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Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification in Taiwan (2000–2010) Analysis of Taiwan Social Change Survey

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Abstract: Religion and social stratification has been an important sociological topic since Max Weber and Karl Marx. It continues to attract scholarly attention nowadays in the United States, giving rise to numerous empirical studies on their complex relationships. However, there is no or inadequate studies on the relations between religion and social stratification in societies that have very different cultural backgrounds compared to the U.S. This research note attempts to expand this sociological topic to non-Christian societies using Taiwan as a case study, where Christianity is not the dominant culture. It first offers a literature review of religion and social stratification in Taiwan, followed by a quantitative study based on a national survey, Taiwan Social Change Survey. Analysis is based on the data from the 2000, 2005, and 2010 dataset. This research note focuses on three important social stratification indicators, namely education level, occupation, and income, and their effects on religious affiliation. Changes in such relations over ten years are also studied. Our analysis has at least five significant findings: (1) respondents belonging to “Protestantism” and “No Religion” tend to be in the upper class. (2) Except for “Protestantism” and “No Religion,” religious affiliation is affected by different social stratification indicators and such effect is particular strong for “Buddhism,” “Taoism,” and “Folk religion.” While (3) “Catholics” have declining score in occupation and income level, (4) “Buddhists” are achieving higher status in occupation. (5) Education, occupation, and income level are increasing for “Yiguan Dao” practitioners.

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1. Background

The purpose of this research note is to try to answer this question: is there any relationship between social stratification and religion in Taiwan from 2000 and 2010? We attempt to shed some lights into this topic by analyzing a series of national surveys conducted in Taiwan. The results obtained in this study can serve as important references for future studies on similar topics.

Discussion on the relationships between social stratification and religion has been an

important topic in sociological studies, especially in the sociology of religion, since Karl Marx and Max Weber. For instance, Marx, whose “religion is opium of the people” has become one of the most frequently quoted statements in the studies of religion, argues that religion functions as an ideology that legitimizes economic inequality and deprivation in society. In Weber’s sociology of religion, much discussion has focused on the effects of social stratification on religion (theodicy of good fortune/ suffering, religion of the elites/ masses).

Thereafter, empirical studies of religion and social stratification has become popular in the United States, where religious affiliation and denominational differences have played significant effects on social stratification throughout its history. Important pioneer studies in this regard include *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Niebuhr 1929) and *Millhands and Preachers* (Pope 1942). In the 1960s, empirical research on religion has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, and some important studies that explore the complicated relationships between religion and social stratification include *The Religious Factor* (Lenski 1961), *Protestant Establishment* (Digby 1964), and *Social Class in American Protestantism* (Demerath 1965). Since 1960s, with the growing popularity in the secularization theory and religious economy model, there was a temporary decline in empirical studies on religion and social stratification, which, however, has resumed momentum in recent years. Some sizable studies are *Ranking Faith* (Davidson and Pyle 2011), *Faith and Money* (Keister 2011), a special issue of *Research in the Sociology of Work* (vol.23) called “Religion, work and money” (Keister ed. 2012) and *Religion and Inequality in America* (Keister and Sherkat eds. 2014). These studies show that there remain some relationships between social stratification and religion in contemporary U.S., and religion has, on some occasions, significant influence on social stratification.

While there are a lot of studies on this subject matter, most of them are conducted in the U.S., where Christianity is a dominant cultural force. There has been no or inadequate similar studies on societies with different religious background from the U.S., such as East Asia, where their societies are largely founded on non-Christian culture. This research note attempts to fill this gap by looking at the relations between religion and social stratification using Taiwan as an example.

The reason for choosing Taiwan is threefold. Firstly, a large proportion of Taiwanese people recognize themselves as Buddhists, Taoists, and folk religion practitioners, with Christians making up only 5% of the Taiwanese population (discussed in more detail later). These religions are usually non-institutionalized, which do not require a strict sense of affiliation/membership as compared to Christianity. This makes Taiwan a suitable example for the study of religion and social stratification in non-Christian settings.

The second reason refers to the revitalization of religion in Taiwan following the end of martial law in 1987, which witnessed an increasing participation in traditional religious practices, rapid growth of Buddhist organizations, and emergence of spirituality “boom” (Chiu 2006). In addition to this, while Taiwan experienced the process of “middle-classization” until the 1990s and has developed a more equal society, drastic changes that came along with rapid economic and social development, especially after 2000, have brought about new form of inequality, such as “the fall of new middle class” (Numazaki 2008, Lin 2012). In such context, we can expect the effect of social change has also inevitably expanded to religion and social stratification. It is, therefore,

significant to explore the various relations between religion and social stratification in a transforming Taiwanese society.

