Han Christian Conversion in Taiwan: A Study of Presbyterian Converts from Traditional Chinese Religions

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Religious Studies Of The Catholic University of America In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

© Copyright All Rights Reserved By Jufang Tseng

Washington, D.C.

2013
Han Christian Conversion in Taiwan: A Study of Presbyterian Converts from Traditional Chinese Religions

Jufang Tseng, PhD

Director: Dr. Raymond Studzinski

This study investigates the process by which Taiwanese Han people converted from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds to Presbyterianism. These converts are called First Generation Christians. Based on the connection between somatic experiences and religious beliefs inherited from Han religions and culture, Taiwanese Han people tend to turn to Christianity either due to the power of ling, a Chinese understanding of religious efficacy, or due to their specific expressions such as gan-dong. Gan-dong means “to be emotionally touched” which is an expression used to specify how a First Generation Christian emotionally connects with the Christian God.

However, the influential ling experiences frequently occurring among First Generation Christians are not regarded important among Presbyterian mainstream academics. Following Western theological interpretation, Presbyterian mainstream academics stress intellectual understandings of Christianity and do not address in culturally emotional understandings of God, such as a reliance on supernatural experiences and feelings of being saved by evil spirits. The inconsistency between the emphasis on intellectual understandings and local emotional understandings gives rise to a cultural interpretation at the grass root level. Local Presbyterian pastors participate in testifying the importance of local somatic experiences.

Based on the results revealed, Substitute, Competition and Assimilation types were developed to clarify how converts adjust when transitioning from traditional Chinese religions to Christianity. Besides these three types, two further categories, ling and non-ling
subtypes, were developed to represent the effects of ling for conversion decisions. When almost half of the interviewees report that their conversion happened within a ling context, the other half of converts did not make their decision due to efficacious results.

Conversions that were influenced by ling, are illustrations of William James’ “sick souls” type, presenting dramatic elements. In contrast, conversions that were not influenced by ling, tended to occur in individuals who belong to “healthy-mindedness,” presenting fewer or no dramatic elements. Consequently, interviewees are categorized into a total of six types. These six types propose a new model for the conversion process under the influence of traditional Chinese religions and culture.
This dissertation by Jufang Tseng fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Religion and Culture approved by Dr. Raymond Studzinski, as Director, and by Dr. Charles B. Jones and Dr. Lucy M. Cohen as Readers.

_____________________________
Dr. Raymond Studzinski, Director

_____________________________
Dr. Charles B. Jones, Reader

_____________________________
Dr. Lucy M. Cohen, Reader
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Sampling Background and Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Historical Background</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Past Scholarship on Presbyterian Conversion</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Recent Christian Conversion Stories</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Interviews and Questions Designed</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Conversion in a Cultural Perspective</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Conversion in an Asian Pluralistic Context</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Past Philosophical Discussions on Han Conversion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The Element of Ling</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ling-xian and Ling-gan</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Zong-jiao</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Methods for Analysis</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Conversion Theories</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Somatic Theories</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Emotion Theories</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TAIWAN</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. First-Generation Christians</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Religious Identification</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Religious or Superstitious</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. The Presbyterian Church and Converts...........................................54
   a. The Presbyterian Conversion..................................................55
   b. The Calvinistic Teaching......................................................62

IV. CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES AMONG
PRESBYTERIAN CONVERTS.................................................................70
   A. Interview Questions and Results.............................................71
   B. *Ling* Experiences and Conversion Theories..............................78
      a. Dramatic/*Ling* Religious Experiences.................................81
         Being Saved in a Dream.......................................................82
      b. Non-dramatic/Non-*Ling* Religious Experiences......................90
         Ecclesiastical Conversion.................................................98
   C. *Ling* Experiences that Are Involved with Somatic Theories and Emotional
      Theories..................................................................................102
      a. Supernatural Healings.......................................................109
      b. Supernatural Encounters....................................................120

V. CONVERSION TYPES........................................................................131
   A. New Conversion Model............................................................131
   B. Substitute Type..........................................................................135
      a. Dramatic/*Ling* Experience.................................................136
      b. Non-Dramatic/Non-*Ling* Experience....................................139
   C. Competition Type.......................................................................142
      a. Dramatic/*Ling* Experience.................................................144
      b. Non-Dramatic/Non-*Ling* Experience....................................154
   D. Assimilation Type......................................................................157
a. Dramatic/Ling Experience..............................................................160

b. Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling Experience..........................................162

*Ling* Experiences that Happened After Conversion.................................166

VI. CHURCH RESPONSES.....................................................................173

A. Charismatic Power vs. Supernatural Power.................................175

a. Examples: Christian Conversions that Happened in a Supernatural Context...........................................................................176

b. Understanding Supernatural Powers along with the Christian Faith....182
c. Psychological Attributes Presented by the Converts.........................185

B. Local Pastors.................................................................................191

a. Selected Sample............................................................................192

b. New Understanding of Church Teachings and Christian God........201

CONCLUSIONS.......................................................................................204

APPENDIX.............................................................................................207

BIBLIOGRAPHY.......................................................................................212
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First I would like to dedicate this work to my husband, Chinhua Wang and both of my parents, Hsiuyu Wen and Jinlung Tseng, for their unfailing support of my doctoral degree. They understand little about my research interests yet they are still willing to support me. The biggest thanks should be given to my husband, Chinhua, who never stopped encouraging me during difficult moments in this process.

Also, I want to express my gratitude to my dissertation Committee, Director Dr. Raymond Studzinski and two Readers Dr. Charles B. Jones and Dr. Lucy M. Cohen. They helped me formulate my ideas from the very beginning. Dr. Studzinski encouraged me to use my creativity and originality in developing a different model to evaluate my subjects when studying Presbyterian converts in Taiwan. Dr. Jones assisted me with very useful references in forming critical and crucial views in analyzing the results. Dr. Cohen provided very practical guidance for the ethics of my field research.

During the research period, the subjects and some Presbyterian pastors in Taiwan were willing to share their personal stories related to the conversion topic. Their real religious encounters enriched this study and contributed to its significance. Although I cannot mention their names, I want to express deep gratitude for their cooperation and trust they offered during interviews.

In addition, I want to mention two friends, Maggie Dunlop and Aaron Stuvland, for their assistance with grammar and advising editorial changes. Without their help, I would not have been able to accomplish this work. As for helping me improve writing in English, Dr. Studzinski, Dr. Jones and Dr. Cohen also patiently suggested grammatical changes found in my earlier drafts.

Last, I thank God who helped me overcome all anxieties I faced during the process of
writing. He helped me foresee the end of this marathon so that I could keep running until I reach the destination. With all my heart, I thank Him for letting all things and related people work together to make this dissertation come true.
I. INTRODUCTION

Conversions among Han Chinese groups have been studied from social and political perspectives in Chinese societies. The political and social environments have served as important macro factors in conversion studies in Chinese societies. These factors highlight the role of culture in the dynamics of how and why Chinese society absorbs Christianity in different contexts. These studies have identified the particularity of the conversion phenomenon when Christianity confronts and interacts with the Han culture. Some of this research that utilizes macro sociological methods on Han or Chinese religious conversion includes scholars like Hsing-kuang Chao whose research focuses on how the interpersonal relationship affects conversion and Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham whose research employs quantitative methods in order to know the extent of the belief in fate and spirit among cities in China.¹ These studies, however, do not pay attention to the content of conversion as evident in personal psychological transformation and phenomenological observation.

Using the quantitative socio-scientific survey method, Yao and Badham identified at least two common and distinctive religious concepts agreed upon by interviewees of various Chinese religious backgrounds, fate and spirit. These common elements seem to play an important role in their religious decisions. However, in Chao’s conversion study, whereas interpersonal relationship seems to be the most important factor contributing to the religious conversion decision, the common religious concepts and experiences emphasized in a Han context such as fate and spirit are not highlighted in the results. In addition, based on Yao and Badham’s conclusion regarding the common religious characteristics in Han Chinese society in China, Christian groups are not different from other religious groups; these Christian

groups answered that both elements of fate and spirit are important to them as well as they are to other religious groups. This indicates that Christian conversion in Han society is not exceptional and may be influenced by the local Chinese understanding of religion and spirit; this may result in different consequences from Christian conversion in the West. Their understanding and experience of the Christian God may be influenced by past experiences from traditional religions. In order to assemble a more complete picture of Christian conversion in the Han culture, other empirical approaches, namely psychological and phenomenological methods, can provide invaluable information when investigating the conversion phenomenon in contemporary Chinese societies.

To select a sample from Han societies, this study focuses on Presbyterian converts in Taiwan and utilizes psychological and phenomenological approaches in examining conversion cases. It begins with an investigation of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and presents sample churches. Based on the result of past studies on the common belief of fate and spirit inherited in the Han culture, a closer religious idea associated with these concepts that points directly to subjective personal religious experiences with the divine, the experience of ling is employed in this study. Therefore, the analysis section introduces this cultural understanding of religious experience, the idea of ling, a local term that popularly used in the Han context to represent a Chinese understanding of religious efficacy, along with conversion theories, somatic theories and emotion theories. After a discussion of the theories, the section divides the converts into three major types, the Substitute type, the Competition type, and the Assimilation type. Then a subtype is created within each major type to differentiate those who had experienced ling from those who had not during their conversion process.\(^2\) Ultimately, this study highlights the aspect of religious continuity with previous

\(^2\) Cheng argues that various experiences of ling represent typical Chinese religious experiences. For traditional religious believers, the experiences of ling generally mean the efficacious ways of communicating with the
religious experiences. In addition, it identifies common psychological and cultural characteristics among Taiwanese Presbyterian converts as a way to understand Han religiosity.

---

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling Background and Interviews

To understand how the traditional Chinese religious experiences may affect Christian conversion, this study selects one Protestant group as the survey sample. Unlike Catholic traditions, except for the churches that adopt charismatic teachings, theological teachings in Protestant churches in Taiwan seldom emphasize miracles or the experience of ling when confirming the Christian God’s presence or existence. The presence of miracles does not comprise an important element for attesting to God to the believers in the Protestant theological tradition. The selection of this Protestant group as the research subject helps clarify the kind of transformation that the Taiwanese Christian converts may have experienced as they moved from traditional belief to Christianity. During the conversion process, they may discern different religious characteristics between the folk understandings of God that stresses supernatural experiences and the Protestant understanding of Christian God that does not highlight supernatural experiences or encounters. Despite the differences between the Chinese religious traditions and Christianity, they may still use their own individual religious experience in determining whether the supernatural power from both traditional religions and Christianity is different or not. In order to observe this influence from their past religious experiences, this study selects one of the most traditional Protestant churches in Taiwan, the Presbyterian Church, that may have deeper contrasts with local cultures.

3 Lin contends that the Protestant tradition emphasizes the correct understanding of the Bible. The correct interpretation of the Bible overrides the interpretation that comes from mere personal supernatural experiences either through charismatic influences. Hong-xin Lin, 加爾文神學 [The Theology of John Calvin] (Taipei: Campus, 2004), 95-97.
a. Historical Background

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (hereafter PCT) has a strong Calvinistic belief in working hard in the present life in order to honor God. The establishment of the PCT has followed Calvinistic teaching that stresses a communal awareness in spirituality that contributes to a social awareness, such as a concern for social injustice, instead of putting emphasis on personal spirituality that seeks for particular and specific spiritual experiences. With regard to the practice of communal awareness in Presbyterian spirituality, PCT has evolved with social and political movements since the 1960s and offers practical services such as education and health care. Although there was tension between the government’s control of religious activities and religious authorities, Murray Rubinstein points out that not all of the major Protestant denominations protested against the Komingtang (KMT) government’s control over the religious groups. PCT’s opposing stance towards the KMT government was due to their focus on religious freedom. This resulted in their later political involvement with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) because of its opposition to the KMT. In the late 1990s, the Presbyterian Church took a strong political stance advocating the independent status of Taiwan. Church leaders developed their theological statements following political liberation ideas. The confrontation between the PCT and the KMT has lasted until today and the PCT has devoted itself to political campaigns and advocacies related to democracy or social justice issues.

The political stance favoring the independence of Taiwan stimulates local Taiwanese awareness among the authorities in the PCT churches. Granted two split political ideologies, reunifying with China or being independent as a country, the PCT supports the latter and

---

4 Hong-xin Lin, 圣靈論 [Pneumatology] (Taipei: Li-chi, 1997), 58-66.
devotes itself to the affirmation of the local Taiwanese culture. In promoting this, the PCT helps build an ethnic Taiwanese awareness in place of the Chinese identity such that they have won the appreciation of the local Han Taiwanese and the indigenous believers who hold the same political stance. The PCT reflects both the image of a radical and subversive element in their active political involvement and the image of an enculturated Christianity through integration with local Han perspectives.6

b. Past Scholarship on Presbyterian Conversion

Due to the emphasis on political involvement embedded within the PCT’s theological discourses, scholarship has only focused on the social and political aspects of the PCT. Only a few studies consider the cultural ties inherited from the Han culture; primary contextual theological discourses are derived from perspectives of liberation movements. In order to differentiate Taiwanese culture in Taiwan from the Chinese culture in China, efforts were made to develop an indigenous theology in presenting the particularity in the Taiwanese culture, particularly from socio-political and post-colonial perspective. Therefore, starting from 1982, when the Sixth Asian Theological Consultation began to discuss the formation of Asian theology, the Taiwanese theologian C.S. Song particularly focused on the common history of suffering and being oppressed by the privileged social and political system. He hoped to highlight these conditions through the method of liberation theology.7 However, by placing more emphasis on protesting against political and social injustice in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the cultural and ethnographical characteristics that should be disclosed in the contextual theology and conversion studies are minimized. In other words, how

---

6 Hong-chu Hu, 認識台灣基督長老教會[Introduction to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan] (Taipei: Shih-tu, 2010), 1-37.
7 Rubinstein, 148-155.
Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist elements may influence the formulation of the concept of Christianity is not emphasized.

The development of theological studies in the PCT correlates with the preference of other related studies as well, such as conversion studies. Therefore, in the past few decades, although Presbyterianism was introduced to Taiwan as one of the earliest Christian denominations in the eighteenth century, little research has been done with regard to Presbyterian converts and the religious influence exerted by Han culture or Han religiosity. Such topics may be relevant to conversion studies and should be included and reviewed as background knowledge on Han Christian conversion. These analyses point out some important cultural factors that had affected the decision of conversion, such as the famous dispute on ancestor veneration. It is discussed among not only the Catholic circles but the Protestant circles as well. Although the discussion on this issue led to reconciliation among the Catholics, the discussion does not arrive at one simple answer among the Taiwanese protestant circles, including the Presbyterian Church. For those who tend to encourage more cultural assimilation during conversion, such as the Taiwanese Presbyterian theologian, Poho Huang, the suggestion is that the church tolerated their members keeping ancestor veneration.8

However, among those who take an opposite position towards merging ancestor veneration with Christian teachings, there is a disagreement whether Christians can keep ancestor veneration. Those pastors who are against it, such as Ssi-tsung Chang, see an incompatibility between ancestor veneration and Christianity. One of the main reasons is that ancestor worship itself does not only contain supernatural connection with benevolent prayers but also evokes evil spiritual power. Converts persuaded by this idea might believe that the

---

8 Po-ho Zong. 基督徒及祭祖 [Christian and Ancestor Worship] (Taipei: Song of Songs, 1994).
spirit attached to the ancestor tablet is not the ancestor but the evil spirit instead. To remove the tablet from home can free it from harassment of evil spirits. Converts tend to be persuaded by the supernatural element to refrain from ancestor worship.

c. Recent Christian Conversion Stories

Past research on Han Christian conversion focused on the sociological perspective. Although these studies do provide less information on the process of conversion, they point out plausible social elements for Chinese Christian conversion in the modern era. Hsinguang Chao’s study on individual conversion in urban Taiwan and Fenggang Yang and Joseph B. Tamney’s study on mass conversion in Chinese societies have both pointed out how social connections and social help may play a major role in Christian conversion. In both studies, social connections and supports among family members and friends through church networks indeed provide a higher possibility for an individual to accept an invitation from a church. After the newcomers’ trust in a church is facilitated through the dependence on interpersonal relationship, both studies claim that it is the relationship that contributes to the resulting conversion decision. Although these studies do not regard relationship as the primary factor for conversion, their research still points out other possible local and cultural connections for conversion.

---

9 The Chinese people historically believe that the soul of the dead can reside on a tablet. When they practice ancestor worship, it is necessary to place a tablet on the table for worshiping ancestors of the family. When doing so, the soul of the ancestor is expected to bless the whole family. However, some Christian pastors believe it is the evil spirit instead of the ancestor’s soul who resides in the tablet. In Chinese, it is called paiwei. Jan J. M. De Groot, The Religion of the Chinese (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 64-71.

10 During my master thesis writing, I interviewed Ssi-tsung Chang about his ministry and his involvement with inner healing and a charismatic movement. He is an influential charismatic Presbyterian pastor who believes in the existence of evil spirit and their negative effects. He had been invited by some Presbyterian churches as a lecturer. He is always aware of the negative effects brought by evil spirits, including avoiding keeping the ancestor tablets in a Christian family.

In Chao’s micro-level perspective on observing converts from two churches, besides the intensive interpersonal relationship; the second important element that contributes to the conversion result is the flexibility of the church stance towards the acceptance of local cultural and religious ethics, such as Confucian ethics. Yang and Tamney analyze the circumstance of mass conversion that happened in both Chinese American communities and modern China. They point out that the openness to Christianity in the Chinese community begins when traditional cultures collapse. This happens more obviously in the modern China. Buddhism has already been regarded as an out-of-date religion and people show low interests in following traditional Chinese religions. Expressing the same viewpoint with Chao towards social supports, Yang and Tamney argue that Christianity tends to appeal to more believers than other religions do because the churches are more able to offer life solutions and better social support than other religious institutions.

Despite the emphasis on the factor of effective social interactions, Chao points out that converts attempt to make subsequent decisions during religious conversion; to make this subsequent decision, Christian converts seek for any extent of relationship between their original belief and the new one. Therefore, they attempt to find out common elements between their original religions and Christianity. From a sociological perspective, Chao refers to the major commonality of ethical understandings, in which the church contributes to bridge traditional religions and Christianity. However, besides the efforts made by the church, there may be personal efforts made to connect these two different religious systems. Besides sociological observations, other psychological, emotional and somatic factors affect those who want to transform their past experiences into Christian conversion. For example, some important personal transformation through similar or different religious experiences may trigger an individuals’ decision to convert. This study aims to focus on the process of
personal transformation during conversion and intends to study these psychological, emotional and somatic elements that affect the final conversion decision.

An early Presbyterian scholar, Ying-tze Lai, studied some of the earliest cases of Christian conversion among the Presbyterians.\(^\text{12}\) He directly points out that these early converts came to Christianity because they encountered miraculous events and supernatural power. Lai argues that these early converts seemed to rely on their original religious understandings in deciding whether or not to convert. Since many of them believe in supernatural power, they would need to experience similar power in Christianity in order to convert. Because of the efficacious and supernatural religious experiences, such as illnesses being cured miraculously or expulsion of demons, some came to convert to Christianity. However, they might regret or quit if religious efficacies did not continue.\(^\text{13}\) Although this connection was observed during the early 50s, it is worthwhile noting that in contemporary Han society, the belief in religious efficacy in the general public is still high and so some new converts report miraculous experiences in their conversion narratives. Despite the fact that supernatural power or religious efficacy is frequently discussed along with religious belief in Christianity as well as in other Chinese religions, studies on religious experiences for the Han Chinese Christians are rare.

Most of the information and observation on individual conversions come from church publications, such as yearbooks of a church. These publications usually include articles that discuss dramatic conversion experiences. The description of conversion experiences frequently highlights the supernatural or efficacious. Wu-tsung Wang is a Presbyterian pastor who does not mind disclosing the miraculous conversion that involves religious efficacy. For


\(^{13}\) Ibid.
example, when he was sent to Penghu islands right after graduating from seminary school, he said that.\textsuperscript{14}

The kind of the job that the local people did is fishing. Because fishermen’s work depended on the weather, the fishermen were very superstitious. Although there weren’t many villagers residing in the area, every temple built in each village was huge and splendid. There is a lot of idol worship in this region…. Unless miracles happened to them, it would be extremely hard for them to convert to Christianity.\textsuperscript{15}

He wrote several conversion stories that related to miraculous encounters and believed that these encounters were the key to conversion decisions. In one of the stories, he wrote in 1983, there was a 60 year-old senior woman coming to church alone. Her son was a temple medium and none of her family members were Christian. She was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer and had already given up medical treatment. After going to church for four weeks, despite her illness, she insisted on walking to church to receive baptism. She announced to her friends and relatives that God would heal her once she made up her mind for conversion. All of them laughed at her and said they would convert to Christianity immediately if her healing indeed happened. However, Wang and some church members supported her and decided to pray for it to happen. The day she prepared to receive baptism, Wang went to her home and prayed especially for her to walk again. Then miraculously the converting woman woke up from bed and walked to church. Knowing this, the villagers spread the words out and commented on this event by saying “Christianity has won this time.”\textsuperscript{16}

This story is one of the many conversion stories published in the Presbyterian circle.

\textsuperscript{14} Penghu islands are an archipelago off the west coast of Taiwan.
\textsuperscript{15} The Chinese word translated here as weather is “tian” which can both mean weather and heaven mandate.
Some related stories are published on several church websites and the publications of several Presbyterian pastors. Although not all of the conversion stories are dramatic, the prevailing efficacious characteristic seems to be uncovered frequently among the details of the person’s decision to convert. If this is true, it is not arbitrary to regard religious efficacy as one of the important elements in observing Christian conversion in the Han society in Taiwan, especially when religious efficacy has already been a crucial element for religious belief in the traditional Chinese religions. Although the belief of supernatural power and religious efficacy seem to be popular both in traditional religions and in the church, it is hard to know the exact number of Christian converts whose conversion is influenced by the dramatic experiences and how their previous religious or supernatural experiences may be involved in these dramatic encounters.

However, since there is no known past empirical study that argues how past traditional religious experiences may influence Christian conversion in the Han society, the only way to establish an initial understanding is through conducting field research locally.

d. Interviews and Questions Designed

To analyze this cultural religious concept ling at work in the Han Taiwanese Presbyterian converts, this study selects 70 interviewees from four Presbyterian churches. The sampling method adopts a “snowball survey”, one that relies on information provided by initial interviewees to generate more subjects. These four Presbyterian churches are all from the region where folk and eastern religions, such as Buddhism and Taoism, are more prevalent than the rest of Taiwan. Two churches, T and K, have been in existence for more than one hundred years. The other two churches, H and P, have a shorter history but more

---

17 Kane, Eileen and Brún, Mary O’Reilly-De, Doing Your Own Research (New York: Marion Boyars, 2005), 126-138.
new converts from eastern religious backgrounds compared with the other churches such as T and K. The choice of these four churches represents a balanced selection of young churches and old churches in the same region.

During the process of finding appropriate interviewees, the coordinators from four church offices expressed some difficulties in finding converts from Chinese religious backgrounds. This is because the baptismal records in the church do not contain the background of the member so new members might convert from a Christian, an atheist or traditional Chinese religious background. To select appropriate interviewees, the snowball survey method is used to determine the background of the converts. The interviewees are selected at the suggestion of pastors, church coordinators and church members, in terms of the converts’ availability, willingness and previous religious backgrounds.

The total interviewees from four churches are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total membership number</th>
<th>Interviewed converts from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**This number of the church membership is based on the number released on the PCT official website. [http://www.pct.org.tw/](http://www.pct.org.tw/)

Among the names of the new converts provided by the offices of the four churches,
only 10 new converts from H, T and K refused to be interviewed. Most of the new converts who came from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds were willing to be interviewed and have already been included in H, T and K church samples. In other words, the interviewed numbers from H, T and K are the maximum amount of church members who came from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds and who were willing to receive interviews. The ideal number for the interviewees is 60 to 70. In order to reach the ideal number of interviewees, only some of the new converts from traditional religious backgrounds at P have been interviewed. The total ideal interview number had been reached after including some cases in P. At the end of the survey, the result at least represents conversion characteristics from three churches, H, T and K.

To explore the phenomenological paradigm of these conversion experiences, this study seeks to gain the answers through an emic interview: through asking questions about their conversion process, their concept of God and the religious experiences that they have been through. The emic approach is suitable for researching in areas where few studies were done in the past and limited information has been revealed. Therefore, it employs unstructured questions during interviews in order to gather enough information for investigations. Unstructured questions allow interviewees to answer questions through their own perspective instead of the researcher’s perspective.18

This study intended to collect sufficient details of all conversion stories allowing the researcher to not only design the basic question guidelines for the converts but also to let the interviewees maintain the largest freedom and flexibility when answering questions. The design of questions only serves as guidelines; during interviews, unstructured questions are applied whenever their answers to conversion experiences require further explanations. This

explains the reason why except for the background information questions, all the other questions related to the experiences are open-ended. Because the actual number of people who experienced ling and how people related to ling is uncertain, the interviews aim to include an appropriate proportion of those who experienced ling and those who did not from the interviewees noting the actual interaction between supernatural power and the subjects.

Although the design of questions is unstructured, there are four dimensions covered in the interview. The first part asks about basic information, including birth city, birth year, gender, marriage status, educational background and occupation. The second part relates to previous beliefs. The interviewees are asked about their understanding of and dependence on previous religions. The third part relates to their experiences with two religions or two religious systems, traditional Chinese religions and Christianity. The questions deal with comparative spirituality and supernatural encounters. If the interviewees have obvious and different religious experiences, they are asked about the details and the comparison. The fourth part asks about interpersonal influences on conversion decisions. They are asked if any interpersonal factors influenced their decision and if the interpersonal factors were stronger than supernatural encounters, if any.

All the interviewees are offered the same question guidelines. However, if the interviewees do not understand the question or cannot answer it, similar or alternative questions are substituted to help them answer. If interviewees want to say more in reply to particular questions, these details about their answers are noted.
B. Conversion in a Cultural Perspective

a. Conversion in an Asian Pluralistic Context

This study on Presbyterian converts adopts multiple perspectives, including history, religious studies, and psychology but primarily focuses on the individual psychological transformation. As Henri Gooren points out, studying personal histories in a synthesized method may involve different interdisciplinary theories including: anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, mission studies, religious studies and theology, all of which help investigate the complex conversion process in a modern and pluralistic context.\(^{19}\) For example, besides analyzing the personal experience and psychological transformation, it is crucial to see how personal experiences are shaped in a macro-social context. Although different kinds of themes have emerged from empirical studies, Gooren states the difficulties of generalizing all conversion experiences into one unified category because of the diversity in the attributes and doctrines of different religious groups.\(^{20}\) Giuseppe Giordan adds that researchers should take into account the ethnographical differences when conversion meets environmental and cultural influences. This asserts the importance of studying conversion by means of social and ethnographic understandings from each religious group. Although there is hardly any general characteristic to apply in every case, it is still worthwhile focusing on a religious group to denote the psychological factors within the ethos in a typical culture.\(^{21}\)

In order to highlight a cultural characteristic, it is necessary to draw a line of distinction between western conversion and a Han cultural one, particularly when this study emphasizes a influence of the previous experiences from Chinese religions. Giordan notes that while western conversion may be strictly a personal choice, other conversions outside the

---


\(^{20}\) *Ibid.*, 42.

western world may happen because of certain environmental and cultural factors. This suggests that modern conversion in a pluralistic religious community in a Chinese society should be analyzed along with the consideration of how Han people interpret and understand religion and how the local understandings of religion impact the way people convert to a different and a recently imported new religion. Therefore, those who have experiences both in traditional Chinese religions and Christianity during the conversion process may be influenced differently than those exposed only to western religious traditions, such as in Europe and U.S.A. These differences should be analyzed not only from socio-political but also socio-psychological perspectives. Often, conversions in Asian countries are viewed from the perspective of mass conversion because in Asian societies the ties of family and inter-personal relation are emphasized, and so the exterior social and political elements are considered the crucial factors. However, due to the general presumption of strong socio-political elements in Christian conversion studies in Asian societies, common cultural psychological characteristics are underestimated or neglected. In a pluralistic Han Chinese context, this study explores particular cultural expressions and characteristics as well as Han people’s understanding of God and the supernatural shaped by local beliefs. Through psychological investigation of individual experiences during conversion, some common observations on cultural psychological consciousness, such as the feeling of religious efficacy, ling, should become one of the key elements in understanding how conversion actually takes place among members of a Han society. Besides, in the Chinese religious setting where all of the deities are considered efficacious and have the ability to manifest supernatural power, it is not surprising when

---

22 Giuseppe Giordan ed., *Conversion in the Age of Pluralism* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 4-5.
people consider Christianity as one “efficacious” choice among others and decide to convert when they indeed experience any kind of evidence explained as supernatural intervention or manifestation. Therefore, although the choice of conversion may plausibly look like a personal choice, it is highly affected by the cultural-psychological context. From this point of view, people convert because they find a similar divine characteristic in traditional beliefs and Christianity that point to religious sacredness. However, despite the similar divine characteristics, some Han Christians who come from strong Taoist or folk traditions may still experience a significant psychological transition from recognizing many supernatural powers, a polytheist point of view, to recognizing only one Christian God, a monotheist tradition. The process of recognition does not happen merely through intellectual understanding, but mostly through personal experiences.

Enzo Pace tends to view this kind of conversion, a shift between two religions, as a process of people getting outside of a system and getting inside of another system. It may look as if the converts break with old beliefs, but actually since the old beliefs cannot satisfy their need, their own spiritual voyage in pursuit of religion is leading them towards a new destination. To apply this in the Han Christian conversion case, the so-called “spiritual voyage” along with experiential moments makes sense. Furthermore, the moment that a convert decides marks a process of redirection of faith. Anthony J. Blasi introduces the idea of redirection of fundamental trust in explaining the shift between two religions. He states, “If fundamental trust is taken for granted and neglected altogether, coming to cultivate and direct a genuine foundational trust can be seen as a conversion.” However, researchers of conversion in some Asian countries such as India and Japan also indicate that the

---

24 Cheng 2009, 151. When traditional eastern religious believers convert to Christianity, they may experience this psychological transformation. This assumption is made in light of Cheng’s comparison between the western religious tradition, Monotheism, and the eastern religious tradition, Panentaoism.
25 Giordan, 189-191.
26 Giordan, 11-12.
“fundamental trust” might happen through different dynamics than in the Western context. This is because the converts still believe either psychologically or intellectually that the Christian God shares part of or all the characteristics of their original belief or interpretation of God.

b. Past Philosophical Discussions on Han Conversion

Through studying past histories of Christian mission work in China, it can be seen that discussion on a possible transition of fundamental trust began at the time when missionaries intended to introduce Christianity to Chinese people in their own understandings. Early missionaries believed that through utilizing similar concepts in the local interpretation of Christianity, the Han people would be more likely to accept the Christian God and would not regard Christianity as a foreign religion. The explanation of fundamental trust in this regard is more philosophical than psychological. Starting from the 16th century, European Jesuit missionaries arrived in China and commenced their task of evangelism. They interacted with Confucian literati and Buddhist monks to find out appropriate methods to proselytize the Han people. When they found that the influence of Confucian thoughts prevails from the authoritative to the laity level, they decided to build their philosophical disputes between Confucianism and Christianity, hoping to create better understanding of Christianity for the local people. By doing so, they intended to make possible cultural reconciliation between Christian thoughts and Chinese culture.

Jesuit missionary Mateo Ricci had made significant contributions in the 16th century by using Confucian ideas to introduce the Christian God. Ricci pointed out the commonality to the Han people that both Christianity and Confucianism shared the same idea of Supreme Being. He stated that,
From the very beginning of their history, it is recorded in their writings that they recognized and worshipped one Supreme Being whom they called the Lord of Heaven, or designated by some other name indicating his rule over heaven and earth. It would appear that the ancient Chinese considered heaven and earth to be animated things and that their common soul was worshipped as supreme deity.27

Ricci points out an important concept in the Chinese concept of God; the Chinese people may be able to realize the idea of one Supreme Being based on the Confucian teaching. For example, although the idea Heaven or transliterated by Chinese as tian, commonly used in Confucian literatures, always points to transcendence, it can still be regarded as a personalized being. Therefore, through philosophical debates, Ricci had succeeded in convincing some literati by indicating how ancient literatures had already pointed out a transcendental God to them. It seemed easier for the Chinese people to bridge the gap between Chinese thoughts and Christianity based on their original belief.28

Therefore, employing both the Chinese term of Heaven, tian and another Chinese term of governor, zhu, the term tianzhu is invented particularly to substitute for the Latin deus for the Chinese converts.29 This kind of approach has been accepted and adopted among Jesuit missionaries when doing evangelical work in China when similarities between two religions, Confucianism and Christianity, were articulated. These arguments suggesting religious familiarity for the Han people prove that religious commonality forms trusts during conversion. However, the connection Jesuits built between western Christianity and Chinese culture is primarily based on the dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity. The ideas of God and spirits from Taoist and folk religions were not taken into consideration. Although

29 Lu, 170-181.
Confucianism prevailed at all social and political levels of the population, the belief in Taoism and folk religions were particularly strong among the laity.

It is still possible for the Han laity to pursue the highest Being during their religious quest as predicted in philosophical disputes, but along with other religious influences, the process may be more complicated. For example, whether Taoism and folk religions also employ the same idea of Supreme Being as some Confucians is doubtful. Since Taoism and folk religions have religious grounds rooted in experiences associated with body and mind, the conversion process to Christianity may be facilitated through somatic processes as well as through intellectual debates.

c. The Element of Ling

Early philosophical debates established several possible approaches to dealing with different religious concepts in traditional Chinese thought and the western Christian one. The discussions of religious experiences in Chinese traditions should neglect neither the importance of religious efficacy nor the commonalities employed by three traditions: Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion. The only exception is Confucianism that neglects religious efficacy. A major reason that Confucianism is usually excluded from the rest of traditional Han religious choices is that since Confucianism does not emphasize the element of ling at all, it is often not considered a religion for the Han people. Confucian thought is essential in shaping Han people’s values and cultural customs, but it is the religious choices, such as Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion that forge Han people’s “religious” ideas. To analyze how Han religious experiences are shaped, the idea of ling that represents the traditional Han religious experience can serve as an introduction for understanding traditional Chinese religious experiences.
According to the Chinese understanding, one element that builds fundamental religious trust common among all traditional Chinese religions comes from the Taoist idea, *ling*. This term has multiple meanings that refer to both a spiritual entity and religious efficacy. Although the idea of *ling* stems from an ancient Taoist belief, it has been broadly accepted by Confucian societies as one of the central concepts regarding religious experiences. When Steven Sangren studied Taoist and folk religions in Taiwan, he clarified that religious efficacy, *ling*, tends to be influential when the believers are deciding which god to follow. In local temples, for example, a folk deity usually receives the most worshippers if this deity manifests relatively stronger supernatural power than other deities by responding to the worshipper’s prayer in an efficacious way.\(^{30}\)

Sangren argues for the collective nature of Han unconsciousness through his study of religious interpretations.\(^{31}\) He adopts *ling* to draw the difference between insider and outsider for Taiwanese folk religion. In his model, he uses *ling* in understanding how *yin* and *yang* work in dividing insiders from outsiders. *Yin* and *yang* in this context represent order and disorder as well as insiders and outsiders. Insiders who experience *ling* are in the conjuncture of *yang* and order. Outsiders who do not experience *ling* are in the conjuncture of *yin* and disorder. Although the distinction between insider and outsider is absolute in some ritual occasions, the distinction is more relative than concrete. In the answers he received from interviewees, although they did not identify a particular god as a personal God to worship, they would still consider themselves as united in the religious community. They became insiders whenever they experienced *ling*. In other words, from the moment of the experience of *ling*, they would try to associate themselves with a certain territorial-cult god in their living

---


\(^{31}\) Sangren 2000, 80-82.
d. **Ling-xian and Ling-gan**

To understand how the *ling* experience affects interpreting religious experiences in the Han culture, Chi-ming Cheng resorts to traditional religious ideas that represent the relationship between God and humanity and the experiences of divine power. He introduces three common ideas of relating the divine and humanity shared among all of the Taiwanese folk religions. These ideas can be understood from both public rituals and personal religious practices. The first idea is *ling-xian*. The word *xian* literally means manifestation. *Ling-xian* means that supernatural power or the divine subjectively willingly manifests Himself to the believers. The second idea is *ling-gan*. *Ling-gan* presents the believer’s subjective feeling or sensing the existence of the divine. Both *ling-xian* and *ling-gan* are adopted in understanding how the divine relates to humanity in the Han religious contexts. These two ideas represent two similar but different dimensions. On the one hand, *ling-xian* stresses more the style of how the divine manifests Himself because the divine subjectively decides to disclose the power to humanity. On the other hand, *ling-gan* associates with the feeling of believers. The experience of *ling-gan* represents the inactiveness of believers awaiting the signs of the sacred through their own feelings. They may also experience different kinds of sacredness through their physical or emotional reactions. The third idea is *ling-xiu*. *Ling-xiu* means that the believers are able to interrelate with the divine through all kinds of spiritual and ritual practices. In other words, the practices ensure the practitioners a continuous and better connection with the divine and the divine power.

This local interpretation of connecting the divine power and humanity has been

---

32 Sangren 2000, 141-159.
33 Cheng 2009, 39.
commonly adopted by three main traditions, Buddhist, Taoist and folk traditions. This common ground points to the possibility of collective unconsciousness inherited in the religious understanding of the Han people. According to the purpose of this study, only ideas of ling-xian and ling-gan are adopted to analyze how the experience of supernatural manifestation and any physical or emotional involvement related to the conversion. To parallel ideas of ling-xian and ling-gan with the western interpretations of sacredness, ling-gan and ling-xian that specify the experience of ling seem to correlate to Eliade’s use of the terms theophany and hierophany. On the one hand, while ling-xian testifies to the appearance of God or spiritual entities, it resonates with the idea of theophany, based on the subject’s testifying to the actual presence of deities. Ling-gan senses or feels the existence or the presence of God.

e. Zong-jiao

The similarity between Eliade’s account and Cheng’s analysis of Han religiosity attests to some common phenomena among different religious experiences. However, this similarity should not undermine the significance of focusing on the experience of ling, a local understanding of religious experiences because the experience of ling has a unique value in this particular cultural setting. Cheng also points out how cultural expressions may affect the idea of religion differently both intellectually and emotionally. He begins with the explanation of the term “religion” in Chinese, “zong-jiao”. The word zong is to believe or to obey and jiao is the religious institution or denomination. In the Han religious context, the establishment of many of the Chinese religions starts from the common experiences of zong. The establishment of a religious institution or denomination requires common

35 Cheng 2009, 128.
religious experiences. The religious teachings come after the religious experience in the Chinese religious context. The order of confirmation of the religious experience and establishment of a religious institution is reversed in the western context. The establishment of the Western religious institutions relies on the confirmation of the teaching first before the church confirms their common religious experiences for all of the believers. In the western Christian context, religious experiences come later than the teachings and are defined by their different and distinctive teachings. As for the Han religions, Cheng argues that, especially for the religious traditions influenced effectively by the folk religions, the laity tends to formulate a particular denomination according to their common religious experiences that involve supernatural encounters. This different religious tendency may also influence the choice of conversion in Christianity. Compared with the Western context, since common religious experiences in the traditional Chinese religions are stressed prior to teachings, the Chinese traditional religions as a whole tend to reflect more emotional dynamics than the rational ones. According to Cheng, religious experiences in the traditional Han religions also depend on instinctual feelings of supernatural power.  

Although believers from Western Christianity and traditional Chinese religions believe in their god both because of the recognition of the transcendental existence, the different languages adopted to denote this belief have presupposed different ways of interpreting religion. Moreover, there may be other cultural and environmental elements that affect religious experiences as well as the conversion process. As Giordan points out the difference between strictly individual choices in western conversion and choices affected by environmental factors in other religious cultures, studying individual religious choices in the Han context should avoid viewing the choice as an independent choice. Rather, the analysis

in this study accentuates how cultural and environmental factors influence the individual in the process. This emphasis implies that in studying conversions that happen in a place where specific traditions generate both values and cultural characteristics, such as the Han culture, possible cultural impacts should be taken into account in order to conduct a depth analysis.

