WORSHIP ASSOCIATIONS IN TAIWAN

BY HUI-WEN KOO*
National Taiwan University

We analyse why Taiwanese families during the Ch’ing Dynasty still held communal assets vested in worship associations (chi ssu kung yeh) even after the division of family assets. Our analysis shows that worship associations benefitted the living as well as the dead. Although the high cost of managing common assets meant the associations were established infrequently, they arose often in a response to clan feuds and served as martial-style corporations for the protection of family property before the twentieth century.

JEL categories: N45, P14

Keywords: commons, property right, Taiwan, worship association

INTRODUCTION

This paper studies a hidden function of the worship associations during the Ch’ing Dynasty in Taiwan. Most worship associations were established when family members found it troublesome to continue sharing family assets in common. Before dividing family assets among the sons, some families would put aside some land undivided, in the name of their ancestors. Such parcels of land were called ‘sacrifice fields’ (chi t’ien). The male members of the family would collectively hold the land undivided and use its returns to finance biannual ancestor worship activities. Such organisations were called worship associations in Taiwan. Paradoxically, these associations were established precisely at the time when family members recognised that collectively owned assets were being managed inefficiently, and yet they continued to hold such land undivided. Apparently, there

* The author wishes to thank the National Science Council for its financial support. The research assistance from Liang, Hui-ru and the fruitful discussion with Kelly Olds are greatly appreciated. The revision has benefited greatly from comments by Stephen Morgan, the Editor, and three anonymous referees.

1 Wade-Giles transliteration for Chinese is used throughout the paper and standard Taiwan place names are used irrespective of the period.
was a trade-off between this inefficiency and some other goals. But what were these other goals?

Clearly, the *nominal* function of such associations is to facilitate ancestor worship with common family assets. This is a costly arrangement as family members tend to free ride on each other’s efforts to manage the public assets and ill-defined property rights often result in asset depreciation. On the surface, the value of joint worship does not seem sufficient to justify such costs as ancestor worship is not necessarily a public affair; these days, many Taiwanese simply worship ancestors in the privacy of their homes.

Anthropologists and historians have suggested other functions of joint assets held by Chinese clans: (i) to help students in the lineage prepare for state civil service examinations with the expectation that those successful in obtaining office would reciprocate the favour in the future; (ii) to serve as a charity trust fund from which widows, orphans, and poor kinsmen might receive supports; and (iii) to finance clan battles.\(^2\) The first two nominal functions have the virtue of providing welfare benefits, while the third function is of a war-like nature and could cause opposition from the government. Guangdong Governor (Hsün-fu) Wang Ch’ien wrote to Emperor Ch’ien Lung to urge restrictions on the size of such associations because, according to his observations, they used their assets to support clan feuds.\(^3\)

There was an uneven distribution of large localised lineages in China, probably due to differing demands on clans in different places.\(^4\) When studying worship associations in the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong, Faure points to a different function of these associations: incorporation. When no modern financial markets were in existence in the Ch’ing Dynasty (1684–1895) to help entrepreneurs raise capital, the broadly based lineage groups – aided by ritualistic worship – were able to pool their resources for land reclamation projects, which paved the way for economic growth in the Delta. This paper attempts to sort out the particular demands for worship associations in Taiwan.\(^5\) We hypothesise that function (iii) – financing clan battles – was important during the Ch’ing Dynasty in Taiwan when it was mainly a society of immigrants. Family members who shared common economic interest might need to unite to defend family properties against outsiders when law was still weakly enforced.

Our approach belongs to the huge literature that considers cultural behaviour to serve hidden economic functions. Iannaccone (1992) explains that forms of self-sacrifice required by some religious sects and cults play a role in screening out people who would likely participate at only a low level, and hence, increase the average utility of those who remain members. In the medieval Mediterranean,
Maghribi traders (a widely dispersed, north African community of Jewish traders) had developed a sense of group identity, solidarity, and sanctions to such an extent that they were able to securely operate long-distance trade almost entirely among themselves. Greif explains that their social ties helped form a coalition to facilitate information transmission and collective punishments so that the problems associated with moral hazard and overseas agents were effectively regulated. Chen investigated the relationship between economic distress and religious intensity during the Indonesian financial crisis, and found that religious institutions offer a form of ex post insurance. Olds and Liu studied the geographic distribution of religious corporations (shên ming hui) during the Ch’ing Dynasty in Taiwan, and found that religious corporations helped define and enforce water rights. In the same spirit, we wish to investigate whether function (iii) ever played an important role in worship associations.

It is a challenging task to identify empirically a particular reason for worship associations in the presence of other functions. Our strategy is to find variables that are irrelevant to other functions, but are decisive factors of function (iii), or variables that work differently for function (iii) compared with other functions. As these variables have different implications for the prevalence of worship associations when function (iii) and other functions are considered, respectively, we are able to analyse the statistical relationship between these variables and the prevalence of worship associations to identify function (iii). The variables we consider include the Hakka ratio (the proportion of the Hakka population to those of Han Chinese ethnicity), the paddy ratio (the proportion of wet-field rice grown), and the time since a place was first settled by ethnic Chinese.

