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Church as "Women's Community": The Feminization of Protestantism in Contemporary China*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the feminization of Protestantism in China today. Although the predominant presence of women in Protestant churches is well known by scholars, few researchers have explained and explored this phenomenon. Based on field data from Pingtan, Fujian, this paper indicates that Christian women's social networks and religious activities constitute the vitality of the local Protestant life. They inhabit a social space similar to what Margery Wolf calls the 'women's community'. Sanctifying this social space, Christian women acquire the means to transform traditional gender relations and challenge a patriarchal order. For men, Protestant religious life has become an increasingly female domain irrelevant to their concerns and interests. This article further argues that the women's community had its inceptive stage under the Cultural Revolution when communal, male-dominant religion was harshly repressed, and privatized, women-dominant religion was able to survive. Women's community, therefore, can be seen as a continuation of Protestant underground house groups under the Cultural Revolution.

Keywords: Protestantism in China, women's community, feminization, gender relation, the Cultural Revolution

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教會作為「婦女群體」：當代中國基督教的女性化

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摘 要

本文探討中國基督新教教會中具高比例的婦女所引發之「女性化」之現象與特色。改革開放以來中國基督教在鄉鎮的快速成長中，婦女佔了明顯的多數。然而，至目前為止幾乎沒有已出版的研究對此現象提出解釋或討論。依據福建平潭縣的田野調查資料，本文指出教會內婦女形成緊密的互助群體，參與各項日常的宗教與社會活動，展現出吳爾芙（Margery Wolf）在研究漢人農村婦女社會空間時所提出「婦女群體」的特色。基督教婦女將此種傳統婦女社會空間挪為己用並予以神聖化，扭轉傳統性別關係，以獲得對抗父權秩序的轉化性力量。對男性而言，加入教會則意味著加入一個以婦女的關切與利益為主導的群體，這使男人對深入參與基督教活動望而卻步。本文進而將此基督教婦女群體的起源追溯至中國基督教在文化大革命時期的轉變。在文革中，社區性、以男性主導為中心的宗教型態遭受最為嚴厲的摧毀，而以家庭為中心、以婦女為主要參與者的宗教活動得以保存。現今基督教會中的婦女群體可說是文革時秘密家庭聚會的延續。

關鍵詞： 中國基督教、婦女群體、女性化、性別關係、文化大革命

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The Gender Skewing

I was sitting in a rear pew in a dark, undecorated chapel, attending a Sunday service. I had arrived in Pingtan Island the day before, and decided to visit this, the oldest chapel in the county town, for my first Sunday. The present chapel was erected in 1957 after the original one was burned down by the Communist Party in 1950. In the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, it was converted to a storehouse for agriculture products before being returned to Christians in 1982. Looking around, I found the seats were fully occupied. There were more than five hundred people, attentive to the sermon. Increasingly, I noticed myself somehow abnormal in this congregation-people around me were all women, most all them over forty. I started to feel uneasy, and was curious about this women-dominated congregation. When the service finished, I watched people flowing towards the main gate behind me and tried to count how many men and women were passing me. I worked out that the ratio was approximately fifteen women to one man. Later I learned that more young people attended church meetings in the other two county-town chapels, but there I still found far more female than male believers going to church, participating in choir, serving as Sunday school teachers and organizing and preaching in neighborhood 'prayer point' meetings.

There is evidence that the disproportionate presence of women in the Pingtan Protestant church is not an isolated case. A Chinese scholar conducted a survey in a village in north China in 2005, and found that female believers comprised 94% of local Protestants, but males only 6% (Guo 2007). Other national surveys show that the gender imbalance is more discernible in Protestantism than other religions such as Buddhism. 'Religious Experience among the Han Chinese,' conducted in 2005, shows that females and males make up 75.8% and 24.2% of Chinese Protestants, respectively, in comparison to the much more gender-balanced figures for Chinese Buddhist women and men-- 54% and 46% (Yao and Badham 2007, 73; Liu 2007). More recently, the survey of 'Spiritual Life Study of Chinese Residents' conducted in 2007 also reports that far more women (73.2%) than men (26.8%) were Protestant, while the corresponding figures for Buddhism (59.7% and 40.3%) are less notably divergent (ARDA 2007). It should be noted that in the previous two surveys the data represents

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self-reported religious believers. From my fieldwork experience, the gender disparity in terms of actual church-goers can be more dramatic.

The predominance of women in Chinese Protestant churches today is itself an intellectual puzzle. For one thing, it is a rather contemporary phenomenon. Lee Tse-Hei's study of Baptist and Presbyterian church membership records in nineteenth century Chaozhou, for example, reveals that in these South China towns and villages there was invariably larger proportion of male to female Protestant believers. He attributes the uneven proportion of male and female to the fact that women encountered more social and cultural barriers than men when they joined the church (Lee 2003: 74-76). This regional study discloses that women have not always outnumbered men in the Chinese Protestant history, and we have to ask why it has become so nowadays. For another, Christianity has by and large been a faith giving privileges to male headship in church and family (Ammerman 1987; Brasher 1998; Brusco 1995; Cucchiari 1988; Griffith 1997; Martin 2003). In the New Testament, women are not encouraged or even allowed to preach to men or assume religious authority, and are taught to submit to their husbands (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:10; Ephesians 5:22). The puzzle thus involves what Bernice Martin (2003) calls 'the gender paradox': why so many women have been attracted to a religion that espouses a doctrine of male dominance?

As far as I am aware, no scholarly attempt has been made to explain the disproportionate number of women in the Protestant church in China inquire into the gender paradox, or explore its significance. Much research has engaged with why women are more religious than men in Western societies (cf. Thompson 1991; Ozorak 1996; Walter and Davie 1998; Woodhead 2003) and the appeals of evangelicalism and Pentecostalism to women in different cultural contexts (Cucchiari 1990; Brusco 1995; Griffith 1997; Martin 2003). While these studies usually tackle movements with female church membership of around two-thirds, the Chinese case, with women constituting possibly three-fourths of Protestants, needs somewhat more explanation. What is needed is research grounded in Chinese contexts.