In this regard, psychological and phenomenological approaches are necessary to investigate first-hand case materials. The personal conversion stories disclose the actual content of how a religion is believed in a cultural setting and whether the believers did experience ling to any extent, and if so, how these experiences would shape the idea of God, and if not, how other direct or indirect experiences impact their understanding of God. In the transition from two different religions, Chinese religion and Christianity as well as two religious systems, an exclusive religious system that only admits one absolute God and an inclusive religious system that recognizes all of the supernatural existences, this study intends to explore whether types for these Presbyterian converts can be established.37

C. Methods for Analysis

Three kinds of theories are adopted to analyze the result of this study. The first kind of theory is a conversion theory. The conversion theory analyzes the religious transformation process based on religious themes such as human sin and the concept of God. The analysis incorporates psychological perspectives. This approach creates types that categorize how various personal dispositions affect psychological transformation during conversion process. For example, Lewis Rambo introduces seven stages that serve as a conversion model to explain a common process that all converts may experience.38 However, typical religious conversion stages are adopted to determine if cultural characteristics will influence the

37 Cheng 2009, 151.
conversion stages.

The second kind of theory is the somatic theory. This theory focuses on how significant bodily experiences convince the convert to believe in the Christian God during the process of conversion. This theory aims to correlate the personal experience and the resultant worldview generated through the self’s bodily experiences. In other words, the self’s bodily experiences reveal the meaning of the world to oneself.\(^{39}\) If the person’s bodily experiences are affected by religious sources, the bodily experiences of religion can reveal the authenticity of religion to oneself. Therefore, compared with the conversion theories that explore primarily the psychological transformation and the impacts of religious teaching during conversion, somatic theories suspend the religious teachings and only highlight the effect of somatic changes of the person during conversion. In other words, the bodily experiences may generate more essential meaning to the converts than the religious teaching can do. This powerful effect from bodily experiences simultaneously resonates with some of the common religious circumstances as part of *ling*. It may explain why, in the Chinese folk religions, bodily experiences usually serve as means to comprehend the significance of religious meanings. The experiences are so palpable that the converts are convinced to believe one religion when somatic experiences point directly to supernatural interventions.

The third kind of theory is emotion theory. The analysis of emotion is also attached to cultural contexts.\(^{40}\) This means that the expression of emotion that happens during conversion process should be considered along with the fact that the emotion is interpreted according to the convert’s previous religious background. The analysis targets several common emotions revealed by the interviewees. Central emotional themes are established for

---


further analysis in later chapters when conversion types are created. Common somatic phenomena incorporated with emotional themes are also introduced.

Moreover, besides the utilization of these three kinds of theories, local religious ideas, concepts involved with *ling*, will be compared and integrated within the analysis of the three theories. The comparison and integration among three kinds of theories and the idea of *ling* aim to explain conversion in light of the cultural context and its contemporary religious and somatic ideas.

a. Conversion Theories

The first type of theory, the conversion theory, is employed to classify different types of converts according to their conversion process.

William James’ account of healthy mindedness and the sick soul presents two opposite types in indicating how personal attributes influence religious conversion and offers a possible parallel to the division between the experience of *ling* and non-*ling* in Han societies. The experiences of healthy mindedness are associated with non-dramatic experiences whereas those of sick souls are associated with dramatic experiences.

In order to include cultural perspectives in the conversion theories, the experiences of *ling* are seen as a mother key for dividing different conversion types. Still, James’ conversion types help distinguish those who have experienced *ling* and those who have not. Combining James’ conversion types and traditional cultural characteristics, based on their personal conversion process, people who experienced *ling* correspond to the group of sick souls and people who did not experience *ling* correspond to the group of healthy mindedness.

Lewis Rambo’s conversion model of seven stages is adopted for further analysis of the

---

conversion process utilizing both theological and psychological perspectives. The seven stages are context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. According to the results of interviews of this study, although not all converts reported to have experienced the total seven stages, their conversion process more or less represents a transformation from a view of the strangeness of Christianity to a willing of acceptance of it. In this regard, the stages help analyze the possible processes that the convert may have gone through. For those whose experience of ling had been a key for conversion, their conversion process may seem to skip some of the middle stages and directly arrive at the commitment level.42

b. Somatic Theories

Since experiences and personal transformations appear in conversion stories, encounters that contain significant somatic experiences should also be included in the study of the conversion process. According to the data, when interviewees were asked about their conversion process, many shared different kinds of somatic experiences. In their accounts, these experiences are crucial to their final conversion decision. These somatic experiences include the descriptions of feeling God and the experiences of religious efficacy and supernatural healings. The experiences ranging from subtle to obvious changes can all be identified as signs for the work of supernatural power or divine intervention. To analyze both somatic and psychological factors involved with religious and conversion experiences, the somatic theories adopted in this study are at the intersection of both somatic theories and psychology. Barnaby B. Barratt defines somatic psychology as,

..the psychology of the body, the discipline that focuses on our living experience of

42 Rambo, 1-17.
embodiment as human beings and that recognizes this experience as the foundation and origination of all our experiential potential.\textsuperscript{43}

To integrate somatic ideas into the Han context, the phenomenon of forming the idea of otherness through somatic experiences is examined along with the local religious expression. On the basis of the results, the somatic experiences can be categorized according to two circumstances. For converts who experience miraculous healings and dramatic life encounters, their experiences present an undeniable otherness to them directly. As for converts who only have relatively subdued somatic experiences such as subtle psychological transformation instead of dramatic changes, they may also credit their transformation to God’s power. However, their submission to Christianity may not appear as directly and as immediately as those who have obvious psychological and physical transformation.

Thomas Csordas adopts Pierre Bourdieu’s view of \textit{habitus} and attests how the \textit{habitus} of a sacred self is formed by charismatic practices.\textsuperscript{44} Unlike the charismatic context, the Han society has already had its own religious meanings inherited from the traditional Chinese religious system that require the necessary somatic practices. These inherited religious practices create a cultural religious unconsciousness common to all of the religious believers. P. Steven Sangren suggests that this religious commonality, the religious \textit{habitus}, that forms through common somatic experiences of \textit{ling} distinguishes insiders from outsiders.\textsuperscript{45}

In order to highlight the somatic influences, Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of \textit{habitus} could be adopted to see what kind of socio-psychological implications should be revealed among practices and representations.\textsuperscript{46} For example, the converts frequently referred good feelings

\textsuperscript{43} Barnaby B. Barratt. \textit{The Emergence of Somatic Psychology and Bodymind Therapy} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21, 91.
\textsuperscript{44} Thomas Csordas, \textit{Body/ Meaning/ Healing} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1-8.
\textsuperscript{45} Sangren 2000, 80-82; Sangren 1987, 158-160.
to the good spirits and bad feelings to evil spirits both physically and psychologically. The idea of *habitus* helps explore psycho-sociological themes appropriate for the Han context and the Han Christian converts, but needs to integrate cultural emotions with it as well. In addition, although the traditional Chinese religions have their own interpretations of good and evil entities or spirits, their experiences that deal with good and evil spirits share some similarities with those in the charismatic traditions.

c. Emotion Theories

Among the Taiwanese Presbyterian converts, the descriptions of feeling and emotion comprise a primary part of the conversion stories. Some state that significant experiences of feeling or emotion at specific moments are turning points in their conversion. Others may not have had particular moments that lead them into the conversion decision, but they may also encounter particular feelings in Christianity that convinces them of the power of Holy Spirit and the existence of God.

There are two kinds of emotion theories adopted in this analysis. The first kind of theory highlights the connection between motivation and emotions and argues how emotions effect the formation of perception. According to Robert Ward Leeper, emotions are not merely motives but also serve as triggers for important decisions. When emotions are related to how humans perceive life, they further affect the understanding of objective realities for individuals.47 Leeper states that common emotions that serve as basic perceptions have long influence and not just a short-term effect on human beings. In studying conversion experiences of the Han Presbyterian Christians, although some common and important emotions play decisive roles, these emotions may vary based on whether the convert

---

experiences ling or not. If the experience of ling brings peaceful feeling, the convert may decide to follow this religion. On the other hand, if the experience of ling brings insecure feeling, the convert may want to seek help from other supernatural source.

Additionally, a second kind of emotion theory that attends to cultural emotions is required. All of emotional expression contains cultural background. The same emotions may be interpreted and experienced differently in a different cultural setting. Kitayama and Markus state that, “emotion scripts or schemas may be applicable to internal sensations and bodily experience and to the external realities in which the internal processes are embedded.”

One of the common emotional expressions for the Han Presbyterian converts in their conversion story is that they hope to “seek for peace” from a religion. This emotional expression should be regarded like emotion scripts or schemas for understanding the conversion process because it does not only mean the spiritual peace but also has cultural associations. Rather, this feeling contains the peace of mind and sentiment of the healthy body as well.48 These cultural emotional scripts are fundamental to the understanding of transformation during conversion.49

Kitayama and Markus (KM hereafter) also introduce the idea of “internal sensations” by explaining how emotions affect the understanding of external realities, KM states that the scripts or schemas “will thus integrate the internal sensations with the external realities to yield simultaneously both a ‘deeply felt or moving’ perception of the external realities and a ‘personally and socially meaningful’ construal or experience of the internal sensations.”50

For the Presbyterian Han Christian converts, when they are involved with the power of ling or religious efficacy, their emotions attached to these experiences have already proven to

48 This assumption is made according to answers given by the Presbyterian converts in this study. Most of them answered that their goal for pursuing religion was to find “the feeling of peace,” ping-an in Mandarin.
49 Kitayama and Markus eds, 9.
50 Ibid.
them the existence of the external “otherness”. In other words, their emotions affirm the
source as an undeniable “otherness” to them. Especially when ling experiences are very
effective, their emotions associated with ling are important. They are the keys to determine
whether Christian God exists or not for the Han converts.
III. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

A. First Generation Christians

To understand the process of the Han Presbyterian converts’ religious shift from a belief in Chinese religions to Christianity, this study selects Christian converts who come from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds. According to Chao, traditional Chinese religions usually can be divided into three main categories, Buddhism, Taoism and traditional/folk religions.\(^{51}\) Although Confucianism plays an important role in many aspects of Han societies, usually it is not regarded as a religious choice for the general public.

The interview process adopts a term having a specific meaning in the context of religious conversion in Taiwanese Christian society. It is called the “First Generation Christian.”\(^{52}\) Although this term has not been formally accepted by the church authority or any church academic studies it is frequently used in the Protestant circles and may be applicable to other Christian groups as well. This term does mean the earliest Christians in Taiwan who converted when European Christian missionaries came to evangelize the local people but the more common use usually designates the kind of new Christian converts whose parents may either be non-Christians or became Christians later. It indicates that the converts receive the least or minimum influence from Christianity in their family background where they receive more influence from their family’s traditional Chinese religions. Since there is no Christian heritage in their background, the new converts are considered as first Christians in the family and are hence called the First Generation Christian.

---

51 Chao, 193-204.
52 When I asked for the list of names from the church office after receiving approval from the pastor, the office secretary would check with me again about what kind of the converts I needed. When I said, “I needed converts from traditional folk or Chinese religious backgrounds”, they would answer me that “do you mean the ‘First-Generation’ Christians?” Then I realized that Christian converts from traditional Chinese religious backgrounds and First-Generation Christians are synonyms. The terms frequently appear in many kinds of published personal testimonies in the Chinese language.
The assumption behind the term “First Generation Christians” indicates that these converts may receive either no or less Christian influence from their parents since their childhood because they themselves may be the first Christian converts in the family. They may have already absorbed and agreed with more Han religious concepts than other Christian converts who have Christian heritages in their family. Moreover, it is assumed that when they encounter different kinds of religious influence in later years, distinguished from those who grew up in a Christian family, they have had more opportunities to compare different religious concepts through their own experiences and concepts than the Christian converts who come from a Christian family. Whether or not the converts believe in or experience ling, before being introduced to Christianity, the past religious understanding of the First Generation Christian may have already presupposed an image of religion and the idea of God.

### a. Religious Identification

Although there are at least three or four types of religions commonly seen in the Chinese society: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and traditional/folk religions, none of the interviewees considered themselves a Confucian practitioner when answering questions regarding their previous religious belief. Rather, all of the interviewees consider themselves belonging to one or more than one category among the choices of Taoism, Buddhism and traditional/folk religions. Taoism and Buddhism have distinctive differences between each other whereas the traditional/folk religions include large diversity of religions that are combinations of different religions. Interviewees tended to view traditional/folk religions as a synthesis of Taoism and Buddhism and although common believers do not recognize themselves as Confucian believers or practitioners, Confucian characteristics are frequently
Traditional/folk religions include a wider range and different kinds of synthesis of Taoist and Buddhist religions but are often classified in one category. Of significance for traditional/folk religion is that believers regard worshiping traditional/folk religions as part of family activities. It is thus common for people to worship deities along with the family ancestors or kinfolk at the same time. Only a few of the interviewees claim themselves to be traditional believers who are seldom involved in any other folk religious activities except practicing ancestor worship. For the Han religious believers, ancestor worship is an important responsibility for practicing filial piety. While worshiping deities and ancestors have the same importance in the traditional/folk religions, worshiping both deities and ancestors represent carrying the family’s belief so it fulfills the expectation of filial piety. This brings an inevitable influence from the family’s faith to the formation of the religious belief of the First-Generation Christians.

In their research on Chinese societies, Xiaojuan Chen and Yongsheng Chen highlight the Han religiosity from the folk culture stating that “a typical feature of Chinese religious belief is an integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.” They point out that the notion for folk belief is essentially similar to the idea of spirituality because both folk belief and spirituality are not restricted by the religions in the Chinese culture. This contributes an atmosphere of religious freedom rooted in the folk tradition that enables people to choose their religious belief across the religious borders among all of the Chinese religions. It also explains why when the interviewees were asked to identify their previous religious beliefs, their answers contain multiple beliefs. Interviewees also showed that they were not sure what

---

53 Milton M. Chiu, 從樹頭公談到十字架: 基督教與台灣民間宗教的比較 [Talk from the god of the tree to the cross: A comparison between Christianity and the Taiwanese folk religion] (Tainan: Jen-Kuang, 1994), 82-88.
54 Xiaojuan Chen and Yongsheng Chen, “Methodological Issues in Psychology of Religion Research in the Chinese Context” Pastoral Psychology. Published Online: March 20, 2012
their specific belief was and were uncertain as to whether they could give more than one answer, such as Buddhist and Taoist, or Buddhist and a traditional believer. Their doubts hint that these religious choices are different but all related. Their traditional Chinese religious identification seems fluid because they believe that a common spirituality is shared and identified among different traditions.

However, while their answers to religious identification or belonging plausibly point out religious preferences and family religious background for each individual, they cannot be used to presume what their past religious experiences might be like. Robert Weller points out that the most religious activities that happened in the traditional Chinese religions cannot be regarded as religious in the usual Western sense. Many people practice religious rituals everyday without considering them as formal religious practices. 55

In addition, the interviewees’ responses about their religion cannot fully imply whether they believe or have experienced supernatural power or any kind of dramatic encounters. Take Buddhist followers for example. The self-claimed Buddhist believer may show either a strong belief or a weak belief in religious efficacy although orthodox Buddhist denominations apparently tend to discourage the belief in ling. Many, such as the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain, Sheng-yen, place more emphasis on teachings on enlightenment than on believing in the power of supernatural entities. Sheng-yen has recognized the difficulty of evangelizing the orthodox Buddhist believer when the folk society tends to rely heavily on the efficacious effects. Most people live a mixture of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist beliefs and formulate their belief according to the teachings and values of those teachings. In Sheng-yen’s perspective, orthodox Buddhism is different from these folk beliefs. The folk society inherits the three traditions and formulates the kind of worship that intends

to include all kinds of deities; this kind of worship does not originate from orthodox Buddhism.\textsuperscript{56}

Weller also clarifies that, distinguished from the folk religious system that employ influential supernatural features distinctively, the Buddhist belief system ultimately should bring an end to the distinction among deities and all kinds of beings for their believers.\textsuperscript{57} No matter what religious identity the interviewee may refer to, the exact religious experiences and the actual religions they may belong to can only be known by examining their religious values and practices, as expressed in their survey responses.

The case P9 demonstrates an example of a Taoist believer who also believed in Buddhism and could not be sure if God really exists or not. When describing herself as a traditional religious follower, P9 identified her other beliefs as rooted in her family, worshiping both Buddhism and Taoism. However, despite her fluid and uncertain tendency towards religious beliefs, she seemed more certain about answering the question on the existence of spirits through her own physical reactions. She described her past encounters associated with temples as unpleasant.

Q: What was your religion before receiving Christian baptism?
A: I did not have a strong memory about my previous beliefs. Before I got married, my family used to believe in Taoism. It is a mixture of Buddhism and Taoism. It is the folk Taiwanese religion, so called bai-bai.\textsuperscript{58} It is a mixture, a real mixture [of the Taiwanese

\textsuperscript{56} Sheng-yen Shi,正信的佛教 [Orthodox Chinese Buddhism] Website: http://ybamswk.cdc.net.my/ebook/faq2/index.htm Searching Date: July 16, 2012; Richard Madsen, Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 87-89. Sheng-yen’s teachings present one example of several orthodox Buddhist schools in Taiwan that stress Confucian practices and values instead of efficacious beliefs when encouraging religious practices.

\textsuperscript{57} Rubinstein 1999, 342-345.

\textsuperscript{58} Bai-bai is term for expressing respect to the deities in Taiwan. When the Taiwanese people say that they went to “bai-bai”, it either means that they went to worship at a temple in a random base or they have a specific request for the deities. Whether the act of bai-bai involves special request or just a random respect to the deities, it is determined case by case. Chi-ming Cheng,台灣的宗教與秘密教派 [Religions in Taiwan and the Secret Cults] (Taipei: Taiyuan, 1992), 61.
Before I got married, because my mother’s side all belong to bai-bai so I simply just followed them.

Q: Did you believe it?
A: I did not know if that was God or not, but I did feel that the spirit [that I had ever sensed] was evil. This was because when I entered the temple, I did not like it. I did not want to get closer to the temple and to them (spirits). I could not object to it because my parents believe it. I have to follow my parents to worship this. 59

P9 admitted the existence of spirits through her actual physical reactions although she was not sure if God exists or not. While P9 might recognize the existence of supernatural power, on the other hand, identifying himself also as a believer of both Buddhist and traditional religious believer, H24 exemplifies another kind of self-claimed Buddhist believer who did not believe in religious efficacy. Although he did pray to God, his religious belief did not involve the expectation of efficacy.

“Q: What was your religion before converting to Christianity?
A: In the past… in my childhood I did not have any special belief, but just followed my family…so I could say I believed in Buddhism. And my belief included folk religions.

Q: Did you follow your family to bai-bai? Did you believe it?
A: Yes, I believed it…. [We] worshiped Guanyin and the Buddha of the Western Pure Land… and mainly Guanyin. 60

Q: Did you feel that it (your religion) is ling?
A: About ling….well, it did not present ling. Not really.

59 The original extracted content is:
“Q：受洗之前的宗教信仰？
A：恩……沒有很強烈的印象，因為我們還沒有結婚之前家裡是道教，就道教跟佛教混合式的，就是一般的台灣的民俗那種宗教，就是拜拜呀….混合的啦，混合式的啦，台灣的一般現在宗教….還沒結婚之前就是在我娘家，我媽媽他們那邊都是拜拜的，就跟著拜呀。
Q：您相信那是真的有神嗎？
A：我不知道那個算不算神，可是我覺得有點邪氣啦，因為我本身去到廟裡，我本身就不喜歡，不喜歡去接近廟那些東西阿，可是因為沒辦法反抗阿，因為父母就是信這個，你就是要跟著父母去拜呀。”

60 Guanyin is one of the divine characters popularly worshiped in the Taiwanese families. The original Sanskrit translation for guanyin is Avalokitesvara. Some traditional Confucian families use domestic altars to worship Buddha and/or Guanyin. De Groot, 129.
Q: So do you think there is not ling?
A: I actually think maybe it (my religion) actually was… it did not… it did not need to manifest ling or manifest whatever because it was just a strength of peace for me at that time… I felt that it was a process… I used to pray a lot [to the deities from previous religions] during my childhood but I didn’t think that the result needed to meet a certain kind of goal in order to be considered ling. So it did not mean that I would not consider Him ling if I could not get full marks. It was not like that.

The above two examples indicate that, although acknowledging Buddhist influence, their religious identifications do not necessarily predict a typical or orthodox Buddhism. Especially when the person identifies oneself as having more than one religious tradition, it is hard to know which tradition has the most influence. A self-identification of beliefs, such as regarding oneself as a Buddhist or a Taoist, does not always imply that the belief has a strong connection with the related orthodox Buddhist or Taoist religious experiences or teachings. Only if a specific name of the sect of the religion is mentioned will particular religious teachings be connected with the believers.

For example, P8 used to belong to a specific sect from one Chinese religion Yiguan Dao. This belief came from her family background. Although Yiguan Dao has inherited

---

61 According to his context, “it” here refers to prayer or the process of believing God.
62 The original extracted content is:

“Q: 信主之前是什麼宗教？
A: 過去……小時候沒有特別，但就跟著家人可以，可以說是佛教啦，那那個包括一般民間信仰，
Q: 您以前跟著家裡拜拜嗎？您那時候相信嗎？
A: 恩，相信……就佛教觀世音菩薩阿、西方佛祖阿，這些，主要是觀世音菩薩，
Q: 您覺得靈嗎？
A: 靈喔，呃……沒有靈，沒有很靈啦
Q: 您覺得不靈？
A: 我覺得其實那只是……也沒有，也沒有刻意要求說一定要吧，一定要很靈或怎樣，因為那時候是一個，
一個平安的一個力量啦，我覺得那是過程……那小時候也是阿，有時候這樣，常常喔，也許跟喔，喔，祈
求阿喔，那並不會說一定要達到怎麼樣的目標… 才會叫做靈阿，所以並沒有說您沒有讓我考一分，我
就覺得不靈阿，呃，沒到像這樣子。”
63 This religion that mixed Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings emphasizes that they have included all five major religions, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. They believe all of the religions unify into one. Yun-feng Lu, The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan: Adapting to a Changing Religious Economy (Lanham: Lexington, 2008), 22-25.
crucial influence mainly from Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and included Christianity and Islam as part of their teachings, her religious experiences and interpretations would adhere to teachings from Yiguan Dao.

“In Yiguan Dao, what my father taught me was not to care about [whether a religion should be] *ling* (religious efficacy) or not. It was not about earning a fortune. Rather, my understanding towards Yiguan Dao was that it talked about cultivating spirituality. There were many branches within Yiguan Dao, and the branch I belonged to let me understand [the importance of] personal discipline towards self cultivation.”

These teachings from Yiguan Dao serve as primary sources for formulating P8’s religious concepts. Unlike P8, other religious believers who do not officially belong to a religious institution may not be able to relate their experiences with religious teachings to a specific religious institution. Although their efficacious experiences may point out supernatural power to them, it does not seem necessary to connect these experiences with institutionalized religious teachings in order to prove the authenticity of certain supernatural existence.

To understand the interpretation of religious experiences among those who generally identify themselves as a Buddhist, Taoist or traditional believer, although no specific religious teachings from one religious institution may be applicable, it should be noted that their own interpretations included somatic feelings of their religious experiences which have already revealed the existence of the divine to them. These personal interpretations of the world that contain the existence of supernatural entities verified through somatic and psychological experiences reveal a world denoted by folk religious hermeneutics. Consequently, except for

---

64 The original extracted content is:

“在一貫道來講，爸爸教我的不是靈不靈，也不是幫助你賺大錢，我對一貫道的瞭解，是讓你修身養性...他有很多教派，那一派讓我瞭解就是個人的修行，修身養性方面...”
the believers who belonged to any institutionalized eastern religion, most interviewees’ former religious identification tends to be influenced by their personal religious experiences as the source of their personal identification. There is more freedom given to the believers compared with the western Christians inasmuch as these interviewees are able to identify their beliefs according to their personal experiences.

**b. Religious or Superstitious**

Religious experiences have different degrees of influence on the sense of religious authenticity of the believers. Sometimes, the degree and the context of believing in religious efficacy determine whether belief in efficacy is legitimate or not. Although Han Taiwanese generally accept the belief in and pursue religious efficacy, they may not tolerate certain kinds of attitudes when it involves an inappropriate dependence on religious efficacy. The inappropriate desire for reliance on efficacy is shown through case studies. During the interviews, when mentioning their religious activities, sometimes interviewees would want to distinguish their religious activities from superstitious ones by employing a self-defending tone. Such answers are predicated on an existing local judgment on the difference between being religious and being superstitious derived from the mixture of Chinese traditions.

According to the responses from the interviewees, although Confucianism was not considered a religious choice by all of the believers, Confucian ideas seem to play an important rule in formulating general judgments on whether believers are religious or superstitious or not. For example, T1’s answer exemplifies how a believer’s religious attitude is influenced heavily by Confucian conducts. Without referring to Confucianism, T1 identified herself as a “Buddhist Taoist.” This term is used as a religious identifier in Taiwan for recognizing a person who receives both Buddhist and Taoist teachings. It may also mean
that the believer receives a stronger impact from the Taoist or traditional teachings. When she described her past religious activities, she deliberately pointed out that although she attended these activities, they should not be regarded as superstitious. She answered,

... [our family members] would consider ourselves Buddhist Taoists just because we cannot be regarded as traditional or orthodox Buddhists.65 I believe that the situation like ours in Taiwan would be considered Buddhist Taoism.

Q: Did you simply follow your family’s religion [to become a Buddhist Taoist]?
A: Yes, I did. I did it spontaneously. I followed this belief right after I was born.

Q: Could you describe it, about your previous belief earlier in your life?
A: So my earlier religious life is [like this]...Since my parents did bai-bai and they worshiped ancestors, I followed their belief naturally and had a chance to worship and entered the temple. I felt it was very common for me...So I did not have any special chance to know Christianity...All the deities in the temples present my religion to me... But, we were not superstitious. We neither go to the fortuneteller nor make use of fengshui.66 We did none. Our faith was very pure. For example, we worshiped the ancestors during the Tomb-sweeping Day. When it came to the Lunar New Year or some other festivals, we would come to the temple and burn the incense... When we were young, we prayed for good grades for our school works. When we grew up, we started to know that we should pray for parents’ good health. Or after we got married, we would want our marriage to go well. We would pray for these kinds of things.67

65 According to her answer, her previous religion should be understood as a mixture of Buddhism and Taoism.

66 Feng-shui is a traditional practice for geomancy commonly seen in many East Asian cultures. It is believed that the divine intervenes in people’s lives through geomancy arrangement. For example, the arrangement of the building structure, the placement of indoor furniture will all affect human’s life in a positive or negative way according to its rules. De Groot, 159.

67 The original extracted content is:
“A: 應該是屬於佛道教ㄟ，因為我們不是傳統的、正統的佛教....所以在台灣這樣子的話都會歸在有點佛道教那樣的部分。
Q: 你是跟著家裡阿，很自然的...出生就有的
A: 跟著家裡阿，很自然的...出生就有的
Q: 那可不描述一下呢？就是早期的信仰狀況?
A: 早期的信仰狀態就是，就是從小就是父母親有拜拜阿，祭拜祖先阿神明這樣子，所以很自然的就會拿香阿，然後就會進去廟裡阿，一切都覺得好像就很自然，然後也沒有特別的機會去接觸到基督教....我覺得信仰就是神明...但是我們家是不迷信，所以我們也不會說要去算命阿，或者是甚麼風水上面，都沒有，就是純粹的就是那種，比方說，清明節要祭祖阿，那有時候遇到那個，過年過節，媽媽會帶到廟裏面去燒香這樣子...年輕的時候大概都是求自己的學業阿，然後大一點以後，慢慢懂得會去求爸爸媽媽身體健康，或者是說自己結婚以後會想， 希望自己的這個家庭可以就是很平安，大概都是求這些。”
On the basis of her answers, if the religious acts conform with the cultural expectation or aim to fulfill the family responsibilities, such as venerating or worshiping family kin or ancestor’s spirits during the Tomb-sweeping Day, the acts will be adopted as the practices of filial piety. The term Confucianism was not used in her description of personal faith but the ideas behind her conduct is obvious-- these cultural responsibilities are considered good or moral from the Confucian perspective.

Therefore, praying for any religious efficacy for parents’ health and a good marriage, as T1 describes, are appropriate religious acts, for they can be regarded as filial responsibilities. A. T. Nuyen exemplifies Confucian practices in modern Asian society. Nuyen extracts the teaching from Analects to show how following the parent’s way is considered filial piety; following the parents’ way and carrying out the parents’ will are considered results of obedience in Confucian ethics. He states,

“When a man’s father is alive, look at the bend of his will. When his father is dead, look at his conduct. If for three years [of mourning] he does not change from the way of his father, he may be called filial.”

Although following the parents’ way is considered filial, Nuyen emphasizes that the act of obedience does not mean the blind and absolute act. A son should reason about the actual practices when it comes to obeying the parents’ way. Related to the concept of filial piety, when the religious practices are considered as part of family traditions, it becomes a necessity for the individual to inherit the religious activities from the family. When the religious activities contain ancestor worship, the act of carrying on the family’s religious

---

69 Nuyen, 433-450.
tradition is considered as filial piety. However, in T1’s view, asking for religious efficacy only for the satisfaction of personal needs would be considered superstitious; this act will receive a negative judgment. On the other hand, to pray for the parents’ health in an efficacious way is a legitimate act.\(^7^0\)

From the convert’s perspective, one of the important divisions of their own judgment on religion or superstition depends on whether the religious acts are expected as family responsibilities. As long as ancestor worship is practiced correctly, the interviewees would not be considered superstitious. This may explain the reason why among those who answered that their religion was traditional belief they usually included ancestor worship. In this regard, the past religious belief looks like a person’s necessary responsibility to the family rather than a personal free choice of religious beliefs. Besides regarding traditional religions as part of the believer’s responsibility, the believer also tries to fit the idea of ling into a correct religious conduct. When one considers the idea of Confucian responsibilities in religious beliefs as rigid laws, the experience of ling provides freedom for these Han religious believers to relate to the divine through their personal supernatural experiences.

On the other hand, to resonate with Nuyen’s idea on the importance of reasoning before obeying the teaching, the Confucian attitude in the religious acts can be seen as using reasons in preventing the family’s belief from going too superstitious in the Han society. The believer’s religious choice seems to swing between two poles, being religious and being superstitious. If Confucianism can be considered as one side of the axis that represents rational elements, the other end of the axis is folk religions, including Buddhism, Taoism and traditional religions. Contrary to traditional religions, folk religions pull the believers to other side by applying the idea of ling through feelings and intuitions. Two different religious

\(^7^0\) Mei-rong Lin, Taiwan culture and history's reconstruction. [Reconstruction of the Culture and History in Taiwan] (Taipei: qian-wei, 1996), 147-151.
attitudes, the Confucian attitude and the folk religious attitude, oppose each other and prevent the general public from being completely rational or completely superstitious.

Evaluating both rational thoughts and the pursuit of efficacious results, P15’s answer demonstrates an example of how a traditional religious believer may maintain herself as a good religious practitioner when pursing religious efficacy.

My father and my mother’s religion should be considered Taoism. But I would say that I did not believe this very much. Before I knew Christianity, if people asked me to bai-bai, I would just follow him. When my mom asked me to bei, I would also do it. But I did not know what (whom) I was worshiping… I also went to a fortuneteller when my husband moved his work to X city. Because I [sometimes] felt bewildered, I would also asked fortunetellers about my own life. I would go to ask anyone whom my friend said could predict accurately, I would go. But I was not superstitious. Only when my friends proved to me that they were okay would I go.71

In her case, the event that pulled her toward religious efficacy was her intention of seeking help from fortunetellers. While T1 listed clearly that some of her religious activities were simply the fulfillment of religious duties so they could not be regarded as superstitious, P15’s rationale for avoiding being superstitious was to restrict the frequency of visiting a fortuneteller. Based on the idea that the religious choice or the religious conduct is made according to the consideration of both Confucian rationality and personal experience of ling, her case implies one possibility of judging the legitimacy of efficacy. The religious believers are encouraged to make efforts before they believe in any supernatural help. Or, to explain it in another way, P15’s legitimate request of asking for supernatural help comes only at the

71 The original extracted content is:

“爸爸、媽媽那邊是算是道教的，可是應該是說我也不算是一個非常信的人，早期啦，就是在還沒接觸基督教之前，我就是有人叫我去拜拜我就去拜拜，媽媽叫我拜我就拜，阿我不知道我在拜什麼… 那也曾經去算過命，就是曾經先生要下來 X 工作的時候，因為會徬徨，所以也會去算命這樣，就是只要人家叫我去哪裡有、有的信，然後算的很準，那我就會去，阿也不是很迷，就是除非真的人家說、朋友說 OK 的，我才會去看看這樣子。”
important moment when her husband changed his job location. This represents one kind of legitimate request for ling—when the person expends a certain degree of personal effort in dealing with life circumstances. Although there does not seem to be a universal judgment from all interviewees, folk religious believers tend to determine when the appropriate moment is and where the supernatural help comes from whenever they seek for direction or support.

As a result, a believer may expect to receive supernatural help or blessings when one’s request corresponds to Confucian responsibilities and results from reasonable practical needs according to his or her own decision. However, even though necessary conditions are met, there is still no clear standard that all believers can follow in order to receive help supernaturally. Although efficacy is attractive and effective to the believers, they all know that there are other conditions that need to be met before they receive efficacious results, such as the fulfillment of Confucian responsibilities and the choice of appropriate time, place and the deity or the supernatural power for making prayer requests. These criteria are becoming the cultural norm for the Han believers in religious choices and a common way to relate with the supernatural power or God.

c. Christianity and the Chinese Religious Choices

Interviewees shared various views when they were asked their impressions about Christianity and the Christian God when first encountering this religion. All of the interviewees tried to depict the similarities and the differences between the western and the eastern traditions in their first encounters with Christianity. Among those who have had positive impressions about Christianity and would like to consider Christianity as a religious choice, some interviewees indicated that they had inherited their family’s religious tolerance.
They believed all religions to be good, regardless of western or eastern ones. Others tried to build a positive image of Christianity by connecting it with the idea of Western civilization and education. Although these are not key reasons for their later conversion, they imply how a belief is changed by already-received positive ideas. T4’s example presents that Christianity is a better choice than the traditional beliefs.

In my idea, Christianity is dignified; people need enough knowledge in order to understand (believe) it. People should not act too frivolous when they enter the church (Christianity). It is not like our Taoism. After you see their activities for a while on the side, you can participate. But (the entry into) Christianity is different. It needs a longer process to enter and requires all conditions to come together at the right time.72

However, although some interviewees claimed to have a good impression in the beginning, it did not inevitably lead to a harmonious conversion process later. Despite the fact that there may be either good or negative impressions, for a large number of the traditional religious believers with multiple religious belongings, the major psychological characteristic that appears during the conversion process is a shift from multiple belongings to one exclusive religious commitment.

It is very common for Han religious believers to have multiple religious belongings within the Chinese religious beliefs. Whereas Chinese religions tend to tolerate multiple belongings, Christianity usually does not. Even if some believers have already been regarded as a formal member of a particular Chinese religious group and identify themselves as Buddhists or Taoists, they tend to keep family traditional beliefs and may still follow folk

72 The original extracted content is:
“我印象中的話就是他格調高，而且他需要一定的知識，才能夠信這個宗教...基督教的話那時候要進去來講，覺得比較不隨便，像一般如果我們道教，反正就在旁邊就像他們就看一看，很自然就參加了...我們基督教就是，基本上要有一定的過程，你才會進去進去...會需要一點時間和需要當時的巧合。”
religions. Because of the common phenomenon of multiple belongings, their belief before coming to Christianity is fluid and usually contains at least two sources of traditions.

Cheng points to a common term to explain the culturally perceived commonality among all religious believers, *shannan xinnü*.

Any kind of traditional Chinese religious believer is termed *shannan xinnü*. These two terms are general terms for all folk religious believers. *Shannan* is used for male believers and *xinnü* for female believers. *Shannan* and *xinnü* are usually combined together to refer to the pious believers regardless of gender difference. These terms are commonly used among different temples for their believers; the use of these terms indicates a fact that the worshippers do not usually have any religious commitment. In addition, *Shannan xinnü* can also be referred to those who have already had strong commitment to one or more temples. While the same term contains both possibilities, this signifies that both the committed and non-committed are regarded as believers by the temples.

Therefore, the psychological transformation involved in a decision whether to worship in a certain temple is very different from a decision whether to quit a traditional religion and adopt a belief in Christianity. Conversion to Christianity for the traditional religious believers involves a shift from recognizing all of the supernatural entities as related, to distinguishing a single existing one from all the other supernatural entities. This may require a turn and transformation in the change of the concept of God or Divinity. Cheng explains the conceptual distinction of God or Divinity between Christianity and the traditional Chinese religions and the way these affect how the believers relate themselves with God or Divinity. To understand their essential differences, Cheng contrasts the two different concepts of God between Christianity and traditional Chinese religions. He contends

---

73 善男信女

74 *Cheng 2009, 212-213.*
that all of the Chinese religions, including certain forms of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism should be considered as one interactive and integrated religious system through their similar and common religious experiences among the believers.

While this integrated religious system in the folk religions employs the idea of Multiple Supreme Divinity, he contrasts it by applying Absolute Monotheism for understanding the Christian God. In this multiple system shared in the folk religions, the existence of one Divinity does not exclude the others but includes the others instead. Cheng states that,

The concept Supreme Divinity in the Chinese context is a very unique cultural phenomenon and cannot be compared with any models found in the western religious theories. It does not resonate with other theism, such as Henotheism, Kathenotheism, Pantheism or Dualism. The Supreme Divinity is not a single model…. All of the Divinities do not oppose against one another. Instead, they integrate and formulate a greater unity…. 

The idea of Multiple Supreme Divinity shows that the Chinese traditional religions express a tolerant attitude towards absorbing different regional religious systems based on their various religious deities. Amidst the religious integration in the Chinese religions, this system presents both a multiple and unified religious characteristic. The experiential factor ling is crucial in this system. While the folk deities relate to each other according to their religious commonality, the notion of ling provides experiential opportunities that offer common religious experience for believers to resonate their experience from one divinity with the other divinities. 

---

76 Cheng 2008, 72.
Consequently, when an encounter between Absolute Monotheism and Multiple Supreme Divinity leads to a decision for Christianity, it results from two possible situations. First, the decision to convert to Christianity may be made based on the premise of excluding or denying the other supernatural entities. If the converts had ever experienced supernatural powers and testified to their existence, these powers could not be claimed as non-existing, but rather as evil to them, in order to recognize them as the only legitimate Supreme one. The affirmation of Christian faith requires converts to regard other powers as negative and evil. Besides, Christian baptism was usually the first religious conversion although in fact this might not be their first time to believe a religion. Therefore, the decision of making religious commitment and of making exclusion of the existence of other deities in order to enter Christianity may happen simultaneously in the conversion process.

Second, the Han Presbyterian converts regard Christianity as one of the religious choices among both western and eastern religions. Although they eventually understood that the final result of receiving Christian faith happened not only through their personal choice but also through God’s grace, the final decision for the believers is the choice of the best one by comparison among their religious experiences. Whether they experienced ling or not, their very personal experience involved with religious interpretations had proved to them the importance of Christian conversion. Thus, excluding other deities as evil or non-existing might not be necessary when the convert still intends to regard Christianity as one of the positive religious choices. Therefore, through the believer’s successfully identifying and realizing Christian God’s gratefulness and grace experientially among or above all the other of the religious choices, the believer is able to convert to this new belief without condemning other religious spirits. The converts still may recognize the existence of other spiritual powers and even consider it as being positive to humanity although this premise may be in conflict.
with Christian monotheist premises.

This cultural characteristic enables the folk religious believers willingly to test all possible supernatural possibilities regardless of their western and foreign attributes. When traditional believers have already affirmed efficacy as the requirement for religious choices, they would attempt to encounter efficacy within Christianity. T13’s conversion process exemplifies how the choice of Christianity was made when different efficacious powers are compared; T13’s case can be regarded as one typical conversion process regarding how people who had significant amounts of ling experience would make their religious choice.

T13 was an obvious special case because she used to work as a spiritual medium in her private studio. In order to receive supernatural abilities, she had involved all kinds of spiritual powers, mainly from eastern religious spiritual entities. Despite her pan-eastern religious orientation, T13 assumed a universal spiritual power that could be sensed and communicated regardless of religious differences. When describing her process of conversion, T13 recalled her conversion experience beginning from the time when she started to encounter the supernatural power from other religions. The result of comparison of her supernatural experiences is key to her conversion.

I went to many temples… [I] had visited all of the famous temples… As long as the temples were believed to be ling and famous, I would go [and worship]. My friends introduced me some temples, and we would go there even when it was midnight. My female friends and I worshiped a lot of idols and a lot of deities… However, during December, I felt that my whole body was bound [and uncomfortable]. Then I prayed to the God in the universe. I said, that, ‘Dear Universal God, if you are really there, please take me to the right place, meet the right person and do the right thing’… I did not want to continue my studio work and wanted to do non-profit jobs… I applied for jobs from online and then a Christian organization replied me and asked if I would reject working in a Christian organization. And I replied that non-profit works should extend religion boundaries. And said yes [to the agent]. She then arranged an
interview for me. It was a [Christian] fellowship. I was accepted [by the office of the fellowship]. They did works for the rehabilitates. I knew that they had a morning prayer meeting everyday but felt painful to attend it in the beginning. However, I did not know that I was touched by God [at one time during the meeting]. I dropped tears when I saw the Bible verses.

[In another time] in this antique Presbyterian Church, TPC, surprisingly they hold a prayer meeting and invited pastor S. I invited many good friends to participate.