The third reason is the availability of quality sample data collected in Taiwan Social Change Survey in recent 30 years. Many items in the survey are related to religion. Even though there are very rich datasets accumulated in these surveys, very few sociological studies of religion made use of these important resources (Chiu 2006, Zhai and Woodberry 2011). For instance, empirical studies on religion and other areas (e.g. gender) are still developing (Zhai and Woodberry 2011). There is almost no study on the relationships between social stratification and religion (Chiu 2006).

The research note first offers a literature review of sociological studies of religion in Taiwan and suggests a perspective for our analysis. Details of datasets, variables, and methodologies are discussed in the third section. Important findings are summarized and discussed in the last part.

2. Literature review and perspective of analysis

To conduct an exploratory study of the relations between religion and social stratification in Taiwan, there can be two directions depending on what kinds of “religion” we are talking about. The first direction is to focus on *religious affiliation*, and to examine the differences in social stratification among various religious practitioners, such as Buddhist, Taoist, or Christians etc. As will be mentioned later, this approach has widely been adopted in the U.S. The second direction is to find out how *religious attitudes* and *religious practices* may have an effect on the formation of social stratification. Unlike Christianity that requires its believers to identify very clearly their affiliation to a particular denomination/church, religious affiliation alone does not necessarily explain one’s religious identity absolutely in Taiwan. Religious practices such as ancestor worship, making prayers or money offerings are not limited to any particular religious groups; instead they are commonly practised at the individual level on a daily basis. Even if someone does not practice any religion, the family consciousness, altruistic thoughts, and a range of social awareness he/she possesses maybe built on or affected by values derived from religions like Taoism and Buddhism. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the relationships between social stratification and various dimensions of religiosity, which can merely be captured in terms of religious affiliation alone. As an exploratory study, this research note follows the first approach and discusses the relationship between religious affiliation and social stratification.

In the U.S, the earliest empirical investigation into this topic can be traced to Cantril’s studies in 1943, since then many other important works were published (Pope 1984; Bogue 1959; Lazervitz 1961, 1964; Greeley 1976; Smith and Faris 2005). In these studies, education, occupation, and income are used as indicators of social stratification, and then the effects of religious affiliation on these attributes are analyzed. Religious denominations/groups are then ranked according to the score obtained in each indicator, and the changes in ranking over time are also studied.

In Smith and Faris’s studies (2005), for example, the relations between denomination and social stratification in the 1980s and 1990s are analyzed based on datasets of General Social Survey (GSS). The result shows that, in the second half of the 20th century, there were significant social stratification differences among various denominations in the U.S. For instance, it is found

that while members of Unitarianism, Judaism, and Presbyterianism etc. tend to belong to the upper class, Jehovah's Witnesses, Southern Baptism, Pentecostalism are in the lower class, and the social class of Assemblies of God shows inconsistency. The second finding reveals that the relations between social stratification and religion in U.S. remained almost consistent from the 1980s to 1990s. The third significant finding indicates that the upper class churches are more White-oriented and tend to have a more liberal and traditional worship style, but that of the lower class are more conservative and emotional and with higher participation of Blacks and Hispanic.

How about in Taiwan? According to the knowledge of the authors, Chiu's works (1988 and 2006) are the only studies concerning the relations between social stratification and religious affiliation in Taiwan. In his studies, Chiu examines how education (as an indicator of social stratification) is related to religious affiliation using a Log-linear Model (other variables include age, sex, and place of residence) based on data from the first Taiwan Social Change Survey in 1985. The result shows that "folk religion" tends to have lower education level while that of "no religion," "Buddhism," and "Christianity" tends to be higher.

Chiu's works are very important references in Taiwanese sociology of religion but there remain a number of limits in his studies. The first one is that his point of analysis is relatively old in terms of contemporary Taiwanese history. Taiwan in 1985 was still under the rule of martial law, which was the period before the revitalization of religion, middle-classization, and the emergence of new forms of social inequality. After experiencing a series of drastic social changes, it is necessary to re-examine how religion and social stratification are related in the new context of Taiwan. The second limit refers to the use of education as the only indicator of social stratification in his analysis. There is no doubt that education is a significant indicator of social stratification, but the effects of other variables like occupation and income cannot be neglected. Thirdly, it remains unclear about the ranking of religious affiliation in terms of social stratification indicators. In Chiu's studies (1988, 2006), the effects of various variables including education on religious affiliation were examined, as well as their interactive effects. However, some basic information about which social status is more likely to possess what kind of religious attributes is still unclear.