One interesting theme emerging from the literature on gender and religion in

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Western societies is the idea of 'feminization'. For example, Ann Douglas' pioneering work *The Feminization of American Culture* (1988), explores how the disestablishment of American religion brought about the transformation of theological thinking from male-dominated Calvinist tradition to feminine sentimentalism in the nineteenth century, and the wider culture consequences that entailed. When established churches gave way to a voluntary system, clergymen lost their economic security, political influence, and intellectual leadership, and were forced into competition for members. They soon found their main "consumers" and allies were a marginalized group- educated middle-class women, who, under industrial capitalism, had no role other than being wives and raising children. Nineteenth-century clergymen hence moved from a masculine world into a world of women: they worked for them and with them. Ministers turned away from the rigorous argumentation of theology in favor of devotional and sentimental aspects of the faith. The two groups further banded together to imprint feminine ethic and qualities on popular culture.

Recently, Callum Brown (2001) and Linda Woodhead (2004, 2007b) applied Douglas' idea of feminization to characterize the cultural and social configuration of Christianity in the modern world. Callum makes use of this concept to support his point that secularization in Britain was closely connected with a cultural shift in the 1960s. His extensive study of popular literature, and of records of interviews, demonstrates that Christian discourse in the nineteenth and the first half of twentieth century in Britain featured the 'feminisation of conceptions of Christian piety'(Brown 2001: 221). The creation of a 'salvation economy' within evangelical Christianity during this period centered around women. Accordingly, women were regarded as innately pious, and a 'discursive Christianity' praised highly the female values and virtues of chastity, modesty, temperance, and good housekeeping. The decay of Christianity in Britain, Callum argues, consists largely in the abandonment by women of the traditional religious values of duty and deference, an abrupt cultural revolution starting in the 1960s. Using a sociological analysis, Woodhead discusses the gender consequences of the changing social position of Christianity in the modern world. By the nineteenth century, along with rapid industrialization, churches had lost social power over politics, commerce, industry and the law, but had attained a new power over individuals' private

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lives. Religion became increasingly relegated to a private, domestic sphere and identified with women's work. Relocated in the realm of women and domesticity, Christianity was inevitably 'feminized'. Although men continued to attend church, it was women who took responsibilities within churches and numerous voluntary Christian associations. They dictated religious practices, and their roles at home were sanctified (Woodhead 2004:205-208).

Douglas, Callum and Woodhead's idea of feminization refers not only to an increase of female members in church, but also to the overlapping of the religious sphere with their domestic and social lives, the idea that there was a greater likelihood that divine power has been exercised through and for women, women's active creation of a religious world to their advantage, and the more distinct feminine qualities manifested in religious culture and practice. Whereas the concept of feminization has been employed to describe the massive social and cultural change of Christianity, in this article, I use it to indicate the fact of gender imbalance and social consequences it involves within a local religious group. Based on data from Pingtan Island, collected in 2004 and 2005, I investigate why the Protestant church attracts more women than men, the ways in which women's predominance transforms Protestant gender relations, and to what extent women's religious perspectives 'feminize' local Protestantism. Particularly I examine how women make use of the *de jure* system of patriarchal authority, while shifting the *de facto* religious priorities to their own concerns and benefits.

In this paper, I argue that the local church's sub-congregation, 'prayer points', serves as a women's social space, to the extent that the vitality of Protestant life consists in this Christian 'women's community'. This brings about Protestant women's empowerment and greater autonomy, as well as uneasiness among men with an increasingly female domain. As we shall see, Protestant sacred power often manifests itself as women's spiritual power in relation to their husbands. Moreover, Protestant women's preponderance can be traced to underground meetings during the Cultural Revolution. When the local religious arena was transformed into a personalized, feminized space, women were allowed more freedom to make their religious choices

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and exercise supernatural power. Meanwhile, Protestantism offered women a version of personal transformation that granted them self-esteem unavailable in the traditional gender system. Today aspects of the feminized Protestant configuration can be seen as a continuation of underground meetings held before the churches were re-opened.

Protestant History in Pingtan: an Overview

Pingtan, the largest island in Fujing Province, is situated in south-eastern Fuzhou. It consists of 15 townships and 192 villages. In addition to the main island, it also includes 125 smaller islands and islets. The population was around 387,000 in 2004. Most parts of the main island are covered by soil that is uncultivable due to its high-salinity, and the major economic activities are fishing and sea transportation. Pingtan is the closest island under the control of the PRC to Taiwan. Before the Communist liberation, local people reaped profits by transporting agricultural produce and timber from Taiwan to Fuzhou and Shanghai. Rapid economic growth since reform has not benefited Pingtan as much as other coastal areas in China. Deprived of the feasibility of trade with Taiwan, Pingtan, an isolated island with few resources, finds it difficult to establish new industries. During the last decades, young people left the island to work in other parts of China and overseas. With other Fujian coastal areas, Pingtan has been notorious for human trafficking and being the home of illegal laborers all over the world. In 2012, China's government approved the 'Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone' project to position the island as an economic zone open to Taiwan investment. The project has brought new hope to local people, but the real impact remains to be seen.

With Fuzhou open to foreign trade and residence following the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, Pingtan became the site of one of the earliest Protestant mission fields in China. In the 1860s, Pingtan was allocated to the 'Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church' from America (Carlson 1974: 95-98). In 1867, 'Haitang' (the old name for Pingtan) was included in the Methodist T'ien-ang Dong Circuit (Lacy 1948: 61). Methodist missionaries opened a hospital and schools in the island. By the turn of the century (1900), children could go to missionary primary schools in

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major villages and the junior school in Pingtan County Town. Bright students continued their education in high school and college in Fuzhou City. The comprehensive educational system opened up employment opportunities for Protestants in church work, educational and medical institutions, and the new Western-style government service (Dunch 1996: 72-73).

The Methodist system of church government organized church workers into a clear hierarchy, and granted equal rights to the Chinese preachers and missionaries of the same rank (Dunch 1996: 44-46). In the early twentieth century, Chinese pastors were able to assume the real leading role, directing the church policy as they wished, and could even excommunicate missionaries (Dunch 1996: 47). While it was male pastors who assumed the leading positions, female ministers, known as 'Bible women' (the lowest-ranking church workers in the Methodist system), seemed to have had a particular role to play in areas where the church was less established. One missionary's account of the church in an almost inaccessible village in 1931 introduces the ministry of a "Bible woman". She was said to be able to do what six male preachers could not do—casting out more demons, visiting more people in need and preaching with greater enthusiasm, thus facilitating extraordinary church growth within one or two years (Lacy 1948: 266). This style of female ministry was to re-appear time and again. In the late 1940s, the Methodist church claimed more than 25,000 members, while the population in the island was around 150,000.

