

## Chapter 3

### The place Baishatun and its ritual landscape

The pilgrimage discussed in this thesis bears the name of a Mazu temple in *Baishatun*, which is located on the northwestern coast of Taiwan. “Baishatun” is in fact an old place name. Since 1946, it has referred to two political administrative villages, *Baidong Li* and *Baixi Li*, in *Tongxiao* Town of *Miaoli* County (Qiu 2001:196-199; see Map 3-1). The old village name has not been adopted by the present official administration, although it is still used by local residents in daily life, despite its division into two units. Its pilgrimage, which was organised by the local Mazu temple, impressed people. However, the extent of the Mazu cult is not confined to Baishatun alone; its ambit includes several villages to the north and south (cf. 4.3).<sup>1</sup> This chapter introduces the place Baishatun, while its surrounding villages will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

My concern in this chapter is to examine the place Baishatun, which provides the grounds for the pilgrimage. I will begin with a general historical overview of the village, including the background to its ethnicity, political administration, economic conditions and social organisations. Subsequently I will introduce the ritual landscape in terms of communal worship in Baishatun, which can be classified into three territorial cults (cf. 1.1 no.1) and seven religious associations. Its disparate ritual organisations and various religious activities make Baishatun a Taiwanese folk religion paradise. Finally, although most of the younger generation have moved away to make a better living, they still maintain their home village identity and return for local religious festivities, even taking on important tasks during the pilgrimage. I will discuss the translocal impact of returning emigrants and visitors from outside on this area.

#### 3.1 The place Baishatun: a general overview

Located in the upper north of the *Tongxiao* coast, Baishatun is a narrow sea-plain area of approx. 227.82 hectares. The shifting boundary of the political administration and the relatively poor economic conditions here make this narrow coastal plain a marginal area in relation to *Houlong* Town to the north and *Tongxiao* Town to the south. The sea-plain facing the sea in the west extends eastward about one kilometre to the hill area. The *Guagang* brook is the natural northern border of the village, while the *Nangang Li* village belonging to *Houlong* is situated

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to the definition of local residents, Baishatun is regarded as a village unit in this thesis. *Li* will be used if necessary to differentiate between the two units. The Baishatun Mazu cult refers to the cult’s entire domain, which includes this village and several adjacent villages (cf. 4.3.3.1).

on the other side of the brook. The southern edge of the village is immediately adjacent to a village called *Neidao Li*.

To get to the village one either takes the coastal railway directly to the small Baishatun station, or the road via the north-south Province Road Number One (PR1) that passes through the village. Both the railway and the modern roads in the village were constructed in the 1920s. Another way of reaching the village is to take the newly-established West-Coast Freeway and then change to local roads, making it roughly a ninety-minute drive from Taipei to Baishatun.<sup>2</sup> The railway distance between Baishatun and its local political centre Tongxiao Town is 8.8 kilometres, and 12.3 kilometres to Houlong Town.

According to the data of the Tongxiao Census Office in July of 2001, Baishatun contains approx. 788 households and a total of 3,025 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> My first impression of this coastal village was different to that of other fishing villages in Taiwan, because there was no distinct smell of fish in the air during the fishing season. It is neither a place devoted to leisure, nor a commercial resort for tourists. Similar to other rural areas of Taiwan, it is usually very quiet here except at festival times.

As shown in pre-twentieth century historical records, the Japanese colonial governors changed the name *Baishadun*<sup>4</sup> to Baishatun.<sup>5</sup> Over the years, inhabitants have consistently used previous place names in their ordinary spoken language. Indeed, many place names for small village locations play a significant role in village daily life.<sup>6</sup> Almost every area of the village has a name, such as *Ongcu*<sup>7</sup> (“the Wang settlement”), *Tauzingcan* (“the front planting land”), *Duakuhng* (“the large planting farm”), *Dicamaor* (“cemetery”) and so on (Map 3-2). Although political administrative units exist for the village (*li*) and the neighbourhood (*lin*)<sup>8</sup>, inhabitants usually adopt the traditional place names to refer to naturally formed neighbourhoods within

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<sup>2</sup> The distance by rail from Baishatun to Taipei is 124.6 kilometres.

<sup>3</sup> Household registration in Taiwan does not correspond precisely to the real situation. This means that people who do not in fact live there but still own a house or a farm can enrol as Baishatun inhabitants for political elections or participation in the Mazu temple organisation.

<sup>4</sup> “Baishatun” literally means the white sand mound piled up by the wind and describes the beach scenery of the village in the past. See Lue 1981:94.

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese characters for Baishatun (Mandarin) 白沙屯 and Baishadun (Mandarin) 白沙墩 are slightly different but have the same meaning. The pronunciation of this place name in the Minnanese dialect is *Besuadun*.

<sup>6</sup> As Basso (1996) and Kahn (1996) have shown, a place name is not merely a term denoting a space, but also one containing the shared memories and emotions that people have constructed on them. Although I do not focus here on the constructed meaning of the place, it is important to point out that the names of these neighbourhoods are related to local resident experience, especially in terms of ritual activities.

<sup>7</sup> These place names have been phonetically transcribed according to the Minnanese dialect spoken by the residents.

<sup>8</sup> *Lin* is the smallest political administrative unit below village level. Although ten households can in principle be defined as a *lin*, the number of households in each *lin* varies, so that they can sometimes encompass more than 20 or 30 households.

the village. The conventional name for neighbourhood is *gaktau*, which is not coincident with the administrative neighbourhood unit (*lin*). These neighbourhoods do not have clear-cut boundaries, nor do they exclude people from other sub-areas. However, certain temples have become neighbourhood emblems.<sup>9</sup>

Due to the hilly area on the eastern side of the village, most of the dwelling areas are concentrated on the western side of the PR1. The Baishatun train station is within 15 minutes walking distance from the Mazu temple, a route that separates the two political units (Baidong li and Baixi li) and runs through the main part of the village. The vicinity of the train station to the west of the PR1 is called *Ciatau* (“station”), and includes four political administrative neighbourhoods belonging to Baixi Li and Baidong Li. Due to the station, this neighbourhood developed into a living compound. It features both new and old buildings, including a small post office, two luncheonettes and three family-run grocery stores that supply a miscellany of goods. Ciatau was the village market centre in the old fishing days; today, only one or two sellers of various kinds of fresh foods remain. The village road from here to the next neighbourhood of *Suitau* (“upstream end”) is known as *Ciataulo* (“road to the station”), which is lined with more recent dwellings with a lower household density. Certain buildings are located here, such as the local office of the Farmers’ Association, a private clinic, a Chinese herbal shop, and several family-run stores. The neighbourhood got its name Suitau from the water that comes down from the hills and gathers here before flowing westwards to the sea. Many of the households around Suitau are engaged in various small businesses, especially along the roadside of the PR1. In general, about ten inhabitants sell their produce or homemade food at the traditional market; occasionally a number of motorised stalls from Tongxiao Town sell clothes or other wares. It is always noisy at the morning market when people gather here to do their shopping or exchange information.

The neighbourhood temple Donglong Gong lies directly on the eastern verge of the Suitau market centre across from the PR1. On the opposite side is the Mazu temple’s guiding arch, from which the Mazu temple can be reached from the village road. This path, which contains more shops and is the village’s main artery, connects the eastern hillside with the west coast. The oldest of the neighbourhood temples, the Wulong Gong temple, is located close to the railway in the vicinity of the neighbourhood *Ongyaging* (“the temple dedicated to plague gods”). The large living compound surrounding this main path is the earliest settlement and the most densely populated in the village.

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<sup>9</sup> With reference to Lugang city in central Taiwan, De Glopper’s study (1974:63-65; 1977) defines neighbourhood based on residence as a partial unit. Although village and city neighbourhoods do not match each other in scale, both are partial units of a whole.

The Gongtian Gong Mazu temple is on the northern side of the neighbourhood Suive (“downstream end”), where the living compound of the Wang lineage is located; it is situated a mere 200 metres from the beach. A simple stage is constructed in front of the Mazu temple, behind which is the north side of the pond that extends to the *Tauzinggau* (“the front canal”) neighbourhood containing the Wuyun Gong temple. Since the Mazu temple has always been the central village venue for various communal ritual activities, the area in front of the temple also constitutes a public space used to accommodate visitors, and a night market frequented once a week by numerous vendors from outside. A market truck from Tongxiao Town offering fresh meat and vegetables parks at the intersection in front of the Mazu temple every other day. About 100 metres north of the Mazu temple is the Tiande Gong temple, which is located in the *Hongtaucu* (“houses facing the wind”) neighbourhood.

### **3.1.1 Ethnic background**

Historically, the Tongxiao area known as *Tunxiao She* was once a colony of the Taiwanese aboriginal people *Pinpu*.<sup>10</sup> Due to the conflict between the *Pinpu* and *Han* peoples, soldiers had guarded this area against aborigine resistance from 1711. From then on the *Han* people began to settle in this area and practise agriculture in large numbers; they came to Baishatun around 1731. While the aboriginal people had been compelled to migrate to the east and south in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, more and more *Han* immigrants settled here and became the main inhabitants of the area.<sup>11</sup>

The *Hakka* people, who originally came from the province *Guangdong* in southern China, make up the majority of the population in Miaoli County. In contrast, the long narrow sea-plain stretching from Houlong to Tongxiao is mostly occupied by the *Minnan* people, who originally came from *Quanzhou* and *Zhangzhou* in the Chinese province of *Fujian*. Most Baishatun residents come from *Huian* and *Tongan* in Quanzhou County. Nonetheless, some *Hakka* households reside to the east of this sea-plain area. According to linguistic research (Luo 2001), residents of this particular area speak the language with a mixture of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou dialects, all of which has developed into a unique “Baishatun accent” with overtones of the Quanzhou dialect.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The *Pinpu* people referred to here belong to the *Taokas* sub-group.

<sup>11</sup> For the settlement history of the *Han* people in this area, see Qiu 2001: 41-50; Chang 1989:157-158; You 1996: 31-33.

<sup>12</sup> According to Luo (2001), the language spoken in Houlong also shows a mixture of the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou dialects, whereas in Tongxiao the Zhangzhou dialect is predominant.

### 3.1.2 Shifting boundaries of political administration

The alteration of district units has played an important role in shaping the extent of the Baishatun Mazu cult. I will give a brief review of the change in political governing units in this area from the seventeenth century until the present.

