Bajiajiang as Religious Theatre: Belief, People, and Transformation of a Ritual Practice

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Summary

The aim of this research is to examine Bajiajiang performance, its transformation, and the significance of the ritual for contemporary Taiwanese society through approaches drawn from theatre and performance analysis studies. Even though there are some existing and ongoing research projects into Bajiajiang in Taiwan, most of them adopt a social and cultural focus rather than a performative focus. From my viewpoint, Bajiajiang ritual performance is not only an event that represents the locals’ attitudes to their beliefs or offers an opportunity for locals to gather together; more importantly, it is an activity that generates and expresses the authority of the gods, gangs, and local organisations through performative means. For that reason, the ritual is not just a religious event; its meaning and significance stretches beyond the performances presented. To provide a fuller picture of the ritual practice, I have observed and participated in temple fairs in Taiwan during 2010 and 2011, and four performances are examined in this thesis. By analyzing the religious activity with theatre and performance approaches, I hope to examine how a dynamic system that is Bajiajiang represents a society through the religious elements in the performance. Through interpreting and analyzing four Bajiajiang ritual performances, my aim is not to define the religious activity but to provide different ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger, 1973) Bajiajiang.
Notes on the Translation of Taiwanese and Chinese words

The Pinyin system to render Mandarin Chinese words into the Roman alphabet is used in this thesis. The Chinese names are with the family name first and the given name second. Names commonly used in the English texts are Romanized in the Wade-Giles system (e.g. Shi, Wan-Shou). The names of rituals, troupes, and temples are also translated by using the Pinyin system.
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The Story Behind the Thesis

It is never easy to describe how it feels when growing up in a religious Taiwanese family.

In traditional Taiwanese Daoism, many people believe that a person’s soul or spirit can leave his/her body and be replaced by other spirits, which includes good spirits (normally gods) and bad spirits (possibly ghosts).¹ In many temples, private shrines, and even some people’s houses, it is common to see representatives of the gods, who are possessed by those unseen spirits, ‘doing things’ (ban-shi) for their followers.² Because of the strong belief in possession and high demand for interventions from the gods, there are thousands of temple activities that take place all over the island every year in people’s daily lives. In Taiwanese Daoism, people pray or seek for the gods’ help in all sorts of fields: from personal health, wealth, and happiness, to the blessing and prediction of the whole country’s future.³ In many areas, such religious events play very important roles in the lives of followers, providing for their personal inner needs, as well as the success of their businesses. To many Taiwanese, religion is not only a matter of belief, but also a lifestyle and a part of their national identity.

I was born and grew up in one of these traditional families on a small island called Penghu in Taiwan, with a grandmother who was also a representative of the gods, a medium who

¹ It is never easy to identify good and bad spirits. Therefore, the statement here only provides a simplified description of their differing statuses.  
² ‘Ban-shi’ is a common used term in Taiwanese Daoism; it describes how the gods possess their representatives for a certain period and serve his/her followers by answering their questions and delivering their blessings.  
³ Some old temples hold events during the Chinese New Year time, and normally the chairman in their committee prays to their gods and asks for some predictions and suggestions for the country every year.
delivered the gods’ messages,\(^4\) who, perhaps from a Western religious perspective, could be called a priestess. When I was a child, people visited my grandmother’s house nearly every day asking for help. They came for religious therapy, for herbal cures, and sometimes wishing to receive some personal advice from the gods. Some of them called my grandmother ‘doctor grandma’ due to the herbal and massage therapies that she offered. As her family members, we children were always happy to be her little helpers, comforting her ‘customers’, and working and organising different appointments for our grandmother. According to my grandmother, she was doing her own duty for the gods and for her own beliefs, so she did not charge anything for these services. And because of that, many of the believers brought gifts – fruits, biscuits, or other food when they visited her. These different kinds of food were the only benefit that we gained from those visitors, and as young children, there was no better treat than those rewards.

When my grandmother was possessed, things became more complicated than when she was just offering therapies to people. Routinely she would start shaking her head, her hands, and then her whole body. This was the beginning stage of her possession, which allowed the god to enter her body and make her become their representative. When this happened, everyone in the room had to kneel in front of her, and listen to her (or him, in the possessed aspect) speaking. She would start speaking in a foreign tongue, which most people did not understand, apart from my uncle’s wife and my mother. Sometimes she even spoke in Japanese with a man’s tone, and when that happened, only my uncle who knew a little Japanese could roughly interpret what she/he was saying.\(^5\) During this period, ‘the god’

\(^4\) In many cases, the gods’ representatives/ agencies/ mediums can receive, deliver, and represent multiple gods by switching their characters during their possession.

\(^5\) According to my mother, numbers of different gods have possessed my grandmother’s body to deliver their messages. These, include a male General, who is a Japanese man, and his wives. The main god that possesses
sometimes said something about the family, sometimes he/she called someone to talk to. We could have conversations with him/her in Taiwanese and he/she would reply in his/her own tongue. After my grandmother had delivered the messages or had a conversation with ‘normal people’ (those who were not possessed), she calmed down, became quiet, nodded off for a few seconds, and then would wake up again as my grandma. What was fascinating with my grandmother’s possession was that she did not speak those languages when she was awake and she did not remember what she had said during the period in which she was possessed.\textsuperscript{6} Since the gods are our family guards and we pray to them at my grandmother’s house, this event was private, taking place at home, and for family members or close friends only.

After experiencing my grandmother’s transformation from a typical Taiwanese woman to a god’s representative for so many years, there are still many things that I do not understand and aren’t able to explain. For instance, why was she chosen by the gods? How did she find out that she was chosen? How is she able to speak different languages with different tones when possessed? How can my uncle’s wife and my mother understand her words without study or being possessed themselves? If she really does not know what she is talking about while she is possessed, then what happens if her translators (my uncle’s wife and my mother) do not deliver the right messages? There are so many questions about this situation, but no-one in my family has ever given me any answers that would satisfy me. I am always told that everything happens as it flows; there is no explanation for anything, neither any need to question the power of the gods. In other word, these questions are forbidden and remain a mystery in the family. In Taiwanese Daoism, this is not something

\textsuperscript{6} In this situation, the word ‘awake’ is used to describe the status of not being possessed. However, it does not mean that she is sleeping and dreaming while being possessed.
unusual; instead, it is a part of some people's daily lives, which still happens in many traditional religious families.

Because of this special personal experience, I developed a strong interest in knowing more about Taiwanese Daoism and its different rituals. Because of the popularity of Daoist belief in Taiwan, different religious rituals are held and performed in different temples and shrines nearly every day. To believers, performing these rituals is a direct means of expressing their respect to the gods they believe in. What is more, these religious activities sometimes also hold the function of entertaining gods and ghosts and are considered as part of an exchange. Fundamentally, believers pray to gods or to ghosts and communicate their requests to them, and once they receive what they have requested from the gods, then they perform rituals or arrange troupe performances as rewards to them. In this belief system, ghosts normally signify those spirits who were once human beings but died in unnatural ways or at the wrong time. This includes dying from accidents, suicide, murder, and so on; some of them do not realise they are dead or accept their deaths after they have died, and they do not know where they belong. Some of these 'wandering spirits' then turn into unhappy ghosts who wander through the world until the day they are exorcised through religious ritual. The idea of 'unnatural' or 'wrong timing' in relation to death may sound irrational, since how could anyone know what is 'natural' and 'the right timing' of their death? But, from a religious perspective, followers believe that there is a god called Yanluo Wang, who is the god of death and the sovereign of the underworld. He is the judge of the underworld who decides whether the dead will have good or miserable future lives according to the 'shensibu' he has.7 Those who have been sentenced by Yanluo Wang must suffer different

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7 Shensibu is a notebook that records people’s fate, which include their life expectancy, the way they are meant to end their life, and the good and bad things they have done. Based on what the person has done while alive, Yanluo Wang then decides where to send him/her to—heaven, the world of men, or the
levels of punishment until their sins are purified. They are only allowed to visit the mortal world once a year, which is during the ghost month (the seventh lunar month). Meanwhile, those wandering spirits who have not been exorcised and sent to the god become homeless and remain helpless in the mortal world all year round. Those free spirits who are not under any of the gods’ monitoring are the common ghosts that most people refer to in their belief. The rancour of those ghosts is sometimes strong and can be harmful to people; therefore, believers wish that the anger and unhappiness could be comforted and eased through the performance of religious rituals. This phenomenon explains the reason why people in Taiwan not only pray to gods but also ghosts. What is more, this factor also increases the mystical nature of the religion.

For adherents of Taiwanese Daoism, religious rituals, troupes, and performances are sacred and inviolable. That explains why my questions about possession remain unanswered, and it also elucidates why there are so many undeniable taboos in the religion. In Daoist ritual, Bajiajiang is one of the most mystical troupes of all. The reason for that is because performers in Bajiajiang troupes act as demi gods and perform various duties: guarding the gods, welcoming the gods, purifying areas, and catching ghosts. Each individual character in a Bajiajiang troupe has his own story and were all once ghosts. However, since they died for their honesty and loyalty, they were promoted to the station of demi gods by higher status gods. Unlike other gods, these demi gods do not have peaceful and calm appearances; instead, they appear as ugly and unfriendly characters, who are scary to many people. Ironically, being a member of a religious family, I was never allowed to attend any Bajiajiang related rituals when I was a child. Since the combination of the status of the demi gods, their unusual appearances, Bajiajiang’s complex taboos, my grandmother always warned underworld.
us to stay away from them. One reason she gave for this was that wherever a Bajiajiang troupe goes, there must be wondering ghosts, who might hurt people, especially children. Therefore, it is better not to engage with any Bajiajiang rituals. Apart from my personal interest in the troupe characters and their appearances, being forbidden to participate in watching the troupe performances increased my curiosity in their rituals. From my viewpoint, religious activities like Bajiajiang not only provide religious cures and offer satisfaction to believers, but also represent a way of living. It is for these reasons that I have undertaken research in Bajiajiang rituals, how they act to bind a culture, and to examine the relations between Bajiajiang and contemporary Taiwanese culture.
The Status of Bajiajiang in Contemporary Taiwan

Historically, Bajiajiang is a ritual practice that originated in China. It was a ghost-catching ritual that was brought to Taiwan when the early immigrants moved to the island, and the first Bajiajiang troupe was established in 1904 (Shi, 1984). However, during Mao’s Great Revolution in 1966-1976, many religious events and activities in China were banned and destroyed. As a result, the historical origins of Bajiajiang in China are unclear. Although the connection with its Chinese cultural background cannot be ignored, the ritual practice that can be seen in Taiwan today reflects the way it has developed in response to its Taiwanese context. In Taiwan, Bajiajiang is not only a religious troupe-based practice, it is also a cultural product which expresses peoples’ attitudes towards life. In the present tricky international political relationship that exists between Taiwan and China, the Taiwanese have worked very hard to establish a stronger international status, which is not easy. Bajiajiang has been one of the ‘soft’ means by which Taiwan has sought to increase its international visibility, using the practice to represent Taiwanese identity in government tourism promotion and international arts festivals. Some Taiwanese are in favour of using this ritual and its striking visual presence as a means of promoting Taiwan. However, others are not in favour, especially given the more troublesome aspects of Bajiajiang, particularly its involvement with gang culture and its appropriation by politicians. These debates around the use of Bajiajiang to represent Taiwanese culture have been going on for decades and demonstrate its controversial status. What Bajiajiang is, what it does, and what it means, is contested.

In contemporary Taiwan, Bajiajiang rituals are one of the most known and recognisable religious troupes. Bajiajiang is performed by groups of performers with spectacular dancing and walking patterns. Wrapped in strict taboos, Bajiajiang takes place in public places, such
as busy streets and temples. Nevertheless, the status of Bajiajiang, as a religious and community activity, has always been heavily debated in Taiwan. The main reason for this is because from a traditional religious viewpoint, Bajiajiang ritual should always be well-maintained and kept, each troupe developing their own identities and histories. However, due to the involvement of different troupe members, the differing management of troupes, and wider political issues, the status and reputation of Bajiajiang is mixed. That is to say, when a sacred ritual performs not only for its followers but also becomes customised for other demanders, sometimes it could be used as a political method of gathering people and has other aims, such as commercial, tourism, election campaign and so on, behind its religious background.

The transformation of Bajiajiang troupes has largely been ignored by the Taiwanese. From a general point of view, while a more traditional troupe that adheres to strict taboos might be presumed to be more manageable and easy to understand due to its adherence to well-established rules, this is not necessarily the case. What complicates matters is the many unseen components operating behind the scenes. Troupes do not only perform religious functions but also serve other functions including the promotion of tourism and other commercial stage performances. The Bajiajiang troupes that I have observed and interviewed during fieldwork over the past few years have asserted how important taboos are to them. Nevertheless, when observing, I did notice that there were often unmentioned adjustments that took place during the ritual. Those alterations did not normally make much difference to the final performances that an audience saw, but from my viewpoint, they had a significant impact on the meaning of the ritual. In contemporary Taiwan, most of the books, research, and articles addressing Bajiajiang have focused on its history, the involvement of teenagers in troupes, and its negative aspects, particularly the links between some troupes and gangs. Not many discussions have addressed its transformation, the
factors involved in this, and how it affects the meaning and status of the ritual within the broader social order.

In Taiwan, there are many stereotypes about Bajiajiang troupes. The most common ones are that Bajiajiang involves groups of teenagers who do not like school, who withdraw themselves from the standard schooling system, and who are most likely to be troublemakers in the community. The latest name for Bajiajing in Taiwan is ‘8+9’, pronounced as ‘ba (8, ba) ga (+, jia) jiong (9, jiang)’, which has developed as a shorthand internet language based on its similar pronunciation in Taiwanese. For some teenagers, joining a troupe provides them with a reputation as ‘cool’ and ‘brave’ in their peers’ eyes as part of the ‘brand’ of ‘8+9’. It is also an opportunity for them to show off in the performance to others. Since Bajiajiang has its own distinct taboos and performance conventions, and the demand for it has always been high, the ritual has become a part of people’s life and is deemed as unreplaceable. In certain respects, Bajiajiang in modern Taiwan has become a brand rather than just a religious activity. It is a ritual activity that involves teenage performers, strong leadership with strict disciplines, fancy costumes and props, simple but varied dancing patterns, possibly a systemic gang involvement, some religious or non-religious parties, and interactions with various audiences. Fundamentally, Bajiajiang troupes are involved in complex negotiations of power and authority which, by simply watching performances, is hard to understand. And yet, this unseen element is key to the success and popularity of the form.

As religious groups, Bajiajiang troupes have very close relationships with temples and locals in the areas in which they operate. A given troupe performs as representatives of the gods and does a job that is demanded by both the gods and their followers. Nevertheless, as a performance, Bajiajiang is always an eye-catching activity that an audience can enjoy
without knowing and appreciating its religious background. It is a ritual that satisfies both insiders and outsiders. Because of that, the ritual performance takes place in commercial events, such as on stage at non-religious ceremonies and events. This demonstrates that the ritual is changing. One of the most common factors in Bajiajiang is the engagement of political authority. Since Taiwan has a very deep adherence to Daoism and Buddhism, politicians are frequently involved in religious activities. In order to get closer to people (or ‘voters’), participating in and supporting religious events has become a clear way for politicians to engage with their constituents’ daily lives. By engaging in religious activities, politicians send out the messages that ‘we are on the same team’ or ‘we believe in the same god’ to establish empathy with people, which is always thought to be beneficial in receiving more support in their future elections. At the same time, Bajiajiang requires funding, support, and manpower to sustain it. As Bajiajiang frequently takes place on streets and in public spaces it also needs the right of way to perform. Troupes can receive funding from governmental bodies and easier access to public spaces.

Bajiajiang in Taiwan is changing. As an historically significant religious activity it has provided its service and delivered its twin functions of ghost-catching and purifying places for believers. The taboos, props, make-up, and walking and dancing patterns that were used in the ritual have specific historic and ritual meanings and purposes. The performers who once engaged in the ritual were volunteers and acting as representatives of the gods in the ritual was the greatest honour, serving the gods as well as other believers. Now, while Bajiajiang troupes remain very active, the meaning and value of their performances is shifting from being mainly religious to increasingly cultural and aesthetic. Bajiajiang is becoming a multi-functional ritual practice with a distinct religious inheritance. In my view, these ongoing changes are enabling Bajiajiang to develop new functions within the broader Taiwanese society. In this thesis I question how Bajiajiang engages with social order,
observing and analysing the performance of its rituals on various occasions, and providing a clear picture of how Bajiajiang ritual is developing a new role in Taiwanese culture.
History, Features, and Vocabulary of Bajiajiang

Due to the growing popularity of cultural research in Taiwan, Bajiajiang research has been given more attention by the public and the government in recent years. Although the functions of the activity - to assist the main god in catching ghosts - have been generally understood by the public and the academic world, its history is still widely debated. It is accepted that folklores and the growing localism have brought some changes to the performance. However, the transformation of the Bajiajiang ritual has barely been mentioned in existing studies. Therefore, in order to compare the changes that have been made to the performances as well as the social meanings that are contained in the ritual, it is necessary to clarify the general history of Bajiajiang and analyse how the ritual continues to function in Taiwanese society.

Religious Background of Bajiajiang

As already mentioned, the religious structure in Taiwan is complex. Buddhism, Daoism, and folk belief are all involved in most people’s beliefs and their daily lives. This combined belief has not only influenced people’s religious life, but also transformed into a way of living (Liu, W.-S., 2003, p. 10). The reason why these are all part of the core belief is because traditionally Taiwan is a fishing nation and superstitious fishermen rely on divine power (Shi, 1984; Chen, 1995), praying to different gods in order to gain better profits and remain safe at sea. That is also why gods such as Mazu, the god of the seas, WuFu Dadi the god of

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8 In Lin & Liu’s research in 2011, 27.4% Taiwanese believe in Buddhism, 12.8 % are Daoist, and 35.1% believe in folk belief (p. 6).

9 Dadi (大帝) is a respectful form of address of Gods, a title of reverence for some of the deities in the Taoist religion.
plague, City God, the god of cities, and Baosheng Dadi, the god of medication, are the most common gods in fishing communities. In Taiwanese religious culture, it is believed that there are three kinds of lives in the world - the gods’ circle, the human circle, and the ghosts’ circle. The first has a higher status and owns the paramount power in monitoring, protecting, and punishing the other two. People believe that gods change their appearances and appear in the other two circles in order to do their jobs. Sometimes they take possession of human bodies, and sometimes they send messages to priests as mediums and ask them to do work for them. Therefore, in Taiwan, tang-ki belief is also very popular. Bajiajiang, as the gods’ generals, are also representatives of the gods in the human circle. The performers act as demi gods and do the missions that the main god requests during the ritual. For that reason, while the ritual is occurring, people consider those demi gods’ to be representatives of gods and respect them. They believe Bajiajiang players have divine power through the gods. As a result, a Bajiajiang ritual performance is not only functional but also mythical.

The Origin and Sects in the Bajiajiang Culture

Based on Shi’s (1984) argument, there are five possibilities of how Bajiajiang culture was developed. Shi’s approach has been adopted by many scholars in existing Bajiajiang research. According to his historical research, the Ruyitzengshoutang Shijiajiang troupe in Tainan City was the first Bajiajiang troupe in Taiwan, and the culture can be tracked to Fu State in mainland China. In order to seek out the original roots of the culture, Shi went to

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10 Tang-ki means ‘the herald of god’, or ‘the psychic’.
11 According to Shi, the five possible origins of Bajiajiang characters are: (a) Wufu Dadi’s generals; (b) the pirates that were caught by Wufu Dadi; (c) rich people’s private warriors; (d) the army of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva; (e) the generals of City God.
12 Although people nowadays call the troupe Bajiajiang, the name ‘Shijiajing’ (the ten generals) is used to represent their troupe due to the number of characters.
Fu State and attempted to find the original temple which had had the first Bajiajiang troupe. Unfortunately, the temple that he was looking for had vanished. The only proof that he could find was a stele with the word ‘Ruyitzengshoutang’ carved on it, which was displayed at another temple. Interestingly, according to the local people, Bajiajiang culture no longer exists in the Fu State. That is why it is generally accepted that although the Bajiajiang ritual is originally from mainland China, the Tainan Ruyitzengshoutang, which was established in 1904, is considered to be the first temple which set up the Bajiajiang troupe system (Shi, 1984, pp. 33-37). However, this approach has not been completely accepted by Lu (2002). In his book on the Bajiajiang culture, Lu argued that there is no evidence to show that any Bajiajiang related troupe was created before 1916 (Lu, 2002, p. 6).

Most scholars have accepted that all the Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan are descended from the Ruyitzengshoutang Shijiajiang troupe (Chang, Y. T., 2007; Chen, W. J., 2006; Wang, J. C., 2006; Huang, F. K., 2006). Since people see the aim of a Bajiajiang ritual as catching ghosts and protecting their lives, and this activity has become extremely popular in Taiwan. People from other temples learned Bajiajiang ritual performance from the Ruyitzengshoutang and trained their own Bajiajiang performers to serve their own communities. For instance, the nearby Chiayi County, has the most influential Bajiajiang troupes on the Ruyitzengshoutang. The Chiayi Tzenyutang was the first organisation which invited masters from the Ruyitzengshoutang to their temple to train their Bajiajiang troupe (1918). Since then, Bajiajiang culture has become vigorous in the whole Chiayi area (Lu, 2002, pp. 5-6).

The main Bajiajiang organisation in Tainan is the Ru System, which is based on the White Dragon Temple. There are five branches, the Chang, the Chung, the Liu, the Shi, and the
Chao, under the White Dragon Temple. The first Bajiajiang troupe Ruyitzengshoutang Shijiajiang belongs to the Chang branch. At the start, each branch had its own Bajiajiang troupe; however, only the Ruyitzengshoutang (belongs to the Chang), the Ruxintuzuxiangtang (belongs to the Chao), and the Rushanfansihtang (belongs to the Chung) are still active nowadays (Lu, 2002, p. 3). The Chang remains the leading branch.

The standard numbers of characters in the Chang’s troupe is thirteen, which explains why even now people in Tainan still refer to this troupe as ‘Shijiajiang’ (Lu, 2002, pp. 3-4). In the Chinese literature, ‘shi’, means both ten and ‘many’. The thirteen main characters in the Ruyetzenshoutang Shijiajiang are respectively the Server, the Wenchaiye, the Wuchaiye, General Gan (day patrol), General Liou (night patrol), General Xie (catching), General Fan (arresting), General Ho (spring), General Chiang (summer), General Xiu (fall), General Tsao (winter), Wen Judge, and Wu Judge (Huang, T.-W., 2012, p. 63). In a Bajiajiang ritual performance, the characters can range from five to thirty-two; therefore, the word ‘shi’ represents many in this situation. The adjustable number of characters in the Bajiajiang system also shows the flexibility of it.

The reasons why the name ‘Bajiajiang’ has become more popular in recent years have been widely discussed. Lu (2002) demonstrates that the main god of the Chiayi Chenyutang is the Wufuchiensui, whose rank in the gods’ world is slightly lower than the Wufu-Dadi. Thus, he should have fewer bodyguards. Therefore, the Wen and Wu Judges are omitted in this ritual that is provided by the Chiayi Chenyutang. Additionally, the Server, the Wenchaiye, and the Wuchaiye are not generals; therefore, the main characters are eight in the troupe (p. 6). In order to differentiate themselves from the Ru System, the Chiaye Chenyutang not only restructured the troupe by losing two characters, but also created a new system - the Chen System - in 1918. The troupe has turned out to be the most active and well-known system.
in contemporary Taiwan. Because of the popularity of the Chiayi Chenyutang, the name Bajiajiang is now widely used and recognised (ibid, p.7).

Today, the Ru and Chen systems are still considered as the foundations of other forms such as the Kung, Kuang and Hsun systems (ibid, p 5-6). Usually, the relationships between those organisations are tight. Those groups follow the principles and respect each other. They learn from each other by exchanging views to improve their performance. This Bajiajiang culture encourages the development of the performance and this indirectly affects people not only to regard the ritual as a religious product, but also start to see the aesthetic side of it. Nowadays, there are even some troupes which perform for entertainment. For this reason, I propose that even though the ritual has developed diverse functions in response to the modern influences, it continues to transform in an ongoing process.

**Main Characters in Bajiajiang Ritual Performance**

As mentioned, there are eight main characters in a Bajiajiang troupe and each of them has its own identity and purpose. Apart from these eight, the Server is also critical in the ritual. In the ritual, the Server is the leader who controls the performance. In order to give a complete introduction of the characters in the performance, it is essential to identify their status in the ritual. To clarify the characters and their specialties, I have consulted and analysed the existing research on Bajiajiang and created a chart to interpret the roles in a Bajiajiang ritual. By presenting significant features of those important roles in a chart format, I provide clearer pictures of those demi gods as individuals but also as a group. The order of the characters in the chart also shows the related positions of the performers in a Bajiajiang ritual performance when facing the troupe. In the religious ritual, the special features, colours, and facial patterns are based on the folklores of the individuals. Some of
the folklores are untraceable in the history; therefore, different troupes may adopt different images to create their own Bajiajiang generals. Information that is provided in the chart is based on the research projects of Shi, W.-S. (1984), Wu, T.-D. (2002), and Lu, J.-M. (2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Character</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Make-up</th>
<th>Costume</th>
<th>Props</th>
<th>Special Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Server</td>
<td>The pioneer of the team. To lead the direction and locate the performance area</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>No particular costume required (nowadays some troupes start to introduce costume for this role but it is not common)</td>
<td>Bamboo shoulder pole with 18 reduced sized implements and bells hung on each side</td>
<td>Leader in the ritual performance who controls the rhythm of the performance by shaking his shoulder pole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Gan</td>
<td>Day patrol</td>
<td>-Basic colour: red-black or red-green -Basic pattern: Yin-yang</td>
<td>Black or green costume</td>
<td>Wooden or bamboo sticks in right hand and white feather fan in left hand (opposite to General Liou)</td>
<td>Always stands in the left hand side and most of the time performs with General Liou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Liou</td>
<td>Night patrol</td>
<td>-Basic colour: white -Basic pattern: uneven mouth</td>
<td>Black or green costume</td>
<td>Wooden or bamboo sticks in left hand and white feather fan in right hand (opposite to General Gan)</td>
<td>Always stands in the right hand side and most of the time performs with General Gan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Xie</td>
<td>Catching ghosts</td>
<td>-Basic colour: white -Basic pattern: bat patterned on his nose and red line on his forehead -A tall white hat with 'lucky to see me' written on it -White costume</td>
<td>Fish pillory in the right hand and white feather fan in the left hand (opposite to General Fan)</td>
<td>A tall and slim character, who dances in 'white crane step,' always stands behind General Gan and most of the time performs with General Fan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Fan</td>
<td>Arrester ghosts</td>
<td>Basic colour: black-red&lt;br&gt;-Basic pattern: monkey's face</td>
<td>A short black hat which has 'good and evil is clear' written on it&lt;br&gt;-Black costume</td>
<td>Iron chain in the left hand and black feather fan in the right hand (opposite to General Xie)</td>
<td>A short and fat character, who dances in a 'monkey step,' always stands behind General Liou and most of the time performs with General Xie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Spring/Ho</td>
<td>Interrogating ghosts</td>
<td>Basic colour: blue&lt;br&gt;-Basic pattern: dragon, lotus</td>
<td>White, blue or green costume</td>
<td>Wooden bucket in the left hand and white feather fan in the right hand</td>
<td>Always stands behind General Xie and most of the time performs with the other three season Generals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Summer/Chiang</td>
<td>Interrogating ghosts</td>
<td>Basic colour: red&lt;br&gt;-Basic pattern: turtle</td>
<td>Red costume</td>
<td>Fire pot in the left hand and white feather fan in the right hand</td>
<td>Always stands behind General Fan and most of the time performs with the other three season Generals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Autumn/Xiu</td>
<td>Interrogating ghosts</td>
<td>Basic colour: blue&lt;br&gt;-Basic pattern: bird</td>
<td>White or blue costume</td>
<td>Pumpkin hammer in the left hand and white feather fan in the right hand</td>
<td>Always stands behind General Spring and most of the time performs with the other three season Generals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Winter/Tsao</td>
<td>Interrogating ghosts</td>
<td>Basic colour: yellow, red, black and white&lt;br&gt;-Basic pattern: tiger, gourd</td>
<td>Dark brown or orange costume</td>
<td>Snake in the left hand and white feather fan in the right hand</td>
<td>Always stands behind General Summer and most of the time performs with the other three season Generals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Organised and created by Hsieh, W.-J)
The Performance and the Dancing Patterns

The basic prototype of Bajiajiang ritual performance stems from the Yi system (The Book of Changes). This, ‘the Grand Terminus’ has two elementary forms. These two forms produced the four emblematic symbols, which again produced the eight trigrams. This concept of the Yi provides a basic moving structure for a Bajiajiang performance, and through the meaningful moving patterns, the ritual represents the relationships between the gods, human beings, and nature (Lu, 2002, p. 122).

There are crucial dancing patterns extensively used during Bajiajiang performances. These dances are short presentations which normally occur while the troupe is on the move. Although most of the new dancing patterns are developed from the existing moves, some Bajiajiang troupes have also adapted certain parts from other forms of ritual performance and combine them with its origin. There are the basic patterns that are mostly performed in a Bajiajiang ritual performance:

1. Xia Ma (the Setting Off) - this is the fundamental dancing pattern in Bajiajiang. This step is always required when crossing roads or when a troupe visits temples. The aim of this action is to announce that the Bajiajiang is getting ready to perform. All the performers follow the Server’s movement, walk and dance in unison.

2. Ba Tzi Bu (the Tiger Step) - this is the basic way for a Bajiajiang character to walk. They walk with their legs wide open and swing their arms to create imposing images of the

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demi gods.

3. *Ta Si Men* (the Four Door Step) - this dance is performed by the Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan. They stand at four corners at the performance area, and walk or run to the centre to catch the imaginary ghosts.

4. *Long Hu Bu* (the Dragon and Tiger Step) - this move is similar to Setting Off, but the performers move at a higher speed and walk across each other. It is normally performed when a troupe crosses wide roads and bridges.

5. *Chi Xin Bu* (Mutative Big Dipper Dancer Walk-Dance) - performers walk and dance at the same time. Their movements are based on the pattern of the Big Dipper constellation. It is often regarded as the most spectacular part of the performance.

6. *Ba Gua Tzen* (The eight trigrams pattern) - this dance requires the eight generals to perform. It is similar to the ‘*Ta Si Men*’ dance, but it is a larger scale performance. The eight performers stand in eight locations, which represent the eight directions in the ancient Chinese Eight Trigrams. They walk or run to the centre to catch the invisible ghosts and lock them. This dance requires a bigger space to perform and takes longer to perform; therefore, it is not very common to see it at temple fairs nowadays.

7. *Zhuo Chin Fan* (the Ghost Catching Dance): this dance relies on the Server to locate the ghosts and guide the Bajiajiang performers to the best place to perform. First of all, General Fan runs to the ghost and handcuffs it with his props then he throws the chain backwards to General Xie. After that, General Gan and Liou encompass the ghost from the other two directions, followed by Generals Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. Wen,
and Wu Judges run to the ghost and surround it. Finally, they rotate the ghost in both right and left directions and the Ghost Catching Dance is complete. Since the ghosts are invisible to the audience, the mythical atmosphere requires performers to create the ghosts through their performance. (Lu, 2002, pp. 115-122; Wu, 2002, pp. 202-204)

The Taboos

In comparison with other religious rituals in Taiwan, Bajiajiang has the most complex and strict taboos which apply to the performers as well as the participants (Shi, 1984, p. 6; Huang, 2012, pp. 145-147). In the religious culture, everyone who attends the event has to follow the taboos in order to avoid the punishments from the gods. Based on Shi (1984), Lu (2002 & 2008), and Huang’s (2012) research, the traditional taboos for the performers include:

1. Avoiding eating any meat three days before the performance.
2. Physical contact with females is forbidden three days before the performance.
3. Going to mourn family or visiting any women who are in confinement is also forbidden.
4. Anyone in mourning has to quit the performance.
5. Talking, laughing, eating or smoking during the performance is banned.
6. It is forbidden to make any noise when passing a temple with high ranked gods.
7. Performers have to use fans to cover their faces when they pass a family in mourning.
8. Fooling around with props is banned.
9. Taoist magic figures must be removed from belts before going to the toilet.
10. Beef, snake, and other usual kinds of meat are banned at all times.
According to Shi (1984) and Lu (2002), the basic taboos for spectators in participating in a Bajiajiang ritual performance are:

1. Standing at a higher position than the troupe, such as on overhead footpaths, is not allowed.
2. Interrupting and walking through the performance is strictly banned.
3. Pregnant women cannot attend the performance.

All these statements explain why Bajiajiang is often seen as a ritual performance wrapped by taboos. However, apart from the fact that the ritual is transforming, the meaning of taboo is also changing. For instance, the establishment of female troupes is one of the most significant changes in the Bajiajiang culture. Some of those taboos have been adjusted to fit into the modern lifestyle. For that reason, I suggest that by re-examining how traditional taboos are adapted in contemporary Bajiajiang we could also account for the transformation of the Bajiajiang ritual.
Chapter One - Bajiajiang as Religious Theatre

Bajiajiang is a well-known religious ritual in Taiwan. It is a ritual performance enveloped by strict taboos and complex small rituals. Due to the growth of Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan, the ritual performance has started to be noticed by academia and the Taiwanese government since the last decade. Scholars have been eager to reveal the relationships between the ritual and the society and attempt to investigate the religious phenomenon in the culture. However, unlike most of the existing research projects which has mainly focused on its historical and sociological aspects, this research into Bajiajiang ritual performance examines it from theatrical and performance perspectives, discusses the relationship between the ritual and the people, and then analyses the significance which that brings to a wider society. Since the ritual behaviour has transformed from an entirely religious action to a multiple functional activity in recent years, I propose that investigating it as theatre would be conducive to understanding its transformation; I discuss it both as ritual and as theatre and provide a new way of seeing the ritual performance.

In order to examine the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual performance, the aim of this chapter is to provide a background and explain the current circumstance of it. The first section aims to explain what ‘Bajiajiang’ is, the background of this study, and then to clarify my aims and the scope of this research. The second part contains general history and features of Bajiajiang, which includes the religious background in Taiwan, the Bajiajiang culture, and the traditional cults in Bajiajiang ritual. The descriptions of a Bajiajiang ritual in this chapter are strongly based on historical research and compilation of documentary information. By means of providing a traditional well-regulated Bajiajiang ritual discussion, I anticipate presenting a structure of how the ritual is thought to be in theory. With the
basic understanding of the ritual process, I will then be able to compare it with how Bajiajiang performances operate in practical terms with my observations in the field at a later stage.

1.1 What is ‘Bajiajiang’?

Bajiajiang is one of the most popular ritual performances in the religious society in Taiwan. In order to provide a clear definition of Bajiajiang, some explanations of what the word ‘Bajiajiang’ means is necessary. From the perspective of Chinese etymology, the meaning of ‘Bajiajiang’ is ‘the eight (ba) home (jia) generals (jiang)’. In Taiwanese culture, the term of ‘Bajiajiang’ could be used in referring to ‘the eight generals’ as characters in the ritual. However, ‘Bajiajiang’ also stands for a form of ritual performance as well as the title that applies to this particular kind of troupe. To avoid confusion of adopting the term ‘Bajiajiang’ in this thesis, I state ‘Bajiajiang generals/performers/leaders’ to refer to the characters and people in the troupe, ‘Bajiajiang ritual performance’ to represent the ritual, and ‘Bajiajiang troupes/organisations’ to describe the groups.

In the religious culture, Bajiajiang generals are subordinates of a main god. The traditional form of a Bajiajiang ritual performance is that performers represent the behaviour of the gods, catch ghosts, and serve as protectors of the main god in the area in which they have authority. It takes place at temple fairs, performs on streets, and encounters audience through its performance. It is a non-texted performance; the performers walk, jump, and

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14 In the Chinese language, plural nouns are normally made by placing determiners or numerals before nouns. Therefore, in order to truthfully adopt the usage of the word in Chinese, in the case of referring Bajiajiang to the eight characters in the ritual, ‘s’ is not stated.

15 In the popular Taiwanese religion, people are polytheist and every temple has a main god who governs a local area.
dance in particular patterns during the performance. The length of the performance is flexible; it can be from two minutes up to a few hours. Followers believe that by engaging with the ritual performance, the Bajiajiang generals can catch ghosts around them, purify their living environment, and bring direct blessings from gods. Because of the close relationship to a region and the locals, Bajiajiang ritual performance has become a part of people’s lives.

Up to the present, the explicit history of it is still uncertain. The earliest record of the ritual that can be traced in history was published in the Ming Dynasty, 1642 (Chen, F.-T. 2004). At that time, the ritual was at its premature stage and was not given a proper name. However, the basic structure of the form of ritual and the descriptions of characters could be considered as a prototype of Bajiajiang (ibid, pp. 132-133; Huang, T.-W., 2002, p. 3). According to Shi, Wan-Shou (1984), the first Bajiajiang related troupe to be established in Taiwan was the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiajiang Troupe in 1904.16 Since the standard number of performers in the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Troupe was thirteen, the troupe was named ‘Shijiajiang’ (‘the many generals’) instead of ‘Bajiajiang’. In spite of the different names, the religious functions of catching ghosts and guard ing the main god in the ritual performance are the same.17

Due to the popularity of the term ‘Bajiajiang’ in contemporary Taiwan, I have chosen it to describe the ritual performance for this thesis. In other words, ‘Bajiajiang’ in this research

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16 Another argument was given by Shi Tsui-Feng (2007), who argued that Bajiajiang ritual was developed in the Tainan County and transmitted to Tainan City in 1960s. However, Shi, Wan-Shou’s argument is more accepted by the academia.