The early 1950s were years of terror and sorrow. The People's Liberation Army took over hospitals and schools and burned down the old county-town chapel; Christians re-built a much smaller one later on. Several pastors were executed on suspicion of collaboration because they received letters from American missionaries. Others were sent to labor camps during waves of political campaigns. Under great pressure, church attendance dropped swiftly. A great number of Protestants renounced the faith, so as to be employed in the public service. All chapels in the island were closed down during the period of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 except for one in the county town that barely survived until the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. For more than one decade, Protestantism seemed to be wiped out in Pingtan. Nonetheless,

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it would again prove to be a vigorous local faith when churches were re-instituted in 1982.

Women's Community

Today, there are more than eighty registered TSPM (the Three-Self Patriotic Movement) chapels in Pingtan Island. Except for a few congregations belonging to the True Jesus Church, most TSPM churches are affiliated with the American Methodist tradition. There are also a few unregistered house churches. In 2004, the Methodist branch of the TSPM claimed 45,000 members among the 387,000 inhabitants in Pingtan.

In the Pingtan Methodist churches, in which I conducted my fieldwork, two themes regarding gender clearly emerged--the presumption of male dominance and the de facto feminization of Protestantism. In the county town, the chief pastor was the only man among four pastors and an un-ordained preacher who together took care of three chapels. Whereas the pastors and the preacher share preaching responsibilities in a variety of church meetings, the male pastor played a distinguishing role from his female colleagues. Female pastors and the minister concerned themselves only with internal church affairs. They supervised various sub-groups such as the choirs, Sunday schools, 'prayer points', and lay leaders' training courses. The male pastor, being the Chairman of the Pingtan County Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee, also headed all eighty TSPM churches in Pingtan. He was in charge of the arrangement of church personnel, coordinating the annual countywide evangelistic event, and representing the Pingtan Protestant church in regular meetings with officials of the Religious Affairs Bureau.

The five full-time church workers could hardly take care of the almost 10,000 believers who lived in Pingtan County Town. The vitality of local Protestant life did not lie in the three chapels and services held in them, but in the neighborhood house meeting--'prayer points'-- run by lay leaders. In downtown Pingtan, there were sixty-three 'prayer points', groups of between thirty and three hundred people. A

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prayer point was co-directed by a few lay female leaders and the meetings were held in their houses. Presumably men were welcome, but there was a nearly exclusively female attendance everywhere. Most speakers preaching in the prayer point's formal weekly meeting on Fridays were also women.

In addition to the formal meetings, every prayer point also arranged various activities which constituted a considerable part of members' social and religious life. On weekday afternoons, there were prayer meetings, Bible studies, and hymn-singing gatherings, in which illiterate women were taught a few hymns word by word, sentence by sentence. On afternoons without meetings, 'sisters' still came by members' houses, and exchanged interesting pieces of gossip, enjoying each other's company. A prayer point was also a support group. Group leaders continuously collected information about everyone's recent situation, which were mentioned during the prayer meetings, and visited people in need.

All prayer points also participated in a program to visit patients in the County Hospital (formerly Pingtan Christian Hospital). Twice a year, each prayer point was responsible for a hospital visit of three or four days. When a prayer point took on the duty, the leaders received a list of patients' names and bed numbers from the last prayer point. During the following three or four days, the prayer point organized several groups; each one visited some people on the list and prayed for them every day. They also had the responsibility of keeping the information on the list up to date—crossing out those who left the hospital and adding new names of patients who were willing to be prayed for. In this way, Christian women made sure that they visited and prayed for every sick person in the hospital everyday throughout the year, even during the Chinese New Year, providing that the patient accepted their ministry.

During my fieldwork in 2005, I observed this ministry in the hospital. In a ward, after a few words of greeting, a group of three women started by singing a short song, followed by one of them praying aloud for the patient and families for one or two minutes. Her praying ended with the three reciting the Lord's Prayer together. After that, there was a time of praying in a low voice, slowly turning into silence. They opened their eyes, the group leader said words of blessing and they left. If the patient

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was sleeping, they would still follow the same procedure but kept their voices down.

During my observation, it became clear to me that rather than ‘visiting’ someone on the basis of interpersonal sympathy, those Christian women were performing a ritualized faith healing as a complement to medical treatment. They conceived the hospital visit not so much as a ministry of expressing care and emotional support to ill people, but rather as a spiritual act aiming to deal with the illness based on confidence in the efficacy of their prayer. In this way, Christian women extended their ministry beyond the domestic sphere into the public, mediating divine healing power to any hospital patient willing to accept it.

The religious life of prayer points displays characteristics of Chinese peasant women’s social space. Margery Wolf reports that Chinese women are engaged in a different type of practice in domestic life and social relationships than their menfolk (1972). A girl is not a member of her father’s lineage and once married her relationship to her husband’s descent group depends on whether she produces sons for the lineage. An outsider within her husband’s family, a new bride is usually struggling with loneliness, and endeavors to create her ‘uterine family’ by bearing children and establishing strong ties of sentiments with them, so as to build up her own small circle of security. The uterine family centering on her has no formal structure and no public existence; it is a part of women’s subculture that granted them some degree of manipulation and power within a patrilineal system. Another part of the subculture of women lies beyond domestic life. In rural Taiwan, Margery Wolf observed, peasant women form informal gatherings as they ‘wash clothes on the riverbank, clean and pare vegetables at a communal pump, mend under a tree that is a known meeting place, and stop to rest on a bench or group of stones with other women’ (M. Wolf 1972: 38). In this ‘women’s community’, as she calls it, village opinion is shaped and circulated, with considerable influence on not only women themselves but also their menfolk. The women’s community forms a mutual support network and establishes for themselves a certain amount of protection when they have troubles with husbands and in-laws. Although the women’s community, like the uterine family, had no public existence, this subculture of women could exert considerable influence on village affairs and

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

meshed perfectly into the main culture of the society. The women's community is a social space beyond the confinement of domesticity with potential impact on the areas under men's control (M. Wolf 1972, 41).