When the Qing army took over the regime of the Ming dynasty in Taiwan, the northern part of the island was classified as *Zhuluo* County from 1683. Around 1731, several military surveillance stations were set up in the northwestern coastal area.<sup>13</sup> Baishatun was defined in 1723 as the southern end of *Houlong Bao* that belonged to *Danshui Ting*.<sup>14</sup> Apart from being a military guarding point, this village was also an official station for delivering imperial orders and information.<sup>15</sup> In 1879, Baishatun was classified under the administration of *Zhunao Bao* of Xinzhu County. When Taiwan was redefined as a province district in 1889, it became the northern end of Tunxiao Bao of *Miaoli* County. As a larger village and the local political administrative centre, Baishatun encompassed the ambit of two villages (*Xinpu* and *Neidao*) to the south in the late twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

In order to achieve more effective control, the Japanese governors reformed the political administrative units seven times during the 50-year colonial regime (1895-1945). At first the colonial administrative structure changed almost every year, with Baishatun classified under various administrative units.<sup>17</sup> The Han people's village from the Qing period was maintained during the early colonial regime, and Baishatun remained a local centre called "Baishadun *Qu*",<sup>18</sup> and included two of its original southern villages. The colonial governors changed the administrative district system and separated the whole island into 20 districts (*Ting*) in 1901. Baishatun *Qu*<sup>19</sup> was relocated to the domain of Tongxiao *Zhiting*, covered by *Miaoli Ting*. In 1909, reforms focused on replacing traditional village units (*Jie* or *Zhuang*) with the district of

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<sup>13</sup> These were the *Houlong Tang*, the *Tunxiao Tang* and the *Baishadun Tang*. *Tang* was the name given to the official guarding spots at the time. See *Danshui Ting Gazetteer* (Chen 1871:157-58); *Miaoli Xian Gazetteer* (Shen 1892: 166); *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897: 64).

<sup>14</sup> "*Bao*" is a political administrative unit below the level of "*Ting*", and *Ting* was the unit below the highest local level *Taiwan Fu* at that time.

<sup>15</sup> The official delivery station was called *Baishatun Xun*, see *Danshui Ting Gazetteer* (Chen 1871:24).

<sup>16</sup> For the alteration of the political districts in this area during the late imperial era of the *Qing* dynasty, see *Danshui Ting Gazetteer* (Chen 1871: 23-41); *Xinzhu Xian Documentation Book* (Chen 1894:1-13); *Draft for the Xinzhu Xian Gazetteer* (Zheng & Zeng 1897); *Miaoli Xian Gazetteer* (Shen 1892:17-32); *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897:12- 32); Qiu 2001: 156-162; Chang 1989:155-158; You 1996: 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> The village was defined under the following administrative units: *Miaoli Zhiting* of Taiwan County (1895-96), *Miaoli Zhiting* of *Taizhong* County (1896-97), *Yuanli Banwushu* of Xinzhu County (1897-1898), *Miaoli Banwushu* of *Taizhong* County (1898-1901). Both "*Zhiting*" and "*Banwushu*" were the administrative units below the level of County.

<sup>18</sup> *Baishadun Qu* was something of a village alliance district under Tongxiao *Zhishu* of *Miaoli Banwushu*, *Taizhong Xian* (Qiu 2001: 164).

<sup>19</sup> The name Baishatun, formerly Baishadun, appeared in several colonial documents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the map of the area first drawn in 1904.

Qu, which combined several villages into one unit. Thus, Baishatun Qu now consisted of three villages (Baishatun, Xinpu and Neidao) and was marked out within the ambit of Tongxiao Zhiting of Xinzhu Ting. In order to conciliate Taiwanese resistance, the Japanese governors adopted assimilation policies and rearranged the administrative system. Baishatun was then re-classified as part of Tongxiao Zhuang under Miaoli Jun of Xinzhu Zhou.<sup>20</sup>

The Chinese nationalist government (ROC) renamed the colonial administrative units in 1946. Baishatun was classified under Tongxiao Town of Miaoli *Qu* in Xinzhu County. A new political administrative system was implemented one year after the government had retreated to Taiwan in 1949. The village of Baishatun has been separated into two administrative villages (Baidong Li and Baixi Li) ever since, and Tongxiao Town was placed directly under Miaoli County.<sup>21</sup>

While the upper political administrative units have changed many times, the naturally formed village units remain relatively stable. As the lowest governing unit, Baishatun has always been the southernmost village of Houlong Bao and the northernmost part of Tunxiao Bao in various historical periods. Nonetheless, the ambit of the village has not been affected by the shifting boundary of upper political districts. As a rule, the political administrative districts were divided into three levels during the Qing period: the upper level *Ting/Xian*, the middle level *Li/Bao/Xiang/Ao* and the lower level *Jie/Zhuang/Xiang*. According to one historian's study (Dai 1979:5-7), the first and second levels were mainly political constructions, a sharp contrast to the third level, which was based on the naturally formed settlement.

Moreover, many village alliances were established in Taiwan after 1842 (ibid: 18-34, 233-270). Several villages were organised into a semi-official organisation with political, military and religious functions (cf. Brim 1974).<sup>22</sup> Despite a lack of evidence (such as contracts, for instance) to prove the existence of the village alliance in Baishatun in the past, the Mazu pilgrimage has included several nearby villages. Particularly the political governing unit Baishadun Qu covered most of the domain of this multi-village Mazu cult (cf. 4.3.3.1).

### ***3.1.3 General conditions for economic activities***

Baishatun was once a Taiwanese fishing port. Subsistence fishing in the past was recorded in various gazetteers, and the village scenery served as poetic inspiration.<sup>23</sup> The *shihu* of piled

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<sup>20</sup> For the alteration of the colonial districts in this area, see: *Draft for the Xinzhu Xian gazetteer* (Zheng & Zeng 1897); *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897:12-32); *Tongxiao Gazetteer* (Qiu 2001: 163-171, 186-188); Chang Hsun 1989:155-158; You 1996: 35-37.

<sup>21</sup> See *Tongxiao Gazetteer* (Qiu 2001: 40, 172-185); You 1996: 37-38.

<sup>22</sup> A village alliance or "*lian-zhuang*" is the amalgamation of several Jies (streets, urban townships) and Zhuangs (villages, rural townships). Brim's study (1974) of a village alliance temple demonstrated the religious function of this kind of organisation.

<sup>23</sup> *Danshui Ting Gazetteer* (Chen 1871: 331, 348); *Miaoli Xian Gazetteer* (Shen 1892: 102,128,253); *Yuanli*

stones was used on the beach to catch fish. A paragraph in the *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897:13) describes Baishatun fishing in the nineteenth century:

Some shihus have been erected on the beach at Baishadun, which is located on the northwestern side, 23 miles from Yuanli. The fish enter the shihu from the sea at high tide and remain there at low tide. Anyone can catch fish with it. All of the villagers here are engaged in fishing. Numerous fishing boats pass busily up and down on the sea during the windless season. ...The rich fishing crop brings in enough money for each household. Almost half of the sea fish consumed in central Taiwan is supplied by Baishadun, whose fishing is indeed a remarkable achievement (my translation).

The shihu has disappeared almost completely from Baishatun's beaches, except for one found in a nearby area.<sup>24</sup> Fishery was a major subsistence activity in this village up to the 1960s. Most residents over sixty have experienced the hardship of fishing in the old days. To my surprise, many fishermen could not swim. A 79-year old male resident gave an account of his experience:

"Most of us couldn't swim, neither could I. ... I started fishing at sea at the age of 15. In the beginning, I always got seasick standing on the raft. But there was no other choice; I had to earn my living at sea. I just tried again and again to get used to it, and then overcame it after much practice. ... You know, we always took the bamboo raft for fishing. It is a traditional fishing raft without mechanised power. We used oars to row the raft out to sea and had to pull the whole raft back to the beach. We did all of these tasks with our own hands; it was really very, very hard. ... In those days, you could catch as many fish as you liked. Who knows why – so many fish in the sea! Sometimes, it was really horrible. I was once at sea for nine whole days, and with nets full of fish! You just can't believe how many fish we were able to catch in the past" (Li-xiang)<sup>25</sup>!

While men went fishing, the women helped to arrange things or cooked at home. There was also fish breeding, especially small mullet; ground dragnet fishing was carried out on the beach.<sup>26</sup> The latter required a large fishing net and a boat, with more than thirty people pulling the nets onto the beach at low tide. Both activities were usually carried out by men and women. The catch was sold to dealers who came to the village to buy fish. However, fishery has declined rapidly since the early 1970s, Not only as a result of pollution from several nearby

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*Gazetteer* (Cai 1897: 13, 98, 112).

<sup>24</sup> The Shanbian hamlet belonging to the northern village of the Baishatun Mazu cult still has a shihu. It is shared by 20 households. I was informed that this remaining shihu was difficult to maintain, as many of the young leave home and older people were unable to continue the routine of cleaning and repairing it. There is talk of the owners abandoning it due to lack of labour and extremely limited fish yields.

<sup>25</sup> Pseudonyms are applied to all of my interviewees shown in this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Fish breeding was called *kanhizai*; ground dragnet fishing on the shore was known as *kango*. For anthropological ethnographies of fishing villages, see also Wang's (1967) study of Kwei Shan in east Taiwan and Diamond's (1969) study on Kun Shen in southern Taiwan.

factories, but also the widespread use of hook fishing nets that led to a decrease in the fish crop. Nowadays, no one in the village can live from fishing alone, although some young people still go fishing in their leisure time. Nevertheless, shellfish such as oysters, mussels, clams, shrimps and crabs continue to be gathered on the beach at low tide. This popular activity usually has no economic significance, whereas oysters occasionally sell quite well.

The decline in fishing changed the beach scenery in Baishatun. People told me that mangroves used to adorn the white sand beach in the past. In 1973, the mangroves gave way to the high protection wall now standing on Baishatun beach. To convert Baishatun into a leisure area, the local government built a ramp on the beach in 1985 as a parking bay for new-styled rubber rafts. The plan to rebuild the port and develop leisure activities to attract tourists has existed since 1997. About 318 fishing licences were granted to residents up to 1998; 60 mechanised rafts were registered in 1999 (Qiu 2001: 314, 415-416). Today fishing has been transformed from a subsistence activity to an activity associated with leisure.