To expand our study beyond these limits, this research note draws on some insights from Smith and Faris' studies (2005) and offer a descriptive analysis of how social stratification is related to religious affiliation and how such relations have changed over time.

3. Data, Variables, and Methodology

3.1 Data

Our analysis is based on data from the Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS). It is an annual survey research project of The Institute of Sociology Academic Sinica funded by the National Science Council of the Executive Yuan of Taiwan (survey before 1st wave of 3rd phase was handled by the Institute of Ethnology Academic Sinica). After the first wave of the 1985's survey, a wide range of topics such as family, gender, social stratification, culture, leisure activity, and religion etc. are included into the project, with each topic being surveyed almost every 5 years on a rotation-basis. The TSCS is a representative survey research of Taiwan, as well as the

largest-scale social research database in East Asia. From 2002 onwards, TSCS has joined the well-known international comparative survey project International Social Survey Program (ISSP) and the East Asian Social Survey (EASS) co-organized with Japan, China, and Korea, playing an increasingly important role in international comparative studies. All datasets are made public in the form of secondary data.

This research note uses data from the TSCS conducted in 2000, 2005, and 2010 (TSCS-2000, TSCS-2005, and TSCS-2010). In each wave of the TSCS, two questionnaires are used separately. For instance, in TSCS-2000, 2005, and 2010, an integrated questionnaire and a special-topic questionnaire were used separately; respondents answered either one of the two questionnaires. In our analysis, all respondents from both of the two questionnaires were used in order to have sufficient pool of samples. Readers may acquire more information about each survey by referring to the corresponding survey report (Chang and Fu 2000, 2006; Chang et al. 2011). Furthermore, surveys conducted since 2000 have adopted a different set of questions and answers to assess the occupation and income level of respondents. Therefore, even though integrated questionnaires were also used in the 1985, 1990, and 1995's surveys, it is difficult to compare these data with that from 2000 onwards and for that reasons are not used in our studies. Subject of analysis is focused on both male and female of age 20 or higher with occupation.

3.2 Variables and Methodology

In our analysis, the average value of four indicators, namely “advancement rate to higher education,” “socioeconomic index,” “occupational prestige score,” and “monthly household income,” is calculated for each religious affiliation and then compared. The indicator for education attainment “advancement rate” refers to the percentage of respondents with vocational school or university level. While “years of education” is used in Smith and Faris's studies (2005), options available concerning education level in each wave of TSCS are slightly different, and therefore it is difficult to compare years of education in our studies systematically. For this reason, their method is not adopted in our analysis. The second and third indicators are “socioeconomic index” and “occupational prestige score”, respectively based on “socioeconomic index of Taiwan (revised edition)” and “new occupational prestige score of Taiwan (revised edition) (Hwang 2008). The last indicator “monthly household income” is obtained by taking the medium of “household income range”.

“Religious affiliation” is divided into “Buddhism,” “Taoism,” “Folk religion,” “Yiguan Dao,” “Catholicism,” “Protestantism,” and “no religion” based on the classification already made in the survey dataset. Answers that are only chosen by a handful of respondents are grouped under the category “other religion” (e.g. such as Xuanyuanism, Islam, Zhaijiao, Luan Tang and others).

Three points need to be paid special attention when discussing “religious affiliation.” The first one is about the classification of “Buddhism,” “Taoism,” “Folk religion,” and “no religion.” Different from religions with a relatively well-organized system of membership such as Christianity and Yiguan Dao, the problem of ambiguity arises when the above mentioned four options have to be classified, due to the fact that they do not have a very clear cut definition of affiliation. In Taiwan, it is not rare to have respondents participating in both Buddhist and Taoist activities,

or claiming to have no religion while taking part in some kind of religious practice. It is arguable that their answers tend to reflect the differences in their understanding of religion, instead of affiliation to religion. Following this argument, one may suggest it is not necessarily the case that “Buddhism,” “Taoism,” “Folk religion,” and “No Religion” can be dealt on the same basis as Yiguan Dao and Christianity. Even if this argument is true, it is still significant to examine which social stratification is likely to “proclaim” which kind of religion affiliation, and such relations are discussed in our studies.