In another article, Margery Wolf (1974), using missionary accounts and village studies of different provinces of China, extends the idea of the uterine family and women's community that she came up with in rural Taiwan to consider women's life in Communist China. She argues that women in mainland China also learn the 'skills of diplomacy' in the domestic setting, and continue to practice them in their interactions with people outside the domestic unit. After the revolution, the new Marriage Law and ideological guidelines assured women innovative rights, but at the same time women were asked to abandon their traditional source of security. Not surprisingly, the propaganda campaign for marriage and family reform met stubborn resistance in rural areas, and peasant women continued to rely on the relational skills with which the traditional family system equipped them to participate in local society.

Recently, in her book *Niangjia and Pojia : Women's Living Space and Backstage Power in a North China Village*, Li Xia (2010) employs the concept of 'women's living space' to embrace Margery Wolf's ideas of uterine family and women's community. The women's living space is first of all a female-constructed 'family in life', different from the male-centered patriarchal family and a result of women's kinship practices. From this non-institutional social unit a kinship and neighborhood network is created for and around the housewife. Through daily interaction and expressions of sentiment, women are deeply engaged with village social network construction, which, in turn, offers them 'backstage power' in family and local community.

While Margery Wolf develops the idea of women's community on her observation in Taiwan in the 1970s, Li Xia's research testifies that this women's social network continues to be lively and influential in rural China today. It is profoundly embedded in women's lower status in a patriarchal society and constitutes their strategic response to the latter. Their study of Chinese peasant women's social life is useful in characterizing the social space of Protestants' prayer points in Pingtan. Christian women formed a women's community by meeting in the afternoon in the

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

absence of their husbands. These gatherings help women develop interpersonal relationships beyond home and blood ties. They offer women a space to air their voices, to receive care and support from each other, and to develop social skills such as leadership and articulation. Moreover, prayer points provide certain types of female power, exerting influences on the social world that includes men. From a masculine point of view this kind of gathering is peripheral, trivial, and unproductive. It lies outside the horizon of the male social world and thus its existence, significance and power can be invisible to men.

It should be noted that Pingtan has a somewhat different social setting. The fishing industry, migrant labors and human trafficking have resulted in more men than women leaving the island. Many women have the experience of taking care of a family without a husband for some period of time. This indeed adds importance to prayer points as a support group for women, granting them more freedom to be involved in activities outside the domestic sphere, and making the Christian women's community perhaps the most dynamic and animated network in the local society. In Pingtan, the social space of prayer points overlaps and intertwines with women's social space. In a sense, Protestantism here has re-created women's traditional social space, appropriated it, and regulated it to some extent with its religious practices and activities. Protestantism then comes to a point where it is subsisting on the vitality of the Christianized female social sphere.

The prayer point as a social and religious realm for women finds comparisons in studies of American Christian fundamentalist women. Brasher (1998), in her research on two conservative congregations in the USA, discovers a disjuncture between authority and power in terms of gender difference. In terms of the overall congregational authority, male dominance takes precedence, and female ministers were not allowed to preach. But women have created their own small women-only groups independent of the established male-dominated power structure of the church. Such 'female enclaves' function as major social networks, and offer various kinds of emotional and practical support. Also, Griffith's (1997) study of the conservative evangelical-charismatic 'Women's Aglow' movement in the USA challenges the

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feminist view that women's participation in conservative religion is the source of their own oppression. Although women of Aglow embrace the doctrine of female submission to male authority, they develop a nuanced but radical renegotiation of power and resistance. Aglow women support one another to cope with marital and familial problems, and find considerable autonomy and authority within the movement. In Pingtan, Protestant authority and power was also divided along the gender line, although female pastors are allowed to preach to both men and women, and women's groups do not exclude men in principle. Nevertheless, everyday Protestant religious lives have been so thoroughly feminized that it would be odd to find a man appearing in those afternoon gatherings, just as, in traditional women's informal gatherings, a group of women would stop gossiping if someone's husband joined them. The Protestant women's community carves out and flourishes in women-only spaces which gain the approval of male-dominated church structure, but escape the latter's immediate control. Prayer points in Pingtan work similarly to Brasher's female enclaves and Griffith's women's movement, deprived of formal authority but nonetheless exercising considerable power and autonomy.

Feminized Sacred Power

If the power of the sacred that people experience in religion is in fact the power of society, as Durkheim argues, it follows that the sacred power mediated through Christian women's community is a power empowering women and at women's disposal. Although this is not to say that local Protestantism ceases to endorse a patriarchal order, women have found ways to draw on sacred power in resistance to the dominant male authority, thus contradicting the prevailing gender order. In the following, I will illustrate this feminized religious power by probing into two women's stories.

A Stubborn Husband and His Wild Horses

Linju was a woman in her late thirties. She was familiar with Christianity from

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

childhood, but ceased to be a practicing Christian as an adult. After marriage, Linju and her husband ran a grocery and rice wholesale shop. The earnings were passable, but her husband always dreamed of establishing a bigger and more profitable business. One day her husband bought seven wild horses from Ürümqi City, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. He had decided to start a horse-riding business at a beach resort in Pingtan, and believed that it would be a money-making enterprise. Nevertheless, because the horses were wild, he had to employ a tamer to train them. Those wild horses started off a series of trials for Linju. Investing most of their savings in the horses, Linju’s husband devoted himself to taking care of them. He moved out of their home and lived in a beach resort with his horses. While the period of training extended beyond his expectation, Linju ran the store by herself to sustain the family and her husband’s would-be business. The burden of operating the shop alone, plus looking after their children, exhausted her. As her husband appeared to display more affection for his horses than for her, grumbling grew into vexation, and the quarrels between them became furious. Her husband began to ask for a divorce, which disappointed and distressed her bitterly.

Linju’s trials led to a journey of return to the faith of her childhood. Suffering severely, Linju immersed herself in praying, often with tears. She also sang hymns and found consolation in their words. She decided that the only hope of bringing her husband back was for him to believe in Jesus and give up his horse-riding business. Linju started to pray for her husband’s salvation.

Her prayer worked like a series of curses upon her husband. One horse fell into a well and died the next day. Another two horses ran wild and devastated a vegetable farm; the owner took retribution by poisoning them. Only four horses were left, but the bad luck continued. One horse kicked Linju's husband in the chest. This accident brought him back home with excruciating pain. One day, listening to a Christian program on the radio, he was deeply touched by a hymn, and felt an impulse to believe in Jesus.