Subsistence farming depends to a great extent on the water irrigation system. Local farmers usually plant rice and various types of vegetable or fruit that form the basis of or supplement their everyday meals.<sup>27</sup> Rice and vegetables are not market oriented crops, whereas watermelons and peanuts are widely known to have great market value. Many people here are very proud of their history of planting sweet watermelons, as Baishatun occupied most of the watermelon market in Taipei. Peanuts were sold to Beigang to make peanut oil in the past; now marketing depends very much on the assistance of the local Farmers Association. Lack of labour has led to a sharp decline in the planting of both crops. Many farmers here are in fact older people who keep up farming as a hobby.

Following Taiwan's industrialisation trend in the late 1960s, six private factories were built here in the coastal area, providing residents with a source of employment. One factory for plastic Venetian blinds employed more than a thousand workers from the 1970s to the 1980s, and set up a section of the factory in Baishatun. Meanwhile, many households were engaged in assemblage work for factories that produced various commodities. The income gained from the family assemblage industry was much higher than that of fishing or farming. When investment abroad was allowed in the late 1980s, these local factories were closed and moved to China or other Southeast Asian countries, thus bringing the golden age of home industry to a close.

Today many households have to combine several economic activities to improve their incomes. Although both farming and seafood gathering remain, most village income depends on small

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<sup>27</sup> The land in Baishatun used to be very dry, so that crops were highly dependent on rainwater. Crops in the past were peanuts and sweet potatoes, see *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897:31, 119).

businesses and employment outside the village. The transformation of economic activity also forced many people to move to other cities or towns to do business or find better jobs.

The rapid change in the economic conditions of the village is reflected in the experience of a male resident in his seventies:

“Our life was terribly difficult in the past. We *torhailang* [fishermen] had to work hard at sea. ... We earned our living solely from *torhai* [fishing]. Although it is dangerous and some never return, we have no choice. It is our fate. ... I tried everything to earn a living for my family. Apart from *torhai*, I also worked at *kanhizai* [fish breeding] and *kango* [ground dragnet fishing], planted mushrooms, and worked for others in the nearby farms and hills. I always had a lot of work to do, and rarely had time to sit down for a chat. Although I worked hard, I still couldn't earn enough money to support my family. Actually, it was very difficult to find a job at that time. ... Everyone was engaged in *gagang* [the home assemblage industry] if at all possible. My family and I did it too and were really able to earn enough money. Oh! It was a great time for us. Only then did our life improve. ... But the world changes so quickly. Today almost all the nearby factories are closed down. All my sons work outside the village; only one is still at home. ... Young people today cannot imagine how hard it was in the past” (Yi-xiong).

### 3.1.4 Social organisations

The pioneers were mostly from the *Chen* and *Wang* clans, whose descendants currently form the majority of the village population.<sup>28</sup> These two large clans, however, did not form functional lineage organisations. Due to family divisions and emigration, people were rarely able to maintain their communal ancestral halls for family worship. Kin relationships do not appear to have played an important role for other extended social groups. A four-clan alliance to organise the annual communal *pudu* ritual of the ghost month festival (cf. 3.2.1.3) did exist, but vanished in the late colonial period.<sup>29</sup> In fact, most villagers in the past were illiterate and seldom kept a record of their family history (e.g., genealogy). Yet, the reconstruction of genealogical relationships has become a common concern for the current residents of Baishatun.<sup>30</sup>

According to government policy, the Baishatun Community Development Committee (BCDC) was established in 1968. This organisation regards all residents as natural members. Periodically, a supervisor from the Town Hall comes to their meeting to propagate local development policies. The BCDC is thus regarded by residents as a local political sector

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<sup>28</sup> See Qiu 2001:125, 127. The pioneers also included people from the Lo clan, cf. Chang 1989, You 1996.

<sup>29</sup> The four clans included the surnames of Wang, Chen, Huang and Lo. See You 1996: 43-45.

<sup>30</sup> I collected several genealogies from people with the surnames of Wang, Chen and Lo. These written genealogies are compiled by residents endeavouring to record the kin relations they know of. Villagers with the surname Chen are not all from the same lineage; but originate from different areas of Quanzhou or Zhangzhou. Descendants from the Lo clan seem to be related to the Lo lineage in Guogang hamlet, which is located in the north of Baishatun.

conducted by the village head (*lizhang*), who is elected directly by the villagers. The village head is the local political representative and a powerful figure, as he not only assists the implementation of government policies, but also exerts considerable influence on local religious affairs.<sup>31</sup> However, apart from building a kindergarten in 1977 and offering several educational courses for villagers, this organisation does not appear to have been successful in local development. In accordance with the two administrative districts, it was divided into two voluntary associations in 1991. Both village heads still play a significant role, since the activities of both associations are a measure of their political achievement. Activities range from leisure programmes for the elderly to village courses in cooking, dancing, hand-weaving, classical musical instruments, and Confucian literature.

The Baixi Community Development Association (BXCDA) in particular has been engaged in the project of improving the local environment over the past ten years. With government funding, the association has been involved in the local place-making project since 2002 (cf. 7.3.1.1).

Other voluntary associations, such as two traditional music groups and a female Buddhist chanting group, are organised by the residents themselves. All of them serve as Mazu temple ritual activities, whereby members of the various groups regard their unpaid performance for the goddess as an honour and obligation. Occasionally, people from the music groups are employed by other temples to perform during the festivities.

### **3.2 The ritual landscape of communal worship in Baishatun**

A range of religious activities constitutes the rhythm of life in the village, where inhabitants are very conscious of the different temple festival dates. Most of these religious celebrations are based on communal worship of various scales. In the territorial cult, the supernatural patron is conceived as having jurisdiction over a spatial domain, and only residents within this domain share the right and obligation to worship. People can also associate voluntarily to worship the same god, where members of the group share the responsibility. These are the basic principles of organising communal worship. My concern here is to give an account of ritual congregations in terms of communal worship in Baishatun. Thus, several shrines defined by residents as “private shrines” cannot be taken into account in my discussion, as they have no believers in the village outside the founder households.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Joanna Pennarz’s study (1992) of a village in southwest Taiwan (Xiluo of Yunlin County) has shown that *lizhang* plays an important role in the competition for local development in the rural areas.

<sup>32</sup> “Private shrine” is a relative definition at present, and could develop into public shrine if it gained enough

Before describing the ritual landscape in Baishatun, I will briefly introduce the general background to Taiwanese folk religion, including the spiritual categories, the domestic altar for daily worship, and different ways of organising communal worship.

Jordan (1972: 27) claims that popular Taiwanese folk religion has its specialists as well as its corpus of beliefs and practices. The Taiwanese pantheon has been classified into three categories, namely gods, ghosts and ancestors (Jordan 1972, Ahern 1973, Feuchtwang 1974). Wolf (1974:131) suggests that each of these categories mirrors “the social landscape of its adherents” in Chinese peasant life. The attitude of the believers towards the three supernatural categories reflects their relationship with three central categories of people in their lives: officials, strangers and kin. All of these can be found in the village. In accordance with the general celestial hierarchy<sup>33</sup> in folk religion, the Mazu temple has developed into the religious centre of the village, surrounded by several neighbourhood temples and shrines dedicated to different deities. Two ghost shrines located near the beach are dedicated to the unknown dead that come from the sea. This is the common arrangement made to propitiate the threatening wandering ghost that died a violent death or lacked descendants to worship it.

Meanwhile, each household has its own altar for daily family worship. The domestic altar usually includes a religious painting with several common patron gods, a tablet of family ancestors, and sometimes additional josses of various deities, such as Mazu or other plague gods. The religious painting on the domestic altar<sup>34</sup> expresses the celestial hierarchy, in which the Buddhist goddess of Mercy (*Guanyin*) occupies the highest position, Mazu the middle position, with the Place God (*Tudigong*) as the lowest on the right hand side and the stove god (*Zaojun*) to its left. The ancestry tablet, on which the name and dates of birth/death of each deceased family member are written, is placed to the right of the religious picture. The additional deity image is usually put in front of the religious painting.

In fact, the domestic altar and the concomitant worship clearly denotes the Chinese *yin/yang* relationship. Unlike Wolf’s model, which focused on the cosmological reflection of society, Sangren (1987:132-40) takes these supernatural categories as symbolic mediators between order (*yang*) and disorder (*yin*)<sup>35</sup> in different cultural contexts. The arrangement of the family

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supporters (cf. Suenari 1986:33-4).

<sup>33</sup> The celestial hierarchy of Taiwanese folk religion does not appear to be a stable or fixed ranking system, although it frequently corresponds to the celestial hierarchy of the Taoist divine genealogy. As Baity (1977) shows, the ranking of gods (or temples) in Taiwanese folk religion depends to a large extent on the efficacious power of these deities. The process of ranking always involves competition between different territorial cults, and, backed by principles, is quite dynamic.

<sup>34</sup> Jordan’s (1972) research on Taiwanese folk religion in the village gives a detailed description of the family altar and ancestor worship (pp.93-102).

<sup>35</sup> According to the Chinese cosmological concept, *yang* and *yin* are binary signifiers that refer to opposite and complementary categories. The symbolic meaning of yang/yin varies according to the cultural contexts applied,

altar adheres to the Chinese concept of a cosmological order in terms of yin/yang relations, where the celestial deities of the yang world on the left side of the altar are higher than the ancestors of the yin world on the right hand side. Furthermore, the family altar usually faces south and worshippers make offerings to the gods facing north, which explains why the north (altar) is higher in relation to the south (worshippers). While worshippers face south to worship spirit soldiers inside the house door, they face south and provide offerings for ghosts outside the house door. This makes clear the relative yin character of the spirit soldier in comparison with the yang status of the deity, but the yang of the former should be seen in contrast to the yin status of the ghosts. As Sangren (ibid: 132-186) has shown, the relativity of the yin/yang contrast can be applied to different contexts, whereby yang (order) encompassing yin (disorder) is the rule of the order.

The Chinese term “*baibai*” refers to both religious worship and religious festivals. The *baibai* of Baishatun means, on the one hand, daily worship at the domestic altar and the individual praying or asking for a deity’s help at the temple, and, on the other hand, communal festival worship whereby each household brings offerings to the temple and prays for good fortune. At worship, people burn incense (joss-stick) and prepare different sorts of paper spirit money and offerings according to the category of spirits (Feuchtwang 1974a, Wolf 1974).