Q: Were they Christians?
A: No, [they were not and] neither was I. I knew that pastor S was a [Presbyterian] pastor who did healing and demon deliverance. He was an exception in the Presbyterian Church.

After he glanced at myself and the rest of us who sat in one row, he laid hands to pray for me, and then said, ‘Are you all worshiping guan-yin?’ I answered, ‘Yes’. I thought that he was incredible that he could also contact spirits. Christianity also knows how to contact spirits! And he relied that I had a great ability inside me. If I did not want to give it up, no one would be able to save me. Neither could he nor God save me if I did not want to give up the ability. At that time I somewhat realized it (his words). 77

One primary reason for T13’s religious quest is to rid herself of physical illnesses and discomfort so she started her religious request by searching for supernatural help for healing her discomfort. Before adhering to any religion, the affirmation of power of the deities including the existence of God has to happen along with supernatural encounters. Later chapters will explore more the connection between bodily experiences and belief. Merely

77 The original extracted content is:
“我 去過的地方很多....有名的廟都跑過了.....那邊靈,那邊有名就去....都是朋友介紹這樣子,然後我們這樣半夜透早都會趕去.....跟姊妹淘一起去拜,去拜很多的偶像,拜很多的神.... 那是十二月份的時候....怎麼會好像全身被綑綁的感覺....我跟宇宙老天禱告,就說神哪,如果你真的在的話,你真的在,請你帶我到對的地方,遇到對的人作對的事,我有上網登陸工作...就說有一個基督教團體的,問我會不會排斥基督教,我說如果做公益愛心應該不分宗教吧,都可以,我說好,她就把我安排去 interview 這樣子,結果是一個團契,就沒想到就被錄取了....更生團契,作監獄受刑人....關懷的....我知道他們每天早上有晨更,當時我覺得很痛苦,為什麼要晨更,更沒想到在晨更當中,神觸摸到,就是我看到那些短文會掉眼淚。TPC 這樣一個古老的長老教會,居然舉辦了一個培靈會,那個培靈會是 S 牧師....反正那次我就帶了好朋友去參加。

Q: 他們都不是基督徒？
A: 對啊,我也還不是啊...後來才知道說牧師是那種醫治趕鬼的這種,是長老教會的特...例這樣子。結果他看到我,他看到我們這一排,他幫我按手禱告的時候他就對我說,他說你們這一票都是拜觀音的呴, 我說對啊,我想很厲害喔,他也通靈,我想基督教也通靈喔,然後他就跟我講說,他就跟我講說我裡面有大能力,裡面有隱藏著一個大的能力,如果不願意放掉的話,誰都救不了我,她也沒辦法救我,上帝也救不了我,如果你自己不願意放棄那個能力的話,我心裡其實就有點...有點明白這樣子。”
focusing on her religious choices, when T13 had already had a positive attitude toward all the religions and attested the efficacious power in Christianity, she considered Christianity as one of the available choices among all the choices. Her example clearly shows how the experience of efficacy may accelerate the conversion process; meanwhile, since the time for baptism only comes after the decision to convert, efficacious events or moments are decisive for some believers to completely transform their stage of belief from non-believing or partially believing to a full scale of believing.

**B. The Presbyterian Church and Converts**

Both Presbyterian teachings and personal experiences have important influence on the decision of becoming a Christian. Since the experiences of *ling* are common among the folk religious believers, churches supposedly should supply teachings for new incomers in assisting them to discern the difference of religious experiences between the Chinese and Christian traditions. However, the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church does not seem to offer enough explanations related to the difference between local spirituality and Christianity due to the rational theological background from the Calvinistic tradition. Since the interpretation of spiritual experiences from eastern religions does not result in one universal answer, to determine local supernatural powers as good or evil is frequently left to the local pastors and even the converts themselves.

**a. The Presbyterian Conversion**

The kind of faith practices emphasized and experienced in the Presbyterian Church historically is socio-politically oriented rather than psychologically and personally oriented. This is to say that the church emphasizes the efforts devoted to the common welfare for the
community and society more than those devoted to the spiritual experiences of the individual. Accentuating this characteristic, Yang-en Cheng demonstrates the Calvinistic influence in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan as a series of social and political involvement towards modernism and democracy. The practice of Calvinistic teachings from the church primarily contributes to the participation and the promotion of communal welfare.\footnote{Yang-en Cheng, “Calvinism and Taiwan” Theology Today 66 (2009): 184-202.} Undoubtedly, the Calvinistic teachings inherited by the Taiwanese Presbyterians have been presented as an exterior representation accentuating its social improvement and the pursuit of political freedom as opposed to an interior representation accentuating the transformation of the personal life.

Few existing documents that focus on the modern Presbyterian studies seem to reveal the historical image of the Presbyterian conversion. Most of the authors analyze the Presbyterian conversion through the lens of Christian mission history instead of an empirical study of conversion.\footnote{Allens J Swanson, Church in Taiwan, Profile 1980 : A Review of the Past, a Projection for the Future (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 22-27. Philip Clart and Charles B. Jones eds, Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).} Because the Presbyterian Church is the oldest Protestant denomination in Taiwan, the earlier general records detailing mission history unavoidably target the Presbyterian population who comprised more than one third of the total Christian population in Taiwan.

Early Presbyterian converts in the nineteenth century well represented the significant type of Christian converts in Taiwan. There were two groups of people, the tribal people and the Han people, who presented two different kinds of conversion models in Taiwan. The type represented by the earlier records could be adopted for all the modern conversion studies. Swanson argues that in the late nineteenth century a lot of the tribal people converted to Christianity but the number among the Han people only grew slowly. This is due to the
cultural dispositions existing in these two groups. The aboriginal people possessed an animist system and it is easier to connect their belief to a Christian God whereas the Han people, including Minnan and Hakka, tended to maintain their religious traditions in order to attach their identity to the Chinese culture. This made them show hostility to the alien religious system, such as Christianity and the Christian church.\textsuperscript{80}

In order to eliminate the feeling of alienation toward Christianity, instead of making efforts in theological discourses, the Presbyterian Church turned to care for the actual needs of the people to practice faith, such as going to the rural areas and mountainous places to set up educational programs. The participation in social work was regarded also as a crucial means to receive more Presbyterian converts. In 1959, the Presbyterian Church launched a mission strategy, “double-the-church movement”. According to the official number released by the church, the strategy enabled the membership to double in size from 49,000 to 80,681.\textsuperscript{81} During 1955 to 1960, Swanson also points out that a significant growing number of converts were the Mandarin speaking and the tribal people. On the other hand, the Christian number of the other two groups, local Minnan and Hakka, who have more committed devotion to the traditional Chinese religions, grew slowly.\textsuperscript{82}

These studies disclose a pattern of how Christian churches can grow in a new culture; the evangelical strategy should be forged according to people’s actual needs which seemed to persuade people to believe. However, behind the statistics, there was no detailed information as to which reasons influenced people’s decision to convert to Christianity. Since the local Minnan and Hakka do not comprise the largest percent of “double-the-church movement” conversions, this suggests that the evangelical strategy did not attract a larger amount of

\textsuperscript{80} Swanson, xx. Rubinstein, 18. 
\textsuperscript{81} Clart and Jones, 222-223. 
\textsuperscript{82} Swanson, 25.
converts immediately among the Han population who devoted themselves to the traditional religions. The Mandarin speaking population, that grew faster than other two local Minnan and Hakka groups, did not comprise more than 20 percent of the Taiwanese population at that time.

The Presbyterian evangelical strategy might have successfully eliminated the alienation that Han Taiwanese people felt about Christianity but did not seem to win as many converts as expected. Despite the fact that the Presbyterian expended significant effort on social welfare, education and a medical system which generally improved the life of people, no empirical evidence attested to a direct connection between Presbyterian social welfares and personal decisions to convert to Christianity. There might be some other important reasons that have not been considered in the studies or placed in the evangelical strategy before. Since no mass conversions have ever happened among the Han population in Taiwan, the missing dimension of Presbyterian conversion studies may be personal experiences through various cultural factors.

Despite the fact that the cultural component has not been evaluated in the Presbyterian conversion in the past, positive results on conversion among the local Taiwanese and Hakka in 1959 offer initial ideas for the Han conversion in Taiwan. The “double-the-church movement” was fruitful in the southern part of Taiwan where there were more small villages and market towns than in the north. Presbyterian evangelistic efforts were more effective in the south; the small villages and market towns contain many traditional religious believers. The reason why the number of the converts flourished in the south was because in the north, Christians had been exposed to all types of Christian information and had arrived at a saturation point for Christian conversion. Because of this saturation effect and the alienation from Christianity that the Han people felt, the traditional religions were the most familiar
among all the choices and still appealed to people in the north more than people in the south.

Describing the situation why people were reluctant to convert in the north, Rubinstein states that, “Too many Christians with messages redolent of outsiders were vying for a population beginning to rediscover its own indigenous traditions.”83 Regarding the religious choices, traditional religions had essential attractions to the Han people that Christianity could not easily replace. From a historical perspective, scholars contend that the time when Taiwan suffered from many cultural and political upheavals, it was the best time for Christianity to grow in a foreign land. However, when the KMT took over Taiwan and political crisis seemed to be relieved, fewer people felt the need to convert to Christianity. Later during 1965 to 1978, more people turned to the specific gods in Fujian and Taiwan region, such as Mazu, Guanyin, Guan Gong and Tudi Gon.84 This phenomenon indicates that Christian conversion for some people was not as essential as the traditional religion.

From a macro historical observation, the only possible time to allow a larger number of Han Christian conversion to happen was around 1959 to 1965. The period was temporary because the converts later went back to the traditional religions after the political crisis ended. Although these historical facts illuminate the process of the enculturation of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, it points out that very few evangelical strategies were effective because the church aimed at a result of a large number of converts at once. Within Presbyterian conversion, it also indicates that although social and political elements and identities were stressed in the late twentieth century, the more essential element for religious conversion lies in a more personal dimension. From a psychological perspective a religious decision for a Han individual may be the outcome of the experience of the differences between the two

83 Clart and Jones, 222-223.
84 Ibid, 224.
religious systems, traditional Chinese religions and Christianity. Although historical and social elements indeed affect religious activities and developments, psychological and personal aspects should be examined when analyzing Christian conversion from a traditional Chinese background.

From the earlier individual conversion stories collected by Yingtze Lai in the 19th century, some cultural characteristics had appeared in the conversion decision among the earliest converts. These characteristics lasted until modern times. Individual conversion stories from those who came from traditional religious backgrounds reveal another facet of Presbyterianism that is not politically relevant. Lai provides some hints that illuminate the situations of the individual Presbyterian conversion during the late twentieth century. These earliest converts became Christians primarily because of the experiences of supernatural healings and exorcism received from Christianity. Lai’s conversion record is one of the few documents that point out the personal and psychological aspect of transformation among some of the earliest conversion cases. According to these records, neither the theological teachings, nor the denominational differences affected their choices when the main concern for converts seemed to be religious efficacy. Referring to the characteristics of the folk believers, Lai argues that they believed in the supernatural power and would like to seek for evidence of that proven in Christianity. Because of high dependence on supernatural powers among the new believers, some believers swayed between traditional beliefs and Christianity but eventually returned to the traditional beliefs. Those who returned to traditional religions believed the traditional religions possess greater powers over Christianity because these powers demonstrated greater efficacious results.

85 C. H. Hsu and L. M. Cheng eds, 
86 Ibid.
Based on the above Presbyterian historical studies both on a macro or micro scale, two conclusions emerge about Presbyterian conversion from 1865 to 1965. On the macro scale, the analysis from the Presbyterian evangelical strategy assumes that new members came to the Presbyterian Church because of the acceptance of the Presbyterian theological teachings as well as recognition of their efforts on social and political involvement. On a micro scale, Lai’s account of the personal conversion story leads to an understanding of conversion that suggests that the particular personal religious experiences involved with different kinds of supernatural power assumed a pivotal role.

Historical studies on mission strategies imply two types of conversion between the Han people and the aboriginal group. However, in comparing the aboriginal group with the Han group, since the success of converting aboriginal people to Christianity depends on the similarity of the concept of God in both animism and Christianity, could there be another paralleling kind of tendency preferred by the Han believers to change their belief? Lai points out that many earlier converts indeed had dramatic experiences in healings or other attested supernatural circumstances, but cannot conclude if these cases comprised most or just few.

Lai’s study suggests that there may be more personal Presbyterian conversion cases that deserve further study. Although the individual conversion stories have never been analyzed in an academic setting, they have been recorded and kept by the local churches as well as the PCT headquarters. The Presbyterian church tends to put a certain amount of emphasis on personal conversion stories on their website. These conversion stories are written down by converts and published either online or through print publishing. For example, although the official PCT website does not typically highlight the dramatic aspects of the conversion stories, the key elements related to how a person transforms oneself during
conversion are addressed. Many PCT pastors would write down their memories as to how their church members became Christians in their personal publications. These usually contain more dramatic plots than the ones published on the official PCT website.\(^87\)

As for the four churches interviewed in this study, they have their own preferences on publication of personal conversion stories. Most local Presbyterian churches publish their own yearbooks. When a church publishes the yearbook, a section of personal testimonies, *jian-zheng*, is usually included. It is very common for a church to edit their own yearbook and distribute to church members every five years. Personal testimonies consist of an important section in the Christian’s life stories. The church wants to address this element in their yearbook so the church authorities would invite First-Generation Christians and non-First-Generation Christians to write their own *jian-zheng*. Although the literal meaning of *jian-zheng* is testimony, when this term is used, it often implies some extent of supernatural and dramatic elements during the personal transformation of conversion. The implication of the term is applied to many Protestant denominations. If the church decides to use personal *jian-zheng* stories as materials to evangelize, usually the church adopts the more dramatic stories. Therefore, the phenomenon of the popularity of utilizing personal testimonies, *jian-zheng*, on any kind of denominational publications, hints that there is a general interest in knowing dramatic stories during personal conversion experience. Besides, this general interest implies a common expectation at the grass root level. Although Presbyterian teachings tend to stress social and political participation and rational theology, there is still a general expectation of dramatic and supernatural plots happening during Christian conversion, even though it may be expected much more frequently in folk religious traditions.

---

b. The Calvinistic Teaching

As mentioned in the previous section, research that presupposes impact from local religious experiences was not popular in the past. Presbyterian studies used to mostly give attention to historical and political studies. The concern with Presbyterian religious experiences viewed through a psychological or individual perspective only began to arise in the academic scholarship later in the 1970s when the charismatic movement became influential across all denominations in Taiwan. The charismatic churches and authorities challenged the Presbyterian version of teachings on the Holy Spirit and expected the Presbyterian Church to respond. Defending the Presbyterian spirituality, PCT scholars did not find a strong relationship between personal spiritual experiences and faith from their tradition. However, during the process of responding to charismatic challenges, issues about feelings and supernatural power within Christian teachings were discussed earnestly for the first time in the Presbyterian scholarship.

The Presbyterian responses to the charismatic challenges can be summarized in two questions they raised within the Presbyterian Church. First, does Presbyterianism agree that personal prayers can effectively lead to the experiences with the Holy Spirit with particular emotional and physical feelings? Second, does Presbyterianism agree that the experiences with the Holy Spirit can only happen with such obvious physical and emotional feelings? The Presbyterian scholars answer no to both questions. These answers were made based on the rational tradition in Presbyterianism; instead of emphasizing particular personal experiences, scholars contend that the understanding of God should be based on knowledge and reason. In Lin’s interpretation on John Calvin’s work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he quotes from the first chapter, “Connection between the Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of
“Ourselves” and “The Human Mind naturally imbued with the Knowledge of God” to elaborate the emphasis on knowledge in Calvin’s idea. He states that Calvin employs a rational method in understanding both humans and God. His approach of understanding God and humans through knowledge clearly represents the Presbyterian spirituality. As a result, biblical interpretations offer the best approach in achieving the knowledge of the divine.

In the Calvinistic interpretation of the Holy Spirit, unlike the charismatic teachings that emphasize bodily experiences both emotionally and physically, the gift of the Holy Spirit should be understood through the idea of knowledge; the inspiration that a person receives from the Biblical knowledge intellectually serves as direct communications between the person and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, both the gift and the fruit of the Holy Spirit are the outcomes of personal willingness to comprehend and practice the correct Biblical interpretations.88

Moreover, Hong-hsin Lin contends that charismatic teachings focus too much on the particular individual experiences than on comprehending the authentic Biblical knowledge. By stressing personal experiences, the charismatic teachings downplay social practices or communal welfare that Presbyterian churches historically have focused on and encouraged their believers to participate in. Lin also doubts if these physical or emotional results all have positively motivated believers when it comes to practicing Biblical teachings. In Presbyterianism, since the Bible represents the highest authority of the faith in the church, the interpretation of the Bible should be placed in the highest order above all of the personal experiences and interpretations. Consequently, the Holy Spirit that Presbyterianism stresses is the kind of spiritual power that leads to correct Biblical understandings through knowledge.

---

and reason. This correct understanding will then generate essential changes among the believers; these changes will not be temporary.

As a result, besides Lin, other Presbyterian authors, such as Wong-hui Liang, Rong-zhong Wong and Hong-xin Lin (LWL) do not agree with the fact that some charismatic experiences plausibly posit particular and personal experiences prior to Biblical teachings. In addition, because of the efficacious consequences presented under the charismatic influences, the Presbyterian authorities worry that the emphasis on prophecy and the unexamined spiritual or supernatural experiences in the name of the Holy Spirit would override the Presbyterian Scriptural emphasis. If so, Christian believers will not have room for rational judgments after they have already determined their self-interpretation based on the subjective experiences when the subjective judgment is affirmed by the charismatic authorities.

LWL opposes the priority placed in the charismatic movement on the bodily experiences to determine whether the person has direct influence from the Holy Spirit or not. Meanwhile, LWL holds a similar attitude in reacting to the bodily or supernatural experiences associated with folk practices or spirituality. They parallel the supernatural power specified in the charismatic teaching with the folk religious experiences while holding a negative attitude towards charismatic experiences and the folk religious experiences, particularly when they are associated with particular bodily experiences.

Despite the disagreement stated by the Presbyterian authors, the Presbyterian members still seemed to favor the charismatic approaches. Recent research conducted by LWL released in 1996, focuses on Presbyterian believers’ religious behavior, including the relation between Presbyterian teachings and their personal faith. The result shows that instead

89 Hong-xin Lin, 聖靈論 [Pneumatology] (Taipei: Li-chi, 1997), 49.
of emphasizing Scriptural interpretations, Presbyterian members tend to confirm their experiences with the Holy Spirit through their own subjective point of views. In the section on discerning the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the interviewees were asked if they have ever had experiences with the Holy Spirit, and if they did so, whether they would apply the Presbyterian teaching to their personal experiences involved with the Holy Spirit. More than 70 percent of the Presbyterian interviewees answered that they would affirm their supernatural experiences associated with the Holy Spirit according to their own interpretations, without reexamining them through Presbyterian Biblical teachings. This result indicates a strong belief in the subjective judgment regarding the experiences of the self when it comes to the experience of Holy Spirit or supernatural experience. In light of this result, LWL worries that church members tend to solely rely on their own supernatural experiences in understanding Christianity and God’s power, without gaining sufficient support from a thorough understanding from the Biblical context. The survey results reveal the strong impact of local interpretation and idea of religion as well as Christian faith. Although Presbyterianism emphasizes judgments through knowledge and reason, the church cannot avoid the strong cultural tendency of relying on personal subjective judgment, such as supernatural experiences; the church members tend to continuously follow it even after conversion.

On the other hand, there is no universal conclusion in evaluating the supernatural experiences from a Presbyterian perspective as to whether the church should treat it with more caution or regard it as a cultural norm. When folk beliefs are considered social activities and serve social functions, there is no need to worry about the supernatural power from the folk deities. Fang-yuan Dong represents this kind of Presbyterian perspective that affirms the social functions that folk beliefs and worship contribute to the society. The idea of believing
in the existence of spirits started long ago; the practice of worshiping spirits is motivated by the expectation of the compassion of the dead people and the fear of their supernatural power. Dong points out that one of the common folk beliefs is the worship of the dead spirits, *quei*. The worship of *quei* includes spirits from both the family ancestors and the unknown dead. The rituals done for these spirits relieve the fear towards the ghosts and represent acts of mercy to all beings. These religious practices have significant social functions so they should be treated with respect. However, Dong does not explain whether supernatural powers indeed exist among these religious practices or not—this is a popular question that most lay believers are eager to know.  

Another kind of opinion tends directly or indirectly to recognize the existence of supernatural powers in the folk religions. Some Presbyterian authors indirectly recognize the existence of supernatural power but oppose putting the existence of supernatural power into consideration when discussing Christian religious experiences. These authors, mostly Presbyterian academics and authorities, showed disfavor to sources both from charismatic teachings and folk contexts. For example, LWL considers both charismatic power and folk religious power similarly dangerous. This perspective tends to regard all of the supernatural powers negatively, from the experience of *ling* and *quei*, to the power of the Holy Spirit. Once the local supernatural power is considered negative, then when some traditional religious concepts of efficacy easily lure people to follow superstitious ideas, the church should stand up and oppose to it. The church has to be aware of this danger. Lin states that,  

It will produce a negative effect if we talk about faith with an acceptance of the efficacious idea. Our society has already had a tendency of pursuing efficacy, and a lot

---

91 Wong-hui Liang, Rong Zhong Wong and Hong-xin Lin, *神學反思：加爾文與台灣基督長老教會* [A Theological Reflection: Calvinism and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan] (Taipei: 永望, 1996), 55.
of sayings towards ghosts and gods. When the western charismaticism uses the term of demon deliverance, the term has to be understood in its own background. The ghost they point to is not *quei* in our context. We may misconceive the meaning… When one seeks help through a prayer, one should realize that the problem would only be solved when several conditions meet all together. Because of this, people cannot depend on the effective result out of one prayer. Consequently, people who tend to solve their personal problems through demon deliverance may over simplify their problems.

Elaborating the similarity between the charismatic teaching and folk beliefs, LWL points out that they both believe these are two camps of good and evil in the supernatural realm that oppose and contest each other. Because this belief has already existed in the folk religions, people tend to favor belief in charismatic exorcism practices easily and put aside Presbyterian rational theological assumption. However, these Presbyterian authors tend to think that both beliefs in folk religions and charismatic ideas on supernatural power do not cohere to Presbyterian teachings.

On the other hand, there is another group of Presbyterian authors who tend to recognize the existence of supernatural power and do not think that this belief is against Presbyterian teachings. Moreover, some of them would believe that the converts’ self-discernment and judgment towards different kinds of supernatural powers are true. These Presbyterian authors show more support for the converts’ self-examination and accept it as one of the possible ways of discerning the Holy Spirit, as long as the content of self-experience does not contradict with the church teaching. In their points of view, it is possible that the supernatural power and the power from the Holy Spirit, communicates with the believers through their subjective experiences without the assistance of Biblical

---

93 Liang, Wong and Lin, 55.
Although major Presbyterian academics tend to question the existence and the effects of supernatural power from both folk religion and charismatic teachings, LWL does not attempt to diminish all influence brought from the personal religious experiences. LWL contends that Calvin does not deny that some particular individual experiences may come from the Holy Spirit. They also affirm these personal experiences but contend that if the particular experiences are truly influenced by the Holy Spirit, they will not just happen once. If these influences come from the Holy Spirit, they should continue to happen to the believer. Under strong challenges from charismatic teachings and the charismatic churches, LWL warns the Presbyterian church and believers that believers should be aware and not to be proud of their particular or dramatic supernatural or spiritual experiences. These particular experiences should merely be treated as past experiences and can neither guarantee nor predict the forthcoming Holy Spirit experiences. The same argument applies to conversion and sanctified experiences. Every Christian should have one’s own experience of sanctification in the present tense and not in the past tense. The religious experiences for Christians should be motivations to follow and practice the Biblical teachings in daily life instead of solely accentuating supernatural experiences.  

Even if the mainstream academics unanimously consider rational Biblical explanation better than the personal experiences, they still leave room for integrating alternative emphasis into the future Presbyterian theological development. There are only a few academic discussions related to an integrated type of Presbyterian theology although some personal articles published among the Presbyterian pastors indicate this possibility. Their points show

---

94 For example, Wu-tsung Wang is an influential pastor in the Presbyterian church. He is the one who supports the importance of demon deliverance during conversion process within and without the charismatic context. He usually affirmed his church member’s self-experiences if these experiences were true to the believers. Wang, 173.

95 Liang, Wong and Lin, 67.
that the rational Presbyterian tradition in the Han society gradually assimilates the local experiences in reshaping the idea of spirituality in Presbyterianism. For example, Long-chih Hu contends that, the traditional Christian denominations in Taiwan in the past, such as PCT, primarily emphasize the idea of order in understanding the Holy Spirit whereas the Pentecostal and charismatic churches primarily emphasize the idea of freedom in experiencing the Holy Spirit. These two types of ideas have different presuppositions theologically but both sides should learn from each other. According to Hu, they will be incomplete if they do not adopt the other side’s viewpoint. In his perspective, both rational and emotional understandings of Christian faith are equally important and should fall into the same category of faith experiences.

This point of view is proposed recently and obviously represents new progress that the Presbyterian theology stands to make in understanding spirituality from charismatic and folk understandings. Moreover, there seem to exist typical psychological themes evident in the local understandings of supernatural power and the characteristics of God which need to be incorporated. Thomas Csordas notes that the psychological tendency presents in the charismatic movement in the North American context through studying their religious *habitus*.

Likewise, based on the similar emphasis on somatic experiences in the Han society, there may be some cultural psychological and emotional tendencies that can be found through the examination of the Han Presbyterian converts. This may provide a more complete image of Han Christian converts.

---

96 Hongchih Hu, 主題探討：從加爾文的觀點來認識聖靈[Theme Discussion: Understand the Holy Spirit from The Calvinistic Perspective]
IV. Cultural Understanding of Religious Experiences

Among Presbyterian Converts

This chapter analyzes common religious experiences found among Presbyterian converts. Some distinctive experiential elements in religion, such as belief in *ling* and particular religious emotions, are crucial factors when converts make religious decisions and judgments. The results suggest that these First Generation Christians’ understanding of God rely heavily on somatic experiences, including supernatural healings and encounters, rather than intellectual understandings. Since some interviewees’ conversions were not influenced by *ling* experiences, both *ling* and non-*ling* types were created and compared based on their differing psychological attributes. How cultural understanding of religious experiences affects the Christian conversion process among Presbyterian converts is discussed in this chapter.

While Taiwanese Presbyterian theologians expected that Presbyterian members should rely on rational understandings to justify conversion, the results from the interviewees’ answers clearly indicate the opposite phenomenon. These results show that Han Presbyterian converts form their Christian understandings based on a cultural context derived from their original understandings of God and religion in which emotional transformations and familial responsibilities are emphasized. In other words, for these Han Presbyterian converts, who are First Generation Christians, understandings of Christianity stem from their own religious experiences rather than from theological understandings. Only a very few converts mentioned the importance of Christian theological understandings during conversion. If any understanding was mentioned, such as love, it was because they experienced it alongside emotional changes and special life encounters. As discussed earlier,

---

97 Hong-xin Lin, 49.
although not all converts experienced ling during conversion, significant emotional transformation was prevalent among both ling and non-ling groups. However, ling experiences tended to be accompanied by dramatic encounters and an ensuing shorter time before the conversion decision, than the non-ling group.

A. Interview Questions and Results

In order to understand the complete conversion process of the interviewees and to examine interviewees’ transformation regarding the different concepts of God, four types of questions were designed for the interviewees in this study. Besides background information, interviewees were firstly asked about their previous religious experiences in traditional Chinese religions and their religious experiences around Christianity. Secondly, interviewees stated whether they had encountered ling experiences, including before and after conversion. Thirdly, if they had encountered ling experiences from two different religious sources, interviewees were asked how they would compare their ling religious experiences from these two different sources. Finally, the interviewees discussed whether their conversion was influenced by interpersonal relationships, and whether their conversion relied on their own personal supernatural encounters or particular religious experiences.

Sixty-five interviewees from four selected Presbyterian churches were examined. Thirty of them when asked if the interviewees had ever sensed ling during past religious and Christian experiences, responded that they had particular encounters with supernatural powers. Their ling experiences came from traditional Chinese religions and Christianity but not everyone experienced both.

When asked the question: “Have you ever had ling experiences?”, the results fell into two categories. Those who answered, “Yes” had experienced ling, and those who answered
“No” had not. After interviewees answered that they had previously experienced ling and explained which circumstances they considered to be ling, many interviewees answered that these experiences occurred when their prayers for personal needs or crisis were answered supernaturally. They also regarded particular and dramatic events as ling when these events are connected to personal crises or needs that were the focus of personal prayers. Besides, during these particular events or supernatural moments, interviewees were able to describe whether they felt different emotionally or physically when they encountered the divine.

Those who had experienced ling in previous religious experiences tended to expect that the Christian God would also manifest the power of ling and demonstrate religious efficacy to them. Consequently, no matter whether the source of ling came from traditional Chinese religions or Christianity and no matter whether their association with ling was based on real experiences or imagination, the experiences were considered ling. As for those who had real experiences, some converts tended to regard unexpected and dramatic events as divine interventions. For example, one might experience a car accident and know that it might be a ling effect due to the offense of a certain supernatural power. One might also regard an escape from a car accident as a divine miracle. Interviewees’ real experiences and cultural expectations on efficacy both act to correlate previous ling religious experiences and ideas with later Christian ones.

However, although this causality seems evident, more questions should be asked in order to establish it. Although most of the cases that experienced ling showed stronger causality between their ling experiences and conversion decision, there were exceptions. A few interviewees who had ling experiences before would not consider that their conversion happened because of their ling experiences. For example, for less than five interviewees who admitted supernatural power were evident in their ling experiences (whether it was the witness
of the ghosts or spirits or any kind of supernatural encounters) these experiences did not convince them to take part in any particular religion or to convert. As a result, their willingness to come to church and Christian conversion was due to non-*ling* reasons.

A few interviewees stated that *ling* experience did not affect their religious choice. But, for the majority or people who had *ling* experiences these experiences seemed to effectively impact or reinforce their choice of Christianity when they had already made the choice earlier. Among these cases, some converts actively sought for *ling* experiences from Buddhist, Taoist and folk religious powers before they became Christians. Others might not actively pray for supernatural results but would not reject supernatural encounters from other religions.

On the other hand, for those who had none or minimal *ling* experiences during their conversion the reason why they decided to follow the traditional faith might be either due to the fulfillment of family responsibilities or the cultural expectation in the society instead of a strong personal willingness for religious reasons. When the interviewees’ deemed belief as connected to family responsibilities, cultural characteristics other than religious concerns might affect religious choices. Based on Cheng’s account of universal experiences of *ling* shared among all folk religions and earlier discussions on the idea of Tian and Heaven from Confucian’s point of view, folk religious thought and Confucian thoughts, two major religions that the interviewees belonged to before converting to Christianity, present opposite rationales in the religious spectrum of the Han society. 98 Confucian thought tends to oppose religious efficacy and avoids discussions about the existence of God, whereas folk religious thought, representing overall traditional Chinese religions, tends to ally itself with religious efficacy. Folk religious thought claims the existence of supernatural power without the necessity of physical proof.

---

98 Cheng 2009, 1-7; Fontana, 64-65; Ching, 20.
For those who follow a religion because of family responsibilities, Confucian rationales seem more important than folk religious rationales. Not only for them but also for the rest of folk religious believers who believe in ling, they have to adjust their ideas toward religion by employing both folk religious thought and Confucian thoughts. How the Han religious believers adopt these two opposing positions has been discussed earlier in Chapter Three. For example, while most believers considered themselves religious, they avoided being regarded as superstitious by society, for the idea of superstition suggests the religious believers’ irrationality. Therefore, the adjustment that the converts make between these two positions also represents another adjustment they make to be religious but not superstitious.

Therefore, for Han Presbyterian converts where ling is a factor, three major sources of religious interpretation influence a convert’s religious decisions or involvement: folk religious ideas, charismatic ideas, and traditional Presbyterian teachings. These sources affirm the existence of God for them and form their understanding of God during the Christian conversion process.

Compared with the focus on rationality in Presbyterianism, both folk religions and charismatic practitioners use spiritual experiences as evidence to determine and confirm actual contact with the divine. When converts who are influenced by folk religions’ emphasis on supernatural experiences encountered Presbyterian Christianity that provides less references for explaining supernatural experiences, they might generate their own ideas in interpreting the Christian God, particularly through their particular emotional and physical experiences. In this regard, the ideas from folk religions become a major source for explanation. Furthermore, those who had previously identified the divine power from the perspective of folk religions might adopt a similar approach in recognizing the divine power from the perspective of Christianity, such as through the similar supernatural experiences.
Some Presbyterian converts who had charismatic experiences were able to relate their folk religious understandings to the charismatic teachings because of their common emphasis on bodily and emotional experiences. However, since those who received charismatic teachings during conversion only comprise a small number among all of the interviewees, although charismatic teachings could also be a source for interpreting religious experiences, they are less likely to adopt such interpretations. Charismatic teachings do not assist them in interpreting their particular emotional and physical religious experiences because most Presbyterian converts, the First Generation Christians, did not know about charismatic teachings when they first encountered Christianity. Consequently, the traditional folk interpretations and Presbyterian teachings are the two major sources in explaining religious experiences for those who had ling experiences.

Based on Cheng’s earlier observation, the common efficacious religious experiences among different folk religious believers make these religions more capable of integrating and interacting with one another; in other words, the believers’ similar efficacious experiences associated with different folk deities constitute these religions’ relevance with one another.99 This is why the major element for explaining Han religious experiences from the folk teachings, ling, is regarded as the summary of the folk religious experiences. It has its own category of systematizing the religious experiences that are accepted throughout all kinds of Chinese religions.

In this category, there are two elaborated ideas derived from ling frequently seen in the experiences of the interviewees. The first one is the idea of ling-xian, which represents the moment when a person testifies to the existence of the divine as a supernatural being. Ling-xian literally means the presence of the divine. When a person experiences ling-xian, it usually

means that the person can see the figure of the divine and describe the appearance of the
divine. The second one is the idea of ling-gan, which represents the feeling or emotional
moment when the person connects with the divine. Ling-gan literally either means human
inspiration or the feelings that connect to the divine, but when it is used in a religious context, it
especially points to the feelings that connect to the divine. In this study, when the interviewees
associate their feelings with the divine, it is perceived as ling-gan; any person can be guided to
ponder the existence of the divine once if one has this particular feeling. In relation to the
emphasis on human emotions and physical feelings shown in the Han religious traditions,
ling-xian represents the physical experience of relating oneself to the divine as a figure, while
ling-gan represents the emotional experience of relating oneself to the divine power, not
necessarily to the figure of the divine.

As for those who have experienced ling and converted because of ling, these
experiences may influence different stages in their conversion. For example, the occurrence of
ling experiences before conversion and after conversion is important but in a different way to
their conversion for groups who had ling experiences. Therefore, for those who had ling
experiences that directly led to their decision to convert, the moment of surrendering to the
Christian God occurred at the time when they experienced ling.

As for those who had ling experiences later or after their baptism, ling experiences did
not directly lead them to conversion but rather strengthened their Christian faith. In this regard,
the role of ling experiences for the First-generation Christians is similar to the role of the
experience of being baptized by the Holy Spirit among the charismatic practitioners. For the
charismatic followers, the baptism through the Holy Spirit is marked as the second birth
experience because it attests God’s real presence to them through particular subjective

100 Cheng 2009, 37-54.
emotional or physical feelings. Those who experience the baptism through the Holy Spirit are distinct from those who only receive the first baptism where no specific emotional or physical feelings as a result of the influence of the Holy Spirit are involved.

On the other hand, even if no obvious supernatural experiences happen to them before baptism, it does not mean that the First-generation Christians would stop expecting the ling experiences after their baptism. Belonging to the Presbyterian tradition, they realize that Presbyterian teachings do not emphasize God’s supernatural powers, but this does not eliminate their aspiration to experience miracles through prayers. There is a kind of saying popularly spread among the church that can explain the close connection between the First-generation Christians and their obviously dramatic stories. People assume that after converting, First-generation Christians can usually experience miracles easily during the early conversion time compared with those who come from a Christian family background. Therefore, these converts saw the supernatural moments that happened after conversion as God’s real presence that could strengthen their faith.

To highlight the cultural and local religious influences on the interpretation of Christian religious experiences, ling experience is divided in order to create the conversion typology employed in this study when other theories are supplied for further analysis. In addition, whether or not a person believes in ling or is affected by ling cannot be determined by the direct presentation on believing or not, or by the answer of the religion to which someone belongs, but rather by understanding the content of the person’s ideas of religion and the kind of conversion the person actually went through.

To analyze how the ling experience affects the process of conversion and the understanding of divine through emotional and physical experiences, three theories are applied in this analysis, taken from conversion theories, somatic theories and emotion theories. Within
each category, a subcategory is created under each analysis in order to differentiate those who experience ling from those who did not. After the ling experience is examined using these theories, the results are used to generate conversion types for the Han Taiwanese converts in the following chapter.

B. Ling Experiences and Conversion Theories

Lewis Rambo points out the concept of tradition transition that describes people who originate from a traditional religion and transfer to a new one later. It also represents a significant change from one worldview to another.¹⁰¹ This suggests that the Han converts may experience a significant change between the Han religious perspective and the Christian one because of the different points of view on theism. Starting with the basic perception of God, polytheism from Chinese religions and monotheism from Christianity clearly point to two contrasting viewpoints. The Chinese religions frequently hold an inclusive viewpoint towards justifying the existence of all deities whereas Christian traditions generally possess an exclusive viewpoint that recognizes the Christian God as the only legitimate one. For example, before they became Christians, those who identified “folk religions” or “traditional religions” as their belief, recognized and worshiped many gods. After conversion to Christianity, they changed this stance and refused to acknowledge the existence of other deities or refuted them as evil spirits while admitting only one legitimate God. Because of this radical change, the transition between eastern religions and Christianity for the converts truly involves cross-cultural dynamics because of this movement from the stance of polytheism to monotheism.

¹⁰¹ Rambo, 14-16.
Influenced by the folk concern with efficacy, when Han converts turn to Christianity from the traditional religions, they may expect religious supernatural power from Christianity as they used to expect from their previous beliefs regardless of the different doctrines they perceived from Christianity. Through the similarity of supernatural powers as discerned by the converts from both religious systems, they are able to relate their primordial understanding of god inherited from traditional religions with the Christian God. Similar supernatural experiences certainly become the indication of religious authenticity for those who believe *ling*. On the other hand, their turn to Christianity may not only be the result of the expectation of common *ling* experiences, but also the recognition of the difference between these two religious systems. For example, the decision to believe in the Christian God takes place when a person perceives that the Christian God is superior to their previous religion in terms of both religious concepts and supernatural manifestation.

Since not every convert has *ling* experiences, there are some varying characteristics during their respective conversion processes that represent the distinctiveness of those who had *ling* experiences and those who did not have. According to the interview results, converts who experienced *ling* tend to have more dramatic experiences, whereas those who reported few or no *ling* experience tend to have had a smoother and less dramatic transition during their conversion process. These observations divide the converts into two groups: Dramatic/*ling* experiences and non-dramatic/non-*ling* experiences. This categorization will be employed to examine the changes and transformations that happened during the conversion process and will draw on Rambo’s theory of seven conversion stages and William James’ conversion theories. 102

Those who had dramatic changes or experiences during conversion, are similar to

---

102 James, 48, 78; Rambo, 16-19, 20, 44-46, 56, 87, 102, 124, 144.
William James’ category of sick souls, revealing sensitive and vulnerable dispositions when they are exposed to life events. Meanwhile, converts who had the least dramatic experiences tend to hold a positive attitude to all life experiences. This tendency is similar to James’ category of the healthy minded.  

Rambo’s stages of conversion provide a heuristic model in analyzing conversion as a process oriented transformation. He introduces seven stages in this conversion model to explain a common process that many converts may have experienced. In the first stage, ‘context,’ the dynamics within the convert’s environment are prominent. The convert will then experience the second stage of crisis, the third stage of quest, the fourth stage of encounter, and the fifth stage of interaction when the convert tries to establish more interaction with Christianity. Eventually, the process comes to the sixth and the seventh stages: the convert’s commitment and the consequences.  

During the first stage of ‘context,’ the convert builds basic communication between himself and the context of the religion through social, cultural, religious and personal dimensions. In the second stage of ‘crisis,’ after the convert has been in a religious environment for some time, some fundamental religious themes will appear so that the convert decides whether he should be actively or passively involved in this religion. In the third stage of ‘quest,’ the convert decides to actively seek for solutions or meanings to “fill the void”. In the fourth stage of ‘encounter,’ the convert has a chance to start religious conversations with believers. In the fifth stage of ‘interaction,’ the convert enters into more mutual interactions with believers and decides whether he should continue or not. In the sixth and the seventh stages of ‘commitment’ and ‘consequence,’ the convert makes the final decision to convert and receives evaluations from both himself and the religious group he attends.