17 Some people use the term ‘Jiajiang’ to call the ritual performance or troupes. By doing so, they can avoid referring to particular numbers.
project refers to a form of ritual but is not limited to the numbers of the performers that are involved in it.

1.2 Background to the Study

‘Religion’ is not a separate realm demarcated from “real life”: it is an aspect of life, reflecting the connection of the gods, the earth, and humankind. In this conservative part of Taiwan [Southern Taiwan], the sacred landscape is never far away (Sutton, 2003, p. 42).

As Jordan (1972) revealed, Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion have contributed greatly to Chinese religious life (p. 27). Baijiajiang ritual performance is a folk activity that developed from Daoist, Buddhist, and folk belief. Meanwhile, it is also a product of the integration of those beliefs with regional identity. The religious activity not only presents a blend of beliefs that are held by the local people, but also expresses the complex history and authority in the country. Being a colony of different countries in the previous six hundred years, the historical and cultural background of Taiwan is complicated. At the early twelfth century, people from mainland China started to move to Taiwan and settled on the island. Until the late fourteenth century, Japanese pirates started to dominate some places in Taiwan as strongholds in the East Asia area. During the seventeenth century, the Dutch and Spanish also occupied the island. For the next 233 years, Taiwan was under control by the Chinese government until 1895. After that, the Japanese government took over Taiwan and returned it back to the Chinese government after World War II (1945). Finally, in 1949 the Republic of China government moved to Taiwan and settled there (Yao, 2006; Yihchen, 2010). Although contemporary Taiwan is no longer a colony, this ‘all-embracing’ influence is still deeply ingrained in the country. Because of those multiple influences that have had an impact on the culture, for the Taiwanese, it is important to find their identity. The awareness of national identity has encouraged the Taiwanese government and some
scholars to start to think what the central value of the culture is (Huang, M.-Y., 1995, p. 117-118). Since localised religious and folk events represent practical attitudes of living in the society, I propose to examine Bajiajiang ritual practice by considering it as a theatrical performance which could provide a different viewpoint to understand the significance of it.

In Taiwanese culture, praying to gods was an essential activity in many people’s daily lives. By praying reverently, people believed they could receive extra blessing, protection, as well as further fortune for their living. Even now, praying to the gods is retained by many Taiwanese people as a regular practice. When there are important events, such as a gods’ birthday, or when a temple receives requests from the gods or local people, a temple will invite or hire a Bajiajiang troupe to perform. By providing Bajiajiang ritual performances to satisfy both gods and people, a temple also strengthens its authority in its local community. To conduct a Bajiajiang ritual performance requires different authorities to negotiate, cooperate, and to make it happen; therefore, temples or organisations that have the ability to manage one for their temple fair always sees it as a big achievement for them. Because of that, a Bajiajiang ritual performance sometimes represents the authority that a temple holds and can influence the reputation of an organisation. This phenomenon shows that the ritual has gone beyond its religious nature. As a result, I argue Bajiajiang should not be considered as a pure religious ritual; instead, it is a social activity that provides fundamental structure for the society.

In a Bajiajiang ritual performance, as few as five or as many as thirty-two performers act as the representations of gods, and in tradition their mission is to catch ghosts and protect people in the local area (Shi, 1986, pp. 1-2). According to custom, the performers transform their identities from that of humans to that of demi-gods during particular pre-rituals before the actual performance. Therefore, those in attendance worship the spirit of the gods as
well as the performers during the ritual. However, ironically, although Bajiajiang performers are worshipped during the ritual, in the performers’ private daily lives, many of them are considered as low class, poor, or even bad people. In fact, most performers are between age fourteen and twenty and most of them quit from school and join Bajiajiang troupes (Wang, 2001; Tsai, 2001; Kang, 2002; Chuang, 2004; Huang, 2006; Hsieh, 2005). To many of them, learning to be a Bajiajiang performer is far more interesting than studying at school (Wang, 2001, pp. 40-73). Generally speaking, being a member of a Bajiajiang is normally of the performers’ own free will, and they prefer to be trained by the masters in the troupe rather than school teachers (ibid, p. 53).\textsuperscript{18} Because of the lack of standard school education, they are always judged by the society and have a negative impression by the general public (Wang, Y.-C., 2004; Chiao & Lin, 2013; ‘Young Bajiajiang Members,’ 2012).\textsuperscript{19} What makes the situation even more complicated is that a Bajiajiang performance requires distinct make-up and costumes to cover the performers’ identities for them to act as gods, and these significant symbols are serve to protect them. Some performers lost their identities in between being a representative of a god and a normal person. The mythical meaning that is revealed in the performance can result in misunderstanding and being misused by the immature performers after the performance. For that reason, apart from performers’ misconception about the performance-real life status, I suggest that the double standard attitudes that are given by the society, which including being seen as representatives of gods as well as being considered as trouble makers, can also create confusion to young Bajiajiang performers.

\textsuperscript{18} Nowadays, few young people are forced by some local gangs to join the troupe. However, this phenomenon is uncommon. (Wang, 2001, p.58)

\textsuperscript{19} Negative impressions of Bajiajiang members which appear in mass media including gangs, bullying, threatens, violence debt collections, and so on.
In the last decade, both the Taiwanese government and some scholars have started to raise the importance of traditional performing arts, and Bajiajiang is one of them. On the part of the government, the Centre for Traditional Arts (a governmental department in Taiwan which was established in 1996) has carried out some research on traditional religious rituals including Bajiajiang, Songjiangzhen, and some other related folk performances. The Educational Ministry of Taiwan has also started to encourage some primary schools to add religious activity into their cultural programmes, and introduced them to be part of the official curriculum in primary schools in 1993. However, even though such rituals have been re-introduced to the public in an educational way, Bajiajiang is still considered to be ‘disreputable’ to most people in Taiwan. According to Wang (2001), bringing the ritual into school does not stop young people withdrawing from school to join a Bajiajiang troupe (p.30).\(^{20}\) This phenomenon manifests that what Bajiajiang performers wish to receive from the ritual is far more than what can be seen in the performance. Consequently, this raises the question of what a Bajiajiang ritual offers to its performers before, during, and after a religious event, that cannot be provided in schools.

While most of the completed research projects have been apt to see this religious activity

\(^{20}\) In Wang’s research (2001), she reveals five main reasons of why teenagers join a Bajiajiang team:
A. personal issues: (1) personal curiosity and interest about the ritual; (2) interested in temple events; (3) seeking for psychological satisfaction;
B. school issues: (1) learning to be a Bajiajiang is more interesting than studying; (2) they do not gain enough satisfaction from studies and feel being given up by the teachers;
C. family issues: (1) family religion; (2) when they cannot reach the expectation of school studies and satisfy their parents, Bajiajiang group provides an exit for them to reposition themselves; (3) there are family members involved in a Bajiajiang team; (4) family owns a temple business;
D. peer issue: some might be encouraged by peers and join in the same team
E. environmental issue: when there are many temples surround the teen’s living area, there is a higher chance for them to join Bajiajiang. (translated by Hsieh, W.-J., pp 41-48)
from the sociological perspective and mainly emphasises its social function in the light of a general dialectical framework between religious, folk belief, and social construction, I propose that the theatrical facet of Bajiajiang ritual performance should also be considered and discussed. On the one hand, a Bajiajiang ritual is functional. On the other hand, the form of the implementation that the ritual adopts is a theatrical practice. It creates a religious atmosphere and achieves its function through its performance. By examining the liminality that occurs in the ritual, I propose that it could answer the question of how Bajiajiang ritual functions through a group activity and why the ritual performance is needed for the religion. Seeing the ritual as theatre also accounts for understanding the relationships between the ritual and Taiwanese society.

Apart from sociological and religious discussions, some of the research projects have focused on Bajiajiang’s visual impact and the performers’ distinct appearances, and they have paid little attention to the elements of the performance from a theatrical angle (Lu, J.-M. 2002, Wang, J.-C., 2004, Shiu & Chung, 2010). Wu, T.-D. (2000) said that religious behaviours generally play more important roles for a local area than belief alone because those social behaviours represent a local ‘living attitude’ which attracts people even when they do not share the same beliefs (p. 1). He also pointed out that ritual activity could help participants to identify themselves with a group and thus strengthen social construction of a community (p 1). He gave a full account of how Bajiajiang integrates the people from different spheres of a community into a cohesive whole. Wu’s arguments have to a certain extent touched the theatrical facet of Bajiajiang ritual. However, in order to understand how the ritual practice acts to reunite a society, I suggest the discussion could be further developed.
Up to the present, many sociological approaches have focused primarily on the social perception of this ritual. Although there are some researchers who do attempt to reveal the importance of this ritual performance and its history, their points mostly go to the problem of youth actors in Bajiajiang since the young people seem to be the most susceptible during the transformation process from human to god (Huang, 2006; Chuang, 2004; Kang, 2002; Wang, 2001). In those projects, in order to explain why these actors are so easily associated with juvenile crimes, most scholars have carried out case studies of different Bajiajiang troupes. Their approaches lapsed again into sociological discussion. Since the last decade, Bajiajiang ritual performance has been introduced as a Taiwanese image in many international occasions. However, apart from the colour and distinct outlooks of Bajiajiang characters in the ritual, the meaning of the ritual, as well as its significance, in the culture are rarely mentioned. From my aspect, this phenomenon implies a great danger of over emphasising the obvious visual images of the ritual appearances without in-depth discussion of the interaction between the ritual and the society. Without considering the social meaning that the ritual performance brings to Taiwanese society, Bajiajiang after all is a display or exhibition. For that reason, I argue that by considering Bajiajiang ritual performance as a theatre and examining how it facilitates to rebalance a society through its performance is necessary in recognising the importance of it.

1.3 Aim and Scope

In a Bajiajiang ritual, performers transform and become the embodiments of gods to provide a performance.\textsuperscript{21} Whether the performers are possessed by gods or act as demi

\textsuperscript{21} The performer’s transformation in a Bajiajiang ritual is debatable. While some believe that performers are possessed by gods and they adopt direct sacred power from the gods when they perform, some simply perform as those demi gods (Wang, Y.-L., 2001; Tsai, H.-M., 2001; Chuang, T.-H., 2004).
gods, pilgrims look on the performers as ‘demi gods’ rather than ‘performers’ while the ritual is running. The liminal space (Turner, 1982) of this performance, negotiations between the identities ‘god’, the ‘performer’, and the ‘audience’ has been researched from a theatrical perspective (Chen, 2001; Coldiron, 1999), in which the process of the ritual trance itself is always considered as one of the most important parts in a religious performance. In Sutton’s *Steps of Perfection - Exorcistic Performers and Chinese Religion in Twentieth-Century Taiwan* (2003), the liminal space that is created in a Taiwanese religious event has been briefly mentioned. Sutton adopted the term liminal to describe a sacrificial transition in a *jiao* ritual and interpreted it as a zone of creativity and power in *yin* and *yang* (p. 38, 111). Based on his argument, in this study of Bajiajiang ritual performance, I suggest that examining the liminality in a Bajiajiang ritual will help to understand how the ritual acts to break, rebuild, restructure, and rebalance the society. Whilst the social meaning of Bajiajiang will be discussed in this research, different troupes’ individual development also cannot be ignored. As mentioned earlier, the visual elements in Bajiajiang are undeniably the most impressive image to audience. Make-up, costume, and props are also the most direct media to help the performers to transform from humans to demi gods. In a Bajiajiang ritual performance, it is those visible makeovers that create an invisible space between the performers and audience, which also demarcate a gap between demi gods and human beings. Accompanied with the dance and the movements in the ritual, different types of space are created through a Bajiajiang ritual performance, which including a visible performing area as well as an unseen liminal space.

From a wider social science angle, Bajiajiang is a group activity that allows local people to

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22 *Jiao* is a traditional Daoist ritual in Taiwan. The aims of it contain blessing, celebration, and release souls from purgatory.
participate and satisfy individual needs, which include gaining blessings from the gods and gathering entertainment. This belief has developed from a simple idolatry of gods to worship the temple organisation, and furthermore, it has been expanded as a representative of a locality. Even though studies from the perspective of social studies and those narrative descriptions of Bajiajiang ritual performance have offered a picture of the ritual circumstance in Taiwan, dramaturgical analysis provides a different facet and fills in what social studies is not able to reach of the ritual. Since transformation of the ritual practice not only manifests in its form of performance but also the aim of it, changes that have been made in a Bajiajiang ritual performance elaborate the performative activity. Although the basic function - catching ghosts - of Bajiajiang ritual remains principle in the religious society; nevertheless, the different forms and functions that the ritual acts to satisfy diverse purposes should not be ignored. From my perspective, the social demand for a multiple functional Bajiajiang ritual performances plays a vital part resulting in its ritual transformation. In order to examine the relationships and interactions between the ritual and Taiwanese religious society, this research focuses on the secondary but the most practical functions of the ritual - the ‘welcoming’ and the ‘greeting temple’ performances. By examining the most common performances that are provided by Bajiajiang troupes, I expect to discover how Bajiajiang ritual engages with society in a practical way.

Nowadays there are also some professional troupes in Taiwan, which perform on stage at exhibitions or commercial events. Performances like this, less concerned with the religious aspects of Bajiajiang, could also be considered as a form of transformation in Bajiajiang. When a Bajiajiang ritual performer becomes an actor, his motive for performing has changed. From my viewpoint, this change also influences the development of the ritual. For that reason, I argue that if a Bajiajiang ritual is performed as theatre performance on stage or for commercial reasons, the meaning of it should also change. However, from what I
have seen in Taiwan, even a commercial Bajiajiang performance is still considered as a religious activity. Although this kind of Bajiajiang performance has to some extent become a formality and does not function in its religious aspect, the religious elements still cannot be withdrawn. The reason for that perhaps is related to the principles in the ritual - respecting the tradition and complying with the customs. Meanwhile, it also shows the significant religious meaning in the ritual is still vital. Therefore, I suggest that it is worthwhile to examine the changes that have been made in the ritual performance and compare them with a traditional form of Bajiajiang ritual. By doing so, I expect to discover how different social reactions have affected the ritual and then to analyze the trend of the ritual transformation. The main focuses in this research project into Bajiajiang are the discussion of the transformation of its performance and function, the role that Bajiajiang ritual performance plays for Taiwanese society, and the significance of it.

Based on the above statement, this research is structured around the exploration of the following questions:

1. How is Bajiajiang ritual performed in different ways by different troupes for different occasions in Taiwan (with special focus on the Tainan Area and the Taichung Area)?
2. What changes to traditional modes of performance take place under the influence of its encounter with the society and how do people respond to the changes?
3. What is the significance of this ritual practice for participants and what is the social meaning of it?

In order to achieve the aims above, this research will not only rely on documental archive, but also actual ethnographical fieldwork and data collection. The information that is gathered from the field will be honestly represented by using the method of ‘thick
description’ (Geertz, 1973) in this thesis and it will be analysed by adopting some related theatrical and performance theories.

1.4 Overview of the Study

To conduct a comprehensive research into Bajiajiang ritual performance, this thesis contains historical research, reviews of literature, research design, four Bajiajiang ritual performances descriptions and analyses, discussion of the data collection, and a conclusion. Chapter One provides a background of the ritual, including the history of Bajiajiang, the principles in the ritual, how it is traditionally performed at temple fairs, and its original functions. By presenting these important features in the ritual, I aim to provide an archetype of a Bajiajiang ritual performance with historical research findings.

After a basic introduction of what the ritual is, Chapter Two discusses and reviews the existing literature of Bajiajiang ritual. There are two parts in the chapter. The first part reviews the existing research projects on Bajiajiang. The aim of this section is to inspect other related research projects, such as folk, religious, ritual, and temple research in Taiwan and what they may contribute to this thesis. It contains the studies of history, social science, folk studies, and some narrative descriptions of the religious activity. The second part of Chapter Two focuses on theatrical studies and performance theories. This section changes the focus from a social science to a performance perspective and explains how theatrical studies support and help me to answer my research questions.

Chapter Three contains discussions of research methods and a research design for this research. The first part in the chapter centres on performance analysis and ethnography methods. I explain the methods that are adopted and their importance for doing this
research. The second part is a research design which has been customised for this project. It explicates the events that I observed and participated in during the research period and their significance for understanding the ritual performance.

To interpret the current status of Bajiajiang society, four fieldworks are selected and represented in this thesis. Each case is discussed by the method of ‘thick description’ and analyzed with theatrical and performance theories. Chapter Four is an instance of Bajiajiang ritual performance that took place in front of a temple in 2011. The aim of the chapter is to discuss Bajiajiang and the representation of locality. At the religious event, a Bajiajiang troupe was hired by a temple and acted to be the temple’s representative for the occasion. By providing this example, I aim to bring up the discussions of how a Bajiajiang troupe engages with a locality and its interaction with the employer temple.

Chapter Five provides an example of an unexpected Bajiajiang troupe which performed on street in the early morning at a temple fair. The main focus in this chapter is to discuss how different authorities negotiate and operate in a Bajiajiang ritual performance and the functional meaning of the performance at that particular event. In addition, by examining the temple event as an example, I aim to explain the relationships between a Bajiajiang troupe, a host temple, politics, locals, and gangs in the religious culture.

Chapter Six contains two Bajiajiang ritual performances which were provided by the same troupe. At the first event, the troupe acted as a host organisation and had authority over the whole event. The Bajiajiang performance was given in front of a stage and was inclined to be a ritual display but still heavily related to the religion. For the second event, the Bajiajiang troupe performed for its brotherhood temple and participated in their temple event. The aim of this chapter is to provide discussions of the functions of a Bajiajiang ritual
and its relationships to a local community.

Chapter Seven is the conclusive discussion of the fieldworks. It covers the changes of the ritual, how a traditional activity exists in a modern country, the relationship between belief and authority in the society, and the transformation of the culture. Finally, conclusions of my investigations into Bajiajiang ritual performance are drawn in Chapter Eight.
Chapter Two - Theory and Literature Review

While the first chapter introduced the research questions and provided the general background of this study, this chapter reviews Bajiajiang-related studies. In order to provide a comprehensive view of this ritual, discussions from different perspectives and their influence on Bajiajiang’s practice are assessed in this chapter. The first section reviews existing research projects on Bajiajiang, including historical research, religious, and cultural (such as criminology, media studies, social development, and fine art studies), which have been undertaken mainly by scholars who work in Taiwan. The second part discusses how rituals are viewed in theatre and performance studies, and how these studies have influenced my thesis. I conclude by outlining my research response to this literature.

Along with Bajiajiang becoming one of the representative images of Taiwan (2004, The Beauty of Traditional Arts in Taiwan)\textsuperscript{23}, research into Bajiajiang has proliferated in some academic fields. However, most of those completed research projects view Bajiajiang historically or criminologically, including the youth problems it causes. Most of the research has emphasised the social function of the ritual in the light of a general dialectical framework between religious belief and social construction. Nonetheless, if the ritual is only examined from the factual detail and problems it brings to the society, the understanding of it will not be complete. This study seeks to re-inspect the ritual from a theatrical perspective and examine how the ritual is shaped in the modern environment and its role in Taiwanese society.

\textsuperscript{23} The Beauty of Traditional Arts in Taiwan was conducted by the National Centre for Traditional Arts, edited and produced by Yuanliou Publishers in Taiwan, 2004.
2.1 Existing Research into Bajiajiang

-Historical research

This first academic study was carried out by Shi Wan-shou in 1984, who published an academic article about the Shijiajing ritual. His research provided a general, but trustworthy history of Shijiajing and described how the ritual applied in a fishing and rural society (pp. 1-9). Shi’s historical approach to the religious ritual has been highly valued and has been adopted by many scholars, such as Chang, Y.-H. (2007), Huang, F.-K. (2006), Chuang, T.-H. (2005), Cheng, T.-H. (2003), Kang, T.-T. (2002), Wang, L.-Y. (2002), Wu, T.-D. (2000), Chen, L.-E. (1995). Shi’s research not only evaluated the ritual and provided a basic, but comprehensive, understanding of it to other scholars as well as to the public, but also opened the door to cultural research of the role of the folk troupe in society. While Shi focused on the highly original religious ritual and gave a detailed description of traditional Bajiajiang cults, the changes that the ritual has undergone due to the industrial modernisation in Taiwan still require further deliberation. In addition, Shi’s research did not offer information about the interaction between the performance, the performers, the spectators, and the influence it has on the community.

In 2000, a research proposal by Wu (2000) was made to the National Centre of Traditional Arts of the Taiwanese government. Wu investigated individual Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan and based on the data he collected, sought to change public misunderstanding of the ritual. Wu interviewed Bajiajiang performers in order to understand their process during the performance. His research report, furthermore, clarified the history of Bajiajiang troupes, the performance, the make-up, the costumes, props, the involvement of troupe members, and then outlined the future possibilities for Bajiajiang troupes (p. 2). This research began
in October 1999 and continued for one year. During this period, the research team did some historical research into the ritual (which is based on Shi’s research), used questionnaires, analysed the data from the questionnaires, and conducted fieldwork (including filming performances and interviewing temple leaders as well as performers). Wu also travelled to Foochow in Fujian province, mainland China, which is believed to be the original site of the Bajiajiang ritual. While there, Wu reevaluated the existing historical record of Bajiajiang folklore (p. 3). With the interviews and research that Wu’s team did, this study used drawings and figures to elucidate valuable information about the standard movements of individual characters and the dancing patterns of Bajiajiang performance. The basic outlines of the choreography and the characters’ actions offered a new method and perspective on how to identify the different roles in the ritual. Wu also listed and mapped several of the most popular temples and Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan in 2000.

Although one of the aims of his research was to discover and analyse the performers’ processes, Wu emphasised the history and the state of Bajiajiang troupes more than the process of the ritual. While he raised the problems with the performers’ self-analysis, Wu’s research did not explain how the performers immersed themselves in a performance. Additionally, the interviews that were done during the research period were very limited, which could be attributed to the shortness of time, the limited number of troupes, and the choice of interviewees. Wu’s research project analysed the historical and existing narratives on Bajiajiang troupes, but not their relationship to society. Thus, while both Shi and Wu presented Bajiajiang as a religious troupe in a more logical and structured way, they did not explain the interaction between the religious activity and the society.
More recent published research of Bajiajiang was done by Lu Jiang-Ming in 2002 and 2008. Lu adopted Shi’s historical research of the ritual but focused on the changes in the ritual over the past hundred years. In his book Jiajiang (2002), Lu gave a clear idea of how this religious activity developed and was applied in different regions. He also explained how several core troupes were related to one another in present-day Taiwan. Based on his analysis, the basic pattern of how Bajiajiang has moved from its place of origin in Tainan in southern Taiwan to other neighbouring counties in the country was illuminated. Lu also drew attention to how troupes made changes to fit their locales. From an historical perspective, his book offered insight into how the ritual developed in Taiwanese society. However, Lu did not evaluate what caused the ritual to change and how it was transformed to fit into society. In his book The Facial Art of Taiwanese Jiajiang Troupe: Bajiajiang Troupe (2008), Lu collected and identified the different make-up patterns of diverse Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan. Even though most of the patterns are still based on the original designs and conform to the concept of the ‘Five Elements’ in ancient Chinese cosmology, to people who are not familiar with the system, the logic is not always straightforward and can be difficult to identify.\(^{24}\) On the one hand, vital changes in Bajiajiang ritual are not always accepted by the public (Shi, 1984). On the other, as long as Bajiajiang troupes obey the original principles and follow the significance of the Five Elements in the Chinese cosmology, they have some room for flexibility for transforming the traditional customs (Wu, 2011). This phenomenon explains why currently, there are more and more distinct Bajiajiang troupes with different appearances in the Bajiajiang system in Taiwan. By keeping track of

make-up patterns, Lu’s most important contribution to the Bajiajiang system was not only illustrating the use of distinctive make-up figures, but using the pictures of facial make-up patterns to trace the connections of troupes to their origin. Furthermore, this analysis suggested the possibilities for Bajiajiang ritual transformation.

Chen, Yao-Ming, in 1995, undertook research into Taiwanese religious behaviour. His book *The Temple Gods in Penghu* (1995) explicated how religious activity occurs and changes in Taiwanese culture, especially in Penghu County. According to Chen, 85 percent of current Taiwanese are the descendants of Minnan and Yuedong immigrants that settled the island in the seventeenth century (p. 1).

Some daily customs were, therefore, brought and introduced to the island then. During the hard times after they moved to the island, Daoism was the main religion in this fishing society. Many of the people believed that Mazu (the god of the ocean) provided blessings of safety for their lives. Meanwhile, worship of Mazu, Wanye (the god of pandemic) and the City God (the god who guards a local area) were the main beliefs in the society at that time. Since the blessings of health and security are so needed in society, worship to these gods continues in Taiwan to this day. Even though Daoism played a vital role for those immigrants, in order to fit in the local culture, some changes in the religious behaviours were made (p. 14). For that reason, in his book, Chen preferred the term ‘folk belief’ instead of ‘religion’ to describe Taiwanese temple activity (pp. 14-15).

In Taiwanese culture, many people not only worship gods, but also their

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25 Minnan is in Southern Fujian Province and Yuedong stands for Eastern Guangdong Province in Mainland China. History shows that some people from Mainland China had started to immigrate to the Island in the Nan [Southern] Song Dynasty (1127-1279 A.D); however, it was the late Ming Dynasty (17th Century), when Ming government sent a number of people from Minnan and Yuedong to Taiwan. Therefore, it is believed that 85 percent of Taiwanese are originally from China.

26 Although Chen is not the only scholar who uses ‘folk belief’ to describe the temple activity in Taiwan, he provides a clear explanation of how this term was adopted. Therefore, in this thesis, his argument is used to
ancestry as well as elements of nature. Combining Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the term ‘folk belief’ provides a better, even wider, understanding of the religious beliefs in the culture. This argument may diminish the importance of each individual religion; however, it also represents the intertwining of religion and behaviour in a particular local area. In addition to expressing belief in gods, the term folk belief also expresses daemon worship and its relation to the people in the society. The graphic illustration below explains how folk belief appears in the Taiwanese culture:

Figure 2.1

The illustration of Taiwanese folk belief
By Chen (1995, p.18) (Translated by Hsieh, W.-J.)

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27 In the original Chinese version of this illusion, Chen places the four Chinese characters which mean ‘daemon worship’ in four places. Although the explanation of the placements of the characters is not given, I personally believe it shows the relation with what the Book of Change (Yi Jing) states: the four directions in the world. Due to the different form of characters in English, this explanation could not be shown in the translated illustration.
In addition, Chen also discussed the key characteristics of folk belief, including (1) anthropomorphism (the gods’ world is no different than that of human beings); (2) tradition-keeping (such as the belief in local gods, that the temple is always a centre of an area, and that gods’ statues can be found in family home which, in turn, are like temples on a reduced scale); (3) freedom of belief (praying to different gods for different blessings and praying to legendary characters); (4) a divine manifestation that encourages prosperity (from a family temple to a public temple, it is also seen as from egoism to altruism in the culture) (pp. 15-18). Chen’s explanations of the temple status offered interpretations of the culture. Even though Chen’s research did not address Bajiajiang ritual studies, it provided a foundation of the general cultural milieu to understand how essential popular temple rituals were to society.

The historical research projects have drawn a general picture of Bajiajiang for the public, and the value of historical research of Taiwanese temple culture is without dispute. However, since most of the studies are based on archives and personal fieldwork, and each Bajiajiang troupe has its own individual history and development, some statements might not be applicable to all troupes. Moreover, some historical research provided narratives of the cultural phenomenon, but did not consider the link between the society and the performance. To some extent, the ritual performance is a product of religious behaviour which offers visual, physical, and other direct connections to the belief and its followers. Since the ritual is always seen as a part of the lifestyle of the local people, most audiences experience the ritual passively, without engaging in any in-depth contemplation of it. My argument is that if the social activity is considered as a ‘performance’ or ‘theatre activity’ rather than just a religious ritual, the ritual and an understanding of it should result in a wider view of the society. By viewing the ritual from the perspective of theatre and performance angles we can illuminate why this ritual not only attracts the
‘insiders/followers’ but also the ‘outsiders/non-followers’. Without exceptional mention, participants participate in the ritual, and by taking a part in it, the group activity spontaneously transforms into a strong structure in the culture. For this reason, the relationship between culture and a ritual performance requires further discussion.

-Religious and Cultural Research on Bajiajiang

Existing research has emphasised the relationship between Bajiajiang and Taiwanese society. Some arguments about Bajiajiang have been raised in a sociological light (Chang, Y.-H., 2007; Chen, W.-J., 2006; Chuang, T.-H., 2005; Wang, L.-Y., 2002), or even in a criminological light (Huang, F.-K., 2006). For instance, although Chang, Chen, Wang, and Huang attempted to examine the importance of this religious ritual and its history, they focused primarily on the problem of teenage performers performing in Bajiajiang. Juveniles, according to these analyses, are susceptible to the transformation in the ritual between gods and human beings, including changes in appearance and mental states. In recent research, scholars undertook case studies of different Bajiajiang troupes in order to explain why those troupe performers are so easily associated with juvenile crimes - an approach which is sociological (Tsai, 2001; Wang, 2002; Chuang, 2004; Huang, 2006). Even though there are some research projects focused more on Bajiajiang’s visual impact and the materials used in it (Wang, J.-C., 2007; Lin, M.-L., 2004; Chen, L.-E., 1995), little attention has been paid to the elements of performance from a theatre or performance perspective.

For example, Wang, Li-Ya’s dissertation: Deviation? Relocation: A Study of Adolescents’ Joining the Bajiajiang (2002) discussed the problem of adolescents who join Bajiajiang troupes, questioning whether the problem is a relocation issue and not a matter of a
deviation among the youth. Most social pressure analysis focuses on the negative side of teenagers’ involvement in Bajiajiang troupes. However, Wang argued that teenagers who join a Bajiajiang troupe should be considered to be finding their new location but not engaging in deviant behaviour. In order to elucidate why this ritual activity is attractive to adolescents in the first place, she looked at the concepts of ‘anti-social’ and ‘counter-school culture’, which was raised by Wu, Chun-Ru (2000, pp. 115-116). Wang argued that one of the main reasons why young people join Bajiajiang troupes is because they want to get away from schools and show their independence. To them, Bajiajiang troupes offer places to play, to make friends, and even to hide when they need it, even though these matters are not the main functions of the ritual. Thus, to a certain extent, Bajiajiang troupes bring some extra benefits to the youth (pp. 32-56). Wang also mentioned that some young people do not follow the rules at school, whereas by contrast, most of them listen to whatever their troupe leader says. To a degree, it is similar to a gang system. However, the religious meaning of the troupe makes the situation more complicated (pp. 76-99). For these reasons, Wang suggested that Bajiajiang group leaders should have the responsibility to educate those students who do not want to go to schools. From her perspective, if Bajiajiang troupes do not just offer a place for the youth to stay but also educate them as school does, a secondary function of Bajiajiang troupe could be revealed (pp.90-91).

Nevertheless, in her research, Wang did not address why young people are most attracted to Bajiajiang troupes, rather than other ritual activities. While considering the

28 After reading Wang’s dissertation, I suggest that the word ‘re-location’ is more appropriate than ‘relocation’ in her argument of teenagers’ involvement in Bajiajiang troupe.

29 Wu believed that one of the reasons that teenagers were attracted to join Bajiajiang is because they do not want to follow the school rules, which she calls ‘counter-school culture.’ (2000, p. 27)

30 In this phase, ‘need’ normally means whenever they wish not to communicate with others, including their family and school life.
disadvantages of joining Bajiajiang troupe (in particular, the participation of adolescents), her research did focus on the educational perspective of the relationship between teenagers and Bajiajiang troupes. Is it only because the group leaders offer them somewhere else to survive outside the school for their physical needs, or is there something more personal and essential? And, why might youths be willing to be trained and educated in Bajiajiang troupes instead of schools? Based on my personal experience of participating in some Bajiajiang rituals, I suggest that this religious activity is not just a social phenomenon under the rubric of religion nor simply a refuge for juveniles. Although Wang’s research clarified the existing problems of youth involvement in Bajiajiang troupes and provided a new indication for the religious activity, there is still a gap in our understanding of this that needs further exploration. Without examining other issues that might attract young people to take part in the ritual and what belonging to a Bajiajiang troupe means to a juvenile as well as to the society, it does not fully explain all the circumstances that lead to joining a Bajiajiang troupe. Therefore, further research and a more substantial discussion of how a theatrical form co-operates with the social phenomenon is required.

Another research project into Bajiajiang is Transfigurations - Persona Masks of the Bajiajiang Adolescents (Lin, M-L, 2004). This project not only raised the issues of why Bajiajiang is not involved in schools as are other cultural and physical courses (such as Songjiangzheng)\(^\text{31}\) in Taiwan, but also aims to explain how this ritual activity is integrated into Taiwanese culture. In order to explain the ritual’s historical background and its value,

\(^{31}\) Songjiangzheng, meaning battle array, is another form of religious troupe. It is popular in Southern Taiwan, especially in Tainan and Kaohsiung counties. This ritual performance is based on Chinese martial arts and requires 24, 36, or 72 performers to perform. Currently, there are only two old troupes which still keep up the tradition of kai-mien in Taiwan.
Lin first examined the connection between Chinese ‘nuo’ culture and Bajiajiang. She also attempted to determine the inner meaning of ‘kai-mien’ (the make-up procedure in the ritual) and to see how this ritual process affects youth. In addition, her research looked at how Bajiajiang troupes are perceived by the mass media. Lin endeavoured to re-examine this ritual performance and present it in a different light. Her primary research methods were historical research, fieldwork data collection and analysis, and the thick description and interpretation method. Lin also drew on Jung’s concepts including ‘persona masks’, Turner’s communitas, and Homas’ ‘exchange theory’ (pp. 17-18).

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32 Nuo culture is a traditional custom in Jiangxi, China. The aim of this ritual is to catch ghosts and purify the bad spirits in the people’s living environment. The original function and the way nuo and Bajiajiang are performed are similar. However, unlike kai-mien in Bajiajiang, nuo ritual uses masks when performing to portray the demi-gods.

33 This research method was developed by Tso, C. H. (2003) who adopted Geertz’s method of thick description (1973) and concepts based in Denzin’s approach to qualitative research (1994). Zhou suggested that because people live in a shared society nowadays, researchers should not only look at the appearance of a fact but should try to understand what is behind the phenomenon, and then they will be able to have an appropriate understanding of it. Therefore, he conceives with four levels—浅薄描述 (translated: General Description—a general description of the research object), 深厚描述 (translated: In-depth Description—a very detailed description of the object, including the participants’ feelings, emotions, the relationship between people, the sequence of the object, and so on). 深描诠释 (translated: In-depth Interpretation—integrates the interaction, sequence, and the history of the object. The aim is to understand the subjective consciousness of the participants, and then to realize the objective meaning in the society), and 反思的深描诠释 (translated: A Reverse Thinking of In-depth Interpretation—researchers have to state themselves into the object, consider the relationship between the research action and themselves; by doing this, researchers will be able to find out the meaning of the research project both for themselves and the readers and will be able to explain the real circumstance of the aimed object (Tso, 2003, pp. 19-23, translated by Hsieh, W.-J.).

34 Jung’s persona theory is adopted to explain that the mask/face painting does not help young people to get away from the society. Therefore, the Bajiajiang face painting could be a vital issue in guiding and assisting the teenagers to get their new identities during the transformation process (p 17, pp. 113-128). Lin uses Turner’s communitas theory to explain why Bajiajiang is so attractive to teenagers. Since most performers in the ritual are voluntary to join, she suggests the communitas theory could explain this phenomenon (pp 17-18, pp 130-133). To a certain extent, Bajiajiang is a product of utilitarianism, the motivation of the ritual
However, what Lin did not analyse in her research were the relationships between those theories, the research methods, and the ritual performance itself. The data and information from the performers’ view that Lin gathered for the research was based on online discussion boards; therefore, some information may have been unreliable and too subjective. Since Lin focused on the youth and Bajiajiang as well as why this ritual has become so popular to adolescents, she does not bring up the social value of the performance. She focused, rather, on how young people thought about it. Although she mentioned some ideas that are related to theatre and performance studies, such as the liminality (Turner, 1969) and cosplay (costume role-play), further discussion of these theories were not in this thesis. The lack of clarification of theatrical theories when viewing Bajiajiang, to a certain degree, even creates some confusion for the readers. For instance, liminality is not a simple phenomenon in the ritual process. Performers’ transformation, the belief, and its social environment also require considerable deliberation. However, instead of addressing those interactions and examining the possible reasons for teenagers’ involvement, Lin described the current status of Bajiajiang troupes, their members, and the public’s social impression of them.

The social perception of Bajiajiang troupes is another issue preferred by sociological researchers. In Chang, Yu-Ten’s (2007) research, he recalled the problem of the twisted opinion from the mass media about the general Bajiajiang troupe in Taiwan. His research was grounded in social science, criminology, and media studies and gave a general picture of how mass media views Bajiajiang troupes in the society nowadays. Chang focused on the

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is to ask for the blessing from gods. From this angle, it may explain why performers wish to use their bodies to exchange gods’ power and bless by smearing the images of demi gods. Lin uses Homan’s network of exchange theory to stand on and wishes to explore the inner motivation of the young performers (p. 18, pp. 103-106).