Although Linju’s husband became a Christian, he did not give up his plans for the horse-riding business. This plan, Linju believed, had become Satan’s scheme to

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dissolve her marriage, and would lead to her husband's destruction. For her husband, the remaining four horses had finally been well trained, and it was the time to reap a handsome profit. Faced with her strenuous objections, Linju's husband found their chief pastor, explained his business plan to him, and came back excitedly to tell Linju that the pastor had given him support. Linju, refusing to admit defeat, also visited the pastor and gave her causes for opposing her husband. The poor pastor thus had a talk with Linju's husband again, saying to him that agreement between husband and wife was proof of God's guidance. Since Linju did not agree with his plan, he should be patient and keep praying. Linju's husband, however, had already talked with a village head and worked out an agreement by which he could conduct his horse-riding business in that village. In return, he would give a sum of money to the village every year. The persistent Linju went to that village head, asking for his sympathy for her affliction and convincing him that her husband was not smart enough to run the business. She succeeded. The village head refused her husband's proposal. Finally, he had to sell the four horses at a low price.

Linju's marital disappointment, however, did not immediately disappear along with the horses. Her unappreciative husband still frequently snapped at her with cutting remarks. Her efforts and success in drawing her husband's business plan to a close hurt his masculine dignity badly, which in return brought her about continuing domestic pain. Miserable, Linju asked Jesus to give her the strength to learn the lesson of patience. She took it as an opportunity to grow closer to the Lord. When her husband started to abuse her verbally, she endeavored not to respond but to evade him and pray that he would stop. Linju recounted: 'Time and again God made me withstand his curses. Every time when I heard them, I prayed that God would seal up his mouth, for it was the work of devil. I drew the strength from God and rebuked the devil, and won a victory over and over again.' One day her husband announced: 'The sixteenth of the next month is my birthday, and we will get divorced on the day.' Both Linju and her mother-in law burst into tears at once. During those days, distressed and nearing desperation, Linju confided her frustrations as a wife to a Christian sister and requested her prayers. Her mother-in-law also had the chief pastor talk to her husband. Linju prayed that she herself would have the wisdom to talk to her husband. One day she

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

apologized for her bad temper, promised that her reforms would follow from repentance, and implored his forgivingness. 'I used to be keen on saving face and would never apologize. God gave me this chance to deal with my sin,' Linju explained. Her husband never mentioned divorce again.

Linju had won her husband back and saved her marriage. Nevertheless, she needed to make sure that he would not undertake another business venture. She hence positively arranged his life. In her words:

> The desire to start an enterprise had always been strong for him. I thought if the pastor could get my husband serving in the church, his heart would not be grasped by business. I called the pastor, asking him to invite my husband to join the church choir….He agreed. I waited several months, but he did not do this. I was very angry. The only thing I could do was to ask help from God to get him [my husband] to do something in the church. One time the church announced, 'Whoever wants to join the choir should register for it.' My husband went to register, and I was exhilarated. Then I told him to attend not only church meetings but also prayer point meetings. He refused. He started to go to church every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, practicing singing, listening to the Word. God's word feeds his life. God grasps his heart. Now he stays at home, reading the Bible, learning tailoring. I think it is good enough that you can stay at home. I am very satisfied. My husband was craving for making a lot of money and having people admire him. He thought that if he stayed at home; people would say: 'It is your wife who has the ability.'

For Linju, her husband's ambition of building up a successful business, like his wild horses, needed to be domesticated. To achieve this goal, she relied on a divine power as well as a supportive community. On the one hand, she resorted to a male divinity. As she put it: 'Due to my husband's lack of affection for me, God granted me faith to depend on Him. If my husband had treated me well, I would definitely not have loved Jesus so much.' On the other hand, the divine power was more clearly a

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

feminizing power, in the sense that it helped to frustrate masculine ambition, bring a man back home, confine him there, and make him practice a domestic craft, tailoring.

Similarly, at first glance, the church is a male-dominated community. Linju's husband knew that the male chief pastor would understand and approve of his business plan, and thought he could appeal to this male authority and have his wife submit to him. Nevertheless, as the story unfolded, it became clear that the male pastor who was responsible for running the church has to take women's marital and familial concerns into account. In fact, one important role of the male chief pastor was being a male authority that could efficiently negotiate with husbands and air wives' opinions, in this case teaching Linju's husband that approval from his wife was the confirmation of God's guidance. Also, Linju assumed that the pastor's male authority was also available to her, so that when she found the pastor did not persuade her husband to join the choir, which was one of few ministries open to men, she got very angry.

Linju's husband was aware that he did not want to have anything to do with the women's community, the prayer point, but from the beginning of his conversion, he was involved in an overall feminized religious world, and his wife had acquired all the resources she needed, emotional, practical, and spiritual, to deal with his perversity. Finally, the church worked for Linju as a means to constrain her husband's devotion to businesses, a channel leading to his emasculation. It is true that her husband's business venture, his neglect of family duty, and his cold-heartedness towards Linju caused great suffering to her, but, as a male interpreter of the story, I also feel sorry that his masculine aspiration to be a successful and respectable member of the society was so completely circumscribed.

As a matter of fact, Linju has never been able to challenge her husband's male authority directly. The biblical teaching of wifely submission required her to avoid confrontation with her foul-mouthed husband. Struggling to love in the face of intense disappointment, frustration, and anger, she could only experience a change through prayer and submission to God and husband. In response to her husband's provocation and his intention to divorce, she had to gain victory through surrender. But for Linju submission and surrender represented far more than simple passivity. In her story,

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

surrender to God and husband was conceived as a way of releasing divine power. Avoiding her husband's crushing words and praying fervently that the devils work be defeated, she was empowered to restore her familial relationships. Her understandingthat her husband's words and attitudes stemmed from the devil revealed a reworking of gender identities: the man was with the devil and the woman with God. A man needed respect but could be spiritually inferior. Satan's scheme for destroying a marriage and a home had captured the weaker part of the relationship in the first place, and it was the woman who had to assume the responsibility of fighting against evil by praying and the act of submission to God and husband, including offering an apology to mend his fragile ego. Linju's efforts to maintain domestic harmony was comprehended as spiritual warfare against the sinful nature of her husband. In doing so, she went to the authority of God, and gained a kind of mediated agency. This 'tactical' practice of submission granted the relatively powerless some degree of control and transformed submission into a tool of authority, however limited it may appear (Griffith 1997).