In what follows, we first provide background information about worship associations and discuss their costs and benefits. We next explain how the three variables mentioned earlier help identify function (iii) and present empirical evidence. The conclusions follow.

BACKGROUND

Concern with afterlife

Chinese people in the Ch’ing Dynasty believed in an afterlife. The dead had to be properly worshipped; otherwise, they would suffer in the underworld. Some believed that the suffering dead might file an indictment against the living descendants in underworld courts, which would cause the living to fall ill or even

6 Greif, Reputation and coalitions.
7 Chen, Club goods and group identity.
8 Olds and Liu, Economic cooperation.
Those dead lacking descendants were worshipped by the public in festivals, with the intention of consoling their spirits so as to ensure that they would not disturb anyone. A contract from the Ch’ing Dynasty in Taiwan shows that when a father divided family assets among his sons, he reserved a portion to support himself in his old age. It was explicitly stated that this portion would never be divided, and after the father died, his sons should take turns managing this asset and use its returns to worship the father. In a survey conducted by the Japanese colonial government, 404 out of 7,326 worship associations were arranged when the parents were still alive. This reveals something of people’s concern about their afterlife.

On the other hand, not every deceased person reserved assets for worship in the afterlife. Even in the early period of Japanese rule in Taiwan (1895–1911), when the frequency of establishing new worship associations seemed to reach its peak (see Fig. 1), in an average year, only 114 new worship associations were established. On the other hand, the male death figures were as high as 54,857 in 1906 and 46,452 in 1911. Even when we count only men over 50 years old (11,113 in 1906 and 9,415 in 1911) and exclude landless individuals, the yearly deaths of male asset owners were estimated to be no less than 4,000. So, on average,

Figure 1. Number of new worship associations in Taiwan, 1720–1925.
Source: T’ai-wan Soutoku, Sai Si Kōu Giyuu TYOU.

10 Lin, T’ai-wan jén, p. 169.
11 Lin Zi T’ai-wan Kiyuu Kan Tiyou Sa Kai, T’ai-Wan Si Hou.
13 T’ai Wan Shèng, p. 234.
14 To reach this estimate, we used the data later in T’ai-wan Soutoku, Kōu Ti, pp. 2–3, which showed the number of households with farm land was 340,674. According to T’ai-Wan Shèng Hang Chéng Ch’ang Kuan Kung Shu, T’ai Wan Shèng, p. 75, the total Taiwanese households in the same year were 795,764. So about 43 per cent of households owned farmland. Multiplying
worship associations were established only for 1 out of every 40 deceased male asset owners.

Using data from the early colonial period, when new establishments reached a peak, clearly yields an overestimate of average annual establishments. A closer look at the data suggests one more reason for this. Before the Japanese arrived, there was plenty of unregistered land in Taiwan, in part because landowners hid their cultivated land from Chinese governors to escape tax payments. When Japanese officers conducted a land survey between 1898 and 1905, the total developed area amounted to around 780,000 chia (14 chia = 1 hectare), more than twice the amount recorded by the Chinese Governor in 1888.¹⁵ Much land was registered during the 1898–1905 survey, including land owned by worship associations. Clearly, many associations that had functioned for years were only recognised and formally established during the land survey conducted in the early colonial period. For example, one response to a questionnaire stated:¹⁶

This association was founded on the bequests of our ancestors to finance worship activities. Only in 1903 did we start to name our organization a worship association. Furthermore, in 1905, during the land survey, a manager was appointed to represent our association.

An association like this would be recorded as being established in the early colonial period, despite having been established earlier. This suggests that the average number of annual worship association establishments was even lower than the estimated one for every 40 deceased male asset owners.

Besides using bequests to establish an association, sometimes descendants used their own money to establish a trust to worship ancestors. In this case, people who bore the same surname, but had no blood relations might also be allowed to purchase shares of the trust and join the association. Their ancestor tablets would become worshipped posthumously in the association.¹⁷ This phenomenon was different from the anthropologists’ findings in China where membership of a worship association was purely on the basis of demonstrated descent. Cohen attributes this surname identity in Taiwan to conflicts among migrants on the basis of surname differences.

**Rise and fall**

Most worship associations in Taiwan were established in the Ch’ing Dynasty and in the early Japanese colonial period, as shown in Figure 1. Although old worship

the deaths of 11,113 and 9,415 by this 43 per cent, we estimate more than 4,000 deceased left behind farmland, which could be used to establish worship associations.

¹⁵ Koo, Property right.
associations were acknowledged as lawful entities in 1923, when Japanese civil law started to apply in Taiwan, no new associations were permitted. 18

Why would the Japanese rulers not tolerate more worship associations? For one thing, there were no such organisations in Japan where primogeniture was practiced. The eldest son who inherited all family assets naturally took the responsibility alone to worship the family’s deceased. 19 Only in Taiwan, where heirs (usually equally) divided bequests, did ancestor worship become a joint responsibility.