35 In Chinese language, Jiajiang means ‘Generals’ and Bajiajiang states the ‘eight Generals’. Unless the author specifies the use of Jiajiang, it references all Jiajiang related troupes, including Bajiajiang and Shijiajiang.
problems that Bajiajiang troupes cause to society and described how media react and represent them to the public. However, the research ignored that as Bajiajiang is also a ritual performance which could also be viewed as a theatrical production, it might have the power to overcome the given prejudice against it and remove the perverse opinions prevalent in mass media. Even though the ritual could be seen as a problematic activity, it cannot be denied that it is still needed by the people. Chang stated the role that Bajiajiang troupes hold in society, but did not focus on the grounds that have resulted in the situation. Especially over the past decade, Bajiajiang and its related troupe Guanjiangshou have been widely accepted as performers in Taiwanese society. Existing Bajiajiang troupe-related research is not a comprehensive study and has often given a stereotypical impression of it. Mass media is a critical agency for informing the public and defining public opinion. Chang saw the link between the troupe and media, but did not provide a clear indication of how the ritual should be viewed. For that reason, a theatrical perspective which could cast a new light on the meaning and perception of the ritual in the society is needed.

Another example is the research of Chen Wen-Jou (2007). This study included historical research, a literature review, and a fieldwork investigation (p iii). It offered the general history of Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan and then focused on an investigation of a festival in the Dunggung area as a case study. Unlike other scholars, Chen argued that the ritual of the Bajiajiang troupe is originally from the northern part of Taiwan. In all other scholarly research, such as that by Shi Wan-Shou (1984), Wu Ten-Da (2000), Huang Fu-Kun (2006), Wang Jiun-Chi (2006), Chang Yu-Ten (2007), the consensus has been that the Jiajiang ritual is originally from Tainan - a county in the southern Taiwan. This is the only existing research

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36 Dunggung area is located in the Pingdong County in Southern Taiwan where the fishery industry remains the most important income source.
work that has suggested a different history of Bajiajiang culture. Chen based his conclusion on his fieldwork and interviews in the Dunggung area. This example shows the importance of fieldwork and interviews in Bajiajiang research. As mentioned above, almost every Bajiajiang troupe has its own history and individual development. Different investigations bring up different origin stories. Since Bajiajiang is a religious ritual that has a strong connection to local ways of life, people may create some legends in order to make it more attractive for some particular events. Dunggung is famous for its once-a-year Ghost Festival and perhaps for this reason, various stories in the local area may have been created to increase the mystical and sacred atmosphere. According to a folk activity expert Fang, there might be two reasons that cause the historical confusion: first, it could be a misunderstanding between Bajiajiang troupes and Guanjiangshou troupes. These two performances are different and have individual histories and folklores, although their appearances and functions can sometimes be similar; secondly, Bajiajiang in Dunggung might have been affected by another ritual “Bajiang”, which was originally from the Taipei area. In Lu’s research, Bajiang troupes are similar in form to Bajiajiang troupes. Not only is the ritual similar; the performers in Bajiang also require comparable costumes, props, and make-up. However, apart from the Server, General Xie and Fan or General Jia and Shuo, the other characters in Bajiang are different (2006, pp. 69-151).\(^{37}\) Nonetheless, Chen’s research

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\(^{37}\) Guanjiangshou is a religious theatre performance in Taiwan. It is generally believed that this event is from northern Taiwan. Although Guanjiangshou is from another god’s system, it is also a traditional ritual in Taiwanese folk belief. According to Lin, M.-H. (2011, personal communication, 21st April), Guanjiangshou has higher status than Bajiajiang. Nowadays some temples and even performers mix these two performances up so the histories of them have become even vaguer (Wang, 2007, p. 95). In direct Chinese translation, Bajiang means “eight generals” and Bajiajiang means “eight home/private generals”. However, Bajiang and Bajiajiang in their religious aspects are very similar, and that is why many people find it is confusing and difficult to identify them. In common parlance, Bajiang troupes acts as guards to purify and protect in front of the main god when touring. Although the function of Bajiang is similar to Bajiajiang to some extent, the roles and dancing choreography are different. Currently, there are three main Bajiang
did not clarify or explain this. This issue is raised here because the historical and original roots of Bajiajiang troupes often not only significantly influence a troupe name, but are also an indicator that could identify what region the performance is from. Regardless of how accurate the historical background of the Bajiajiang troupes in Dunggung was in Chen’s research, what is most significant for this study is that, on the one hand it shows some of today’s Bajiajiang troupes have perhaps mixed with other related troupes. On the other, it suggests that the trend of Bajiajiang troupe localisation in the society seems to be developing and this should be accounted for when examining the troupe.

The research of Wang Jiun-Chi (2007) drew attention to the facial masks of Bajiajiang. Wang adopted the methodologies of field surveys, in-depth interviews, data mining, and sign analysis to contrast and summarise the facial masks in his research (p. v). The aim of his research was to collect the original face painting patterns of the characters in Bajiajiang troupes (in particular from the historical records of the Tainan Ruyitzenghotang, the first Jiajiang troupe in Taiwan), and to compare them with the face painted figures in Chinese Opera. By doing this, he intended to discover the sequence of these two forms. Wang’s research adopted Fedinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) theory of the sign, which not only explains the relation between signifier and signified but also explains how a sign contains both content-form and expression-form (pp. 42-44). Wang also attempted to trace back the original graphic meanings that were defined in the early years. Wang’s research looked at totem culture and used it to explain the role that face painting plays in Taiwanese society (p. 21, pp. 25-30). According to Wang, Bajiajiang troupes and Chinese Opera have similar origins and a shared Chinese background, with the meanings of the patterns changing as a

troupes in Taiwan: (1) Quanmin Bajiang troupe (belong to Xiahai City God Temple); (2) Chinshen Bajiang troupe (belong to Monga Chinshen Temple); (3) Taijiang Bajiang troupe (belong to Sanchung Taijiang City God Temple): they are all located in Taipei area (northern Taiwan).
result of a locale’s history as well as the localised understanding of the people (pp. 226-231). Based on Lu’s research (2002), one of the oldest make-up masters in the Jiajiang culture, Mr. Ye, had learned Chinese Opera’s make-up technique and introduced it to his Bajiajiang troupe Chiayi Zhenyutang in 1919. This was the time when Chinese Opera face painting began to intertwine with Bajiajiang performance. Lu’s work explained why current face painting in Bajiajiang is similar to the characters in Chinese Opera; nevertheless, apart from tracing the history of face painting between Bajiajiang and Chinese Opera, neither Lu or Wang offered an explanation for why Bajiajiang performance cannot be performed without face painting or what the role that face painting plays during the performers’ transformation process is. Therefore, the meaning of face painting, the interaction between the visual and persona, and the impact that the face painting has on the participants and observers require further study.

2.2 How Rituals Are Viewed in Theatre Studies and Performance Theory

Having reviewed important existing research projects of Bajiajiang, in this section, I evaluate and explain the importance of considering Bajiajiang ritual by applying theatrical and performance theories. Most of the current studies of the troupes in Taiwan are limited to the social science field. Hence, understanding of Bajiajiang performance can be very subjective and problematic. For instance, while most studies have looked at the visible elements of the troupe, including the visual appearances of the performers, the choreography, and its social status, further discussion about the connection and interaction between the ritual and the society has barely been touched. However, using Western theatrical and performance studies to analyse the relationship between the ritual and society would illuminate a further understanding of the ritual. Furthermore, by perceiving how the ritual practice interacts with Taiwanese society, I propose that the value of the
particular ritual performance could be revealed not just for its presentation but for understanding the culture in which it is performed.

In her thesis *Ritual is Theatre, Theatre is Ritual – Tang-ki Spirit Medium Worship* (2001), Margaret Chen drew attention to the Chinese tang-ki spirit and how it works in different Chinese communities in different countries, such as China, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan. By using fieldwork, in-depth description, and data collection and analysis, she sought to determine the relationship between ritual and theatre. Chen interviewed some performers of the tang-ki spirit in several Chinese communities, and attempted to discover the relationship between ritual and theatre by investigating individual tang-ki worship. Although the people she interviewed had different cultural backgrounds and spoke different languages, tang-ki worship was the primary medium for pilgrims to communicate with their beliefs.

Performers used iconic gestures, props, costumes and make-up to portray gods, and their convincing portrayals reaffirmed the religious beliefs held by their audiences. In this way mythology became a dramatic canon for religious Daoists, and theatre became a tool for the dissemination of religion (Chen, 2001, p. 129).

Chen’s investigation of tang-ki spirit offers useful directions for my examination of Taiwanese Bajiajiang ritual. Both tang-ki spirit and Bajiajiang are the products of Daoism and folk belief; they both require performers and observers to probe the presence of the gods, and they both use symbols and icons in the ritual. In her research, Chen argued that tang-ki spirit worship is a more heroic and individual religious experience than most other

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38 Tang-ki ritual is common in the Chinese society. In Daoism, tang-ki is a person who is possessed by an unexplained spirit, normally a god or a ghost. In the ritual, tang-ki’s body is accessed through the god/ghost and acts as its agent to send messages or communicate with his/her pilgrims.
religious events. In order to clarify the relation of ritual and theatre, Chen used some Western theatrical theories to explain the tang-ki spirit worship and examine the ritual in a more theatrical way. These included Turner’s concepts of social drama and liminal stages.

Chen’s research provided a new explanation of ritual which differed from those who had applied an Eastern perspective; however, it is still debatable to define ritual as theatre. No doubt, some rituals contain the elements of theatre, but a religious ritual also has its own functions, which might be to offer the believers some spiritual satisfaction, or to satisfy the gods they believe in. These particular functional meanings of religion do not always exist in theatre. Although in theatre, the message that is delivered to an audience can vary, in a religious ritual, the most important goal for participants is to carry the same message. In a Taiwanese context this would be the blessing from the god they believe in. For this reason, ritual can diversify into theatre, and theatre can sublimate into ritual, but to regard the two as equivalent, requires considerably more discussion. Particularly in a religious ritual like Bajiajiang performance, even though the sacred and entertainment elements are both involved in it, the ritual is still based on a belief in Daoism. For instance, traditionally, the Bajiajiang ritual is not allowed to be discussed nor can its sacred status be questioned; however, with the development of modern society and the slow undermining of religion in Taiwan, this ritual has expanded to a broader status. It is religious, but it can be entertaining at the same time. In other words, nowadays, by using theatrical elements to examine the ritual, the training, the make-up, and the taboos, this religious ceremony no longer has only a religious function. In contrast, it provides the society with more than what an original belief offers by linking to a performance or a concert-like exhibition. Therefore, the performers’ training and other special techniques of this ritual become essential signs of viewing the performance. As Schenckner has argued, ‘It is also clear that rituals are not safety deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems
generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways’ (1993, p. 228). Schechner’s assertions correspond with the fact that Bajiajiang’s status in modern society is constantly changing and providing a dynamic force to society. The changes that occur in the ritual do not modify the belief; instead, by making some changes, it roots into the culture and strengthens the structure of society.

With the flourishing of Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan in recent years, the ritual has become part of the lifestyle of the Taiwanese. The traditional religious activity has not disappeared because of the modernisation of Taiwanese society; on the contrary, it gets more and more popular. However, ironically, it is not necessary for people who enjoy participating in the ritual to believe in the religion. Therefore, the popularity of the ritual not only contributes to the religion and the entertainment, but is a normative social phenomenon, which includes taking part in the activity, the visual elements, and the atmosphere it creates at events. In the case of the Bajiajiang ritual, this normative mind-set allows people to strengthen their belief by being engaged in the same activity. Here, belief does not necessarily have to be a religion or a folk belief, it is a conviction that is created by the participants and shared by them. From this point of view, the meaning of the performance is not only the ritual itself (such as ghost catching in a Bajiajiang troupe), but also a communitas and liminality that the people create for a certain time at a certain place.

Turner’s concept of social drama (1969) provided a means of examining how a community activity is able to transform from a religious ritual being representative of a locality or even the whole society. During a Bajiajiang ritual performance, all the participants and observers who take part in the activity are in the same and equal state at that particular moment. However, during the process of organising a temple event, different authorities engage and harmonise with each other before, during, and after it. The condition breaks down the social
status between the people and places them on the same level. Since the relationship between society and ritual interacts with everyday Taiwanese life, it crosses the line of religion and locality; furthermore, it structures and re-structures the social order and offers a dynamic power to the culture. The social drama concept interprets the break-down and reformulated ritual phenomenon in the society; however, what is fascinating in the Bajiajiang ritual is the negotiation of pre-arranged issues, such as the arrangements between troupes, local authorities, and temple fair organisations. To some extent, a Bajiajiang performance is not just a ritual practice about the demi gods to present their mythical power to its followers, nor for the pilgrims to worship their gods, but more importantly, it is an arena for different authorities to show off their strengths.

According to Chen, the main impulse underlying traditional Daoist folk belief is utilitarian (Chen, 1995, p. 18). The people prayed to the gods for their personal needs, whether it was to have good fortune or simply blessings of health and peace. Later on, as society modernised and the living standards of society improved, bringing a higher quality of life, religious concerns have become less important to many people. For that reason, ritual activity has started to be seen as both religion and entertainment by some people. Sutton (2003b) raised some of the reasons why people need this kind of social activity in a modern society. He suggested that local authority in the ritual encourages folk events to flourish; however, for most insiders (the locals), another important reason is the local representative and the local identity issues that are engaged in Bajiajiang troupes (Lu, 2002, p. 5-6; Sutton, 2003b, p. 111). Consequently, in addition to the authorities of the organisations, for a Bajiajiang performance to be seen as successful, the interaction and favourable responses of the local residents are also vital.
In his book and article, Sutton referred to ‘Infernal Generals’ (2003b, pp. 3-4; 1990, p. 543), which is described as Bajiajiang in this thesis, as a popular form of religious performance in Taiwan. According to him, this performance is very different to other Taiwanese ritual troupes due to its adherence to strict taboos and its resistance to change (1990, p. 551). However, from Sutton’s complete ‘outsider’s’ point of view (a foreigner’s angle), the connection between change and society that is explained only from ethnographical and historical perspectives does not provide a clear explication of how the interaction and transformation occur in either Bajiajiang or Taiwanese culture. Based on the existing research of Bajiajiang troupes and their relationship with the wider society this religious ritual not only expresses how Bajiajiang maintains social order during its performance, but it also offers an example of how a religious performance benefits a culture. As Sutton revealed, ‘social, economic, political reasons have acted as a strong stimulus to local religion’ (2003a, p. 2). These issues that have been raised by Sutton are critical to the current development of Bajiajiang. In describing the ritual, Sutton adopted some theatrical terms. For instance, when examining the authority shift and mediation between gods and ghosts in the ritual, Sutton stated, ‘liminality, Victor Turner pointed out, is a zone of creativity and power. The constant liminal shifting between yin and yang in myth confers the powers of mediation and transformation mobilized in ritual performance’ (p. 111). Moreover, the term ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner, 1967) was used to express the Bajiajiang performers as typical mediators in between the gods’ and the ghosts’ worlds in the culture (p. 111). Nonetheless, these statements are mainly used to explain the position of Bajiajiang characters in the god world (yang) and the underworld (yin). Since the status of performers in Bajiajiang is always changing and transforming during the ritual, the ‘betwixt and between’ state of liminality deserve further examination, not limited to the performer, but also extending to the possibility of how it influences the transformative effect.
In a traditional Bajiajiang ritual, performers ‘act as’ demi gods and perform in front of an audience.\textsuperscript{39} They are aware of who they are (as performers rather than demi gods) and create a liminal space for the pilgrims to achieve their religious needs. Bajiajiang ritual in religious events provides a rite of passage to its followers, as Rowe (2008) has revealed in his discussion of Turner’s liminality, ‘the state and process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status’ (Turner, 1977, p. 33) (as cited in St. John, 2008, p. 127). Through their ritual participation, on the one hand, pilgrims fulfil their wishes via the religious and ritualized behaviour; on the other hand, the spiritual offerings (from the gods) strengthen the position of Bajiajiang troupes via the gathering of the pilgrims.

However, in the past decade, the Bajiajiang ritual has undergone a kind of transformation. The ritual no longer serves the gods and the followers only, but aims to develop a distinct aesthetic style so as to enrich the performative aspect. Based on these trends, the Bajiajiang ritual should be both a liminal activity and a liminoid activity. Furthermore, the awareness of ‘who I am’ plays a vital role in creating the ‘in between’ status. Simply speaking, the sacred activity breaks down the boundaries between people and their social status within a short and shared time and space. However, whilst most participants know what is

\textsuperscript{39} In a traditional Bajiajiang ritual performance, performers do not experience possession by the gods. In his description of Five Manifestations Temple to Spur Heaven in Chishan, Pingdong County, Sutton witnessed possession in the troupe and suggested the possession procedure plays an important role helping the performers engage with the characters they act. Therefore, he suggested that in some Bajiajiang performances, the ‘additional’ help from the gods (it means possession here) bring the performers the ability to perform. However, from my personal interviews with some experts and some Bajiajiang performers, they do not completely agree that this phenomenon should be happening in Bajiajiang performances (Wu, 2005; Lu, 2002; Fang, 2010; Wu, 2011)
happening, and where they are going, they each willingly and individually enter the performance world. This personal engagement with the ritual could make the group activity becomes less religious and more private for both the followers and also to the Bajiajiang performers. This explains why taboos for the troupes and pilgrims may be negotiable and changeable. Furthermore, being between liminal and liminoid provides a capacity for some Bajiajiang troupes to become non-religious.

Sutton argued that, based on the Chinese cosmology, Bajiajiang is the shift between yin and yang. Therefore, everything in a Bajiajiang performance has an inseparable relation to these two key cosmological forces (2003a, p. 166-219). From the group choreography to the individual face painting, the concepts in Chinese Cosmology offer basic patterns. How the different elements work in Bajiajiang performance with yin and yang is well examined in Sutton’s research. However, from my understanding and other Taiwanese scholars’ research (Huang, 2006; Chuang, 2004; Kang, 2002; Wang, 2001; Tsai, 2001; Wu, 2000), not every young performer nowadays has full knowledge of the Chinese cosmology. Therefore, how the understanding of the Chinese cosmology affects both the performance and the performers during the ritual requires more observation and discussion. Moreover, when strict and systemic training becomes the main strategy for Bajiajiang performers to portray and perform in front of its audience, a new balance emerges between functioning as gods’ representatives and performing as Bajiajiang performers.

Taboo as another vital aspect of Bajiajiang deserves a further consideration since its root in Chinese cosmology almost always function as a principle in the religious activity. Several essentially strict taboos maintain the tradition of the Bajiajiang ritual. Whereas researches on Bajiajiang troupes frequently focused on taboos and injunctions, they have not discussed the negative function of the performance limitation and thus provided some room for
negotiation instead. Durkheim asserted that the negative cult is the point of access to the positive cult (2008, p. 230). In the light of it, taboo in the Bajiajiang ritual has the same function in reaching a positive end. Although most Bajiajiang troupe leaders state that they obey the taboos inheriting from their masters and passing them down to the new generation, it cannot be denied that many of the taboos are not the same as in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{40}

According to Sutton, the demand for change in modern Bajiajiang troupes is occurring (2003a, pp. 144-145), and at the same time, some of the ritual taboos are unaltered. Sutton’s argument makes sense because the competitive atmosphere prevailing among the Bajiajiang troupes indeed causes the ever-changing status of the performance. However, he does not provide an in-depth discussion of what Bajiajiang ritual taboos truly means to its members. While the reasons for the alternations of Bajiajiang taboos may vary, the goals of the ritual stay the same. It is common to see that Bajiajiang troupes still obey the cults, but develop their own methods for reorienting their pilgrims towards their taboos. In other words, as long as a Bajiajiang troupe still ‘acts’ as Bajiajiang in festive events, the taboos have normally would not be questioned. This is the way the negotiation of taboos exists. Therefore, even being changed, taboos in Bajiajiang provide fundamental structures to the religious activity.

During his fieldwork in southern Taiwan in 1988-1992, Sutton visited a number of Bajiajiang troupes in the area, including the historical troupes and their newly developed branches (brotherhood/friendship troupe). With his background in anthropology, Sutton let the

\textsuperscript{40} For instance, according to Shi (1984), one of the taboos in Bajiajiang ritual is that, for seven nights before they perform, the performers have to sleep under the table where the god’s status is placed; performers are not allowed to talk from the moment they have make-up on until the ritual is finished, and so on. Many of these taboos are not necessarily followed by most Bajiajiang troupe nowadays, perhaps due to the modern society lifestyle and personal convenience (Mr. Fang and Mr. Wu, 2010).
performance tell a troupe’s history and reconstruction of a troupe’s origin and underlying culture. Thus, he avoided learning history from the heroic legends often involved in a troupe’s history (2003a, p. 7). What Sutton suggested is that the various dancing choreographies, make-up, costumes, and props in Bajiajiang troupes provide useful information for observers to gather the historical connection between different troupes. At the time when Sutton conducted his research into Bajiajiang ritual (1990s), the performance was deeply reliant on temple organised events, such as gods’ birthdays and jiao (a Daoism ritual). However, in the last decade, the aim of the ritual not only included religious aspects but also provides entertainment for different occasions. This argument reflects what Sutton revealed about the ‘renao’ atmosphere in the culture.\footnote{Renao: populous, lively, prosperous, to liven up, bustling, mirthful, flourishing, to have a jolly time.} The Bajiajiang ritual plays a vital role in attracting audiences to temple fairs, so the more attention they get from the public, the more chance for them to receive extra income. Some Bajiajiang and related troupes even perform for non-religious or commercial occasions in order to earn more money, and in the past few years, have begun to be considered as simply performances (Fang, 2010, 21\textsuperscript{st} April). Sutton’s arguments were based on the performances he had witnessed in southern Taiwan. In the 1990s, when the temple events were still almost the only venue for Bajiajiang, ’a troupe depend[ed] on the market because it must do what its changing audiences expect and will lose out to others if it fails, yet it must also justify (or deny) artistic innovation in the light of tradition’ (Sutton, 2003a, p. 11). This statement suggests that the Bajiajiang had changed as much for the audience as for decisions among the troupe for the transformation of the religious ritual; nevertheless, it did not state why the changes were demanded and what those changes were, and for what audience they were made. Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid approach (2003, first revealed in his book
Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid concept provides a perspective from which to examine the relationship between theatre and ritual. From the theatrical perspective, Bajiajiang acts as a ritual practice that is also a performance; it contains the multifarious components - the performers, the training, the transformation process, and the engagement with the location and the participants. From a religious perspective, this ritual is efficacious because it offers its adherents a formal and complete route to express their feelings to their gods. In addition, it also establishes and restructures a balance with the local community. On the other hand, to non-followers it is entertainment in which they can take part. Most of the audience view the ritual performance with an appreciation, whether they believe in the religion or not. Although the performance itself is religious, people accept it as a part of their lifestyle because the ritual is performed in public areas, such as on the streets and in the marketplace. Pilgrims believe that the performance catches unhappy ghosts who might hurt them, so they welcome the performers who visit and engage with them in order to receive protection and blessings. Others view this ritual as a professional entertainment. Being so intertwined with peoples’ lives, this religious activity is generally accepted and welcomed by both insiders and outsiders (as long as respect is shown), not because of where or how it is performed, but rather because it represents the spirit of the community (Lu, 2002, p. 6). This phenomenon shows that these days, a Bajiajiang ritual should not only be considered as a pure religious activity; instead, since it is also entertainment, the environment in which it is performed needs to be evaluated.

Schechner has noted that efficacy and entertainment are not opposed to each other, and that no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment (2003, p. 71).
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(Richard Schechner, 2003, p. 130)

This table illustrates the relationship between efficacy/ritual and entertainment/theatre. The factors that are listed in the table show that Bajiajiang could be viewed as a ritual performance and exists somewhere between ritual and theatre. For observers, including adherents and the onlookers (or non-followers), the ritual contains both the features which Schechner revealed - it could be a ritual of religious belief and it can be an amusement; the audience shares the experience whether they have the same belief or not. It is performed in symbolic time and in the present time. The performers may be possessed or in a trance, but most of the time, they know what they are doing. The audience watches and also participates. Not all of the audience believes in the ritual, but they all appreciate the performance. Criticism should be discouraged but it is no longer an issue due to the more competitive ambiance and the authority representation in between communities. Finally,
although individual creativity is not encouraged in traditional Bajiajiang troupes, creativity and freedom that are grounded in the original principles (such as traditional Chinese cosmology and taboos) can be found in dancing patterns and face paintings in the performance. The line between efficacy/ritual and entertainment/theatre is blurred in Bajiajiang performance in present-day Taiwan. This phenomenon also proves that if this religious ritual is only considered as a social activity or folk belief, then it cannot be properly understood.

In addition, for the participants, to engage in a religious event is to be blessed by the gods, and for the most part, a Bajiajiang performance is only a part of the whole ritual rather than the centrepiece. Therefore, the artistic merit of a Bajiajiang performance is sometimes ignored by the participants. However, many Bajiajiang troupes regard Bajiajiang performance before the audience not only as a religious duty, but also as a glory for their locality. Therefore, apart from offering blessings to pilgrims in their demi god duty, they also consider festivals as arenas for them to show off their performances in public. Also, the attitudes of ‘being different’ and ‘standing out’ encourage the development of Bajiajiang troupes and create a competitive atmosphere at temple fairs. Nevertheless, while new elements are adapted into the ritual, Bajiajiang is still a performance based on Daoism, and its fundamental principles such as taboos and traditional Chinese cosmology are the centres to which they serve. As a result, when Bajiajiang troupes are improving themselves by providing various and extravagant performances, the importance of taboo-keeping has not declined; instead, it has become even more vital for Bajiajiang troupes. Sutton argued, in a similar vein:

[...] modernity is not a simple polar opposite of “tradition”. The very act of re-exploring and reaffirming what have come to be defined as traditional ways is an aspect of
modernity. There is always the possibility that organised competitions and touring exhibitions of “folk customs” will turn religion into mere folklore. By the 1990s these modern innovations were few and sporadic, and did not interfere with the conventional gods’ festival (2003b, p. 297).

Modern Biajiang troupes are re-exploring and reaffirming their strengths by obeying the traditional customs and not interfering with gods’ festivals. However, at the time when Sutton was doing his research into Biajiang ritual, the aim of the ritual was simpler than now. Although he mentioned that the competition and touring exhibitions might have brought some changes to the ritual events in the 1990s, he was not able to predict the current trend of Biajiang transformation. This transformation is occurring not only because of individual development in different troupes, but most importantly the diverse and sometimes subversive authorities involved in these ritual practices. Due to the need for entertaining and financial goals of Biajiang performances, more new forms of presentation, such as the welcoming and temple greeting ceremonies, take place in temple events as well as on stage (as concert performances) in modern-day Taiwan. To some extent, the function of Biajiang is no longer simply religious. Instead, other needs like political propaganda, entertaining and aesthetic concerns, local financial and commercial interests, and local authorities, all clashing as well as cooperating, continuously affect the ritual transformation. This phenomenon encourages the growth in both the quality and quantity of Biajiang troupes across Taiwan. The traditional and modern elements in Biajiang troupes not only influence its expansion, but also represent new attitudes of both the troupes and the audience.

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42 Two examples of both religious and commercial troupes are the Na-Cha Studio of Folk Art (originally from the capital city Taipei) and the Joutien Biajiang Troupe (originally from Taichung City). They have performed for temple events at temple fairs as well as on proper theatre stage on some occasions.
Sutton moreover, raised the question whether, in fact, the Taiwanese believe in the gods (2003b, p. 294)? He was asked if he felt the god’s presence when he witnessed a ritual in 1994. Aside from the question of believing in gods, this does bring up the question of how a Bajiajiang performance expresses the belief system to the pilgrims as well as to the audience. ‘Rather than belief being demonstrated in ritual, the actions of ritual mark acceptance. Taking part in ritual events acknowledges that the gods exist, and the more one participates, the stronger that acceptance becomes’ (ibid, p. 295). In this statement, Sutton acknowledges how folk belief functions in a culture - the more often one participates in the ritual, the more blessings one receives from the gods. In addition, he also pointed out the engagement and interaction between the ritual and Taiwanese culture. Sutton’s approach showed that the quantity of blessings that the gods offer is reliant on the extent of a participant’s involvement. This also applies to any troupes’ involvement in Taiwanese religious society. However, this research stresses how a performance contributes to the ritual in modern Taiwanese society. Not only the performance itself, but the construction of the ritual, including the processes and other small rituals that are offered by the performance, play a vital role in structuring and strengthening the power of belief. Therefore, the power that is brought out from the performance is stronger than the belief itself.

Sutton argued that the functions of escorting, exorcising, and dancing, which were defined by him as the ‘outer ritual’ (2003a, p. 45), have merged in the Bajiajiang ritual. According to him, outer rituals serve all general functions to followers. By contrast, ‘inner rituals’ are those activities that are behind the scene, which include the actor’s training, inauguration, possession, and taboos. Sutton suggested that outer rituals demonstrate authority and inner rituals lay the groundwork for it (ibid, p. 48). The structure of the religious ritual does not differ from many theatre productions; however, since the involvement of the
authorities is more complex in the religious production, the presentation of it is more unpredictable. Sutton’s argument to some extent interpreted not only how a Bajiajiang ritual is framed but also suggested the importance of the authorities' involvement in it. As mentioned, a Bajiajiang performance is always affected by many other issues in the society - from gods, troupe leadership, organisational bodies, political issues to local businesses and gangs - every element is accounted for in the performance. Therefore, although inner rituals in a Bajiajiang performance fulfil a crucial function for its pilgrims, the outer rituals are the keys to affecting a performance presentation. Sutton’s research shows a wide and deep knowledge of Bajiajiang troupes and how they existed in 1990s. However, the examples that he chose to explain the ritual are based only in southern Taiwan and are limited and out of date. Although the original concept of the ritual itself has not changed substantially since his fieldwork was done, the religious activity appears to have a different role in society today.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has been a review of research that has been done on the Bajiajiang ritual by other scholars. The main focuses of these studies were on the history of the troupes, the process of the ritual, and the interaction between the ritual and the society. Although Bajiajiang as a ritual performance is popular across Taiwan, most information that has been chosen to study is still based on the troupes in southern Taiwan. This is likely related to the accessibility of individual troupes and the personal choice of the researchers. In order to provide more comprehensive understanding of the ritual, my study adopts some theatrical and performance theories to examine Bajiajiang, using fieldwork to trace the trends in the ritual performance today. Existing Bajiajiang research projects frequently have asserted that the ritual itself has not changed significantly since it was created; however, studies and
media reports have indicated that variety in performances of Bajiajiang troupes is happening. The different appearance does not mean that the original meaning of the ritual has changed, but all the signs show that the capacity and possibility of the religious activity could be influenced by its surrounding environment. By looking beyond the gap in historical and social studies, theatrical and performance analysis offer a more comprehensive understanding of the ritual and its relationship to the culture of Taiwan.

In order to provide an overall plan for this research, the next chapter explains the methodology and describes the fieldwork work plan for this project. The methods are adopted from theatre, performance, and ethnographic studies. After explaining the research methods and their significance, the next chapter elucidates the chosen areas and their importance in favour of understanding Bajiajiang performance. Finally, I discuss the further opportunities for research.
Chapter Three - Research Design

While most of the existing studies of Bajiajiang ritual have focused on the status of Bajiajiang troupes, its interaction with the local community, and the influences it brings to the society, a discussion of how rituals are capable of providing and generating a dynamic balance in the culture has rarely been mentioned. In order to conduct an in-depth examination about the role that the ritual plays in society, I participated in several important temple fairs in Taiwan and scrutinised the interactive relationship between the ritual, the function transformation, and its relationship to the society. This chapter provides the research methods that I adopted for this thesis, and their significance in examining the Bajiajiang ritual, followed by a fieldwork plan for the Bajiajiang performances and troupes in which I participated during the research period.

The first part in this chapter focuses on my methodology, which centred on performance analysis and ethnography. By inspecting the religious ritual with performance analysis, I clarify the aim of it, explain how it is able to play an important role for people to achieve their religious desire, and discuss its correlative influences to the society. The existing studies of Bajiajiang ritual in the last decade have shown that nearly every troupe has developed its own identity, and some of them have even transformed from religious troupes to multi-functional performance groups. In order to reveal the relationship between ritual identity and community, and furthermore, to discuss the significance of the ritual transformation, ethnographic research methods have played a vital role in grounding and conducting this thesis. Performance analysis was used to analyse the data. By using this to examine the ritual performance and then, introducing ethnographic methods that apply to this research, perspectives on analysing the social order behinds the ritual and its
significance could be presented.

After discussing the methods that are adopted for the ritual, the second part of the chapter is the fieldwork plan of Bajiajiang ritual participation and its relevance to the methodology. It includes selected events and their significance as well as the limitations of this research. In this chapter, I endeavour to frame a practical plan for doing my research and identify the focus of this thesis, as well as provide an overview of how I expect to answer my research questions.

3.1 Methodology

In recent years, Bajiajiang performance has been acknowledged as a national event in Taiwanese society. On the one hand, the troupes perform as representatives of gods in the ritual for their religious goals; on the other, Bajiajiang troupes also play a vital role in representing their places of origin, which could be a small community, a village, a town, or even a county. Similar to some other distinct rituals in other countries, such as the Balinese Barong Dance and Indian traditional dances, Bajiajiang performance is based in folkloric culture. Performers act in the way that locals expect them to and deliver gods’ blessings to people. However, for an audience which is not familiar with the cultural background, sometimes the first impression given by a Bajiajiang troupe is that of an eye-catching performance without too much additional meaning to it. For this reason, I first document Bajiajiang performances using techniques of performance analysis before complementing this with some ethnographic methods to elucidate the multiple functions of this performance ritual.
In this section, first of all, I focus on how the ritual could be viewed as a performance. Although Bajiajiang rituals are normally discussed as a religious or folk element in Taiwanese culture, how they have become a dynamic system for the society requires further emphasis. As revealed in previous chapters, the communication between the ritual and the culture is constantly occurring, involving troupe leaders, training masters, organisations, political issues and local gangs, as well as the locals. Performance analysis could facilitate answering the question of how the ritual has been transformed. Furthermore, it could help to develop an understanding of the continuous changes in the performance, the negotiations among different authorities, as well as how it has been adjusted to engage with the society from generation to generation. This analysis also uses methods that are adopted from ethnography, which include participant observation, reflexivity, interviews and visual ethnography, and thick description. By examining the ritual with these elements of ethnography, Bajiajiang’s significance to the people and its social meanings beyond religion will be illuminated.

3.1.1 Performance Analysis

Bajiajiang incorporates several necessary steps similar to the procedures in a performance. According to Wu (2000) and Sutton (2003a), the concept of Chinese cosmology is the most vital element that influences Bajiajiang’s make-up patterns and its choreography. From the basic individual performer’s appearance, gestures, poses, and dance training to group dance choreography, a Bajiajiang performance does not only represent the gods’ images and deliver blessings to people, it also presents a performance with the philosophy and aesthetics that are expressed in Chinese cosmology. In Taiwanese folk society, this provides a basic aesthetic sense to most Daoism rituals, and Bajiajiang is one of them. For that reason, in order to understand how Bajiajiang ritual is structured, and to recognise how it plays its
role in balancing a society and religion, it is essential to observe how the ritual acts as a performance as well as how it merges with people’s daily lives.

In the past, the Bajiajiang ritual was considered solely a product of religious or folk belief in Taiwanese society. Recently, scholars and others have begun to view its artistic side. As noted, the visual impact is the most direct impression that affects a Bajiajiang audience. However, what grounds the ritual and supports it to operate in the religious culture should not be ignored. In order to comprehend the ritual and the society, I conducted the research by participating in selected temple fairs where Bajiajiang troupes perform to examine the relationship between ritual and performance. Additionally, Ubersfeld and Pavis’s questionnaires (2003, pp. 34-38) for Western text-based performance were used. Since a traditional Bajiajiang performance is neither a text-based nor a staged actors/audience performance form, most of the chosen questions were more related to my understanding, which is based on the participant observation method in ethnography, rather than gathering responses from the audience. As a result, concepts of Ubersfeld and Pavis’s questionnaires were adapted and further developed into a systematic sequence for this research in order to gain a better understanding. The answers that were gathered from the following steps illuminate the reality of this ritual performance.

-Steps to identify Bajiajiang ritual performance

1. Understanding the performance

   (1) How does the audience know about the performance? (How are the events introduced to the audience?) What do they know about it (in general impressions as well as knowledge of a particular troupe)?

   (2) How does the performance locate itself in relation to historicity? (The changes to
the performance, diversity of modern elements, and how they engage with the traditions)

2. The space

(1) Relationship between audience space and performing space.

(2) How does the performance locate itself in (urban) space? (Locality, target audience, assumed desire, the surroundings, relationship to the locals’ everyday lives.)

(3) Principles of structuring/organising space

   A. Relationships before, during and after the performance. (Where the preparation work is done - in a public area or in private places, where the performance is performed in the event, the entire routine of the performance.)

   B. What are the visible and invisible spaces in the performance? (How does personal feeling and the ritual interact?)

3. Communication

(1) What is the social function of the performance: construction of convention (the training and the rehearsals)?

(2) The authority in the performance group/team. (The authority of the event organisations, the political matter, the leadership in a troupe, as well as local authority, such as the gang system and economic issues)?

(3) What does the performance bring to the culture and how does it fit in modern society (What are the multiple functions of the ritual)?

4. Performers

(1) Physical description of individual characters about their gestures, poses, bodily movements, facial expression, and make-up patterns, as well as some vital changes in their appearance in the last few decades.
(2) Construction of character - performer/role relationship (the transformation process).

(3) How Bajiajiang performers consider the taboos and their understanding of Chinese cosmology in favour of performing.

(4) Relationship between performers and their troupe during the performance: movements, ensemble relations, leadership.

(5) Music and movements; surrounding noise.