The second point that we should be mindful of is the meaning of “Buddhism.” As discussed above, the classification of Buddhism and other traditional religions in Taiwan is ambiguous. In order to identify those “genuine” Buddhists, a question in TSCS is designed to inquire those self-proclaimed Buddhists the year they got initiated. With this question, it became possible to distinguish between initiated and non-initiated Buddhists for more meaningful analysis. However, due to the fact that options concerning Buddhist initiation have been adjusted in TSCS-2010 and others, “Buddhism” is not divided into initiated or non-initiated in our analysis.

The last point refers to the small sample size of some religious affiliation. For instance, there are cases of having only around 10 samples for certain categories in some datasets. Small sample size affects the reliability of survey’s result. In particular, handling analysis that compares different time periods requires much caution. In case of having a small sample size, we should consider whether to integrate various categories into one or simply ignore them from the analysis is a better choice. Nevertheless, for the sake of examining a wider range of religious affiliation, categories with a small sample size are also included in our analysis as reference.

4. Results

Table 1 to 4 respectively shows the advancement rate to higher education, socioeconomic index, occupational prestige score, and monthly household income for each religious affiliation. In each table, the results of TSCS-2000, 2005, and 2010 are shown side by side, sample size and percentage or average value are also provided, with religious affiliations ranked in descending order according to their score. The results of 2000’s survey are first discussed, followed by 2005 and 2010, and changes (e.g. ranking) over time are then examined.

Table 1. Religious affiliation and advancement rate to higher education (2000–2010)

Year 2000				Year 2005				Year 2010			
Ranking	Religious Affiliation	%	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	%	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	%	N
1	No Religion	45.9	564	1	Protestantism	56.0	109	1	Protestantism	58.5	106
2	Protestantism	44.4	99	2	No Religion	54.6	621	2	No Religion	52.6	593
3	Others	40.0	25	3	Catholicism	50.0	22	3	Yiguan Dao	46.3	54
4	Yiguan Dao	31.3	64	4	Yiguan Dao	43.6	55	4	Others	46.2	13
5	Catholicism	31.3	48	5	Others	41.7	24	5	Catholicism	44.7	38
6	Buddhism	25.5	734	6	Buddhism	33.6	617	6	Buddhism	34.3	670
7	Folk Religion	21.7	627	7	Folk Religion	25.9	1042	7	Taoism	34.3	467
8	Taoism	19.1	502	8	Taoism	21.9	370	8	Folk Religion	31.3	928
Total		28.8	2663	Total		35.1	2860	Total		38.4	2869

Source: TSCS-2000, 2005, 2010. Both male and female of age 20 or above with occupation.

Table 1 shows the relations between religious affiliation and advancement rate to higher education. In 2010, 58.2% of Protestant and 52.6% of atheist have attended vocational school or university, showing their relatively high level of education. Buddhism (34.4%), Taoism (34.3%), and folk religion (31.3%) are below the average of 38.4%, arguably having a lower education level. Both Yiguan Dao (46.3%), others (45.2%), and Catholicism (44.7) rank in the middle of the list.

There are some observable changes in ranking over time. All religions have their advancement rate increased in the past 10 years except for Catholicism. It is likely related to the rise in overall education level in Taiwan in the past decade. For Catholicism, the rate rose from 2000 to 2005 but dropped in 2010 (31.3% to 50.0% to 44.7%)

If we look at the ranking of each religion, Protestantism has risen from 2000 to 2005 and remained top in 2010. Taoism has slightly moved up from 8th in 2005 to 7th in 2010. Catholicism and others show more fluctuation in their ranking, probably caused by the small sample size that affects the reliability of results. Yiguan Dao moved from 4th in 2005 to 3rd in 2010.

While there are some minor changes as seen from table 1, the general pattern of religious affiliation and advancement rate is arguably stable from 2000 to 2010. In other words, Protestantism and “no religion” remain top of the list, while Buddhism, Taoism, and Folk religion are more associated with lower education level, with Yiguan Dao, Catholicism, and others occupying the middle positions.