The traditional ritual office system for communal religious activities has been maintained. It focuses on the selection of a “*luzhu*” (“ritual officeholder”)<sup>36</sup> and several “*toujia*” (“ritual headmen”). Since *luzhu* and *toujia* are annually selected by casting divination blocks<sup>37</sup> to ask for divine decision, they are regarded as representatives chosen by the deity for the communal ritual. Household heads are eligible for selection if no one in the household has died that year (and are thus defined as clean), and the household owns a share in the territorial cult or religious associations. By and large, taking up the position of *luzhu* is a great honour and pleasure, not only because the opportunities to do so are extremely limited, but also because many Taiwanese believe that the *luzhu* and his family will be bestowed with divine protection and good fortune. An associated ritual officeholder (*fu luzhu*) is also selected. The number of ritual headmen depends on requirements that vary with the scale of the different religious

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for instance, yang: yin:: god: ghost:: bright: dark:: male: female:: positive: negative etc. However, they are not mutually exclusive, since the balance of the yin/yang relationship is based on a dynamic process of mutual adjustment. See Sangren (1987).

<sup>36</sup> *Luzhu* is also translated into English as censor master.

<sup>37</sup> The divination blocks are small crescent-shaped pieces of wood with a flat and a convex surface. In communicating with gods or spirits, two of the blocks are cast to the ground for divination. There are three possible answers to the question asked of the god. The deity’s response is positive when the flat surface of one block and the convex surface of the other face the ground. Two flat surfaces indicate a negative answer. When the convex surfaces of both blocks face downwards, the deity regards the question as either ridiculous or inappropriate, and the supplicant must revise his question and try again. See also Sangren 1987: 55; Jordan 1972: 61-64.

organisations.

Apart from this traditional ritual office system, a Temple Administrative Committee (TAC, *smiao guanli weiyuanhui*) is organised in each temple on a legal basis, the outcome of government policy on temple registration and administration since the 1970s. Both the traditional ritual office system and the TAC organisation currently coexist in various religious congregations in Baishatun.

### **3.2.1 The territorial cults in Baishatun**

#### *3.2.1.1 Place God shrines*

The territorial shrine dedicated to the Place God (*Tudigong*) symbolises a specific domain in a neighbourhood or village. Sangren's (1987) research in Ta-chi in northern Taiwan shows that the ritual domain for a place god is usually a village in the rural areas, or one or more neighbourhoods in a town. As Wolf (1974:134) points out, the place god should be understood as a deity of the "site" or "locality".<sup>38</sup> In folk belief the place god is a territorial deity with the dual function of policing the ghosts and of regularly reporting to his superiors on the human affairs under his charge. This deity plays the role of a local patron in the lower rank of the celestial hierarchy, but at the same time maintains a very close relationship with his believers in ordinary life. Whenever a place god shrine is built for communal worship, the households that share the shrine mark out its ritual territory. However, there are two communal shrines dedicated to the place god in Baishatun:<sup>39</sup> the older one located in Baidong Li beside the railway has been reconstructed many times since it was first built in 1809; the other is situated in the coastal area of Baixi Li near one of the ghost shrines. The reason for creating a second place god shrine most probably relates to growth in the village population. Both shrines are built in a gaudy temple style but on a small scale, and correspond to the common form of enshrining this deity in Taiwan.

The birthday celebration of the place god takes place on the second day of the second lunar month. A *luzhu* is selected to organise a small celebration; his chief task is to hire a performing troupe for the deity's birthday festival. On the festive day itself, households under his jurisdiction bring offerings of paper spirit money to the shrine. Meanwhile, household worship to celebrate the deity's birthday is performed in front of every domestic altar.

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<sup>38</sup> For the myth and symbol of the place god in Taiwanese folk religion, see Schipper's research on neighbourhood cult associations (1977:660-664).

<sup>39</sup> There is a smaller private *Tudigong* shrine belonging to several households with the surname Chen at *Tauzinggau* in Baixi li. It is said that the deity requested a shrine through the dream of one of their members. In fact, private shrines for the place god are sometimes seen on private farm lands, usually for a particular reason and without the obligation of communal worship.

### 3.2.1.2 *Worship of the Gods of Three Worlds and the pinganxi festival*

Another common territorial cult at village level is the worship dedicated to Gods of Three Worlds (called *Sanjiegong*): God of Heaven, God of Earth and God of Water. According to folk belief, these three gods are brothers, each of whom controls one of the three worlds of the cosmos: heaven, earth and water. They play a vital role in keeping a yin/yang balance in the cosmological order that directly connects to the human world of the living. Because they occupy a higher status in the celestial hierarchy, such as the Emperor of Heaven, they are usually worshipped with one representative censer and no images.

The history of worshipping the *Sanjiegong*'s censer at Baishatun is hitherto unknown, but its cult territory has for a long time encompassed the whole village, i.e., Baidong Li and Baixi Li. Once a year a *luzhu* and twelve *toujias* are selected to hold this territorial cult. The *luzhu* has the right to worship the deities' censer at his domestic altar during his one-year period of office. His responsibilities include daily worship (burning incense every morning and evening), performance of the ritual to celebrate the birthdays of each of the three deities,<sup>40</sup> and the collection of *dingkou* money (the household membership fee)<sup>41</sup> to organize the annual festival for the whole village. He is assisted by twelve annually selected ritual headmen.

The annual festival includes a Taiwanese opera or a hand-puppet performance, which is known as "*pinganxi*" ("opera performance to celebrate peace and prosperity"). The purpose of the *pinganxi* festival is to give thanks for protection of the gods throughout the entire year. The festival usually falls in the tenth lunar month.<sup>42</sup> How much is spent on the festival depends on the collection of resident household membership fees. Moreover, the end of *pinganxi* marks the final stage of fulfilment in the yearly communal territorial rituals: the household "*kaojun*" rites ("rite of appreciating spirit soldiers" cf. 4.2.1.2 & 4.2.6.2.) to give thanks for the protection of Mazu and spirit soldiers also draw to a close. In the past the *pinganxi* festival was held in rotation in the villages within the domain of this Mazu cult (cf. 4.3.3.1) for the sake of mutual participation and invitation. However, at the moment the festival does not seem to carry the same weight as the Mazu pilgrimage, and its rotation in several villages has now been abolished.

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<sup>40</sup> The birthday feasts of these three deities are known as *shangyuan*, *zhongyuan* and *xiayuan*, and occur on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first, seventh and tenth lunar months for the God of Heaven, Earth, and Water respectively.

<sup>41</sup> *Ding* is male and *kou* is female. *Dingkou* money means the household membership fee for taking part in communal ritual activities. Each fee depends on the number of male and female members in the household. The fee for men used to be different from that of women; but it is currently 100 NT dollars for each household.

<sup>42</sup> The date is decided annually by casting the divination blocks to ask for the approval of the gods.

### 3.2.1.3 *The patron goddess Mazu and her temple*

Apart from the territorial cult gods (such as the Place God and the City God), only gods with higher status in the celestial hierarchy can be worshipped as communal territorial patron gods of a village or town (Wolf 1974, Sangren 1987, Feuchtwang 1992). Mazu is regarded as the local patron goddess of this area. The temple dedicated to her is called *Gongtian Gong*. According to local gazetteers, this temple was first built in 1863,<sup>43</sup> when a sufficient number of Han immigrants had gathered in the village. Nonetheless, irrespective of scant evidence, inhabitants claim that the origin of worshipping the goddess's image and the pilgrimage activity must have been earlier than 1863.<sup>44</sup> Apart from worshipping the goddess Mazu in the main hall, side altars in the temple house several subsidiary deities, mostly the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy (*Guanyin*), the Golden Mother of the Jasper Pool,<sup>45</sup> and the tablet of Mazu's parents.

The traditional ritual office system of this Mazu cult has been maintained. All village household heads are eligible for selection as *luzhu* and *toujia*. These households are also responsible for supporting the ritual festivities held by this temple, such as paying household membership fees for the pilgrimage. While the traditional ritual office system includes only households in Baishatun, another temple organisation (TAC) has included residents from the northern and southern villages of this Mazu cult since its establishment in 1974. According to temple regulations, any Mazu believer over twenty years of age and resident in the cult domain can apply to be a permanent member of the temple by paying the membership fee.<sup>46</sup> One believer representative is selected from every ten permanent members of each *li*, forming the Believers' Representative Meeting, which is currently composed of 34 people who make decisions for the temple. The Temple Administrative Committee (TAC) is elected from among the believer representatives and includes five members for the Board of Supervisors, fifteen for the executive council, and one chairperson chosen from the latter.<sup>47</sup>

The major ritual activity of this temple is the annual Mazu pilgrimage. Devoid of records that might have shed some light on why the pilgrimage journey is made to Beigang, inhabitants insist that the pilgrimage is a local tradition passed down by their ancestors. In the living

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<sup>43</sup> See *Draft for the Xinzhu Xian Gazetteer* (Zhen & Zeng 1897:127), and *Yuanli Gazetteer* (Cai 1897: 22 and 63).

<sup>44</sup> See Lo Yong-chi 1993:1-2. Cai Sheng-de 1993:22-23.

<sup>45</sup> This goddess is also known as Eternal Mother. In Baishatun she is known as Jin-mu-niang-niang, cf. Sangren 1983.

<sup>46</sup> These members own the right to speak at temple meetings and to vote for the Believers' Representative or any temple plans. It is their duty to help promote temple development, implement temple plans and make donations for temple activities. The membership fee is 3000 NT Dollars (almost EUR 75).