(6) Status of the performer: amateur/occupational troupes, professional situation, and reasons to perform.

(7) What actors gain or wish to gain from performing.

5. Spectators’ reception

(1) How do participants perceive/understand/interpret the performance?

(2) Any notable reactions of the participants?

(3) What images, scenes, themes caught most of the participants’ attention?

6. What are the differences between different troupes? Are they memorable?

As Bajiajiang is traditionally performed in an open space, there are many unpredictable incidents which can take place during a performance. Consequently, even the same troupe’s performances for different events could still be different. Since there are too many uncertainties, doing fieldwork for different troupes at different temple fairs becomes necessary to understand the ritual from the performance perspective. Moreover, since a traditional religious Bajiajiang performance requires an audience’s imagination to complete, observing and participating in the ritual at different events accounts for the interaction between it and its audience. By means of observer participation, the significance of ‘space’ in the ritual is examined, which includes the actual performing space, the space between the performers and the participants, the liminal and liminoid space that the
performance creates for the limited time and space, and the internal mental space that belongs to individuals. The physical distance and the psychological space that is created by the troupe and the audience during Bajiajiang performances can be complicated. The actual performing space means the performing area and the visible surrounding environment. While performing, Bajiajiang performers constantly define the performing area by using their dancing steps, which in addition, outlines the boundary between them and the audience. Due to this performance style, the audience moves physically with the troupe in order to give enough room for the performers to dance while the ritual is happening. Nonetheless psychologically, space is conceived as invisible, unlimited, and linked to its users, determined by their coordinates, movements, and trajectory - space as not a substance to be filled, but expanded and extended (Pavis, 2003, p. 150). Therefore, to some extent, the space is both limited and unlimited.

As mentioned, there is another invisible space, the objective, external space - the liminal space (Turner, 1967) in this ritual. Liminal space 'marks the separation (more or less clear, but always irremovable) between stage and auditorium, or between staged and backstage space.' According to Pavis, 'liminality is more or less clearly demarcated, for example, by footlights, candles, the 'circle of attention' traced mentally by actors to isolate themselves from the gaze of others' (2003, p. 151). Based on his approach, when participants become engaged with Bajiajiang performance, a liminal space is created. This atmosphere allows the performers and the audience to re-site themselves in the ritual, and it creates a new state that offers an invisible space in which they can take part. Bajiajiang, as a religious ritual performance, plays the role of leading its audience to the invisible world for their individual satisfactions. In other words, the liminal state, which is created by a Bajiajiang ritual during its performance, could be regarded as a method that conducts participants to enter the liminal space. Since the virtual space between a troupe and its audience is always undefined.
during the performance, the liminal state is constantly shifting, uniting, and separating. For that reason, when observing a Bajiajiang ritual performance, noting the interaction between the performers and the audience become vital, and this is why this shift-unite-separate status in the ritual is worthy of consideration, rather than just the performance itself.

Another space is the ‘internal space’. Pavis argued that internal space is the representation evoked by the *mise-en-scène*, whose processes of displacement or condensation could be analysed. The stage becomes adrenalised space where dream mechanisms can be represented, and into which spectators can project themselves (2003, p. 155). This approach explains the phenomenon of the liminal space in Bajiajiang performance. On the one hand, participants project themselves and seek what they wish to gather from the ritual; on the other hand, performers also reflect themselves by performing as gods’ representatives. At this stage, the liminal state that occurs in the ritual not only creates an opportunity for both performers and participants to engage their minds to the belief, it also offers a room for them to locate themselves in their personal world. Although the shared liminal space is owned by the performers and the audience, the internal space only belongs to the individuals.

Additionally, even though many changes have been made and are ongoing in Bajiajiang performance, the belief that its pilgrims hold is still solid. In Taiwanese society, most Bajiajiang followers catch up with the changes, respect, and accept them without questioning. While this phenomenon shows that the folk belief itself still plays the central role in the ritual, it does not mean that troupes have the freedom to be totally creative in a performance all the time. Taboos still are one of the most important elements in keeping the tradition. However, while most people still consider Bajiajiang as a traditional form of
religious performance, it cannot be denied that in the past decade, the ritual has been transforming rapidly. By adapting the principles and cults that were passed down from their predecessors and gradually adding more modern elements to it, the transformation in Bajiajiang ritual performances has become noticeable to its followers. In order to inspect the disciplines and acceptances of taboo adjustments in the ritual, as well as how these factors influence the development of a Bajiajiang ritual performance in contemporary Taiwan, performance analysis plays a vital role in favour of recognising the trend of the religious activity. Furthermore, analysing the performance aspect of the ritual, gives a perception of how those ongoing changes exist in the society, how they structure the culture, how performance is restructured in a modern society, and how people co-operate with them in the ritual.

3.1.2 Ethnography

In order to gather direct source and data of Bajiajiang ritual, ethnography plays a vital role for this research. Important information which was gathered from the field will be examined and analysed with ethnographic and performance studies. Ethnographic research requires one to stay in a certain place for a period of time, watching what people do, listening to what is said, collecting data, interviewing people, and attempting to understand how and why things are done from both subjective and objective perspective. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and O’Reilly (2005), by participating in and observing the setting, researchers should not only see, listen to, and note details of their surroundings; they also have to let themselves get involved with the people and the setting. Because I am Taiwanese, I have the advantage of sharing the same cultural background and main language with the locals, which shortened the time necessary for learning a new culture;
nevertheless, it also raised the issue of being native.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, learning a familiar culture from a scholar’s angle and attempting to avoid some subject judgement is essential. For that reason, when observing and participating in Bajiajiang rituals, I alternated between being a local religious participant and an academic researcher when necessary. By doing so, the advantages of being an insider can exist in conjunction with the scholarly, more objective perspective. The following are some appropriate ethnographic methods that have been chosen and explained for this project. Advantages and disadvantages of using ethnographic research methods are also discussed.

-Participant Observation

By engaging in participant observation, I would first highlight the significance of the visual elements in the ritual (such as the dance choreography, the make-up patterns, the costumes and props, and so on). Secondly, how participants were engaged with the ritual when it was operating would be examined. Thirdly, some side effects, such as the growth of business in the local area and the emergence of local authority, which might not be directly related to the religious activity in the first place (Sutton, 2003, pp. 56-57), would also be examined through observing and participating in the ritual.

The ritual performance aims to satisfy the needs of its pilgrims in the first place; nonetheless, while it takes place in open areas, everyone in the same space is considered to be a part of it. Therefore, ‘being there’ holds a different significance for different individuals. For some participants, the Bajiajiang ritual may be an activity for a pure religious healing, a way to receive blessings from the gods, to experience the joy of watching a ritual performance, or

\textsuperscript{43} Further explanation will be given in this section.
simply gathering together with other participants. For others, the ritual that occurs around them is an exhibition, which does not have a religious meaning to them. Recognising the sequence of a Bajiajiang ritual and its interaction with local community and the wider society, the meaning of being there deserves further examination.

Furthermore, due to the development of the ritual, nowadays a Bajiajiang performance not only acts as a religious practice, but has also become a tourist attraction during religious festivals in Taiwan. In order to gain attention from the public, many temples, communities, and counties even promote their local Bajiajiang troupes as their representatives. With its great relevance to the local community, the ritual has been transformed from a pure religious activity to a multiple function performance troupe that meets the diverse needs of the society. This phenomenon encourages the development of Bajiajiang ritual, and distinguishes its performance styles by locals. The trend of Bajiajiang ritual transformation is a result of inquiries from people and its foundation in Daoism. The responses from its pilgrims and social demands constantly influence the development of Bajiajiang troupes. In order to satisfy people’s diverse needs, the functions and performances they provide have to change. As a result, the capacity of the ritual is limited by its religious aspects, but at the same time, it is expanded by the variable social functions it performs. In order to provide a better understanding of the ritual and its operation within society, the iterative-inductive approach, which was discussed by Karen O’Reilly (2005, p. 17) was used. This method draws on a family of methods: having direct contact with participants during the ritual, watching what happens at the event, listening to what is said, asking questions and producing a written account that respects the participants and locals, as well as evaluating the researcher’s own role, and that of the performers and participants as individual elements of the performance.
To gain the best results from the iterative-inductive approach, researchers must situate themselves in an appropriate position while engaging the research, where they can gather constructive data and analyse it validly. For this research project, it was especially vital to shift roles among a researcher, a participant, and an observer. Doing Bajiajiang research requires sensitivity of posing with different roles for dissimilar occasions, especially when there are different authorities involved. For instance, Bajiajiang troupes and locals are normally welcoming toward outsiders who wish to enjoy the events, even if they have a different religious background; however, they are not always very open-minded towards people questioning their traditions and taboos. During the ritual, it is a principle that participants follow the taboos and respect them; nevertheless, due to the constraints of time, what the taboos are is not always announced to the public. Moreover, since most local people consider these customs as part of their daily life, it is expected that most of those who attend the ritual are already aware of the taboos beforehand. This reinforces the importance of knowing and understanding the culture before going into the field, particularly in events such as Bajiajiang and other religious rituals. As the approach of Rock (2001) shows, ethnography is not characteristically undertaken in the field at all, but in the library (as cited in O’Reilly, ibid, p. 23). Without studying a background of the research before going to the field, a researcher may encounter unpredictable situations and fail to gather helpful information. This also explains why documentary research is essential for this Bajiajiang ritual performance research project.

According to Fetterman (1998), ‘doing ethnography [one] is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native’s point of view, the better the story and the better the science’ (1998, p. 2). However, without supportive theory, a researcher’s approach might not be able to define and tackle the problem (ibid, p. 5). He also argued that the most important element of fieldwork is being there - to
observe, to ask seemingly stupid, but often insightful questions (ibid, p. 9). Therefore, as a researcher, in order to gather some useful information from the fieldwork, it is essential to learn the key research questions before entering the field. Ultimately, an ethnographer’s task is not only to collect information from the emic\textsuperscript{44} or insider’s perspective but also to make sense of all the data from an etic\textsuperscript{45} or external social scientific perspective (ibid, p. 11; Chen, 2001, p. 28). By adjusting my status between an insider and an outsider while in the field, the different data that is gathered from multifaceted perspectives with ethnographic methods contributed my understanding of Bajiapiang ritual as theatre.

In this research project, one of the biggest challenges has been to express a foreign culture and its cultural product - Bajiapiang ritual performance to complete outsiders. The emphasis of being emic and etic interprets how I located myself as a researcher in the field. Since I share the same social background as Bajiapiang troupes, I had no problem with understanding the language. However, I still needed to learn key jargon that is used in the ritual; additionally, some of the Taiwanese language needed to be learnt in order to lessen the difficulties of communicating with the local dialect.\textsuperscript{46} Even though I had the same cultural background as the target groups, for them I was still an outsider. Furthermore, my awareness of the distinctive Taiwanese culture diminishes the possibility of being too judgmental. My position in this research not only encounters the half emic and half etic\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{44} Emic: the ‘insider’s’ or ‘native’s’ interpretation of or ‘reasons’ for his or her customs/beliefs. What things mean to the members of a society. [source: http://www2.ceu.edu/~kdahl/emicdef.html]

\textsuperscript{45} Etic: the external researcher's interpretation of the same customs/beliefs. What things mean from an analytical, anthropological perspective. [source: http://www2.ceu.edu/~kdahl/emicdef.html]

\textsuperscript{46} Although Mandarin is the official language in Taiwan, the majority language that is used in temple fairs and Daoism rituals is Taiwanese. Many elders do not speak fluent Mandarin and Taiwanese is the only way for them to communicate. I speak fluent Mandarin but not Taiwanese. Therefore, before I go to the field, I have to learn the Taiwanese language so that I can communicate with them.
situation in the field, but also the challenge to act as a storyteller who is responsible to interpret a culture through my own translation after leaving the field. Being aware of being a researcher in the field, I aimed to make the ethnographic research of Bajiajiang less subjective and more comprehensive. In order to achieve the answers for my research questions, I first viewed the ritual passively as a spectator, then actively participated in it. Then I finally engaged as a researcher with Bajiajiang troupes. During this process of being an outsider to becoming partly an insider, I could illuminate the ritual perceptive and the significance it has to the society.

As I was always an outsider, even if as a participant, understanding all the subtleties of the Bajiajiang was complex. For that reason, to gather further information on the Bajiajiang ritual, some appropriate informants and gatekeepers that could confirm the information of the chosen events became essential in the field. O’Reilly (2005), Fetterman (1998), and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have revealed the importance of informants and gatekeepers when conducting fieldwork in their studies. O’Reilly argued that informants could be very helpful for researchers to know the field better in a shorter time and make access easier.

Fetterman, on the other hand, (1998) not only cited the importance of interviewing one or two key actors or informants, but also examined the danger that key actors or informants might bring to the research. In order to gather useful information in a limited time, researchers might be led by the bias of key interviewees. For instance, every Bajiajiang troupe operates differently in Taiwan, and information that is provided by those interviewees when talking about one or another troupe can be subjective. Although a researcher is expected to make their own diagnosis when conducting a research, limited and partial information could mislead researchers and influence the result. Therefore,
taking great care while doing the fieldwork is essential (ibid, pp. 50-51). Whilst the awareness of information that is offered by key people in the field is well explained in Fetterman’s study, it is not simple to predict what might occur in the setting until the fieldwork is in process.

To avoid possible problems of interviewing selected interviewees for this research, I made contact in advance with several experienced religious experts, including scholars and regular event participants, and discussed the aim of my research of the ritual performance. During the conversation with them, I could find the most suitable and reliable key persons to consult or interview for this project. By doing this, I narrowed down the target troupes and events that I was able to observe in this short research project, and furthermore, gathered more specific answers for my questions.\(^{47}\) My key informants were found through some popular online forums and discussion boards of temple fairs in Taiwan. I was recommended to visit Mr. Fang’s blog and contact him.\(^{48}\) During the conversation with him, I found out that he had been a personal assistant of a Taiwanese folk expert, Professor Lin Mao-Hsien, for many years. He was very knowledgeable about temple fairs and rituals in Taiwan. Through Mr. Fang, I met Mr. Huang, a master’s student who was doing research into the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiadiang Troupe at that time. As a result, with their agreements, they were chosen to be my key informants. With their help, I gathered insider knowledge of particular troupes that was not always apparent to the public and was able to supplement it with my own observations. As suggested by Denzin & Lincoln (1994),

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\(^{47}\) Due to the geographical distance in between Taiwan and the UK, email and online discussion boards of temple events in Taiwan were the main sources that I used at the beginning stage of this research. After discussing my intent with some people, I chose some important temple fairs to participate in and planned a schedule of participation for 2010 and 2011.

\(^{48}\) Mr. Fang’s blog is available at http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/mangogreen.tw/.
researchers should gather as much information as possible and check it by triangulating. Triangulation allows researchers to combine different methods and provides a more exhaustive set of findings for the research project (pp. 214-215). In-depth narratives of the ritual occurrence are necessary to illustrate the circumstances, documents, interviews or conversations in the field. Furthermore, the researcher’s reflexivity is also necessary to provide information for triangulating, examining, and analysing.

By the same token, Brewer (2000) raised the danger of ‘going native.’ He argued that observers may lose their critical faculties and become an ordinary member of the field (p. 60). This problem increases when a ‘native’ observes ‘natives.’ As I am a researcher who shares the same culture and nationality with the people who are researched, it is not always easy to draw a line between me and the local people. Being a ‘native’ researcher, I might act as one of the participants who share the same beliefs with them; therefore, from a wider cultural background aspect, I consider myself as an insider. However, to Bajiajiang troupes, anyone who is not member of the troupe is an outsider. In other words, apart from the members of the troupe, no one is native (Wu & Fang, 17th May, 2011). This issue again reinforced the importance of finding the right gatekeepers who can help me locate myself in settings in a very limited time. Since most Bajiajiang troupes adjust their performances and principles due to different needs for diverse temple events, by observing troupes and their performances from a certain distance as an outsider, and interviewing key persons in those troupes, I sought to gather some inner information by listening to what was said and examining it, with what was done in settings. As a researcher and outsider, I expected to truthfully express the troupe performances through my narratives. In other words, with assistance from reliable gatekeepers, I aimed to shorten the distance when engaging with Bajiajiang troupes. From my viewpoint, some necessary distance to view the researched troupes was needed in bringing up less subjective arguments. In addition, this research
project does not aim to correct the history but to focus on the religious performance itself and the way it has developed in response to wider cultural changes.

As mentioned, religious events do not only stand for group activities in the community, but are also representations of local identities. However, in Bajiajiang culture that locality can simply mean the region of a troupe as well as which place a troupe represents at different events. Traditional practises such as showing off a troupe’s name and its region when it participates in temple fairs apply to the former situation. In the latter circumstance, however, being hired and acting as another temple’s representative can challenge the customs and is far more complicated. 49 This ‘acting as representative’ phenomenon encourages the development of troupes and influences the form of religious events. Even though, in general, a Bajiajiang ritual is well-known with its strict practitioners and taboos, I hypothesise that there is no standard construction of how a Bajiajiang troupe should operate in temple events. In order to clarify the status Bajiajiang troupes hold in religious occasions and identify how they co-operate with host temples and the locals, it is vital to observe individual troupes, and evaluate how some acceptable changes are made. Although sharing the same general culture was an advantage in my fieldwork for the sake of time and efficiency; nonetheless, previous knowledge and personal experience of the ritual could have obscured my noticing materials that would have been helpful in examining the transformation of the performance. By being aware of this issue, I sought to decrease the danger of ‘going native.’

49 More description and discussion of Bajiajiang troupe acting as other temple’s representative are provided in Chapter Four.
-Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the capacity of participants in rituals or display events to creatively employ stocks of shared cultural knowledge to explore, negotiate, comment on, or transform the culture itself (Berger and Negro, 2002, p. 64). An ethnographer has a critical attitude towards data and uses it in representing the social interaction between them and the researched field through their own presentation. The interpretation through the researcher’s perception is both personal and unique. The significance of ethnographic research is to gather useful data and analyse it. The importance of being reflexive when doing an ethnographical research should be stressed for this project. However, sometimes the foreshadowed questions may not be fitting for a particular setting and may lead to a problematic result. With considerable concerns and awareness of being reflexive, the role of a researcher in the research setting is crucial. Murillo (1999) has argued that critical ethnography could run the risk of an ‘overprivileging’ of the native and representing the voice of the oppressed as gallant, through an overly heroic portrayal (as cited in Groves, 2003). Groves (2003) further suggested that the ‘researchers’ and the ‘researched’ are both engaged in the production and performance of a public transcript through their constructed relationship, blurring the boundary between subject and object. Since I am a researcher who is studying her own communities, I am not only a researcher, but also one of the

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50 In their article ‘Bauman’s Verbal Art and the Social Organisation of Attention: The Role of Reflexivity in the Aesthetics of Performance,’ Berger and Negro state there are three terms of reflexivity: (1) the term is used in the analysis of language and sign systems, and in this case, reflexivity refers to the capacity of a language or sign system to refer to itself; (2) the term has been used in the context of ideas like attention, consciousness, subjectivity, and interaction; in this case it refers to the capacity of subjects to be aware of themselves as subjects and to be aware that they are the focus of another’s attention; (3) scholars in the tradition of symbolic anthropology have used the term reflexivity to refer to the capacity of participants in rituals or display events to creatively employ stocks of shared cultural knowledge to explore, negotiate, comment on, or transformation the culture itself (2002, pp. 63-64).
researched. Hytten (1998) argued that even though researchers are not in the setting simply to observe, record, and describe, but to interact with the researched in mutually beneficial ways, it cannot be ignored that most ethnographers are highly educated and socially privileged, and their analyses are legitimated and privileged over the local knowledge of the natives. Therefore, being a critical ethnographer, reflecting on the assumptions and frames brought to the research is more important than just self-reflection (pp. 99-100). With unpredictable issues that might happen in the field, I was mindful of my questions, noted the interaction with the researched, but always corrected my questions with information I received whenever it was needed. By doing this, I could be flexible while in the field, learning with the researched as an engaged participant, and benefit from my gathering not only from an insider’s perspective but also as an outsider so that I would be able to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the ritual performance.

Nevertheless, reflexivity can be a problem. Since I locate myself and look at a setting from a self-concerned angle, this self-involvement could lead the readers to a particular understanding of the setting and result in an incomplete representation. According to Groves (2003), it is important to engage in self-discovery and critical reflexivity so that a researcher can have a strong sense of the consequences of her multiple roles, identities, and positions as they interact with the others while in the field, so that they can produce a postcritical narrative (p. 108). In other words, being aware and adaptive to the changing researcher’s role illuminates settings more broadly, and makes it possible to reproduce the settings through partial data. Therefore, reflexivity could also be the solution - by making the partial facts unambiguous, the legitimation and representation of the data could be improved (Brewer, 2000, p. 127). Since every individual Bajiajiang ritual provides its own performances for diverse occasions, an observer with only limited time cannot represent the whole Bajiajiang culture. However, it is possible to figure out the relationship between
the Daoism beliefs, the local people, the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual, and the Bajiajiang system from observation. Thus, choosing the most suitable angles to describe the settings and represent them appropriately was essential.

Moreover, Brewer (2000) argued that since reflexivity shows the partial nature of our representation of reality as well as the multiplicity of competing versions, researchers are encouraged to be reflexive in their account of the research process, the data collected and the way they write up (p. 129). In the process of conducting and reproducing this research, how to let these partial narratives represent the ritual and the culture becomes vital. Thus, the guideline followed in this research provided the way to view the ritual, but to frame this research in a suitable and logical way required reflexivity. Fetterman (1998) suggested that ethnographers cannot be completely neutral as they have personal beliefs, biases, and individual tastes. The ethnographer can guard against the more obvious biases by making them explicit (1998, p. 22). Based on his argument, it is essential that researchers have comprehensible ideas about what they want to gather from the field before, during, and after the ethnographic work. After all, the value of ethnography for my research of Bajiajiang ritual is not about judgment but to represent it, note its relation to the society, and examine the interaction between them.

**-Interviews and Visual Ethnography**

Another key activity when doing ethnographic research in Bajiajiang has also been raised in most of ethnographic studies - interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, O'Reilly, 2005; Pavis, 2003; Fetterman, 1998; Harris, 1991; Geertz, 1963, 1965, 1975; Malinowski, 1922). Interviews offer the opportunity to gather more ideas about what the insiders say and do. Although people do not always do the same things as they say to outsiders, interviews can
still provide the chance for researchers to understand the consequences of what those who are being researched think and perform. For instance, even though strict taboos in Biajiajiang ritual are basic principles and are not meant to be changed, possible adjustments of the taboos should not be overlooked. It was especially important not to judge or criticise these unmentioned changes when they occur, but to observe the events that the insiders might not notice or mention. Performers might break taboos for convenience or by accident in chaotic situations, but they would rather not have this be noticed (Fang, personal communication, 17th May 2011); therefore, questioning those changes in the ritual could be unappreciated or seen as rude or even offensive to the people’s beliefs as well as to the researched troupe. To show my respect to those troupes and their performances, it was unnecessary to challenge them. Nevertheless, those incidents were not ignored when observing an event, since they provide clues and ideas for re-examining the interviews and happenings, and to account for the trend of Biajiajiang ritual transformation later.

Apart from interviews and conversations with the people at temple events, I kept contact with my informant through the Internet and telephone conversations. For ethical reasons as well as to maintain the integrity and accuracy of this research, being honest and accurate when representing what insiders and gatekeepers say is vital. In order to receive permission to use the materials that the interviewees offer for the research, I presented and explained my research purpose and an ethics form, which was specially designed for this research, to the interviewees to explain about the aims of this research. I also informed them that the data that was gathered from them might be used in this thesis. Although it was not guaranteed that the individuals I interviewed would sign the ethics form, it was necessary

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51 For practical reasons, the ethics form is written in Chinese, and it is translated and explained in both Mandarin and Taiwanese at interviews. Both Chinese and English translated ethics forms are located in the Appendix section in this thesis.
to ask the interviewees to do so. Even if the interviewees did not feel comfortable signing a formal form, it was still essential to provide enough information about the possible use of their words in this thesis and to receive their permission when recording any forms of material. The names and backgrounds of the interviewees as well as some insider’s information was sealed as requested. I made certain that all information from the interviewees was to be used and analysed for this thesis only.

Interviews are a valid means of recording research data, but visual elements are also valuable for this Bajiajiang research project. As a participant in the Bajiajiang ritual, I realised it was not easy to separate myself from the crowd as well as to find the most suitable position (whether practically or emotionally) in settings. To avoid the possibility of missing important moments or having too much personal emotion involved in the ritual, I collected visual elements by using a camera and video recorder for later analysis. Since the Bajiajiang performance is a group religious activity, being there and feeling the atmosphere is the most direct way to understand it. However, the danger of being a participant should also be noted. It cannot be ignored that group consciousness can sometimes change mental status and affect data collection. For that reason, by consulting visual elements and reviewing video footage taken by me or others, I expected to be reflexive about my own implication in the setting.52

John Berger (1972) noted that the photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject (p. 10). Pink (2001) also revealed that visual elements represent the camera holders’ subjective angle. However, the diversity of research elements still provided

52 To restructure the ritual performance through text, I will not only refer to my own collections, but also compare them with photographs that are taken by other people. However, all the images that are used in this thesis belong to me.
some further information for data triangulation (ibid, p. 110). Berger and Pink pointed out the inherent subjectivity of photography. Since readers rely on my words and eyes to experience the ritual, the ‘I’ as an observer, storyteller, and researcher, always exists throughout the descriptions of the settings. As Pink stated, ‘Images are “everywhere”. . .They are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as definitions of history, space and truth’ (ibid, p. 17). This approach gives a clear definition of image - they are not only visual elements, they tell stories, show the specific identities, and even present and represent a culture and its environment honestly. She also argued, ‘Visual research methods are not purely visual. Rather, they pay particular attention to visual aspects of culture. Similarly, they cannot be used independently of other methods; neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist.’ (Pink, ibid, p. 17)

Not only are they useful, but visual elements in ethnographic research also provide much-needed validation of events in the field. Nonetheless, photography and video do not simply represent reality (ibid, p. 24). Since visual images are constructed in an individual and subjective way, some personal biases and feelings are also involved in them, and each photograph represents a unique perspective that might only tell part of the story; therefore, images do not always tell the whole truth. An ethnographer should keep in mind that they use images to refer to certain versions of reality, and treat images as referents of visible and observable phenomena (ibid, p. 24). For this reason, it is important that I choose the images that I want to represent the ritual performance. Since misleading images might be harmful to the culture and the society, the choice of using visual elements in ethnography must be a responsible one.
In order to carry out successful photographic research, the social relationships and agendas of the subjects must be understood by applying visual ethnography (ibid, p. 76). Nevertheless, visual elements do not always show full realities, thus, one must be aware of the use of visual element in representing an incident to others. For example, the video clips of Bajiajiang rituals which are available on the Internet may only show one angle of the ritual, without explaining how it relates to a whole and how the ritual is actually conducted. By watching these video clips, a basic knowledge of what the performance is like can be perceived, but what we cannot see in those videos is the trends of the ritual and the complex relationships between troupes, host temples, and the encounters behind the scenes. As an ethnographer who observes and participates in Bajiajiang rituals, photography or video is not be used as evidence but as a supplementary research material. Since ethnographers’ backgrounds, feelings, personal experiences and subjective views are very different, a recording that does not define itself clearly has the possibility of being interpreted in a different way to that of the ethnographer. Therefore, ‘analysis should focus not only on the content of images, but on the meanings that different individuals give to those images in different contexts’ (ibid, p. 99).

In addition, the ethical issues of recording materials, including verbal, photographic, and video recordings arise when they are used for their research. As mentioned earlier, there are many taboos in a Bajiajiang performance, and recording without permission could be offensive to troupes and affect the researcher’s relationship with them or other authorities in the field. For instance, when Bajiajiang troupes perform in public spaces, any form of recording is acceptable to most troupes and organisations; however, taking photographs and recording of the preparation and activities behind the scenes before and after the performance might not be permitted. In some temples, those pre and post- performance activities are mysterious, and they are only disclosed to the ‘insiders.’ They do not always
welcome outsiders to observe and record them (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011; Yun, personal communication, 21st April, 2010). Gatekeepers or informants may be able to lead researchers to participate in some secret activities; however, great respect should be given to troupes, and challenging the taboos is strictly banned even for academic reasons.\textsuperscript{53} To a certain degree, troupes prefer researchers to observe their activities as an ‘invisible’ participant because recording actions may be seen as obstructions during the ritual process (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011). For this reason, in order not to bring any harm and inconvenience to those taking part in the events, I paid close attention to what the performers did in settings, noted or photographed their actions, and then restructured the events with thick descriptions.

-Thick Description-

Geertz delineated culture as ‘a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’ (1973, p. 89). The reason why ‘thick description’ plays a vital role in this Bajiajiang ritual research project is because it helps provide a better understanding of a foreign culture by viewing it in a detailed, interpretive, and even deeper way. According to Geertz:

A repertoire of very general, made-in-the-academy concepts and systems of concepts—

\textsuperscript{53} An example of challenging Bajiajiang ritual taboo was given by Huang about a female researcher who observed a pre-Bajiajiang ritual in the Tainan area. A Bajiajiang master caught the researcher attempting to use her palm to measure the length of a prop, shouted loudly to her, and asked her to stay at least 30 cm away from it. The trust between her and the troupe was broken and she had difficulty of doing further data collection from that particular troupe. This situation does not apply to all Bajiajiang troupes but it still exists in some strict groups (personal communication, 21 April, 2010).
‘integration,’ ‘rationalization,’ ‘symbol,’ ‘ideology,’ ‘ethos,’ ‘revolution,’ ‘identity,’ ‘metaphor,’ ‘structure,’ ‘ritual,’ ‘world view,’ ‘actor,’ ‘function,’ ‘sacred,’ and, of course, ‘culture’ itself—is woven into the body of thick-description ethnography in the hope of rendering more occurrence scientifically eloquent. The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics (1975, p. 28).

The details in people’s lives compose a culture. For instance, in a Bajiajiang performance, there are many identical elements involved. In order to have a full understanding of it, it is necessary to look at its historical background, the religion, the event, the pre and post-performance rituals, as well as the participants. Then, appropriate explanation and analysis can be carried out. Since Bajiajiang is a particular ritual performance that only exists in Taiwan, with thick description as the main method to represent it, I use reflexivity to describe it truthfully. Although the partial observations of the ritual do not always correspond to a whole society, thick description is the best way to provide a clearer picture of Bajiajiang performance, how it encounters the religious culture, the cooperative relationship to Taiwanese society, and furthermore, to offer some significance for analysing the ritual transformation.

Geertz (1975) argued that cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete, and that the more deeply it goes the less complete it is (p. 29). When researchers conduct ethnographic research, it is important to realise that they are never likely to represent a culture by looking at it from one particular angle. Although researchers often attempt to represent a culture by giving it an appropriate explanation that is developed through all the data and details that have been gathered from the field, such descriptions do not often mean anything to the group being researched. However, sometimes those unnoticed actions and elements provide fundamental clues which account for understanding a culture.
Additionally, thick description allows me to shift my positions as a researcher, a participant, and an observer in settings through narratives. Clifford & Marcus (1986) have argued that whatever else ethnography does, it translates experience into text and brings experience and discourse into writing (p. 115). Chen (2001) also argued that rather than gathering the insider’s point of view of the researched, the importance of reflexivity should not be ignored when interpreting a culture (p.28). My situation and relationship to the researched troupes are the main factors that affect the representations of the ritual, and my personal experience of observing the religious ritual in the field is to be represented and translated through thick description. As mentioned, a Bajiajiang performance is composed of a variety of ingredients, so I adopted the thick description method to examine not only the individual ritual performance and the troupe, but also the organisations, the environment, and the surroundings. By doing this, I aim to offer a ‘way of seeing’ Bajiajiang ritual practice through theatre and performance perspectives, but not to provide an inclusive account of the ritual phenomenon.

-Conclusion

The research methods applied to this project were designed to answer my research questions, which included the development of Bajiajiang troupes in current Taiwan, the troupe transformation, the negotiations between different authorities, the significance of this ritual practice for participants, and the social meaning that the ritual performance brings to the society. In terms of discovering the changes in the ritual performance as well as examining how it engages with the society, ethnography plays a vital role. The methods adopted for this research were interactive, co-operative, and also effective - I engaged with the rituals by using participant observation, undertaking interviews and visual ethnography to provide supplemental knowledge of the researched, evaluating through thick description.
which offers a way of interpreting and representing the ritual through texts, using performance analysis and related theatrical theories to note, view and examine the ritual process, and applying reflexivity to all of the methods above.

3.1.3 Ethical issues

This section aims to identify the ethical issues that are engaged in this research. As argued earlier, researchers normally play the roles by 'outsiders' in an event, therefore, it is never easy for ethnographic research to be completely covert or overt. The foreshadowed questions that researchers bring into the field can sometimes be critical due to the unfamiliar situation. Researchers have to be aware of finding the most suitable and appreciated position to locate themselves in settings so that they can gather the most useful data for their research. During O’Reilly’s and her students’ conversation, the issue of being covert and overt was mentioned. According to their discussion, sometimes to keep informing people what the researchers are doing can cause more problems and could affect the information they gather from the field. For this reason, they suggested that apart from letting the informants and gatekeepers know about the research topics, it is not always necessary to let others know what the researchers want to gather from the setting. After getting to know more about the local people and the environment, perhaps the researcher could then find a chance to let the others know what information they wish to gain from the setting. However, they also agreed that to be covert or overt really depends on what the research is about (O’Reilly, 2005, pp. 70-81).

Being covert or overt is a difficult task when doing participant observation research. My main argument on this issue is that when only the gatekeepers or informants know what a 'stranger' (researcher or outsider) is doing in the field at the beginning, others may feel
uncomfortable and change their usual working patterns as well as their attitudes. Although the researched may be informed about the aims of the research later on, the earlier uncertain status of a researcher in the field could sometimes affect data collection and results. The truthfulness that researchers wish to gather may be affected from the very beginning stage. Therefore, when doing ethnographic research into Bajiajiang ritual, I discussed this issue with gatekeepers and informants before I engaged temple events or Bajiajiang troupes and informed them my concerns. Based on gatekeeper or informant’s suggestion for individual incident, I would then consider requesting an introduction to the troupe members or act as a participator in settings. In an ideal situation, I would anticipate that troupe members would know the reason I am there and could offer me some useful information which would be linked to my research interests. On the other hand, if the access to troupes was not straightforward, I would depend on the responses from the research subjects and perhaps observe the rituals they provided along with the surrounding elements to gather the useful information instead.

Researchers go into the field to learn about people’s lives. Therefore, great respect should always be shown to the native culture. As O’Reilly stated (2005), ‘[...] ethics is about trying to ensure that you cause as little pain or harm as possible and try to be aware of your effects on the participants and on your own data’ (p. 63), to some extent, this research should not be seen as harmful to the native people nor to the culture. However, in a conversation with Bajiajiang ritual experts Fang and Lee, they mentioned that some arguments about the Bajiajiang ritual that have been discussed in the academic literature have too many personal opinions involved. Those scholars who have presented unclear or unbalanced arguments have caused distrust of Bajiajiang troupes. Some troupe members who were interviewed even felt offended when they realised how their words were used and criticised in some research (Fang, personal communication, 20th May, 2011). Those
published partial arguments directly and indirectly increased the difficulty of doing further research on the Bajiajiang ritual. As a result, it was essential to find suitable gatekeepers and informants who could help me to gain trust from those researched troupes quickly and provide me helpful information when communicating with a troupe. To reduce the possibility of bringing harm to the ritual performance, I acted as a participant and observed the ritual happening. However, as a researcher, my job was more than just being ‘one of the audience’. Consequently, apart from conducting interviews with pre-arranged Bajiajiang troupes, some conversations become possible with Bajiajiang troupes that turned up randomly at temple fairs and the locals were also vital for this research.

In order to bring least harm to the ritual practice, I respected the religion and the ritual, and ensured that I would not offend the taboos and the people when observing the events during my fieldwork. The data that was gathered from observations, interviews, and conversations will be carefully interpreted and analysed with honesty and respect, and in an appropriate manner. In addition to the above, some private information of particular Bajiajiang troupes or interviewees, and some inappropriate discussions about the delicate relations between troupes and the locals will not be revealed.

3.2 Fieldwork Plan of Bajiajiang Ritual for 2010-2011

After clarifying the methods that were adopted for this research, in this section I provide the plan for the fieldwork in 2010 and 2011. The plan was designed with careful and practical consideration of the research methodology and reflected and answered my questions of Bajiajiang as religious theatre. Some selected fields are given and their significance to understanding the ritual is elucidated in this section. After introducing the chosen settings, I point out the theoretical and practical limitations of this research project.
before finally discussing how my conclusions could contribute to developing some of the theories that have been adopted. In addition, although the fieldwork plan is designed for the academic research period, some documentary materials that were consulted and discussed relate to events outside that time frame.