This type of feminine power is comparable to that described in Elizabeth Brusco's work among Pentecostals in Colombia (1995). She argues that conversion to Pentecostalism leads to the reformation of a male machismo that threatens the well-being of family. Within the movement men gain the dignity of an authority based on the model of Jesus himself, which requires them to giving up alcohol, drugs, gambling, and sexual adventures. Brusco names the Pentecostal religious milieu a 'female ethos' (Brusco 1995: 129), and suggests that Pentecostalism endorses a view of ethics consistent with wives' interests, to which male converts are brought to conform. As she says, 'the "other world" that the male convert enters is the feminine world. He eschews male values and conforms to a value system and behavioral norms that are consistent with women's aspirations' (124). In Pingtan, Protestant women also dilute the traditional patriarchal gender model and seek to bring men to meet their expectations. This less patriarchal model is an important reason for the continuing predominance of women in the church.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

The Sanctification of Women's Social Space

As Linju's story reveals, domestic trouble and emotional distress are central issues that the women's religion tackles. These themes also appear in the story of Yu.

Yu's husband was involved in an extramarital affair when her son was five years old. They divorced after all her efforts to end her husband's relationship with another woman came to naught. She suffered from depression for a long time, especially because custody of their son was granted to her husband. Three years later, she was married again, but the grave harm that divorce caused did not go away. As she recounted:

> After I married into this family, I did not leave the threshold or talk with neighbors. I almost never went outside. I felt…in my mind, I married him, only to have a sense of belonging. The rest of my life was just a matter of the meaningless passing of time. The second marriage… before I believed in the Lord, I thought my life was already over. I could not feel any change. The divorce impaired my whole life greatly, and it still has an impact on my current ministry.

In order to seek a change, Yu accepted an invitation to go to church, even though her new husband's family was committed to folk religious practices. Going to church did not improve her state of depression immediately, but brought about another outcome-- she started to feel uncomfortable being immersed in an environment of traditional gods and spirit worship. Over a long period of time, it had been rumored that the house they lived was a place 'where devils wandered'. Strange things were said to happen there. While her mother-in-law responded with more devout worship of gods and propitiation of spirits, Yu thought that it was her mother-in-law's traditional practices that brought evil forces into the house. After one of Yu's sisters-in-law, living next door, seemed to be possessed, and spoke in an unusual voice, Yu found it unbearable. The spirit-possession soon became so well known that on the first and fifteenth day of the lunar month, people came to consult the spirit residing there. Yu prayed that she could leave this place. In the next year, they sold the house and moved into a newly built one.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Yu was very thankful that God had answered her prayer. She yearned for a complete commitment to Jesus. Nevertheless, her husband and mother-in-law would at most only allow her to go to the Sunday service, and she would see their displeased faces when she came home. At home, her responsibility was to look after her one year old son. Her husband, who ran a small business making traditional cakes and pastries at home, also demanded her help. They went into debt due to the construction of the new house and bore a heavy financial burden. Once, the yearly evangelistic meeting in her birth village was about to be held, and, coincidentally, her husband received an order of cakes from the village. After delivering the cakes and sending her baby to her mother, Yu stayed for the meeting without telling her husband and mother-in-law. She felt joyful and peaceful throughout the three days. ‘At that time, I was truly saved by grace.’

Reckoning herself as a converted Christian, Yu hoped she could be devoted to church work, although her daily duties made it impracticable. Her dream finally came true when she went through a life crisis. On the eve of the Chinese New Year in 1996, bleeding, Yu experienced excruciating pain. She was sent to hospital, where doctors concluded she had a dangerous ectopic pregnancy and needed an emergency operation. Waiting outside the theatre, Yu’s husband made a vow that if Yu lived, he would set her free from the family business and let her serve her God as she wished. The operation was successful, and Yu’s husband kept his vow. Unable to run the business without Yu, he ended it and stayed at home for two years. Due to the crisis, family members converted to the Christian faith one by one.

During those days, while her husband often worried about their livelihood and debts, Yu happily devoted her time to praying, reading the Bible, and attending Christian meetings. On one occasion, when Yu was present at a prayer point meeting, the speaker suddenly stopped her presentation and said to the audience, ‘I will not come to this prayer point next time because among you there is already someone who can preach.’ She pointed to Yu. Yu, having received only primary schooling, denied this instantly. She had to deny it again and again because her prayer-point leaders unremittingly invited her to preach. At last, she wrote some notes and spoke in front of

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

those Christian sisters. She became a regular prayer point preacher from then on.

Similarly to Linju's story above, Yu went out to serve the Christian women's community while her husband stayed at home. Even though her husband started running a business again, Yu was not confined to her domestic duties, as she said:

> I am very joyful in front of God. Now no matter how much visiting, serving and preaching I have to do, no matter how late I come home in the evening, my husband does not say a word. Before I believed in the Lord, he did not even allow me to go back to my parents' home. So now I am very free. And my husband says, 'You are supreme. You are the leader, the leader of the family.' I thank the Lord. Sometimes I am very tired after visiting people. When I come home, my husband has prepared rice and dishes. Everything is ready for me. So I say, 'Lord Jesus, you treat me really well!'…. Sometimes when I come back late, my mother-in-law also cooks for me. My mother-in-law is eighty-five years old this year. Thank God. She is very good at praying. She says, 'Lord Jesus, my daughter-in-law goes out to pray for others, so please listen to my prayer.' She is very smart!

Yu's religious experience tells a story of personal transformation and empowerment. During the long period of emotional depression and hopelessness, going to church provided her with personal time and space. In an environment of folk religious practice, praying to Jesus became a way of asserting her religious affiliation. Going to church and praying to Jesus was an expression of her autonomy. It was most explicitly demonstrated in her act of leaving her husband's home for three days without telling him, and attending the evangelical meeting in her natal village. It was while making this bold step that Yu truly converted. The divine power of Christianity became her power, a power eventually transforming her husband's family to her benefit and granting her full autonomy.

The realization of Yu's freedom started from her husband's vow and conversion. Resorting to Yu's God, he submitted his male authority over his wife to his new God. It is interesting that he did not sacrifice himself to serve God but sacrificed his wife

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

instead. This, nevertheless, was an honest deal. For one thing, the promise led to the end of his cake-making business, a real sacrifice on his part. For another, his personal works of service were, after all, useless in the Christian women's community. For Yu's husband, converting to the Christian God implied relinquishing patriarchal prerogatives that the society granted him, and surrendering to a power that sanctifies women's traditional social space.