<sup>47</sup> The election of this temple administrative committee is of great importance to villagers. The position of chairperson is in particular hotly contested, and the subject of competition between local factions, usually related to a political campaign. As in Pennarz's study (1992), the election of the temple committee corresponds as a rule to the political election of the village head (*lizhang*).

memory of people over eighty years of age, the pilgrimage tradition can be traced back at least three or four generations. As the largest local ritual activity, the pilgrimage continues to attract more and more believers from other places. Because of the goddess's reputation for protection, the fire and incense from this temple are distributed to several branch temples. In order to satisfy believer needs, the TAC provides divided images of Mazu, so that believers can worship temporarily or permanently at their domestic altars.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the annual pilgrimage, two types of communal ritual are held by the Mazu temple for the whole village. The first is the goddess's birthday festival on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the third lunar month, when residents bring offerings and pray to Mazu in the temple. The main festive activity is the performance of a Taiwanese opera dedicated to the goddess. It is called "*sanyuexi*" ("opera performance in the third month"), and celebrates the fulfilment of the pilgrimage. I was informed that the opera performance continued for more than a month in the past. Indeed, opera was the main form of peasant entertainment, whereas today it is received with little enthusiasm and generally has a very limited audience.<sup>49</sup>

The second communal ritual activity is the universal salvation festival known as *pudu*,<sup>50</sup> which takes place on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh lunar month. According to Taiwanese folk belief, the entire seventh lunar month is the ghost's month, during which the spirits of the yin world are allowed to roam the yang world. The significance of the *pudu* ritual is to provide food for hungry ghosts as a bribe against any malevolent damage they might inflict, thereby representing "an act of mercy toward yin spirits and an act of propitiation" (Sangren 1987:81-82). Adopting the meaning of salvation from Buddhism, the *pudu* ritual in folk religion usually consists of a performance of the Taoist ceremony. It is performed in two parts: the first is the household ritual performed by the residents in front of their family houses, and the second is the communal Taoist ceremony performed by professional priests in the Mazu temple. As I witnessed in 2001, the TAC of the Mazu temple hires Taoist priests on behalf of the whole village and provides all kinds of offerings for the one-day ceremony.<sup>51</sup> People told

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<sup>48</sup> It is believed that a Mazu image from the temple is more efficacious, and that worship of these images at home will bring good fortune to the worshippers. To obtain a Mazu image from the temple permanently, believers need to first ask Mazu's approval by casting divination blocks. When Mazu renders three consecutive positive responses, the askers might have an opportunity and should present a red envelope with some money as a gift to the temple. Meanwhile, the TAC offers twenty Mazu images for which believers can attain a year's permission to worship at their own domestic altars. This type of worship always involves rivalry among the believers. For the one-year permission, competitors cast divination blocks in the temple on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month.

<sup>49</sup> The present Taiwanese opera performance continues for 12 days after returning from the pilgrimage journey, and lasts for three days at the celebration of Mazu's birthday.

<sup>50</sup> See Weller 1987, Saso 1990:180-181, and Seiwert 1985:90-95.

<sup>51</sup> According to Seiwert (1985:91-95), the offerings made in this ritual were related to abundance and competition. Firstly, the ritual focused on making generous offerings for hungry ghosts, evident in the priest's performance of adding more food. Secondly, the ritual also entailed competing for offerings after the ceremony; it was claimed

me that the pudu ritual used to be a combination of the private household rite and the communal Taoist ceremony, in which Taoist priests performed the pudu ritual in the Mazu temple and separately in each neighbourhood. In the past the Taoist ceremony continued until midnight, whereas it has been confined since the 1980s to the temple only in order to save time. There are several individual rites believers can perform on their own in the temple. As is the case with other temples in Taiwan, believers come to the temple to pray whenever they need to. They ask for the goddess's direction by casting divination blocks or by random drawing of revelation verses (*chouqian*) at the temple. Apart from the practice of these two common rites, they can light a small lamp (*guangmingdeng*) at the temple with their name written on it to bring good luck. During a year of bad luck in accordance with the Chinese almanac, people can request one-year's protection from the Taisui god by putting their names on the wall of the side altar in the temple. They can also perform the *bugaiyun* rite to remedy their bad luck and improve their fortune. This rite begins by casting divination blocks to establish communication with the goddess and, according to the result, subsequently burning several kinds of paper spirit money. During the performance of this rite, believers usually take along clothes that represent members of their families, as well as a piece of paper on which their names and addresses are written. Traditionally, believers are supposed to donate some incense money to the temple to perform these individual rites.

Most of residents here can tell numerous stories about the efficacious power of their Mazu, or about their own experience of her protection. I constantly saw believers praying in the temple on ordinary quiet days outside of the festive period. Worshippers mostly visit the temple on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month, when Buddhist sutras are chanted in the early morning and traditional music is played in the evening. Residents of this cult area offer their services to the temple on a voluntary basis; for example, some donate incense money or give up their time to take care of temple offices, and yet others clean the temple every morning.

### ***3.2.2 Neighbourhood temples and voluntary religious associations***

Because of far greater economic restrictions in the past, most residents of this village could not afford to worship a deity image at their domestic altars. They used to associate voluntarily to hold communal worship dedicated to the same god. This kind of religious association is called *hui* (religious associations), the advantage of which is to share responsibilities and festive expenses with other households.<sup>52</sup> Japanese ethnographers have identified five different types

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that the winner would have good fortune in the following year. This competitive aspect of the ritual has now almost disappeared.

<sup>52</sup> Only the names of household heads are recorded as "members" of temples or religious associations, although

of religious associations in Taiwan. According to this classification, all religious associations found in the village were initially based on the principles of residence, common origin and common interest (cf. Schipper 1977: 653-654). However, current membership of these *huis* is based on voluntary participation, which is not necessarily confined to the above principles. Multiple affiliations are now also possible. Once the *hui* recruits more members, temples are built.<sup>53</sup> Residents refer to them as “neighbourhood temples” (“*gaktavior*”), since they occupy various sub-areas of the village. Meanwhile, the celestial status of the deities housed in these temples is lower than that of the goddess Mazu, so that these temples are regarded as temples of a secondary rank (under the Mazu temple) in the village, none of which can claim to act on behalf of the whole village.

With worship on a smaller scale than the pan-village territorial cults, the religious associations discussed below will include four neighbourhood temples and three shrines. While the goddess Mazu is devoid of the spirit medium (known in the vernacular as *danggi*)<sup>54</sup> as a result of her high celestial status, all voluntary religious associations possess their own shamans and séance rituals. Shamans usually have an intimate knowledge of village life and maintain close relationships with their clients.<sup>55</sup> The séance rituals are conducted by a spirit medium possessed as a rule by the deity to act on the god’s behalf or to perform spirit writing (known as *fujī*, wielding a divination instrument).<sup>56</sup> The séance ritual based on believer needs concentrates on asking the gods’ help to solve a multitude of problems, such as physical and mental illness, selecting a proper date or a correct direction, exorcising malign influences, and giving advice. The general attitude of the residents toward the deity is aptly described by the local saying, “*wu bai wu borbi*”, which means that if you worship the deity, you obtain the god’s protection. Worshipping deities and asking for the help of the gods is not regarded as superstition in the village. On the contrary, people worship in order to feel peace and harmony with the assistance of the gods,<sup>57</sup> or as a form of self-reflection.<sup>58</sup> Séance rituals held by

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participation in worship is not restricted to them alone.

<sup>53</sup> Not all temples are based on communal worship. Several are defined as private shrines in this area.

<sup>54</sup> *Danggi* is also written as *tang-ki*, which refers to the spirit medium possessed by the deity in folk religion (Gallin 1966: 241-46, 256-269; Jordan 1972:67-86; Ahern 1973; Kagan and Wasescha 1982). Gallin (1966:241) distinguishes between three kinds of ritual specialists in Taiwan: “*tao shih*” (Taoist priests), “*fa shih*”(shaman) and “*t’iao t’ung*” (spirit medium). Most of Baishatun’s ritual specialists are classified as spirit mediums, also known as *t’iao t’ung*.

<sup>55</sup> *Danggi* plays an important role in peasant life as a whole. See Gallin 1966, Jordan 1972.

<sup>56</sup> The performance of spirit writing to gain divine revelation has a long history in China, and is widely carried out today by religious sectarian groups. See David Jordan and Daniel Overmyer 1986, Seaman 1974, Xu 1966.

<sup>57</sup> Some of the older people told me that they took divine charms with them when they went for an operation or some other medical procedure in hospital. I observed in séance rituals or healing rites in the village how believers were told to take such-and-such a Chinese herbal medicine when they went to see the doctor. Ritual healing obviously has a significant function as psychological comfort.

<sup>58</sup> The following remarks made by a middle-aged primary school teacher are typical of the new interpretation of

religious associations thus provide a religious function that the Mazu temple cannot afford. These neighbourhood temples include the “plague god” category of deity, which can be defined as a celestial position that includes distinctive male deities widely worshipped in Taiwan. The general Taiwanese term for the plague god is “*Ongya*” (“Lord King”, “*Wangye*” in Mandarin), but the names or titles can vary according to local legends. There are approximately 132 plague gods, whose surnames when they were alive have been identified. Generally, several plague gods are enshrined together. Most legends describe their collective death as humans while attempting to save the lives of others, and how they were worshipped collectively after death because of their efficacious power to help people. The original ghost-like status attributed to the plague gods as a result of their violent death was converted into deity status, permitting them to be worshipped as protective plague gods. Spiritual ascendancy is not unusual in Taiwanese folk belief (Harrel 1974). In addition to the diversity of the legends, the ritual liturgy of worship dedicated to the plague gods is itself diverse (Jordan 1976; Katz 1987, 1990; Lee 1993; Liu 1983; Cai 1989; Huang 1988, 1989).<sup>59</sup>

The worship of plague gods in this village relates to the *Fumei Gong* Temple in *Quanzhou* of Fujian in southern China. This temple is mainly dedicated to an imperial officer, with 24 plague gods as his significant subsidiary deities (QZFMG 1991:24-29). This system of plague god belief seems to relate to the Chinese belief in Epidemic Kings. Whether plague gods were transformed Epidemic Kings is still debated today (cf. no. 52). However, the plague gods with different naming systems are mostly portrayed as representatives of the highest Emperor of Heaven, so that their temples are usually entitled “Inspection Tour on Behalf of Heaven” (*dai tian xu shou*). This depiction of celestial hierarchical relations is similar to relations between the imperial emperor and his subordinate officers of this world, where the Chinese emperor usually sent his special representatives on inspection and to deal with the problems of the

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religious worship:

Many people here believe in gods. ... When I feel very annoyed or confronted with difficulties, I go to the Mazu temple to worship. It is always quiet at ordinary times. I speak to Mazu in my mind or just look at her, since she is the best listener. I ask Mazu to give me confidence to overcome the things that annoy me. It is not necessary to say *xuyuan* (to make a vow asking for the deity’s help), it is more like meditation. In other words, by going to the Mazu temple we just reflect on ourselves (Mu-bai ).