3.2.1 Selected Fields

1. Region: the Tainan Area
   Chosen setting: the Nankunshen Daitien Temple

The aim of doing Bajiajiang research in the Tainan area is to observe the original performance form as well as define the social meaning of the ritual for the locals. Tainan is known as a very traditional and historical city in Taiwan. There are some very old temples in the area and religious events flourish there even today. It is also the place where the first Taiwanese Jiajiang troupe developed. Most troupes in this area still keep the traditional elements of the performance, from the preparation process, the performance, and the ceremony afterwards (Wu, 2005; Lu, 2008). There are five main systems of Bajiajiang in Tainan, which belong to the Wufu Dadi (Lord). Each Dadi has its own Bajiajiang troupe; however, nowadays only Zhuyitenshoutang, Zhuxintzijingtang, and Zhushanfansihtang still train Bajiajiang performers and perform only for some special occasions (Fang & Huang, personal communication, 21st April, 2010). For the locals, Bajiajiang is a ritual which represents their region and stands for the original and honest attitude to their belief.\(^{54}\) As

\(^{54}\) When interviewing Fang and Huang, sometimes they used the title ‘Jiajiang (The Generals)’ instead of the well-known ‘Bajiajiang’ to describe the ritual, especially when they talked about it in the Taiwanese dialect. The explanation of different names for the same type of ritual is that the name ‘Jiajiang’ does not state the numbers of performer and limit the form of performance; as a result, ‘Jiajiang’, as a form of ritual, is commonly used in the religious society nowadays. However, due to the popularity of the name ‘Bajiajiang’
a result, most troupes in this area keep the strict taboos in the ritual as the pride of their local representations (Wu, 2005). However, since the complicated Bajiajiang taboos are still widely obeyed in the Tainan area, it also increased the difficulty of viewing the whole ritual process and the opportunities were limited.

In order to observe the Bajiajiang rituals in the Tainan Area, I chose to participate in the pre-birthday celebration event of His Highness Lifu’s (Lifuqiansui, the Great Lord) at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple on 21st and 22nd of May, 2011. I participated in the event on the first day, and observed a Bajiajiang troupe which was hired by another temple to perform on their behalf for that occasion. As mentioned, there are many unpredictable issues in Bajiajiang rituals at temple fairs. For that reason, flexibility and immediate reaction are the key factors when conducting fieldwork on the Bajiajiang ritual. The aim of this participation is to gather data for identifying the significance of an employed Bajiajiang troupe at a temple fair, the meaning of ‘locality’ in Bajiajiang system, and furthermore to analyse the trends of transformation of the ritual. However, data collection not only relies on the Bajiajiang troupes that turn up for the event, but also depends on the on-site situation. Description and discussion of the ritual is provided in Chapter Four in this thesis.

2. Region: the Taichung and Chanhwa Area
   Chosen setting: the 2010 Mazu International Tour Festival (organised by the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple)

The Taichung area is in the middle of the Island of Taiwan; geographically it is located in between the capital city Taipei and the old city Tainan. The reason why the Taichung Area

\footnote{in the wider society, I choose to use it to describe the ritual in this thesis.}

\footnote{More introductions of the temple background and the event are provided in Chapter Four.}
is considered as an important region to examine Bajiajiang performance is because the form of performance in this area is different to that in the place of origin, Tainan. The most significant change that has been made to is the characters in the performance. In this area, the main roles in a Bajiajiang troupe remains eight, but apart from the front four, the General Gan, Liou, Xie, Fan, many Bajiajing troupes have created new characters to replace the rear four. They adapt Generals Jia (meaning to pillory), Shuo (meaning to lock), Chen, and Shen to replace the Four Season Generals in the traditional Bajiajiang troupe. Due to the change of characters, adjustments of costumes, props, and dancing patterns are made to correspond to the new characters.

Changes made in the Taichung area not only modified the functions of the characters, but also altered the form of Bajiajiang performance. However, the changes in Bajiajiang ritual that are made in Taichung have not been widely adopted by troupes in other regions in the country. Nevertheless, Bajiajiang has become fashionable in the Taichung area. Although the ritual transformation has yet to develop to a stable stage such as that in the Tainan area, there are more and more Bajiajiang troupes following in new developed patterns in this area. My observation of the ritual in recent years suggests this phenomenon is perhaps a result of the decline of Bajiajiang performance in the Tainan area, but could also be a sign of regional consciousness in the religious society. The 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival was chosen for this research since it is one of the most popular temple events in Taiwan during the year, and it normally has various forms of rituals appearing. Also, the Mazu Tour runs for eight to nine days without stopping, I was able to have a greater chance to observe

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56 Comparison of the differences in Bajiajiang troupes was discovered during my previous experience of temple fair participations in different areas. Although Lu (2002, 2008) identifies different figures of individual troupes, he barely discusses the connection and transformation of troupes and their origins.

57 Apart from Jia, Shou, and the Four Season Generals, the other Generals are named after their surnames.
Bajiajiang performances which were provided by the local area during the period. Although the popularity of the Mazu Tour is based on its religious aspect with the local governmental and political supports, it provided an informative opportunity for me to inspect an inclusive ritual operation in a society. Therefore, by conducting fieldwork in the Taichung area, I could gather information about the relation between troupe, the event organisation, the authority, and the locals for further examination. More description and discussion of observed Bajiajiang ritual in the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival is given in Chapter Five.

3. Region: the Taichung Area
   Chosen setting: the celebration ceremony for the 2010 Mazu International Tour Festival (organised by the Fatientan Folk Troupe)

Another Bajiajiang ritual that I participated in the Taichung Area is the celebration ceremony for the International Mazu Tour Festival in 2010. The event was held by an individual troupe, the Fatientan Folk Troupe, which does not belong to any official Mazu Tour related organisations. This spontaneous ceremony took place in Taichung city centre and lasts for about five hours on the last day of the Mazu Tour. The Fatientan acted as an organiser which offered various troupes to celebrate the completion of the Mazu Tour. Since the Fatientan held the full authority of conducting the event, the Bajiajiang performance that it offered was unabridged. The benefit of observing a complete Bajiajiang ritual performance and discovering the trends of transformation means that the Fatientan event provided an excellent opportunity for observation. The description of the Fatientan event as well as the Bajiajiang performance is discussed in Chapter Six.
4. Region: the Taichung Area
   Chosen setting: Paominggung Jinxian ceremony

Apart from the self-organised event, the Fatientan Folk Troupe also performs for their brotherhood temple. In the Paominggung Jinxian ceremony, the Fatientan Bajiajiang troupe was invited and acted as a sponsor to participate in their brotherhood temple, Paominggung’s event. The Bajiajiang troupe provided a ritual performance in the early morning in front of the Paominggung and guarded the god’s sedan to visit another temple. The functions of the Bajiajiang troupe for this occasion consist of guarding, purifying, as well as praying. With advanced contact with the Fatientan troupe leader, I was allowed to observe the pre-event rituals and the troupe’s preparation for the event before their performance. In this setting, I had the chance to observe how a Bajiajiang ritual is constructed and witness the complex rituals behind the performance. The significance of this observation is not only to understand how a troupe co-operates with other temples, but to gather some data for further examination about the ritual transformation. The descriptions of observation and discussion of this event are also located in Chapter Six.

3.2.2 Limitations

As a female researcher, the difficulty of engaging with Bajiajiang troupes should be mentioned in this research project. Since taboos are key in the ritual and there are some spaces and occasions from which females are banned. Some troupes do not even allow females to watch their pre- and post-performance rituals (Fang & Huang, personal communication, 20th April, 2010). Consequently, occasionally, I have referred to visual elements that are provided by other scholars and informants. Even though the second-hand materials represent the performance, they do not always represent how the participants
are engaged with the event. For that reason, some respectful actions, such as advanced enquires about level of participation and engagement with individual troupe, were undertaken before entering the field. When observing the unpredictable Bajiajiang troupes, it was necessary to gather the troupe members’ permission before interviewing them. Besides, a further limitation linked to this issue how to recognise the validity of the information that is given by the troupes or organisations. As a result, the fieldwork data was confirmed with documentary research undertaken prior to the actual observation. As noted, the ritual always takes place in a busy and chaotic environment, participant observation quality is cannot be guaranteed; being flexible and seeking the most suitable moments in the field is one of the challenges that I faced while undertaking this research.

Moreover, access to Bajiajiang troupes is not always straightforward and due to time and location issues, attending some important events and gathering first-hand information may be complicated. Some troupes welcome people to participate in their activities and interview them, but some are more defensive towards outsiders. To gain the trust of troupes required some time to let the targeted groups get to know me as a researcher as well as my research project. This issue applies to most of outsiders and is not only limited to females. Although some data of the ritual performance and the surrounding environment can be gathered through observation, to achieve the aim of understanding the ritual and its transformation requires more than just observation. Hence, I had to build relationships with those Bajiajiang troupes at the settings in a very short and limited time so that I understood their backgrounds and activities at the performances. During the time in the field, I met some Bajiajiang troupes in temple events but it was hard to get access to them. The four instances that are chosen to discuss in this thesis were the ones who showed an interest in being researched.
Bajiajiang performances did not always take place on pre-arranged days and the schedule was changed due to many unpredictable reasons, such as the weather. It was not guaranteed that I would be able to see the performance even with some advanced verification. Therefore, the best way to do the fieldwork is to have very reliable informants who can offer the latest information in the first place. However, I was conscious of the danger of being led by informants in the field. Informants may provide some useful information which was based on their personal experiences, but I maintained my own independence rather than rely on this information. As a result of the unpredictability of the ritual in temple fairs, I allowed extra time to stay in the field to attend unscheduled events.

In Daoism events, the lunar calendar is the fundamental basis on which for temples arrange rituals. In this research, both lunar calendar and solar calendar are stated for each setting. Based on the lunar calendar and consultations with my informants Fang and Huang, the most active period to observe and participate in Bajiajiang ritual is in March, April, May, August, September, and October due to different occasions.\(^{58}\) In March and April, most of the Bajiajiang performances are given for gods’ birthdays and their main function during this period is to welcome and guard gods when they visit temples or are on tour. On the other hand, there are more ghost catching rituals happening at other times. Since welcoming, guarding, and temple greeting ceremonies are the main focus for this research, my fieldwork centred on the events that take place in March and April. Apart from the general schedule of gods’ birthdays each year, Bajiajiang events are also heavily affected by the animal sign of the Chinese Zodiac (Fang, personal communication, 20\(^{th}\) April, 2010). Due to the ferocious meaning of tiger in the Taiwanese culture, the Tiger Year (2010) was not a

\(^{58}\) To show my respect to the tradition, months that are stated in this section are base on the lunar calendar, which is approximately one month ahead than the solar calendar. However, this is only a general guideline and does not apply to every year.
popular time for Bajiajiang troupes to perform the ghost catching ritual. Instead, there were more welcoming, guarding, and temple praying rituals occurred at temple events in 2010. In consequence of the academic period of doing this research, the ethnographic data is mainly carried out from the Bajiajiang ritual that took place in March and April in the Tiger and Rabbit Year (2010-2011). Although the data that is gathered in the field was limited, it did not affect the quality of data collection and my subsequent analysis of the ritual.

The next three chapters are instances of fieldwork that have been chosen during 2010 and 2011. Four different occasions that are provided by three Bajiajiang troupes are examined in those chapters. They are given in a thick description form, and are engaged and examined with the mythologies that are recalled in this chapter. The first instance is a temple fair that takes place in the Tainan city, which is located in the south of Taiwan. The Bajiajiang troupe which performed in the setting is hired by another temple and acts as the temple’s representative. The main focus of the chapter is to consider the meaning of ‘locality’ in Bajiajiang system in the religious society, and furthermore to discuss how it influences the transformation of the ritual.
Chapter Four - Bajiajiang and the Representation of Locality

In the previous chapters, I discussed the historical background and social status of Bajiajiang in contemporary Taiwan, noting the lack of research projects that have addressed its sociological and religious aspects. I also discussed the research methods used in this paper, and detailed some of the ethical concerns and consequences involved. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the way Bajiajiang troupes operate in Taiwanese culture, in this chapter I discuss the interaction between a hired troupe and its employer, the relationship between Bajiajiang troupes and locality, and how the ritual is able to represent locality. Furthermore, this investigates how a hired troupe acts as a local representative. The example discussed in this chapter is a temple event that took place in Tainan County in May 2011. In it I discuss how a Bajiajiang troupe presents (acting as a ritual performance) and represents (acting as a representative of other temple) a local identity. I also explain the role that a host temple plays in this type of temple fair, and how the system by which troupes are hired affects the performances that Bajiajiang troupes present. In this particular situation, employer temples hire Bajiajiang troupes to impress their pilgrims at temple fairs, and some Bajiajiang troupes would cover their own name to show respect to their employers.\(^{59}\) To a degree, this action is a kind of business transaction between the two. Because of the business issue involved, Bajiajiang troupes have to provide particular or customised performances to satisfy their employers' needs. Despite the fact that this phenomenon of troupes acting as the representatives for particular localities has rarely been discussed in other research projects, I argue that this is a key factor in the creation of

\(^{59}\) How a troupe shows its original identity normally is discussed before the performance. Some employer temples do not mind their hired troupes letting people know their original names; meanwhile, some prefer the hired troupes to act as their own representatives without showing their identity.
the room for Bajiajiang troupes to transform, and it also highlights the importance of the market mechanism to the troupe culture nowadays.

The particular form of hired troupe performance in Bajiajiang culture is well known but little understood in society, and I argue that it is worthwhile to discuss its relationship with the environment by adopting the studies of social structure. Through the discussion of Bajiajiang and society, I aim to describe how this performance responds to locality and to society as a whole. In this thesis, the definition of ‘locality’ for Bajiajiang ritual does not only mean a geographical region, but more importantly, it is a concept of religious community where pilgrims are engaged. Sutton has explained that the gods in Taiwan ‘are seen as territorial in nature; despite metaphors of official appointment and the vague notion of an otherworldly bureaucracy, they represent the locality at least as much as higher divine authority’ (2003, p. 21). His argument not only indicates the relationship between gods and locality, but also suggests a basic structure of traditional folk belief in Taiwanese society in general. Inasmuch as the locality and divine authority both play vital roles in society, the correlation of them becomes fascinating and worthy of further discussion.

In order to examine the relation of locality and Bajiajiang troupes, I have taken the Nankunshen Daitien Temple as a case study. The aim of the first part of this chapter is to introduce the background of the wangye belief and the particular temple event that I observed, followed by a detailed description of the incident, and finally a discussion of locality in relation to Bajiajiang troupes, and the role they adopt in a focused temple event, as well as the relationship between troupes, temples, and the locals for this particular form of temple fair. The temple event not only provides an example of how Bajiajiang troupes engage with a local temple in the Tainan area, it also shows the transformation of Bajiajiang and the interaction between its status as a religious ritual and its status as a popular form
of performance. In addition, I also discuss how financial needs in the Bajiajiang system have changed the original meaning of locality in the tradition.

4.1 An Introduction to the Nankunshen Daitien Temple and Wangye Belief

The Nankunshen Daitien Temple is one of the biggest temples in the Tainan Area. It has various rituals nearly every day, and it is also the main avenue in Southern Taiwan for other temples from different places to jingxiang during weekends. According to the temple’s official website, since 1662, jingxiang has been the most recognised ritual of wangye belief held in the culture. Due to the number of different traditional rituals that take place there every day, the Nankunshen Daitien Temple is considered to be one of the most famous religious and educational regions in Taiwan.

In popular Taiwanese culture, wangyes are the gods who deal with different forms of plague. As mentioned earlier, fishing was the main industry in traditional Taiwanese

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60 Jingxiang is a popular form of worship in which temples visit other temples on particular dates. In order to show their respect and honour to the gods they visit, temples always bring their own gods’ statues with them, as well as preparing some religious performances, such as Bajiajiang troupe, Guanjianshou troupe, and tang-kis. (Cheng, 2010, pp. 224-228)

61 According to the Temple’s official website, the Nankunshen Daitian Temple is widely recognised as the ‘home of wangye’ in Taiwan. The temple is both aesthetically beautiful and a representative example of classical Taiwan temple architecture. In recognition of the importance of Nankunshen Daitian to Taiwanese culture and religious traditions, in 1969 the Taiwan Provincial Government in designated the temple complex as a ‘Provincial Religious Tourism Memorial District’. In 1981, the Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan designated Nankunshen Daitian as a 2nd Grade Historical Site. (http://www.nktemple.org.tw/2010/ENG_web/history10ENG.html)

62 There are different forms of wangye belief in the society. The main stream in Southern Taiwan is the god of plague system. The other systems include the heroic spirits, the Zheng Chenggong’s family, the mountain gods, and the gods of drama. (Tsai, 1989, pp. 71 & 81)
society, and by praying to wangyes, people believed that they would be blessed in health as well as security; moreover, they believed that the gods would help their followers with profits in return. In other words, in Taiwanese folk belief, gods and people have a beneficial exchange relationship. This forms the connection between gods and people and also explains why wangye belief has played a decisive role in Taiwanese culture generally. In the Nankunshen Daitien Temple, Wufuqiansuei are the main gods (zhushens) that people pray to.\textsuperscript{63} In Southern Taiwan, such as Tainan City, Chiaye County, Yulin County, Kaohsiung City, and Pingdong County, \textit{wangye} belief is especially popular, and there are over 8,000 temples offering the incense of the Nankunshen Temple in those area.\textsuperscript{64} In the past, when fishing equipment and safety at sea were not as well developed as today, fishermen prayed to gods for protection and to bless them with a plentiful catch of fish. Since fishing was the main industry for those places due to their geographical locations, \textit{wangye} belief became the main faith in those areas. Nowadays, this belief has become an essential part of the culture and has had a huge impact on the local economy, with many of the local people relying on the temple and its practices for their living. Due to the demand in the society, the Nankunshen Daitien Temple acts as a focal point for the surrounding region. The temple is also widely believed to be one of the most efficacious temples of wufuqiansuei in Taiwan. For that reason, not only do other temples visit the Nankunshen Daitien Temple on a regular basis, but many individual home-based shrines also undertake visits and prayer at this main ‘host’ temple as a vital ritual. Being an old and traditional wufuqiansuei temple, the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Wufuqiansuei in Chinese translation is ‘five lords’. They are respectively Lifuwangye, Chifuwangye, Wufuwangye, Zhufuwangye, and Fanfuwangye. Zhushen in Chinese means the main gods in temple, some temples have one zhushen and some may have many. (Liu, 1983, p. 230)
\item According to the Nankunshen Temple official website, there were 8,086 temples offering incense in those areas in 2009. (http://www.nkstemple.org.tw/2010/ENG_web/worship4bENG.html)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Nankunshen Daitien Temple has become one of the most popular places to visit for other temples from all over Taiwan.

In Taiwanese culture, there are many reasons why smaller temples or brotherhood temples visit bigger temples, or each other, on important occasions. It is generally believed that the older temples have an original, stronger, and direct power from the gods. In Taiwanese folk belief, a god or goddess is not just spiritual but can also be embodied through statues. That is why one god can have many different statues and is able to exist in different temples or shrines. A god or goddess can also have different powers due to the age of the statues and the frequency to which they are prayed. Generally, people believe that the longer the statues or temples are established, the stronger the power that its gods amass. Similarly, the more people who pray to a god, the more power that god and that temple have. The main reason for the praying and visiting ritual is to take the power from the more established gods’ statues or temples and transfer it to their own temples/shrines. By doing this, people believe that the smaller temples/shrines would have extra power that is given by the original god to protect their communities (Tsai, 1989, pp. 171-180; Cheng, 2010, pp. 225-227). This pattern to some extent not only represents the assorted authorities (both in the gods’ and in the human worlds), but also raises the importance of the identities of every individual temple/shrine. Furthermore, it enhances the significance of the locality of both the visited and visiting temples.
4.2 Bajiajiang Performance at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple Event provided by the Tainan Shenhegong

*Location: No.976, Kunjiang, Beimen Dist., Tainan City
Time: 7.00am-11.00am, 21/05 (Saturday) (19/04, Lunar Calendar), 2011*

The Nankunshen Daitien Temple is located in a quiet country village near Tainan City. It is approximately one hour’s drive from the city centre. Before I decided the date to visit the temple, I contacted their office and found out that many different forms of religious troupe would be turning up on 19-20th of April (Lunar Calendar), and it was recommended that I visit the temple during those two days. Additionally, since the temple welcomes visits from other temples, it tends not to limit the forms of ritual that these visiting temples prepare as part of their visits. Therefore, the people who worked at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple could not guarantee if Bajiajiang troupe would participate in the fair during the period. In other words, the rituals and performances that appear in the Nankunshen Daitien Temple are normally unpredictable and liberal. In addition, since there is no timetable for the event, representatives from any other temple could visit the Nankunshen Daitien Temple at any time during the two days. For that reason, in order not to miss any chance to see Bajiajiang performances, I decided to turn up in the morning on the first day and observe the event as it occurred.

A ritual competition seemed to start from the moment when some large cars carrying people who represented those visiting temples and troupes entered the village. Those cars, which carried people in open boots as well as lots of religious materials (such as drums, traditional Chinese music instruments, props, and some costumes) were all heading in the

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65 Shenhegong is a Daoism temple that is located in Tainan City centre.
same direction as me on the motorway. From the uniforms they wore, and the names and the decorations on the cars, it was not difficult to tell that they were from different temples. Once they got off the motorway, some of the people who were sitting in the boots started to ignite firecrackers and throw them along the street, while others started to play drums and beiguan. I arrived at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple at about 7am and by then it was already very busy. In front of the temple; there was a big square, where some temporary stalls had already been set up along both sides. Cars had to queue to enter the parking area on the right hand side of the temple square. Due to the lack of space in the parking area, some coaches and large vehicles had entered through the front archway and were parked in front of the stalls (figure 4.1). Firecrackers were being set off in front of the front archway as well as at the front of the temple.

The Nankunshen Daitien Temple covers nineteen hectares. It is a multi-structural building, with a front gate, front square, front hall, back hall, and back garden. The Wufuqiansuei statues are displayed in the centre of the front hall (also called the Daitien Hall). In the right hand side of the front hall is Chunjiunfush, while the City God is situated in the right hand side of the front hall. The back hall is also known as xingshentsi, where Guanshiying Buddha (Mercy Buddha) is located. Hundreds of pilgrims were scattered everywhere in the

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66 When temples/shrines visit other temples, they always show the place where they are from as well as the name of their temple on their vans. In the culture, it is a common method for temples to promote their regions.

67 Beiguan is a form of traditional Chinese music that is often used in religious and folk rituals in Taiwan. The main music instruments include percussion instruments, stringed instruments, wind instruments, and flip and pick instruments. The music is always loud and noisy in order to announce and inform the start of religious rituals.

68 Locations of those halls are defined when facing the temple.

Temple at the time I arrived. Some people who wore Nankunshen Daitien Temple uniforms were guiding those who came with their temples/shrines as they unloaded their equipment and prop outside the archway. Performers and their helpers got off their vehicles and prepared to enter the square. Under the supervision of the temple’s staff and volunteers, every action was put in an effective order.

After having a brief view of the whole environment, I decided to stay near the archway so that I would not miss any Bajiajiang troupe who arrived (if, indeed, any turned up). While I was there, some Xing-shi troupe (Tiger Dance troupe), tang-ki, Guanjiangshou, Shenjiang (the Holy General), and gods’ sedans were already there and queuing to pray to the temple. At about 9.35am, the first Bajiajiang troupe arrived in front of the main entrance. According to the name on the van, the troupe represented a temple called Shenhegong from a village in the Tainan area. There were seven performers in the troupe, which included the server Wenchaiye as well as Wuchaiye, General Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan. The two chaiyes wore yellow and black striped long gowns and red trousers. General Gan, Liou, and Fan had dark green long gowns with red trousers. General Xie wore a white long gown and white trousers. All of them were already fully dressed up and had face paint on when they got off their coach. Wenchaiye, General Gan, and Xie held dark grey feather fans in their left hands, while the others had their fans in their right hands. While waiting for the server’s instruction, they all used their fans to cover their faces. The whole team was led by the server and headed towards the archway. Just when they were about to walk under the archway, the server shouted loudly and asked the other performers to get ready (figure 4.2). All the performers then became very serious and lifted their hands with their feather fans up to cover their heads. They followed the server gently but with big steps walking through the archway. The server, who wore a black casual polo-shirt and shorts, shook his shoulder poles which had bells fastened to them. He made a noise with the shoulder pole to create
a steady tempo for the others to walk to so that the whole team was moving together.
While the server was walking ahead, he constantly looked backwards to make sure that
every single performer was in step with him until the last two performers passed under the
archway. Then he asked the team to stop (figure 4.3).

After greeting the troupe leader who was walking with the troupe, I received permission to
walk with the troupe at a certain distance and to take some photographs of the Bajiajiang
performers, as long as I did not disturb the troupe’s movement. The leader told me they
had been hired by the Shenheng Temple to participate in the event. However, due to the
chaotic circumstances, he had to go back to monitor the troupe and could not take any
more time to introduce the background of the troupe and the status they held in the
situation to me. For this reason, with his permission, I decided to observe what happened
by myself.

Unlike the other troupes that I had observed in other events, this troupe did not provide
assistants for each individual performer; instead, there were only five assistants to look
after all the performers. In addition, the assistants in the troupe did not wear the same
uniform on this occasion. Once the whole group had walked under the archway, they
became more relaxed. At that time, I had the chance to walk closer and observe their
appearances in detail. This troupe seemed to be very serious when they faced the audience.
They only talked to other troupe members, and the server was the only one who talked to
the guide from the Nankunshen Daitien Temple. They were asked to wait where they were
until further notice. In front of the Bajiajiang troupe, there were about fifteen different
troupes of various forms waiting to perform in front of the main hall.
The troupe assistants passed some betel nuts and cigarettes to the performers while they were waiting. The leader walked ahead to check the queue then came back to the troupe. He then told the performers to rearrange their appearance and make sure they could be ready to move at any point. After a few minutes of waiting, the whole queue began to move again. It was 10.20am by then. While the troupe was moving slowly, I took the chance to run to the front of the queue and observe what was happening there. I noticed that the queue had split into two lines about twenty metres away in front of the main hall. There were many guides from the Nankunshen Daitien Temple scattered amongst the troupes, guiding them to their performance area. On the right hand side of the temple, there were two separated performance areas, which allowed two troupes to perform and greet the God at the same time. Each area was about eight metres long and four metres wide. Alongside these performance areas, there were people standing in between, to the side, and on the stairs by the main gate of the temple. It was difficult to move through the crowd to get a good view of the situation. In contrast, it was clear on the left hand side. Troupes that performed in the middle area were guided to the left hand area and then exited after their greeting. Troupes that performed in the other area exited to the arcade in their right hand side after their performance (figure 4.4). Therefore, the two sections in front of the main hall were very different - one side was very tense and busy, but the other side was more relaxed and quieter.

On the way back to the Bajiajiang troupe near the archway, I asked one of the volunteers who was wearing a uniform waistcoat from the Nankunshen Daitien Temple about Bajiajiang troupes in the event. The young man told me that normally it was almost impossible to know what kind of troupes would turn up to this kind of temple event until the moment they arrived. According to him, the basic principle of the greeting ritual at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple is that any form of greeting performance is welcomed to
participate in the temple fair, and the visiting temples/shrines do not need to inform the Nankunshen Daiten Temple about their attendance in advance. That was why sometimes troupes have to wait and queue for a long time to perform. The situation always happens during weekends and on gods’ birthdays. Most of the visiting temples and troupes accept the fact that they have to wait if they want to participate in the ritual.

His explanation clearly interpreted the situation at the event and also stated the operative relationship between a host temple and the visitors. After a short conversation about the circumstances of the event with him, I headed back to the Bajiajiang troupe. The troupe was still standing and waiting at the dividing point in front of the main hall. In front of the Bajiajiang troupe, a god’s sedan was carried by four men, one of whom was topless, with the others were wearing the same orange tops. Another topless man, who wore yellow trousers with a wide red fabric belt, was walking in front of the sedan and waving a long pointed sword. Behind the Bajiajiang troupe, there was another troupe who also wore the same orange tops accompanying a larger god’s sedan. It was only on comparing the similar appearance of these different groupings that I realised that the Bajiajiang troupe represented the same temple as the groups in front and behind them. The front team was the vanguard, the Bajiajiang troupe was the guard of the main god’s sedan, and the main god was at the rear. This realisation alerted me to the importance of observing the relationship of a Bajiajiang troupe with the other groups around it, as it was this that indicated the function of the Bajiajiang troupe for that particular event. Once the position of the Bajiajiang troupe was confirmed, it was easier to predict what kind of performance the troupe would provide. At such religious events, temples commonly hire different troupes to promote and strengthen their fame. However, in the case of hiring a Bajiajiang troupe, since the performers do not wear the hiring temple’s uniform and sometimes do not communicate with the other troupes (even when they represent the same temple), it
is not always easy to tell which temple a troupe represents. In this kind of performance, it is essential to observe the whole performance that is offered by the visiting temple, as it is in this performative context that the function of the Bajiajiang troupe is established and becomes meaningful. For this reason, in what follows, I consider the Bajiajiang troupe as part of a larger performance.

The distance from the archway to the main hall was about eighty meters, but it took more than thirty minutes for the troupe to reach their destination (figure 4.5). At about 10.50am, the front team that represented Shenhegong Temple was guided into the middle area to pray to the god. The Bajiajiang troupe followed it and waited behind it (figure 4.6). I ran to the very front of the performance area and sneaked into the crowd to get a better view of the whole performance. At first, the lead topless man in the leading group walked into the performance area and started to hit his own back and head with his long spiky swords. This ritual is called *kitang* in the Taiwanese language. The ritual is always held by a *tang-ki*, who is believed to be possessed by the god, is not afraid of any physical pain and will not be hurt in the procession ritual (Chen, 2001, p. 254). The aim of this ritual is to purify a particular area by sacrificing the *tang-ki*’s blood (figure 4.7). The smaller god’s sedan was still behind him and constantly shaken by four carriers in different directions (figure 4.8). After about two minutes of movement, the sedan was guided to exit from the praying area.

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70 Kitang is an action which occurs when a tang-ki is possessed by an unknown spirit. Dong, Feng-Yuan (2008) has argued that Bajiajiang is a form of witchcraft in which the performers imitate gods (imitatio Dei), and they are amateur tang-kis (p. 204). However, this argument is always debated by Bajiajiang troupes and scholars since traditionally Bajiajiang performers do not experience possession during their performance (Lu, J.-M., 2002; Yun, personal communication, 21 April, 2010; Fang & Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011).

71 According to Huang (1997), the blood of a possessed tang-ki has a special power transferred from god to purify a space (p. 95).
Meanwhile, the tang-ki was still hitting himself and was covered by his own blood. Some people who wore the orange tops asked him to stop but they were all ignored. At the same time, a man walked to the middle and waved to the Bajiajiang troupe. The Server then led the whole team into the performance area just behind the tang-ki.

The server firstly shook his shoulder pole and posed with a bow and arrow step. The bells and mini-sized punishment weapons on both sides of his pole made a loud noise. When he started shaking the shoulder pole, there was a short moment where the audience had a sudden silence and moved their focus to the troupe. After posing for a couple seconds, the server moved his body and walked towards the front with big steps. When he arrived at the front spot, he greeted the god by stepping forwards with his right leg in front, and jumping backwards by lifting his left leg up to waist height three times (figure 4.9). At the same time, the other six characters were standing behind him and swung their bodies with their props and fans. When the server gave the second step, the two chaiyes went to the middle and posed in a bow and arrow step behind him, and General Gan and Liou started to walk as a pair in a circle in the middle of the performance area (figure 4.10). The two generals constantly lifted one leg up, jumped, and switched the centre of gravity to the other leg. They kept a relative position and were about one metre away from each other. While walking in a circle, they crossed each other, turned their bodies in opposite directions, and finally posed in the middle (figure 4.11). The whole movement only lasted until the server finished his action of praying to the god in front (when the third stepping forwards and backwards finished).

After the praying ritual, the server turned his body to face the other characters. He lowered his body, bent his right leg to his front, and shook the shoulder pole once sharply. Then he posed in this position for a few seconds. While he was doing this action, the two chaiyes
walked to the middle, lifted their fans up in front of him, and posed in a bow and arrow step to greet him. After a very short greeting, the server then left the performance area and stood at the front of the team and waited. Meanwhile, the two chaiyes walked to the front, faced the god statue, and posed in a bow and arrow step again for a couple of seconds. Then they looked at each other and walked further and closer to each other to the front; they held their inner hands (the hands with their props - Wenchaiye was holding a wooden rectangle plate and Wuchaiye was holding a yellow flag) straight down and posed their outer hands (the hands with their fans) in front of their chests (figure 4.12). They moved their feather fans up and down in front of their bodies three times and then turned to face the four generals behind them. During the turning direction procedure, they walked pass each other and switched their positions. Generals Gan and Liou had started to walk in circles, as they had done earlier, while the two chaiyes were praying to the god’s statue. When Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye faced them, they stood in a bow-arrow pose with the hands with fans up and wide, and placed their bamboo sticks across and in between their bodies. The two chaiyes also posed in the same step and the two pairs faced each other (figure 4.13). About three seconds after greeting each other, the two chaiyes stood straight, walked past each other, and then returned to their waiting points in the front of the line.

After the two chaiyes had left the main performance area, Generals Gan and Liou immediately jumped to the sides, faced each other, and posed in the bow and arrow position. They held the fans right in front of their own faces and gently swayed them. The pose lasted for a few seconds. Subsequently, they walked in big steps to the front and stood close to each other (figure 4.14). After that, they made brief eye contact and left their outer hands up and to the side. General Gan used his bamboo stick to knock Liou’s, then they moved forwards to the front at the same pace. This was followed by stepping with their outer legs three times at the same spot, the two Generals turned their bodies round to face
the audience and switched their positions. They began to walk in circles but kept a distance of about 1.5 metres in between them. Meanwhile, during the whole procedure, they both swayed their heads and their hands, posed for a couple of seconds when they were in the east-west and south-north relative position, and had a light jump before they began to move again. The walking in circles movement was about twenty seconds in total. Then the two Generals walked to the middle and faced General Xie and Fan, who had entered the performance area and waited for their greeting (figure 4.15). At that moment, the surrounding noise was extremely loud. The Nankunshen Temple office was announcing car number plates and asking vehicle owners to move their cars. The Shenjiang troupe was performing in the right hand side at the same time; the continuous beating of drums and striking of gongs in the two performance areas and standby lanes had never stopped for even a second. The other troupes in the queues were restless and were getting ready to perform at any time while the official volunteers were scattered everywhere to make sure of the security of the audience. To facilitate a smooth transition of different programmes, the audience had to shout when they spoke. Cameras and video cameras were being held high everywhere to capture the happenings. In short, the whole scene was restless, chaotic, and full of excitement.

The rear generals had been swaying their heads and swinging their props since the front two greeted the God. However, instead of moving their positions, they stayed in the same spots and waited for their time to come out and perform. When the front generals finally walked to them, General Xie and Fan walked into the performance area to meet them. General Xie kept his body straight and jump-walked as if he were a crane; by contrast, General Fan kept his body low and bent his legs when he walked like a monkey. The two pairs had a face to face greeting ritual - the front pair posed in bow-arrow step and the rear pair posed in crane and monkey poses for a few seconds in the centre of the performing
area. Then General Gan and Liou left from the right hand side together, giving the space to the other pair (figures 4.16 & 4.17).

Compared to the two chaiyes and the front generals, the movements that the rear generals gave were much faster and diversified. General Xie danced in a crane step and lifted his right leg up most of the time; on the other hand, General Fan tended to lower his body like a monkey when he moved about. The contrast of the pair was clear, not only from their costumes (white and dark green) but also their body positions (high and low). The two generals first walked in a synchronised position in the performance area, and they stopped and posed in their own crane and monkey steps most of the time. At one point, General Fan stayed in the same spot on the left hand side, and General Xie turned his body around for a few times by shifting to the other leg while remaining on the spot on the right hand side. The two tended to maintain eye contact, and it looked like General Xie was teasing General Fan by moving his body and waving his props. After performing in this pattern for about ten seconds, the two moved and met in the centre, posed, and then walked to the front to greet the god (figure 4.18). The greeting ritual was the same as the front generals - stepping forwards three times in the same spot, turning their bodies around to the audience, and starting to move again. This teasing dance continued for another few seconds with General Fan still keeping his body low on the left hand side, and General Xie moving forwards and backwards from him a few times. Finally, Xie stood in front of Fan, and turned his body with one leg in situ. While he was turning, Fan suddenly ran to the back corner, posed with his body low and looked at Xie (figure 4.19). Xie then noticed that Fan had moved so he walked to him; at the same time, Fan also moved to Xie. The two met in the middle, walked in a circle, turned their bodies to face the troupe that was behind them, posed, and then left for their standby spots (figure 4.20).
The group that stood behind the Bajiajiang troupe was another god’s sedan, which was led by a man holding a liangshen.\(^{72}\) The liangshen man gave a solo dance for about twenty seconds. The main movement of his dance was walking backwards and forwards and clearing the front space for the sedan. Another tang-ki who held a spiky sword followed him. At that time, all the Bajiajiang performers were standing along both sides and posing in their individual poses. The tang-ki walked past the liangshen performer to the very front of the troupe and started to hit his head and his back using another kind of spiky sword. Blood was falling from his face but that did not stop him (figure 4.21).

At that time, people around shouted at him and asked him to stop. However, he just walked to the front and back to the sedan and continued doing it until the liangshen man led the sedan forwards to greet the host god. Unlike the other sedan that arrived earlier, this second sedan had three gods’ statues on it and was carried by nine men. The carriers walked in a figure of eight pattern, acted in harmony and entered the central area. At that point, all the Bajiajiang performers stopped posing and stood straight as a form of salute to the gods. The tang-ki walked to the sedan and then stood aside, letting the liangshen man walk pass him. The Bajiajiang performers then covered their faces with their feather fans, entered the crowd in the front, and left the performance area (figure 4.22). The liangshen, the tang-ki and the gods’ sedan also left the area after them. The whole performance that was provided by the visiting temple, which included the first tang-ki, the first god’s sedan, the Bajiajiang troupe, the liangshen, the second tang-ki, and the second god’s sedan, lasted for about seven minutes in total.