---

103 James, 48, 78.  
104 Rambo, 16-19, 20, 44-46, 56, 87, 102, 124, 144.
While not all of the stages may be applied to all cases in this study, those who have experienced ling apparently skip some stages and arrive at the stage of commitment earlier than those who had not experienced ling. When there is the impact of ling experiences, the results imply that there may be elements within these experiences, such as the emotional and physical feelings, that drive the person to make the decision not only earlier but with greater conviction.

a. Dramatic/Ling Experiences

Before a formal interview started, besides expressing the willingness of participating in the interview, the interviewees usually held two typical reactions regarding their conversion stories. If the stories were more dramatic, they tended to like to share them. If not, they tended to like to keep them to themselves. Their answers clearly indicate a strong cultural expectation of dramatic plots when it comes to religious experiences. Instead of the non-dramatic experiences, the dramatic or efficacious experiences tend to be regarded as the “real” religious experiences. Those who have dramatic religious experiences are often encouraged to share them in public. Contrarily, those who did not have dramatic encounters do not tend to regard their experiences worth sharing. For example, one of the typical answers that affirm the dramatic religious experience is like,

I do not have many things to say about my conversion because it just happened naturally and smoothly. If you do want to know more about conversion stories, you should go and ask Mr./Mrs. X. He/she should be able to have more stories to share and the kind of conversion story you need.

Or, they would reply that their stories were not “interesting” or “dramatic” enough to be selected as samples for a study of conversion stories or conversion experiences. This may
sound like an excuse for a person who wanted to reject the interview. But in most of the interview cases, it is not an excuse. The person simply did not think he or she had the typical religious experiences that most people expect. Therefore, once they were told that all kinds of conversion stories would be accepted for an interview, they would agree to participate in the interviews and did not mind revealing their personal conversion process. In the opposite situation, if the person is sure that he or she has the dramatic conversion experiences, a different reaction would happen. The person may answer that, “I have a lot of stories to share and you’ve found the right person”. When one replies in this way, most of the time he or she has dramatic encounters throughout the conversion process and is willing to share them.

The emphasis on dramatic plots in the religious experiences can be regarded as a cultural element affected by the Han religious background. 105 Regardless of religious doctrinal differences between Han religions and Christianity, when it comes to religious experiences, although church people may not talk about or use this term ling directly, their answers can still imply connections with folk understandings, such as a strong belief in religious efficacy. Applying one of the James’ types of conversion disposition, the sick souls, to the dramatic/ling type, helps understand common experiences and the particular psychological mechanism found in the shifting between the two religious systems.

**Being Saved in a Dream**

P6’s story is a typical case for the dramatic/ling type who converted from the traditional Chinese religions. P6 is a married woman in her 50s, who had been a Buddhist. She used to belong to a particular Buddhist denomination, Ci-ji, an organization that combines particular contemporary Buddhist teachings and a worldwide charity organization. Ci-ji is an influential

---

Buddhist organization that had approximately five million members worldwide in 2000 and is famous for its volunteer services contributed by members.\textsuperscript{106} P6 used to participate in \textit{Ci-ji} and practiced some volunteer works. However, she stopped going to \textit{Ci-ji} after realizing that no friends from there came to see her after a serious car accident. While feeling disappointed with their lack of concern for others, she did not intend to actively seek any other religions.

Nevertheless, her next religious choice spontaneously came to her through a revelatory dream. P6 did not have any idea about Christianity before this dream. She describes that in her dream she met Jesus who appeared as a rescuer according to the plot that developed. This experience led to her decision to convert immediately and dramatically. The conversion happened out of her supernatural experience within the \textit{ling} context. This supernatural experience can be regarded as a type of \textit{ling-xian} because she vividly identified the appearance of the divine, whom she later recognized as Jesus Himself. In the vision of the dream, P6 described Jesus as a man with a beard who came to rescue her amidst her great fear.

Q: Later on, how did you get in touch with the church?
A: When I was sleeping…I dreamed that many people [were chasing after me and] wanted to kill me…their faces were covered….They were probably bandits… I was running and running… and kept yelling and calling for help. I wished somebody could come to help and save me… Then a voice came down from the above. The voice asked me to hold my hands up so I did as I was told and got pulled upwards. When those people who wanted to kill me got to where I was, they couldn’t find me so they left. Afterward, when I came down and looked at his face, I knew it was our Lord. He was a foreigner and…with a thick beard. When he saved me, I was so surprised and woke up startled. I saw his whole face …but only knew that it was our Jesus later… I did not know who he was at that time, but when I got shocked out of sleep, he left me with a strong impression.

Eventually it was at the time when I went to X hospital. At the X hospital, there were many Christians who volunteered to pray for others, you know? [When they prayed for

\textsuperscript{106} C. Julia Huang. \textit{Charisma and Compassion: Chen Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement} (Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-5.
me,] I got a booklet with Jesus’ name on it. When I saw it, I suddenly felt surprised. Wow, did I not dream about our Lord Jesus Christ? From then on, I drew my heart closer to this faith and towards our Lord. That’s it. It is my experience [of conversion]….

Not only does P6’s ling experience itself matter but also her feelings matter in the process of her decision for conversion. She demonstrates a great need for relying on the divine power for being saved. Her fear and the experience of being saved in the dream were key to her conversion. The feeling of hopelessness arose when no Buddhist friends came to visit her. Her despair of Ci-ji resulted from their lack of help, and she remained with unfulfilled requests for help in her other life events. Religion is considered a practical help and support to her, and a suitable religious choice has to conform to and support this image. Therefore, the plots that occurred in the dream were a turning point regarded as real supernatural help. The inner fear she experienced from the dream comprised the climax fear so that the resolution of the fear produced a great release and enabled her to pay attention to the one who saved her. The supernatural help in P6’s case appeared in the form of ling-xian in the context of folk religious interpretation. The ling-xian experience presents the divine’s willingness to reveal Himself to the believer. It is considered the first level of the mystical experiences in the folk religious traditions because ling-xian testifies to the existence of the divine. 

Cheng 2009, 25. According to Cheng, there are three levels of mystical experiences in the folk religions. The second level is ling-gan. It happens as spiritual practices maintain the connection with the divine. The third level is lin-xiu. The experience of lin-xiu gears the person towards the union with the divine.
the strongest proof for the person’s knowing and believing in the existence of the divine. Therefore, who this supernatural figure is and where this figure belongs comprise her religious choice.

To analyze this case with James’ categories, the description of her fear and the powerlessness of overcoming evil resonate with the characteristic of vulnerability in the sick souls. Evil always serves as a real enemy that the sick souls have to confront. James explains that,

“Evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness or vice in his essential nature, which no alteration of the environment, or any superficial rearrangement of the inner self, can cure, and which requires a supernatural remedy.”

Unlike healthy minded people, the sick souls cannot find a remedy as mind-cure for their burden of sin or evil. The remedy they need is not solely from “any superficial rearrangement of the inner-self”, but rather directly from the supernatural power itself. This is why dramatic plots happen frequently in their encounters; converts who express a large extent of fear represent a specific vulnerable disposition compared to the one who expresses powerfullness in the life circumstances. Vulnerability drives sick souls to seek for a higher protection for their weaknesses more frequently than other people. These types of converts can be identified by their expression of connection between their self-weaknesses and salvation. Due to their strong need for external or higher help, they usually encounter the dramatic process of conversion and express the results as feeling saved or prayers being answered miraculously.

However, drawing on P6’s case, the dramatic/ling type in this study may plausibly

---

109 James, 48, 78.
resemble most of the characteristics of vulnerability in the sick souls, but it may not account for the concept of sin in the Christian understanding. Cases in the dramatic/ling type tend to neglect the idea of sin although it is an unavoidable theme when it comes to conversion. This is because the theme of sin and repentance is historically not a decisive theme in the Han society—or at least the Han religious believers approach human sin and repentance differently from how Christians do. Due to this cultural difference, the sick souls who typically convert out of sin and repentance may not happen in the Han culture as frequently as other Christian societies do. James’ account of the sick soul pertains to the Germanic races that consider sin as part of their essential nature and which cannot be removed through “superficial piecemeal operations.”

But considering P6, for example, her turn to Christianity and decision to religious commitment had a weak relation with sin and repentance. Other dramatic/ling cases present a similar tendency; when they addressed their conversion process or why they eventually turned to Christianity, none of them mentioned repentance from sin.

Furthermore, in P6’s conversion, instead of referring to her personal sin, she emphasizes the experience of being protected and helped and regarded it as a central key for conversion. The supernatural encounter was decisive for her conversion, while this supernatural help occurred without repentance from sin before or afterward. Being saved in a dream is just one of her supernatural experiences related to Christianity. P6 received not only supernatural help from a dream but also physical healing through prayers. In the event of her healing experience, she had been seriously injured in a car accident and, as a result, could barely walk. After she prayed, her body recovered better than expected and she believed it was because of the help from God. She claimed supernatural help through her healing process.

---

Ming-dan Zhong. 罪、罪感與中國文化 [Sin, Guilt, and Chinese Culture], 神學論集 (Collectanea Theologica Universitatis Fujen) 97 (Fall 1993), 335-362; Ze-hou Li. Practical Reason and A Culture of Optimism (Beijing: San-lian, 2005), 55-97.

James, 78-80.
leading to her bodily transformation. In both significant events that contributed to her strong
determination to convert, she stressed the importance of feeling saved and rescued but the
feeling of repentance was not included.

Consequently, dramatic/ling cases present vulnerability during which they develop
great dependence on supernatural power. However, James’ sick souls can only partially explain
these cases because their vulnerability does not come from the inability of overcoming sin or
sinful nature but rather from the failure of fighting evil or dealing with life difficulties in
practical events. To posit this observation in a macro cultural context, the absence on
discussions of sin does not only appear in the cases of the dramatic/ling type, but also in the
Han culture historically. The cultural characteristics may contribute to this consequence.
Ze-hou Li uses the term “a Culture of Optimism” to describe the pursuit of the greatest
emotional happiness in this worldly affairs, which serves as a communal expectation in the
development of a Confucian society.

In Western philosophy, philosophers assume that human beings employ reason and
rationality to gain truth and knowledge. Contrarily, emotions or feelings derived from
interpersonal relationships are the foundation of the development of Chinese philosophy. The
kind of reason stressed and developed in the Chinese philosophy does not surpass practical
human relationships and has to be based on them. The practical elements affect religious
emotions. The religious emotions that people pursue are derived from the interpersonal
relationship. Consequently, the other kind of religious emotions that stem from transcendental
concepts, such as religious love or repentance, which is beyond the ideas of relational emotions,
are unfamiliar in this “Culture of Optimism.”112

The reliance on practical relational emotions in the Han culture leads to fundamental

112 Li, 55-97.
philosophical differences between the two mindsets of the Han religious believers and the Western Christians. In dramatic/ling cases, dramatic and supernatural experiences of being saved are much more important when they admit Christianity as their faith than recognizing the sinful self. Nevertheless, although the theme of sin is often absent in the religious choice, it does not mean that the idea of sin does not exist in the Han society. The concept of sin exists but it is developed in a different context and yields different content from the western one. According to Ming-dan Zhong, the Chinese concept of sin, Zui, influenced earlier by Confucianism and later by Buddhism, generates two levels of meanings. The first level of meanings associates with personal faults or wrong doings, which is close to the meaning of crime. The second level of meanings, forged by the Buddhist teachings, is connected to personal religious immorality, and is developed from the idea of karma.\textsuperscript{113} Both levels of meanings do not deal with any ontological idea of sin that connects with the self-nature considerations in Christian theology. In addition, Zhong contends that Han culture historically has adopted Mencius teachings that consider human nature as good instead of bad while generally employing this as the basis of understanding human nature. This supports the presuppositions raised in the argument of “Culture of Optimism”, in which both practices of Confucian morality and Taoist unity with the universe are considered the fundamental goals for the “Culture of Optimism” since both practices bring the eternal bliss and should be pursued by every person.\textsuperscript{114}

As a result, in the dramatic/ling type, when one affirms supernatural help and the self’s vulnerability as resolved in dramatic events, although it is the feeling of awe and religious sacredness that convince the person to believe, the consequence of personal surrender does not lead one into the process of self-repentance unless the supernatural event itself is associated

\textsuperscript{113} Zhong, 335-362.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
with personal faults or immorality. Therefore, because of the lack of the concept of original sin in the early converting process, new Han converts tend to rely on these supernatural and efficacious experiences and not connect them to Christian teaching on repentance. In other words, through the emphasis on ling experiences, a decision to Christian conversion has already been done before one understands Christian teachings and the necessity to repent from sin. Moreover, although these efficacious events usually happen immediately, their effect on the person lasts long. These experiences happened many years ago and the person probably has received subsequent Christian teachings that may have provided understandings of the Christian God and Christian teachings, but this does not change the conclusion that the early dramatic experiences contain supernatural factors and were crucial to the person's conversion decision.

Consequently, the idea of ling effectively influences the decision to convert in this type while the rational theological thinking that the converts obtained after conversion does not change their affirmation of the ling experiences during their early encounters with the Christian God. Meanwhile, the experience of ling and the immediate confirmation of the divine power shorten the decision-making process. According to Rambo’s theory of conversion stages, as noted above, there are seven stages usually observed in the conversion process, context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. The dramatic/ling conversion seems to skip or telescope the middle stages and arrive at the final Christian commitment earlier. Crisis happens at the time when the person encounters disorientation, such as life crisis. Context tells about how the convert enters a particular religious institution or environment that one later decides to convert to. Quest presents the person’s pursuit of the purpose of life. Encounter and interaction are the stages when the person interacts with the religious advocate agent and develops appreciation for the religion. Finally, if the person is determined to enter a
faith group, one can decide and then follow the religious ritual accordingly. The final stage is consequence. It makes sure that the convert adjusts well in the new religious environment, including the new value system and religious life, etc.\textsuperscript{115}

In analyzing the dramatic\textit{/ling} type, most cases start with context and may proceed into crisis and quest, then skipping encounter and interaction, and directly enter commitment. It is because the demonstration from \textit{ling} is taken as a sign for believing and does not need additional steps for proof. For example, in P6's case, her encounter with a threat in the dream can be regarded as crisis. Her immediate surrender to the savior in the dream and later recognition of Jesus’ image from a gospel sheet comprises the most important \textit{ling} element for her believing. As a result, the dramatic\textit{/ling} type reveals a tendency that the greater the supernatural dramatic experience that the person perceives, the fewer stages that a person has to experience to arrive at the decision of conversion.

b. Non-Dramatic/Non-\textit{Ling} Experiences

Opposite from the dramatic\textit{/ling} type, the other group that has no involvement with \textit{ling} experiences recalled a less dramatic or non-dramatic conversion process. Unlike the sick-souls type, this group resembles the healthy-minded type in James’ account. The healthy-minded type is regarded as the “once-born” compared with the “twice-born”. Cases from the once-born type are able to actively find happiness through their own effort independently. James writes,

\begin{quote}
“…Happiness, like every other emotional state, has blindness and insensibility to opposing facts given it as its instinctive weapon for self-protection against disturbance. When happiness is actually in possession, the thought of evil can no more acquire the feeling of reality than the thought of good can gain reality when melancholy rules. To the man actively happy, from whatever cause, evil simply cannot then and there be
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{115} Rambo, 22-23, 44-46, 56, 87-88, 102-105, 124-126, 143-148.
believed in.”

James correlates healthy mindedness with the first-born convert, who sees God as “the giver of freedom” instead of a savior that saves people from the control of evil. Cases in this type may still experience some degree of vulnerability. But since their world is surrounded by goodness in their positive thoughts, they seldom focus on the weakness in their personality. They easily conceive all things as good. In this regard, their positive attitude towards life makes religion less helpful compared with the sick souls. Showing less vulnerability, healthy mindedness has a stronger mind facing life difficulties.

K8, a single male in his 60’s whose wife passed away in recent years, demonstrates an example of non-dramatic and non-ling experience among the Han Presbyterians. He would have considered himself an atheist while also admitting his studying and believing certain religious teachings at the same time.

Q: What is your previous belief [before becoming a Christian]?
A: I would say that I did not have a belief, but I liked to read some Buddhist books…My family believed in Taoism, but I read Buddhist books.
Q: Have you ever worshipped (ancestors/deities/Buddha) before?
A: Yes, I did. I worshipped Ma-tzu. But as for me, I enjoy [reading books better,] such as the Buddhist books.
Q: Did you think the deities in temple have the power of ling?
A: I was.. kind of an atheist.. I thought that all religions convince people to do good so I…did not tend to get too close [to any of them]. But as for these religious materials, [I knew that] Confucianism teaches about nurturing your nature through self-cultivation , Buddhism teaches about seeing your nature through self enlightenment, and Taoism teaches about making contemplation the self’s nature. So I was more into the reading part, but when it came to religious practices… I did not intend to …. I rarely … visited any temple or any religious places.

116 James, 54.
118 The original extracted content is:
Unlike the sick souls, K8 did not mention his weakness or life difficulties when encountering Christianity. Neither could he point out any time, circumstance or personal transformation significant to conversion. In other words, there was neither dramatic encounter nor significant turning point connected with ling experience during his conversion. When asked about why he would convert, the only crucial factor he could point out was his wife’s belief in Christianity. Although his Christian conversion later in life was influenced by his Christian wife, his conversion did not take place until she passed away. His process of conversion was not an emotional one.

Q: Why would you decide to convert to Christianity?
A: After I was retired from work… A year after my retirement, my wife and I happened to notice a community college [run by this church] was recruiting students. Since we were retired already, my wife and I decided [to come] because this could kill some of our free time. When we gradually got to know the church people better, we found that they had a heart of love. Their acts were close to our ideal. And after we had more contacts with them and heard about what the pastor preached, [we thought] Christianity is good. Then my wife received baptism first. Therefore when my wife asked for my approval, I said of course yes!

Q: Why did you not receive baptism with her at the same time?
A: Because my adoptive mom was still alive! I am an adopted son. Originally I was planning to convert after my mom passing away and having her funeral arrangements made... But after the first year when my wife died, I was baptized.

Q: Why [wasn’t your decision made earlier]?
A: Hmm, because if I were to be baptized anyway, it made no difference whether it is done earlier or later.
Q: Did any special event happen to influence your conversion?
A: No. We (my wife and I) had talked about this…when we were together, we talked about friendship, our body, [the relationship between] husband and wife, and wealth. We realized that these would gradually disappear. [It would be different] only when it came to faith…

Q: Why didn’t you choose to be a Buddhist?
A: Didn’t I say that we seldom went to temples? It just happened that we were here and this community college just happened to be run by a church…

In this conversation, K8 tried to explain that his choice of becoming a Christian could be a random result. By saying that, “It just happened that when we chose to come here to study, this community college was run by a church”, he meant that if this community college were run by a Buddhist organization, he might have become a Buddhist instead. K8 and his wife did not have particular religious preference on which to decide which religious-based community college to choose. There were neither intellectual inquiries nor affective needs for seeking religious knowledge or supernatural help. Although he developed intellectual or spiritual interests from studying Buddhist texts, these interests did not bring him a deeper sense of religious devotion. The willingness to become a Christian for K8 did not come from any deep religious emotion or teachings. Instead, the key for conversion was that K8 hoped to maintain

---

119 The original extracted content is:
“為什麼信基督教，來受洗？”
A: 因為...我退休以後，第二年的時候跟太太剛好看到這裡，那個社區大學有在招生嘛，我們兩個人就一起，反正退休了，等於是一種打發時間嘛...慢慢接觸到教會的人，但是看他們那一種...愛心的時候，還是蠻接近我們的理想阿，還有是後來慢慢接觸的時候，有聽...牧師在講，講道嘛，所以慢慢覺得嗯...那個基督教還不錯，那我太太先受洗，但是我太太是有徵求我，當然她要受洗我說可以
Q: 怎麼沒跟她一起受洗呢？
A: 那時候我還有...養母在呀...因為我是給人家當養子的阿，阿本來的時候是說等我養母...走了以後，把她後事處理完以後...再來信教...後來是我太太死完第一年，我就受洗了
Q: 為什麼？
A: 阿，我就既然要受洗，早也是受洗，晚也是受洗阿
Q: 那有發生特別的事情讓您？
A: 沒有阿，那時候是我們本來就有談到，因為我們在一起的時候，我們聊到朋友啦、身體啦，還有夫妻啦，還有財富，這些都會慢慢的、慢慢的消失嘛，只有信仰的時候......
Q: 那時候怎麼不是去佛教的
A: 不是說，我們很、我們很少在走那個寺跟廟?阿剛好是來這裡的時候，剛好這，社區大學的時候，剛好這裡是基督教的。”
an emotional attachment with his wife through the same religious belief. In this regard, he
did not seek for transcendental meanings from religion or sacred relationship with the divine
but rather for an attachment with the loved one through the same belief.

The non-dramatic/non-ling type that K8 presents in the conversion process shows little
emotional attachment and religious affection compared with the dramatic/ling type. In this
regard, representing non-dramatic/non-ling type, the K8’s case accords with the
healthy-mindedness type, for both types tend to be more optimistic about life and hold a
peaceful attitude to all religions. All religious ideas, including K8’s original Chinese religious
ideas and Christianity, coexist harmoniously. His earlier assumption about an affirmative
attitude towards religions was not changed after his Christian conversion. Neither did he
consider that other religious ideas, such as Buddhist or Taoist ideas, contradict his Christian
understandings. K8 presents a type of healthy-mindedness with the least emotional or religious
dependence according to James’ account, but his lack of religious emotions does not eliminate
his affirmation towards the goodness of all religions. Cases from the non-dramatic/non-ling
type tend to show friendliness to all religions to the extent that they would admit the positive
sides that non-Christian religions contribute. Compared with the dramatic/ling type, the
dramatic/ling type tends to show the exclusiveness of Christianity when the converts feel that
the Christian God is the only and exclusive savior who demonstrates supernatural power in the
midst of life difficulties.

Because the non-ling type’s tendency of showing a tolerant and peaceful attitude
towards all religions, the converts go through a relatively smooth and gradual process when
experiencing some transitions from traditional beliefs to Christianity, quite distinctive from the
radical changes that happened in the cases associated with the ling experiences. Unlike the
dramatic/ling type, religious emotions for the non-dramatic/non-ling type do not occur at the
time when the person feels being helped by the supernatural power. Consequently, the kind of religious love that the non-dramatic/non-ling type feels close to seems to be an analogy of familial love.

P10 presents another example that shares a similar context with K8. Both P10 and K8’s conversion to Christianity were affected by the spouse’s faith or religious belief. However, despite the fact that the spouse’s faith may have served as an important factor for the convert, similar to K8’s case, P10’s conversion did not happen soon after she married a Christian spouse but rather occurred later in life. Categorized as the healthy-minded, both K8 and P10 were explicitly influenced by non-religious reasons when both made conversion decision. In the non-dramatic/non-ling type, the spouse’s Christian belief sometimes seems to be an influential factor for the person’s religious choice. For example, there are three cases who expressed the interest of conversion after realizing that they could not be buried together with their Christian husband or wife. The willingness of being buried with their spouse after death became the catalyst for their Christian conversion.120

P10 belongs to one of the three cases. P10 is a married woman who is willing to follow the traditional culture with its customs correspondent to the Confucian patriarchal teaching. Her mother’s belief shaped P10’s religious thinking while P10 also tended to admire her mother’s religious ideas. When asked about her belief, P10 particularly mentioned her mother’s influence. She described her mom’s belief as, “Among those who worshiped folk or Taoist religious beliefs, she has a relatively clear mind and way of thinking.” As mentioned in the earlier chapter, most traditional religious believers avoid being regarded superstitious. P10 was aware of it so her statement distinguished her mother’s being rational in belief from other

superstitious traditional religious believers and it resulted in admiration for her mother’s religious attitude. By describing her as *shen zhi chin chu*, translated as “a clear mind and way of thinking”, it implies that the person is rational and not easily affected by superstitious ideas.

Although P10 considered Christianity as a good religion that conveys moral teachings and even felt “the guidance from God” herself, she could not make up her mind to convert until she seriously thought of the issue of death and her desire to be buried together with her husband when death comes to her.

One time during the Tomb-sweeping Day, I went to sweep the tomb. My mother-in-law believed in Christ and she was buried behind the [Christian’s] tomb…Because she was not baptized, her tomb had to be placed behind them [and not among the Christian’s section]. …Other [Christians’] graveyards looked neat but her burial ground was right next to some mess. Plus she was not buried with other family members… She was all by herself.

Then my husband told me, ‘If you don’t receive baptism, you would be like her because you would not have a place to be buried [together with your other family members.]’…. I realized that my mother-in-law was so foolish that she would not receive this baptism. [If she were like other Christians,] her tomb would have a cross on it. But in fact, she did not get any—she just didn’t get any at all. My husband said that the main problem is that she was not baptized… Then I thought I would not want to be like her… so I said yes that I would like to receive baptism… When I made this decision, many deacons were very surprised. Because I grew up elsewhere and was married into this church. I arrived at this decision [to convert] after 15…, at least 15 to 16 years.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\) The original extracted content is:

“Q: 有什麼事情讓您決定要受洗？
A: 就是有一次去那個掃墓節的時候，去掃墓的時候，我婆婆是，我婆婆是那個也是信主的，喔，她就是葬在那個墳墓的旁邊，…可是她沒有受洗，就是葬在旁邊，人家的墳墓都很漂亮，他就葬在…就是那裡…亂七八糟旁邊，…然後沒有跟家人葬在一起，就是，就是自己一個人，這樣子。
我老公就跟我講說，妳，妳不受洗的話，妳以後就會跟他一樣，…沒有地方可以，可以葬妳，葬身，我那時候覺，覺得說我婆婆為什麼這麼傻，她不洗禮，一樣死了還是用一個十字架在那裡，可是實際上她沒有，她沒有受洗，沒有領受到，她根本沒有領受到，他就說妳看，…問題就出在於她沒有去受洗，…然後我是想說我一定不要像她這樣子，…所以說我就想，…就決定說我要受洗，…我那天受洗，…受洗的時候喔，很多長老，他們都嚇一跳，因為說我就是外，外來的新娘，…經過了差不多十五年有了，十五、六年了才決定。”
In addition to the effect brought from the spouse’s belief, another theme arises from P10’s case. The non-dramatic/non-ling types tend to accept and appreciate Christian teachings when they encounter Christianity, but their appreciation does not make them feel the necessity of receiving Christian baptism. It usually takes longer for the cases to decide to convert compared with the dramatic/ling type. Some cases in the non-dramatic/non-ling type wait for a long time before the final decision comes after they had been involved in the church services for years. The final decision may come when a certain crucial event finally emerges from their daily life and enables them to rethink their relationship with Christianity, such as the death of a Christian spouse. Although for the non-dramatic/non-ling type, the event still contains some dramatic elements, the decision for conversion was not made dramatically as compared with the dramatic/ling type. These influential life events arrive at the time when they have sufficient knowledge about Christian teachings. In this regard, the event is the catalyst that helps them transform the level of their Christian affirmation—from treating it as a useful knowledge for life objectively to a personal religious commitment subjectively. Meanwhile, for the non-dramatic/non-ling cases, the dramatic elements that emerge from daily life transform them from the scale of little or no belief to the scale of complete believing.

In the non-dramatic/non-ling type, it is important to note that some may also be involved with ling experiences during their conversion. However, the difference between those who have ling experiences in the dramatic/ling type and in the non-dramatic/non-ling type is that, those from the non-dramatic/non-ling type do not take the ling experiences as seriously as the dramatic/ling type do. Their ling experiences did not contribute to their decision to convert eventually. In other words, they may both admit the existence and the experience of the supernatural power, but will not let these experiences or perceptions influence their conversion decision.
Ecclesiastical Conversion

However, despite a general appreciation and friendliness showed by this non-dramatic/non-ling type towards all religions, converts still point out the negative or unsatisfactory experiences from their previous beliefs. These critiques of their original beliefs contribute to understanding why they seek alternative religions. They usually are not related to ling experiences, but rather associated with other emotional or social elements from their previous negative experiences.

The idea of “ecclesiastical conversion” from Albert Gordon can be applied here to explain their process of conversion. Gordon states, “Ecclesiastical conversion is, I think, a further indication that the individual in our day is often faced with stresses and strains, anxieties and insecurities that bespeak his loneliness in our contemporary world.” Compared with those who believe in supernatural power and rely on their ling experiences, those who do not believe in ling and tend to take a longer time to ponder their relationship with Christianity convert in specific social contexts. Gordon mentions that, as the non-dramatic/non-ling type indicates, some change their belief to accord to their spouse’s belief. Others turn to other faith tradition because of certain dissatisfaction with their original faith.122

Among ecclesiastical conversions, Gordon claims there are three types: Pro Forma converts, Marginal converts, and Authentic converts.123 The Pro Forma Converts demonstrate the kind of conversion that is influenced by the spouse’s faith, which also resonates with the interfaith-marriage cases in the Han Presbyterian converts. They show less interest in religion and may be regarded as a “nominal convert”. The main reason for conversion is to grow more in emotional attachment and be more effective at maintaining the family relationship.

Consequently, the conversion makes the person achieve a better family relationship when one changes the religion to the spouse’s religion. In Gordon’s observation, where interfaith-marriages comprise eighty percent of his conversion cases, this type is believed to consist a major type among the three.

The Authentic converts represent the individuals genuinely interested in religion. The reason for their conversion is purely intrinsic. Their conversion is not to overcome personal issues such as emotional insecurity but to declare that the Christian God was the only true God. While showing the desire of seeking for truth, they do not rely on the supernatural power to ensure a good marriage or a better life. In Gordon’s case study, this type comprises a relatively small percentage among the three types. In the non-dramatic/non-ling type among the Han Presbyterian Christian converts, there may only be one or two cases, and yet these cases may not completely conform to Gorden’s Authentic conversion. This is because although non-dramatic/non-ling converts either do not expect to experience the immediate supernatural power or do not let their ling experiences influence their conversion decision, most of them still look forward to personal changes when converting to Christianity. For example, compared with other non-dramatic/non-ling converts, T6’s conversion process is closest to the description of Authentic conversion. He is an investment consultant of a bank in his forties. When asked about his conversion process, he recalled his early encounter with Christianity and the reason for conversion.

Going to a Christian church was, well, it just feels very different from going to other religious places. One time a deacon from a church passed away and [the church] asked us for help. I felt very shocked from that experience. The folk religious believers are usually afraid of seeing the corpses, touching the coffin, etc. But at the church funeral, they [did not mind] placing the coffin at the center of the sanctuary. Besides, they

124 Ibid.
played the recorded voice of the dead person from the tape who wanted to leave for the kids. I’d say that this brought a very different feeling from I had from the folk religions because the folk religions keep a distance and are very afraid of these. This was the first time when I had a very different feeling towards the Christian church.

Then another time several Christians invited me to sing in the church choir. I got into the church because of I participated in the church choir. Then I fell in love with the church afterwards. Whenever I went to sing in the choir, I felt something different in my heart. My work situation, family relationship and the relationship with my personal life gave me some pressure and negative emotions. But when I went to sing in the choir, I felt great.

Q: What key point made you convert?
A: Like I just said, I had a deep impression to Christianity. I felt that it was different from the folk religions that I knew before. There’s something else about other religions. People who practise these folk religions are usually very much scared of death. For a long time folk religions have been intimidating people with this. And to be honest, this is not attacking—this is just how I feel. When they intimidated people, it seemed that they were scamming for money. During a funeral ceremony, they would get red envelopes from the bereaved family. By not allowing the bereaved family to touch the coffin or to look at the deceased or to do this and that, they could ask for more red envelopes.

When I entered the church choir, I felt dependent to this faith. When I listened to the church teachings, I found that they can relate to our life intimately, unlike other religions that are distant from our life. Let me give you an example. Paul said, “When you enter Jesus Christ, you will be a renewed person.” In the past, I used to have inappropriate thoughts or inappropriate behavior. After entering the church and believing the truth, I seemed like being put on new clothes when throwing away my old stuffs.\(^{125}\)

---

\(^{125}\) The original extracted content is:

“我們進教會的那個感覺喔，就是跟一般的宗教有很大的差別。有一次，就是……某一個教會的長老，過世的時候，喲……請我們去幫忙。那結果那一次，給我很大的震撼，因為，民間宗教喔，他們通常都……比較會懼怕，看到屍體啊，碰到棺材啊，之類的喔，可是那一次，我最大的震撼就是，咦？他們居然喔……是把那個棺木喔，放在教堂的中間，而且那一天喔，他們還放了那個……那個往生者的錄音帶，就是要留給小孩子的那一些話……。我說這個跟民間宗教，是完全不一樣的感覺；民間宗教是敬這些東西而遠之的……很怕，很怕這些東西的，這是我第一次對教會，有滿大的那種不一樣的感覺。

後來是……幾位基督徒……邀請我……到聖歌隊來唱歌。然後我就是因為，到聖歌隊來唱歌，進到教會。從此就……愛上教會了。因為每次，每次去……唱歌的時候，覺得心裡面的感受是不一樣的。我的工作的關係啊，家庭關係啊，就是……生活的關係啊，週遭……那難免會有一些……壓力啊……心情不好，情緒不好的時候。可是，我每次去教會唱歌，我覺得心情非常好。

Q：什麼樣的關鍵讓你決定受洗？
A：就是我剛講的，我對基督教的那種，很深刻的印象嘛，我……覺得，就是……跟我在一起的那個民間
However, unlike the typical Authentic converts who seek for true religious knowledge and understanding, the way of seeking a true God for T6 is more emotional and rational. Among the Authentic cases shown by Gordon, their conversion presented the consequence of a thorough investigation and study on the difference between their previous religion and the new one based on religious knowledge. For T6, religious knowledge is important but his earlier feeling towards Christianity was the key element that convinced him to stay in church before his final conversion.

The last type is the Marginal conversion. These converts do not intend to give up their previous beliefs completely after becoming a Christian. They may like to keep the values, thoughts, and the practices that they perceive as important from the previous religion. In the non-dramatic/non-ling cases, all converts continue to practice Confucian teachings to varying degrees. This includes basic and general practices such as showing filial piety in the family or taking personal responsibility relationally, and other religious-affiliated activity, such as attending festivals held in the temple. As for their previous Buddhist and Taoist ritual practices, such as worshiping the deities, most converts are able to quit them. However, this does not necessarily change their belief to an entirely monotheistic one. In terms of the ideas of God, as mentioned earlier, it is common for the non-dramatic/non-ling type to hold inclusive religious attitude towards all religions when admitting Christianity is the highest one. For example, T9 had always believed only one Creator in the world, but while not negating the existence of

宗教，所感受到的不一樣。那還有一件事情……一般宗教喔，他們幾乎都會對死很恐懼…。
以前民間宗教一直在用這個在恐嚇人……而且坦白講啦，這個不是攻擊啊，是我自己的感受，像那樣子的恐懼，有一點是斂財的行為…他們都…跟那個喪家喔，就是收取很多的紅包…就是說你不能碰棺材啊、你不能看屍體啊、你不能……，因此他們可以拿更多的紅包啊……
當我去聖歌隊以後，我覺得……有一種寄托了嘛。然後當我在…聽一些道理的時候，我發現……它…是跟我們的生活，可以緊密結合在一起的。不像一般的宗教這樣子，好像距離滿遠的。我舉個例子來講喔，保羅講…「當你進入到耶穌基督裡面以後，那你是全新的一個人。」…我以前有一些不太恰當的想法，或者是有一些，不太恰當的行為…進到教會以後…相信這個真理以後，我就可以好像是換新衣服一樣的，把我舊的東西給拋掉。”

126 Gordon, 218-229, 262.
Buddha simultaneously, he thought that God and Buddha must be good friends in heaven. When transiting from traditional belief to Christianity, he did not commit himself to a strictly exclusive monotheism, but rather tried to bring his original concept of God into Christian belief.

While the dramatic/ling type tends to accentuate their more rapid transformation, the non-dramatic/non-ling type tends to follow a smoother and extended path. To apply Rambo’s conversion stages, the non-dramatic/non-ling converts are more likely to experience all seven stages because they can only be convinced after extended contact with Christianity through the process of encounter, crisis, and interaction. Not until then will they be comfortable coming to the stage of commitment and evaluating their decision accordingly.

C. Ling Experiences that Are Involved with Somatic Theories and Emotional Theories

Based on the above analysis, ling is a factor that influences the conversion choice dramatically. According to the stories of converts, their specific physical or emotional feelings associated with ling experiences are crucial to a positive decision concerning the existence of God. This indicates that a common cultural phenomenon may exist among Han religious believers at the time when they affirm the existence of God. This phenomenon is that when they make conversion decisions, physical and emotional experiences usually take higher priority than rational understandings.

To understand how physical and emotional experiences influence religious choices, it is important to know how these feelings and experiences yield religious meanings to Han Presbyterians. To the believers, physical and emotional experiences function as religious metaphors, as religious metaphors help a culture preserve its own way of expressing
sacredness and passing on sacred meanings.\footnote{Glifford Geertz. \textit{Myth, Symbol and Culture} (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), 43-45.} In the Han Presbyterian context, these feelings related to supernatural power can be regarded as means or metaphors for affirming the interpretation of sacredness and religious meanings in one’s particular religious encounters. When religious ideas often point to the existence of supernatural power or any otherworldly ideas that are difficult to grasp, these metaphors provide tangible access for people to notice and realize the meanings bestowed by the sacredness. These metaphors are the “continuum”, of meanings within a culture that receives them.\footnote{Ibid.} This is the reason why some people experience God through supernatural dreams or dramatic life encounters. They are the metaphors for these believers to encounter the sacredness.

In this study, the metaphors not only appear as \textit{ling-xian}, in which the converts can testify to the divine through “seeing” the appearance of the divine, but also as common feelings and healings that can be perceived as \textit{ling-gan}. The cultural emphasis on \textit{ling-xian} and \textit{ling-gan}, when serving as religious metaphors, carries religious meanings through sensible and subjective feelings. Simultaneously, since the religious meanings can be sensed subjectively, the person who experiences them tends to be very certain about these meanings.

But how does one interpret religious meanings mediated through physical or emotional feelings? Physical or emotional feelings are convincing for proof of the divine but converts still need the help of local religious interpretation to truly identify the sources of sacredness, such as the name of the divine and the capability of the supernatural power. For Han Presbyterian converts, they might only adopt local religious texts for interpreting religious experiences because they do not possess enough knowledge about Christian teachings. Or, they might have already acknowledged Christian ideas about God but still
prefer to adopt local religious scripts. In a third possible situation, they combine more than one kind of religious interpretation and create their own religious interpretation.

No matter what choices may be available, traditional frameworks have become the primary sources in understanding and distinguishing the sources and type of ling. Interpretations of supernatural power from local contexts are usually understood as an integrated whole although there may be differences between Buddhist and Taoist traditions. As Cheng explains regarding the context and ideas of ling-gan, as long as a person is contacting spiritual or supernatural power within the traditional Chinese religions, one has already joined this integrated religious system, sharing religious interpretative structures from Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist and folk religious traditions. Buddhist and Taoist spiritual practices integrate and assimilate each other when speaking about religious experiences in interactions between the human and the divine. Folk religions clearly have a strong emphasis on the ability of human beings to contact supernatural power, so they are able to offer similar explanations on supernatural powers while combining three religious explanations, Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist traditions.¹²⁹

These folk religious interpretations advise people who encounter supernatural power to discover the identity and characteristics of the power, and the situations in which they encountered it. What results is largely based on how people feel about the supernatural power. For example, if people felt emotionally or physically uncomfortable, they must have encountered the evil spirit and vice versa. It is commonly believed that good spirits bring comfort and security whereas negative or evil spirits do the opposite and bring discomfort and insecurity. Since these ideas come from an integrated traditional Chinese religion, this belief that the somatic effects ascertain the existence of supernatural power has been

¹²⁹ Cheng 2009, 64-65.
maintained and believed by all kinds of Chinese traditions. To interpret the continuous physical practices that occur in a specific setting, Pierre Bourdieu adopts the idea *habitus* in explaining how physical feelings yield particular meanings while serving as “durable training.” The meanings bestowed by emotional and physical feelings formulate religious judgment or discernment and may later become systematic understandings.

To elaborate this idea, Bourdieu continues that *habitus* is “the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after PA [pedagogic action] has ceased and thereby of perpetuating in practices the principles of the internalized arbitrary.” The somatic emphasis that the Presbyterian converts highlighted in their experiences came from the influence of the Han culture. It looks as if those whose religious experiences were deemed supernatural came to their conclusion from personal spontaneous feeling in relation to an unknown power. These experiences did not only refer to temporary feelings but they pointed to deeper and more significant interpretations. The PA resource in the Han Chinese religions, for most Presbyterian converts, does not come from any religious rituals that provide training to the believers through physically related activities. Rather, their understanding of divine power and divine-human interaction mainly comes from their family and the ideas contained in local religions that they received from childhood. These original understandings of somatic ideas and their relations with supernatural power are the sources for future religious interpretations.