Although the associations started with the good intention of gathering family members at least biannually to worship ancestors, disputes over the associations’ assets arose from time to time among family members. When a case involving an old association was brought to court, the number of plaintiffs and defendants could number in hundreds. This was particularly bothersome to the Japanese rulers, who had no laws governing worship associations. After a long debate among Japanese legal scholars and Taiwanese elites, it was decided to disallow the establishment of any more worship associations once Japanese civil law was applied in Taiwan. 20

Another blow to associations many years later was land reform, which took place in the 1950s after the Nationalist Government fled from China to Taiwan. The ‘Land-to-the-Tiller Act’ promulgated in January 1953 forced owners of more than three hectares of land to sell the excess to the government, which would resell it to tenants with a 10 year loan. Suddenly, the association’s assets were rendered disposable. For instance, in 1907, the Liu family in Shulin set aside 8 out of 28 chia of land to establish a worship association. In 1953, during the land reform, the Liu family sold 7.5 chia of that land and divided the receipts. The association’s assets hence shrank to 0.5 chia. 21 The Liu’s in the 1950s chose not to set up an investment fund with the receipts of their land sale to continue worship activities, seemingly because their interest in joint ancestor worship had dwindled during the first half of the twentieth century.

Today, some rich worship associations remain in Taiwan. Instead of farmland, they hold urban property, which was exempt from compulsory sale during the land reform. Many members are keen to cash in on their common assets. However, the legal status of a worship association is ‘public co-ownership (kung t’ung kung you)’, and according to Code 828 of the Taiwanese Civil Law (Min Fa), unanimous agreement is needed to dissolve any public co-ownership. 22 An individual who had a strong preference to keep his association intact could thus veto the will of the other members. 23

18 Lin, Kuo chia (I); Lin, Kuo chia (II).
19 Tsuji, Rites of passage, p. 30.
20 Liu, Fa, chin tai.
21 Sung, Property and lineage, pp. 29–30.
22 Though the Codes of Civil Law have been revised over years, the spirit of Code 828 remains unchanged ever since 1929 when practiced in Mainland China.
23 Faure, Emperor and Ancestor, p. 219, has the same finding in the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong. In 1752, when drought led to a grain shortage, one Zhan Shangji stood up to oppose his relatives who attempted to sell ancestral property for relief.
In 1982, the Civil Affairs Bureau relaxed the interpretation of the code: ‘Unless it is specified in the association’s charter, dissolution needs to be approved by all the association’s members’. This provided leeway for dissolving associations. For example, in early 1983, a worship association in Pingtung met to pass a rule in their charter that only a majority vote was required to dissolve their association. A few months later, the association was dissolved under the new rule.24

In summary, worship associations began to emerge in Taiwan in the early eighteenth century. In the early twentieth century, new associations were still being established. Under Japanese rule, however, the importance of worship associations declined, in part due to a hostile new legal regime, and in part because members began to lose interest in their associations.

COST AND BENEFIT

The previous section shows that although there was a large number of worship associations over time, at any particular moment there were not many newly established associations. The infrequency of establishing worship associations must be attributed to their relatively high cost. As mentioned, about six per cent of associations were arranged by those to be worshipped while they were still alive, and they were probably not much concerned with the costs associated with management of jointly held assets. In what follows, we concentrate on the costs and benefits of the remaining 94 per cent of associations that were created by worshippers.

Benefit on the surface: a public service?

In Chinese thinking, worshipping ancestors serves mainly to feed the deceased so that they will not suffer hunger in the underworld. The best food is prepared and ancestors are invited through prayer to enjoy the offering. The worshippers will then divide the leftovers and enjoy the meal themselves. Of course, there are other ceremonial routines to follow, but the feast clearly stands out as the highlight of the event.25

So, could we view ancestor worshipping (feeding) as a public service? Given the typical free-riding problem, when people separately decide how much money to spend on a worship ceremony, funds will necessarily be under-provided. The optimal ceremony size could be achieved if people were to negotiate and coordinate their donations.26 However, to repeat the negotiation each time could

25 For a detailed description about the ceremony of ancestor worship, see the field study by Li, Chi ssu, pp. 54–7.
26 Coase, The problem.
be expensive, especially when generations later, as the family grows, increasing numbers of people will be involved. There is always the worry too that remote descendants might evade their responsibility to worship ancestors not personally known to them. When sons jointly set aside part of the family assets to fund a worship association, in expectation that its income flow would finance future worship activities, the optimal amount to be allocated could be negotiated once and for all. Their contracts repeatedly state that such family assets were set aside for perpetual worship services. Clearly, the founders were already worried their descendants would dispose of the assets and leave the ancestors hungry in the underworld.

Field studies by anthropologists have highlighted the importance of fixed assets to maintain perpetual worship activities. In the Taipei Basin, besides establishing worship associations, there were two other ways to finance worship. Firstly, clan members could share the expense at each ceremony. Secondly, clan members could take turns being in charge of the ceremony. In both these cases, however, when clan members migrated to other places, they also withdrew from the collective activity, and declining numbers of local, supportive participants threatened the continuance of joint worship. On the other hand, a worship association could last longer, thanks to the steady source of income from its assets.

In Chushan, central Taiwan, it was reported that disposal of a worship association showed that the will to maintain collective worship services was nearly spent. Unlike most traditional Chinese, people in Kwei-Shan Tao did not consider the lineage an important matter. The anthropologist in the field conjectured that this was because, on this small fishing island, there was no good farmland suited to maintaining a worship association. Lacking good financial means to support a long-term collective activity, people inevitably drifted away.