Table 2. Socioeconomic index and religious affiliation (2000–2010)

Year 2000				Year 2005				Year 2010			
Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N
1	Protestantism	62.83	99	1	Protestantism	62.84	109	1	Protestantism	61.74	106
2	No Religion	62.35	564	2	No Religion	61.27	621	2	No Religion	60.81	593
3	Others	60.19	25	3	Buddhism	57.58	617	3	Buddhism	57.47	670
4	Catholicism	57.70	48	4	Yiguan Dao	56.67	55	4	Yiguan Dao	56.98	54
5	Buddhism	55.50	734	5	Catholicism	56.35	22	5	Taoism	56.21	467
6	Yiguan Dao	54.67	64	6	Others	54.99	24	6	Catholicism	54.98	38
7	Taoism	54.33	502	7	Taoism	54.37	370	7	Folk Religion	53.93	928
8	Folk Religion	51.51	627	8	Folk Religion	52.44	1042	8	Others	52.57	13
Total		56.13	2663	Total		56.25	2860	Total		56.90	2869

Source: TSCS-2000, 2005, 2010. Both male and female of age 20 or above with occupation.

Table 2 shows the socioeconomic index for each religious affiliation over the past decade. As of 2010, Protestantism has the highest score (61.74), followed by “no religion” (60.81). Taoism (56.21), Catholicism (54.98), and “others” (52.57) are all below average (56.9), while Buddhism (57.47) and Yiguan Dao (56.98) are in the middle.

Protestantism and “no religion” remained 1st and 2nd respectively in the three surveys. The ranking as well as the score of “others” and Catholicism have both dropped in the past ten years. Oppositely, Buddhism and Yiguan Dao have moved up in the ranking, from 5th in 2000 to 3rd in 2005, and 6th in 2000 to 4th in 2005 respectively. Along with the increase in score, Taoism and folk religion also have their position slightly improved, moving from 7th in 2005 to 5th in 2010, and 8th in 2005 to 7th 2010 respectively.

In brief, Protestantism and “no religion” remained top of the rank consistently, while the rest

experienced some changes in 10 years' time. These include the decline of "others" and Catholicism, as well as the gradual increase of Buddhism and Yiguan Dao. While the score for Taoism and folk religion remained relatively low among others, some improvements in their positions can be observed. In addition, the results of Table 2 are, to a large extent, similar to that of advancement rate in Table 1, except for the fact that the socio-economic status of Buddhists has moved upward.

Table 3. Occupational prestige score and religious affiliation (2000-2010)

Year 2000				Year 2005				Year 2010			
Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N
1	Protestantism	59.88	99	1	Protestantism	60.97	109	1	Protestantism	58.99	106
2	No Religion	59.31	564	2	No Religion	58.60	621	2	No Religion	58.63	593
3	Others	57.32	25	3	Buddhism	55.94	617	3	Buddhism	55.55	670
4	Catholicism	55.73	48	4	Catholicism	55.77	22	4	Yiguan Dao	55.26	54
5	Buddhism	53.87	734	5	Yiguan Dao	55.20	55	5	Taoism	54.40	467
6	Yiguan Dao	52.23	64	6	Others	53.85	24	6	Catholicism	53.92	38
7	Taoism	51.89	502	7	Taoism	52.46	370	7	Others	52.62	13
8	Folk Religion	50.49	627	8	Folk Religion	51.39	1042	8	Folk Religion	52.40	928
Total		54.10	2663	Total		54.57	2860	Total		55.07	2869

Source: TSCS-2000, 2005, 2010. Both male and female of age 20 or above with occupation.

Occupational prestige score for each religious affiliation is presented in Table 3. The results here are almost the same as that of socioeconomic index (Table 2). Similarly, the ranking of Catholicism and "others" appeared to fluctuate in the way found in Table 2, which is probably also due to the small sample size of these two categories.

Table 4. Monthly household income and religious affiliation (2000-2010)

Year 2000				Year 2005				Year 2010			
Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N	Ranking	Religious Affiliation	Mean	N
1	No Religion	83511	564	1	Protestantism	58578	109	1	Protestantism	84811	106
2	Protestantism	77222	99	2	No Religion	53945	621	2	Others	78462	13
3	Others	76000	25	3	Taoism	51757	370	3	No Religion	77572	593
4	Catholicism	67396	48	4	Buddhism	50956	617	4	Yiguan Dao	75000	54
5	Buddhism	65858	734	5	Folk Religion	50365	1042	5	Taoism	71274	467
6	Taoism	63954	502	6	Catholicism	48182	22	6	Buddhism	71112	670
7	Yiguan Dao	62109	64	7	Yiguan Dao	46818	55	7	Folk Religion	65199	928
8	Folk Religion	59585	627	8	Others	45625	24	8	Catholicism	56974	38
Total		68216	2663	Total		51638	2860	Total		70986	2869

Source: TSCS-2000, 2005, 2010. Both male and female of age 20 or above with occupation.