On the other hand, since most converts did not previously attend specific religious rituals that include physical movements or feelings, converts rely on their own spontaneous physical feelings associated with supernatural experiences. When some similar physical or emotional feelings appear repeatedly and accord with folk religious teachings, converts will

---

130 Bourdieu, 31.
try to interpret the religious significance in a systematic way. The process of systematizing religious interpretations becomes a self-training process; it is a process by which the person determines based on their own experiences whether the physical feelings relate to good or bad supernatural powers. These experiences not only contain religious significance but also present common cultural themes. One of the common themes is the strong need of personal protection. The stronger the demand for religious efficacy, the greater the personal protection needed. Previous analysis shows the non-dramatic/non-ling type, which presents a smoother transition during conversion, as opposed to the dramatic/ling type, which depicts a more radical transition, that the dramatic/ling type relies on emotional changes for religious choices.

In this regard, the dramatic/ling type accords more to the somatic assumptions that converts tend to seek for tangible sacred feelings or emotional relief from religious experiences. This brings a closer connection between ling and its somatic influence on conversion in this study. This is to say, for people who experienced ling, religious emotional and physical feelings serve as necessary signs that trigger the final decision for conversion.

Furthermore, the emphasis on somatic experiences in the idea of ling designates a fluid boundary in the Christian tradition between insiders and outsiders compared with the rigid one in institutional conversion. P. Steven Sangren observes how the power of ling affects the hierarchical structure among the following categories: the ancestor religions, the local deities that different communities worship, so-called territorial-cult gods and some well-known Buddhist/Taoist religious deities, such as Kuan-yin and Ma-tzu. For example, the forgotten and unworshipped spirits from any of the categories are considered most ling, most religiously efficacious. This idea implies a typical traditional Chinese religious logic that as long as spirits possess supernatural power, despite the fact that it may be from a dangerous
source such as a dead spirit who died due to disease or violence, they are seen as one important source of supernatural power, undivided from the deity system synthesized in folk, Taoist, and Buddhist religions.\textsuperscript{131}

Moreover, the understanding of traditional Chinese religions from the perspective of ling not only explains how local people classify supernatural powers, but also demonstrates the local perspective on the boundary between insiders and outsiders.\textsuperscript{132} When it is in the context of particular territorial-cult rituals, the boundary between insiders and outsiders is absolute and strict. The boundary also helps distinguish who that particular territorial deity protects as His “insiders” from natural disasters or harm. However, Sangren does not mention if there is any absolute way for an outsider to become an insider in this context. This religious logic based on ling seems to suggest an experiential approach, religiously efficacious or not, to determine who is a believer. The chances are that as long as the worshipper experiences ling, one ceases to be an outsider. Consequently in this system, the outsiders can be considered as the “not yet” insiders because they can still have ling experiences later. This shows that the difference between outsiders and insiders is relatively contextually-driven and particularly relies on subjective feelings or efficacious events. On the other hand, the ling context tends to bring the worshippers into a passive role awaiting the divine to prove Himself true. These ideas that come from the cultural context shape what a First Generation Christian may expect from the Christian God. When converts turn to the Christian God for supernatural power, they may perceive the Christian God as a powerful territorial-cult among all gods. Then their decision for conversion is made based on where supernatural help is received. The feeling of receiving help contributes to the sense of religious belonging.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 157-159.
The above analysis shows a close interconnection between ling and somatic experiences. Before starting the somatic and emotional analysis of converts, a different sub-category has to be created in this study different from the previous one used in the analysis of conversion theories. In most cases, the sub-category includes those who had experienced ling and excludes cases who reported no emotional and physical transformations at all so that the results can be focused on the majority of cases, who did experience emotional and physical transformations. The argument made in this somatic analysis is not based on their ling experiences but rather on their different kind of somatic experiences. According to the results, emotional and physical transformations presented as two separate types so the cases are divided into these two types.

In order to contrast their difference, the analysis selects examples that present significant changes of either type. These cases are usually involved with the impacts of ling. The first somatic conversion type that involves physical feelings results primarily from supernatural healings. Supernatural healings serve as a powerful efficacious phenomenon and contribute to an immediate conversion. They produce strong evidence in subjective feelings. The feeling of supernatural power attests to a true religion so it tends to shorten the conversion process. The second somatic type that involves emotional feelings primarily receive influence from supernatural encounters. Compared with the former type, those who experienced supernatural encounters tend to take longer to convert. There is a wide range of subjective understandings regarding supernatural encounters perceived by the converts. For example, almost all kinds of supernatural experiences that do not belong to supernatural healings can be included. Converts subjectively determine certain events or moments that were specific supernatural interventions in which they could feel the difference through emotional changes.
a. Supernatural Healings

As suggested by Bourdieu through the idea of habitus, the connection between somatic experiences and religious meanings is shaped by culture. The habitus that First Generation Christians experience does not seem to result directly from religious teachings or practices at specific local religious institutions. Since most people did not belong to any religious institution, the majority of converts were influenced by their family religious background and the religious information the person received from folk religious resources. No matter the extent to which the convert was involved with traditional religions in the past, he or she is sure to share a common religious unconsciousness extant in the Han culture. As Cheleen Mahar, Richard Harker and Chris Wilkes point out, while that habitus can be seen as personal disposition, it also reflects how a person’s ideas and sense of body interacts with the world subconsciously. Habitus not only serves as a reflection of the self’s being in the world because it includes a person’s understanding of the world and has a “genuine constitutive power.”

Moreover, when this power is constituted in a religious setting, it connects the person with the infinite divine power. The person interprets and relates to the higher religious power through his or her own perception in somatic activities. As an example of an application of this idea in a field of research, Thomas Csordas adopts habitus in interpreting how a person employs this constitutive power to connect the divine and the self and then experience the transformation of the self in Christian activities. For Csordas, the formation of the self is

an indeterminate capacity. The self uses one’s own bodily experiences to extend this
capacity in reaching the “Otherness” to accord with one’s own religious imagination. He
wrote,

Self is neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become
oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity. In this sense self occurs
as a conjunction of prereflective bodily experience, culturally constituted world or
milieu, and situational specificity or habitus. \(^\text{135}\)

Meanwhile, this indeterminate characteristic of the self seeks for its most preferential
way to adjust oneself both physically and mentally in a specific cultural setting. Then he
introduces the idea, “sacred self”, based on the observation that comes from his past
charismatic research, in which bodily feelings are mainly used for proof of God’s power,
especially in the healing process. The self is transformed through a particular healing process
when the person is transformed in the midst of suffering. There he specifies the process as to
how the sacred self is formed instead of just defining the state of the sacred self. He wrote,

Yet if healing is the creation of a sacred self, it might be objected that we have never
said what the sacred self “is.” Our answer must be that if the self is elusive, it is
because there is no such “thing” as the self. There are only self processes, and these
are orientational processes. \(^\text{136}\)

Religious significance for the self is formed in the process of developing one’s
awareness of Otherness through one’s practice of somatic experiences. This means that
awareness occurs when a person experiences sacredness through his or her own feelings.
Through this process of perceiving the divine, the approach to acceptance of a faith is

\(^{135}\) Ibid.
\(^{136}\) Ibid, 276.
different from the faith that is received through intellectual understanding. Csordas adopts the idea of myth in explaining this difference. He wrote,

Perhaps myth is a better term for what we have been studying. This is presuming… that myth is understood not (with respect to rationality) as a set of beliefs, or even (with respect to textuality) as a cosmological narrative, but (with respect to embodiment) as milieu that is inhabited… The principal characteristic of myth is that it constitutes reality, and it is the constitution of reality in perception and practice, rather than of either belief or knowledge, that has been our underlying concern. Bypassing the notions of belief and knowledge, we have found the existential ground of the sacred in the alterity of the self, and the criterion of the sacred in the experience of spontaneity.\(^\text{137}\)

Csordas’ conclusion suggests a somatic approach to understanding conversion that identifies Han religious logic, which is a way to conversion through experiencing efficacy, as different from an intellectual conversion through knowledgeable understanding of religious texts. Csordas uses the term “somatic mode of attention” to describe how a person’s consciousness of an object can be alerted by the self’s physical changes.\(^\text{138}\) In this regard, a sense of otherness can be found through attention to transformation of the self’s body. The transformation results from self-examination of the status of the body’s situation, such as an immediate and spontaneous change of the body emotionally and physically. However, not any spontaneous change of the body can be used as proof of god and the acceptance of the divine power. Bodily transformations serve as proof and the acceptance of divine power usually carries positive and healthy signs, such as illness being healed with little or no medical help.

The cases involving supernatural healing explicitly accord with the above assumptions, especially when the convert used to be strongly involved in folk supernaturalism. Among the Presbyterian converts, several people who used to have folk

\(^\text{137}\) Ibid, 280.  
\(^\text{138}\) Ibid, 67.
supernatural connections claimed that after unsatisfactory experiences with previous religions, they were open to seek other supernatural help for healings, such as the Christian God. When supernatural healings indeed happened, these experiences were key to conversion. H18 is a college-educated male in his early thirties. He was brought up in a traditional religious family but came to church to seek for supernatural protection other than that available among traditional religious choices. This is because H18 had suffered from supernatural spiritual harassment within folk religions since he was in childhood and only felt released when he came to Christianity.

His experience well explains how the somatic mode of attention crucially leads to a final decision for Christian conversion. This case also demonstrates one example of the religious *habitus* adopted in the Taiwanese religious context, which relies on a cultural interpretation of the somatic mode of attention. For example, there is a common antithesis emphasized and shared in traditional religions, with feeling cold representing encountering evil spirits and feeling warm representing meeting good spirits.

A: My family originally belonged to folk religions. Folk religions in Taiwan do not have systematic doctrines like Buddhism or Taoism do. [I came to Christianity] because I always experienced harassment from evil spirits. When I was young, I used to seek help from Buddhism.

Q: Could you describe the kind of harassment from evil spirits you experienced before?
A: They were attacks from supernatural spiritual entities.

Q: What kind of supernatural spiritual entities were they?
A: The way Buddhist teaching puts it is that they were your karmic creditors.

Q: How did they attack people?
A: They made you feel uncomfortable and so on.

Q: How could you be sure that they really were your karmic creditors?
A: I did not think it up but I knew it from Buddhist teachings… In Christianity, I think they are called Satan.

Q: How did you know whether this is just because of your physical sickness and not
because of their attacks?
A: Because when I went to the temples, the mediums told the same thing to me. I could also feel whether it was a supernatural spiritual entity or myself. You would know it yourself [by experiencing it]. You must have not been caught by it before. If you did so, you would know what it is.
Q: Could you describe it (the situation of your body)?
A: Sometimes they steal your Qi (energy) or suck up your energy so you’d be debilitated… Perhaps it was my personal disposition that I easily attracted those entities. Even if I just walked by, maybe just walked by, a ghost, it would be attracted to me… And then when I graduated from college, my situation became worse. Several [spiritual entities] came to harass me so I couldn’t take it anymore.
You are warm; he is cold—he is a ghost after all. But your body is warm, so… both attributes are against each other. [If spirits enter your body,] they will attach to various places in your body and not to one particular area. Sometimes it is on the top part of the head and sometimes it is the back side of the head. Sometimes they appeared and spoke to me… of course [they speak] through the mediums. [For example,] the ghosts would say that one of my ancestors owed them [so they had to ask it from me].
Q: Wouldn’t they talk to you directly?
A: No.
Q: But how did you know if the entity was still attached to your body?
A: I knew it because it made me hurt. [It’s just like] if it was attached to your shoulder, your shoulder felt cold and your muscles got tight.
Q: How did you solve this problem?
A: How did I? I couldn’t solve it… After I graduated from college, I became very ill. Then I was introduced to Christianity by my father’s friend… Yeah, just so that I could get away from this evil demon…
Q: So were these the issues that you wanted to deal with when you converted to Christianity?
A: Yes, I came to seek help.
Q: Was it effective?
A: Not immediately, but I knew God was helping me and was fighting against the supernatural spirit.\(^{139}\)

\(^{139}\) The original extracted content is:
“A: 其實我家本來是民間信仰，台灣的民間信仰，而不是那種比較有系統的教義的那種佛教或道教…因為我是遇到一些……邪靈攪擾，小時候，那時候是去求助佛教
Q:可以描述一下邪靈攪擾的東西？
A:就是會有靈體攻擊我就對了啦。
H18 claimed that he had already known that Christian teachings were good before starting to learn church teachings and know church people. Nevertheless, the decision for Christian conversion was made when he physically experienced power before thoroughly understanding theological or Biblical teachings. His case not only exemplifies the proof of otherness through subjective somatic attentions but also reveals how the supernatural world is shaped by bodily feelings. These religious ideas regarding feeling cold and warm and their projection to supernatural entities did not seem to originate from one authoritative and reliable source attached to any religious institution. In H18’s case, the sources were from his past experiences and the local mediums who agreed with him. The opinions from local mediums were the social influence that assists in constituting personal connection between the bodily transformation and the world. When the mediums affirmed his supernatural

Q: 什麼樣的靈體?
A: 當然在……在佛教的講法就是冤親債主....
Q: 怎樣的攻擊呢？
A: 讓你身體不舒服阿或怎麼樣之類的?
Q: 那怎麼確定是冤親債主呢？
A: 就是佛教的講法，不是我講的…基督教很簡單他就是撒旦嘛
Q: 您怎麼確定是純粹身體不舒服還是冤親債主？
A: ..去、去那些公廟、神壇他也是這樣子講嘛，對，然後我自己也可以知道那個是靈體這樣子，就是你自己會知道阿，你一定沒有被東西抓，有的話那種感覺就是你自己會明白....
Q: 描述一下狀態？
A: 他有的是偷你的氣，他會吸你的能量，然後你會虛弱。...可能是我那時候的體質比較容易引來那種東西...可能是路過，可能是路過一個陰魂他就被吸過去....然後重點就是說在我大學畢業那個時候....還蠻、蠻嚴重的...就是好像一次來好多個....所以我受不了阿...你是熱的嘛，他是冷的，他是陰魂阿，可是你身體是熱的，所以其實......那是一種相斥的屬性啦......他會附在你身上，哪裡不一定，有時候是頭阿，有時候是後腦杓...他出來跟你講說，藉由當然是藉由靈媒、乩童阿，他跟你講話就是你哪一個祖先欠我的
Q: 可是他不會跟您對話?
A: 沒有對話
Q: 就是您知道這個東西在您身上?
A: 對，會痛，例如說在你的肩膀上面，這裡就會冷阿，然後就開始緊繃阿之類的。
Q: 那您都怎麼解決的？
A: 怎麼解決囉，沒有解決...那大學畢業之後呢，那一次就身體急轉直下，然後很糟糕……然後後來我就才在我爸的朋友介紹下接觸基督教...對，這是為了逃，逃離，那個邪惡的魔鬼，
Q: 所以您一開始信主是要處理這些？
A: 對對對對，是逃命的。
Q: 那就立刻生效嗎？
A: 沒有立刻生效，只是你可以知道神在幫你，然後再跟他對抗。”
experiences, they not only reassured his personal interpretations of supernatural power but also included him in participating in the habitus shared within the Han religious traditions. The interconnection between bodily transformation and supernatural power unavoidably strengthens the position of ling in Han religious interpretations.

Therefore, for this type of convert who relies on supernatural healings when they themselves had previously been involved with folk supernaturalism, their conversion relies on the repetitive and similar experiences that serve as “practices” in formulating “perceptions” of the supernatural world. By affirming the connection between practices and the supernatural world, the healing experience serves as the most important process in creating the sacred self while it formulates a fundamental understanding of the other world, the one distinctive but partially duplicated within the existing world. Moreover, the sacred self in this type requires the discernment of what the self is focusing. A person’s supernatural healing happens when subjectively discerning that good divine spirits are defeating evil ones as one turns from illness to recovery. In other words, in this healing process where supernatural spiritual discernment is involved, an antithesis of good and evil also exists. Converts decide that the highest or best supernatural power is the one that defeats the evil powers and provides healings or comfortable and peaceful feelings. Meanwhile, past negative physical experiences serve as a reference for contrasting and knowing good supernatural powers from evil ones.

However, supernatural healings do not necessarily come with supernatural spiritual discernment. Since not all converts were involved with folk religious powers in the past, for those who had little or no involvement with folk supernatural powers before, their experiences of supernatural healings were different. They did not experience an antithesis between good and evil power because there were no past references of supernatural
experiences for discernment. When first receiving supernatural healing from Christianity, converts regarded it as their first ever experience with supernatural power. For example, K1’s decision for Christian conversion was made after a supernatural healing. K1 is a nurse in her early thirties. She has already been in church a while and agrees with Christian teachings. However, the key for deciding to convert was not the time when she finally achieved sufficient understanding of Christian teachings but an event involving a miraculous transformation of her body. She considered the transformation a form of healing.

I am already married so I had to face the reality that I need to have my own children. However, because of situations that occurred in past surgeries, such as the fact that my abdomen had been punctured all over the place, and some of my organs are affected by scar tissues, I could not conceive easily. Then coming back to the previous factor that I mentioned earlier, if my ovaries had pH issues, how would I be able to conceive? When we prayed for it, we still cooperated to receive medical treatments [for infertility]… I received four treatments in total. I did not cry out like some women would do during the first three treatments but rather kept quiet, for I thought God would keep His promise to me. But when I came to the fourth treatment, I told my husband that although I was quiet, I felt discouraged… I had received 450 shots already! My muscles were stiff and I started to have many side effects. The doctor told me that for my case, if I failed four treatments, very frankly, I should not waste my money again. My husband was more optimistic than I was. He wanted me to receive the fourth treatment.

I remembered after I agreed with my husband’s idea, I wanted to do a faith proclamation. Both my husband and I were not baptized yet. I remembered that was a Tuesday or Wednesday night. Before we went to bed, I held my husband’s hands and said a prayer like a faith proclamation. We prayed for a testimony from God. This whole issue was not just the two of us wishing for a child [but having more than one grandchildren for my husband’s family because] my husband is the only son in more than ten generations when you trace his paternal lineage. I prayed to God that “if God you promises and gives us this testimony, I, my husband, and my child would be baptized and believe you.” Then I conceived after the fourth treatment was done!140

---

140 The original extracted text is:
“我已經結婚，我很現實必須面對說換我必需去生育的問題，其實你的身體整個肚子全部都有穿孔過，
K1’s feeling of being healed was experienced in the final success of getting pregnant. The connection between supernatural intervention and her bodily transformation was established through a subjective determination about a supernatural healing. However, K1 could not feel the difference in her body right away when the “miraculous healings” happened. Her healing had to be revealed by a doctor instead of feeling it on her own. This is different from the case of H18 who represents the first type of cases in supernatural healings. He could determine the feeling on his own through the contrasting physical experiences before and after healing. K1 and H18 represent different paths and two different types for receiving supernatural healing. Nevertheless, both were persuaded by the supernatural intervention during the miraculous event. The sacredness of the event occurred while K1 was informed that her body was transformed from being infertile to pregnant. The result itself has already demonstrated the existence of the divine. In the second type that K1 represents, the physical transformation is testified first by the medical professionals and not by subjective judgment. When the self has to rely on others to know the self’s physical situation, such as K1’s case, it reduces the maximum possible interaction that the self can have with the process of one’s physical transformation with divine power.

其實在器官有一些沾黏等等，其實不是在於懷孕，然後後來回到最原始，我回去開到的那個原因，你的卵巢有酸鹼...那要怎麼懷孕？！那我們...就是不住的禱告，還是認真配合治療...其實我經歷了四次的不孕症治療，前三次其實我沒有像人家那樣呼天喊地，就只是覺得說這是神所應允的我就沈默不語....到第四次我就跟我先生說，雖然我沈默不語但是我已經垂延喪志了...那我已經打到四百五十針了！肌肉都硬化了，爾且有很多副作用....且醫生也確實跟你說，阿你這樣的 CASE 其實做四次如果沒有他就直接跟你說你不要再花錢做，再下去都是花錢都只是浪費錢，我先生他比我還樂觀就說既然這樣哪我們就做第四次...那我記得那時候我跟我先生達成共識後就要做信心的宣告嘛，因爲那時候我跟我先生都還沒受洗...那天晚上好像是禮拜二還是禮拜三的晚上，要入睡之前我拉過我先生的手一起做禱告類似信心的宣告，跟主...說我跟你一個見證我們希望有一個小孩，於小孩不只是單純我們對子飼的期盼，還有很大的一部分現實的原因是我先生她們家是10幾代單傳...如果這是你應允的，你給我們這個見證，那我就跟我的先生和我的小朋友全家受洗，然後就相信你。....然後，後來就有了，第四次做完了就有了！”
It seems plausible that the second type of supernatural healing did not involve the *habitus* shared in the Han religions as much as H18’s case. Nevertheless, it opens up a possible category under supernatural healing where supernatural healings do not necessarily happen in the context of the antithesis between good and evil power. K1 demonstrates a type in which conversion out of supernatural healing uses positive bodily transformation as a divine promise. The bodily transformation in this type signifies divine intervention as well as divine will for the person. Unlike the previous type who has ascertained supernatural contacts and knowledge of supernatural spiritual discernment from folk religions, the converts of this second type are not sure whether they can really contact the supernatural world through their feelings or bodily changes. However, both types share the same tendency to trust that divine power should be perceivable through bodily changes. For the second type of converts, exemplified by K1, they usually use this format as a request for proof of supernatural power, “if… then I will believe you.” The blank part in this request is to be filled with their personal wish for physical healing, as K1 said in her prayer, “if you promise and give us this testimony, I, my husband, and my child will be baptized and believe you.” Once the healing exhibits connections with the prayer, the converts then attempt to view personal physical transformations as undeniable and unbreakable divine proof. This proof not only attests to the person but also to all related persons, such as family members, who also consider the healing divine evidence, for the proof has been testified and examined by the medical professionals already.

Although in this type converts had little or no involvement with folk supernatural powers, their conversion can still contain general Han religious logic. The resources for supernatural discernment are from the local religious scripts. As a result, their distinction of insiders and outsiders accord with folk religious thoughts better than Christian thoughts.
Sangren points out the fluidity of determining a Han Taiwanese’s religious belonging to the Han folk context. The experience and testimony of ling become keys for a person to transit from being an outsider to an insider. Therefore, the miraculous healings constitute very reliable religious efficacy to the convert while both types receive influence from ling. In this subtype of conversion through supernatural healings, converts expect to see “something” happen as a proof for the existence of supernatural power.

Barnaby B. Barratt uses somatic psychology in understanding how healings affect both people’s mind and body simultaneously. As Barratt describes healings as a part of holistic discourse applying to all kinds of body-mind therapies, he writes

> The impulse of our physicality – the living experience of our embodiment – can be treated as a “voice” and brought into this new awareness, just as much as the conceptual formulations that chatter in our heads or that come out of our mouths.  

In the above two types of supernatural healing, the kind of healings that are determined subjectively to be associated with supernatural power precipitate both physical and psychological transformation. Both types which include dramatic physical changes from sickness to health under folk supernatural interpretations and physical changes that happen based upon prayer requests and are proved by medical professionals can immediately lead to a religious choice. Healings of the body are no longer seen as isolated events when religious sacredness is formed. Their bodily experiences of healings create “connectivity” between subject and object, mind and body.  

The fact of being healed generates new significance of their body to them; the body itself mediates religious significance. At the same time, when the healing process proves divine to them, it also blurs the dichotomy between mind and body.

---

142 Ibid, 47-48.
Their imagination had direct influence and effect on their body. Particularly for converts from the second subtype, supernatural healing brings a new awareness leading to sacredness that they had never experienced before. They themselves experienced this possibility of connecting body and mind and attested to it.

b. Supernatural Encounters

Conversion in this type, supernatural encounters, presents another kind of connection between the self and the divine as well as a different process of how the self can experience divine power. In the previous type, supernatural healings were key for the self to experience sacredness and progress to conversion. During the process, converts were certain about their own physical discomfort or illness. They made sure that their illness or discomfort needed medical help but had no confidence that medical treatment could provide a cure. Therefore, they sought supernatural help on their own initiative and knew that it was an alternative yet powerful solution. When their illness was healed without medical help or their discomfort was gone unexpectedly, the healing was regarded as a divine response to their urgent healing needs.

Unlike converts who had supernatural healings, those who converted due to supernatural encounters did not rely on supernatural help for physical illnesses but rather sought supernatural guidance for their present situation or emotional discomfort. They can also be divided into two subtypes, encounters associated with ling and encounters that had little or no association with ling. Both subtypes of supernatural encounters did not actively seek supernatural help as much as the type that experienced supernatural healings would do, but this did not stop them experiencing the power of ling. Converts from the first subtype of
supernatural encounters, as the analysis indicates a correlation between ling and dramatic experiences, had more dramatic encounters than those who did not experience ling.

In addition, while the type that experienced supernatural healings actively sought for help, both subtypes that experienced supernatural encounters described that their supernatural experiences happened unexpectedly. Their supernatural experiences happened spontaneously and related more to their subconscious life, such as dreams or unexpected emotional changes. Converts usually stressed that they did not prepare for these subconscious or emotional changes. The supernatural encounters happened unexpectedly and were regarded as very positive events that consoled them or spoke to their existing experience. These supernatural encounters then became convincing divine proof for their conversion.

For example, T10 is a college student in his early twenties. Before the supernatural event occurred, he broke up with an ex-girlfriend. He despaired but did not actively seek help to recover from his emotional pain. The turning point for his conversion related to his recovery from the emotional pain and it all happened in a supernatural dream.

One of my classmates from college, who was a Christian, passed away because of cancer. I went to attend his funeral. The first time that I participated in this kind of Christian ceremony was through my classmate’s funeral. After the funeral, I felt empowered and strength in my body. I was not sad [about my breakup with the ex-girlfriend] any more. After I attended the funeral and left the church, I thought perhaps I should go to church. After two to three weeks, I wanted to see a psychiatrist because I knew I had psychological problems. Then I thought of finding a church again but I still did not do it. One night, I dreamed that my classmate who passed away. He appeared in my dream, looked at me and smiled at me without talking. But I could feel that he seemed to tell me that I should go to church and Jesus would help me. There was light behind him, a white light. I felt full of strength.

Q: What made you decide to be baptized?
A: That day when dreaming about my classmate, I decided to be baptized right away. During the conversion process, I sought help from Tarot and from praying to folk
deities and Buddha. When I sought help from Tarot, another school classmate gave me the Heart Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom. I did recite the sutra, but could not attain inner peace. Instead when I dreamed of that deceased classmate, I calmed down and felt all relaxed while I was still in the dream.143

T10 demonstrates one example of conversion because of a ling experience that happened in the context of supernatural encounters, and that was associated with dramatic emotional transformation. The emotional transformation, the feeling of peace, proved to him that the supernatural figure in the dream was reliable; he attested to the religious sacredness both through the image and the feeling in the dream. The sacred sign and the feeling attached to it, his school senior and the peaceful feeling, together made him experience religious sacredness. When T10 also had other religious encounters, the feeling of peace became key for religious discernment of the true religion among all choices. Additionally, although he did not directly meet any figure of God Himself in the dream, the presence of the person with the Christian faith who passed away became a substitute figure for the greatest divine presence.

For the first subtype of supernatural encounters, dreams or visions usually serve as common mediators for an unexpected divine sign to occur. The spontaneous occurrences of these supernatural encounters contain persuasive power contributing to an immediate decision to convert.

143The original extracted text is:
“我一個學長，他是基督徒，他得癌症了，他過世了…我去參加告別式，…我第一次就是參加到這種，接觸到基督教的儀式，就是參加我學長的告別式，然後就是參加完告別式之後，我就是..全身充滿力量，就比較沒有那麼哀傷...那我離開做完告別式離開教會的時候，我就有心裡就有在想說，我一定要去教會看看....過了兩三個禮拜，就是那陣子我覺得我，就是心理有問題我想去看心理醫生....後來就有各種想法，就是去找教會，可是我還是沒有去，然後就是過一天晚上，夢到我那個過世的學長，他就出現在我的夢中，然後看著我然後對著我笑，是沒跟我講話，可是感覺好像在告訴我說，可以去看教會吧，耶穌會幫助妳，然後他背後是亮光，白色的亮光，那我就覺得充滿力量...”

Q：怎麼最後決定受洗？
那一天，我夢到學長那天我就決定受洗，我相信，那時候我也是過程，又去算塔羅牌，然後跟求神問佛，甚至（清喉嚨）去算塔羅牌的時候，學姊還給我那個波羅多密心經，然後我就念，可是我沒有得到心理的安靜，反而是那個學長，在我夢中我就整個平靜下來了。”
The sacred signs shown in the type that experienced supernatural encounters resonate with Geertz’s discussion of religious metaphors. Religious metaphors play a decisive role in believing. They communicate meanings of specific events or moments and provide predictions. In the conversion context, the metaphors that converts encounter are used as predictions that contain guidance for them to decide whether or not to move from one state to the next. Those who converted due to supernatural encounters seem to subconsciously seek peace, protection or the feeling of security. Although they did not reveal this hidden quest in pursuit of protection and security in their conversion story, this disposition is still reflected in their religious decision. The supernatural encounters helped them discover unconscious emotional needs. They are sacred signs that helped them explore the existence of the divine.

To further explain this transition from unbelief to belief, Geertz states that,

People undertake religious experiences because they desire to change the way they feel about themselves and the world in which they live. They come into their particular cult with some constellation of feelings – isolation, disengagement, powerlessness, enervation, debasement, contamination—from which they need to move away.¹⁴⁴

Those who rely on ling experiences to change their unsatisfactory state are eager to grasp any sign used as a religious metaphor to transform their dissatisfactory feeling to a satisfactory feeling. Since there might be multiple divine sources, it is important to know which source can provide the right feeling for the self and help the self move from the present state towards greater happiness.

The conversion process for the other subtype of supernatural encounters includes little to no ling experiences. In other words, they conclude that their encounters with God are supernatural experiences but these experiences did not necessarily relate to ling. This is

¹⁴⁴ Geertz 1971, 56.
because the converts did not actively or passively look for divine interventions that bring changes dramatically whereas most cases that rely on ling experiences to convert expect efficacious results. Converts who had supernatural encounters unexpectedly did not actively express their yearnings for life changes. This subtype who had no ling experiences had the lowest level of involvement with supernatural power among all types of supernatural healings and supernatural encounters.

While their contact with God was still a supernatural one, its supernatural element should be examined in the local context along with a specific Chinese idea, gan-dong. The same word gan is used in two terms gan-dong and ling-gan. The verb gan communicates a person’s feeling of being touched physically or psychologically. The idea ling-gan can be used by any religious group to point to any religious supernatural contacts in physical or emotional experiences.\textsuperscript{145}

\textit{Gan-dong} has almost the same meaning as ling-gan, but is exclusively used by Taiwanese Christian groups to communicate a person’s being touched by God through emotional changes. Although they share very similar meanings, those who converted from non-ling context intended to avoid connections between the idea of gan-dong and any efficacious implications. In English, gan-dong means to be moved or touched by something. The exclusively suggestive use of this term seems to purposely separate the divine connection between converts and folk religious powers from the one between converts and the Christian power.\textsuperscript{146} When gan-dong happens to a person, it usually occurs unexpectedly. Converts usually stress the unexpected element of gan-dong in order to distinguish it from other secular moments that cause emotional changes and are unrelated to the divine intervention.

\textsuperscript{145} Cheng 2009, 7.
\textsuperscript{146} This term is frequently used in conversion stories in many Han Christian communities. For example, in this popular online blog, “the Little Sheep’s Garden,” Taiwanese Christians discussed how the idea of gan-dong is frequently used as particular Christian emotions associated with God. Search date: April 9, 2013.
Therefore, this term can be used subjectively at any time when a person unexpectedly feels that one’s emotion has connected with the divine.

The actual emotional contents of *gan-dong* can differ from person to person. Many cases experienced unexpected tears when hearing Biblical teachings or hymns. Since they did not prepare for this emotional release, they believed the sudden emotional changes were caused by divine interventions. Emotional release, for example, is one of the keys to conversion. For those who had little or no *ling* experiences, it is the only way to experience God in a supernatural way.

H24 is a doctor in his late 40’s. He started to be involved in church activities and teachings for some years before conversion. H24 stated his believing in the existence of a certain god in the universe during his previous beliefs without showing particular favor or disfavor to any religion. However, he did not experience any feeling from any supernatural power before. His turning to Christianity primarily came out of the experience of *gan-dong*. Although he showed some favor towards Christianity, the feeling of *gan-dong* was the main reason why he decided to convert. He believed that *gan-dong* was a sign that God revealed Himself to him.

Q: What was the key to your baptism?
A: There was a period of time when I felt enlightened. It was the time when I was interested in knowing Christianity for…I forgot how many years.. Perhaps one to two years, or two to three years. From then on, I started to think that I have to separate the sacred from the secular. This meant that I needed a sign from God. God would give me a sign so that I would feel the difference between the sacredness and the secular world. Then I had a *gan-dong* because Easter was coming at that time. The church offered classes for new incomers who needed to be trained and equipped before baptism. I registered for the class and attended it. Then the pastor made sure whether I indeed understood the teaching and I was baptized. I did not know why [I decided to attend the class.] Perhaps it was because the atmosphere was just right and I was moved.
Q: Is there any special event that made you feel the existence of God?
A: I would say no, but you could also say that God was trying to tell me that I should receive baptism. Therefore He touched/gan-dong me so I felt that I should be baptized.
Q: How did you know the existence of God? Did you know Him through miracles or any particular feelings?
A: Well, I did not feel anything psychically unusual, nor sensed any miracles. I would not say so. This is like when we were preparing for exams in college. A classmate who lived with me in the same dorm, in my memory, who also showed interests towards Christianity but had not received baptism yet, prayed for God to let him pass the exam. Because I was very close to him, I frankly pointed it out to him that he did not actively seek for Christian truth but rather he was just seeking any last minute help he could get.
The Christian faith shouldn’t be like that.
Q: Did you experience any turning point for your conversion?
A: No. I did not have very obvious turning point.
Q: What about from the time you started to believe [in God] until you decided to be baptized?
A: It was because I had special gan-dong at that time. I did not know why because I did not feel like receiving baptism in the past. I really did not know why. Perhaps it was because the time had come and I should be baptized.

Most cases who claimed to have little to no ling experiences described moments of gan-dong and tried to use these moments as proof for God. Gan-dong does not only happen

147 The original extracted text is:
“Q:讓您決定受洗的關鍵是什麼？
A:……有一段時間那時候就, 或者是說頓悟吧……...自己也、也慕道喔, 那時候應該是幾年？一、兩年,兩、三年了吧, 真的開始, 那後來就覺得、覺得說要, 還是要跟俗事有所區別, 要是、要是、要有神的印記喔, 他要做記號, 才會覺得與世區別嘛, 那、那就那一個感動嘛, 那、那就說復活節要到了阿, 教會要辦那個什麼、那個什麼問道理呀, 就受洗以前還是要有一些訓練嘛, 裝備, 就報名、就參加, 之後就問道理, 就受洗, 不曉得也許當時氛圍剛剛好吧, 嘿, 就有那樣的感動。
Q:有發生特別的事情，讓您覺得有神的存在嗎？
A:呃……我是覺得沒有啦，但是或者你也可以說神那時候在跟我，比方說你，你應該要受洗，感動我說我覺得應該要受洗了...
Q:您怎麼樣知道有神的存在呢？有奇蹟或特殊的感覺嗎？
A:這倒是……感覺到沒有說什麼靈不靈，或是什麼神蹟，比較沒有...像大學的時候喔，我們也是...像考試，考試嘛，那我們也跟我住在一起宿舍，有一個同學喔，記得他也是慕道友阿，考試他就說他，他也
要祈求禱告阿，讓上帝保佑他也能夠順利考過...因為我跟他很熟啦，所以我跟他講平常也沒有在積極慕道追尋，考試倒是臨時抱佛腳，你這是...上帝的信仰應該不是這樣子...
Q:剛剛您說的轉戾點是什麼？
A:沒有，沒有很明顯的轉戾點...
Q: 那從相信到受洗呢？
A:就是那個比較特別有感動吧, 覺得不曉得, 之前也不會特別想要受洗呀, 阿不曉得那時候就覺得嘿時間到了, 應該受洗了...”
among those who had little to no ling experiences, but also among those who had ling experiences. Those who had ling experiences also referred to their moments of gan-dong when they attested to supernatural power. However, those who relied on their emotional moments of gan-dong to convert were the ones who had less ling experiences. For this subtype, it seems that their emotional release during conversion revealed sacred significance to them; they did not seem to be able to release their emotional burden before they encountered Christianity.

Besides gan-dong, a similar type of emotional feeling is also emphasized in other religious contexts and is used as evidence for religious conversion; when the feeling occurs, it indicates that a certain religious power has unveiled itself to the individual and enabled the individuals to commit themselves to the belief. For example, Huang observed that “religious crying” among Ci-ji members was a turning point for establishing their belief. The crying that often occurred during ritual practices was used as an evidence for establishing a strong personal connection with a belief. Additionally, both examples that stress religious emotions enforce a cultural image in Han society that common emotional expressions are useful proof for a religious determination or conversion. In Ci-ji’s context, it is religious crying, whereas in the Han Christian converts it is the indescribable feeling of gan-dong, which could both mean unexpected crying and warmth in the heart. Both religions’ emotional expressions demonstrate the necessity of common religious emotions for fostering further religious belief.

Therefore, gan-dong has become the common expression that Christian converts often use to describe their religious emotional connection with the Christian God. For the Han Presbyterian converts, the sacred moment for divine intervention was the time when they

---

148 C. Julia Huang, 128-132.
received unexpected emotional transformation. The most frequent emotional release under
the idea of *gan-dong* is unexpected crying. Presbyterian converts regarded unexpected crying
that occurred during praying or listening to hymns important signs for divine existence. H2
owns a small family sewing business. She is in her fifties. The key for conversion was an
unexpected and unknown emotional release during an evangelical meeting.

A: It was the time when Pastor S held evangelical meetings. I took my mom there. After
we attended the meeting, we decided to be baptized. It was 2003. The evangelical
meetings were held for many days. They were about 30 days in total.
Q: Did the pastor preach any message that made you convert?
A: What exactly happened to me? He preached the story of Jonah. And what made me
want to receive baptism? I did not know what happened to me. I just felt very *gan-dong*
touched).
Q: Did you cry?
A: Yes. And then because someone prayed for my mom and asked if we wanted to be
baptized, we said yes. I do not know why I continued to cry when I prayed.
Q: Was it your first time praying?
A: Yes. 149

The subtype that experienced supernatural encounters reflects some hidden and
subconscious emotional themes that influence Han Presbyterian Christians’ conversions. It is
assumed that under the Confucian influence, where appropriate modesty is required in all kinds
of situations and responsibilities are added to many kinds of social and familial roles, a person
who resists religious efficacy may need an alternative solution to release emotions. It appears

149 The original extracted text is:
“A: 後來一個 S 牧師在[舉辦]佈道會嘛…我就帶我媽去參加，阿參加以後我們說要決志說要洗禮就洗
禮了。….那個時候是 2003 年….佈道大會有好多天喔，好像三十天的樣子。
Q: 他說了什麼讓你想受洗？
A: 發生什麼事？他講的是約拿的故事啊，什麼事想要洗禮喔？不曉得，就會…很感動啊。
Q: 有流淚嗎？
A: 恩…後來是因為有人在為我媽媽禱告的時候….剛好有人問我們要不要洗禮，我們就有決志啊，也
不知道為什麼，禱告的時候就一直流淚
Q: 第一次禱告嗎？
A: 對。”
that those who follow Confucian customs diligently have not given up the choice to rely on supernatural power. However, this conclusion would require additional interviews in order to analyze the connection between one’s past experiences related to restricted emotional expressions and the later conversion decision based on emotional transformations.

This chapter employed multiple concepts, including conversion theories from Rainbow, James and Gordon, and major somatic and emotional theories from Csordas, in analyzing the interviewed conversion stories. These concepts not only helped distinguish the cultural differences that these Presbyterian converts presented, such as an emphasis on emotional changes and efficacious results during conversion, but also helped establish the common habitus that both folk religious believers and Christian converts might share in connecting experiences and religion when both groups share the same culture.

These emotional emphases are rooted in the Han culture and mediated in common folk religious concepts and language through ideas of ling, including ling-xian and ling-gan. Both folk religious believers and First Generation Christians use these concepts to communicate their common bodily practices and to formulate habitus, particular religious feelings of ling for religious believers. First Generation Christians might have wanted to differentiate their Christian ling experiences from previous ling experiences by creating a specific context for Christian emotional feelings, such as the use of a particular gan-dong to target their emotional connection with the Christian God. However, their aspiration to connect with the divine through emotional transformation and the expectation of efficacy through prayer or special life encounters reveals traces of their rooted cultural religious emotions. These emotions and

---

150 Rambo, 1-17; James, 48, 78; Gordon, 2-7.
expectations enable them to look for a true God who demonstrates supernatural powers and can be felt through somatic changes rather than a God who can only be understood through rational teachings. In this regard, it is this common *habitus* that causes their conversion to correlate more closely with traditional religious concepts than with typical rational Presbyterianism.