Cost: management

Only the problem of eliciting donations is solved via the establishment of an association. Once there is common property, the challenge becomes determining who will manage it. In the Ch’ing Dynasty and in the early Japanese colonial period, Taiwan had a largely agricultural economy, and the association’s assets mostly consisted of land to be rented out. When the plot of land was small, a common arrangement was for sons of the deceased to take turns collecting the

27 Lin Zi T’ai-wan Kiyuu Kan Tiyou Sa Kai, T’ai-Wan Si Hou.
28 Sung, Property and lineage.
29 Ch’üang, T’ai-wan Han jên, p. 135.
30 Wang, Kui-shan Tao, p. 67. To our knowledge, the only exception in which collective worship could last long without the support of fixed assets was that by the Hsu clan in the Pescadores. See Li, Chi ssu. In the field studies in Hong Kong, anthropologists also recognised the importance of fixed assets to support continuing worship activities. See Baker, A Chinese Lineage; Potter, Land and lineage.
rents. The person in charge had to pay for all worship expenses that year, but could retain any remaining amount, which created an incentive to collect rents diligently.\textsuperscript{31}

Inefficiency would still arise when it came to land improvement. For instance, an irrigation channel could enhance the value of land, so tenants would willingly pay higher rents in the future. But who would undertake the construction of a channel? If each brother wished to free-ride on the other’s efforts, land improvement would be postponed indefinitely. So, it was not surprising that often an association would hire a manager for the common property. The manager would help collect rents and take charge of proper land improvement. As revealed time and again in court cases, however, the manager did not always work in the association’s interest. In many cases, managers stole the association’s assets.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the problem for the association’s members shifted to: Who would take pains to monitor their common agent?

Monitoring the manager is a more difficult problem than collecting donations to establish the worship association in the first place. The money that each descendant puts in is easily accounted for, while monitoring efforts are usually unobservable. The shareholders of a modern company encounter similar problems. Empirical evidence shows that when a company is in a riskier situation and monitoring becomes more urgent, company ownership becomes more concentrated as the large shareholders have stronger incentives to monitor company operations.\textsuperscript{33} A worship association is usually not as flexible because membership in an association passes strictly from father to son.

When a common property is poorly managed, a natural solution is to sell it to a private owner. For a worship association to dispose the common property, however, is to violate the very reason for its establishment, as an association’s founders usually expressed explicitly in a written contract that the assets were to be permanently held to fund ancestor worship. Certainly, these founding members, when making their common assets non-tradable, were expressing their preferences for ancestor worship and maximising their utility. Generations later, however, their descendants might not share the same preference for ancestor worship; or they may simply have proven less capable of managing the association’s assets, and yet have been barred from transferring them to a more capable owner. As the families grew over time, management problems became increasingly serious. A Japanese observer commented that worship associations put a huge number of assets into a non-tradable state and constituted a significant economic disadvantage to individuals and society.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Lin Zi T’ai-wan Kiyuu Kan Tiyou Sa Kai, \textit{T’ai-Wan Si Hou}, p. 605. Similar incidences in the Pearl River Delta are stated in Faure, \textit{Emperor and Ancestor}, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{32} Lin, Kuo chia (I), p. 138.
\textsuperscript{33} Demsetz and Lehn, The structure.
\textsuperscript{34} This paragraph is based on the critique by Prosecutor Kaniuchi in his series of articles \textit{T’ai-wan sai si}.
Other possible benefit: to support clan fights

Does ancestor worship really constitute a public service? A worship association has two activities: to maintain graves in good conditions and to hold regular joint worship activities. The first is certainly of a public nature, although it does not necessarily call for a family association. In modern times, grave maintenance is a commercial activity. Reputable companies receive a one-time payment from the deceased’s family in exchange for an undertaking to maintain the grave in perpetuity. People no longer need to hold common family assets to take care of the graves of ancestors.

So, let us turn to the joint worship activities. When worship is practiced individually, as in modern Taiwanese families, the cost is almost nil. The food presented to ancestors is soon afterwards consumed by worshippers. For this reason, many Taiwanese continue worshipping ancestors privately. Hence, the free-riding problem is not a significant issue unless a feast is thrown for many participating clan members. In reality, the association’s assets are not spent to finance worship, but to finance a family get-together. What matters is the social aspect of joint worship, the stressing of their common roots in a ritual meeting of the clan.

What, then, is so sacred about the common roots? In the Ch’ing Dynasty, when Chinese started to migrate to Taiwan from the Mainland, families were the migration units, sharing common economic interests. In the new territory, the law was loosely enforced and, very often, migrants had to defend with force their newly acquired properties. Clan feuds were a headache for Chinese rulers in the Ch’ing Dynasty. Fights could take place between people of different surnames or different origins, be it Chinese provinces (Fukien vs. Guangdong) or prefectures (Chang Chou vs. Ch’uan Chou, both in Fukien). The daily conflicts between migration units commonly caused antagonism, so fights between two migration groups could trigger fights between two similar migration groups in distant areas. For instance, in 1832, when a Mr Chen (from Fukien) was humiliated after being caught stealing taro leaves from a Mr Chang’s (from Guangdong) field, Mr Chen’s clan leader organised a group to destroy Mr Chang’s taro field, triggering a clan feud and armed fights between Fukien and Guangdong immigrants almost everywhere in western Taiwan. The situation grew uncontrolled and soldiers from