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\(^{72}\) Liangshen is a huge umbrella especially made for temple events. The aim of using this umbrella is to purify a space for god’s visiting and lead the sedan when touring. (Yen, 2009, p. 12)
On this occasion, the Bajiajiang troupe I observed did not act individually but as a part of a larger performance. Its function was not only to purify the praying/performance area for the gods, but also to operate as guards for the gods’ visit. Apart from ghost catching and purifying, this example demonstrates the other functions of Bajiajiang, that of guarding and greeting. As I have stated in my research questions in Chapter One, one of the main rituals that I would like to discuss in this thesis is that of greeting and praying in temples. This occasion without doubt provides a pattern of that particular ritual. In the Nankunshen Temple event, visiting troupes are supposed to have more freedom than pre-arranged temple fairs as they do not need the host temple’s permission in advance to perform. However, in this kind of event, the limitation of timing and allocation are crucial. Because of this, the performances always have to be flexible in order to take place in such unpredictable situations. In addition, since troupes from all over the Island participate in the event and wish to stand out in front of the gods as well as the other troupes, more consideration and preparation for both host temple and participators are needed.

Normally, a Bajiajiang troupe participating in a temple event provides one of their most eye-catching performances and seeks to receive more attention than other forms of performance. Because of that, the relation between a troupe performing under their own name troupe or acting as a hired troupe (who represents a temple and sometimes performs without showing their own identity), can be very sensitive. Troupes have to understand what their employer needs, and then decide what kind of performance is suitable for the event. Sometimes what the employer wants the audience to know about the troupes is also discussed in advance. This situation normally happens when an employer hires more than one troupe. In order not to confuse the host temple as well as the audience, sometimes the employer would prefer the individual troupes that are hired by them not to make their own identity public so that the combined performance can be considered as one whole piece.
that represents the employing temple (the Bajiajiang troupe leader at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple event, personal communication, 21st May, 2011).

Even though the Bajiajiang ritual is modified for different occasions, the basic patterns remain the same. In the example of Nankunshen Daitien Temple event, although the Bajiajiang troupe acted as the representative of Shenhegong temple, and only performed for a very short time, their function of guarding and purifying the space was not diminished. The main difference was to keep the identity of the troupe masked so as to make the identity of their employer - the temple who hired them - more important. As I argued in the historical background section on Bajiajiang ritual in Chapter One, showing their origin to the public is vital for a Bajiajiang troupe when they perform. However, in this kind of temple fair, they have to hide it and act as part of the employer temple’s retinue. To some extent, this paradoxical situation is against the traditions of Bajiajiang; nevertheless, due to the need to financially support a troupe, a change like this is sometimes necessary.

4.3 Bajiajiang and the performance of locality

The role change of being an independent troupe to being a part of other temples illustrates the importance of locality in the Bajiajiang troupe system. In this special temple fair, organised by the Nankunshen Daitien Temple for its god’s birthday pre-celebration, hundreds of visiting troupes and temples’ representatives from other places arrived on the same day. In such a chaotic environment, it was not easy for a troupe to stand out from all the other troupes and performances. However, from another viewpoint, this factor reflects the true aim of the different troupes’ involvement in these temple events, which is simply to take part in the occasion. Since the focus is the host temple, the visiting temples and troupe performances are only an element of the overall celebration and their participation
is one of the ingredients that enriches the event. On the one hand, in this kind of event, a
host temple welcomes and relies on different temples to bring their local identities and
troupes to show the popularity of their host gods to the public. On the other hand, the
visiting temples and troupes not only participate in the host temple’s event, but also take
the celebration ceremony as a chance to display themselves, their names and where they
are from to the general public. Sometimes the visiting temples and troupes also take such
events as opportunities for informal competition between them. This phenomenon is in
some way favourable for the development of troupes, as it encourages the visibility of the
Bajiajiang performance. As I have suggested earlier, Bajiajiang is always one of the most
eye-catching troupes in temple fairs; when the audience have more interest in the troupes,
the hired temples too gain more notice. Once the visiting temples have become well-known,
they can gain more support from their local areas. As a result, after observing some of this
type of Bajiajiang performances, I suggest that in this kind of employer-employee
relationship, the identity of hired Bajiajiang troupes seems to be kept as suppressed as
possible so that the focus can be on the temple that has hired them. In addition, the
Bajiajiang troupe must be more flexible in their performances (including the length and the
patterns performed) in order to accommodate any request from their employer or the host
temple.

According to the Bajiajiang troupe leader I spoke to at the Nankunshen Daitien Temple fair,
the main reason that Bajiajiang troupes or other troupes might not show their names on
their uniform or flags is to give the title and focus to the temple who hires them (personal
communication, 21st May, 2011). For that reason, I assume that is the reason why he would
not mention the name of his troupe but only the name of the temple they represented
during our conversation. This is an interesting phenomenon that has not been widely noted
and discussed. For instance, Wu (2000) and Lu (2002 & 2008) described different individual
Bajiajiang troupes and their distinctions in contemporary Taiwan, but the importance of locality and the possibility of troupes operating as the representative of other temples has not been discussed. Sutton’s work on Bajiajiang troupes in Southern Taiwan (2003) discussed the significance of how troupe engages in temple fairs, but he too did not investigate the issue of locality. From my viewpoint, without a doubt it is vital to understand how individual troupes co-operate and engage with society; nevertheless, the role that troupes play as other temples’ representatives should not be ignored. This argument raises the issue of how a hired Bajiajiang troupe acts beyond its name and performs as someone else in many situations.

Being hired to perform for other temples’ events has become common in religious events nowadays. Sutton has revealed in his research about occupational (semi-professional) and amateur (unpaid) Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan (2003, p. 48). The Bajiajiang troupe that was hired to perform at the Nankunshen Daitein Temple event was undoubtedly paid to participate. However, from my viewpoint, the definition of being an ‘occupational’ or an ‘amateur’ requires more consideration. In the past, Bajiajiang troupes performed for their god, their belief, and their reputation for the most part. Now, however, more and more troupes perform to gain extra income to support their ongoing costs. This is also another reason why nowadays more Bajiajiang troupes provide diverse performances, such as performing for commercial events. The ‘market mechanism’ needs in some way speeds up the transformation of the ritual performance. For example, the Chio Tian Folk Drums and Arts Troupe is a popular troupe that engages with some religious ritual and is also very famous for its commercial and concert performances on stage. Some troupes like the

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73 Chio Tian Folk Drums and Arts Troupe is a troupe based in Taichung City. It was established in 1995. The troupe has diverse troupes for different occasions, which includes Bajiajiang, Guanjiangshou, drums, and God Puppets. The troupe provides performances due to different needs on different occasions.
Fatiantan Folk Troupe do not perform for money but still receive contributions from their sponsors and private supporters (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011). For that reason, I suppose if they only receive money for a particular event, to define a troupe as occupational or amateur may not be reasonable and meaningful. The reason for this argument is that, since most troupes rely on financial support to run, although some performers are not paid to perform, it cannot be denied that there are still necessary expenses related to maintaining a troupe. As revealed by Shi (1984, p. 3), at the very early stage of the Bajiajiang ritual’s development, troupes volunteered to perform. Neither troupes nor performers accepted any money, food, or drink in return; they purely performed for their god and their belief. However, the situation of temple fairs in the present time is very different; even though some Bajiajiang troupes still perform for their god and belief without charging, they do accept donations from their pilgrims. From a religious perspective, the Bajiajiang ritual performance is for the religion and money does not justify its religious meaning. However, from the viewpoint of surviving, no Bajiajiang troupe is able to operate without financial support. Therefore, I suggest that defining the form of troupes by considering the financial aim of their performances does not clarify the current environment of Bajiajiang ritual; instead, investigating how Bajiajiang troupes gain local support (including financial and other supports) and their position as representatives of a locality is more important to understanding the relation between the troupe and the wider society.

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74 More discussion about Fatiantan Folk Troupe will be given in Chapter Six.

75 According to the Fatiantan leader Mr. Wu, many Bajiajiang troupes receive donations from their supporters to run their troupes. Troupe leaders use the money to cover the basic expenses and pay their performers some pocket money in a red envelope to wish them luck as well as to appreciate their performance for the troupes (personal communication, 17th May, 2011).
As mentioned, when troupes perform for their own or for brotherhood temples, letting the audience know the origin of the temple and where it is located seems to be very important. However, when troupes are hired to perform as other temples’ representatives, the circumstances are very different. Based on this phenomenon, I suggest that on the one hand, showing troupes’ names when possible is a way for them to gain fame and increase their familiarity with other temples as well as a wider audience. On the other hand, being hired by other temples provides an opportunity for them to receive actual financial support to run a troupe. For instance, the Bajiajiang troupe which acted as the representative of Yunhegong Temple in the Nankunshen Daiten Temple event was employed to provide their performance; ‘locality’ to them is the place/temple they represented, not where they are originally from. For that reason, financial issues are one of the main factors that result in a change to the meaning of ‘locality’ in the Bajiajiang system in Taiwan. In a similar way to the Bajiajiang ritual, this factor also results in the popularity of Guanjiangshou troupes in temple fairs and causes the change of Bajiajiang performances in recent years. While these two ritual performances are very similar in their appearances, Guanjiangshou has simpler dancing patterns and requires fewer performers. Therefore, instead of hiring a larger Bajiajiang troupe, many local temples hire Guanjiangshou troupes to perform as their representatives on some smaller occasions to save money.

‘Locality’ in Bajiajiang does not have to be where a troupe is from, but can be considered as where and who they represent. This is changing the form of Bajiajiang performance. After all, Bajiajiang troupes still function to bond a community with its religious life. Nonetheless, due to financial needs, Bajiajiang troupes can also ‘act’ as if they are a local troupe for other temples. From my viewpoint, this shift challenges more traditional understandings of ‘locality’ in Taiwan, and also shows that the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual is not simply an aesthetic change that produces more diverse performances, but one that signals a
broader social change which represents the supply and demand relationship in the religious culture.
Figure 4.1. The front square of the Temple

Figure 4.2. The troupe waits for the Server’s indication before walking pass the archway
Figure 4.3. After passing the archway

Figure 4.4. Troupes split into two lines and performed in the middle and right hand side areas in front of the temple at the same time
Figure 4.5. The distance from the archway to the main performance area is about eighty metres.

Figure 4.6. The Bajiajiang troupe was guided into the middle lane and waiting to perform.
Figure 4.7. A Tang-ki sacrifices his blood by using a spiky sword

Figure 4.8. Four carriers move the god’s sedan behind the Tang-ki in different directions
Figure 4.9. The Server greets the God

Figure 4.10. The two Chaiyes, General Gan, and Liou perform behind the Server
Figure 4.11. General Gan faces the front and Liou faces the back

Figure 4.12. The Chaiyes greet the God in front of the other Generals
Figure 4.13. The Chaiyes greet General Gan and Liou

Figure 4.14. The two Generals stand close to each other and face the front
Figure 4.15. When the two pairs of Generals meet

Figure 4.16. The four Generals meet in the centre of the performance area
Figure 4.17. General Xie and Fan perform

Figure 4.18. General Xie and Fan poses before greeting to the God
Figure 4.19. Fan poses in the back corner as if a monkey; Xie faced him and poses as if a crane.

Figure 4.20. The two Generals perform their ending pose, greet, and give the performance area to the next troupe.
Figure 4.21. The Tanki scarifies his blood to purify the place for the gods’ sedan

Figure 4.22. Bajiajiang performer covered their faces with fans, entered the crowd, and left
Chapter Five - Authority in a Bajiajiang Ritual Performance

Following the review of how Bajiajiang represents locality, this chapter moves on to discuss authority in the religious activity. This focus brings up the relationship between different authorities that appear in a Daoism temple fair; in addition, the observation and expression of different forms of authority also extends the argument from addressing locality in the ritual to addressing authority and power in wider Taiwanese society. To explain the structure of how a Bajiajiang ritual operates in the society, the term ‘authority’ has been adopted to explain the different administrative powers and forces in the Bajiajiang culture. It contains the domination of troupe leadership, temple organisation, political and local forces, as well as gang forces.

The changes to Bajiajiang not only contain its functions and the ways it performs, but also how people view it as a performative ritual in the religion. From my perspective, apart from the authority of the host temple and other political reasons, the different ways in which people consider the ritual is one of the significant reasons for the ritual to have been transformed to its current status. For that reason, when examining Bajiajiang as a performative activity that accounts for the temple fairs nowadays, it is necessary to start with an understanding of how religious rituals subsist in the society. In Taiwan, it is common to see that Daoist temples not only act as religious venues but also as community centres in a local area. To represent a distinct identity, hosting temple fairs have become a popular way for the locals. In order to organise successful events for the locals to participate in and worship their gods, the need of temple organisations comes into existence as a result. In recent years, the tendency of temple fairs has developed from a basic worship to gods to a competition between temples, and somehow this phenomenon directly affects the
development of Bajiajiang performance.

In order to provide an overall background of the Mazu Tour Festival, the first section of this chapter is a basic introduction of the event’s history and its importance in Taiwanese society. The 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival started on 16th April and finished on the 25th April. I participated in the first two days and also on the 20th April. There was no Bajiajiang ritual performance occurring on the opening day but one took place on my second visit. A detailed description of what I observed in the temple fair as a whole and an unexpected Bajiajiang performance during the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival is given in the second section. Some narratives of different authorities that happened in the incident will be also be revealed. Photographs of the event are stated and presented in the end of this chapter. Thereafter, I introduce the arguments of how authority acts in a Bajiajiang ritual performance, as well as the relationships between the host temple, the visiting temple, the hired troupe, politics, financial status, the locals, and the gangs. The interaction between these factors is sensitive and close, but can also be fragile. For that reason, from my viewpoint, it is worth examining how this circumstance exists in the society. Finally, I also discuss how the Bajiajiang performance is able to generate a dynamic system and its importance in Taiwanese culture.

5.1 Background of the Taichung Mazu International Festival

The Taichung Mazu International Festival is currently one of the most famous religious events in Taiwanese society.76 It occurs in March (Lunar calendar) around Mazu’s birthday.

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76 Mazu (媽祖) is one of the most popular goddesses in Taiwan. Tianshang shengmu (天上聖母) is one of her religious titles. Mazu was a woman named Lin Mo (林默) originally in the Song dynasty. It is believed that Mazu was a medium and had talents for thaumaturgical ritual. When she was alive, people believed that
every year. The aim of the festival is to allow the god Mazu in the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple (大甲鎮瀾宮) to visit the neighbourhood temples during her birthday period in Taichung County, Chanhwa County, Yunlin County, and Chiayi County.\textsuperscript{77} Due to the numbers of temples visited (normally more than three hundred temples), the event normally lasts for eight to nine days.\textsuperscript{78} It is organised by the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple every year and the whole routine covers approximately three hundred and thirty kilometres (EKI, 2013). During the tour, thousands of pilgrims participate and volunteer to accompany Mazu through the process.\textsuperscript{79} Since the Mazu sedan has to be carried throughout the whole routine, many pilgrims travel on foot with Mazu (figure 5.1).\textsuperscript{80}

In the past, Mazu from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple used to visit the Beigang Chao-Tien Temple (北港朝天宮), in Chiayi County.\textsuperscript{81} At that time, the public used to call the Mazu Tour ‘visiting Mazu’s parent’s home’ and the Beigang Chao-Tien Temple used to organise a

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she saved shipwrecked sailors. After she passed away, people worshipped her for blessings. By 1123 A.D., Lin Mo (also known as Lin Moniang) was officially named as a goddess in the popular religion. At first, Mazu was a sea goddess worshipped by people and sailors. In Taiwan, early migrants from Fujian also worshipped her for blessing them on crossing the Taiwan Strait. When they migrated from the coastal areas to the inner land of Taiwan, Mazu was also treated as a goddess blessing their farm work. Apparently, Mazu transformed from a sea goddess to a farm goddess. As a farm goddess, she also plays a role in preventing floods and damage from pests (Lin, 1999, p. 43). Nowadays, followers believe Mazu can heal nearly everything, and she has become more or less an almighty god in Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{77} Mazu’s birthday is on the 23rd March in the Lunar Calendar.

\textsuperscript{78} The Da Jia Mazu Festival used to be eight days and seven nights, but since 2010, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple had changed it to nine days and eight nights in order to allow Mazu to visit more temples during the festival period.

\textsuperscript{79} According to the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple official website, at least 100,000 pilgrims attend the event every year (EKI, 2013).

\textsuperscript{80} The Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple organized its own official bicycle and scooter teams to follow the sedan. Some other followers use their personal vehicles to travel with Mazu nowadays as well.

\textsuperscript{81} In 1933, a book that was edited in Japanese by the Da Jia public school has recorded the history of the Jenn Lan Mazu had been visiting the Chao Tien Temple for at least 100 years.
welcoming ceremony for the Mazu from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple’s visiting.\textsuperscript{82} However, in 1987, before the legal communication rules had been introduced between Taiwan and China, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple Chairman Yen (1960- ), who was also a legislator at that time, used his political authority and presided over the first ever religious visit to the Fujian Meijhou Mazu Temple in Mainland China in October. The aim of the visit was to participate in the Meijhiou Mazu’s 1,000 year celebration ceremony and also to bring back a Mazu statue from the Meijhou Temple to worship in the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple.\textsuperscript{83} From the political aspect, by doing this, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple not only showed that the Beigang Chao-Tien Temple did not have a higher status than the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple nor should act as their ‘origin’; instead, it demonstrates the equality between the two temples. Therefore, visiting the Beigang Chao-Tien Temple should be regarded as a normal visit, much as the visits to other temples during the tour. Nevertheless, the Beigang Chao-Tien Temple was not pleased with the statement that was shown behind the action and argued about it. Therefore, the relationship between the two temples had changed and the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple decided to create a new routine for Mazu to visit. At that time, the Hsingang Feng Tien Palace (新港奉天宮) in Chiayi County showed their interest in engaging with the Mazu tour. For that reason, since 1988, the route of the Mazu tour has started from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple, where the Mazu statue is located, and travels to the Feng Tien Palace in Hsingang, Chiayi County. After arriving at its destination, the tour continues to visit other temples on the way back to Jenn Lann Temple and the whole tour ends where

\textsuperscript{82} In the state, visiting Beigang Chao-Tien Temple does not actually mean visiting Mazu’s parents, but where Mazu was originally worshipped in Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{83} The year 1987 was the 1000th year that Mazu obtained Tao (enlightenment). The Mei Chou ancestral temple invited people worldwide to return to the ancestral temple to participate the activity. The temple organizers from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple visited Mazu’s birthplace – The Ancestral Celestial Queen Temple at Kang Li where they worshiped the Mazu. Since then the relationship between Jenn Lann Temple and its original temple has continued again (Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple, 2012).
it started. Since then, the schedule has been accepted and enforced. In 1999, the chairman of the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple Yen even asked the government to open up direct religious transportation across the Taiwan Strait. ‘The political announcement caused tremendous pressure on the Taiwanese government. Goddess Matsu (Mazu), the patron deity of Taiwan was then transformed by human persons into a deity of political resistance and protest’ (Ke, 2006).

In Taiwanese culture, people believe that if they can keep the Mazu sedan in their local area for longer, they will receive more blessings from Mazu. Therefore, all the neighbourhood temples apply different ways of delaying the tour in order to keep the Mazu sedan at their place for longer. This kind of activity directly and indirectly encourages the flourishing of religious troupes. More explicitly, on the one hand, some troupes are created or hired in order to stop the Mazu sedan for that particular purpose. On the other hand, in order to attract more people to participate in the event and visit (and even donate to) their own temples even after the festival finishes, temple organisers are encouraged (or forced) by the locals to create their own ways of gaining the attention of the public. The need and requirement for troupes in this kind of religious event therefore emerges.

Meanwhile, as religious event organisers have the power to decide what troupes are allowed to perform on which occasions and in which locations, the relationships between temples and troupes become subtle and sensitive. This situation also explains why local authorities normally play important roles in temple events in Taiwanese religious society. In addition, the chairman of Jenn Lann Temple, Yen Chin-Biau, was a well-known politician from the ruling party, the Kuomintang, at that time. Many other politicians (even from different parties) also attend the Mazu tour festival in order to gain the pilgrims’ support. Since they realise how important this event is in society, the festival is an essential place for
them to show themselves to the public. Besides, gangs also play an important role in this kind of religious event. One reason which might explain why gangs are always involved in the religious events is perhaps because the local authorities require some local people to protect their own region, so some people spontaneously organise some groups to do the job (Wu, personal communication, 1st June, 2011). Since those group members are people from local areas, ideally, they know the environment better than other visiting troupes and visitors, therefore some temple organisations ask those groups to participate in the events with their help and support to make sure the events run as they plan. Those groups have the mission to protect the god and their own temples both during the event and in their daily lives. In order to strengthen the local temple’s force, some group leaders recruit young people and train their group members in a very systematic way. Although the aim of those groups is to protect their own temples, some groups adopt the authority from the temples and become organised gangs in the local areas. Therefore, to a certain extent, the Taichung County Mazu Festival is not only an event with a religious purpose, but is also a stage for local authorities, including politicians and gangs, to express their power in the public realm.

5.2 Performance for the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival: the Fatzetang Bajiajiang Troupe

Location: Chanhwa County
Time: 8pm, 20/4 - 6am, 21/4 (7/3 – 8/3 lunar calendar)

It was the fifth day in the Festival and the Mazu tour was on the way back to the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple, Taichung. As a tradition, the Mazu statue and sedan stayed in the Tien Ho Temple, Chanhwa City, for a few hours for the local pilgrims to pray. The Tien Ho Temple

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84 In Taiwan, ‘Tien Ho’ is also a respectful form for Mazu. It means the queen in the god’s world. According
has always been one of the most popular temples in the Chanhwa Area where many pilgrims visit; the spot is an important stop for the Mazu Tour to visit during the journey. To welcome the tour, the locals always prepare many celebration ceremonies in order to honour the god, to keep the god in the area for longer, and to promote the temple and city to people who come from other places. My informant Mr. Fang is an expert in the Mazu tour who has been observing the event for more than twenty years. For that reason, after we had discussed my interests in the Bajiajiang troupes that were appearing in the event, at his suggestion I decided to visit the tour again after the opening ceremony, so that I might have the opportunity to witness some of its more unplanned and unpredictable aspects.85

I took a coach from Taipei City at about 3pm and it took approximately two hours to reach Taichung City, where I was to meet Mr. Fang. It was about 5.30pm when I arrived at Mr. Fang’s house. To make use of modern technology nowadays, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple organisation had set up a GPRS device on the top of the Mazu sedan, which allowed everyone to follow the tour on the Internet as well as to see where the tour was. We checked where the Mazu tour was from the temple’s official website, which showed that it was heading to the Chanhwa Tien Ho Temple and was predicted to arrive at the Tien Ho Temple at 9pm. It was planned that it would stay inside the temple until 11pm, and then the Mazu sedan would continue on its journey to the Chao Xin Temple in Taichung County. In order to be there before the tour and observe the setting, we left Taichung City at about 6pm in Mr. Fang’s car. It took about 30 minutes to get to Chanhwa County. Once we left

to the Taiwan Cultural Department, almost every county or city on the island has at least one Tien Ho or Mazu Temple.

85 The Mazu International Tour Festival was from 16th to 25th in April (3ed -10th March in the lunar calendar), 2010. I visited the Opening Ceremony on the 16th April and stayed overnight. This visit was my second visit during the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival. Since many of the Bajiajiang troupes take place at late evening or midnight, I started my observation from the evening until the next morning.
the motorway at the Wangtien Junction, Changhwa County, we could see many decorations along the main roads in the area. It was not difficult to find where the Mazu tour would be going later on - as long as we followed the extremely bright street lights and the temporary stalls on the streets. The leading van of the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple had arrived in advance and was driving round the city announcing to people when the tour would arrive at the Changhwa Tien Ho Temple. At that point, people in the local area seemed all ready for their special guest, Mazu. Our car was parked about one kilometre away from the temple in order to avoid the traffic jams later on and we walked from there to the Tien Ho Temple. Since Mr. Fang was very experienced in attending those kinds of folk events, he had advised me that if I wished to leave before the tour departed to the next spot, it would be best to park somewhere not too close to where the tour was going so that we would not be stuck in the traffic.

The main road in the area had four lanes and it ran under Changhwa Bagua Mountain. Along it were temporary stalls, which sold snacks, drinks, betel nuts, cigarettes, and cans of beer. There were also some simple children’s games. As a first time visitor, it seemed like a night market event in the town centre. In order to find out more about the setting, I asked a local, with whom I was sharing the same park bench by the main road, if there was a night market in this location every day or every week like many places in Taiwan. I was surprised to discover that every stall that appeared along the road on that day was illegal. Stall owners paid local residents and connected electricity from private houses to light up the stalls to run their businesses. Since all the police were very busy with the upcoming Mazu Tour, these infractions, such as the prohibited stalls and illegal parking in the town centre, were all ignored. According to him, this situation only happens once a year - when the Mazu Tour comes. ‘The town centre is always very quiet after 8pm on normal days. But when Mazu visits the town, it transforms into a frenetic place until the Mazu Tour leaves, no matter
what time of day or night’ (Anonymous man, personal communication, 20th April, 2010).

According to what he described, I realised that this temple event engages with peoples’ lives and their interactions in this particular period were interesting and required more investigation. From my viewpoint, Turner’s argument about the relationship between ritual and social change corresponds with this and may go some way towards explaining this phenomenon. Turner stated that,

[...] ritual does not merely mirror nor rest on the surface of more fundamental social processes that underlie or precede it; it is not simply symptomatic of more primary social activities. Rather, ritual is part of the process of social change, given its capacity to generate new, communitarian social arrangements (1974, pp. 43-45).

Based on my observations of the Mazu Festival, I argue that ritual constantly partakes in social forms and it is always transforming during the event. For instance, the dates and routine of the Mazu tour were picked by the host temple - the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple (of course, with the god’s approval)86, and based on the organisation’s decision, the society operates and benefits from the event. The co-operation-negotiation relationship in the religious ritual in Taiwan represents the people’s attitudes, not only to their belief but also to their lifestyle. The transformation of the ritual and society is therefore continuous and endless. Furthermore, what happened on this occasion could also be referred to Turner’s anti-structure concept - rule breaking and restructuring. In this accident, once the governmental rules are broken, people seek another way to rebuild, benefit and manage

86 The Mazu Tour is arranged on the Lantern Festival (15th January, Lunar Calendar) every year. The chairman of the Da Jia Jenn Lan Temple organisation represents the pilgrims and prays to Mazu, asking the god about the routine, date and time for the tour through the ritual Bua Buei (which is a common religious prop that is used to gather god’s yes/no answer).
the situation under the new balanced status. It does not always mean it will create a mess, but a new way to live and exist in the space for that moment. Although the visible changes in the setting are temporary, the fundamental structure of the society is always accumulating and strengthening the community.

A few hundred people appeared near the Tien Ho Temple at about 8.10pm. Some young people who wore black tops especially caught my attention. They walked in groups, with an estimated age of fourteen to the early twenties, with a few teenage girls wearing fancy colourful clothes who were clearly involved with them. They ignored all the traffic on the road and used almost a full lane for their walk. The groups were almost marching on the main road without paying attention to others in the place. It seemed that people who walked past them were attempting to avoid direct eye contact with them. Some of them were playing around, shouting to each other, smoking, and drinking on the street. I could feel the unusual tension in the setting so I asked Mr. Fang about who they might be. The reply that I received was not a surprise - they were the local gangsters. ‘Black t-shirt or shirt is always their symbol, and you better not to stare at them as that might offend them and cause you trouble,’ said Mr. Fang.

There are normally two aims for gangs to appear in this kind of event—one is to show off their authority to the locals and the tourists, and the other reason is to protect their own area and stop other gangs from doing anything that might harm the locals [...] The policemen do not have the spare time to manage and question them when the Mazu tour is coming to the town, so this is the only time they can be free to show off their force to everyone here, as long as they do not cause any serious problems (Mr. Fang, personal communication, 20th April, 2010).

Mr. Fang explained to me why those gangs could freely show off their authority on this occasion. It seemed to me that there was a balance between gangs and the locals - if the
gangs did not hurt the locals, they could easily situate themselves in the local district. For the locals, to some extent those gangs could even act as local guards to offer protection when the locals needed them. However, according to Mr. Fang, the tension is always high but delicate between the gangs and the locals. Each area has its own way to find the balance, but once the balance is off, gangs may create some problems for the locals, such as damaging local cars and shops, stealing, or hurting people. This phenomenon again corresponds to Turner’s concept of ‘anti-structure’. However, some dangerous and unpredictable issues are involved in the situation. Under this circumstance, there is always a danger of enlarging the problems that accompany a ritual but ignoring the core of it.

At about 8.45pm when the Mazu tour was about to enter the town centre, the place became very crowded and noisy. Lots of fireworks and firecrackers were let off to welcome the tour. Some sections of the main road were blocked for the firecracker displays on the ground, which are intended to welcome and delay the tour.⁸⁷ People on the street started to move to the Tien Ho Temple in order to see Mazu and pray for her blessing. After all the celebrative welcoming rituals in the town, the tour finally entered the Tien Ho Temple at exactly 9pm. Hundreds of pilgrims who had incense sticks in their hands followed the Mazu sedan into the temple and started to pray. The leading van, which had a sign of the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple on it, was driving around the town and announcing the news of Mazu’s arrival to the locals. The town was extremely busy at that time. People bought drinks and food from the stalls along the streets. Many people were waiting to use the toilet inside local fast food restaurants. The gangs spread out into the crowd instead of staying as groups as they had earlier. The whole town was very active and felt like it was not going to stop. As

⁸⁷ In order to keep Mazu with them for longer in a place, people always use firecrackers and fireworks to delay the tour. They believe that the longer the god stays, the more blessings they gather from her.
a first time visitor, if I had not had the information about what the town was normally like
from the local man whom I had talked to earlier, I would have thought that this town was
normally as busy as Taipei City.

Along the road, there were also pilgrims who looked as though they had been walking with
the Mazu tour since it started, sitting on the ground almost everywhere. Some of them used
their backpacks as pillows and lay on the pavement, and some were just leaning their heads
on their luggage and resting. Tiredness as well as happiness was shown on their faces. This
was an opportunity for them to take a two-hour break while the Mazu statue was staying
in the Tien Ho Temple. Meanwhile, some of the Mazu sedan carriers were eating at the local
stalls or on the streets and getting ready for their next destination. Some local people
delivered free food and drink on the streets to everyone, and some displayed packed food
on tables in front of their houses and invited people to eat and drink for free. In front of
some houses, there were even notices welcoming pilgrims to use their showers and toilets.
The community was so busy but in a very organised and peaceful way. The whole city was
like some kind of utopia at that moment.

By observing this, I started to wonder if this was due to the fact that ritual changes the
people or that the whole blessing process inspires a well-disposed part of humans. From
my viewpoint, the peaceful and spontaneous order that occurred could be considered as
anti-structure behaviour which only lasts for a few hours and it does not always happen in
the people’s daily life. In addition, according to my informant, most of the acts were
organised and done by volunteers in the Mazu tour. As Turner argued, pilgrimage is a social
process, which also contains different characteristics of communitas (1974, p. 169). In this
event, the locality represents existentia or spontaneous communitas, which is built by the
homogeneous community; in order to achieve the same goal, celebrating Mazu’s birthday,
a normative communitas was created. Finally, the peaceful and organised environment that was created represented the optimal ideological communitas. To me, in between each communitas, there was a gap where anti-structure took place. New states of society are created after reconstruction. However, in the case of the Mazu tour, the final creation only lasts for a certain time and occurs every year; after the Tour, everyone switches back to their normal life straight away. While those repeated behaviours and frequent activities have to an extent become rituals for the locals, how to offer exciting performances and troupes has become an important issue for local temples to attract the participants back every year. Without doubt, direct attractions such as troupes and fireworks play important roles in temple events; nonetheless, they are also beneficial for the commercial aspect for individual temples. For that reason, I suggest that communitas explains the fundamental base of the religious activity in the society; however, what encourages the development of temple fairs in Taiwan is another issue.

Two hours later, the Mazu tour was ready to continue its journey. Some people wearing identical orange t-shirts, representing the local organisation, started to set off firecrackers on the main road, which were displayed while the Mazu statue was staying in the temple. The noise of firecrackers was everywhere in the town centre and I could barely hear what people said. I was pushed and forced to move with the people and lost Mr. Fang at that point. For safety reasons, some gangsters started to help out with the order on the street by shouting at people. From what I heard from the crowd, the locals were planning to keep the Mazu statue and sedan in the area for longer by offering some small ritual activities on the street. At this point, I realised why local organisations (or local temples) rely on local gangs’ authority to protect and calm the event. Without their ‘powerful’ force presented on this occasion, it would have been difficult to complete their plan of delaying the Mazu tour. While I was walking with other people, I heard that the local people wished to delay
the tour for at least two hours. Some other temples in the same area had hired three big lorries full of fancy fireworks which were parked in different places on the tour’s route, which would be launched in order to delay the Mazu sedan. Being a first-time visitor to the event, everything looked so fresh and exciting to me. I did not know that fireworks could be launched from lorries and that they could move to wherever they wish to in order to perform their various functions - welcoming, celebrating, and delaying the Mazu sedan (figure 5.2).

I finally got out of the crowd and contacted Mr. Fang by calling his mobile. We arranged to meet up in front of the McDonald’s restaurant nearby and went to see the first lorry which was about one kilometre away from the temple on the main road. Once the Mazu sedan had left the temple, the noise on the street did not stop for a single moment. Lots of people were queuing to crawl under the Mazu sedan in order to receive a direct blessing from the god, a once-in-a-year chance. Fireworks and firecrackers on the road were still being set off everywhere. While the tour was about one hundred metres away, people on the lorry started to launch fireworks to delay the tour. The fireworks were computer programmed and the display lasted for about fifteen minutes. People around it became very excited at seeing the fireworks in the sky. The town looked very bright at that time, even though it was about 2am. Although the distance from the Tien Ho Temple to the lorry was not far, it took about three hours to complete that section.

In order to find out what was prepared for the Mazu tour later, I asked Mr. Fang to drive me to the next few stops that were on Mazu’s visiting list and observe these settings before the tour arrived. We passed a few small villages in Changhwa County and saw some pilgrims

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88 According to Mr. Fang, in tradition, crawling under Mazu’s sedan is a ritual for diminishing sins. Nevertheless, this ritual has transformed into receiving god’s blessing activity nowadays.
walking on the street as groups, or alone with their luggage. Their flags from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple were bound with lots of priests’ papers from the temples they had visited.\(^9\)

When we entered the other side of Changanwa City about twenty minutes later, I noticed a group of people wearing pink t-shirts in front of a small temple called Jiufonggong, which was located not far from the intersection of Zhongshen Road and Jinma Road. It seemed they were preparing for something. I decided to get out of the car and observe what they were preparing for. It was an ongoing ritual - people were burning some paper money in front of the temple. I followed the street lights and walked about one hundred metres away from the temple to look at the nearby environment. Some people with colourful costumes were hiding amongst a group of people while I was wandering about. I squeezed into the crowd and attempted to find out who they were and what they were doing. I was very excited to see what I had been waiting for - a Bajiajiang troupe. The performers were fully dressed and already had make-up on their faces by the time I saw them. There was a temporary shrine set up for them to do the preparation and pre-rituals for a formal performance later on.\(^0\) I went closer to the performers and tried to find the ‘right’ person to talk to. With Mr. Fang’s suggestion, he pointed out someone who wore a pink uniform with ‘Jiufonggong’ written on it, and told me it might be worth trying to talk to him in the first place and see what he said.\(^\)\(^1\)

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\(^9\) Those priest papers were prepared by different temples. When pilgrims visit temples, they are free to ask the priest for papers to take home. Pilgrims always bind the papers on the top of the flag and display it with the God statue they pray to at home and pray to them twice a day (morning and late afternoon).

\(^0\) Normally temples set up a shrine, which is like a big tent, to allow the performers to prepare for their performance. It is also called ‘xinguang’ in the ritual. This name represents the temporary temple in the Taiwanese language/dialogue; however, there is no official translation of it in written Chinese. Therefore, I will give the meanings of the word ‘xin’: (1) walk, and (2) punishment; and the word ‘guang’ means an indoor space. There are some debates over the word ‘xin’ in some research, some choose to use the meaning of walk (Wu, 2005; Lu, 2002 & 2008); however, in Shi’s research (1984), he uses the meaning of punishment to translate ‘xin’ in Chinese.

\(^1\) The word ‘gong’ means a form of temple. In the past, it was normally used for small temples. However, after receiving more donation from their pilgrims, some gongs rebuild to bigger temples but still keep the word ‘gong’ as the temple’s name.
He was a young man, about twenty-five years old, who was very thin with a serious face. I approached him, and greeted and introduced myself to him. His response was totally unexpected - he gave me a big friendly smile and told me I was very welcome to see what they were doing. This was encouraging for my fieldwork at this point, especially after experiencing the other incomplete Bajiajiang performance a few days before.\(^{92}\) With Mr. Fang’s experience, it was not too difficult for him to figure out who might be the leader; however, it was not easy for me at that time. After a simple greeting, Mr. Fang and I walked with the troupe and talked to the man. He asked someone who also wore the same uniform to find the Bajiajiang troupe’s business card and give it to me. Then he introduced himself as Mr. Yun. He was a member of the Jiufonggong and he had hired this Bajiajiang troupe from the Fatzetang Troupe to participate in the Mazu tour event.\(^{93}\) He and the troupe leader were very close friends so he knew the troupe very well and the performers also considered him as one of their masters. Since the leader of the Fatzetang Troupe was very busy at the time, Mr. Yun represented both the temple organiser and the Bajiajiang leader. According to him, the performers in this troupe were aged between fourteen and twenty, and only one of them was an adult.\(^{94}\) In addition, the price to hire a Fatzetang Bajiajiang troupe is flexible; it depends on the total performance time, as well as on the form of performance,

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\(^{92}\) On the opening day of the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival, I observed a Bajiajiang troupe on the street outside Da Jia city. The troupe members totally ignored me when I attempt to talk to them. After they have done all the preparation work, their performance was called off and they never performed. From the rumours that I heard in the crowd, due to the possibilities of drugs involved in the troupe and there might have potential fight after their performance, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple had made the decision asking the troupe not to provide their performance.