Since it is common for First Generation Christians to shape their new understandings of Christianity from both the church and their previous experiences, they may develop differing styles of adjustment during conversion. Therefore, since the basic types of those who experienced *ling* and those who did not have been established, more precise analyses should be made according to the different kinds of adjustment that occur during their conversion. For example, if the convert intends to create continuity based on the similarities that they experienced between the two kinds of religion, the convert may consider the new religion to be a substitute or another format of the same belief. On the other hand, if the convert tends to view the two religions differently, the convert may expect to discontinue the previous influences or regard them as evil. Alternatively, another situation is when the convert possessed only minimal or initial understandings of their previous religions. For these converts, Christian conversion became the first time that they established any formal ideas of religion as they entered an institutional religion. All of these three situations will be discussed further in the next chapter.
V. Conversion Types

As indicated in the conclusion of Chapter Four, besides the basic division made between ling and non-ling types, another category emerges when analyzing different types during the conversion process. Following the dramatic/ling and non-dramatic/non-ling division, the present Chapter presents a new category that contains three types: Substitute type, Competition type, and Assimilation type. These types help understand how the Presbyterian converts employ their concepts of God during the shift between two religious systems. Two subtypes, dramatic/ling and non-dramatic/non-ling, are created under each conversion type (Substitute type, Competition type or Assimilation type). Therefore, there are six types in total; all of the interviewees fall in one of two subtypes in one of the three conversion types.

A. New Conversion Model

In Chapter Four, an important division between those who experienced ling and those who did not was discussed. For those who convert because of their ling experiences, their trust in a religion relies primarily on its efficacious results. It is the efficacious results that prove the existence of God immediately. As for those who had no ling experiences, they either did not have a chance to encounter ling experiences yet or did not rely on the ling experiences to convert. Although those who had no ling experiences present a weaker connection with the typical Han supernatural experiential expression, this does not mean that they had no other religious experiences inherited by the culture when it comes to an understanding of God and experiences with God. For example, for those who did not convert through ling experiences, they may still expect to have some kind of connection with God, such as through supernatural encounters, so some of them were open to possible supernatural
encounters with God to prove God’s existence. In some cases, they may not expect or depend on efficacious experiences at all and in that way try to avoid any superstitious relevance. These cases tend to view religious practices as cultural responsibilities, the tasks that they have to fulfill as a Confucian familial member. Consequently, familial and marital relationships are influential in their religious decision. For example, when an important family member holds a belief, those who follow Confucian traditions diligently may regard it a responsibility to convert to the same belief.

Despite the fact that some cases stressed Confucian influences and disregarded supernatural influences, most cases still presented a different range of connections with specific emotional and physical transformation related to the divine intervention. This happened in both ling and non-ling categories and explicitly shaped particular conversion experiences for the Han Presbyterian converts. Especially since the idea of religion and religious experiences in the Han society have their own definitions and contexts which rely on emotional and physical implications, it is necessary to create a new conversion model, distinctive from the types employed by the western Christian conversion studies. This helps see how all possibly different cultural factors affect the Han Presbyterian’s conversion process.

According to Rambo, the closest existing conversion model for Han Christian converts may be Tradition transition.151 This model explains the transition of those who convert from one world traditional religion to another and is distinct from those who convert within the same tradition. The process of this kind of conversion can be affected by many possible interacting factors besides their different religious teachings, such as sociological, historical, and psychological aspects. Since this study focuses on the psychological and

151 Henri Gooren, Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation: Tracing Patterns of Change in Faith Practice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 48-49.
phenomenological elements, the conclusion and the new typology suggested here
undergird an ethnographic understanding of religious transformation within the Han ethnic
group, and their transformation from Han religions to Christianity. As a result, to further
analyze the results, three more categories should be added in addition to the division between
dramatic/ling and non-dramatic/non-ling category when all the possible somatic factors are
taken into consideration. The new conversion model contains three major types, Substitute
conversion, Competition conversion and Assimilation conversion. Since those who
experienced ling and those who did not are both included in these three categories, two
subtypes dramatic/ling and non-dramatic/non-ling are created under each category.

The three categories are created in consideration of the diverse process of conversion.
There are at least three different extents or levels that represent how people convert to
Christianity based on their understanding of God’s characteristics as well as their own
somatic experiences. Those who had negative bodily and emotional experiences associated
with different supernatural powers tended to divide Christianity and other religions into two
contrasting forces. On the contrary, those who did not have negative bodily and emotional
experiences associated with different supernatural powers did not tend to regard folk religious
powers negatively. These phenomena not only appear among those who experienced ling, but
also among those who did not. Those who had no ling experiences may also separate two
religious systems, Christianity and traditional Chinese religions, as two distinct groups when
they experienced challenges from family members or opposing powers against their Christian
conversion.

According to their different understandings of God during the conversion process, the
analysis reveals three different speculations; these speculations formulate three categories
that this chapter is going to discuss. The first speculation is that the Christian God is similar
to what converts had believed before. Converts assume all gods are good but the goodness that the Christian God presents is different from other gods. Because they felt that Christianity is prior to their previous religions in which they used to worship on a regular basis, they decided to convert. These ideas constitute the Substitute type. The second speculation is that the Christian God is the greatest power for good among all whereas all the other religious powers are determined negative. This is the basic idea behind the Competition type. The third speculation is that Christian God shares similar characteristics with the other gods that converts had in mind. Converts claimed their little knowledge about previous beliefs or held an attitude that all religions are the same. The third type is similar to the first one, but the difference is that the third type did not have a committed attitude during past beliefs, as the first type would do. The third type seemed to develop a committed religious attitude for the first time when converting to Christianity. Since converts weigh Christianity and other gods equally, they continued to affirm values from the past religions and this avoided judgments towards other religions. These conditions all together constitute the Assimilation type.

Although all types include dramatic/ling and non-dramatic/non-ling cases, some types seem to include more cases from dramatic/ling than the others. For example, the Substitute and Competition type include more cases from dramatic/ling experiences than the Assimilation type does. These results imply that dramatic/ling experiences tend to cause a more exclusive attitude towards all religions during Tradition conversion although the Assimilation type is an exception. The three types are introduced below.
B. Substitute Type

There are 14 cases in the Substitute type that comprise the lowest number among the three. In the Substitute type, converts obtained some positive and perhaps little negative religious experiences from their previous belief systems. These experiences constitute their general understandings of God. When they first contacted Christianity, they tended to consider Christianity as another form of powerful divine protection. This impression is inherited from the previous religious experiences that God listens to human beings’ prayers and manifests supernatural power in protecting God’s people. Converts present the continuity of believing in religious efficacy or express the same strength of religious piety in the new beliefs. Within the two subtypes, for those who had experienced ling, when they encountered Christianity, they tended to approach Christianity under the similar expectation of religious efficacy. But for those who had not experienced ling, they did not expect the same intensity of religious efficacy to happen when they encountered Christianity, but would transfer an intensive religious piety that they used to devote from their previous beliefs into the new belief, Christian faith.

Since converts hold positive attitudes towards the Christian faith and their original traditional Chinese religions, the shift between two religious systems is a transition between two religions, perhaps from what they consider a lesser good religion to a better one. Their original religion was not regarded as a negative one completely when the transition happened. Therefore, the process of transition is that the new religion replaces the old one/ones. Converts felt comfortable shifting their established trust from one religion to another. Anthony J. Blasi suggests the shift of trust in the conversion as the idea of redirection of foundational trust. The foundational trust happens in a non-empirical or less empirical level such as when people trust natural facts without thinking twice. The redirection of
foundational trust, which usually happens in the conversion process, is a similar moment when people trust God without going through examinations just as they believe in natural facts. The existence of God as well as these facts is taken for granted.

The completion or the redirection of the foundational trust requires both push factors and pull factors. Blasi suggests that both macro social influences and micro individual experiences compose push factors and pull factors. While the push factors prevent the person from entering the desired religion or its institution, the pull factors assist the person entering the realm of one religion or its institution. When the pull factors are more than the push ones, the individual shifts his or her trust.\footnote{Giuseppe Giordan, \textit{Conversion in the Age of Pluralism} (New York: Brill Academic, 2009), 14-28.} However, since somatic experiences are influential to both ling and non-ling types, this fact shows that individual factors are valued more than sociological factors as a whole; personal experiences with the divine are more decisive than the social impacts from specific institutional teachings and the social networks of the church. For those who had dramatic/ling experiences, ling experiences within Christianity were the obvious pull factors for attracting them to Christianity whereas the push factors were the possible ling experiences that they have already received or expected to receive from previous beliefs. For those who did not have dramatic/ling experiences, they are influenced by other factors such as familial and marital relationships and responsibilities. Serious Confucian followers may feel the need to carry the same belief as their spouse or son does. Strong familiar bonds in a Confucian context become the pull factors for Christian conversion.

\textbf{a. Dramatic/Ling Experiences}

The number of interviewees for this subtype is 11. This constitutes a very high
percentage among the total cases of 14. This percentage is the highest among the three categories. It means that most converts who had already had a committed or attached traditional belief relied on supernatural experiences to convert to Christianity. T3 is a divorced man in his fifties. He represents the Substitute type under the subtype of dramatic/ling. In his religious philosophy, all the religions are similarly good. He did not feel unsatisfied with his past religions. His religious turn to Christianity was not due to his bad experiences with the previous beliefs but rather through the result of a comparison between an acceptable religion and a better one. The better one, the Christian God, was proved true to him through efficacious results; the supernatural power occurred when he was in need. It was more efficacious than his previous beliefs. This following case of T3 shows that his conversion was primarily affected by a supernatural encounter served as the miraculous solution for his financial crisis.

Q: Could you introduce your previous religious belief?
A: My previous religious belief… I just went with the flow. Namely, when I encountered Taoism, I would follow the Taoist teachings. When I encountered Buddhism, I would follow Buddhist teachings.
Q: So were you more of a Buddhist/Taoist [before]?
A: Yes, I was.
Q: How did you get in touch with Christianity?
A: I was brought up in the church… because the church was close to our home. I attended their Sunday school, but I did not have any special feelings… Then I studied in S middle school, which is a church school. I had to attend meetings, services and sang hymns [during my school years]. Then we (my ex-wife and I) went to T church. Because my wife’s EQ was low, she decided to attend training courses offered by a church. Then, the church speaker asked her to read Purpose Driven Life. And then she continued to go to that church. In the beginning, I accompanied her to the church and she accompanied me to do bai-bai. [We went to different religions because] I though any person has freedom to believe any religion.

153 The word EQ he mentioned means Emotional Quotient.
Q: When you worshiped gods in the past belief, did you tell them how you felt just like how you pray to God now?
A: Yes.
Q: Was it efficacious?
A: Sometimes.
Q: How did you turn to believe in Christian God?
A: Because at that time, we encountered financial problem and would like to seek for help. Then we met a very spiritual senior person in the church. He first gave us lessons about the tithe. At that time I thought if we listened to a successful person’s suggestion, at least we wouldn’t fail. So we simply followed how he suggested us to do and started our tithe at church. After a year, things really happened according to what he told us. God opened a window from the Heaven. We believe that if you really did the tithe at school, God will bless you abundantly. So our debts of three million NT dollars were paid within two and a half years. Sometimes we did not feel that we had earned that much, but when we multiplied the tithe we contributed by ten, we realized that we really made that much money.
Q: Was it because of this that you believe God?
A: Yes.  

---

154 The original extracted text is:
"Q: 你先講一下你以前的宗教信仰。
A: 我以前的宗教信仰……隨遇而安, 就是等於說, 到道教就是道教那一套, 到佛教就佛教那一套。
Q: 比較是佛道教?
A: 對, 是。
Q: 怎麼接觸基督教?
A:…我從小在教會長大….因為離我們家很近嘛, 啊小時候就是主日學啊, 這些啊, 但是不會有特別的一個感覺……再來, 讀 S 中學，也是教會學校, 每個禮拜也是要週會、做禮拜、唱那個……詩歌。啊後來到 T 教會….我太太因為她 EQ 不好，就參加父母會的一個訓練課程。然後呢, 那時候的講師就叫、叫她看那個「標竿」這本書, 那她就會到那個教會去。那, 剛開始, 我陪她去教會。教會完, 她陪我去拜拜，變這樣。因為我認為個人的信仰喔, 是個人的自由。
Q: 那你在拜的時候, 會像禱告這樣嗎, 把你心裡的事情講出來?
A: 會。
Q: 那有靈驗嗎?
A: 也會有。…
Q: 後來是怎麼樣決定相信主?
A: 因為那個時候, 我們經濟上有碰到問題。那就尋求協助。結果..我們碰到一個非常屬靈的長輩….他是先上課，讓我們了解十一奉獻….那時候我比較相信說，你聽一個成功的人的建議，最起碼，你不會失敗。啊所以就是，他講怎麼做，我們就跟著怎麼做，從那時候開始就一直十一奉獻。慢慢的過了差不多……一年，確實就是按照他跟我們所講的，上帝開天窗……因為你確實做十一奉獻哪…上帝就賜福滿滿啊，所以我們當初的負債將近三百萬，其實在……差不多兩年半之內，就完全還清。… 有時候，感覺自己沒有賺那麼多錢，但是我們、我們用十一奉獻的這個……金額喔，回頭來推，才發現說，莫名其妙會賺那麼多…。
A: 這件事情讓你覺得，有上帝嗎?
Q: 對。"
Even after his conversion, T3 still maintain social contacts with other traditional Chinese religions, including being a volunteer for temples. The main reason for his coming to Christianity was not about intentionally seeking for religious truth but to solve his very practical life problems. In this subtype, if one has already had a belief in efficacy, one tends to adopt the same efficacious standard when shifting to another belief. All religions that present efficacious powers are regarded similarly, the convert chooses the one that presents the most beneficial effects in the end.

b. Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling Experiences

Because this subtype did not pursue or have experiences in religious efficacy, the religious preference was based on other practical factors, such as the necessity to follow the family member’s belief. P12 is a single woman in her late sixties whose husband died several years ago. She has already had a pious belief in folk religions and ancestor worship. P12 tended to regard her religious belief as one of her familial responsibilities. When she was still following the traditional religions, she would diligently practice all the necessary traditional rituals and worship. The key for her conversion was her decision to follow her son’s belief, Christianity. It is one Confucian tradition for a widow to follow her son’s way or to be attached under him. The following of the son’s religious belief is necessarily included. Additionally, because practicing a religion means to bear necessary responsibilities, before her baptism, P12 wanted to make sure that she had placed all of the ancestral tablets in a columbarium. By doing so, she made sure that the ancestral spirits would rest in a good place after their routine worships discontinued when any family members became Christians.

In her case, Confucian ideas are not necessarily used as either opposing or supporting factors in conversion. They contradicted her decision to Christian conversion when she
decided that Christianity would not allow her to continue her worship of her ancestors. On the other hand, they supported her to courageously change the belief from the traditional one to Christianity if she were to follow her son’s belief.

Q: What is your previous religious belief?
A: Our family were Buddhists. We have inherited this belief from our ancestors… All of our family members used to gather together and worship in the temple. We were like that in the past. However, my child [made his own choice to] go to a church that belonged to the “American religion” since junior high school. But as for us Buddhists, we had to worship (our ancestors). We do so for Chinese New Year and other important festive occasions. But starting from 2007, I began to seek for a nearby church with my son and found P church. I decided to be baptized after I went there for two years and started to know God better.

Q: Have you ever officially converted to a particular Chinese religious group?
A: No.. no, we were very casual. We only worshiped our ancestors. First, I would not go to a random temple to worship. I only worshiped our ancestor. I always did so, just our ancestors. I had that responsibility. Being their offspring, we have to take the responsibility.

Q: What made you want to convert to Christianity?
A: When I was about to be baptized, I told God that after my husband passing away, I would have to be with my son. My son liked to invite me to live with them (my son and his family). If I live with them, I have to believe the same religion as they do. My son even taught at this (seminary) school. If I did not believe in Christianity, what else would I believe in? He stays there and that is his job. I have to follow him.

Q: Was your belief in Christianity because of your good relationship with church people or because of your personal contacts with God?
A: My major thought of conversion was to follow my son. If my son wants to take me to a church, I’ll be okay and follow him.

Q: But what if your son were a Buddhist?
A: Then I would probably not have gone to church. I was a Buddhist to start with and it wouldn’t make any difference if he were a Buddhist.155

---

155 The original extracted text is:
“Q: 信主之前的宗教信仰？
A: 我們是那個佛教的，祖先就是佛教的…大家兄弟姐妹聚在一起拜拜，以前我們都是這樣，……小孩從國中開始他就自己去像這個美國教的那個教會……我們佛教的，應該都要有拜拜…祖先一定要拜拜阿，過年過節呀…都要去拜，阿到我，我開始和小孩，小孩九十八年……也是找人去找，找我們這個
Since her conversion involved the least connection with religious experiences, according to Gordon’s three conversion types, P12’s case belongs to the Pro Forma type who shows no real interest in the religion itself. The previous ling subtype at least had interests in the religious efficacious element, but the non-ling subtype received cultural influences from family and society. As a result, this subtype accords the Pro Forma type who cares more about only the format of believing a certain faith instead of the pursuit of meaning. The reason of their religious conversion comes from other impacts such as to accord the spouse’s religious belief. Rodney Stark proposes a similar conversion type, secondary conversion, from his analyses of conversions that happened due to the influence of personal relationships such as attachment to the religious choice of the spouse. Secondary conversion depicts the kind of conversion that happens passively and lacks the mobility of genuine religious pursuit.

The occurrences of secondary conversion rely on active guidance from the influencing person’s primary conversion. According to Rodney Stark’s examination, most secondary conversions occurred between spouses, and wives are usually the primary converts while their husbands the secondary converts. As converts in this non-ling subtype tend to emphasize Confucian responsibilities over religious efficacy, they also value the belief of the spouse. However, it seems that cases of secondary conversion can come from both husbands and

附近教堂喔，P 教會近近的而已….去兩年而已就開始洗禮，阿就開始、開始和主認識…。
Q: 您以前有皈依嗎？
A: 沒，沒，我們就是很簡單...我們只是純粹祭拜祖先，第一啊，我不會隨便去拜拜，我只有我們家的祖先，我一向都這樣，最主要我做祖先而已，有那個責任阿，有那個責任說我們做他的子孫，嗯，有什麼事情我們要負責任這
Q: 有什麼事情讓您決定信主？
A: 我要受洗，我去跟上帝講，我先生已經不見了，阿就，就因為我一定會跟著兒子阿，兒子很喜歡我去住他那裡，我如果要去住他們那裡喔，我就不會信他一樣走同一條路，因為我的兒子還在這個...學校教書，我沒去信基督教，是要怎麼樣？他那裡，那是他的飯碗，我就要跟他阿....
Q: 您會信主是因為教會人們的關係還是自己感應到上帝？
A: 我，我是想說我要跟他一起去，所以兒子要帶我去教會，我就 OK，好我跟你一起去
Q: 如果您兒子是信佛教呢？
A: 可能我就沒有去教會...本來我們就是佛教了啊，他信佛教這樣就沒有關係。”
wives among Han Presbyterian converts. Primary conversion is not necessarily the majority conversion type among wives. Additionally, due to Confucian influences, it may be also natural to see secondary converts who received religious influences from not only the spouse but also from the father and son, such as P12’s case.\textsuperscript{156}

As a result, due to this non-\textit{ling} subtype’s general lack of religious interest in conversion compared to the \textit{ling} subtype who tends to choose the more efficacious religion, this non-\textit{ling} subtype cares the least about the actual differences between their original and new religious choices.

**C. Competition Type**

The Competition type includes 18 cases among all in this study. The total case number is slightly higher than the Substitute type. The kind of conversion that the Competition type experiences is through the process of comparison and contest between two or more religions. Their conversion requires definite judgments after the religious comparison. Regardless of their experiences with \textit{ling} or not, conceptually converts from this type believe that all the traditional religions belong to the evil spirit and only Christianity obtains God’s good power. Most of the decisions were made based on whether a feeling of security and protection from the Christian God can be obtained.

Converts in this type need the feeling of victory when experiencing different kinds of religious ideas or supernatural powers. They made sure that the Christian God is the only true God by regarding all the other religious teachings and powers evil. They also believed that powers from their previous beliefs prevented them from converting to Christianity. In their religious worldview, there are two opposing sovereigns, the “evil” camp that represents their

original beliefs and the “good” camp that represents the Christian God. Conversion takes place when the “good” camp wins. Because of the judgmental attitude that converts hold towards other religions, this type takes the most hostile stance to all Chinese religions among the three categories.

To analyze the kind of conversion that happens during the process of two contesting religions, the situation among the Hindus and other religious groups in India can serve as a parallel example. Enzo Pace illustrates the conversion type that happens under the conflicts and tensions between different religious groups, Hindus and other religious groups, and criteria that influenced the final choice. The tensions between Hindus and their opposing religions are actual social conflicts where both sides want to win their believers back from their religious enemies. Each side competes to convert the believers in order to attest the superiority or authenticity of one’s own while denigrating others as evil and dark. This confrontation forces believers to take side and believe the chosen side superior to the other.\textsuperscript{157}

Pace’s model well explains the confrontation that converts may face between two opposing religious camps. Converts in his model had no choice of staying neutral in their religious discernment because of the pressure given by opposing religious groups. While cases in Pace’s model deal with social and practical religious conflicts, the Presbyterian Christian converts faced conflicts both this-worldly and otherworldly. They may encounter similar situations demonstrated in Pace’s model. The difference is that conflicts that happened in the supernatural world were primarily associated with personal psychological transformation owed to somatic impacts. The similar part is that the converts had to take a side and demonstrate themselves as superior to their enemies in both confrontations of the ling and non-ling circumstances. Those who had ling experiences told their stories of victory

\textsuperscript{157} Giordan, 189-211.
over evil spirits in the supernatural world and those who did not have ling experiences also
told stories of victory over Confucian restrictions in the real world. Those who experienced
ling from different religious powers distinguish good and bad spirits based on their physical
and emotional feelings. This subtype in the Competition type includes most cases from this
study who had ling experiences from their bodily transformations. This suggests that ling
experiences tend to generate judgmental results during the conversion process.

a. Dramatic/Ling Experiences

For those who had ling experiences, the contest that they attest to was mainly in the
supernatural realm. The supernatural world that they experienced brought revelation to them
in the present world of reality. The supernatural world that they associate with is pervaded
with supernatural entities. The decision for conversion was made when they realized that
worldly troubles could be solved through the supernatural obtained from another supernatural
world that duplicates the world of reality. The intervention of a superior supernatural power
can be felt through their emotional and physical transformations. In order to save themselves
from all kinds of miserable circumstances in the real world, they have to find the most
powerful supernatural existence or force that can protect them from all evil powers.

In Chapter Four, during the discussion on supernatural healings, H18’s experiences
have already demonstrated the kind of habitus practiced among the traditional Chinese
religions. Regarding traditional religious experiences, the traditional Chinese religions,
particularly folk religions, rely on the interconnection between physical transformations and
supernatural power to generate religious meanings and discernment. Comfortable feelings
emotionally and physically can be interpreted as the involvement brought from the good
supernatural power and vice versa. According to H18 and other interviewees who had ling
experiences through bodily feelings, they adopt the idea of “disposition” in explaining why the experiences of ling or the contact with supernatural power differ from person to person. The idea of “disposition” assumes that some people tend to be able to encounter supernatural powers or supernatural entities while others have few or none. It is because their disposition and their body attract supernatural entities easier than others. When people find themselves encountering supernatural entities or events easier than others physically and emotionally, they conclude they belong to this group. Their ability or the strong sense of religious judgment that distinguished good spirits from evil ones was derived from this disposition.

T13 who converted out of her ling experiences encountered similar situations. She is a single woman in her late forties who used to be a medium and spoke about her conversion experience involved with ling. Because of her particular disposition, she was able to detect the supernatural world through her physical and emotional transformations. Her conversion occurred when comparing between two contrasting and contested supernatural powers. She found that the supernatural power from Christianity is the authentic one that alone offers protection to her.

…I belong to one kind [of spiritual disposition] that does not require visual sensitivity, but I still have the sensibility [towards supernatural entities]. Before I converted to Christianity, I often experienced the ghost pinning me down (in bed while I was asleep). I used to only be able to speak the six syllabled mantra to expel the ghost. Although it usually came back again and again, it only affected me for a while. However, I had a very impressive experience during in April. When I went back home one day, during the middle of the night, I woke up. Suddenly I felt that a power that looked like a very big black cloud was going to oppress me but could not get closer to me. Then I started to recite the [Biblical] verse of “let the Holy sword break it”. A pastor taught me to read particular three verses so that the evil power could not come to me. I could feel that they were still there but could not come closer. Then it came
again and shook my bed. I thought it was an earthquake but it was the power that shook my bed. However, it could not get closer to my body. Then after I received baptism, these never happened again.

Q: How would you compare two different supernatural powers?

A: … I felt so released when in Christ and in God. All of the folk religious rituals were unnecessary, such as the routine worship done by the beginning and the middle of the month. And the biggest difference is that… I did not have to feel afraid during the lunar month of July. We used to be very afraid of it but now I felt peace. I felt a lot of peace. Jesus’ blood has protected me so I didn’t feel afraid during the night, even when it was in the lunar month of July. And then as for the mantra, if I heard people recite mantra, I could not bear it. They made me have serious headache and then started to cough. I often had this kind of experience. When entering a place where the monks recited verses, I usually started to do a cleansing prayer but would still cough uncomfortably and foamed at my mouth.

In chapter four, the case example H18 from the somatic conversion and the subtype of Competition type T13 both compared the differences between at least two supernatural powers. They came to choose the one that offered the highest and most sustainable protection among all. They are the typical cases for the Competition type who choose a religion based

---

158 In Chinese culture, the lunar month of July is known as the Ghost Month. The gates of Hell are opened and ghosts could come to the world of the living for an entire month. People who believe in this would make offerings to feed these ghosts in order to prevent them from causing mishaps. Dennis L. Peck and Clifton D. Bryant. Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience (LA: Sage, 2009), 512-514.

159 The original extracted text is:

…我是屬於，我不是視覺性，我是非常非常敏感的…在決志前我常常會被，被壓，那我當然只好講那個六字真言去破除他，密宗的六字真言…一下下有效，但是又來啊，又來又來就降子，…就是一下下有效。那我覺得印象很深，就是在四月份…，那次我回到，因為我一個人住，結果那天晚上半夜的時候，我這樣醒過來，突然就感覺到很大的那種黑暗的，好像雲那樣的勢力要壓過來，可是沒辦法、沒辦法靠近我，沒辦法靠近我，結果我…就念念那個牧師教我的聖靈寶劍展斷…有一個牧師就教我講這三句，真的就沒有來了…我可以感覺到他存在，無法靠近…可是又來，搖床，我以為是地震，結果是搖床，…他沒辦法靠近我的身體…再來就是受洗之後，從來沒有發生過…

Q：要不要比較兩種靈的力量

A：…在基督裡面，在神裡面覺得真的是太輕鬆無比了，什麼那些繁文綣節，什麼初一十五那些根本就不用，還有一個很大的差別，七月份根本不用害怕（強調），…以前我們都好怕喔，可是真的是平安…我就覺得超平安的，耶穌寶血真的是遮蓋保護我，我晚上也不怕， 然後七月份一個人也不會害怕…然後那些咒，持咒念經那些，聽不下去、沒辦法， 會讓我頭痛的很厲害…然後咳嗽。 我常常有這種經驗， 就是進到一個地方，如果他們法師開始念經的話，我就開始潔淨禱告，但是就是會不舒服咳嗽…然後吐白沫。”
on their own ling experiences that separate good powers from evil ones. As it is mentioned in Chapter Four about the relationship between supernatural healing and conversion, as for those who were healed supernaturally and decide to convert, their feeling of being “saved” religiously is equivalent to being “healed” physically. For both H18 and T13, their distinction between good and evil power stems from their physical needs. They expect to retrieve health as well as the right to claim their sovereignty over their own health and body. The disturbance from any outer power that attacks or tries to contest the sovereignty over their body is considered evil.

Supernatural healings are a significant part in this subtype, but the ling experiences that happened in the Competition type do not only contain supernatural healing experiences. Other supernatural encounters also bring decisive influences to converts during the format of contest and confrontation. For example, the confrontation between two camps can happen in the dreams bringing a certain extent of psychological transformation to the convert. P9’s case demonstrates the kind of supernatural contest that happens through dreams. P9 is a married woman in her early fifties. She married a Christian and seemed to know Christianity through her marriage. However, she stressed in the interview that her conversion was out of her own personal transformation and not under her husband’s religious influence. Before knowing Christianity, she had already had negative impressions towards traditional religions and she wanted to consider an alternative religious choice other than the traditional ones. She would decide based on her own experiences. She already had established good impressions regarding the Christian faith but the main factor that pushed her to receive baptism was through supernatural dreams. In the supernatural dreams, the previous religious power competed with her Christian belief and wanted her back. Their threats further pushed her to decide to choose a side that can offer protection, peace and security.
...Few nights before I decided to be baptized, I had a lot of nightmares. I usually dreamed that the god from my previous belief wanted to bring me back.

Q: Which God was it?

A: I did not know. They were the mediums...and they carried the sacred palanquin and chased after me—they wanted to catch me. I was so frightened that I had nightmares every night and would suddenly wake up during the dreams. I think there must be a reason behind this. When I was young, I was of poor health. So my mom took me to the temple and begged the gods there to take me in as one of their adoptive daughters. If parents have a difficult time to bring up their children, it is better to let the god act as the so-called adoptive father. Because of this, I think they had my records so they would not let me go easily. They had disturbed me for years. Even after having received baptism, I still had nightmares... The situations went worse when I went back to my parents' home where the folk and Taoist beliefs are still there. One time when I had nightmare again, I did not know how I would have this courage to shout loudly to them. I said that "I am not one of your people anymore because I belong to Jesus"... Then the nightmare disappeared. Soon I woke up and felt peace... I found that these words were effective hereafter. They worked even when saying them in the dream. They seemed to be afraid of Jesus. When I said Jesus' name, they withdrew. They seemed to say that "we should just give her up because she seems to belong to another kingdom different from ours."160

The two contested supernatural realms were revealed to P9 through her own somatic experiences in the dream. Different from the experiences of H18 and T13, P9 experienced the
evil power through feeling fear in the dream. The visible confrontations in the dream opened another sphere of reality to her. P9 discerned a religion either good or bad according to her own feelings. In the earlier part of her interview, P9 stated that although she worshiped gods in the temple, she did not like to go there, for she “felt” that the gods looked evil. Her uncomfortable feelings brought by fears indicate the religious discernment. The evil she encountered in the dream became the embodiment of the fear and the climax of the fear towards evil. Then it would not be a surprise when the traditional religious powers were regarded evil when the spirits from her dreams “all” were afraid of her proclamation of belonging to Jesus.

The two or more opposing supernatural powers were not only discerned by the self, but also by other agents who possess similar “dispositions” to detect the existence of these powers. As the idea of habitus in the Han religious culture shares the common explanations constructed through somatic experiences, the discernment of supernatural contests can be observed at an individual level as well as at a public level. The disclosure towards these opposing powers is neither only done nor known by personal experiences, but rather shared among all who have joined in the same system for religious interpretations. P9 herself not only experienced two opposing powers through the dream but her judgment on these opposing powers has further supported by the other agent, the folk medium, who joined to offer meanings through the same interpretative system.

When the medium affirms that the Christian power opposes the other folk powers through presenting supernatural knowledge to P9, that affirmation separates the Christian power from the rest. Therefore, her experiences revealed only two kinds of supernatural powers, the Christian supernatural power that is the exclusively supreme power and the inclusive folk powers that resort to Buddhist, Taoist and folk religious supernatural sources.
Because I was working during the daytime, I asked a babysitter to raise my second child. The babysitter belonged to folk religion. She said it was difficult to take care of my child. My child would cry and be cranky. When my child was one month old, she took my child to the medium and let the medium chase away the bad spirits possessed on him/her. Because she did not know how to pray, she asked the medium to perform “soul retrieval therapy”. Every time when she came back from the medium, she said it was effective. The baby became calm and would not cry continuously any more. Because the babysitter would feel tired of taking a cranky child for a whole day, I did not know whether I should let her know if it was good or bad to let the medium handle it. Then when I talked to our pastor about it, he said that Christians should not do this. He asked me to tell the babysitter to stop [bringing the child to the medium] but I really did not feel comfortable telling her.

After some time, I signed up for the infant baptism in the church for our baby. After the baptism, one day I brought the baby to the babysitter during the day as usual and took the baby back at night. The sitter surprisingly asked me if I had ever brought my child to receive baptism. I said yes. I indeed did it last week but asked how she would know it. She said that one day when she brought the baby to the medium again, the medium asked her not to bring the baby there anymore. There had been a sacred mark placed on the baby’s forehead so her supernatural treatment could not affect him/her anymore. She indeed told me so…

As a result, the above three examples H18, T13 and P9 unanimously refer to two opposing powers, the traditional religious powers and the Christian one based on their ling experiences. Their fears and uncomfortable physical feelings made them believe that there would be no positive power coming from folk religions to save them. The ling power from

---

161 The original extracted text is:
“我們老二呀，因為我在上班，我就託那個保母帶阿，阿我們那個保母也是一般的那個拜拜的阿....有時候小孩不是那麼好帶呀，會哭，會鬧什麼的...在剛生完之後滿月的時候，她會帶他去....民間宗教...收驚...她不會祈禱嘛，她都帶他去收驚啦，阿收驚回來就說好像有效，都說小孩很乖，不會哭，不會哭不停...因、因為保母也是很累呀，她整天都要照顧那個小BABY嘛，那我就想說，那我就...不好意思跟她說好或是不好......後來我有問這個問題跟那個牧師講...他就跟我講這樣不行喔，你要跟她講說...我們不能去帶去那邊收驚阿，可是我真的講不出口啊...後來沒有多久，我們那個有報名來那個小兒洗禮...阿洗禮完了之後喔，有一天，我也是這樣子照常這樣子...帶小孩到保母那邊，晚上再帶他回來嘛，然後我們保母...竟然跟我講說，你們家的什麼是不是有去洗禮過，我就說有啊，他上個禮拜洗禮呀...你怎麼知道？她說我帶他去收驚喔，收驚那個人跟我說，叫我不帶去啦，說他頭上有印記了啦，說已經沒有效了，真的啊，她就這樣子跟我講...”
Christianity seems like a distinct choice because it does not have any connection with all the other traditional religious powers. The classification according to their ling experiences group all supernatural experiences related to traditional Chinese religions together as one integrated system. Although the mediums were capable of employing folk religious ideas in interpreting all kinds of supernatural experiences, they could not apply skills of supernatural knowledge in understanding Christian religious experiences. When the supernatural experiences associated with Christianity are unknown but possess the great power different from other traditional religions, converts tend to believe that these Christian experiences are more powerful than the traditional religious powers in helping converts defend the attacks from evil supernatural powers. This is because the absolute and exclusive characteristic from Christianity helped converts to rid themselves from all the other supernatural dangers. A sense of belonging in a supernatural context formulates protection. Therefore, P9 spoke to the people who chased after her in the dream that “I am not one of your people anymore because I belong to Jesus.” To use an example, it is like these Christian converts had already received passports from another country and the protection from that nation so that any person from their original country cannot harm them.

P13’s conversion was influenced primarily by supernatural encounters. His supernatural encounters include two particular events, his miraculously being saved in a car accident and having one revelatory dream. These two supernatural events yield two further explanations in understanding the ling impacts. The first is that the unfortunate events are usually considered to result from impacts from bad and negative supernatural power. This may happen to the ling subtype in other categories as well, but since the Competition type stresses the two conflicting powers, converts tend to emphasize the negative impact as supernatural attacks more than the other two categories. The second is that revelatory dreams
are usually decisive to conversion decisions, especially for the Competition type. If converts experienced being saved in a dream, they tended to equate it with the idea of Christian salvation despite the fact that the theological idea of Christian salvation primarily deals with the concept of sin and not with a person’s emergent needs.

P13 is a seventy-year-old married man. Before becoming a Christian, he used to be a “pastor” in a Chinese folk religion called I-kuan-tao. He is one of the few cases in this study who participated in an institutionalized traditional religion and reached the clerical level. He had a revelatory dream that made him finally decide to be baptized after attending church for a long time. However, he waited for two years to receive baptism. He encountered several accidents that rendered him too ill to attend the baptism ceremony so that he had to postpone the date. He explained these events as supernatural attacks that prevented him from being baptized because of the vows he had made in front of the gods.

Normally it is difficult to convert from I-kuan-tao to other religions. No matter what kind of religion it is, the I-kuan-tao believers will feel afraid to do so. It is because that I-kuan-tao believers have to take serious vows in front of their gods. They have to write their “Eight Words of Birth” on a piece of paper listing ten vows [that they promise to do]. Once if they cannot disobey the vows, they will be cursed seriously. Then they burn the “Eight Words of Birth” in the incense burner and kneel down in front of the burner….This is why people feel hesitant when they want to leave…

So did I when I thought of leaving I-kuan-tao. Although I really liked to attend the worship and came to church every Sunday, when it came to baptism, I decided to turn away…. I could not decide whether to stay in church or go back to i-kuan-tao.

One night I had a special dream….I dreamed that I was going to CK Road by walking. When walking, I suddenly saw a cross lying on the ground. It was black. The whole street was just me myself. When I was confused by this weird scene, the cross fled up. It fled above my head and started to chase after me. When it chased after me,

---

162 According to the lunar calendar and the traditional method of counting time, the birth date and time of a person can be transliterated into eight Chinese characters instead of numbers. Therefore, the birth date and time are called the “Eight Words of Birth.” The Eight Words of Birth can be used to know a person’s fate.
I was running under the pedestrian arcade. Then the cross flew into a store. I also followed and arrived there. I was startled to see a coffin placed in front of the store.

At that time, I was not aware that... it was actually a funeral service held in the store where everyone kneeled down and sang hymns. I was surprised to see the coffin. Then the cross fled into a coffin and then fled out of the store and up to the sky again. Then I followed the cross outside and yelled continuously that “the cross was flying in the sky!”... I also called my wife’s name. She was still asleep but woke up [when hearing me yelling]. After I woke up and rethought the dream again, I thought that black represented death... [it meant that] if I believe in Jesus, after I die, the cross will take me to Heaven. Before the dream happened I was still indecisive, but after the dream, I determined to receive baptism.

After my decision was made, I encountered mishaps for two years in a row.

When I booked the time to receive baptism, I had to lie in T hospital because of the kidney surgery. I stayed in the hospital for 28 days. Normally people stay in the hospital for 14 days for this surgery but mine took 28 days. I could not receive baptism because of the surgery in T hospital. One year later, I had a serious car accident after booking the date for baptism so I could not receive it. However, after that, I was very determined to receive baptism knowing this was a battle between the evil powers and the Holy Spirit. I insisted on being baptized and was finally baptized in 1981 in P church, along with my wife, son and daughter.  