35 Regarding the common practice to worship ancestors at home, see the official website of Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan: http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=4466.
36 Ch’ing government imposed restrictions on female migrants to Taiwan. So, many men came as bachelors and married indigenous women. However, men belonging to the same families in China tended to move to Taiwan together. For instance, fieldwork finds that dozens of Lai family members exploited Changhua Plain together in the eighteenth century. Moreover, to unite members of the same lineage, men of Hsiao’s lineage found an association in Changhua to worship their common ancestors in China who never visited Taiwan. See Chen, T’ai-ican, pp. 143–51.
37 Dai, Ch’ing Tai, p. 767.
Mainland China were sent to help pacify the conflict. The conflict took four months to suppress.\(^{38}\)

Clan feuds are certainly public business. When family property was expropriated, who would reclaim it? Only when those fighting were assured of fair compensation could clan feuds escalate to a grand scale. A field study revealed that a worship association of a Lai clan association in the 1970s had an appearance of a charity organisation, which gave condolence money to the deceased clan member’s family. However, when this worship association was first organised in the Ch’ing Dynasty, it served to promote clan feuds and emphasised that clan members shared common blood when jointly worshipping their ancestors. Moreover, its rich assets encouraged members to fight opponent clans as the association would properly compensate any injury or death in a fight.\(^{39}\)

So worship associations could be established in response to frequent clan feuds, and in a society in which law was weakly enforced, family unity was important. In extreme cases, public funds could be set up to provide financial incentives to maintain family unity. A worship association thus served the living rather than the dead.

### Charity and scholarship offering

Clans in Mainland China have been found to invest in corporate property to look after the social welfare of their poorer members. The most famous example is the field of a thousand mu (a mu is the more common alternate measure to chia for area), named *i t’ien*, and set up by Fan Chung-yen (989–1052) to finance the feeding and clothing of poor family members. In this case, charity is the main function of the corporate property. On the other hand, the so-called book-lamp-fields (*shu t’ien*) were set aside to encourage clan members to study to pass the civil service examination, and in this case, the corporate asset served as a trust fund to offer scholarships.\(^{40}\) Similar arrangements have been found in Taiwan, but they were rare and found only among very rich families. For instance, a Lai clan in central Taiwan started to manage corporate assets in the early nineteenth century, including ‘book-lamp-fields’ of about nine chia and ‘sacrifice fields’ of about five chia.\(^{41}\)

The rarity of *i t’ien* and *shu t’ien* does not mean that Chinese clans in Taiwan did not care about their members’ welfare or education, but they could offer the same support via means other than creating a specified trust fund. For instance, the mission of a Chuang family worship association in Chushan included both the

---

38 Lin, *Lo Han Chiao*, pp. 38–43.
39 Dai, *Ch’ing Tai*, pp. 774–5. Similar phenomena were observed in Fukien and Guangdong. See Lamley, Lineage feuding, p. 43.

© 2013 The Author
*Australian Economic History Review* © 2013 Wiley Publishing Asia Pty Ltd and the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand
worship of ancestors and supporting the education of children. Therefore, charity and scholarship offerings, the two most popular functions of lineage organisations in Mainland China, were also functions of at least some worship associations in Taiwan.

**EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

In the eyes of Chinese rulers, the worship of ancestors, charity, and scholarship offerings were all righteous causes to establish associations. On the other hand, the promotion of clan feuds was not. We present empirical evidence to show the importance of this function. A straightforward test of this hypothesis is to see whether there exists a positive correlation between the density of worship associations and the frequency of clan feuds over time and space. Unfortunately, there are no reliable data about clan feuds, so we have to test the hypothesis indirectly. Below, we first identify the causes of clan feuds and next investigate whether the prevalence of these causes implies a higher density of worship associations.

**Paddies**

Dai observed that most clan feuds in the Ch’ing Dynasty were over irrigation matters. Despite the public nature of an irrigation system, most irrigation systems during the Ch’ing Dynasty in Taiwan were established privately. When a family dug channels to bring water from the hills to irrigate their land, neighbours could free-ride on their efforts by digging a sub-channel a little up-stream to irrigate their own land. This might result in insufficient water for the first family. Fights over water rights would ensue. Such conflicts were particular to areas of paddy cultivation. So we could test whether more worship associations would be found in an area where the paddy ratio was high. The paddy ratio is calculated from the earliest land survey in the Japanese colonial era.

**Hakka**

According to a survey conducted in the Japanese colonial era, 83 per cent of Taiwanese settlers came from Fukien Province and 16 per cent from Guangdong Province. Immigrants from Guangdong were mainly Hakka people who had

42 Ch’üang, *T’ai-wan Han jên*, p. 122.
43 Controversies over water rights have also been identified as a cause of lineage feuding in southern Fukien and eastern Guangdong. See Lamley, *Lineage feuding*, p. 53.
44 Lin Zi T’ai-Wan ToTi Tiyou Sa Kiyoko, *Hata Syyuu Kaku; Ta Syyuu Kaku*.
45 T’ai-wan Soutokufu, *T’ai-Wan Zai Seki*. Note that in this survey, some people who honestly identified themselves as Fukien migrants might actually be Hakka people from Guangdong. They
their own language and customs distinct from other Chinese people. Unlike the early settlers from Fukien across the Taiwan Strait, most Hakka arrived much later, probably deterred by the longer journey from Guangdong. In any case, in the early Ch’ing Dynasty, the Hakka were banned from migrating to Taiwan by General Shih Lang, who considered Guangdong to be the home of pirates. In the Ch’ing Dynasty, several severe clan feuds took place between Hakka and Fukien immigrants.