The average monthly household income for each religious affiliation is compared in Table 4. As of 2010, Protestantism (NTD84811), "others" (NTD78462), and "no religion" (NTD77572) have the highest income level, while folk religion (NTD65199) and Catholicism (NTD56974) are lower than average (NTD70986). Both Yiguan Dao (NTD75000), Taoism (NTD71274), and Buddhism (NTD71112) are in the middle level.

The results tend to change dramatically across different stages of time. One explanation is

that monthly household income is affected by social change more easily than occupational prestige score and advancement rate to higher education. Although the results appear to be quite complicated here, at least three patterns can still be identified, which include: (1) Protestantism and “no religion” have higher income; (2) income level of Catholicism has declined, while (3) that of Yiguan Dao has increased.

5. Summary and Discussion

Based on the analysis above, at least five important points can be concluded. (1) The social status of Protestantism and “no religion” is consistently high in both three surveys. They got relatively high scores in all the three indicators used in our study, which include education level (advancement rate to higher education), occupation (socioeconomic index and occupational prestige score), and income level (monthly household level). While fluctuating between 1st and 2nd places, they always occupy the top two positions in most rankings. Suffice it to say that Protestantism and “no religion” are the religious affiliations characterized by high social status in contemporary Taiwan. (2) All religious affiliations, other than Protestantism and “no religion,” have quite different results depending on the indicator we use. For example, while Buddhism tends to rank low in education level, it is associated with higher score of occupation status. Also, Taoism and folk religion are in the lower position of education and occupation status rankings, but their income level is not necessarily low. While there may be some irregularities in the results, a number of interesting patterns can be identified according to each indicator. The first one is (3) the decline of Catholicism in occupation status and income level rankings, which contrasts sharply with Protestantism (also Christianity), which tends to rank top for all indicators. Another two is (4) the increase of occupation status of Buddhism and (5) the gradual increase of social status of Yiguan Dao (both education level, occupation status, and income).

Our analysis here is not sufficient for us to understand the factors and mechanisms behind the complicated relations between social stratification and religious affiliation, and further studies are definitely required. Nevertheless, the authors attempt to provide some insights into two issues.

The first issue refers to the increasing social status of Buddhism and Yiguan Dao. Both of them enjoyed rapid growth with the liberalization of religious market after the end of martial law. For Buddhism, the end of martial law has weakened the power of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, which was the most influential Buddhist organization at that time (Chiu 2006; Laliberte 2003). Many large-scale Buddhist organizations began to flourish and public interest in Buddhism in general has increased, especially among white-collars such as professionals (Madsen 2007). It is likely that Buddhism has continued to attract people of high social stratification since the 2000s. For Yiguan Dao, it has relatively stronger ties with politics, and thereby tend to actively develop networks with politicians and the upper class (Lu 2008; Kuo 2008). This tendency might have continued to this day. The second issue is the declining social status of Catholicism. It grew rapidly after the World War II until the 1950s, but experienced gradual decline in membership and number of church, and its scale and influence has been weakened a lot since the 1980s. Even now its size keeps shrinking, probably because a proportion of the upper class in Catholic Church might have converted to “no religion” or Buddhist etc.

Religion and social stratification has been an important topic since Weber and Marx, and empirical studies are still very popular in the U.S. today. However, little is known about the relations between religion and social stratification in non-Christian societies. Therefore, the objective of this study is to provide some insights into this subject matter using Taiwan as an example. Based on TSCS-2000, 2005, and 2010, the authors offered detailed descriptive analysis of the relations between social stratification (educational level, occupation status, and income) and religious affiliations, as well as their changes over time. Our results show that each religious affiliation has different social stratification characteristics, with Protestantism and “no religion” consistently associated with the upper classes. Moreover, changes in social stratification characteristic of Catholicism, Yiguan Dao, and Buddhism over the past decade can also be observed. This research note is a modest attempt to provide some basic insights into this subject matter. In contemporary Taiwan, the questions of why religious affiliation is related to social stratification and how religious culture may transform along with changes of social stratification are important topics for future studies. In-depth field studies, case studies, and studies of religious history etc. are important keys to these questions.

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