Yu was the one being offered in her husband's vow. For her, nonetheless, it was not a sacrifice but the gaining of her freedom. Serving in the women's community, she abdicated her responsibility for domestic labor. Developing her gifts in the Christian women's community and establishing herself as a preacher, Yu's spiritual credibility, authority and leadership extended back to her domestic life. As we have seen, she ministered to other women outside, whilst her husband and mother-in-law cooked for her at home. What is more, her husband now calls her 'the leader of the family.' Again, Christianity manifests itself as a feminine power, a power discrediting male authority and entitling women to share formerly patriarchal privileges.

In her study of the feminization of Christianity in Western Europe, Linda Woodhead argues that it was achieved by the overlapping of the domestic and religious spheres, which she refers to as 'the sanctification of the domestic sphere' (2004:232). Nevertheless, in Pingtan, Protestant sacred power tends to release women from domestic responsibilities and grant them freedom to participate in the women's community. As a result, men are called back to take on domestic duties previously assumed by their wives. Instead of sanctifying the domestic sphere, I propose, in China, feminization results in the sanctification of women's social space.

The personal transformation and empowerment that Yu experienced conveys the underlying theme of dealing with a patriarchal order. Recovery from domestic wounds and release from household confinement made Yu's religious salvation also serve as a pathway leading to an alternative social integrity that overcame personal loss and humiliation inflicted by a patriarchal system. This parallels what Salvatore Cucchiari writes about the Sicilian Pentecostal women he studied: 'more than just the healing of old wounds, religious redemption is for these women a continuing struggle to achieve a

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

new social integrity that goes beyond the limits set for women by the prevailing gender system' (Cucchiari 1990: 698). The Christian women's community has also become a female collaboration to heal their internal scars and establish new channel for achieving self-esteem.

Men's Uneasiness with a Women's Domain

In Pingtan, the fact that more men than women work outside the island indeed contributes to a gender imbalance in the church. However, the majority of Christian men who stay in Pingtan are still reluctant to go to church. I was repeated told by female informants that their Christian husbands were around but seldom attend church activities. As we have seen, the feminization of Protestantism in China is achieved by the sanctification of traditional women's social space. Conversion to Christianity implies the acknowledgement of the spiritual and social power of the Christian women's community. While Christian wives were drawn into this community, Christian husbands showed their religious devotion by allowing their wives to leave home and to create, enhance and divinize the female social space with other women. As Christianity becomes closely connected with women's everyday lives, it becomes equally irrelevant to men's interests. Perhaps men are not excluded from the Christian community, but they would find that this community is not their social world and does not address their concerns. The Christian faith has much more to say about their wives' lives than their own.

As Protestant life becomes a women's domain, men's involvement in church activities may put their masculine character in danger. Even going to church may be regarded feminized behavior, as one of my female informants puts it pointedly:

> In Pingtan…it is women who believe in the Lord. Where are the men? There are very few! Take the example of going to church. If a man is on his way to church, he will cover his face, not daring to go openly. If someone asks where he is going, he will say, 'I have some business to do.' He will not admit [going to church], as if only imbeciles would

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

believe in the Lord.

The sense of masculine superiority prevents men from stepping into women’s social spaces, particularly, a prayer point. They find the burden of social discrimination upon a male church-goer too heavy to bear. Boys growing up in the church may gradually come to see the Christian faith as irrelevant to their lives, and decide that the church is no longer a place for them. I was repeatedly told by female believers that they had brought their children to church, but boys stopped going to church after going to junior high school.

A grown-up man may enter the church when he becomes frustrated in the masculine world, as the story of Juin shows. Retiring from the army, Juin had attended church meetings with his family, but disparaged those non-militaristic messages such as ‘if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.’ He attributes his disaffection with the church to his gender: ‘As a rule, women believe; men follow, but seldom attend meetings. Men still gamble and play cards; they focus their attention on business.’ Afterwards, Juin’s business collapsed and he went into debt. Friends and relatives who had lent him money began to see him as unreliable. Distressed, he went back to church and found peace. He began to find every preached message relevant to his life. He had to read the Bible daily to have the courage to live on. He concluded his story with the following:

> Sisters find it easier to believe. It is difficult for men to receive the faith. In men’s opinion, everything is acquired through struggling. The nature of men is insubordination, desiring to conquer the world. A man is expected to struggle, to be self-reliant. Only when he is helpless will he receive [the faith]…With suffering, the end [of the way] of the world is the beginning of salvation.

As Juin was aware, the Christian faith espouses a principle different from that of the men’s world. Salvation involved compromising masculine identity and aspirations. The sacred power he experienced did not empower him to venture into his social world, but consoled him when he was precluded from it and offered him another, feminine world. This was feminized sacred power.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Women's Options in the Absence of the Church

I have explained the disproportionate presence of women in the Pingtan TSPM church by referring to the appeal of Protestant religious life to women and its irrelevance to men. Whereas local Protestantism is integral to the existing gender order, it is also used to give access to power from inside and becomes subversive to the existing gender order. The Christian women's community reconfigures gender-based social power and contributes to the gender imbalance in the church.

An explanation, however, could go the other way around—the preponderance of women in church may also shape the formation and social position of the Christian women's community. From this perspective, the Christian women's community, as a social mechanism that reproduces the predominance of women in church, is itself a result of the preponderance of women. To fully grasp the gender imbalance, therefore, we have to consider not only what role of the women's community plays in Protestant religious life, but also how and why the Christian women's community came into existence. I will address the latter question by looking at the Protestant transformation under the Cultural Revolution.