Even today, many Hakka in Taiwan still follow their traditions and live in their own villages. Researchers have found, however, that the early Hakka were not segregated from Fukien settlers. At least in central Taiwan, it was only after serious armed conflicts that the Hakka moved away from Fukien settlers and established their own villages.

When conflicts arose among settlers, the minorities such as the Hakka were clearly at a disadvantage, and thus felt greater pressure to remain united. Worship associations that emphasised the unity of clan members should, therefore, be of greater importance to Hakka during the time of their settlement. We thus expect to see more worship associations in an area with more Hakka.

**Aboriginal people**

The aborigines in Taiwan are ethnically Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian). Early conflicts involving the Chinese were not among themselves but with these aborigines. For example, in the Hsinchu area, there were examples of Hakka and Fukien settlers cooperating to defend themselves against aborigines attempting to reclaim lands. Apparently, the Chinese sub-ethnic groups lived in harmony when they had a common economic interest to pursue. Only after years of chasing away aborigines from the plains, did Chinese settlers start to fight for resources among themselves.

When Chinese fought Chinese, each group had to differentiate themselves from their opponents. The activity of a worship association that emphasised kinship helped to promote comradeship when a family member was bullied by outsiders, and united family members to fight off such outsiders. On the other hand, the Chinese and the aborigines could be distinguished by appearances. When in conflict, there was no need to address each side’s different origins. In the face of

lost their origin identity in the long process of migrants’ integration. See, Hsu, Changhua; Li, Ch’ing tai, pp. 259–63.

46 An exceptional early Hakka settlement in Pintung is dated from the late seventeenth century, see Huang, Ping Pei.

47 Huang, T’ai Hai, p. 92.

48 Yin, Min Yüeh; Hung, Ch’ing tai T’ai-chung; Shih, Ch’ing Tai, pp. 81–86; Chang, Li Shih, pp. 165–66.

49 The Hakka ratio is calculated from T’ai-wan Soutokufu, T’ai-Wan Zai Seki.

50 Li, Formosan; Shepherd, Statecraft, pp. 27–32.

51 Wu, Min Yüeh; Lamley, Subethnic rivalry.
common opponents, Chinese families of different origin in the early settlement period united to defend their newly acquired properties. To emphasise each family’s lineage contributed nothing to their fight against the aborigines.

This analysis leads to two predictions. Firstly, worship associations should have emerged in the later settlement period. This is supported by a field study in Chushan. Secondly, the mountain area and the east coast where Chinese settlers arrived only in the late nineteenth century and remained dominated by aborigines in the Ch’ing Dynasty should have fewer worship associations.

We lack precise information about when a place was first settled by the Chinese; most accounts only record the reign during which a place was first settled. To split the Chinese migration history in Ch’ing Dynasty into two roughly equal parts, we adopt an early settlement dummy variable, which takes a value of 1 if Chinese immigrants came to a place before 1820 (the last year of Jiaqing Emperor) and 0 otherwise. The settlement time recorded by Cheng is used to decide the dummy value. The early settlement dummy is expected to have a positive relationship with regard to the density of associations.

**Data**

From 1908 onwards, the Japanese colonial government conducted a series of censuses of worship associations. The early censuses were criticised for containing errors because interviewers sometimes failed to distinguish religious associations, which worshipped gods, from worship associations, which worshipped ancestors. Learning from the past mistakes, each census sought to improve on previous ones. The best and the last census was conducted in 1937.

Its summary report was only up to chou (or tien) level (prefecture-level administration). There were five chou and three tien in Taiwan. So, for every item in this summary report, we only have eight data points. Each chou, or tien, was subdivided into dozens of chuang (village), towns, and cities. Unfortunately, despite numerous efforts, the only original census documents that we could recover were for Taichung Chou, and for Tainan City and Madou Town in Tainan Chou. Hence, our empirical analysis will rely on the data of Taichung Chou.

There were 2,127 worship associations listed in Taichung Chou. We used the data up to the chuang level. There were 59 chuang in Taichung Chou. We derived the density of worship associations in a chuang by dividing its number of associations by its number of households (in thousands). The household figure changed over time, so to best represent numbers in the Ch’ing Dynasty, we used the...
household data from the earliest population census in the Japanese colonial era conducted in 1905.\textsuperscript{58} The highest density is 83 per thousand households, and the lowest is zero.

Our data are plotted in Figure 2. The density of worship associations is on the horizontal axis, while the paddy ratio, Hakka ratio, and the early settlement dummy are on the vertical axis. The first glance at these 59 data points confirms our conjecture. The paddy ratio (presented by circles) and the Hakka ratio (presented by asterisks) have a positive relationship with the density of associations. Only four chuang were settled later than in 1820 and have a zero-valued dummy variable (presented by triangles). They all have a low density of associations, ranging from 1.16 to 3.62, while the average of the sample is 18.81. As predicted, places that developed later have a lower density of associations.