163 The original extracted text is:

“一般在一貫道要轉變喔, 不論什麼..心裡毛毛..因為一貫道要發誓,發重誓就對了,詛咒啦,一貫道要在他們的神明裡面的面前喔,發很重的誓...將自己的生辰八字喔,寫在一本這裡面,裡面要寫十條願就對了,反正你不能違背這個願就對了,不然你就會有很重的誓的詛咒......要將你的生辰八字燒掉,由這個,要燒到香爐裡面去...還要跪在香爐面前...所以一貫道要離開的人,想到這個就不敢離開了...所以...要離開一貫道,我也是很躊躇.....聚會我很喜歡去,每個禮拜我都自動來呀,但是要洗禮我就走了...我心裡很躊躇,我來參加聚會,但是我就不敢洗禮...我很躊躇,到底我是要來洗禮,還是要回去一貫道？

...有一天我做一個很奇妙的夢就對了...我用走的要去走 CK 路,就這樣,這樣走下去就對了,忽然間地上..有一個十字架...是黑的就對了,我一個人整條街只有我一個...我正想奇怪的時候,十字架飛起來,飛起來,十字架飛到我的頭上....一直追我就對了, 阿十字架如果追,騎樓下我一直跑、他一直飛...就飛到人家的店裡,我追到店裡面喔,我嚇一跳,那店的前面一副棺木在那裡。

我那時不知道現在知道是做告別禮拜...阿大家跪在那裡在吟詩阿,我嚇一跳阿,看到一個棺木在那個..那個..那個人..黑的十字架就飛進去,棺木的前面之後,又飛出來,飛來到中正路...就飛到上面去,我就跑出來一直喊,喊說你看,十字架飛到天空上去,喊我老婆,我太太在睡覺就醒過來...我清醒自己想, 黑代表死亡阿...你如果死後信耶穌,十字架會讓你得救到天堂,到上天堂嘛,那是當然我自己的理解,自己想就對了,黑代表十字架,你如果信耶穌,十字架將你帶到天堂...我在那裡躊躇是不是要這樣,要來教會還是要在...之後決定我要洗禮就對了。

我決定要洗禮之後,兩年都出事...第一年報名要洗禮躺在 T 醫院,我腎臟開刀嘛,這院二十八天...所以一般住院十四天我二十八天才出院, 我到 T 開刀不能洗禮,第二年報名要洗禮又出車禍,又沒洗禮了,之後,我覺得無論如何我都要洗禮...我知道這是聖靈和魔鬼在做工,所以我決定堅持要洗禮,所以我我在七十年洗禮,在 P 教會洗禮,和我太太及一對兒女。”
Unlike the previous cases, the religious confrontation that P13 faced was not the undetermined folk religious powers versus the Christian one but rather an ascertained folk religious power versus the Christian one. Similarly, since he had already involved with ling experiences through the previous religion, P13 tended to seek for supernatural evidence from Christianity as a higher protection that helped him avoid the curses. Consequently, when he found at least two supernatural signs, a revelatory dream and his life saved from a car accident, these signs strengthened his determination to fight against the curses. As chapter four demonstrates the power conveyed through the religious metaphor, P13 perceived these events as a positive metaphor to confirm his stance for Christian conversion. Among the three metaphoric strategies, P13 used the first strategy for establishing new understandings towards his faith. He “borrowed” the meaning from the black cross to elevate the position of Christianity which proved it superior to the religion he previously pursued. On the other hand, he regarded serious misfortunes as influences from an inferior and negative power and signs for them to turn away from the disfavored religion.164

Among all cases in this subtype above, during their confrontation with the previous beliefs, the moment of the final recognition and acceptance of the Christian god came when they felt the supernatural protection. The sense of feeling protected becomes the key for conversion. The Christian God’s characteristic as the supreme protector and a powerful savior is most emphasized in their experiences.

b. Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling Experiences

In contrast with the supernatural confrontation that may not be perceived publicly, this subtype demonstrates a social conflict and confrontation brought about by familial or

---

164 Geertz 1971, 44-45.
environmental influences. For example, some converts had family members who showed hostile attitudes towards Christianity. They became the primary opposing power against Christianity. In this regard, converts were forced by their family members to stop participating in the church activities or believing in Christianity anymore, or else they would face confrontations with their family members. In the confrontation, traditional values, including Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian thoughts were regarded as incompatible with Christian faith and ideas. Sometimes Christian ideas were even thought as menacing intended to allure the local people away from the tradition they should keep. Since the religious belief of the family plays an important role, the obstacle that the converts had to face was the stance of the family. Converts’ unavoidable task facing two opposing religious powers was derived from the family’s strong protest against Christianity. The choice for this subtype is either to maintain the familial religious belief so as to remain the familial tie or to convert to a “Western” religion and break the familial tie. The choice of Christian conversion not only presents the person’s strong determination towards Christian faith but also signifies the person’s pursuit of autonomy and personal freedom in breaking traditional bondages.

P1 is a 65 year-old married woman. In P1’s story, her parents-in-law were radically opposed to her church participation. However, their harsh intervention and even physical threats rather strengthened her will to attend church instead of discouraging her. Her conversion happened out of her determination to resist opposition in protesting against being a traditional obedient Han Chinese woman in the family.

I used to work as a housemaid and helped cook for a family. The daughter in the family married a pastor. Every time when she returned home to visit her parents, she invited me to believe in Jesus. She did it for several years but I always refused to go. One time I was having argument with my parents-in-law for different opinions about preparing items for worship. How did we get into arguments? They rejected whatever
I prepared. [This discouraged me] so I thought of giving up the folk religion. [After that,] one day the daughter was back and invited me again. I said yes that I wanted to believe in Jesus. Then she invited me to attend church.

One day after I participated in a family service, I left the weekly church news at home and my father-in-law saw it. He was very angry and wondered how come I would go to church? I had the Hymn book and the Bible in my bag. He poured the whole bottle of the black ink into my bag so that both the Bible and the Hymn turned black. Then we would fall out over something like this. I believe a demon was [trying to stop me]. However, the more he irritated me, the more determined I became. I decided to go as many churches in the city as possible in order to hide from them.... My husband joined my father-in-law and wanted to get me. He would check if I came to the park or went to the church [on Sunday].

When I arrived at the church, there would be a lookout at the front door. The elders were there to help me [hiding from my father-in-law and my husband]. At the second floor [where the sanctuary is located], there would be another lookout. I used to hide and they were all looking out for me. If I came earlier before my father-in-law and husband, the church people would warn me by saying, “Go and hide yourself in case your father-in-law arrives soon!” The more frequently they followed me, the more actively I would want to attend church. All of the elders and pastors in the church were praying for me. At that time when I was still active attending church activities, he (my husband) presented me with two choices. First, if I really wanted to convert, he would divorce me. [Second,] if I refused to divorce but still wanted to come to church, he would cut off my hands and feet. These words were really coming from my husband’s mouth. He wanted to cut off my hands and feet! I indeed encountered these situations. But, I became even more active [attending church activities] than before!  

\[165\] The original extracted text is:

“那個老闆娘的女兒...嫁一個牧師...每一次如果回來看她爸爸、媽媽的時候，都講好幾次，講好幾年...都一直邀我去信耶穌，我都不要，有一天...我剛好卡到我公婆為了拜拜都不同樣的那個，都吵架啦，怎麼吵呢？那個東西我們買這個不行...那個不行...我想說乾脆放棄了，剛好有一次，她女兒剛好回來跟我說，我說好我要去信耶穌，阿所以她就邀我去....

有一天....我去做家庭禮拜，有...我們教會的......週刊被他看到，喔，不得了，想說我怎麼去信耶穌？我那個袋子有裝聖經聖詩...一罐墨水喔...都倒在我的袋子，整個都黑色的這樣，就開始都會吵架...人家都魔鬼在做工...每一次...他越惹我，我越熱心，我 R市的教會跑光光，因為我先生也要抓我...看我有來公園沒有？來這間沒有？

以前我剛來時大門口顧一個...那些長老在顧著我，樓梯頭二樓嘛，樓梯頭一個在顧...我都躲在那裡，人家都在顧著...我如果先來，我們對面也說...快點，快點跑去躲起來，妳老公又來了...現在這樣以後，喔！我又越熱心，我變成這些長老，全教會的長老，牧師都為我祈禱。我在走教會的那時候，現在就在那裡講，他說兩個條件，第一妳如果要信耶穌，我們離婚，妳如果沒有要離婚，我跟你說妳不能去教會，妳如果去教會被我抓到手腳一定要把你剁掉，那是我老公講的，換我老公要把我手腳剁掉，那時候
Although P1 mentioned the belief in the evil power in her story, her primary and biggest opposition came from the practical world instead of the supernatural world. In other words, the suppression of her religious choice that came from her in-law family was regarded as evil power. P1’s story represents a typical case in the Competition type who converted to Christianity when receiving opposing powers or opinions from the environment. It accords with Pace’s contest model that converts are forced to consider the opposing side evil and bad when choosing the good side in this confrontation.166

D. Assimilation Type

The Assimilation type includes half of the cases. Among the 64 cases, the Assimilation type comprises 32 cases. So, this type has the largest number among the three categories. This type generally accepts Christian teachings with little conflict with their original beliefs. Many converts claimed that Christian conversion was the first time that they felt deeply committed to a religion. Although their choice may be different from their family members, in contrast to the Competition type, they received support from the family when converting to other religions. Additionally, they started to develop religious affections for the first time after their Christian conversion because they used to have “no particular feelings” towards their previous faith. Most converts who had some level of religious participation through their previous faith said that their religious practices were simply following the familial religion. This means that their previous beliefs fell within diffused religion and their Christian conversion made them move from diffused religion to institutional religion.167

166 Giordan, 189-211.
Yang, ancestor worship or the community deities that most converts in the Assimilation type used to follow belonged to diffused religion. The practices in diffused religion offered them strong family and social ties so that as long as they continued these practices, they were strengthening family ties. No mystical or systematic teachings were offered by diffused religion. But when converts encountered Christianity, they experienced transformation through participation in an institutional religion. During the process of conversion and due to receiving systematic religious teachings, they became aware that they should start a new life. They also simultaneously built connections with groups other than family and community groups.

Due to this shifting from a diffused religion to an institutional religion, Assimilation converts generally express that they have little trust or affiliation with their previous religion, in contrast with the first two types. This lack of affiliation occurred because diffused religion simply could not ignite specific religious emotions for the believers like an institutional religion can. The Assimilation converts formulated systematic religious ideas and made a religious choice for the first time while understanding Christian teachings. During these converts’ previous traditional beliefs in diffused religion, they did not seem to have made their own belief choices.

Additionally, influenced by their past understandings, because their attitude towards religions was not formulated yet, they had flexible explanations of religions. They regarded all religions as different kinds of philosophical thoughts and intended not to judge if one was absolutely right or wrong against others. Christian faith was viewed as one of the choices, a representative of the western religions in contrast to all the other eastern traditions. For some converts, the Christian faith was even regarded as more “advanced” compared to the local religions. Under this concept, conversion to Christianity was considered as making the self
more like an elite in the society. Following the image of a western religion, Christianity fits with the general impression of progressive, educated, and developed. This explained the reasons in some cases that they were willing to be open to alternative religious choice. The traditional religious choices are not bad or evil but converting to Christianity seems a better choice. It provides a possible chance of moving up to more advanced and institutionalized religious thoughts for them.

The Assimilation type and the Substitute type share similarities because both hold friendly attitudes towards all religions. The Substitute type may also regard Christianity as a more advanced religious choice. However, the difference between them is that the Assimilation type has more flexibility towards religious ideas. The Assimilation type tends to start their genuine religious quest earlier than the Substitute type, for the Substitute type is more attached to the past religious teachings and practices. Besides, the Substitute type has already established different levels of religious knowledge before becoming a Christian whereas the Assimilation type has not.

While most converts in the Assimilation type did not have ling experiences, their conversion took a longer time than those who belong to the ling subtype. Particularly among the non-ling subtype, the converts who received the least ling impacts belong to Gordon’s Authentic convert model whose conversion is out of intrinsic pursuit of religious truth. Their decision took a longer time. Some of them were waiting for an appropriate moment for conversion, an event that looked like a “sign” for baptism. Others simply let themselves merge in to the church environment. After they developed a sense of belonging, they tended to move to the next step of the decision of conversion.
a. Dramatic/Ling Experiences

The number of those who had ling experiences is only 11 out of the total case number of 32 in the Assimilation type. It is almost the half of the number compared to those who did not. Their ling experiences were decisive for conversion but the influence did not happen right away. The ling subtype in the first two categories were persuaded by the efficacious impacts immediately and decide to convert whereas the ling subtype in the Assimilation type tended not to convert right away just because of the efficacious results. Those in the ling subtype would take other Christian experiences and reflections into consideration as well. Since the ling experiences did not lead to conversion directly, the role of their ling experiences serves as an important stimulation for the religious quest and an important sign for the later decision.

For example, H10 is a married woman in her early sixties. It was the ling experience through one event that inspired her to look for a religion that offers great protection. This ling experience was not the only time for her encounter with supernatural power. She possessed a special “disposition”, like several cases who claimed in chapter four, that provided her ability to detect and attract special supernatural entities. However, unlike the subtype in the Competition type, this disposition did not result in judgments that separate evil from good supernatural powers between folk religions and Christianity. Rather, her case shows that the important impacts from ling experiences do not only include their immediate effect on conversion choice but also as a sign and proof for the existence of God. Those who are able to contact supernatural powers from both folk religious powers and Christianity do not necessarily generate a judgmental attitude towards good or bad supernatural powers. All of the possible supernatural powers are treated equally.

…Before I converted to Christianity, I often read some philosophical books. My
husband read a great variety of books so I followed him. Whenever I read those philosophical books, I felt empty inside and would like to pursue spiritual satisfaction. This is why I stepped inside the world of God.

In 2000, when we (my husband and I) were going to attend my daughter’s graduation in T city, we had a car accident. The car was smashed seriously, but we were absolutely fine. I could even open the door at my side and got out of it. Ever since then, I started to ponder if there is a God who is protecting me, a God that I did not know before. From then on, I began to search diligently so I …[turned to Christianity later.]

Q: Have you tried Buddhist or Taoist religions?
A: No.

Q: Why?
A: I did not like them.

Q: Was it because they were evil?
A: I did not want to comment on them. I think religion is a personal preference and has nothing to do with being evil or not. I did not know if they were evil or not.\footnote{The original extracted text is: “我在信主之前…常常在看一些，哲學的書啊……我先生看的書很廣…然後我會……跟著他看哪，所以看那個哲學的書，我就會覺得，咦，我的內心好像很空虛啊，所以我就要尋求、尋求這種心靈的滿足，所以我就因為這樣子，踏進這個，這個神的世界。…好像我在 2000 年…那時候…我們要去 T 參加她畢業典禮。就在高速公路上車禍，撞的全部車都…都爛掉了，然後我跟我先生，兩個人好好的，剩下我旁邊一個車門可以打開、可以出來。那時候我就，心裡就覺得說，咦，好像有一個神還是什麼，在保護我…有一個我不知道的神，還是什麼的…所以我從此以後我就一直在尋尋尋尋，所以就…就……
Q: 可是你有去佛道教那裡去嗎？
A: 沒有。
Q: 為什麼？
A: 不喜歡。
Q: 那你覺得他們是邪靈嗎？
A: 我也不去評論他們…我覺得信仰是個人喜歡的，沒有什麼邪不邪。我、我不知道它是不是邪啦…”}

Besides the peaceful attitude that H10 showed towards all religious powers, her case also implies a separation between ling experiences and the belief of traditional Chinese religions. A person can claim to have connections with the supernatural power but have no connections with any folk religions. This division enables the person to develop one’s own religious interpretation merely based on the supernatural experiences. However, the person
may eventually need a religion if one aspires to obtain higher or more systematic interpretations, just like the story of H10 who wanted to find out the source behind the supernatural power. Since she did not participate in any folk religious activities, when she encountered Christianity it became the first religion that she seriously thought of being involved in. At the same time, Christian knowledge became the primary source for her religious interpretations. Additionally, since she was seeking the religious truth for life and a greater protection at the same time, her image of God was not only a protector but also the one who permeates the religious truth.

b. Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling Experiences

There are 21 cases in this subtype. It contains the most interviewees who considered themselves as “atheists” among three types and their subtypes. However, as mentioned in the earlier chapter, this term is not completely equal to the definition of the “atheist” in the West. For example, when some of the interviewees said that they were “atheist in the past, they also mentioned that they believed or had even encountered ghosts and supernatural powers from the folk religions. This seemingly produces contradictions with their answer that assumingly excludes all recognition of divine existences or influences.

However, by answering “atheists”, their tendency was to express that they were neither superstitious nor relying on supernatural powers in daily life while they might continue to keep a belief in fate or ghosts. In some situations, converts in this subtype still had some kind of ling experiences but these did not influence their conversion decision. Besides, all of them held strong Confucian moral values towards life, such as taking the responsibility to follow the family’s religion. Despite their disbelief in powers of deities in general, most of them would follow their family to worship in the temple because it was to
show their obedience to the parents or elders in the family. While they did not follow any religious teachings before Christian conversion, they tended to rely on their own efforts in dealing with any life issues or solving problems.

T8 is an example who had absolutely no ling experiences before or after conversion. He used to follow his family to the temple and worshiped there but did not believe the deities at all. He described himself as a rational person because of his belief in science. The reason why he came to church was because of despair about the bad relationship with his daughter. His daughter would not listen to him. His later turn to conversion was because he finally admitted that his own efforts were limited and could not solve anything anymore as he used to do.

…A lot of people came to church because they encountered difficulties or hurt. After a person believes in God, he receives support. [Based on this idea,] for those non-believers like me, we thought Christianity was a shelter for the looser. Before we encountered difficulties, we would not particularly want to go to church. However, my main reason of going to church was, hmm, was because [I] had a difficult time bring up my daughter. I could not figure out why my wife and I could not educate her well with our good educational backgrounds.

Q: Could you describe the whole situation?
A: How would you feel if your own daughter swears at you? [This is what happened to us.] In the past when I studied in the university, I believed I could do anything, including the fulfillment of my studies, the pursuit of my career and my interests. But I could not even teach my own daughter well. The biggest difference that happened to me after conversion is that I can feel my own shortcomings and am willing to change. Before conversion, I used to think it was all her (my daughter’s) faults [for she did not listen to me], but now I would admit that I had used an inappropriate way to educate her. [The reason was my harsh discipline on her.] I always asked myself to be the top one since childhood [and thought it was necessary to be so.] So when it came to teaching my own children, they could not earn my praise because I did not think they could ever do better than what I have already done. My children were not brought up with affirmation and praise. I believe this was my fault.
Q: Have you felt any differences when expressing your feelings during Christian conversion?
A: In the past forty more years, whenever I felt sad, I turn the grief into motivation. Then I sought for improvement, got stronger and stood up again. I never cried before. But today, after forty more years, I would acknowledge my mistakes when I get along with others. And when I attended church activities, I often had tears in my eyes. I received baptism after attending church for more than half a year to one year. I had a lot of gan-dong before baptism no matter if I was in a church meeting, in the praise and worship, or during the church sermon. When I heard the Hymn in the Presbyterian church… You know sometimes when you listen to a song, it would make you cry.

Q: Did you not easily cry before coming to church?
A: No, I did not. And in the past, even if I cried, it would not be because of my own weaknesses—not for myself. But the cry I had now was like the one we had when we saw Jesus’ suffering. We felt the same. This was a completely different feeling.¹⁶⁹

His burden of the children’s education can also be regarded as part of Confucian responsibilities. T8 also mentioned her mother’s death and his not being able to accompany her in the last five years of her life. Christian faith not only provides a good solution for his parenting frustration but also enables him to release the emotions, expressing love and care

¹⁶⁹ The original extracted text is:
“…很多信主的人…都是因為受了受挫…受了傷害，然後他信主以後…他得到支持嘛，但是…對我們就是說沒有信主的來看會感覺說，這種是一個挫敗之後的一個避難的地方，喔，那我們還沒也挫敗以前我們不會特別想去…我最主要會去教會還是，因為是這樣啦，就是…就是女兒很難帶，但是我一直想不出說我們，我們夫妻都，喔，我們唸書都，都很順利的，但是為什麼我們會這樣，沒有辦法把小孩帶好。Q：可以講一下嗎？
A:我跟妳講，妳的女兒對著妳罵三字經的時候，妳感覺怎樣？我們以前唸書我哪有什麼事情是我做不到的…我要念書，我要做什麼，我要學什麼…可是我連自己小孩都教不好。我信主了以後我最大的、的差別是我可以感受到我自己的缺點，我願意去改我的缺點…以前剛開始沒有信主的時候，我認為都是她的問題，但是我現在會認為其實我自己當…當初我有…做了不好的地方…我從小到大我都是，我都是幾乎都是最 top 的出來，所以我小孩做好喔，其實沒有得到讚賞嘛…因為她們，她們不可能做得比我好，所以…我的小孩從小…沒有在鼓勵跟讚賞下長大…這是我的錯。
Q：那您在表達自己的感覺方面有沒有改變？
A:…我說四十多年了…我們過去我就是化悲憤為力量，我努力求進，重新更強的再站起來，我從來不會去流淚…但是四十多年來的今天，就是我體會自己待人處事的缺點…我參加教會的活動，其實我去我常常流眼淚，我事實上是過了半年多一年才受洗的嘛，那就是這種感覺都是在還沒有受洗以前…不管是小組的活動，或者是敬拜讚美，或者是聽牧師講道…長老會裡面的那個聖詩，妳常常有時候聽一聽歌，妳就會流眼淚。
Q：你以前是不輕易流淚嗎？
A:不輕易流淚…以前流淚不是感覺自己的缺點，不是感覺自己，這個流淚是，我們看到、我們看到耶穌基督的這些受苦，就感覺到自己就是這樣的受苦，就是這種感覺是完全不一樣的。”
that he was reluctant to do before. The above factors were key to his final decision. T8’s
case shows that although this subtype does not seek for religious efficacy, converts still aspire
to connections with God through particular feelings. This is why T8 mentioned that he
experienced *gan-dong* when he heard specific church teachings or music. The emotional
release or the feelings of *gan-dong* indeed comprise one of the most important reasons among
the non-ling converts. The connection with God through emotional transformation substitutes
the need for religious efficacy. This is to say, this subtype still expects to experience
something different from their daily life events as a proof for the existence of God.

This assumption is crucial in understanding how Han cultural and religious factors
influence the non-ling conversion because the opposite factor to the ling influence is not the
intellectual understanding of the religion. The characteristics of the sick-souls presented by
the ling subtype show major influences from emotional elements. But this does not indicate
that the rational elements will replace the emotional ones for the non-ling subtype. As the
characteristics of the healthy minded presented by the non-ling subtype, converts view their
life positively and rely on the self-efforts rather than the religious power. Nevertheless, other
than the characteristics shared with the healthy minded, the non-ling subtype seeks for at least
same extent of emotional resonance with the divine. This does not only happen in the
non-ling subtype in the Assimilation type but also the ones in the Substitute and Competition
type. This emotional resonance is presented as the particular religious feelings different from
the non-religious ones. This is why some key words, such as feeling peace and feeling
*gan-dong*, usually appeared in their given reasons for conversion. Converts highlighted these
distinctive moments.

Consequently, the non-ling subtype in the Assimilation type seems to be the only
subtype combination among all possible combinations that can be considered an Authentic
convert, who seriously seeks religious truth and makes it the priority in conversion. For example, in T8’s case, he was willing to restore his bad relationship with his daughter after a previous reluctance to show love and care for her. During other parts of his interview, he emphasized how Christian love had changed him. It made him become a “softer” person and enabled him to express his true emotions. His case as an example for the non-ling subtype in the Assimilation type shows that Authentic conversion does exist in one of the subtype combinations. Although converts will pursue religious truth, the realization of the truth cannot only be a mere intellectual realization but also a realization through feelings and somatic transformations.

Not surprisingly, even if converts were originally attracted by Christian teachings, when asked about the reason for conversion, few converts only mentioned church teachings, including personal sin and the salvation of Jesus Christ, and did not include their somatic experiences. More converts were focused on the gradual self-transformation that they found helpful or beneficial, or the particular religious feelings that they received during the process of conversion.

**Ling Experiences that Happened After Conversion**

For the non-ling subtype, while most converts claimed that they did not believe in any religions or have contacts with supernatural powers at all in the past, they might experience ling after their conversion. In order to make a consistent division, cases whose ling experiences happened later than their Christian baptism are still classified as the type of non-ling instead of ling. Their later ling experiences had strengthened their Christian faith or proved the existence of God. These efficacious experiences were important but since they did not happen at the stage of conversion, these converts are considered as the non-ling subtype.
This chapter demonstrates through focus on psychological perspectives and different perceptions of God three possible kinds of Christian conversion that occur during the transition from traditional Chinese religions to Christianity. These three kinds of conversion extend the possibilities of the traditional ideas proposed by Rambo in *Tradition conversion* when conversion takes place from one kind of world religious tradition to another completely different tradition. Although common religious experiences in traditional Chinese religions tend to be categorized together when contrasting them with Christianity, especially when it comes to religious efficacy/ling and supernatural experiences, how believers finally arrive at their conclusion about God and His supernatural powers still rely on diverse subjective experiences.

It was the basic need of feeling protected, saved and peaceful that became the psychological evidence for all converts’ religious choices. While the occurrences of the three conversion types all happen under the assurance of converts’ feeling psychological security, this sense of security is formulated either cooperatively or through conflict. It all depends on how converts perceive God or the power of ling before they encounter Christianity. In this regard, there is no significant difference between converts’ subtypes in terms of their experiences with God. For example, the ling and non-ling subtypes in the Competition conversion type both show strong insecurity while they remained in the traditional Chinese religions. This indicates that the non-ling subtype may regard the traditional religions as inferior whereas the ling subtype may view them as evil and threatening.

As a result, although from the Presbyterian authorities and academics’ perspective the most important thing for Christian conversion is to recognize and intellectually assent to the
Calvinistic Christian teachings of Christianity, only a few converts mentioned Calvinistic teachings as an influence during their conversion process. At the same time, when converts discussed the appealing elements of Christianity, few converts noticed denominational differences or took them into consideration. They instead focused more on the general teachings of Christianity and compared them with their previous beliefs. Converts then tended to discern their religious preference based on their own experiences and feelings. For example, some of them expressed that they felt a love and peace that they could not feel through their previous beliefs. These feelings drew them closer to Christianity.

However, although their answers supplied the elements that established good feelings towards the Christian faith, these answers did not give the main reasons for converts’ final decision to be baptized. In other words, their acceptance of Christian teachings did not necessarily result in conversion. Both those who had ling and those who did not have it had to fulfill different needs beyond intellectual and rational understanding. Good feelings that the converts experienced through Christianity enabled them to relate to church teachings. Through these special feelings and experiences, they found a way to integrate or replace their original understanding of religion with Christianity, before proceeding to the final commitment.

Those who relied on ling attested to the existence of God through extraordinary feelings or encountered events. They received their authentic religious understandings through somatic and subjective tangible feelings. Oftentimes these supernatural events or feelings served as the turning point for an immediate conversion decision. These somatic influences prevail in all ling subtypes in three main types although the subtypes differ in that ling leads to different conclusions. The somatic influences moved religious judgments in two directions of either integrating or separating the two religious systems. This decision-making process relied entirely on converts’ subjective experiences of religious power.
For those who were not influenced by ling, decisive factors for conversion vary. In most cases, the primary concerns are whether the idea of Christianity can be applied to cultural beliefs or religious interpretations. The concerns include both reconciliation and confrontation between Christianity and particular religious and familial values that converts have to deal with. The solution leading to reconciliation and confrontation may not result in immediate conversion, but is crucial to a final conversion decision in the long term. These issues are not less important than understanding the truth of Christianity but are rather regarded as even more important than Christian teachings. As a result, interviewees postponed their conversion decision for two specific reasons. The first one is when they could neither integrate Christian thoughts within their original religious ideas nor simply replace the original ideas with Christian thoughts. Nevertheless, although they were not able to commit to the Christian faith completely, they would still continuously come to church and express their appreciation for the teachings. As a result, it was very common to hear from the non-ling converts that they quickly showed appreciation towards Christian teachings but decided to wait for years until they eventually decided to be baptized. The second reason was when they could not solve the conflicts that occurred in their family due to family members’ opposing religious stances. This became an obstacle to Christian conversion. Although this study does not interview those who ultimately failed to convert to Christianity, it is reasonable to assume that recognition of Christian teachings is not the crucial element for non-ling converts. If people cannot solve their conflicts, they may eventually turn back to their original beliefs.

The three non-ling subtypes in the three main types manifested differently the way in which cultural elements affected conversion decisions, based on the ways in which the converts perceived Christianity. For the Substitute type, particularly among serious Confucian practitioners, converts made up their mind to receive Christian baptism when their previous
religious responsibilities or promises could be taken care of either by themselves or by others. Therefore, when they converted, they did not attempt to reject the authenticity of their previous beliefs immediately. However, the situation was the contrary for the Competition type because these converts were inclined to discontinue their relationship with their previous beliefs once they wished to convert to Christianity. These converts then turned away from their previous religion completely, negating its authority when turning to Christianity. Since they faced pressure from social or familial opposing stances, the ability of the church to support these converts in dealing with these pressures determined the final conversion decision. The cases of this subtype in this study all received assistance from the church when facing their confrontations, so they were ultimately able to convert.

As for the Assimilation type, their conversion to the Christian faith depended on whether they were able to regard Christianity as a reliable choice that accords with their cultural understandings of religion. For example, it was assumed among the Assimilation converts that all religions contribute good effects to their believers and inspire them to act morally. If the Assimilation converts observe that Christianity mobilizes people in a morally correct direction, they will trust Christianity as one of the reliable religious choices and then further develop their sense of religious belonging.

To sum up the analyses on the two conversion character types and their subtypes, it is clear how existing understandings and habitus influence Christian conversion among Han Taiwanese Presbyterians. Their decisions were made according to their personal will but were influenced by feelings and emotions inherited from existing culture and religion. These circumstances make all three types of conversion distinctive from the Authentic conversion type that shows strong interest in Christian teachings. The Authentic convert expresses strong religious interest in the conversion process, relying on the pursuit of love for the Christian God.
or preference for Christian teachings. In contrast to Authentic converts, the Presbyterian Christian converts generally did not describe a strong intrinsic religious quest based on a preference for Christian teachings. They did express interest in Christian theological teachings but this interest did not lead them into conversion. Something identifiable had to happen to build a “real” connection between the teachings and actual belief. Therefore, even among subjects who attended Bible studies and sermons before baptism, including both ling and non-ling converts, the moment for conversion occurred during different kinds of life events and memorable somatic moments. For the ling converts, the efficacious moments triggered an immediate decision, whereas for the non-ling converts, the key to conversion was whether any religious conflicts that happened in their family life could be resolved.

Therefore, for both ling and non-ling converts, somatic experiences had significant influence on their conversion. Even the non-ling converts, who were less influenced by somatic experiences, did not primarily rely on Christian teachings and disregard their subjective emotional or physical experiences. Contrarily, in many cases, subjective experiences and feelings tended to dominate their religious decision. This result shows that generally non-ling converts’ conversion seems to parallel some of the experiences in charismatic conversion, especially when both stress somatic and efficacious results. These similarities make Presbyterian academics nervous and cautious because they worry that new incomers rely only on supernatural experiences to convert. But on the other hand, the local Presbyterian pastors tended to accept these supernatural experiences when hearing stories from their new members. They did not deny the significance and the importance of these experiences. Part of the reason was because they might also testify to some ling experiences themselves. How church authorities interpret these experiences and how the Han Presbyterian experiences, particularly
supernatural ones, can parallel with other ethnic groups will be further discussed in the next chapter.
VI. Church Responses

To include the actual experiences of First Generation Christians and analyze how their experiences affect local understandings of Christianity, an integrated result should combine the interactions of these three elements: charismatic power, local supernatural power, and the understanding of Christianity. This approach helps develop a fuller picture by examining analyses of both subjective conversion experiences and the church’s attitudes. Ethnic examples in this chapter show common characteristics in terms of the reliance on supernatural experiences for Christian conversion in places where local supernatural belief is strong.

Besides the converts’ subjective experiences, the local church pastors are a factor in this process of understanding Christianity through local perspectives. Being aware of local religious influences, the Presbyterian pastors presented diverse opinions in explaining the supernatural power associated with Christian conversion.

These opinions depend on what kind of church the pastor belongs to and what kind of religious experiences the pastor has had in the past. A primary reason the Presbyterian church is divided into traditional and non-traditional is the church’s stance on charismatic teachings. The non-traditional churches support charismatic teachings whereas the traditional churches do not support charismatic teachings.

Compared with the diverse opinions on ling experiences, since charismatic teachings and ideas are based on the Bible, they receive more legitimation in the church than ling experiences do. As a result, instead of ling experiences, charismatic teachings and ideas tend to become the target when the church talks about supernatural power. As for the Presbyterian Church, based on the pre-interviews done with the local church administrators in the four selected churches, different stances are taken by traditional churches and non-traditional ones. Pastors from the traditional churches tend to suspect the legitimacy of
charismatic teachings whereas pastors from non-traditional churches tend to accept part or all of the teachings. However, when speaking of supernatural powers that originate from folk or traditional religions, both traditional and non-traditional churches tend to follow charismatic teachings and merge charismatic teachings and local religious ideas.

Additionally, the four selected churches shared different opinions when responding to questions such as whether they themselves believe in supernatural powers from the folk religions, how they react when their church members convert due to ling experiences prior to acquiring Biblical understanding, and whether they regard ling experiences a kind of charismatic influence. Distinctive from the Presbyterian academics, the pastors tended to take their own personal experiences into account when answering religious questions; not all of them regarded supernatural experiences as the result of charismatic influences. Particularly, when some pastors had also had ling experiences, they could not avoid admitting the existence of supernatural power and were more willing to affirm their new members’ supernatural experiences. Csordas refers to these processes since “the notion of habitus psychologizes that of environment by defining its constitution in terms of disposition.” The local pastors have attested to and joined in the same habitus shaped by both folk and Christian ideas when they interpret Christian experiences.\textsuperscript{170}

From both the perspectives of the converts and their church pastors, the subjective experiences are powerful enough to arbitrarily integrate a cultural understanding of God into the existing theological understanding offered by church academics. It does not matter if these common supernatural experiences are admitted by the local church authorities or not; people who have somatic experiences still look for sacred implications and then build connections between these experiences and the Christian faith.

Although these somatic experiences shape the way in which converts understand Christianity, it is rather difficult to know how far these subjective and personal experiences can shape a contextual interpretation. The subjective somatic experiences bring vivid images to converts with a variety of possible explanations but the church teachings and positions tend to restrict and limit the range of the explanations. Local church authorities are still the gatekeepers for theological explanations towards supernatural power and they will not accept all of the local explanations and experiences. Therefore, although contextual understandings of Christianity seemed to have arisen from common experiences, from both converts and some local pastors, these contextual understandings are like the branches of the main trunk of a rational Presbyterian interpretative framework. The academics are aware of the branches’ existence but are not yet prepared to let these explanations enter mainstream academia.

A. Charismatic Power vs. Supernatural Power

Besides this study, related research discussed in this chapter shows that other ethnic Christian churches believe that their conversions can also happen in the supernatural context. These ethnic Christian churches may regard Christian conversions associated with local supernatural powers as a kind of “charismatic conversion.” Research of Han Presbyterian converts is one type among the ethnic studies on conversion experiences. It seems that in the places where the belief of supernatural power is strong, converts tend to formulate a sense of continuity between their previous supernatural beliefs and Christianity through similar supernatural feelings and experiences. If converts have experienced supernatural power related to their past beliefs, they expect Christianity to manifest similar supernatural power. In this regard, even though they convert to a new religion, converts carry forward the essential belief in efficacy and somatic experiences. This belief becomes the key for their
religious decision.

Meanwhile, although these conversion processes are usually regarded as charismatic, they stem from a different context than the charismatic situation in the West. The *habitus* presented in the North American charismatic groups and the one inherited by ethnic Christian converted groups are based on different cultural psychological needs. The encounter with charismatic power seems an entirely new experience for most born-again North American Christians in terms of the connection between bodily experiences and the associated meaning of sacredness. The pursuit of sacred experiences for these born-again Christians aims to obtain tangible subjective feelings connected to Christian sacredness while reacting against a strictly intellectual understanding of Christianity. Contrarily, Christian converts who come from traditional religious backgrounds often already have knowledge of, belief in, or have experienced supernatural power. They have their own explanations for religions or supernatural powers and acknowledge connections between bodily experiences and sacredness; they are aware that these sacred bodily experiences can range from different and particular emotional feelings, such as awe and dread, to an influence on the individual conscious level, such as spirit possessions. Thus, for some Christians deeply influenced by their traditional religions, the *habitus* associated with Christian supernatural power stems from the memories and practices of their previous religion.

**a. Examples: Christian Conversions that Happened in a Supernatural Context**

The following ethnic examples present the *habitus* that converts experienced through somatic feelings associated with both previous beliefs and current beliefs. Norbert Vecchiato finds a parallel between traditional cult worship and evangelical Christianity for Ethiopian

Christian converts based on their cultural belief in supernatural power.\textsuperscript{172} The recognition of supernatural power among some Ethiopian converts enabled them to willingly shift from practices of traditional spiritual possession to Christian exorcism. The case seems to focus on the recognition of exorcism by evangelical groups and the cult worshipers’ strong attraction to them. However as shown by Han Presbyterian converts, particularly ling converts (who look for sacred signs to convert), Ethiopian cult worshippers were also relying on efficacious experience. The experience of sacredness creates a sense of continuity and a sense of religious trust.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that these ethnic groups all share the same traditional beliefs despite their similar emphasis on religious efficacious power. For the Ethiopians, their supernatural belief is closer to animism, which is different from the major Han folk religions. The Ethiopians believe that human beings will be disturbed and seized by the spiritual power sheitanna that stays in many creatures. The belief in sheitanna and existing practices of spiritual possession become their basic understanding of the divine power. When they encounter supernatural power in Christianity, they feel familiarity instead of strangeness. Therefore, they can shift from indigenous spirits to charismatic power and believe in the charismatic power without inspecting rationally whether converting to Christianity should rely on believing in a supernatural power or not. Charismatic exorcism was regarded as similar to traditional spiritual possession and accepted naturally.

Ines Zupanov demonstrates another example of conversion and supernatural healing experiences in India when the conversion also involved spiritual/demon possession. Conversion in Goa happened in the context of supernatural healings during the 17th century

\textsuperscript{172} Norbert L. Vecchiato, “Illness, Therapy, and Change in Ethiopian Possession Cults.” \textit{Africa} 63(1993): 176-96.
when Jesuit missionaries brought Catholicism to the region. Knowing that the local people believed in supernatural power and its impact on healing, Jesuit missionaries adopted the same idea and claimed that Christianity possessed the same miraculous healing powers as the traditional beliefs. When people converted to Christianity, both their body and soul would be saved. This was the Jesuits’ strategy for evangelism. Therefore, although the Jesuit missionaries were setting up modern hospitals and applying medical knowledge and skills in healing diseases instead of using prayers for miraculous healings, this did not stop people from regarding recovery as a sacred sign or divine manifestation.

In fact, in addition to the medical approach, Jesuit missionaries employed religious methods in dealing with local demon possessions. They used Catholic sacraments and exorcism to prevent souls from being attacked by spirits again; they did not deny the existence of local supernatural powers. This enabled them to successfully win converts. As a result, whether Goan people converted or not depended on the outcome of exorcism. If the church succeeded in chasing away possessive spirits, it proved Christianity to be a true powerful religion. Conversion in Goa relied on subjective somatic experiences rather than theological teachings. Analyzing this obvious contrast - that traditional religions seemingly place greater emphasis on somatic experiences and conversion than Christian theology developed in the Western countries - and how it affected the evangelistic approach in Goa, Zupanov states,

…the body was, especially in the missionary situation, the first tangible proof of the failure or success of conversion. In the Jesuit letters there is an obsession with exact number of converted “souls”, but as soon as the narrative telescopes closer to the ground we encounter bodies. Many of them were counted at the moment just before they expire, then the extreme unction or a baptismal formula was given as a last

The relation between bodily feelings and conversion is not a metaphysical one but a practical one. It is for the sake of assuring practical protection and avoiding misfortunes in this world. Because of the general fear of demons and sorcery, converts expected their conversion to Christianity and the baptismal ritual to offer solid protection. At least Christianity could guarantee the convert’s complete ownership over their body. Goa’s case well explains how missionaries in the past in areas where spiritual remedies were strongly relied on, used a similarly efficacious solution to spread the Gospel.

The above two examples share a similar context of how local Christian converts understand Christianity primarily through encounters between local supernatural power and the Christian supernatural power. As mentioned earlier, these encounters are classified as tradition conversion and their experiences accord with the First Generation Christians in the Presbyterian church in terms of their supernatural experiences. Although in studying Presbyterian converts, there are explicitly two subtypes, the ling subtype and the non-ling subtype, the element ling still plays a crucial part in understanding religious experiences and religious power in Han society.

A Catholic priest and a practitioner of exorcism in the church, Xiao-Zhong Lai, attested to local supernatural power and started to practice exorcism among Catholic Christian converts in contemporary Taiwan. He examined the idea of ‘ghost’ and ‘demon’ from the Han perspective in order to solve his cases more successfully. Belief in supernatural power generally includes belief in shen and gui. Shen literally means ‘God’ and gui means ‘ghost’ but these ideas do not have rigid distinctions in the Han folk religions. Although shen tends to be in a higher position than gui in the supernatural world, it does not guarantee that

---

174 Ibid.
*shen* always acts as a protector for His believers. Both *shen* and *gui* can protect their believers from misfortunes, bestow misery and even intrude on the believers’ consciousness through spirit possessions. To correspond to the Western idea of exorcism Lai only chooses *gui* in understanding local demon possessions, so he elaborates more on the idea of *gui* and *mo-gui* than *shen*. The idea of *gui* originates from a symbol that denotes a man wearing a mask. When a person dies, the spirit may turn into a ghost, continuing to exist in a world different from the present one. A ghost is not necessarily harmful to living human beings; however, based on folk knowledge, if the dead spirits are not worshiped properly, they may become evil ghosts and harm living people.

As for the concept of ‘demon’, it is a composite term that includes the idea of ghost. Lai introduces another word, *mo* (representing the governing power of all of the evil spirits) and explains that the term *mo-gui* is the Chinese term for demon. *Mo-gui* is the target that needs to be expelled during exorcism. Both *gui* and *mo-gui* may be the “supernatural sources” for his cases who suffered possessions. However, Lai did not establish causality between conversion and exorcism because some possessed cases appeared after Christian conversion. He did not claim that Christian conversion can guarantee an ultimate liberation from demon possessions. Nevertheless, he still highlighted the necessity of practicing exorcism in contemporary society while urging the church to recognize the real existence of “supernatural powers” that have long existed in folk beliefs as well as being observable from the effects these powers have on Christian believers.

Due to a lack of information regarding dealing with local supernatural powers, Lai employed categories and methods from charismatic teachings regarding supernatural powers. For example, he resorted to both exorcism and memory healings; influenced by charismatic

---

teachings, he related personal sin to demon possession and contended that it was the personal sinful behavior that offers a chance for demonic intrusion into a person’s body. Attesting to the real encounters of evil spirits through his cases and influenced by charismatic teachings, Lai contended that these spirits come from other religions. This position creates difficulties in keeping a balance between appreciating good values of local religions and being cautious about attacks from possible evil spiritual powers.