<sup>59</sup> Liu (1983) and Huang (1988, 1989) regard the worship of *Ongya* as having been transformed from the worship of Epidemic Kings (*Wenwang* or *Wenshen*). It is said that these Epidemic Kings are representatives of the Emperor of Heaven, ordered to descend to the human world to spread epidemics. This is understood as the punishment from the highest Emperor of Heaven for the bad behaviour and immorality of human beings. People worship *Ongya* for protection against epidemics. Katz (1990) suggests that *Ongya* and the Epidemic Kings are two different deities. From analysing the festive rituals of a *Donggang* temple, he claims that *Ongya* worship is in fact a kind of demon worship, as the spirit of *Ongya* is the ghost from an unnatural death transferred to the deity. However, Lee’s (1993) research on the same cult refutes Katz’s argument. He regards *Ongya* as a clear and specific category of deity that cannot be seen as demon. Cai’s research (1989) shows that worship of *Ongya* was in fact transformed from the worship of Zheng Chenggong, a patriot of the late Ming Dynasty.

people. Similarly, one plague god feature is literally to “enact rightness for Heaven” (*ti tian xing dao*) by punishing the bad and protecting the good. This general attribute of the plague gods is still prevalent in Baishatun, albeit people seldom know the legends and stories about their deities. Nevertheless, enshrinement of plague gods depends on the deities’ magical power to protect, which believers can support with numerous stories.

Another feature of plague gods relates to the practice of ritual exorcism. Several plague gods are delegated for the ritual each time, and a King’s Boat containing all and sundry is built to send them off. Ritual exorcism culminates in sending the King’s Boat with the plague gods and their prisoners out to sea. It symbolises exorcising an epidemic, and it is said that wherever the King’s Boat arrives, the populace must perform exorcism rites to ward off ill. According to Japanese records (TWGX1903/1987 3(9): 142-148, 3(10): 200-201), a King’s Boat from the Fumei Gong Temple of Quanzhou arrived at the *Waipu* beach in Houlong in 1903. Two more King’s Boats from southern China came to the beach of Miaoli area in 1897 and 1873. Based on these records, plague gods enshrined in Baishatun were said to have originated from the King’s Boat that arrived in 1903. Moreover, the ritual of sending the King’s Boat out to sea was changed to burning it on the beach in southern Taiwan. However, this ritual was not performed in this area. Instead, residents of the Miaoli area have transformed the meaning of the arrival of the King’s Boat and its potential to inflict damage to symbolise the arrival of protective gods (ibid 3(10): 201). This is the chief reason why the plague gods are enshrined in Baishatun.

### 3.2.2.1 *Wulong Gong temple*

The shrine dedicated to the plague gods is part of the long history of the village. Despite the lack of historical records, some believers insist that the founding of this temple was contemporaneous with or even predated that of the Mazu temple in the nineteenth century. Although there is no evidence to indicate its origins in the arrival of the King’s Boat from southern China, many believers have stuck to this version. Coincidentally, the annual temple festival is held on the date assumed to be that of the arrival of the King’s Boat at *Waipu* in 1903 (see above). The temple houses seven plague gods called *Ciensue* (another term for plague god), and each god has a unique surname.<sup>60</sup> According to the temple’s committee members, the origin of these plague gods is related to the legend of 360 prominent males who died collectively and then became plague gods. The main god, *Lin Ciensue*, is said to be a child-god aged seven in possession of efficacious powers. The birthday celebration<sup>61</sup> for this child-god is

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<sup>60</sup> Their surnames are *Lin, Wen, Xue, Su, Li, Zhu, and Chi*.

<sup>61</sup> *Lin Ciensue*’s birthday is on the third day of the tenth lunar month.

viewed as less important than the temple festival, which incorporates the birthday celebration for two gods housed in the temple.<sup>62</sup>

This temple was popular with many believers in the past due to its highly reputed séance ritual conducted by a shaman. This long deceased shaman was said to be very helpful in solving villagers' problems. Today, however, the temple has the least parishioners compared with other neighbourhood temples. This is probably related to a decline in its séance ritual, which was not performed during my stay in the village. I was told that the position of shaman had been empty for some time, and that although chosen, the future candidate was still in training. Meanwhile, I was informed that according to Chinese geomancy (*fengshui*, a system of cosmological relations), the temple's *qi* (vapour, energy, or deity's efficacious power) had been severely impaired since 1920 when the railway was built on its old site. Damage to the temple's *fengshui* is said to be another reason why believers have abandoned worship there.

While the traditional ritual office system is maintained to hold the temple's festivals, the renaissance of this temple depends on the efforts of the temple's committee (TAC). The present chairperson of the TAC, who is a descendant of the former temple keeper, was particularly chosen for the position by casting the divination blocks to ask the gods' approval rather than by election. I was told that he rejected the position with great vehemence in the beginning. However, convinced that the plague gods had protected him for years from the threat of cancer, he was forced to accept the position in the end.

### 3.2.2.2 *Tiande Gong Temple*

Unlike other village plague gods, the five enshrined in this temple are not related to the legend of the King's Boat. Believers name their plague gods *Ong* (Lord King), with their surnames and sibling orders based on sworn brotherhood. For example, the oldest plague god is called *So dua ong* (The First King Su).<sup>63</sup>

It is claimed that the history of plague god worship in Baishatun goes back more than 140 years,<sup>64</sup> reckoned from the time when the deities were first enshrined at the domestic altar of the first shaman. When believers tell the story about the initiation of the shrine, the deceased

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<sup>62</sup> The first day (18/06) of the festival was chosen to coincide with the birthday of the Lord King *Chi*; the second day is also the birthday of a female subsidiary deity (*Lin Furen*), who is said to be the older sister of the main god.

<sup>63</sup> The five plague gods are called in Minnanese *So-duaong* (the oldest King So), *Ku-riiong* (the second King Ku), *Liong-samong* (the third King *Liong*), *Zin-siong* (the fourth King *Zin*), and *Cua-quoong* (the fifth King *Cua*). Inhabitants also call the temple "*qo-hu*", which refers to the five plague gods.

<sup>64</sup> When I discussed the history of this temple with the believers, they claimed that their *Soduaong* was a historical figure that existed more than two thousands years ago. I was informed that this story came from their spirit medium possessed by the plague god in a séance ritual. However, when they asked their gods about the history again in another séance ritual, they obtained no response.

founders can be identified quite clearly. The shrine's first *danggi* (shaman) came from the clan of Chen. He once picked out a block of wood from the sea but was unable to burn it despite numerous attempts. He then dreamed of plague gods asking him to enshrine them. I was informed that under divine instruction he carved josses and enshrined them in his own domestic altar. He was then ordained as a shaman and conducted the séance ritual by holding the "small divination chair" ("*ciugiau-a*", a ritual object) to perform spirit writing, asking for direction from the gods.

This shrine with its highly reputed séance ritual gradually associated many parishioners and resulted in the construction of the temple. Following the migration of believers to Taipei in the 1960s, the divided shrine dedicated to the plague gods was first set up at Gongguan in 1971, and was moved to Xinzhuang in 1999. Meanwhile, the shrine's shaman also came to Taipei periodically to conduct the séance ritual. The reputation of their gods' efficacious power was such that believers in Taipei suggested building a temple in Baishatun. The temple was erected under instruction by the gods via the shaman speaking in a trance. The first temple building, which had a large front square and a pond, was completed in 1970. It was extended in 1982, and subsidiary deities such as the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy were added. The temple building was still under construction during my fieldwork in 2001.

The temple's renowned shaman tradition even attracted believers from outside the village.<sup>65</sup> The present shaman is the fifth successor to this position. The temple shamans are all said to have been chosen by the deities, with the gods directly possessing their bodies and putting them in a trance. The shamans then speak and act similar to the deities. I witnessed séance rituals in this temple, where the shaman, who was in a trance, spoke rapidly in an unknown language, drawing something red on the paper spirit money with his brush pen. After this ritual dealing, the paper spirit money was then used as an efficacious charm for the supplicant. The shaman's assistant, known as *dorhtau*, translated the shaman's words for the believers while the deity possessed the shaman. The séance ritual conducted by the shaman takes place in the temples of Baishatun and Taipei three times a week. Some committee members are worried about the fact that there is still no candidate on the horizon as his future successor. I was told that requirements for the position of shaman are very strict, which makes the selection difficult. Alcoholics, gamblers and the sexually immoral are excluded from the list of potential candidates.

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<sup>65</sup> One shaman surnamed *Hung* is widely known in this area. He died in 1997, having served as a spirit medium for more than 60 years. Many important decisions on constructing this temple and stories of the efficacious power of the gods date from when he served as its spirit medium.

### 3.2.2.3 *Wuyun Gong temple*

The founding history of the plague gods' shrine relates to the arrival of the King's Boat in Waipu in 1903. According to the temple record (You 1994), a villager called *Chen Lian* and six other founder members brought back an incense censer and a pair of divination blocks from the King's Boat. Chen Lian then had a divine revelation telling him that this censer belonged to the seven plague gods. Households began to worship this censer collectively, and icons of the plague gods were also housed at Chen Lian's domestic altar.

Apart from the seven plague gods, known as "*Daisun*" ("Great Representatives of Heaven"),<sup>66</sup> over twenty deities are housed in the temple at present. It is said that the enshrinement of so many deities follows the instruction of the gods transmitted in séance rituals. The temple was built in 1965, when economic circumstances had improved to a great extent. With the increase in believers, the temple building was extended to include a large front square in 1976. One branch shrine was built by emigrant believers in Tucheng of Taipei in 1986.

The shaman tradition of this temple is renowned. The first shaman, Chen Lian, performed spirit writing by holding the small divination chair with another person. The present 42-year old shaman is the fifth in the temple's shaman genealogy. He works as a carpenter during the daytime and conducts séance rituals in both Baishatun and Taipei once a week in the evenings. He conducts two different types of séance rituals. The first resembles that of the Tiande Gong temple shaman, who transmits divine instruction in a trance while possessed by a god. This kind of divine revelation occurs frequently when it concerns instructions pertaining to temple decisions or ritual activities. The other method of conducting the séance ritual is to carry the "divination chair" ("*lengiau-a*", larger than *ciugiau-a*) with three other people. In this case, the god apparently descends to the divination chair to respond to believer requests.<sup>67</sup> The rite begins when four carriers, including the shaman, carry the divination chair to a divination table and wait for the coming of the god. The moment the carriers endeavour to move and hold the divination chair is said to be a sign of the deity's descent, the explanation being that the deity comes to the divination chair and makes it move so that the carriers have to hold it tight or follow its movements. When a believer's question is asked, the carriers make the divination chair knock on the divination table, where points or lines are drawn. Similar to the Chinese characters left in the *fujū* rite, they are said to represent the deity's instructions.<sup>68</sup> Only the

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<sup>66</sup> The surname of these seven plague gods are: *Zhang, Han, Di, Lei, Xing, Jin, Chi*.