Figure 2 gives us some idea about the correlation between variables. To examine further the marginal effect of our explanatory variables on the density of associations, we run a multi-regression and present the results in Table 1. All factors have the predicted impact at a four per cent significance level.

While the analysis of data in Taichung Chou confirms our conjecture, we next examine the summary report to see if a similar pattern prevails throughout Taiwan. Figure 3 shows the density of worship associations in eight chou/tien in Taiwan. Taitung and Hualien, the two tien on the east coast, had the lowest densities. Separated by the high mountains from the west coast, these two places were the last to be developed by the Chinese people and had the largest aboriginal

\textsuperscript{58} Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Ko Kou Tiyou Sa Bu, Meiji, pp. 70–104.
According to our theory, the Chinese immigrants were not yet in conflict and worship associations that emphasised immigrants’ origins were not needed.

The first five data points in Figure 3 reflect the situation in the five western chou. Tainan Chou had the lowest density on the west coast. Table 2 lists the geographical data of each chou (or tien). Among five chou on the west coast, Tainan Chou had the lowest paddy ratio in 1905. Our theory predicts that there would have been many fewer conflicts over water rights in Tainan Chou, and hence fewer worship associations. Hsinchu Chou, although only ranking third in paddy ratio, had the highest density of associations, probably thanks to the large proportion of its population being of Hakka ancestry. In summary, we find that the chou level data show similar patterns as the Chuang level data in Taichung Chou.

### Table 1. Density of worship associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.649</td>
<td>5.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakka ratio</td>
<td>32.631†</td>
<td>8.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early settlement dummy</td>
<td>26.056†</td>
<td>8.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy ratio</td>
<td>17.102‡</td>
<td>7.856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.29$
Sample size = 59

†Indicates significance at the 1% level. ‡Indicates significance at the 4% level. Standard errors are in the parentheses.

*Source:* T’ai-wan Soutokufu, T’ai-Wan Zai Seki; Cheng, Da-hsueh; Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Toti Tiyou Sa Kiyoko, Hata Chou Kaku; Ta Chou Kaku.

**Figure 3. Association density (per 100 households).**

*Source:* T’ai-wan Soutokufu, Sai Si Kou Giyuu; Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Ko Kou Tiyou Sa Bu, Meiji.
Identification problem

As previously discussed, the associations have several functions, so the question remains whether the regression is really identifying factors promoting clan feuds ahead of other important functions?

Some explanatory variables that we used do help solve the identification problem. Firstly, the Hakka ratio should be irrelevant to other functions as settlers of different sub-ethnic groups should have shared the same desire to worship ancestors; they would have similarly cared for the misfortunates of clan members and promoted study with the same eagerness. As all other functions predict the coefficient of the Hakka ratio in our regression to be zero, the positive relationship found between the Hakka ratio and the density of associations can only be explained by the Hakka being a minority emphasising family unity; something consistent with clan feuds.

The early settlement dummy is relevant to all functions, but these functions have different implications for the coefficient of the dummy. We shall first consider the service of worship *per se*. Two points are important when calculating density. Firstly, (i) it was often the case that once an association was established, the male descendants would all be worshipped after death by the association and no new association would be established for the same clan. As time passed, the households of this clan increased, while the number of associations remained unchanged, and the density of associations would decrease over time. Secondly, (ii) for those households that had no association, so long as the need for ancestor worship *per se* stayed constant over time, the establishment of new associations per thousand households should have been roughly constant over time. Taken together, these arguments imply that the density of associations should have decreased over time when only the worshipping function is considered and the coefficient of the dummy should be negative.

When the charity function is considered, the logic of point (i) above still applies, that is, once a charity fund was set up, there was no need to set up a new fund, although its assets might grow with time. However, for point (ii), we observed that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chou/Tien</th>
<th>Paddy ratio (%)</th>
<th>Hakka ratio (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taipei</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hsinchu</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taichung</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainan</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaoshuang</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taitung</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hualien</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

it was settlers in a virgin land who probably needed most support from the clan to develop the area and to safeguard their welfare. The need to establish associations to give clan members support should have decreased over time. In all, the charity function also implies a negative coefficient of the dummy.

On the other hand, early settlers were probably busy battling problems with agricultural development and had little leisure to study for civil examinations. The thought of scholarship probably only arose later. So, only the functions of promotion of clan feuds and scholarship predict the coefficient of the dummy to be positive. Our regression result shows that when the marginal effect of the early establishment dummy is considered, these two functions dominate the importance of the worship service per se and charity.

Lastly, Freedman suggested that the surplus accumulated in a highly productive rice economy helped bring rich worship associations into existence. Therefore, all functions, with the probable exception of charity, imply that the coefficient of the paddy ratio is positive. This is because while charity funds would be easier to establish in a paddy area, it is probably settlers working in dry fields and experiencing a poorer life who most needed support from their clans.

In summary, our explanatory variables support the view that the function of prosecuting clan feuds tells a more coherent story about the variations in the density of associations than do other functions.