\(^{93}\) The word ‘tang’ stands for a form of temple or an organisation that relates to temple business. In Taiwan, it is common to see Bajiajiang troupes that belong to different tangs. However, the word ‘tang’ is also used widely for some gang organisations. In this occasion, Fatzetang is an organisation who trains Bajiajiang and offers performance during temple event.

\(^{94}\) In Taiwan, only those over the age of 18 are considered to be adults.
which comprises the whole street performance. It normally lasts for one to two hours, depending on the requested/employer temple and the function of the performance, and the welcoming performance usually lasts from five to fifteen minutes.

The action of passing me the troupe leader’s business card emphasised the business function of a Bajiajiang troupe in contemporary Taiwan temple fairs. As I argued earlier, temples which hire troupes to perform for religious events not only aim to celebrate a god’s birthday or for other special inquiries, but also to promote the temples as well as the troupe. In order to gain either reputation or profit (or both) by offering performances in the public, troupe leaders not only have to introduce their troupes to people, but also have to improve their troupes’ performances for the multiple functional instances nowadays. From my aspect, this functional transformation of the ritual directly influences the flourishing of Bajiajiang in society.

I walked with Mr. Yun as well as the troupe to the Jiufonggong. When we walked close to an overpass on the street, Mr. Yun stopped our conversation and talked loudly to the Bajiajiang performers to remind them to cover their heads with the fans in their hands, and then the performers walked quickly to pass it. This action showed that this troupe has been following some of the strict taboos more commonly observed in a traditional Bajiajiang ritual performance. I noticed that there was one person accompanying every performer in the troupe. Mr. Yun told me that they were the performers’ personal assistants during the performance procedure. Since the performers normally have to prepare in a temporary place and sometimes the conditions are not perfect for them to work, Bajiajiang leaders always hire people to assist them.

‘When they perform, we ask some young members to look after those performers before,
during, and after the performance, until the make-up is removed from their faces—it also means until they go back to their normal life’ (Mr. Yun, personal communication, 21st April, 2010) (figure 5.3). After walking past the overpass, the performers slowed down their steps and continued their walk to the Jiufonggong. Their walk was very gentle, quiet and serious. None of the performers played around or talked during their walk. It seemed to me that the performance had started from the moment that they departed to the Jiufongguang. Due to the lack of street light in the setting, it was not very easy to have seen the performers clearly. When we walked to about thirty metres away from the Jiufongguang, the whole troupe stopped and was about to take a break. All the assistants went to take some chairs so that the performers could sit down while they were waiting for the performance to start. Some of them helped the performers to re-arrange their costumes on the street (figure 5.4). With assistants accompanying them, a couple of performers went to urinate behind a car which was parked along the street.

It was about 3.10am. I finally had the chance to get a closer look at the performers at this point. I noticed that the characters looked different to a traditional Bajiajiang troupe. Mr. Yun introduced me to the ten members in the troupe - Wenchaiye, Wuchaiye, General Gan, Liou, Xie, Fan, Chen, Shen, Jia, and Shuo. Unlike a traditional Tainan Bajiajiang troupe, Fatzetang had replaced the four season generals (Generals Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) with the different characters of Generals Chen, Shen, Jia, and Shuo. ‘Chen’ and ‘Shen’ are both common surnames in Taiwan; ‘Jia’ and ‘Shuo’ in Chinese both mean lock. They use Generals Chen, Shen, Jia, and Shuo to strengthen the force of a traditional Bajiajiang tactic. With a clearer interpretation, in a traditional performance, Generals Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter represent the four directions (East, South, West, and North) in Chinese cosmology in an area (Shi, 1984; Wu, 2005; Lu, 2002 & 2008); however, in this troupe, they believe that with the eight Generals they have chosen to work together, it is
more effective at catching ghosts, locking them up, and re-locating them. Mr. Yun also told me that this kind of Bajiajiang troupe is very popular in the Taichung area (including Taichung, Changhwa, and Yunlin Counties) nowadays. Another reason that Bajiajiang troupes in the Taichung area prefer to have this ‘new’ pattern of performance is because they believe that ‘General Chen, Shen, Jia and Shou bring up more new dance steps and a new style to the traditional performance with still similar function, such as ghost catching and purifying, of Bajiajiang’ (Mr. Yun, personal communication, 21st April, 2010). In order to understand why those four characters were chosen to replace the four season Generals at the beginning, I asked Mr Yun about where the original idea came from; however, I did not get a direct answer from him. Instead, he told me that the fatzetang was a very young tang; they wished to have their own identity in the religious society and bring their own characters to the performance.

Traditionally, Bajiajiang troupes always centre on whichever original temple they come from and prefer to keep the link between them. Conversely, in this case, they seemed not too keen on talking about that; or rather, in order to stand out from other Bajiajiang troupes, this troupe attempted to avoid discussing that. I found this very interesting and started to wonder if this phenomenon was becoming more common in Taiwan. I argue that this factor has a similar impact to what I revealed about ‘locality’ in the previous chapter. From my observation, localisation plays a vital role in the Bajiajiang culture in Taiwan. After adopting the principles and cults of Bajiajiang ritual from their original troupe, some Bajiajiang troupes have adapted their performances to encounter with their regions and social needs. Therefore, many troupes are more concerned about their relationship with their regions rather than their origins. After Mr. Yun’s explanation of the changes that were made for Bajiajiang ritual performance in the Taichung area, I suggest that this phenomenon in religious events also has a strong relationship with local authorities, such as temple
organisations and local pilgrims. Without a powerful force, it is not easy to re-introduce new changes to a traditional activity. Therefore, from my viewpoint, apart from the commercial aspect that accompanies in a Bajiajiang ritual performance, authority is another main force that encourages changes in contemporary Bajiajiang troupes.

During their break before the actual performance, I asked permission to take photographs of the troupe and some detailed pictures of each performer from the performers. None of them replied to my request; some of them even covered their faces with their feather fans when I walked close to them. Mr. Yun noticed that and asked all of the performers to stand straight and took me up to the troupe for a better look at each individual character. With a very serious and strong voice, he asked them to look at my camera without hiding their faces with fans. He did not need to explain why I was there to take photographs of them and they just followed every word he said. I observed each character in a very close position and noticed that the paintings on their faces were very detailed. However, I also noticed that the make-up seemed to have been done by two different people. Mr. Yun told me that they have two kai-mien (make-up) masters in this troupe, and sometimes both of them worked together for a performance; therefore, in some performances there were two different make-up styles in the troupe. ‘However, not many audiences noticed the difference because they normally stay away from the performers’ (Mr. Yun, personal communication, 21st April, 2010). Since I was more curious of the ‘new’ characters in the troupe, I tended to spend more time observing them. The make-up of Generals Chen, Shen, Jia and Shuo (the rear generals) were similar to Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan (the front generals). 95 What is more, the props that they had in their hands also corresponded to those

95 In order to avoid repeating those Generals’ names all the time, some people in the field separate the eight Generals into two groups: the front generals - Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan, and the rear generals - General Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter; or in this case they were Generals Chen, Shen, Jia and Shuo.
of the front generals. The server who led the troupe did not wear make-up and costume. He used his prop, a bamboo shoulder pole, to lead the team and perform during the ritual.

The front pair in the troupe was Wen chaiye and Wu chaiye. They both wore yellow headgear with two long feathers on them. The costumes they wore were identical - long golden tiger patterned vests with wide red belts; underneath the vests were white long-sleeved tops and red trousers. Wen chaiye held a ling (plate) in his right hand and a white feather fan in his left hand. His make-up was white-based with black bat patterned eyes and a red mouth. Wu chaiye held a chi (flag) in his left hand and a white feather fan in his right hand. His make-up was basically red, blue, and white, with a big white round mark on his forehead and thick blue lines on his cheeks. General Gan stood on the left hand side behind Wen chaiye. He had a white feather fan in his left hand and a silver metal stick on his right hand. His make-up was based on white, red, and black. His headgear was golden, and full of fancy shining decorations (figure 5.5). General Liou stood in the right hand side next to General Gan. He had the same props as General Gan but held them in the opposite hand. His face painting was basically white with many detailed thin red and black lines on it; he had an uneven red mouth and big wing-like eyes (figure 5.6). Followed by General Gan and Liou were General Xie and Fan. General Xie stood behind General Gan and his make-up was predominantly white, had a pair of big butterfly-like eyes and some very detailed thin red and black lines on his face (figure 5.7); he had a tall white hat with ‘Lucky to See Me’ written on it and held a fish pillory in his right hand and white feather fan in his left. General Fan stood behind General Liou, and his face painting was fundamentally black and white with red dots on his

The reason people do so is because, during the performance, the front and rear Generals have their own functions and they have different dancing patterns which relate to their functions. By putting them into two groups, the audience would be able to know what their movements stood for in the ritual (Lu, 2002 & 2008, Wu, 2005).
cheek and chin (figure 5.8). He had a short black hat with ‘Good and Evil is Clear’ written on it. He held an iron chain in his left hand and a white feather fan in his right. General Chen was behind General Xie, his face painting had a white base, with some red and black thick lines on it (figure 5.9). He had a white feather fan in his left hand and a bamboo stick in his right. General Shen had a white face with big bat-pattern eyes and also an uneven mouth (figure 5.10). He also had a bamboo stick in his left hand and a white feather fan in his right. The last pair was General Jia and Shuo. General Jia stood behind General Chen and his appearance (including his face painting, the fan, and the hat) was comparable to General Xie (figure 5.11). Correspondingly, General Shuo had a similar appearance to General Fan (figure 5.12). The front and rear groups looked very similar in many ways. In fact, without Mr. Yun’s explanation, it was not easy for an outsider like me to tell the two groups apart, especially when they were not standing in their troupe positions.

While I was walking among the troupe and taking photographs of the performers, I noticed that some of the performers started to talk to each other and smoke during their break. In Bajiajiang tradition, these behaviours are normally banned. I asked Mr. Yun in private on the street about the taboos in the Fatzetang Troupe. According to him, not everyone who wants to perform Bajiajiang is accepted to join the troupe. The leader examines the backgrounds of the participants and makes sure they will not do any harm to the troupe. Those who are below adult age (eighteen) have to receive their parents’ permission in the first place, and then the leader would talk to the parents before deciding if they could join the troupe. Mr. Yun told me that Fatzetang is very strict on their practice process and the training for a Bajiajiang ritual performance is very tough. Because of that, not every performer is able to cope with the procedures.

The public and the media like to see and emphasise what Bajiajiang members have done
wrong in their normal life; however, no one really pays attention to how hard these young kids learn to perform for temple events. They spend their spare time after school practicing the dancing instead of watching TV and playing computer games at home (Mr. Yun, personal communication, 21 April, 2010).

As a good friend of the troupe leader, Mr. Yun felt sorry for how Bajiajiang performers were viewed by wider Taiwanese society. In the Fatzetang Troupe, the leader does not mind the under aged young performers smoking or talking before the performance, as long as they behave and perform well. Any kind of fighting in the troupe is strictly prohibited, though. If the leader finds out about a member fighting with others in his private life, that individual’s membership will be withdrawn. Mr. Yun also stated that teenagers nowadays have their own thoughts and sometimes they can be difficult to communicate with; therefore, the leader has to re-adjust the taboos and finds his own way to work with those teens. That is why in the Fatzetang Troupe the taboos are not as strict as a traditional Bajiajiang troupe.

Apart from the rules in the Fatzetang Troupe, the re-adjustment of taboos in contemporary Bajiajiang ritual is very interesting to me. While most scholars have discussed and emphasised the importance of taboos in a ‘traditional’ Bajiajiang ritual, not many have discussed the changes of taboos in contemporary troupes. In some old and long lasting troupes, changes to taboos are never allowed because they relate to the origin of a troupe as well as their respect to the ritual and their belief. However, nowadays, more and more troupes give new explanations to taboos, which are supposed to make Bajiajiang ritual become closer to people’s daily life. The most common changes in taboos are smoking and chewing betel nuts after the kai-mien ritual. These behaviours are strictly banned in a very traditional troupe like the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiajiang troupe. However, it is common to see many fully dressed Bajiajiang members do so in public. In some Bajiajiang troupes, the leaders even consider giving performers freedom as rewards for the
performance (Yun, personal communication, 21st April, 2010). Another taboo that has changed significantly is acceptance of the audience’s behaviour during the performance. For instance, in a traditional Bajiajiang troupe, females are banned from having any physical contact with the performers (normally three days before the ritual, some troupes even say seven days); however, although nowadays females are still not allowed to get too close to the performers during the performance, it is not considered as serious as it used to be. Another example is the space between the performers and the audience. In the past, any audience member who crossed though a troupe while they performed might be pushed away or even beaten up by the performers’ assistants; nowadays many troupe leaders nowadays simply politely ask them to leave and blame the assistants for not doing their job well. It is always emphasised that Bajiajiang is a taboo enveloped ritual (Shi, 1984), and those taboos are meant to be unchangeable. Nevertheless, without doubt, some strict taboos have been transformed in the current Bajiajiang system.

At about 3.35am, the village was filled with the noise of firecrackers from somewhere not far away from where we were. Mr. Yun apologised to me and told me that our conversation had to end due to the upcoming activities. I therefore went in front of the troupe and observed the scene on my own. From the noise, I could guess that the Mazu tour was getting closer to the temple. Suddenly, hundreds of local people turned up on the street. A very old lady with a curved back, holding a long incense stick, attempted to walk through the crowd and wished to go to the front to welcome the Mazu sedan. A few minutes later, the noise got closer and closer. People seemed to lose control and started to move forwards to the Jiufonggong. At this time, the Bajiajiang assistants took the chairs away from the performers and moved them to the Jiufonggong. All the performers stood up and were ready to move again to the temple. There was a Guanjiangshou troupe walking in front of the Bajiajiang troupe. There were three performers in that troupe. When the Mazu tour
was about to arrive at the temple, the Guanjiangshou performers started to run to the Mazu sedan at high speed. All the participants got very excited when this happened. It seemed to me that their action had just announced the start of the event. The Bajiajiang troupe followed the Guanjiangshou troupe and stood behind it. The Guanjiangshou troupe started to perform in front of the Mazu sedan. Meanwhile, members from the Jiufonggong infiltrated the Mazu Tour and tried to detain the sedan. Witnessing this happening, I realised that the Jiufonggong was not on the Mazu tour visiting list and that was why they had hired those two different troupes, to delay the tour and to gain extra time for the temple members to take the sedan from the Jenn Lann Temple. After the short welcoming performance of Guanjiangshou, the Bajiajiang troupe also did a short (approximately one minute) greeting ritual to welcome the sedan. Four men from the Fatzetang troupe played gongs in the front of the group. The server led the Bajiajiang group to run to the sedan and controlled the walking speed by shaking the bells that were attached to his shoulder pole. The performers posed as a group, greeting the sedan when they were about ten metres away from it (figure 5.13). Then the server walked to the middle of the troupe and led the team, turned their back on the sedan, and then walked away. The performers followed the server in pairs - Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye, Generals Gan and Liou, Xie and Fan, Chen and Shen, and finally Jia and Shuo, walking forward for a few steps then turned their bodies and walked to the Jiufonggong (figure 5.14). The second welcoming ceremony in front of the temple lasted for about three minutes in total. From the time when the Bajiajiang troupe turned their team backward to the Mazu sedan and walked in front of it, they actually acted as if they were the front guards of the Mazu sedan, whose duty was to purify the road for the sedan and lead it to Mazu’s next stop. Whilst everyone focused on the performances, the Jiufonggong members finally detained the sedan from the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple and welcomed the Mazu sedan into their temple for the locals to pray. However, according to some local people’s rumours, if Jiufonggong was not able to take the sedan from the Da
JiaJenn Lann Temple, the ritual might have ended here.

In fact, before the Guangjiangshou and Bajiajiang performances, no one really knew in advance if the welcoming ceremony would work to delay the tour. The atmosphere at that moment was excited as local people got the chance to pray to the Mazu statue in the Jiufonggong and the Jiufonggong won the honour of keeping the Mazu tour longer for that area. After the Mazu sedan settled down in the temple, the temple members spread out lots of firecrackers and displayed them on the ground in front of the temple. This action indicated to the participants where the performances would occur. People moved backwards, providing space for the performers in front of the temple. While people were moving, I got the chance to sneak to the very front of the temple for a better view of the whole performance. Those temple members whom I had seen when I had a conversation with Mr. Yun recognised me so they just ignored me and did not ask me to leave.\textsuperscript{96} The Guangjiangshou performers then turned up from the back of the participants and walked forwards to the temple. After they located themselves in front of the temple, the temple members set firecrackers alight and it seemed to be an opening announcement of a performance (figure 5.15). The Guangjiangshou troupe did a three-minute performance. Then they left from where they entered once the performance finished. After that, the people from the Jiufonggong set up some more firecrackers and ‘announced’ the next ritual performance, Bajiajiang, by setting alight those firecrackers. Since the space was given for the Guangjiangshou performance earlier and was clear, the Bajiajiang performers just turned up from the same place where Guangjiangshou had come from and they stood in a dignified

\textsuperscript{96} Normally, the temple members only allow ‘insiders’ to stay in their working area. In this particular occasion, I was accepted amongst them as they considered me to be a friend of their organiser.
manner (figure 5.16).

The server, who wore a Fatzetang uniform and carried his shoulder pole, with eighteen reduced implements hung on each side, led the whole group into the front area of the temple, where firecrackers were displayed on the ground. The other performers followed and stood behind him in two lines. The server shook his shoulder pole and rearranged the whole team. The other ten performers went to the middle of the performing area but remained in two lines. They went into their individual poses and held them for about three seconds. All the performers bent their outer legs and held their fans to their sides. Their body language seemed to me like the ‘opened’ bodies in theatre performances (figure 5.17). Then the server faced to his front, front-right, and front-left and stepped forwards and turned back to a centre spot respectively as a formal salute step in Bajiajiang ritual performance to greet the Mazu sedan. By doing this, he indicated a clearer area to the participants of where the troupe was going to perform later on (figure 5.18). This movement also reminded the audience not to enter the performance area. Meanwhile, the other performers spread out to the edge of the performing area and kept their bodies straight but remained in two lines.

After greeting the god and clearing the space, the server turned his body to face the other performers, walked into the middle, passed through them, and then left the troupe. He stood outside the performing area but still shook his shoulder pole to create the rhythm to control the troupe’s footfalls. Following the rhythm from the bells, the two chaiyes and the other generals walked to the centre and spread out again. Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye walked to the front centre, posed, and swayed their heads slowly for about ten seconds. This time their hands were more ‘closed’ and against their bodies, and they bent their inner legs (figure 5.19). The others still stood straight behind them at that time. After the pose, the
two chaiyes went to the middle immediately. They bent their outer legs and lifted them almost up to their chests. Then they stepped out and bent their outer legs, lifted their fans above their heads, and swayed their heads again. However, this time they looked straight into each other’s eyes when they faced each other. After the pose, they then stepped in with their right legs up and turned to face different directions: Wenchaiye faced the back and Wuchaiye faced the front, both with their legs wide open (figure 5.20).

This action lasted for about another ten seconds. After that, they stepped in to the middle and stepped out again but changed their direction to the right and left hand sides (figure 5.21). This action also lasted for about ten seconds. Afterwards, they stepped out to the edge of the performing area in the front section and turned their bodies to face the temple and posed as their opening positions for another eight seconds. Their heads were swaying and looking around during the whole procedure. In the meantime, the server suddenly ran into the front of the two chaiyes from the left hand side of the troupe. He ran to the incense pot which was located in front of the temple and then turned his body to the other performers. The other generals who were standing along the edges then joined the two chaiyes in the middle area and posed as they had earlier (figure 5.22). The server then shook his shoulder pole sharply and walked between the two lines with very big steps. The other performers behind him followed his steps and swayed their hands high to the front area in pairs, and then they turned their bodies, switched their positions and left the performing area as the same relative position as they came in. Once it finished, people started to enter the temple and pray to Mazu. After the performance, the Bajiabian members left the temple as a group. The Mazu statue and sedan stayed in the Jiufonggong for about one hour and continued its journey straight away.

The performance offered by the Fatzetang on this occasion was unusual. The whole
performance focused on the server and the two chaiyes. Apart from the group greeting, the other Generals barely gave any significant performance. Since most troupes do not have the two chaiyes in their performance, apparently this performance is very different to many other Bajiajiang troupes’ performances, which focus on the generals’ presentations, in many other temple events. I was not sure whether the limited time, the special occasion, the unpredictable situation, or how much they got paid influenced the form of the performance. However, from this event, I realised how unpredictable and flexible a Bajiajiang ritual performance could be at temple fairs, not just the unsure external factors but also the performance forms. For instance, the performance may not have taken place, or have stopped early, if the Jiufonggong was not able to take the Mazu sedan. And if the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple did not agree to let the Mazu sedan stay at the Jiufonggong, the performance would not have taken place either. From this instance, I argue that, behind the respect of each other in between temples, different forms of authorities, such as political issues, different organisations, the temple who hires the troupe, the leadership in troupes, as well as the local gangs, are constantly working and switching through the Mazu tour event. In addition, by witnessing this Bajiajiang ritual performance, I also found that the performance itself represents forces working in the society in many ways. The authority that was expressed by the performers shows the force of the demi gods, the organisation, and the individual performer; creative dancing and face painting patterns in different troupes demonstrate how young Bajiajiang troupes may have developed from traditions at the present time. The diverse functions of the performance also prove the change of needs for different occasions in the ritual. Although some of these issues have been raised in the research of Wu (2005) and Lu (2008) by considering Bajiajiang as a product of Taiwanese culture, nonetheless, the interaction between the ritual practice and Taiwanese society has rarely been discussed. Therefore, I suggest that the relationship between the temple, the troupe, the locals, and the local gang is tricky but undividable. In this event it was clear that
there were negotiations between these temples before the event; however, the nature of these negotiations is not easy to uncover.

This event also showed that the Bajiajiang ritual has changed its functions from just catching ghosts, guarding, and purifying to welcoming and greeting gods and temples. The transformation of the ritual without doubt also affects the forms of the original performance. As a well-known taboo enveloped ritual that continues to exist in modern society, some changes in Bajiajiang are unavoidable. This phenomenon may relate to different people’s needs or individual situation at temple fairs. Turner argued that,

Rules may ‘frame’ the performance, but the ‘flow’ of action and interaction within that frame may conduce to hitherto unprecedented insights and even generate new symbols and meaning, which may be incorporated into subsequent performances. Traditional framings have to be reframed—new bottles made for new wine (1982, p. 79).

He also revealed, ‘I like to think of ritual essentially as performance, enactment, not primarily as rules or rubrics. The rules “frame” the ritual process, but the ritual process transcends its frame’ (1982, p. 79). Bajiajiang’s ongoing transformation represents the society in different ways. For the local people, this ritual does not only expand the spectacle of a religious event, but also brings material benefit to the community. Of course, a religious event without Bajiajiang can still achieve the aim of worshipping the gods; however, the reason this ritual is irreplaceable in temple fairs and plays such an important role in them is its tight relationships and interaction to society. To some extent, the meaning of this performance in the society goes far beyond the religion or its direct visual impact.
5.3 Authority and the Performance

The Fatzetang’s Bajiajiang ritual performance was an interlude in the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival. This unscheduled impromptu that took place during the Tour demonstrates how Bajiajiang ritual performances are inflected by, and reflect, different authorities. It also illustrates how this ritual performance can be easily fitted in and edged out in the fluid and unpredictable circumstances of the tour. For instance, this particular type of troupe performance was banned in the Da Jia town centre on the first day of Mazu’s tour, but was not forbidden to take place at any point during the tour period once the Mazu sedan had left the town.97 This seemingly contradictory situation suggests that while, on the one hand, temple fairs welcome the participation of troupes such as Bajiajiang because they attract the general public; on the other hand, they also recognise that the participation of Bajiajiang troupes can create unpredictable circumstances. In the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival, from the political aspect, the Da Jia Jenn Lann acted as a host temple in the religious activity that held the full control in their location: the Da Jia area. Nevertheless, when the Tour has left the town, it did not immediately mean they lose their power; instead, they created the possibilities of sharing the authority of Mazu with other parties in order to satisfy everyone’s needs in the event. Meanwhile, they have also shared the responsibility of any possible negative occurrences. The whole state is sensitive and fragile, but the complex social situation creates a new balance for the society, which allows the religious

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97 According a local Bajiajiang troupe leader Mr. Fon from the Da Jia area (personal communication, 16th April, 2010), the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple did not permit any Bajiajiang related rituals to perform in the Da Jia town centre on the Mazu’s departure day due to some fights between Bajiajiang troupes just before Mazu left for the tour in the previous year. The host temple knew that mass media would broadcast live on TV of the opening ceremony, and they wished to avoid negative impressions of the event sending throughout the country. Therefore, for the event in 2010, they decided to ban Bajiajiang ritual performances in the Da Jia town centre.
event to regenerate new resources for its people all the time. As Turner argued, ‘Often when ritual perishes as a dominant genre, it dies a multipara, giving birth to ritualized progeny, including the many performative arts’ (1992, p79). Bajiajiang, being a form of religious ritual which has been running in the society for a few hundred years, has experienced its high and low, from Mainland China to Taiwan, is confronting the procedure of rebirth in different ways all the time.

By adopting Sutton’s argument about Bajiajiang troupes in Southern Taiwan (2003), I agree with him that ‘authority’ plays a vital role to account for ritual performance like Bajiajiang. The authority requires different forms of institutions to express and deliver in a Taiwanese religious ritual. From my viewpoint, taboo itself stands for a very basic and fundamental authority in the sacred ceremony. The reason I suggest this is because most Bajiajiang troupes consider taboos as crucial disciplines that everyone has to obey. Although how those taboos were set up and by who are anonymous in the Bajiajiang’s history, they are still supposed to be unchallengeable in the system. This authority of traditional obligation has been adopted for many generations and is still ongoing in Bajiajiang troupes. Masters and trainees in troupes establish the customs when they train the performers; at the same time, most of the performers are willing to be monitored under this system. To a degree, this inheritance of authority is the centre of Bajiajiang and is one reason why this ritual is still considered of value in the culture. However, as I argued earlier, Bajiajiang as a performance has transformed significantly in different ways these days, and it cannot be denied that the involvement of different types of authorities account for its transformation. In order to give further consideration to understanding how the diverse forces work altogether in the religious activity, it is essential to examine how different authorities are established, needed, interact, and engage in temple events. There are some indispensable elements when organizing a temple event, which include the host temple or organisation,
the local support (include the government, political, the local gangs, and the local people), and essential rituals or performances. Each of them plays different roles in producing and completing a temple event. For the sake of providing a clear understanding of how different authorities contribute a temple event, I will explain how they work by viewing them as individual parts in their own sphere, and then explicate how they cooperate.

From the performance aspect, I would like to adopt Turner’s concept of liminal space (1967) to examine and discuss the Bajiajiang ritual. In a Bajiajiang ritual performance, performers outline a visual space by moving their bodies, the audience steps back and gives space to the performers, a space (whether in physical/actual or mental/imaginary) is then created by those movements. Performers dance and walk, the audience are engaged with the performers in an open area, the noise, the crowd, the surroundings, and the atmosphere are all linked together in a visible as well as an invisible space. What the performers do in the ritual is not only to worship the gods and separate the performance area, but also to assert themselves to the public in the limited place and period. As Turner has suggested,

> All the senses of participants and performers may be engaged; they hear music and prayers, see visual symbols, taste consecrated foods, smell incense, and touch sacred persons and objects. They also have available the kinaesthetic forms of dance and gesture, and perhaps cultural repertoires of facial expression, to bring them into significant performative rapport (1982, p.81).

I presume every individual audience member has his or her own way to engage with the performance under those disordered conditions. What is more, it cannot be ignored that the appearances of the performers plays an important role in representing the characters of the Generals, leading the audience to the imaginary world, furthermore to succumb the believers with their sacred power. However, from my viewpoint, the main factors in
creating a liminal space in the performance are the quiet but powerful force that was released by the steady facial images and their unequivocal but simple movements. In other words, those silent visual elements not only strengthen the power of the characters, but also indicate the audience to be engaged, and then be able to complete their own imagination of the demi goddess. This liminal stage allows people to communicate with the gods they believe in. Although every individual may have different feelings during the rite of passage, the communitas situation that the ritual creates at that moment should not be ignored. Interestingly, in the Fatzetang Bajiajiang performance that I have observed, even though the visual elements were fully packed, the dance patterns and the ritual were simplified and short. This factor brings about my further interest and extends my question about the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual, not only from its visual appearance but also the substance of the performance.

In the incident of the Bajiajiang performance that was provided by Fatzetang for the Mazu tour in 2010, apart from the group walking on the street, being the guards of Mazu sedan, and group guarding the performance area, only two performers actually danced in front of the Jiufonggong. In addition, the dance was not even given by the eight main generals but the Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye. According to my informant, this situation sometimes occurs in Bajiajiang performances nowadays but is not very common. From a functional aspect, the troupe has done their duties of protecting the God’s sedan and purifying the area; however, the performance was obviously simplified. In that situation, the simplification does not seem to bother the pilgrims. On the contrary, it shows that, in some temple fairs, as long as a Bajiajiang ritual manifests its set functions of praying, detaining, and guarding the gods’ sedans, the performance element is less important. This phenomenon shows that in some occasions the ritual has transformed to a visualised and nominal performance in the religious events. For that reason, I argue that this is also a form of transformation that
proves a Bajiajiang troupe has become a functional based trend rather than a pure religious ritual in present days.

In addition, it is worthwhile to adopt what Turner (1992) and Schechner (1988) argued about social drama to examine a Bajiajiang ritual performance. The kind of performance creates a space that is under the shared cultural background. The audience gather what they wish by attending the event and participating in the performance. In fact, no one would be able to find out if the gods are satisfied with those performances that are given by the Bajiajiang performers; neither would they know if all the ghosts are caught by the troupe. However, by sharing the same belief and participating in the event together, the audience believes the ritual heals illness and brings them happiness. At the same time, I suppose every participant would presume that the gods are glad and that ghosts are caught during the performing procedure. From this aspect, it leads to the doubt that I mentioned earlier about the original aim of the ritual and raises the importance of it. For those pilgrims, the ritual is a direct way for them to worship and receive blessings from the gods. Once they obtain their wishes by participating in it, the form of the performance is no longer important. By keeping all the traditional visual elements in their costumes, make ups, and props in order to show their awareness of the ritual, current Bajiajiang performance tends to bring up the spiritual part of the ritual without following the traditional rules. On the one hand, the liminal stage that is created during the event is far more important than the visual elements. On the other hand, visual elements account for the achievement of the liminal stage. To a certain degree, the relationship between supply and demand in the ritual is clear. Therefore, I suggest that while a ritual has transformed from the religious base to an ostensible function, the tolerance that is given by the pilgrims is one of the most important reasons that accommodates Bajiajiang’s ongoing transformation.
5.4 Performative Bajiajiang and Conclusion

According to the Department of Statistics in 2013, there are 12,083 temples in Taiwan. Those temples not only act as a religious centre, but more importantly they also work as community centres in many local areas. They are run by the local committee and founded by the local pilgrims and business through donations. In Taiwanese custom, when temples/organisations wish to set up an event, first they have to consult the lunar calendar and choose the most suitable day for the event to be held. Not all the events are set up on the gods’ birthdays nowadays due to the needs of the society. For example, the Mazu tour is the main part of celebration ceremony Mazu’s birthday and it normally starts from the weekend about two weeks before the God’s birthday every year. Normally the actual date is agreed by Mazu by showing on the buei in the *bua-buei* ritual on the Lantern Festival (15th January, Lunar calendar), which is approximately two to three months in advance. However, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple has the authority to choose the date and the time for Mazu before they consult the God, and then the God demonstrates her agreement by showing on the buei. In other words, the authority of the God that is given by her pilgrims is somehow transferred to the temple organisation, and the organisation passes it back to the god by praying and asking for permission. According to my informant Mr. Fang whom I met before the Mazu tour, the ritual that happens at the Lantern Festival is a ritual in form. The aim of it is not only to show the respect of the god from the host temple, but also to prove that the decision of the host temple is permitted. For that reason, to some extent, it could be said that this ritual represents the negotiation of authority that occurs in between the god and the host temple. Since temple events have to fit in the society in order to gather more support from their followers, by holding the event during the weekends it is hoped to gather more pilgrims, or even more tourists. With more participants joining in the events, the host temple/organisation not only gains more reputation, but is also believed to gather
more authority from the gods (Lu, 2002). This factor shows that a host temple has to put all the considerations into account when organizing a temple fair, which includes different forms of authority. Therefore, from my viewpoint, a Bajiajiang ritual in a temple could be seen as a marionette, where the host organisation acts as a marionettiste; the different authorities work as the strings that tie on a puppet. With all of them working together, the ritual is framed, firmed, and complete.

Generally speaking, in temple events, the organisations also have the authority of deciding what form of troupes they prefer to invite and hire in the event. For instance, when the City God goes on tour, the host temple/organisation normally invites Bajiajiang troupes and Guanjiangshou troupes to participate in the events in order to help the god to complete his mission of catching ghosts (Shi, 1986; Wu, 2000; Lu, 2002 & 2008). ⁹⁸ For that reason, in tradition, when there is a god’s birthday, such as Mazu’s, Bajiajiang has never been an extensive troupe to take part. However, nowadays, it is also very common to see those ghost-catching troupes appearing in such activities. ⁹⁹ Some troupes are invited by the host temples/organisations in order to create the atmosphere of ‘re’nao’ (excitement) (Sutton, 2003, p.28 & p.136). At the same time, the opportunities that are offered by the hosts also give the troupes chances to present in front of the audience as well as other troupes. By performing in front of the audience/worshippers, Bajiajiang performers express the authority of the demi gods (the characters they play) and the troupe itself. To a certain extent, the decision that is made by the association decides what troupes can appear

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⁹⁸ In Taoism, some ghosts can be nasty and harmful to people. Since City God is the god who monitors and guards a local area, therefore, catching ghosts and protecting the locals are two of the most important duties of him.

⁹⁹ In the folklore, ghosts are afraid of gods and they hide away from gods. For that reason, the attendance of Bajiajiang in gods’ birthdays did not seem to be necessary in the old time.
(including the form of ritual, the form of performance, and the timing limitation for a performance), and then the troupes that are invited to join have the chance to show the power through their performance. Everything that happens in a temple event is authorized and organised under different forms of control. With strong and powerful authority of the host temples/organisations, the events will then be presented to the audience in the way that the hosts wish them. For that reason, the functions of Bajiajiang ritual performance sometimes have to change in order to fit in with the event (Lu, 2002). Because of holding the power of choosing the form of event, the relationships between the host temples/organisations and the troupes is therefore very tight; the organisations decide the forms of performance to encourage the locals to attend their events, and under the hosts’ organisation, the troupes have to be diverse in their performances to both fit the events and to please the audience. Both hosts and troupes have to find a balance between them when arranging a temple event. If the balance is off, some unnecessary arguments and fights may occur during the events. This feature not only shows the switches of the function in modern troupes in society (Ye, 2009, p.449), but also illustrates the force and tension between the organisations and the troupes.

In order to understand how religious fairs work in Taiwan, it is important to be aware of the authority that a host temple/organisation holds in a ritual. In the Taiwanese religious culture, temples hold different events for diverse functions. Most of the events are held for their host gods’ birthdays, \(^{100}\) and sometimes they cooperate for their brotherhood/neighbourhood temples’ great projects. \(^{101}\) Regardless of the aim of the

\(^{100}\) Generally speaking, most temples have one main god and have a statue of it for pilgrims to pray to. The statue is settled in the main hall (normally in the centre of the temple), and assists with some other gods’ statues display along its both sides. The main god (Zhushen) is the core of the temple (Hung, 2009).

\(^{101}\) Further discussion about brotherhood/neighbourhood temple fair will be given in the next chapter.
events, the host temples/organisations have the responsibility of choosing the form of their events and organizing activities for both the gods and the pilgrims. In other words, the authority that the host temples/organisations have is supposed to be the main force in producing the events. However, who gives the gods and the temples the authority? This question links to the need for the ritual. According to Wang (2010), ‘to the pilgrims, ritual is a transformation from the evil power of ghosts to the protective force of God; it rebuilds the relationship between the human beings, the gods, and the ghosts in the society; meanwhile, it also creates an ideal order for the society’ (p. 345). This argument to some extent clarifies how the performance is granted and also links to Turner’s social drama approach. Turner stated four phases of studying social drama, which include (1) breach, (2) crisis, (3) redress and (4) reintegration/recognition (1992, p. 69). From my viewpoint, the ‘ideal order’ that Wang raises in her thesis is the result of ‘anti-structure’ and ‘reintegration/recognition’, and the power that is transferring between human beings, gods, and ghosts states the ‘redress’ in social dramas. However, what is lacking in Wang’s discussion is the position of host temples. In my view, the host temple plays a decisive role in religious activities in the society. It is obvious that temple events occur due to the needs in the society, and the role that host temples/organisations play in the ritual is to set up some activities and offer people a place to participate in, as well as to feel the power of the gods. From this aspect, host temples and organisations indeed hold the main authority in temple events. Although gods’ birthdays are changeless, every action still requires permission from the gods (by doing the bua-buei ritual). What is more, apart from the fixed events, there are also some activities that take place at different time during the year, such as catching ghosts or purifying the local areas. These quests are sometimes requested by the local people and sometimes they are asked to be set up by the gods.\footnote{It is common to have people who can deliver messages from the gods during a possession in temples.}
who requests the event, temple organisations have the final force to execute the action (including the ritual of receiving the permission). For that reason, host temples are in some way not only the organisation which holds temple fairs, they also stand as the mediums between gods and pilgrims.