<sup>67</sup> This séance ritual is known in the vernacular as *bandaizi*, which means that the deity descends into this world to solve the problems of human beings.

<sup>68</sup> According to Huang (1997: 198), the shaman is the main actor in moving the divination chair when he is possessed by a deity, while other carriers merely follow his movements during the séance ritual. Meanwhile, shaman's assistant (*dorhtau*) plays a crucial role in interpreting and translating these signs to believers. However,

shaman is in a position to understand and translate the meaning to participants. If need be, paper spirit money is transmuted into charms, or used to write down the deity's instruction for making herbal medicine for questioners. In the temple I observed that newcomers often consulted the experienced about the application of charms, how to make requests or pose questions, or how to follow the god's instructions.

This temple is in constant competition with the Tiande Gong temple for reputation. Despite being a neighbourhood temple, its TAC staged the first plague festival, including a tremendous five-day Taoist *jiao* ritual (rite of cosmic renewal) to celebrate its ninetieth anniversary in 1992 (You 1994).<sup>69</sup> The Taoist *jiao* ritual (Saso 1972, Liu 1983), normally performed by professional Taoist priests, is supposed to be organised by a temple of high rank encompassing a large ritual territory, such as a town. The spectacular plague festival with a series of rites that symbolise the building and burning of the King's Boat involves almost five months of preparation. Its ritual scale covers the entire domain of the Baishatun Mazu cult. In fact, this kind of plague festival usually takes place in southern Taiwan and not in this area at all (TWGX 1987 3(10): 201). Nonetheless, this temple successfully organised the festival, thereby greatly increasing its reputation (see also Qiu 2001: 571-575).

The number of household members registered in the temple reached 137 in 1992, with 75 at the branch temple in Taipei. However, some believers have withdrawn their membership from both the mother and the branch temple since 1999 due to the scandal concerning the sexual immorality of the previous shaman that caused one death in Baishatun. The religious skills of this particular shaman, as witnessed in the plague festival, were renowned in the area.<sup>70</sup> He was dismissed by the temple's TAC after the scandal broke; this led to tension between his supporters and those of the temple.

#### 3.2.2.4 The Donglong Gong Temple

This temple is principally dedicated to *Guandi* ("Lord Guan", God of War), a historical figure known as *Guan yu* (160-219 AD) during the period of the Chinese Three Kingdoms (220-280 AD). His allegiance and righteousness were widely celebrated in Chinese Confucian culture, since he had protected his King's family from being killed by their enemies, and was himself subsequently killed fighting for the kingdom. He was also bestowed with several official titles

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because the temple lacks an adequate helper, the shaman simultaneously plays the role of shaman and translator in the séance ritual. This dual roles, however, gives him the appearance of not being possessed by deities in the ritual.

<sup>69</sup> One three-day Taoist *jiao* ritual took place to celebrate the temple's hundredth anniversary in 2002.

<sup>70</sup> The Taiwanese plague festival usually includes a large Taoist *Jiao* ritual performed by Taoist priests, and various rites performed by shamans (*danggi* and *huatsu*). The rites performed by *danggi* and *huatsu* can vary (Katz 1990).

from various Chinese emperors after his death. On the basis of this background, he developed into a cult figure in folk belief.

The reason for worshipping this god in Baishatun is unclear, and the founding story of the shrine cannot be traced unequivocally in living memory either. Some claim that the icon of the God of War originates from the King's Boat, which arrived in Waipu in 1903; some state that the temple's incense is divided from mainland China.<sup>71</sup> Another narrative recounts that the icon of one particular deity housed in the shrine comes from the sea. While some define the latter as the God of War, others regard it as the joss of a plague god enshrined in the temple. Nonetheless, regardless of the different versions, only two deity icons were worshipped at the founder's domestic altar i.e., the God of War and a plague god with the surname *Sui*. The founder surnamed Lo is a shaman who conducts the rite of spirit writing using a small divination chair. His private domestic shrine developed into a religious organisation (*hui*) with 27 household members in 1978.

The construction of the temple is the result of the god's instruction, as revealed in several believers' dreams. In order to construct the temple, many people invested a great deal of time and money, and were faced with considerable difficulties. In particular, the temple land was originally owned by the government and not available for private purposes. They had to apply to numerous local political organs to solve the problem. When the temple was completed in 1982, four other plague gods, known as "*Ongya*" ("Lord King"), were added to the two gods mentioned above.<sup>72</sup>

The present temple shaman is a descendant of the founder family. Despite living in another village, he comes to the temple for the séance ritual nine times a month.<sup>73</sup> His shamanistic performance consists of going into a trance, and when the deity takes possession of his body, of acting and speaking like a deity. Unlike other shamans, who usually speak an unknown language that requires translation by his assistant, this shaman speaks the ordinary spoken language understood by believers if no assistant is available to translate. I was informed that this particular shaman gained the god's permission by way of rituals to speak the ordinary language of the believers. As a result, direct communication between the shaman and the askers has increased the number of believers attending séance rituals.

### 3.2.2.5 *The Taizi Hui (religious association) and Mude Gong temple*

Both shrines discussed here are dedicated to the worship of the *Taizi* god (the Third Prince

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<sup>71</sup> See also the temple brochure *The Donglong Gong Temple in Baishatun (Baishatun Donglong Gong)* 1996.

<sup>72</sup> The four plague gods' surnames are Su, Di, Zhang and Xi.

<sup>73</sup> The séance rituals take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup> day of each lunar month.

God), which is usually in possession of a medium and has thus become a popular god in folk religion.<sup>74</sup>

This religious association consists of three icons of the Third Prince God, which is worshipped at the domestic altar of the deceased shaman's house, located in the *Hongtaucu* neighbourhood. The three gods are named by the sibling order so as to differentiate their divine features and specific efficacious power. Although the founding story and the reason for worshipping the three gods remain unclear, some claim that the initiation of this shrine probably predates the Tiande Gong temple. According to believers of the shrine, the séance ritual conducted by their deceased shaman was extremely popular in Baishatun prior to the 1970s. However, this association declined rapidly after the death of the shaman, as no successor was available to hold the séance ritual. Although the worship of the three Third Prince Gods has been maintained, none of the former shaman's family descendants is willing to take over this ritual position or to organise it. There are currently only eleven members in the association. A ritual officeholder was chosen annually to manage the deity's birthday celebration. He was allowed to worship one of the icons of the Third Prince God at home during the period of his ritual office. While participation by association household members declined radically, another temple that also housed the Third Prince God, recruited more and more village believers. This temple, with the name of *Mude Gong*, is located in Baidong Li. Its founder is a shaman who claims to have been selected by the Third Prince God of the original shrine. When the former ritual assistant of the original shrine claimed that the shaman of this temple was the deceased shaman's successor, the temple was recognised by some of the residents in the village. As a result, several households switched membership from the original association to the temple. Nonetheless, some still view the temple as a branch shrine of the original, while others even define it as a private shrine.

#### 3.2.2.6 *The Nanwen Gong association at Baishatun*

This newly-established shrine focuses on ritual healing. Its founder lives in the *Ciatau* neighbourhood, where he manages his morning business for a living. Both he and a female ritual specialist are believers of the *Nanwen Gong* temple in Houlong town. Following the god's instructions shown in a dream, he built the branch shrine in Baishatun in 2000. Several inhabitants living in the vicinity formed the association to worship together.

This shrine houses three deities, whereby the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy represents the chief deity. The attraction of this shrine is its ritual healing conducted by the female ritual specialist

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<sup>74</sup> This deity is *Zhong-tan-yuan-shuai*, also known as *Li Nuoza*. See also Jordan 1972/1985: 71.

once a week. The healing rite (known as *lingliao*) is based on mediation between the earthly and the divine world, and appears to relate to the sectarian tradition.<sup>75</sup> Coming from Taizhong in central Taiwan, this female ritual specialist is said to possess special religious powers to communicate with the divine world during the healing rite. In spite of being an outsider to the village, she has already attracted many believers to ritual healing. The fame of this newly-established shrine spread rapidly in the area after the health of the supplicants had improved after ritual healing.

Table 3-1. The ritual calendar of communal worship in Baishatun (Baidong Li and Baixi Li)

Name of territorial cults, neighbourhood temples or religious associations	Main god (s)	Ritual domain of territorial cults number of members <sup>1</sup>	Date of main or festival (day/month) <sup>2</sup>	Date of séance ritual or ritual healing
Place God shrines	Place God	Baidong Li (491) Baixi Li (297)	2/2 2/2	---
Worship of <i>Sanjiégong</i>	Gods of the Three Worlds	Three Baishatun (788)	Unfixed/10	---
Gongtian Gong temple	Mazu	Baishatun (788)	1) pilgrimage unfixed/1,2or3 2) 23/3 3) 15/7	---
Wulong Gong temple	Seven Plague Gods (called <i>Ciensue</i> )	70	18/6 (17-19/6)	Unfixed, (shaman in training)
Tiande Gong temple	Five Plague Gods (called <i>Ong</i> )	over 130	12/4 (11-13/4)	Noon on Monday, Wednesday, Friday
Wuyun Gong temple	King Zhuwuhung and seven Plague Gods (called <i>Daisun</i> )	137	15/9 (14-16/9)	Saturday evening
Donglong Gong temple	Guangong and five Plague Gods (called <i>Ongya</i> )	about 55	13/5 (12-14/5)	Evenings of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 26 <sup>th</sup> and 29 <sup>th</sup> of each month
Mude Gong temple	Third Prince God	unclear	9/9	Unfixed, as required
Taizi Hui /association	Third Prince God	11	9/9	Interruption
Nanwen Gong shrine	Guanyin	unclear	5/7 pilgrimage Houlong	and Sunday to (15:00 -- 22:00)

<sup>1</sup> Member refers here to household member. According to statistical data from the *Tongxiao Census Office* in 2001, there were 492 households in Baidong Li and 297 in Baixi Li.