CONCLUSION

This paper analyses why in the Ch‘ing Dynasty family members still held common assets to establish worship associations even after the division of family assets. Our cost–benefit approach suggests that worship associations benefitted the living as well as the dead, but due to the high costs associated with managing common assets, worship associations were established only infrequently. The data suggest that the establishment of worship associations was often a response to clan feuds; their holding of regular rituals that emphasised the common lineage of members served to unite the clan. Moreover, the assets of the associations could help finance clan feuds, which were public affairs. When law and order was brought to Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era, worship associations became less important. Restricted by association rules, however, members were not free to dispose association assets. The land reform in the 1950s came as a big blow to the worship associations because it introduced some leeway for members to sell association assets and divide the receipts.

60 Brown states the legal system in Ch‘ing Dynasty Taiwan was so corrupt as ‘designed to keep people out of the courts, regardless of the legitimacy of their claims’. When it was realised that the Japanese judges took no bribes, ‘people flocked to raise old grievances’ in the beginning of the colonial era. When studying antagonistic organisations in Mei-nung in South Taiwan, Cohen also points out that lineages lost their warlike functions in the Japanese colonial era when security became provided by army units and by the police.
REFERENCES

Dai, Y. (1979) [The Local Control in Taiwan in Ch’ing Dynasty] (Taipei: Linking Book).
Department of Land Administration, Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan (1984) [A Study of Commonly Owned Land in Taiwan].
Kaniuchi, Z. (1912) [Comments on the second draft proposal about worship associations]. Taihai Shih Ch’u [Taiwan Law Monthly], 6, 49–61.


Lin Zi T’ai-wan Kiyuu Kan Tiyou Sa Kai [ Provisional Taiwan Old Customs Investigation Committee] (1910) *Tai-Wan Si Hou Hu Roka San Kou Siyo* [Taiwan Private Law, Appended References].


Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Ko Kou Tiyou Sa Bu [ Provisional Taiwan Household Survey Bureau] (1907) *Meiji San Ziyuu Ochi Wai Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Ko Kou Tiyou Sa Chou Kei Gen Biyou* (Ti Hou No Bu) [The Provisional Household Survey in Taiwan, 1905 (Local Report)].

Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Toti Tiyou Sa Kiyoko [ Provisional Taiwan Land Survey Bureau] (1905) *Hata Chou Kakou Oyobu Chuang So Tiyou So Siyo* [A Survey of Dry-field Harvest and Tenants’ Rents].

Lin Zi T’ai-Wan Toti Tiyou Sa Kiyoko [ Provisional Taiwan Land Survey Bureau] (1905) *Ta Chou Kakou Sa Tei Siyo* [A Survey of Paddy Harvest].


Saka, Y. (1936) *Sai Si Kou Giyou No Ki Hon Mon Dai* [Basic Problems of Worship Associations]. Taikoku Imperial University, The College of Liberal Arts and Laws. Political Science Research Annuals, 3(1).


Shih, T. (1987) *Ch’ing Tai Tsai T’ai Han Jên Tê Tsu Chi Fên Pu Han Yuan Hsiang Shêng Hua Fong Shih* [The Origins of Taiwanese Immigrants in Ch’ing Dynasty] (Taipei: Department of Geography, National Taiwan Normal University).


T’ai-Wan Shêng Hang Chêng Ch’ang Kuan Kung Shu [Chief Executive Office] (1946) *Tai-Wan Shêng Wu Shih I Nien Lai T’ung Chi Shih Yao* [Taiwan Province: Statistical Summary of the Past 51 Years].

T’ai-wan Soutokufu (1897–1942) *T’ai-wan Soutokufu Toukei Siyo* [Taiwan Government-General Statistics].
T'ai-wan Soutokufu (1928)  
*T'ai-Wan Žai Seō Han Min Žoku Kiyou Kan Tiyou Sa* [A Survey of Chinese Immigrants' Origins].

T'ai-wan Soutokufu (1934)  
*Kou Ti Bun Bai Ni Ke E Tiyou Sa* [Farm Land Allocation and Its Management], Nou Giyou Ki Hon Tiyou Sa Siyo [Basic Agriculture Survey], No. 31.

T'ai-wan Soutokufu (1937)  
*Sai Si Kou Giyou Tiyou* [The Worship Association Census].

Taichung Chou (1940)  
*Sai Si Kou Giyou Tiyou Sa Biyou* [The Worship Association Census of Taichung].

Tsotung Bureau (undated)  
*Sai Si Kou Giyou Tiyou Sa Siyo, Tsotung* [The Worship Association Survey, Tsotung], manuscript.


Wakeman, F. (1975)  
*The Fall of Imperial China* (New York: The Free Press).

Wang, S. (1967)  

*Min Yüeh kuan hsi yü Hsin-chu ti ch’ü t’u t’u k’ai k’en* [The Hokien-Hakka relationship and the reclamation of land in Hsin-chu area]. *Center for Hakka Studies Newsletter*, 2, 15–9.

Yin, Z. (1985)  
*Min Yüeh i min tê hsieh ho yu tui li* [The cooperation and conflicts between Fukien and Guandong immigrants]. *Taipei Archives*, 74, 1–27.