As the above ethnic cases share similar characteristics and attributes with Rambo’s Tradition conversion criteria, these cases can be fitted into one of the three types (Substitute, Competition or Assimilation conversion) created in Chapter Five. For example, the conversion of the Ethiopian Christians belongs to the ling subtype of the Competition conversion. When Christianity is presented as a choice, experiencing supernatural power from Christianity reduces difficulties for converts to shift from traditional beliefs to Christianity. Christianity presents more advantages to them because in some cases, converts may find their previous religion not powerful enough in expelling a spirit. For example, the Christian God exemplified victory over the evil power of sheitanna for the Ethiopians so they were willing to convert. Goan Christians fit into the same category when converts came for exorcism. However, besides exorcism, other Goan people might come to Christianity due to experiencing a supernatural healing. In this regard, Christian power is seen as an alternative religious choice as helpful as a traditional option. These Ethiopian and Goan converts can be regarded as the Substitute conversion because the Christian power was not seen as the defeating power opposed to all the existing supernatural powers.

176 Ibid, 45-54.
b. Understanding Supernatural Powers along with the Christian Faith

These above examples and their application of three types show that it is not uncommon to see ethnographic study of conversion involving supernatural experiences, particularly when converts were all First Generation Christians influenced by their own religious ideas. There are many existing studies of charismatics that explain why places such as Africa and Asia accept charismatic influences, resulting in the fast spread of Christian faith through the charismatic movement. This rapid adoption is due to the interchangeable practices and beliefs between local shamanism and charismaticism.\(^\text{177}\) However, other than the case in Goa, it seems that while many contemporary cases of Christian supernatural conversion are easily placed in the charismatic context, the local understanding of supernatural powers is often underestimated. In order to create an interpretative framework that takes into account local understandings of the supernatural power, Corinne Dempsey uses the idea of ‘miracle’, situating a religious belief in God that happens out of a supernatural context in the modern day, particularly in the Asian region where various kinds of traditional religions may demonstrate different supernatural powers.\(^\text{178}\)

The cultural concept of ‘miracle’ not only anchors particular religious experiences but also shapes how divinity is understood. These religious experiences are the cultural habitus that has impact on conversion. Dempsey reports the cultural linguistic roots of “miracle” and points out psychological differences. The differing ideas of miracle may point to similar efficacious effects but suggest different psychological roots. The Greek word for miracle is *meidian*, meaning to smile, which traces back to the Sanskrit root for miracle, *smi*. Both European Christian and Indic tradition use the word “miracle” to indicate the idea of surprise

\(^{177}\) Cordas 1997, 28-38.

or wonder. But in the Asian context, miracle not only includes wonder, but also divine manifestation. For example, in the Han Taiwanese context, the idea of ‘miracle,’ *qi-jī* or *shen-jī*, indicates traces of divine or supernatural intervention. *Qi* means ‘rarely seen,’ ‘not common’ and ‘supernatural’ and *chi* means ‘results’ or ‘traces.’ *Shen-jī* is another word for miracle replacing the first word from “*qi*” with “*shen.*” *Shen-jī* is a common word for religious phenomena and literally means “the traces of God.” The term is often used as proof for the existence of God for a religion. The Han linguistic root supports the occurrence of extraordinary facts people expect in a miracle.

Besides the Han perspective, miracles as well as supernatural powers receive more social affirmation than criticism in some Asian contexts where the supernatural is regarded as a common and normal way to contact the divine in folk religion. Where contacting supernatural powers is regarded culturally appropriate instead of irrational, the rationale for these experiences may be different from the Western context. In other words, at least for the Han context, when it comes to religious experiences, supernatural and extraordinary elements are not seen as irrational or distant from normal life. This also explains why the convert who encounters the supernatural seems to know what these supernatural experiences mean to them before reporting and seeking for affirmations from religious authorities. Extraordinary experiences may appear beyond the normal, but this does not mean that the acceptance of supernatural experiences creates a dichotomous worldview.

Dempsey compares the Western and Hindu worldview and concludes that “… ‘miracle’ typically refers, in the West, to the ‘disreputable opposite of scientific rationality’, this association… potentially distorts significant realities in the ‘Hindu world’ that allow for deities or unseen beings to affect the realm of normal experience.”

---

179 Ibid, 4.
establishment of the Hindu worldview has included both miraculous and non-miraculous experiences and so does not downgrade the miraculous ones. This also means that supernatural religious experiences are not separated from normal life and are not excluded due to an emphasis on human rationality - for both life and religious experiences, believing in miracles and supernatural powers is not seen as irrational.

However, in the Western approach towards the supernatural, believing miracles means the acceptance of divine intervention, and divine intervention is seen as outside the natural law by mainstream Protestant and Catholic theologians. The division between the Western approach and other ethnic approaches creates different attitudes in dealing with religious experiences and the relationship with the divine. Western theologians tend to hold dualistic ideas in defining rational and irrational attitudes when interpreting religion. Using divine intervention and supernatural power to understand God while skipping logical and intellectual thinking is considered irrational. Because of the Western emphases on rationality, there is a restriction of the availability of experiencing Christian supernatural powers.

For example, according to Friedrich Schleiermacher, the connection between humanity and God should not be built on miraculous experiences. Schleiermacher implies that this connection based on miraculous experiences is weak and unreliable, while understanding God through reason without supernatural elements is seen as adequate. Rudolf Bultmann further states that it is not possible to believe miracles that happened in the New Testament while living in the present modern world when all kinds of technologies are available. He seemingly has excluded the possibility for converts to experience supernatural power through Christian faith. Addressing the influence of Western interpretations of religious experience, Dempsey argues that the development of a rational

---

180 Ibid, 9.
society and the emphasis on reasoning in Asian regions have made believing and relying in miracles modern conundrums. As a result, Presbyterian academics are one example of those who avoid both inheriting local religious understandings of supernatural powers and embracing the possibility of supernatural experiences within Christianity. The only plausible choice left for explaining Christian supernatural powers is to go through charismatic and Pentecostal teachings.

c. Psychological Attributes Presented by the Converts

Although interpreting supernatural and miraculous experiences through charismatic perspectives cannot offer appropriate explanations for all cases, Dempsey affirms that it at least facilitates the church’s willingness to elaborate on other kinds of religious miraculous experiences. Additionally, the emphasis on bodily experiences among charismatic and ling experiences shares common theoretical grounds. Csordas observes that *habitus* forms the sacred self and forges psychological attributes during Catholic charismatic practices. He adopts the idea from Merleau-Ponty who regards *habitus* as “a system of perduring dispositions. This system constitutes the unconscious, collectively inculcated principle for the generation and structuring of both practices and representations.”181 The environment systematically instead of randomly forms the practice of a person while “there is a principle generating and unifying all practices, the system of inseparably cognitive and evaluative structures which organizes the vision of the world in accordance with the objective structures of a determinate state of the social world.”182

While the self is oriented by the collectivity in the world, the self also relies on *intersubjectivity* to situate itself during the process of somatic interactions between two

---

182 Ibid.
Csordas explains that every person adopts intersubjectivity to share and communicate common feelings in a society, such as anger and sorrow. A person realizes how a person feels immediately from their emotional expression. It is not only an intellectual acknowledgment but also a somatic understanding through the self’s same experience. He later uses both intersubjectivity and intercorporeality to explain messages conveyed through nonverbal ways. Humans have the capacity to express common experiences beyond verbal languages during communication. Non-verbal interaction such as through personal feelings and bodily movement creates the possibility for intersubjectivity in which people communicate immediately. It is the same with the self’s feeling of sacredness during charismatic activities. The idea of the “sacred self” is thus formed when sacred feelings are conveyed during an immediate somatic interaction between charismatic leaders and participants. Moreover, besides the interaction with the charismatic leader, the self also experiences a separation between the social self and the sacred self when the sacred self is formed. These experiences reveal the awakening of new senses which have religious significance when the self interprets the somatic transformation. A radical sense of being newborn among the charismatic participants is thus formed.

On the other hand, ling converts also find religious significance through similar somatic experiences. Christians from both kinds of experiences are quick to respond to somatic signs and notice the difference between the transformation of bodily status afterwards. Their mind pays attention to the somatic signs when they begin to arise; these signs include events such as illnesses being miraculously healed and revelatory dreams that communicate something significant. For the Han converts, they particularly pay attention to the gan-dong feeling, taking it as a sacred feeling different from other social feelings.

---

However, although both types of converts rely on somatic experiences, their transformative process leading towards habitus is based on different approaches. For the charismatic converts, the interpretation of supernatural somatic experiences is formed in special meetings led by charismatic leaders. Charismatic activities are the main environment for shaping somatic interactions. In contrast, for other ethnic individuals who experience supernatural powers from their religious background, the formation of habitus does not rely on regulated meetings or specific leaders but rather on normal living. There are usually no direct institutionalized religious practices in which some ethnic converts are involved. Although there are no specific charismatic sources, the sources of habitus for these ethnic Christian converts are still traceable. They are mostly found in the personal relationship between the convert and their religious surroundings. For example, for Han Presbyterian converts, the sources are rooted in each family’s belief and the converts’ childhood surroundings. Han Presbyterian converts acknowledge their own interpretation of supernatural powers based on what they have heard and were taught since childhood. When something supernatural happens specific feelings trigger unconscious seeking for the link between relevant information in their memory and any possible religious interpretations. The information usually relies on a judgment related to ling, such as good feelings related to good spirits and bad feelings related to bad spirits.

These judgments point to cultural psychological attributes. As for how supernatural elements or objects constitute specific psychological attributes, Csordas suggests that they are seen as “culturally reified objects”, which either assist or obstruct a person from obtaining a holier self. For the charismatics, negative emotions such as anger and sorrow are sometimes regarded as evil spirits that prevent the self from being holy. Therefore rituals exist to negate
the control of these negative emotions while relying on the assistance of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{185} As for the Han Presbyterian converts under the ling influence, no specific emotions are regarded as evil spirits. For these converts, evil spirits are usually attached to visible deities whom the converts used to worship either from temples or their own residences. The recognition of the existence of these “culturally reified objects” can occur not only through a particular subgroup, such as a charismatic group, but also through individuals in a society that recognizes their existence. These people usually call themselves “traditional religious believers” but sometimes the converts who used to claim themselves as atheists also recognize these objects as well. As a result, Han Presbyterian converts, especially those who belong to the ling subtype, affirm the existence of supernatural entities before they can be felt somatically. Charismatic converts tend to affirm the existence of such entities after experiencing negative emotions.

Somatic interactions that support ideas of supernatural power rely on specific cultural psychological attributes. The Catholic charismatics share the same psychological attributes with other North American charismatics. These attributes reflect three common cultural phenomena: spontaneity, self-control and intimacy.\textsuperscript{186} Spontaneity signifies an attitude of the active pursuit of a more significant and improved personal life. Charismatic participants actively pursue spiritual renewal through their existing Christian beliefs. Self-control points to the necessity of the self’s responsibility for personal emotions and attitude. Intimacy represents North Americans’ eagerness for love and communication, primarily stemming from the relationship with a spouse. These attributes not only signify North American characteristics but also serve as the basis for a grassroots movement in reinterpreting traditional Christian faith. These attributes are derived in a combination of Catholicism and

\textsuperscript{185} Cordas 1997, 64.
\textsuperscript{186} Cordas 1997, 65-66.
Pentecostalism as a “revitalization movement” that aimed at breathing new life into a tired cultural tradition.\textsuperscript{187}

On the other hand, the somatic interpretations for Han Presbyterian converts do not seem to be a revival of a traditional religion, but rather a nostalgic return to traditional supernatural experiences. There is no unified religious authority that suppresses supernatural experiences in contemporary Taiwanese society so somatic interests cannot be seen as reactions against one particular rational tradition. This is to say, the psychological attributes that Han Presbyterian converts present are the consequence of inheriting traditional characteristics that are shaped by common religious cultures, such as hierarchical characteristics from Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

For example, where the Confucian tradition stresses absolute obedience of the young to the senior and of the common people to the ruling class, the same obedience and respect have been applied to traditional religion where children were warned to show respect and awe to the divine, no matter whether to shen or gui, to good spirits or evil spirits. No matter whether the supernatural power is good or evil, if respect and awe are not felt appropriately, misfortunes may occur to the person. Therefore, seeking for protection instead of intimacy reflects an important psychological cultural aspect for the Han Presbyterian converts and it is perhaps the most common psychological connection that the folk believers express. Converts may start to realize the different relationship that Christianity offers to its believers after receiving more Christian teachings, but psychological influences received since childhood regarding supernatural powers will be present during the shift between the two different belief systems.

Nevertheless, although almost every convert in this study sought divine peace and

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, 42.
protection, their process of conversion divided into three types that presented different levels of protection in three kinds of situations. For the Substitute conversion, converts tended to regard previous beliefs and the Christian faith as the same kind of higher protection. That is to say, previous positive experience encourages converts to seek for a similar substitute for divine protection. The previous one is not seen as evil or bad so the convert is willing to seek a similar experience based on the previous sense of protection.

For the Competition conversion, previous beliefs do not offer spiritual protection or bring bad feelings. Whether the feeling of the divine is a positive one depends on whether the bad spirit can be defeated or the misfortune or bad situations can be changed. Meanwhile, compared with the Substitute conversion, the Competition conversion represents more passivity in waiting for divine signs to appear. It is the opposite of spontaneity found in Catholic charismatics from North America who actively pursue spiritual growth.

For the Assimilation conversion it seems that the converts expect amount of familiarity before proceeding into deeper understandings of Christianity. This familiarity does not only mean better acknowledgment of Christianity but also an expectation of a harmonious relationship between their life and this belief. When they find a more harmonious relationship and have completed all religious responsibilities, they will desire to convert. These situations are for both the ling and non-ling subtypes. The Assimilation conversion also shares the need for being protected during the process of conversion, but the final key for their decision is the sense of being “settled” or “residing”, reflected in their smoother somatic experiences.
B. Local Pastors

The analysis of somatic influences on Han Presbyterian converts indicated that although the converts received neither direct teaching or guidance from their pastors nor intersubjective somatic influences between the converts and their pastors, the religious concepts that converts garnered from church pastors still contributed to the formation of habitus concerning local understanding of supernatural powers. As mentioned in chapter three, charismatic teachings and the local understanding of supernatural experiences are opposed to the traditional emphasis on rational understanding in Presbyterianism. The confrontation between those who supported the existence of supernatural powers and those who did not caused tension among the Presbyterian academics. The academics publicly warn local churches to be cautious about influences of believing these powers because negative influences had already occurred in several churches.

For example, according to Hongsin Lin, the Presbyterian church started to receive influences from charismatic teachings in the 1970s; the aboriginal Presbyterian churches especially assimilated the teachings to a greater extent than the Han Presbyterian churches. Some of the aboriginal churches even replaced their pastors with “prophets” who claimed to have the gift of prophecy. These actions not only created separations within the church but also caused confusion among members about correct teachings.188 The charismatic trend substantially impacted aboriginal churches and extended to the Han Presbyterian churches later.

---

188 Hong-xin Lin 1997, 1-2.
a. Selected Sample

Although charismatic effects in the Han Presbyterian churches were less, the belief in supernatural power based on both charismatic teachings and folk religions already shape how local churches understand supernatural power and Christianity. Among Han Presbyterian churches, the different extents of acceptance of supernatural ideas and charismatic teachings split churches into two groups, traditional and non-traditional churches. Non-traditional churches are willing to adopt charismatic teachings whereas traditional churches tend to maintain rational Presbyterian teachings in sermon and worship styles.

This division between traditional and non-traditional is decided by the church members, their pastors and the opinions among other Presbyterian churches. The label does not exemplify a binary distinction but does approximate a church’s understanding of supernatural powers. Among the selected four churches (T, P, H and K) in this study, T and K both have more than one hundred years of history whereas P and H have around fifty to sixty years of history. Presbyterian participants assumed that historical churches belonged to the traditional group that tends to maintain traditional teachings, and this accords with the situations of T and K; Pastor A1 from T and Pastor A4 from K considered themselves more traditional than other churches.\(^{189}\) Likewise, Pastor A2 from church P and Pastor A3 from H did not describe their church as traditional, and they were more willing to accept charismatic ideas. Members from other churches tended to view them as non-traditional. However, this did not mean these pastors had entirely adopted charismatic teachings, for they still wanted to keep the Presbyterian tradition.

From the Table below, it seems that H has the most First Generation Christians but this may not be the case. This study included the maximum number of First Generation

\(^{189}\) All historical information from the four selected churches are from their church yearbooks. The distinction between traditional and non-traditional was based on pastors’ own answers.
Christians from T, K and H but not from P. The selected number of converts from P is to fulfill the ideal size of this study after all of the available converts from T, K and H had been selected. P should have more First Generation Christians than the listed number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Pastor</th>
<th>Total membership number</th>
<th>The number of interviewed First Generation Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>A4</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The size of the church membership and the selected First Generation Christians

It does not matter whether the church adopts traditional or non-traditional teachings. All four churches contain the three types of converts and their subtypes. Therefore, the division between traditional or non-traditional church does not seem to affect the results of the conversion types that their members belong to. But through interviewing local pastors, it appears that at least their answers show that their understanding of Christianity through supernatural powers were influenced not only by their theological knowledge but also by their experiences with actual conversion cases. Nevertheless, they would arrive at different conclusions based on their own experiences. All pastors shared their ideas about conversion, their personal views regarding supernatural powers and if they necessarily related them to charismatic teachings. Those who had ever experienced supernatural powers tended to agree with their converts’ experiences while trying to integrate with the rational Presbyterian teachings.
The four pastors are all males. A2 is in his sixties while A1, A3 and A4 are in their late forties and fifties. Regardless of whether they recognized supernatural powers, all the pastors agreed that their priority is to make sure that converts recognize basic Christian teachings before the convert follows any particular religious or supernatural experiences that persuade them to convert. As for understandings of supernatural powers, all the pastors testified to local religious ideas or spiritual power and were aware of the clear distinction between local supernatural experiences and charismatic experiences. No matter whether they agreed with charismatic teachings, all of them directly stated that some supernatural powers from the folk religions are evil.

Pastoring a traditional church and maintaining the Presbyterian tradition, A4 showed an explicit contrast between his rational traditional Presbyterian stance and his belief in supernatural power. Before he answered questions about supernatural powers, he first stated the traditional and rational stance of the church as to why he would not adopt charismatic teachings in the church. He replied,

A: …We saw many other church denominations using charismatic teachings when talking about exorcism, healings and other things. Why can’t we have it in the Presbyterian church? It is because what we expect is whether a person can continue to practice his faith and serve in the church after he is filled with the Holy Spirit. That is more important.

Q: Have you ever invited charismatic speakers to your church? If so, how do you think about them?

A: Our church is a very, very traditional church among all Presbyterian churches…According to my understanding of our church members, they… would not want me to invite this kind of speaker. Besides, I do not think it important [to do so] either… It is mainly because of the [difference between Presbyterian] theology [and charismatic teachings].

---

190 The original extracted content is:

“我們看到很多其他教派就是一直很、很用靈恩的方式在談趕鬼，在談醫治，在談什麼，那為什麼長老
A4 highlighted his stance in carrying on traditional Presbyterian teachings, but when asked about folk supernatural powers, he did not mind adopting folk religious ideas to understand supernatural powers nor did he deny their existence. However, this did not mean that he would offer any exorcism practices for his church members because he himself had not encountered any cases.

Q: Do you believe that folk religions relate to evil spirits?
A: Do folk religions relate to evil spirits? Of course they do! Among the Christian teachings, the Christian God is the only true God. Whenever we mention this, almost the whole of Chinese or Taiwanese society shows their dislike of Christians. Because [this assumes that] the only true God is the Christian God, the rest [of the supernatural powers] are ghosts. 191

Q: Have you ever heard about special experiences from First Generation Christians [in your church]?
A: Yes, I did hear about some special cases. But frankly speaking… those who encountered ghosts and then came to Jesus are rare… or… I don’t think there are many of them who encountered this in their daily life… [However,] some cases [I have encountered] who were from a background of bai-bai worship and wanted to convert said they were afraid [when they were about to convert]. [In one of the cases,] the reason was because a wife’s [deceased] husband demanded that she should not convert. Otherwise he would appear to her [as a ghost after passing away]. Then she would claim seeing him [after he passed away]. However, some of the demon possessions experienced by the “ghost-possessed women” I have heard of were manipulated by men. Besides, a psychological problem cannot be seen as demon possession. I do believe in demon possession. I indeed believe but just have not
encountered it yet.\textsuperscript{192}

Although A4 did not believe that conversions due to supernatural encounters could be many, he admitted that if they did happen, they must usually happen to First-Generation Christians rather than to those who already had Christian familial backgrounds. As a result, A4 admitted the existence of supernatural powers and the effect of ling from folk religions but was not ready to practice exorcism.

Compared with A4, A2 presented more willingness to integrate his theological ideas and folk understandings of supernatural powers whenever he himself had encountered cases possessed by demons. He shared past experiences about demon expulsion and clearly knew that they did not happen in the context of the charismatic movement. Although he had not received any charismatic training, he had practiced exorcism for his church members in the past.

Q: Would you refuse to recognize the supernatural power [in the folk religions] because of the rational traditions of the Presbyterian Church?
A: No, no… I completely [believe this.... because] the Bible also already mentioned it. Even Jesus Himself practiced exorcism…So, it is very clear and I believe one hundred percent that some spirits harass [people]…
Q: Did you mean the folk religions?
A: Yes.. they are included. That is why some people convert to Christianity.
Q: So do you think that this kind of conversion [that happened due to influences of folk religious powers] is common?
A: Yes, although there are fewer now. I would think it at least happened before… it is because of my own experiences. Through prayers, God showed mercy and healings in

\textsuperscript{192} The original extracted content is:
“Q：有聽過第一代信徒說過比較特殊的經驗嗎？
A：呃，當然有，比較特殊的，一般的坦白講說看到……鬼的，再來信耶穌的也很少啦…那……不過說他生活在經驗……遇到這樣的事情的……應該也不多啦…好像有的……有的剛要信耶穌他，可能是本來是拜拜的……他就是會害怕阿，她先生可能交代她不能夠來信耶穌阿，不然會找她阿，阿她就跟著會看到阿……就像我接觸到很多所謂的鬼婆喔，其實大數都是這些人的因素啦，精神上的疾病不是真的被鬼附身……但是我是相信有鬼附身的事情，我是相信，只是我還沒遇到...”
that-- that…[particular event]
Q: Did you mean that some cases converted because of this? Did you encounter any?
A: Yes, I personally encountered this. It was a few years ago. [He] came here and yelled ‘Jesus’ and ‘ghost’. Then I would come to church during our Wednesday meeting and expelled the demons. After the demons were expelled, he left.193

Also, A2 expressed willingness to accept charismatic teachers in his church to preach to his congregation. He also accepted their teachings regarding supernatural powers. Consequently, he was open to the kind of conversion that resulted from ling such as demon expulsion. Although he mentioned it was important to understand the Bible before conversion, to Pastor A2 the most important criterion when he examined a person was whether one was determined to follow Jesus.

A3’s case demonstrated another style of handling Presbyterian teachings, folk understandings of supernatural powers and charismatic teachings; he showed an acceptance towards all three interpretations while pointing out their differences. However, A3 also tried to distance himself from charismatic teachings while simultaneously developing his own ideas about folk supernatural powers through his own experiences. By separating folk understandings from charismatic understandings, he would neither oppose nor encourage his church members to attend charismatic activities.

Q: On the premise of the rational tradition in the Presbyterian church, if your church

193 The original extracted content is:
“Q: 所以您不會因為受到長老教會理性的神學傳統，而是排斥事情？
不會、不會，我完全、聖、聖經裡面都有記載呀，耶穌也有趕鬼過阿，喔，喔，所以這是在那個地方，
我也很清楚、我也很相信，百分之百相信鬼神在這樣的、在那裡、在那裡捉弄，捉弄那個什麼。
Q: 您指民間宗教？
A: 民間宗教裡面那些，都有呀，嘿，所以有的人、有的人這要來信主的阿
Q: 您覺得也是很平常？
A: 最近比較少了…總是我覺得…有這樣經驗過…在那個地方通過祈禱，阿主憐憫，醫治啦…
Q: 有例子說因為這樣來信基督嗎？…您有遇過？
A: 有，我有遇到阿，好幾年前的事情，在那個地方…來到這裡喊、喊…耶穌、鬼阿…禮拜三聚會來這地方給他趕鬼，趕完了之後出去。”
members experience gui, how do you respond?
A: I know that theologically speaking, we Presbyterian churches are very rational, but in real pastoral experience, we adopt a lot of emotional approaches…. In my personal opinion, I accept [my church members’ special experiences] easily. During the time when I was brought up, in my high school years, we experienced these things.

Q: Did you mean that you ever dealt with [spirit or gui]?
A: Yes, demon expulsions were very common in my church.
Q: Does it happen in your church now?
A: No, it only happened in the church of my childhood. I even participated in it.
Q: Was it related to the charismatic movement?
A: No, it was not. I think it was different from [the cases in] the charismatic movement. It was completely different between the time when a person was possessed by ghosts and we expelled them through our faith, and the time when a person is pursuing spiritual growth charismatically.

While A3’s belief in supernatural powers from folk religions was based on his personal experiences, A1 had the same answers but his ideas came from charismatic observations. A1 did not refer to his personal experiences of folk supernatural power at all, and the account of his understanding of supernatural powers mostly relies on charismatic teachings. Although he still emphasized the rational tradition in the Presbyterian church, he had a very open attitude in accepting supernatural possibilities from Christianity. When asked if a Presbyterian church should keep the rational tradition, his answer was the same as A3.

---

194 The original extracted content is:
“Q: 長老教會的神學傳統比較理性，如果您有會友受到傳統信仰的鬼影響，您怎麼處理？
A: 其實在長老教會是，我們在神學上我們是很、很理性啦…...但是我們在牧會...生活裡面，我們其實也是常常很多的感性啦...所以其實對我自己來講，我對這些事情我也是……很容易去接受。因為在我們自己在成長過程當中...在我…...差不多國、國、高中的時候，我們就常常有經歷過這一些的事情。
Q: 您自己有所經歷？
A: 對，那在我們的教會就常常發生就是有就趕鬼這樣子的……
Q: 您這邊有發生過趕鬼？
A: 這、這邊沒有，是我自己本身...小時候在我的教會裡面，我就有、幾、幾乎是有，有參與這樣子的。
Q: 這跟靈恩是沒有關係？
A: 那個是沒關係，沒有，我想那個跟靈恩是、是不一樣的...那種被、被鬼說有附身，然後藉著我們的信仰去、去趕鬼，我想跟追求靈恩，我想那是完全不同、不一樣的。”
replying that both rational and emotional elements should be taken care of in order to develop a “healthy” church.

Q: Would you like to invite charismatic speakers to your church?
A: It depends on who the person is. I would expect the person to come from a mainstream denominational background. Presbyterian churches are more likely to accept this. I once attended some charismatic meetings and found they were exaggerating [charismatic effects]. A church held a special charismatic meeting and I invited my church members to attend. I had a very bad feeling about that meeting. [The leader] laid hands on people and later some people started to shout. These people were volunteers there. When someone was shouting, [the leader] handed a microphone to the person so that everyone could hear the shouting. I thought this was too manipulating. I would prefer [to invite] another [charismatic] pastor H whom I invited previously. [During his charismatic meeting,] I saw a child from our church who was in the second grade. At the beginning she stood there and watched, but at the end [of the meeting] she started to cry. And at the end of her crying, she lay down for almost half an hour and could not stand up again. She was only in the second grade! I found that the work of Holy Spirit is marvelous. We must open ourselves to accept any possibility that God presents. However, we must not lose our acknowledgement of the truth and rational teachings.

A1 shared his observations about charismatic experiences; while affirming charismatic power, he showed his preference for the experience that included the least “manipulated” elements from the charismatic leader. This is to say, he recognized rational

---

195 The original extracted content is:
“Q：會想要邀請比較靈恩的講師嗎？
A: ...我們還是要看人...希望他比較、比較正統的教會，這個是可能長老教會比較能夠認同的...我有參加過特別有一些靈恩的聚會，我覺得那有一點誇大...有一次是...有一個教會他們一個特會，阿我就、我就邀請我們的教會的兄姊一起去參加...那一次的感覺是很不好就是，他讓人倒下去，然後有人在叫...那些又是他們的同工，然後他叫的時候，他又拿麥克風給他...就是要讓大家知道他在叫，他的叫聲，...我覺得太刻意去操作......我有邀請過 H 牧師......我覺得基本上 H 牧師我、我能夠接受的...我在那當中有看到有一個喔，呃，我們教會的一個小孩子，他是讀國小二年級，是個女孩子，她原來喔站在旁邊看，看到最後她開始哭，哭到最後她竟然倒下去喔，爬不起來，呵呵，差不多半個小時，躺在那邊喔，阿沒辦法爬起來，國小二年級而已，我發現說聖靈的工作阿，很奇妙...我們必、必須要 Open...去接受上帝各樣的可能性，但是我們絕對不能夠失去理性的一個教導，對真理的認識。”
Presbyterian teachings and charismatic supernatural teachings at the same time. Being a rational protestant believer, his understanding of Christianity did not only come from intellectual knowledge but also from bodily feelings. The key for A1’s acceptance of charismatic power came from his own witness of supernatural powers during a charismatic meeting.

This assertion can be applied to all four pastors. Besides their theological knowledge and insistence on Presbyterian rationality, their own life experiences, associated with different sources and treatment of supernatural powers, add to their framework of religious interpretation. Based on their chosen explanatory sources, all the pastors sought reconciliation between affirmation of supernatural powers and rational theological understanding. On the one hand, the actual conversion cases with which they had had contact exemplified the folk worldview that they also shared within the same community. Since in these cases the supernatural phenomenon is undeniable, rational Presbyterian ideas are not sufficient to explain converts’ somatic and supernatural experiences. Therefore the interviewed local pastors not only valued the conversion experiences of their new members but also sought correspondence between converts’ stories and available explanations from local folk understanding or charismatic teachings. Local pastors join the same explanatory system shared with folk religions. The converts and pastors also share the same habitus in understanding their experiences with ling, including supernatural encounter and spirit possession.
b. New Understanding of Church Teachings and Christian God?

The study of Presbyterian converts and church pastors seemingly points to an interpretative framework in understanding conversion and experiences that differs from Western Protestantism, where both the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church and Western Protestantism highly value rationality. As shown in Chapter Three, some Presbyterian authorities and academics follow the Western approach and neglect discussions of supernatural powers. They either consider it unimportant or regard the powers non-existent. When it comes to other religions, Presbyterian academics and church pastors do not seem to have a unanimous stance in their answers.

The results of this study, in which most First Generation Christians from four Presbyterian churches report supernatural experiences connected with folk religious powers but not with charismatic powers, indicate that converts’ experiences enable local Presbyterian churches to seek folk interpretations in understanding both folk supernatural powers and possible Christian supernatural powers. Explanations may also include charismatic aspects but the local Presbyterian churches include more possible interpretations. For example, when charismatic teachings only regard folk religious powers as evil and the Christian God as the absolute god, people who adopt folk understandings regard their encounters with ling or any supernatural power as either good or evil. Only the Competition conversion tends to agree entirely with the charismatic point of view. Folk understandings of supernatural powers indeed influence converts’ attitudes manifest in their spiritual judgments.

Second, previous religious experiences and concepts are not the only impact on conversion. This conclusion notes possible theological formation derived from ethnic and cultural religious experiences. Some of the converts may change their original judgments based on the correct “Christian” teaching received from the church. They may change their
viewpoint from recognizing all deities to be true, to admitting the only absolute Christian God while negating others as evil. Others may not follow this doctrine completely in that they do not view Christianity as the only true religion although they regard the Christian God as the highest god. These converts belong to the Substitute and Assimilation conversion, whose religious viewpoint is deeply influenced by the religious concepts that shape the Han Taiwanese religiosity that “all religions persuade people to do good“. The folk and traditional Chinese religions will only be regarded as evil when the converts, such as those from the Competition type, indeed experience attacks or harassments from spirits.

While feelings of peace and security are determinants rules for converts’ religious choices, these somatic experiences formulate their understandings of Christianity prior to their intellectual theological understandings. Personal experiences are more crucial than the formal Christian teachings they receive from the church. Additionally, these psychological characteristics of emphasizing feelings seem to influence not only their conversion experience but also continue to affect converts after they enter a “formal” Christian life. Church pastors unavoidably participate in this process of developing a cultural understanding of Christianity through their personal observations, supernatural encounters and their witness of their congregation’s somatic experiences. As A2 stated in the interview, although he thought it important to ascertain that new members receive formal baptism classes before they convert, it is also important to see evidence of their determination for Christian conversion. It may not matter so much where the determination comes from when the local pastors are aware of converts’ effective somatic experiences.

In summary, conversion experiences revealed through cultural understandings influence ethnic understandings of Christianity. Ethnic understandings of Christianity rely on cultural somatic experiences and are not rooted from Western charismatic teachings.
Converts’ subjective feelings toward religious understandings are connected with a cultural unconsciousness.\textsuperscript{196} It is a \textit{habitus} from common life experiences and interpretations that offer those who believe an opportunity to communicate with each other and to contribute to continuing systematic religious meaning. As stated in Chapter One, although the dependence on somatic experiences for Christian conversion has existed since Christianity was brought to Taiwan, this dependence did not establish a corresponding theology. Understandings towards Christianity have still followed the Western intellectual schema without taking cultural experiences into consideration.

The link that Presbyterian converts maintain between past religious or cultural emphasis on somatic experiences and later Christian experiences indicates a new approach for connecting humanity and Christianity based on ethnic experiences and a cultural unconsciousness. This finding opens an insight for future analysis in both conversion studies and contextual theology, based on an available approach that combines somatic analysis and cultural scripts.

\textsuperscript{196} The idea of cultural unconsciousness has been discussed in Chapter Two, in the analysis of Sangren’s work on proposed the collective \textit{habitus} practiced in the Taiwanese folk religion.
Conclusion

Although ling experiences tend to shorten the entire process of conversion, they are never simply impulsive decisions disconnected from cultural understandings. Indeed, due to the impact of habitus, including the church and its members, the church’s understanding of Christianity cannot avoid interacting with the local religious ideas, which contribute to traditional Chinese religious emphasis on efficacy and particular religious emotions.

This cultural background promotes Presbyterian converts’ creativity in understanding the Christian God. As suggested by Csordas in his observations with charismatic groups, the emphasis on somatic experiences during religious activities generates cultural, psychological significance to the self as well as to the group. The cultural emotions and the needs that they manifest in past experiences and during Christian conversion, such as being protected from insecurity, reflect a need for a hierarchical God for the Han Christian believers who demonstrate great superior powers. This is reflected particularly among those who had experiences involved with ling, whose conversion was the outcome of being saved from dreams, healed from uncomfortable physical disorders, triumphs over evil spirits, etc. Their desire for religious efficacy during conversion continues in their new Christian experiences with past religious understandings.

For those who did not experience ling, Christianity was seldom the consequence of an actively religious pursuit; they were not the Authentic converts in Gordon’s account. These likely healthy-minded converts seek for particular emotional connections with God, such as gan-dong, that represent a supernatural feeling although they were not like the ling subtype who actively sought religious efficacy to prove the existence of God. Or, some sought for fulfillment or harmonious relationship with the family so that they tended to wait for the appropriate time to convert when family duties were done. Meanwhile, for the non-ling
subtype, Christian thoughts can be regarded as important just like other cultural ideas such as Confucianism since it does not demonstrate supernatural powers. As a result, both ling and non-ling subtypes sought emotional signs to connect with God supernaturally so that they can separate the holy moments from the secular ones. And both types emphasize somatic experiences and tend to consider them more important than the intellectual Biblical understandings.

However, due to different types of integration that converts experienced between traditional beliefs and Christianity, three categories are created: the Substitute, the Competition and Assimilation type. They represent three possible variations in conversion processes that converts experienced. These categories should also be applicable to other ethnic converts who experience a shifting dynamic between their religion and Christianity. These types represent three situations that converts experienced psychologically as they moved from one religion to another; they may replace the existing one with the newer one, consider the existing one as evil and the new one as good, or assimilate elements of both similarities when moving into the newer one. Although the three types depict different psychological strategies when making religious decisions, most converts seem to prefer merging two ideas into one integrated thought instead of considering two as opposed and conflicted with each other. The Assimilation type comprises half of the converts. This result indicates that the Presbyterian converts tended toward assimilation rather than differentiation shifting from traditional beliefs to Christianity. They were also inclined to seek for reconciliation and continuity based on the feeling of peace and security.

Finally, the church’s stance needs to be taken into account for the complete analysis of conversion in the Presbyterian Church. The ambiguous attitude of the Presbyterian authorities, including both academics and local pastors, have shaped cultural understandings of
Presbyterian conversion along with the converts’ subjective experiences. Moreover, the emphasis on rational attitudes stressed by the Presbyterian academics does not help further understanding of converts’ subjective experiences, particularly associated with ling. The lack of knowledge regarding folk supernatural experiences and the uncertain attitude about charismatic teachings sometimes made new converts turn back to their own ideas of folk religious interpretations.

On the other hand, some local pastors share the same cultural understandings with the converts while they also relied on their experiences in interpreting religious phenomenon. They affirmed converts’ experiences and mostly relied on previous understandings of folk religions. Consequently, the particular Han religious subjective experiences, expressed through somatic feelings such as feeling of ling-gan or gan-dong, mediated between folk religious experiences and Christianity. However, some possible mutual somatic experiences may be seen as dangerous; at least through the lens of Presbyterian academics, the recognition of supernatural powers from both folk religions and Christianity degrades Christianity to “one” of the supernatural choices. Nevertheless, for the converts, it does not matter which conversion category they belong to, they were all able to elaborate how their memorable and distinctive somatic moment with the Christian God led to their conversion. From this evidence, it is clear that the Han Presbyterian converts explicitly showed a strong habitus inherited from traditional Chinese culture and religions by using their somatic feelings in their move to Christianity.
## Appendix

### Conversion Type Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>DL/NDNL</th>
<th>SH/SE</th>
<th>S/C/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>H2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>H3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>H4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>H5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>H6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>H7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>H8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>H9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>H10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>H11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>H12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>H13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>H14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>H15</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>H16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>H17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>H18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>H19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>H20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>H21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>H22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>H23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>H24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>H25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>H26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>K1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>K2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>K3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>K4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>DL/NDNL</td>
<td>SH/SE</td>
<td>S/C/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>K5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>K6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>K7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SL</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>K8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>K9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>P7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>P8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>P9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>P10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>P11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>P12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>P13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>P14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>P15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>P16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>P17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>T5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>T6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>T7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>T8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>T9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>T10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>T11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>T12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>NDNL</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>T13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>SH</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Dramatic/Ling (DL) or Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling (NDNL)
Supernatural Healing (SH) or Supernatural Encounters (SE)
Substitute Type (S), Competition Type (C) or Assimilation Type (A)

**P16’s supernatural healing happened after conversion.
**P12 experienced supernatural encounter after conversion.
**P10 had one significant supernatural encounter event but that did not seem to influence her conversion decision.

1. Gender

Number of Female and Male  
F: 43   M: 22

Percentage of Gender

![Pie chart showing percentage of gender]

- Female (F) 34%
- Male (M) 66%
2. Dramatic/Ling and Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling

Number of Dramatic/Ling and Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling
DL: 35  NDNL: 30

Percentage of Dramatic/Ling and Non-Dramatic/Non-Ling

3. Supernatural Healing and Supernatural Encounters

Number of Supernatural Healing and Supernatural Encounters
SH: 10  SE: 29  N/A: 25

Percentage of Supernatural Healing and Supernatural Encounters
4. **Substitute Type, Competition Type or Assimilation Type**

**Number of Substitute Type, Competition Type or Assimilation Type**

S: 14  C: 18  A: 32

**Percentage of Substitute Type, Competition Type or Assimilation Type**

- Substitute Type (S): 21%
- Competition Type (C): 49%
- Assimilation Type (A): 3%
- X: 27%

![Pie chart showing distribution of Substitute Type, Competition Type, Assimilation Type, and X.](chart.png)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


_____________. “Intersubjectivity and Intercorporeality” *Subjectivity* (2008) 22, 110-121


213


Hu, Hong-chih. *主題探討：從加爾文的觀點來認識聖靈*. [Theme Discussion: Understand the Holy Spirit from The Calvinistic Perspective]


Huang, C. Julia. *Charisma and Compassion: Chen Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi*


Kane, Eileen and Brún, Mary O’Reilly-De. Doing Your Own Research. New York: Marion Boyars, 2005.


Lu, Kejia “The Heavenly Learning (TianXue) in Late Ming Dynasty and the Ideas of Tian in


216


Young, John D. *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983.

Zhong, Ming-dan. 罪、罪感與中國文化 [Sin, Guilt, and Chinese Culture], 神學論