<sup>2</sup> Dates according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

In brief, Table 3-1 lists the principal dates in the ritual calendar of communal worship in Baishatun. The ritual domains of the three territorial cults correspond to the ambit of the village. The cult dedicated to the Place God is divided into two parts (Baidong li and Baixi li) within the village, whereas the territory of the Mazu cult includes other nearby villages (cf. ch.4).

<sup>75</sup> I was informed that believers also worship the Eternal Mother (*Jin-mu-niang-niang*), a popular sectarian patron.

Neither séance ritual nor spirit medium is present in these territorial cults. In contrast, the seven religious associations dedicated to the worship of different deities concentrate almost exclusively on séance ritual or ritual healing conducted by distinctive ritual specialists. Believers can thus choose from several possibilities according to their needs. Similarly, the specific plague god names and séance rituals mark the disparities between the neighbourhood temples.

### **3.3 Discussion: translocal influences through ritual activities in Baishatun**

No local ritual activity can ignore outside influence. Participation in festivities particularly involves Baishatun's emigrants and people from branch temples elsewhere. This sub-section will discuss how the social network of emigrants and branch temples is maintained.

Despite having moved away, many emigrant Baishatun people return to the village to take part in the Mazu pilgrimage or the various local festivities. Viewing deities from home as their real patron gods, many migrants continue Baishatun worship customs in their new settlements. Branch temples dedicated to the plague gods from Baishatun are occasionally built where a large number of Baishatun emigrants congregate. Although the Mazu temple encompasses far more branch temples (or shrines) than any neighbourhood temple, relations between the Mazu temple and its branches concentrate on the pilgrimage journey, which will be elaborated in the following chapters. On the contrary, relations between neighbourhood temples and their branches (usually close to Baishatun) have an enormous impact on the village. Not only because several emigrants have played important roles in their home village festivities, but also because the branch temple social network is vital in spreading the reputation of these neighbourhood temples. Table 3-2 shows the distribution of branch temples separated from Baishatun's neighbourhood temples.

The common method of maintaining relations between the branch and the mother temple is the pilgrimage visit, when people from the branch temple make the annual pilgrimage journey as a return to the mother temple in Baishatun. These pilgrimages are usually organised on a small scale in comparison with the communal Mazu pilgrimage in this area. As a rule, the dates of these small pilgrimages coincide either with the festivities of the mother temples in Baishatun, such as the Donglong Gong temple and the Wulong Gong temple, or branch temple celebrations in Xinzhuang and Tucheng in Taipei.<sup>76</sup> A small pilgrimage is a one-day tour by

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<sup>76</sup> These temple festivals are held on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth lunar month for Wude Gong temple in Xinzhuang and the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth lunar month for the Tucheng Wuyun Gong temple. Both branch temple pilgrimages are carried out on the weekend previous to their own temple festivals in order to attract more participants.

car directly to the village, where pilgrims carry the palanquins of their branch deities in a parade approaching their mother temple. Apart from the ritual performed in the mother temple, people from the host temple provide a banquet to entertain pilgrims from the branch temple, who in turn present them with the gift of a red envelope (*hongbao*) containing enough or more than enough money to cover the expenses of the banquet. When I joined the pilgrimage tour from Tucheng to Baishatun in 2001, the large banquet held at noon accommodated approximately 800 people.<sup>77</sup> I was informed that the banquet for pilgrims from Xinzhuang includes seats for up to 1,200 adults. Similarly, Baishatun villagers are also invited to take part in festivals held by branch temples in other cities and towns.

Table 3-2 Branch temples of the neighbourhood temples of Baishatun

Neighbourhood temples (NT) in Baishatun	Location of the NT	Branch temples from Baishatun	Location of branch temples in other cities
Wulong Gong (temple)	<i>Ongyaging</i>	<i>Tianfu Gong</i> <i>Qisheng Gong</i> <i>Sufu Ongya</i> <i>Sansheng Gong</i>	Dingzhou road, Taipei Banqiao, Taipei Tongxiao Jian, Hualian (eastern Taiwan)
Tiande Gong	<i>Hongtaucu</i>	<i>Wude Gong</i>	Xinzhuang, Taipei
Wuyun Gong	<i>Tauzinggau</i>	<i>Tucheng Wuyun Gong</i>	Tucheng, Taipei
Donglong Gong	<i>Suitau</i>	<i>Wanan Gong</i> <i>Guangxing Gong</i>	Shigang, Taizihong Jioufang, Taizihong (central Taiwan)

Cooperation between mother and branch temples is central to managing activities carried out by both temples. In fact, maintaining good relations between both sides is of major significance for practical reasons. The spirit medium of the Wuyun Gong temple, for instance, conducted séance rituals at both mother and branch temples once a week; the shaman of the Tiande Gong temple also holds the ritual for believers in Baishatun and Taipei three times a week. Both neighbourhood temples have similar reputations with regard to the séance ritual, which is organised with the assistance of their branch temples. The larger ritual festivities, such as New Year or *jiao* rituals, also depend on cooperation between people in Baishatun and Taipei. In addition, the Donglong Gong temple is greatly dependent on the assistance of its branch temple in Tongxiao to find a method of reforming and managing their temple activities.

According to several temple keepers in this area, there are two indispensable elements in managing a temple. Firstly, the deity's efficacious power for protection depends on propagation and recognition by believers; and secondly, a capable leader who can propose and implement a

<sup>77</sup> A banquet for religious festivities usually caters for ten adults at one round table. On that particular day there were about 80 tables.

blueprint for temple development. This is similar to a Taiwanese saying: “need a god, need people too” (*ai sin ma ai lang*). Indeed, the temples in Baishatun not only conduct popular séance rituals to satisfy believer needs, but also rely on the management or assistance of emigrant village companions. Due to their economic status or social achievements, emigrants from Taipei in particular play a key role in Baishatun’s temples. One emigrant, a successful businessman living in Taipei for over 30 years, was chosen as chairperson of two temples: Wuyun Gong temple in Baishatun in 1984 and its branch temple in Taipei in 1986. This arrangement is convenient for both temples, and serves to improve cooperation and common decision-making.<sup>78</sup> Another case is the chairperson of the Donglong Gong temple. Manager of a company in Taipei and involved in social networks with other religious groups, he has chaired the temple’s TAC since 1993.<sup>79</sup> It is said that emigrants from Taipei inevitably intervene and control important decisions in Baishatun.

Moreover, apart from distinctive séance rituals, the competition for reputation between neighbourhood temples gives rise to diverse ritual activities in Baishatun. In order to attract believers, disparate rituals are created or adopted from outside. In particular, emigrants and branch temples from other places bring new ideas and innovative ritual practices to Baishatun. Some examples will be given in the following.

Firstly, the Wuyun Gong temple initiated a tremendous plague festival in 1992. This festival was the first of its kind in northern Taiwan. Meanwhile, the small pilgrimage parade made by its branch temple from Taipei included a crew of females who carried a palanquin bearing a goddess. While the deity palanquins are conventionally carried by men, organising a female palanquin brigade was a pioneer design by the temple’s TAC, in an attempt to motivate more female believers to participate in pilgrimage activity. Secondly, a small pilgrimage parade by the Wude Gong temple to return to the Tiande Gong temple, involves elements from the sectarian system, such as the performance of *Jigong* related to the religious sect “*Cihui Tang*” (“Compassion Society”). In fact, several shrines contain sectarian elements in the village, including one private shrine and the newly-established Nanwen Gong association. Thirdly, the Donglong Gong temple recently joined a countywide temple alliance organisation centred on worship of the God of War. Focusing on the Taoist ritual tradition, this organisation provides the temple with opportunities to communicate with other temples beyond this area. As a result, this temple hosted a countywide festival dedicated to the God of War in Baishatun in 1999,

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<sup>78</sup> In fact, only branch temples can attract believers beyond this area, while donations of money from these believers also flow back to the mother temple in Baishatun.

<sup>79</sup> The chairpersons of Baishatun’s four neighbourhood temples are selected from several candidates by casting the divination blocks.

with a large banquet that accommodated more than 2, The common method of maintaining relations between the branch and the mother temple is the pilgrimage visit, when people from the branch temple make the annual pilgrimage journey as a return to the mother temple in Baishatun. These pilgrimages are usually organised on a small scale in comparison with the communal Mazu pilgrimage in this area. As a rule, the dates of 000 guests. In addition, its temple festival in 2001 included reformed Taoist ceremonies performed by a professional group from Taipei, and several shamanistic performances presented by its branch temples from central Taiwan. And finally, the Wulong Gong temple seems less active than other neighbourhood temples in Baishatun. Under pressure of competition, this temple is engaged in finding its historical origins in China and plans to make a pilgrimage trip in the near future.

### **Conclusion: from the local to the translocal**

In short, there are disparities of different scales in the communal worship of Baishatun, and different deities play distinctive roles in believers' daily lives. Due to the goddess's celestial status, the Mazu temple represents the highest religious centre, whereas neighbourhood temples and shrines housing other deities occupy a status of secondary rank. The annual Mazu pilgrimage is based on the territorial principle. It is organised by the Mazu temple on behalf of the local cult, whose domain can extend to several nearby villages (see the following chapter). On the other hand, séance rituals and festive activities held by other temples and shrines are based on voluntary participation, where believers can take part freely in religious associations according to their own needs.

Local festivities included various kinds of ritual practice brought into Baishatun through emigrants or branch temples from other places on the island. Indeed, translocal influences in the village cannot be overlooked. Many of the Baishatun emigrants participate in local religious activities as a result of their home village identity. They play a significant role in the competition between the four neighbourhood temples, and their impact on the village cannot be ignored.

As Appadurai's notion of the "ethnoscape" (1998) suggests, the current global trend towards de-territorialisation makes it difficult to define a group bound in a specific geographical space. The phenomenon of translocal influence in Baishatun would seem to place it in a quasi de-territorial state. As a result of emigrant home village identity and influence in the village, the term "Baishatun people" is no longer the monopoly of its local residents. In this sense, the ritual landscape of Baishatun includes diverse ritual practices that are not restricted to its geographical boundary, making the place Baishatun no longer a pure land with so-called local

“tradition”. The Baishatun Mazu cult and its pilgrimage activity has in particular accommodated countless pilgrims and believers from other areas of Taiwan. Before coming to its analysis, I will introduce pilgrimage in the following chapter.