The existence of Protestant underground gatherings during the Cultural Revolution has been well noted (Hunter and Chan 1993; F Yang 2006). Some evidence shows that the rapid Protestant growth in contemporary China started in the 1970s (Lambert 1999; Dunch 2001; Kao 2009). In this sense, the Cultural Revolution was a formative period for Protestantism in China today. In Pingtan, one of my informants, Fuyu, was a lay leader during the Cultural Revolution. She helped to organize Protestant underground meetings in several villages, and established a reputation as a faith healer and a Christian exorcist. According to her, when ordained pastors were sent to labor camp, those who evangelized neighbors with great enthusiasm, ministered to fellow believers with surprisingly 'spiritual gifts', and took leadership roles in Protestant groups were all lay women like her. The new converts they attracted were also women. The resemblance strongly suggests that the Christian women's community in Pingtan today can be traced to these underground gatherings under the Cultural Revolution.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

The case in Pingtan is comparable to that in 'the H area', another Fujian coastal region (Kao 2009). Here the severe repression of religious activities under the Cultural Revolution brought about a re-configuration of the local religious arena. Whereas communal religious life was destroyed, private religious activities, such as the worship of stove god and goddess, continued to exist secretly throughout the Cultural Revolution. New religious arenas featured supernaturalism, individualistic practice, and female religiosity. Deprived of religious authorities such as the Bible and pastors, a decentralized form of Protestantism became heavily experiential in emphasis. In this non-institutionalized, feminized religious arena, new Protestant converts were also mostly women. Evidence from these two cases strongly indicates that Protestant underground meetings during the Cultural Revolution were very much a 'women-dominated religion', largely characterized by practices dealing with misfortune and illness (Sered 1994).

Why were women so strongly associated with private religious forms? An explanation can be found in the gender division of religious participation among Han Chinese. Emily M. Ahern (1975), based on her field data in Taiwan, explores different ways in which Chinese women are considered polluting and dangerously powerful. This ambivalent perception is closely related to women's position in a system of male kinship, especially 'their capacity to alter a family's form by adding members to it, dividing it, and disturbing male authority' (Ahern 1975: 200). The power and danger is conceived within a set of concepts about cleanliness and pollution. [1] In Chinese folk theory, the gods' cleanliness represents the social order and neatly bounded social groups, whereas things unclean represent a threat to order or a result of disorder. Menstrual blood, symbolically representing women's ambivalent social power, is the major source of ritual pollution. As the polluting substance is exclusively associated with women, they are allowed less contact with gods than men are. Men have a greater responsibility for worshipping high, clean gods and play a major role in communal religious activities during festivals, whereas women tend to cater to low ranking gods and ghosts, on behalf their families (Ahern 1975: 205-207).

Traditional gender divisions of religious participation left printed a clear mark on

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

the structural features of the religious sphere during the Cultural Revolution. The communal types of religion were far more susceptible to the harsh political suppression of religious activities than the private, largely women-dominated, religions. When communal religious activities were strictly prohibited, the foundation of male participation collapsed. My life-story data show that, in the 1960s and 1970s, it was usually women who sought help from various kinds of supernatural beings and it was they who first converted to the Christianity, and then might or might not convert their husbands. Due to the devastation of temples, traditional higher-ranking gods, who were able to exert efficacious power for reigning in ghosts and other ambiguous, threatening spirits, became almost inaccessible. As people's life stories invariably reveal, the only remaining local supernatural beings were stove gods, female shamans' tutelary spirits, and countless, rampant malevolent spirits.[2] This reconfiguration of the spiritual world, in fact, contributed to women's eagerness to resort to Christianity. Every Sunday, they got together covertly before daybreak, singing hymns, sharing needs and emotions, praying to a clean, powerful high God for healing and protection, and left the house with joy and hope. This kind of collective fervor and social solidarity was not usually experienced when they consulted a local 'witch'. This type of underground religious groups, I propose, was the nascence of Protestant women's community.

After the re-establishment of the TSPM bureaucratic structure in the reform era, with its new emphasis on religious hierarchy and male leadership, these furtive household gatherings have been absorbed into the official church and continue to operate as sub-realm congregations. This transformation of the gender role is accurately summarized by Susan Starr Sered in her study of religions dominated by women: 'Among the factors that encourage women's attainment of authority roles are emphasis on personality or supernatural power rather than on hierarchy or the training of cult/church leaders....women often function as founders/leaders, losing their leadership roles as the religion becomes more institutionalized (1994: 5).' Although Protestant women lost authority roles after the church was re-instituted, their intimate relationships, wide variety of activities, well-established social networks, and what Cucchiari calls 'antipatriarchal potentialities' (1988: 435) continue on to attract women

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

to its fold. As we have seen, the women's community plays a pivotal role in the persistent predominance of women in Pingtan Protestant church today.

Conclusion

Feminization is an important, albeit often neglected, aspect of Protestantism in contemporary China. Here the feature involves the overwhelming majority of women in church, their higher levels of religiosity than men, and, most importantly, the ways in which women appropriate a religious gender order that legitimizes patriarchal privileges and work within such an order so as to maximize their own advantage. Feminization in this sense implies constantly challenging the ability of a patriarchal order to reinforce and sanctify the unequal distribution of power in relation to gender. In Linda Woodhead's words, it is 'a tactical trajectory within religion' that 'bargains with patriarchy' (2007a).

To elaborate this strategy, in this article, I employ Margery Wolf's idea of 'women's community' to characterize Christian sisters' social space, explain its appeals to them, and search for its origin. In the Pingtan TSPM church, neighborhood 'prayer points' constitute a major part of Christian women's religious and everyday lives, allowing them to develop close friendships, cultivate their social skills, and exercise divine healing power in the public realm. Under the protection of established, male-dominated church structure, the Protestant women's community does not attempt to overthrow the traditional patriarchal system or promote an ideology of emancipation, but instead develops subtle forms of resistance and subversion. Inhabiting Chinese women's traditional social space, they sanctify it, making it a channel for achieving their own autonomy and empowerment. The sanctification of the women's community provides women with the means to deal with personal loss, hurt and humiliation imposed by a patriarchal order. It also results in men's uneasiness with the church, an increasingly female domain. Moreover, the women's community can be traced to secret Protestant meetings that were organized and attended by women under the Cultural Revolution, triggering and shaping the Protestant revival in the last decades. The women's community thus attests to the long-term impact of the Cultural

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Revolution on the transformation of Protestantism in China.

In the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, missionary Protestantism broke into Chinese society either by allying with modern institutions, namely, western education and medication (Dunch 1996), or by providing political support to village patriarchal clans (Lee 2003). Today, when religion, especially Christianity, has been swept away from the public sphere, Protestantism is gaining a new impetus by situating itself within the traditional female social network. In this way, Protestantism in China no long goes hand in hand with modernization or Western political power, but with Chinese women's demands and aspirations.

NOTES

1. Stevan Harrell (1986) also discusses the gendering diversity of social power reflected in Chinese popular religion and reaches a similar view.
2. For a detailed discussion of Chinese category of spiritual beings and how they are related to the social life, please see Jordan (1972), A. Wolf (1974) and Potter (1974).

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