Nevertheless, even though externally the host temples/organisations have the main authority to conduct a temple event, other important factors behind the scene cannot be ignored. Since the host temple has the authority to organise events, it is always essential for them to be sensitive and have the knowledge of the local area about whom they wish to invite to perform for the particular events. Recently, more authorities such as the local politicians, gangs, and different troupes wish to emerge and show off their power by attending those religious events; therefore, in order to keep the order of the activity, it is essential for host temples to ensure the happenings in the events are all under a certain control. However, controlling normally requires authority. Sometimes this authority is not only possessed by the host temple, but also shared by other local authorities including some politicians. For instance, in some cases, apart from gathering the permission from the gods about hosting the event, the hosts also need to arrange the time for the different local politicians to appear in the events. Besides, before the start of many events, some host temples also have to negotiate with the local gangs and ask them not to cause any unnecessary trouble during the rituals. Moreover, sometimes the hosts have to stagger different troupes to avoid unnecessary disputes between them. Most of the time, local gangs play vital roles in temple events in the society. They are the grassroots in the social order, who may not the most vital group that could manage the event, however, they have the most direct force to either smooth or ruin the incident. For that reason, before some

Therefore, some missions are directly ordered by the gods.
important temple events start, some event organisers would inform the local gangs, invite them to take part, and offer them certain authority as guards or helpers at the occasions, to make sure everything runs efficiently. The pre-arrangements to a certain extent help to smooth the whole event procedure; nonetheless, it also offers an invisible field for the authorities to express their power. What is more, the negotiation with different forces may be seen as a challenge for host temples/organisations and, if it works well, it also raises the reputation of the hosts, and vice versa. The local support also includes the local people’s help. Since temple fairs are not only held for protecting the local areas and the people, but also stand for the local status in the society, some people who live in the area volunteer to favour the local events by either helping the temple out during the ritual or participating in it, local people believe the messages will deliver to the gods directly (Lu, 2002). In other word, this phenomenon strengthens the power of the local gods, as well as the temples that hold the events. Foucault has argued,

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression (1981, p. 119).

His argument provides an explanation of how temple events are held in the Taiwanese religious society. The power that is owned by the host temple has to find a balance in between different authorities, and meanwhile to master the whole situation. They have to release certain power in order to smooth the event and strengthen the community. By offering the room for other bodies to take part in the event has become one of the most important methods for an organisation to frame a temple fair. That is why in some temple
events, the organisation does not mind unplanned troupes, politicians, or gangs to take part in their activities.

To explain why authorities play such important roles in a temple event, it is necessary to discuss the significance of events have for the society. For instance, the Mazu tour that took place in April, 2010, the president of the temple, Yen, Ching-Biau was also a famous politician and had a rooted power in the local area (Da Jia Town, Taichung Area). With his support and promotion, the event has become the most known temple fair in Taiwan during the year. Due to the popularity of the nationwide event, many other politicians also wish to appear in the event in order to gain more support from the audience/pilgrims. The event offers an arena for them to present and show themselves directly to the people. What is more, for the host temples/organisations, it is always beneficial to gain governmental support (including financial and human resource support) for the events; by including some politicians in the event, it always helps temples to gain extra help and attention from the government and the public media. In fact, there are also some similar Mazu tours and birthday celebrations that occur at the similar time as the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple Mazu Tour in Taiwan every year; nevertheless, not all of them gather as much attention as it. Without a doubt, it also relates to how the media release the news to the public - the more politicians are involved, the higher chance that the news is announced. For that reason, for many temples and politicians, inviting some famous politicians and turning up at religious events sometimes can be a win-win strategy to achieve both of their needs.

Another important feature of temple events is the participation of local gangs. On normal days, gangs hide in society; nonetheless, they are almost everywhere during local temple events. The role they play in this kind of religious events is not only to show off their power to the others, but also to help the temple keep the order in the events (e.g. in the Mazu
tour). In other words, temple activities offer an arena for local gangs to present their force; at the same time, local gangs help the temples complete their mission. However, there is always a danger in this relationship. It is like the edges of a sword, the needs of local gangs in temple fairs sometimes contributes the events as well as bringing some harm to it. This phenomenon especially happens in Bajiajiang performances. Since most Bajiajiang performers are very young and they perform as demi gods in the performance, sometimes those young performers are also involved in local gangs or have friends among the gangs in their private lives. In fact, according to some news in Taiwan recently, some troupes even use the name of Bajiajiang and develop their own gangs behind the religious associations (e.g. Social News Centre, 2010, Nownews).

In this chapter, I have discussed the different authorities that occur in Taiwanese religious life that influence a Bajiajiang ritual performance. Although different authorities interact in the ritual, they still offer the power for Bajiajiang troupes and their performance system to function in the society. Ye (2009) argued that the relationship between ritual and performance is complicated. Whether it is that ritual produces performance or if performance affects ritual, they do not only have their own rationalities to happen and exist, but also complement each other. Therefore, there is no pure or absolute derivative relationship between them (p. 449). In a Bajiajiang ritual performance, the ritual is transforming due to the social needs. The diverse forms of performance have been developed to satisfy the people. This instance of Bajiajiang ritual performance shows that the liminal space occurs in the ritual accounts for the social relationship in Taiwanese religious culture. Subsequent to the examination of the limited period of operation of authorities in the Bajiajiang ritual, as well as how the performative aspect frames the ritual, the next chapter is about two ritual performances that were provided by the Fatientan Folk Troupe at two temple fairs. The first performance was organised by the Fatientan Folk
Troupe and the second performed for their brotherhood temple event. By bringing up two instances of the same troupe, I aim to discuss the development of the troupe, how the function has changed and is changing in the ritual, and the relationships between a Bajiajiang ritual performance and society.
Figure 5.1. Pilgrims carried their bags to travel with the Mazu Tour (16 April, 2010)

Figure 5.2. Two men were setting up the fireworks on a lorry before the Mazu sedan arrived
Figure 5.3. Bajiajiang performers and their assistants

Figure 5.4. Assistants helped the performers to rearrange their appearances on the street
Figure 5.13. Bajiajiang performers posed and greeted in front of the Mazu Sedan

Figure 5.14. Bajiajiang performers walked in front of the Mazu sedan and led it to the temple
Figure 5.15. Guanjiangshou performers entered the Performance area and stood above

Figure 5.16. The Server from Bajiajiang troupe led the team entered the performance area after the Guanjiangshou’s performance.
Figure 5.17. The front Bajiajiang performers stood together but opened and extended their bodies in this position.

Figure 5.18. The Server indicated the performance area by moving around and shaking with his shoulder pole.
Figure 5.19. Bajiajiang performers held their hands close to their bodies and looked at each other.

Figure 5.20. The two Chaiyes posed and looked into different directions.
Figure 5.21. The two Chaiyes moved again, posed, and looked at the audience asides

Figure 5.22. The other performers joined the two Chaiyes and posed in front of the temple
Chapter Six - Bajiajiang Transformation

In the studies of the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple fair and the Fatzetan Bajiajiang troupe performance, I argued the importance of locality and authority in the religious troupe. In this chapter, I aim to extend the discussion by examining the transformation of the ritual based on two different forms of performances that were provided by the Fatientan Folk Troupe. The first section of this chapter offers a basic introduction to the background of the troupe. This is followed by descriptions of two individual events that they were involved in. The first scene was organised by the Fatientan troupe to celebrate the 2010 International Mazu Tour which took place on the last day of the Mazu event. The second setting is the description of the troupe performance which was for their brotherhood temple fair, where it acted as an invited/guest troupe.

The two instances of fieldwork illustrate the different statuses of Bajiajiang in different situations, which include being a host as well as a guest troupe. From my perspective, the host/guest state of a troupe plays a vital role in changing the performance. On the one hand, being a host gives the troupe more freedom and control in a temple; on the other hand, as a guest who performs for other temple events, a troupe has to obey the order of the host organisation. Therefore, based on these two settings, I then discuss the changes that are made due to adjust to different contexts of performance and how this phenomenon leads to the transformation of Bajiajiang troupe in the society. With the purpose of assessing the role that change plays in the religious ritual, previous discussions of factors of locality and authority involved in the ritual provide a grounded understanding of the phenomenon. The argument of the function of change in the ritual is expected to provide a structural frame in concluding how Bajiajiang ritual performance plays a vital role to connect people in the
culture. For the reasons above, I take the Fatiantan troupe as an example and examine how a Bajiajiang troupe fits into modern society with its distinct performance; furthermore, its function within the culture, given its different statuses within a ritual, is also analysed.

Fatiantan is an active and popular folk troupe in the Taichung Area. The troupe is famous for its systematic organisation and distinct performance styles. In this chapter, I first introduce the background of the troupe and then provide performances that were given by it at two different temple fairs. Unlike some Bajiajiang troupes in contemporary Taiwan, Fatiantan do not perform for money and are not available for hire. Their funding is basically derived from the donations of pilgrims or other local companies (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011). For that reason, the better their reputation, the more income they gather from the public. All the masters and performers are not employed by the troupe but volunteered to take part in the performance. Therefore, the income that the troupe gathered is mainly used on their host event and other costs during the training and performing procedure.

6.1 Profile of the Fatiantan Folk Troupe

Fatiantan is a religious organisation based in Taichung City. The difference between the Fatiantan troupe and other famous Bajiajiang troupes is that, in contrast to the latter, the former do not have their own temple which is open to the public for its followers to pray on a regular basis. However, it offers different troupes for religious events on different

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103 The word tan means a place of Taiwan folk beliefs/religion. It is normally smaller than a temple; however, some tans are getting bigger nowadays, Fatiantan is one of them.

104 Instead of being administered by a temple, Fatiantan bases in a private shrine in Taichung City, where they have some gods displayed, as well as some drawings of Bajiajiang characters hung on the walls for the
occasions, including those that are held by its own organisation as well as for other temple events. The association was set up by the followers of the god Tzifuchensuei. *Fa* and *tien* are the first two words of an incantation. *Fa* also means ‘exalting the spirit of God’, and *tien* means ‘following nature’ in this phrase. For the above reason, the organisation decided to use these two words to represent their spirit, and their aim is to participate in different temple events by introducing their troupes to the public, and expressing their belief to others through their performances. Therefore, Fatientan is more about their spirit and aims, rather than an actual temple (Fatientan, 2007). In view of the fact that there is no actual temple for the organisation, temporary shrines are sometimes needed for the troupes to prepare for their individual performance (Wu, interview, 17th May, 2011). This organisation is very active in taking part in religious events, which is why it has become very popular in the Taichung area.

According to their official blog (Fatientian, 2007), Fatientan was established in Taichung City in 1985 and has had its own Bajiajiang troupe since 1986. The troupe was founded at a temple called the Donshengong in Taichung County, and it adopted the cults from a master called Ye Hai105 from the Ruyichenyutang in Chiayi City.106 As a tradition, the Donshengong contributed to the ceremony in Donggang area by offering a number of troupe performances. Due to a lack of performers, the Fatientan troupe helped Donshengong by

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105 Master Ye, Hai played a vital role in Bajiajiang history by bringing the performance to a further stage. He combined the traditional makeup patterns in Bajiajiang with the makeup in Taiwanese Opera and developed some new patterns for the performance.

106 RuyiChenyutang is a very active and popular Bajiajiang troupe in Taiwan at the present time. It followed the Bajiajiang cults of Shijiajiang in Tainan White Dragon Temple and created its own Bajiajiang troupe in 1918. RuyiChenyutang developed a systemic Bajiajiang troupe and exalted the quality of the performance. Therefore, even nowadays, many troupes in Taichung area are still influenced by it.
training and sending their own troupe for the occasion. This explains how the Fatientan troupe started to follow the Bajiajiang system of master Ye, and shows the historical relationships between the two organisations. Historical links of this sort are normally very important in a traditional Bajiajiang culture. Although the Fatientan do not identify their origins and history by using the name of the Ruyichenyutang, they still follow the basic training, dance and makeup patterns of master Ye. In their official blog, the troupe also states that its Bajiajiang troupe is a branch of the Chiayi Ruyi Chenyutang. In addition, because the Fatientan do not reveal the original system in their name, the situation offers the troupe more freedom to create their own Bajiajiang performance. In 1991, the Fatientan combined several troupes in the Taichung area and organised a united Bajiajiang union in order to reduce some unnecessary arguments and fights between Bajiajiang troupes during their performances. However, due to the different perspectives of the different troupes, the union did not work out and was finally disbanded in 1999 (Fatientan, 2007). Since then, the Fatientan Folk Troupe has offered independent performances and has participated in many religious events as an individual troupe.

6.2 Performance for Fatientan’s Celebration Ceremony for the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival

Location: Jingwu Road and Shuangshi Road, Taichung City
Time: 7.30pm-10.30pm, 24/4 (11/3 Lunar calendar), 2010

This event, staged by the Fatientan, aimed to celebrate the successful close of the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival. Since the worship of Mazu is the main religion in the

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107 The International Mazu Tour Festival is held by the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple every year before the god Mazu’s birthday (23ed March in Lunar Calendar). The Tour visits Taichung Area, Chunghwa County, Yulin
Taichung area, the Fatientan organised a small tour in Taichung City centre to celebrate the closure of the Mazu Tour. The final destination of this tour was located in an open space at the intersection of Jingwu Road and Shuanshi Road (Figure 6.1). There were over ten different forms of troupes participating in the tour and the whole line of troupes, gods’ sedans, and pilgrims was about five hundred metres long. A temporary stage was set up in the open area for all the troupes to greet the god and perform in turn in front of it. There were many modern buildings around the stage and the traffic was extremely busy at that time. Thousands of people were in the area, and some traffic police were directing the traffic during this time. The final greeting ceremony in front of the stage was estimated to start at about 7 PM and finish before midnight. The Fatientan normally hosts big events for three years in a row and then rest for another three years. The event in 2010 was the last of a three-year circle. In this event, the Bajiajiang performance lasted no longer than nine minutes during the whole evening. Additionally, Fatientan hired a formal presenter for this event to introduce the different troupes, and also provided a screen next to the stage for the audience to watch the performances.

There were fourteen performers in the Fatientan troupe, which were the servers, two Xiaochaiyes, Wenchaiye, Wuchaiye, General Gan, Liou, Xie, Fan, Chen, Shen, Jia, and Shou. Unlike traditional Bajiajiang troupes, there were two servers instead of one in this troupe; meanwhile, they also had Generals Chen, Shen, Jia, and Shou instead of the Four Season Generals. According to my informant Mr. Fang (2010, conversation, 24th Feb), the Fatientan Bajiajiang troupe is famous for the number of performers, and they have different combination of characters in their Bajiajiang ritual performances for different occasions.\footnote{County, and Chiayi County for nine days without stop.}

\footnote{On some occasions, Fatientan can have up to thirty performers at the same time. Therefore, they always have several sets of performers according to the needs of different events.}
According to Lu (2008, p. 90), Xiaochaiye is a character which normally played by a young child, and the function of this character is primarily entertainment. Xiaochaiyes do not perform much and are not essential for a Bajiajiang performance; therefore, many troupes do not have this character for their performance. Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye are important roles in a Bajiajiang troupe. They receive and deliver missions from the god to the eight generals (Shi, 1984; Lu, 2002, 2005, 2008). Nevertheless, these two characters are not widely discussed in Bajiajiang due to their positions in the troupe. Some Bajiajiang troupes also leave out these two characters.

In order to offer clearer descriptions of the appearances of the characters for this occasion, I discuss them in pairs, based on their presentation and position in the troupe.

1. The Servers: One server wore a pink Fatientan uniform and a pair of black trousers, and the other wore a black t-shirt and black trousers. Both of them wore trainers. They shared a bamboo shoulder pole, which had implements of punishment of reduced size which hung on both sides, and they carried it in turn. Neither of them had makeup on and they stood in front of the troupe as leaders (figure 6.2).

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109 ‘Wen’ in Chinese means literature. ‘Chaiye’ is the title of the position in the God’s world. Wenchaiye’s job in the troupe is to receive the message from the God.

110 ‘Wu’ in Chinese means brave or martial. Wuchaiye’s mission in Bajiajiang is to pass the message that Wenchaiye receives from the God to the eight Generals.

111 Bajiajiang stands for eight Generals. In the very first Bajiajiang troupe in Tainan Zuyitzenshoutan, Wen and Wu chaiye are two of the main characters for the troupe. However, since Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye are only transmitters of the God, some Bajiajiang performances tend to omit these two roles due to lack of performers (Mr. Fang, personal communication, 21st May, 2011).
2. Xiaochaiye: The two Xiaochaiyes had very similar costumes on. They both had a yellow top and a red vest on top of it, a yellow shawl, a pair of red trousers with a yellow, long belt with ‘Fatiantan’ written on it, white socks and straw sandals, and a golden headgear with some red decorations on it. The right hand side Xiaochaiye had a white leather fan in his left hand and a plate in his right hand; his makeup was based on white, with uneven eyes. One eye was drawn across his forehead to his cheek, and the other eye was much smaller with a similar pattern; additionally, he had facial makeup consisting of several black lines. The face painting was very detailed. On the contrary, on the left hand side, Xiaochaiye had a fan in his right hand and a temple flag in his left hand; his makeup was generally white, with some red colour on his forehead and some thick white circles on his cheeks.

3. Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye: Similar to the Xiaochaiyes, those two chaiyes also had similar costumes on, the only differences to the Xiaochaiyes were their shawls and belts, instead of wearing yellow shawls and belts, they had a tiger fur pattern on them. Wenchaiye had a leather fan in his left hand and a plate in his right hand; the main colour of his face was white, with a pair of black bird shaped eyes and some red lines on his forehead. Wuchaiye had a leather fan in his right hand and a flag in his left hand; his face painting was mainly white, with some red lines on his forehead and baby blue lines on his cheeks (figure6 .3).

4. General Gan and Liou: This pair of generals both wore a brown slanting shoulder gown and a red vest on top of it, red trousers, a white belt with long fringes showed in front, white socks and straw sandals, and a golden headgear decorated with red and blue pom-poms. General Gan had a brown leather fan
in his left hand and a bamboo stick with red, yellow, white, green, and black colours in his right hand; he had a remarkable red line across his one eye and some blue lines on his cheeks. General Liou had the same equipment as General Gan, but they were presented in the opposite way. He had very thin and uneven sized eyes as well as an uneven red mouth, set on the background of a white face (figure 6.4).

5. General Xie and Fan: General Xie had a slanting cream shoulder gown with a red vest on top of it, red trousers, white socks and straw sandals, and a yellow tall hat with the words ‘lucky to see me’ stitched on it. He held a white leather fan in his right hand and a fish pillory in the other. His face was basically white, with black butterfly patterned eyes and a notable red line on his forehead. General Fan had a slanting black and white checked shoulder gown and a red vest on top of it, red trousers, white socks and straw sandals, and a dark red short hat with ‘good and evil is clear’ stitched on it; he had a brown leather fan in his left hand and a plaque in his right. His makeup was based on black and white, with red round patterns on his cheeks, which were based on the image of a monkey. Nonetheless, unlike the roles in other Bajiajiang troupes, where they normally have the fans facing out when they perform, these two characters in the Fatientan troupe have identical position of holding their props, the fans are held face-inwards all the time (figure 6.5).

6. General Chen and Shen: These two generals had matching costumes and props like General Gan and Liou. The only difference was the makeup. General Chen had a red and black yin-yang pattern on his forehead, whilst his face was painted white. General Shen wore a white based and uneven eyes and mouth makeup.
He looked very similar to General Liou but with more detailed black lines on his face (figure 6.6).

7. General Jia and Shuo: They also had the same costumes and props as General Xie and Fan. General Jia had a white face and bird patterned eyes and General Shuo had a monkey face based on black and white, with a red dot on each side of his cheek (figure 6.7).

With the permission of the troupe leader, I was able to get closer to the troupe before the performance and the performers even posed for me to take photographs of them. Every performer was accompanied by one assistant, who wore a Fatientan uniform (figure 6.8). The child performers were looked after by their mothers. There was a queue to perform and a number of other different troupes were in front of the Fatientan Bajiajiang troupe, so they constantly moved towards the main stage, resting when possible. During their breaks, the performers looked after each other and adjusted each others’ appearances. Some were practicing their dancing steps as well (figure 6.9). In contrast to the loud background noise, the performers seemed extremely quiet.

At about 8.45pm, the line started to move constantly but still slowly when they got closer to the stage. All the performers performed as their characters while they moved from this point. The assistants moved away from them and let them walk alone. The female presenter on the stage introduced the Fatientan Bajiajiang troupe to the audience; this all happened before the troupe entered the crowd. According to the presenter, more than 10,000 people participated in this event. Once the troupe walked close to the performance area, the audience began to push each other in order to get closer to watch the troupe. The people from the Fatientan had to clear some space for the troupe to walk through. Just before they
walked into the cleared area, the server with the pink uniform walked into the performance area. He stood in a bow and arrow stance in a spot with firecrackers on the ground between his feet.\footnote{The bow and arrow position is named after the shape of a bow and an arrow. It is a basic step for the performers to learn. Performers have to keep their back straight, feet parallel, farther than shoulder width apart and their legs bent at a 90-degree angle.} Another person wearing the same uniform went to him and set the firecrackers alight. The server stood steady and the firecrackers lasted for about five seconds. According to my informant Mr. Fang, this ritual is called ‘tsuopau’, which in English translation means ‘sitting/standing above firecrackers’. The aim of this action is to show the audience that the Bajiajaing performers are brave enough to complete their missions and are able to be gods’ representatives. According to the troupe leader at that event, it can be painful and scary so they do not encourage every performer to do the ritual; it is more to do with their personal willingness.

While the firecrackers on the ground were still going, the whole troupe started to move again. The first server passed his shoulder pole to the other server and let him lead the troupe ahead. After walking for about fifteen metres, Wuchaiye, who was played by a boy, walked out from the troupe and stood in a bow and arrow stance in front of some firecrackers. He shook his head slowly and moved his leather fan in front of him at the same tempo. In the meantime, his body also quivered slowly. His legs were widely spaced with one straight and one bent and they stayed very steadily on the ground; the hand with the leather fan moved from his front to his right side, the flag was held tight in his left hand against his waist, and then he posed. This position lasted for about three seconds. A man walked to the firecrackers and set them alight. The firecrackers were very close to the young performer, but his face did not show any fear and he stayed very still (figure 6.10). After the firecrackers had finished, he ran two steps towards his front and executed a small jump,
then he turned and ran back to the troupe at a high speed. After the short performance that was given by Wuchaiye, the troupe kept moving towards the performance space.

A couple of minutes later, the presenter on the stage officially welcomed the Bajiajiang troupe into the performance area through the microphone. At that moment, people started to push each other again. The people from the Fatientan joined their hands together and stopped people getting into the centre. At the same time, ten people with pink uniforms turned up in front of the troupe and played suona horns.\(^{113}\) The loud noise from the suona horns announced that the performance was about to start. Accompanied by the sound of the gongs, the Bajiajiang performers passed through the audience and entered the performance area.

In front of the troupe, while some people were cleaning the scattered paper and empty firecracker boxes from the used firecrackers with their feet, the whole troupe had moved into the centre performance area. Then General Liou came out of the troupe and gave another individual tsuopau performance. He went to the front and quivered his head, bent his left leg and straightened his right leg, and then he waved his fan with his left hand and finally posed with the fan above his head. During the whole performance, the bottom half of his body stayed very still. Then someone set the firecrackers alight (figure 6.11). The performance lasted for about ten seconds and then General Liou went back to the troupe. All of a sudden the place became extremely crowded and people pushed each other in a very rushed way in order to get a better view of the performers. The whole troupe continuously moved towards the performance area. After a few steps, Generals Gan and Liou walked out and posed in the front of the team; the rest of the team members walked

\(^{113}\) The suona horn is a kind of brass-wind instrument. It is widely used in temple events in Taiwan.
in circles about ten metres behind them. They constantly walked and posed in the middle of the performance area. Generals Gan and Liou then walked together initially, and then they separated, went in two directions and stopped at the front corners of the performance area. They stood in a bow and arrow stance and posed without any movement for a few seconds. Two men turned up and set the firecrackers between the feet of General Gan and General Liou alight. The whole space was filled with smoke and the burned firecracker paper. Then the performers went back to the team after the group tsuopau ritual.

At 9.03pm, all the Bajiajiang performers finally led by the server, who wore black clothes, walked in big steps, swayed their fans and bodies to the front of the performance area as a group. They were standing in two lines - Xiaochaiye, Wenchaiye, Generals Gan, Xie, Chen, and Jia were on the right hand side; meanwhile, the other Xiaochaiye, Wuchaiye and Generals Liou, Fan, Shen, and Shou were on the left. There were about three metres between the two lines and two metres between each performer. Since the performance was carried out on the ground instead of on the stage, it was not easy for the audience to have a good view. The presenter on the stage asked people not to push each other as the performance would be played live on the big screen by the stage once it started. However, the announcement did not stop people from pushing each other to observe the actual performance. At this time, some people from Fatientan were rearranging the young performers’ headgear and making sure they looked presentable (figure 6.12). Then the server walked forwards and backwards for three times as a salute to the statue of the god beside the stage. After the server finished his salute, he walked back to the middle, and the two Xiaochaiye walked towards him at the same time. They used their fans to cover their faces when they walked; then once they stood in front of the server, they posed in bow and arrow step, lifted their fans in front of them, and then started to quiver their heads gently.
The server left after this action. The two Xiaochaiye then moved a step closer to the statue of the god and turned their bodies to another direction; then they faced to the front and posed. About two seconds later, they moved and faced each other, and then posed again. Every time when they were about to move from one pose, they lifted one leg higher with a slight jump, and then they started the next action. After that, they looked at each other and walked towards the statue of the god and walked back. When they walked back to the team, they turned their own bodies around then looked at each other, before walking across each other’s paths and back to the middle and posing again. In the meantime, Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye came out to greet them in the bow and arrow stance, placing the fan in front of them, and quivering their heads gently. The four chaiyes then faced each other from four corners with the same pose (figure 6.14). After about three seconds posing, the two Xiaochaiyes then walked past Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye with big steps, swayed their arms, and then went back to their standby positions.

These two chaiyes posed twice in different directions as Xiaochaiyes in the first place. Then they walked three steps towards to the front then turned their bodies to face each other. They walked in a circle to face each other in different directions afterwards. Wenchaiye had his fan covering his face and Wuchaiye lifted his fan above his head. They continued walking in circles while posing a couple of times in different directions. Afterwards, they posed in the middle but one faced the front and one faced the back. Then, they turned their bodies and faced each other and posed again. Finally, they moved to the front and saluted the god as the two Xiaochaiye had done earlier and went to greet the next four performers -

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114 In the Bajiajiang performance, this is the basic pose for performers. In order to avoid explaining this pose too often in this essay, I will use the term ‘basic pose’ to represent this action.
Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan (figure 6.15).

Generals Gan and Liou were holding their bamboo sticks and placed them across each other in front of the group. General Fan, who was bending one leg and kneeling on the other leg in a lower position, was right behind them. At the back was General Xie, who was standing straight with his fan lifting up high. When Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye walked past them and moved back to their spots, the four generals started to move by the noise that was made by General Gan, who knocked General Liou’s bamboo stick with his own bamboo stick. This action seemed to be a starting point for the group movement (figure 6.16). Then the four generals spread out to four directions and posed. General Xie was the only one who did not bend his leg and always stayed straight, and sometimes he even stood on one leg. In contrast, General Fan always bent his legs and made his body look shorter than the others. After the short pose, they went back to their first opening pose for another few seconds. Then General Gan again knocked General Liou’s bamboo stick with his own bamboo stick, before the group started moving in a different pattern. General Gan and Liou walked towards the front and saluted the statue of the God by moving forward and backward once. In the meantime, General Xie and Fan were walking in circles at the back. After Generals Gan and Liou had finished their greeting to the statue of the God, General Xie and Fan moved towards the front and repeated the process of saluting the god. Then Generals Xie and Fan went back to the middle where General Gan and Fan were posing. General Fan jumped across General Gan and Liou’s bamboo sticks to the back; meanwhile, General Xie stood at the front. The four generals faced each other and also looked around by quivering their heads. At the moment, General Xie was at the very front of the team.

115 These movements represent the legends of General Xie and Fan. General Xie corresponds to a crane and General Fan stands for a monkey.
General Gan and Liou were in the middle, and General Fan was sitting on the bamboo sticks between Gan and Liou. At the same time, the rear generals turned up in the back of the performance area and they had a similar opening pose as the front team, with Generals Chen and Shen standing at the front, followed by General Jia with a lower body pose, then General Shou, standing straight at the back (figure 6.17).

General Xie then faced the whole team and walked past General Liou from the right hand side to where General Fan was. At the same time, the other three generals also moved. General Fan turned his body and sat on the central point of the crossed bamboo sticks which were held by Generals Gan and Liou. Now the two teams were facing each other in an opposite direction. General Xie performed a crane dance in front of the other team. The main pattern of the crane was to stand with one leg and lift his fan high as if the performer were a crane with opened wings. General Shou then jumped across Generals Gan and Liou’s bamboo sticks to the middle and met General Xie from the front team. Followed by General Jia, these two generals from the rear team circled General Xie. Generals Chen and Shen also moved towards him. At this stage, the three other generals from the front team stayed steady and the four rear generals walked around General Xie. The five generals then walked across each other and finally faced each other but posed in different directions. After a second pose, General Fan stood up and turned his body, kicked the bamboo sticks and jumped over them, and then all performers started to move. At this point, General Xie went back to join his team. The front team then positioned themselves in a rhombus shape, while the rear team was in a square shape. The team members faced each other in their own team at this moment (figure 18). Then the first team danced in a ‘Four Door Step’ in which they walked in circles then towards the middle and then they posed. After that, they spread out and posed while facing each other again. Then they stepped back and walked in circles but in a different direction this time. When General Fan walked to the front and General Xie
was at the back, the team stopped moving. Generals Gan, Liou, and Fan stayed where they were and posed, and General Xie moved from the rear to the front to stand by General Fan. The rear team basically had the same dancing pattern as the front team. However, their action was about five seconds delayed. I suggest that this allows the audience to change the focus of the performers. When one team is performing and the other team is posing, perhaps it is easier for the audience to change their focus in between them. In addition, this choreographic pattern offers a different visual experience to the audience.

After both teams had finished their Four Door Step, they faced each other in the opening pose. Then the first team walked past the second team from their sides and went back to their standby positions in the lines. After that, Generals Chen and Shen went towards the front and saluted the statue of the god by moving backwards and forwards once, followed by Generals Jia and Shou. The salute action was the same for all the performers. When Generals Jia and Shou went back to the middle to meet the other two generals, they did the same dance which the first team had performed at the beginning, after the salute. They walked in circles and looked around the audience from different directions. After a short pose, they walked back to their standby spots. Once they reached their spots, the whole team (including the rear four generals) instantly moved to the middle and stood in pairs. The server turned up at this time and did a final salute to the statue of the god. The other performers all showed the basic pose and faced the front. Then they interchanged their legs twice as their own way of saluting the god. In the end, the server led the whole team out of the performance area and they disappeared into the crowd.
-Bajiajiang as a religious ritual display

This celebratory event demonstrates how religious events normally occur in a busy city centre like Taichung. Everything in this event seemed to be neat and under the control of the organisation. What is more, from my perspective, the location and the setting of the event diminished the religious connotations of the event. To a certain extent, the Fatientan participated in the Mazu Tour in its own way; however, without knowing the title of the event on their posters, the link between the two activities was not clear. Therefore, in my view, this event was more entertaining than efficacious. After reviewing what had happened in the event by reading my footnotes and diary about the ceremony, as well as viewing the photographs and video clips that I have recorded on that day, I suggest there are at least two reasons why the ceremony should be considered more as a performance rather than a religious ritual. The same reasons are behind the transformation of Bajiajiang.

First of all, I propose that the location is an important factor. The activity took place at a busy site in Taichung City, surrounded by many tall buildings and department stores; some of the audience turned up not because of religious motivation, but out of curiosity and, perhaps, simply by accident. This phenomenon explains the concept of ‘re’nao’ referred to by Sutton (1990) and Thompson (1984).116 In Taiwanese society, ‘kan re’nao’ means watching and participating in public social activities, and it especially happens during religious activities. Due to the secrecy of religious events, this factor in a way encourages people to go to an actual event and discover it for themselves. Since there are always some different troupes that turn up and perform at religious ceremonies, people who are curious about the unknown happenings always appear before, during, or even after events. In this

116 Sutton (1990) translates ‘re’nao’ as ‘noisy excitement’ and Thompson refers it to ‘bustle and excitement’.
case, the Fatientan organisation set up a proper stage for the ceremony and offered a visual announcement to the public of the activity before everything happened. In addition, although they had the whole routine for the day displayed on their official blog, they did not tell people what would happen and what troupes would be involved in the ritual. Therefore, those who wanted to find out had to be there and see. For the people who lived or worked in the area, the constructed stage provided an indication that something was happening that evening and they also had to turn up to find out. Additionally, the presenter had a list than he ran down to follow the procedures. Those factors made the event become more like an aesthetic performance rather than a religious activity.

Secondly, the performance itself is another significant factor. Although Fatientan adopt the traditions that were passed on from Chiayi ZuyiChenyutang, unlike other Bajiajiang troupes, they have developed their own distinct system of Bajiajiang. For example, instead of having Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, Fan, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, they have Generals Gan, Liou, Xie, Fan, Jia, Shou, Chen, and Shen. This is not common in a Tainan Bajiajiang performance. However, according to their official blog, Fatientan wish to improve the performance by making some changes to the traditional elements. The changes that they make are not aiming to challenge the traditions or taboos, but to improve the ritual and present it to the public in a different light. From my viewpoint, this is one of the objectives that they wish to accomplish with the new Bajiajiang performance. For instance, the main pattern that was used for the performance in this ceremony was the Four Door Step. Although the front and rear generals gave the same performance (the rear team was five seconds delayed though), the performance looked abundant. In other words, in modern Bajiajiang performances, the traditional choreography does not have to be changed, but rearranging the dancing patterns injects new life into existing traditions. To some extent, those changes open the door to a wider vision and variety of Bajiajiang performances; on
the other hand, it shows that the Bajiajiang transformation starts from its origin.

At the celebratory event, I was impressed by the systematic and professional organisation of the Fatientan troupe during the whole procedure. They had clearly rehearsed and organised their performance routines and were able to maintain order in the setting. It seemed everything was under the control of the organisation. From my perspective, the event could also be considered as proof of how locality and authority co-operate in religious society. Moreover, this Bajiajiang experience also sheds light on how, by offering distinct performances, an individual and belief-based Bajiajiang troupe survives in the generally temple-based Bajiajiang society. When discussing the acceptance of an artistic transformation production in a culture, Pierre Bourdieu (1993, p. 106) argued, ‘on one side are the dominant figures, who want continuity, identity, reproduction; on the other, the newcomers, who seek discontinuity, rupture, difference, revolution’. In terms of ritual transformation in the Bajiajiang system, it was the social needs that resulted in the changes that have been brought to a traditional, purely religious functional performance. This again interprets the interactive relationship between the belief, the people, and the ritual in Taiwanese society. Based on the observation of this event that was held by the Fatzetang organisation, I argue that those changes that have been made by the troupe have generated new elements in what is a traditional form of ritual performance, and the practice of innovation is part of a strategy of distinguishing themselves from other troupes and transforming Bajiajiang performance in contemporary Taiwan.
6.3 Performance for Brotherhood Temple Event

Location (Preparation work): No. 512, Shijiadong Road, Eastern District, Taichung City
Location (Event): Paominggung, Holongwan area, Northern District, Taichung City
Date: 14-15/05/2011 (12-13/04/2011 Lunar calendar)
Time: 11.30pm (14/05/2011)-7.20am (15/05/2011)

This ceremony took place on the early morning of 15th May, 2011. The aim of this occasion was to participate in the host temple - Paominggung’s (Taichung City) - visiting tour to greet Anxigung. For that reason, Paominggung invited Fatientan Bajiajiang to perform and represent it in the greeting and guarding ceremonies. The event in Paominggung started at about 7am; however, the Fatientan troupe had started their preparation at approximately 11pm the night before. Through Mr. Fang’s help and introduction, I received the permission of the troupe leader, Wu, and I was authorised to observe, photograph, and film the whole procedure. As I had the chance to observe the complete ritual, some detailed descriptions of the preparatory work, the conversation with the troupe members, as well as the performance are provided in this section. By examining the functional changes that have been made in a Bajiajiang ritual performance, as well as the relationship between troupe, temple, and a community, I aim to bring up the significance of how the Bajiajiang ritual functions for a community through its performance.

The whole procedure took place in a small tang called the Kuanningtang, which is about

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117 Anxifu is a temple, which is located in Taixi Village, Yunling County.
118 Due to the mystery of a Bajiajiang troupe, sometimes troupe leaders do not welcome ‘outsiders’ to their preparation. For that reason, it is vital to get the permission and understand what is allowed to do before going to the setting.
119 Fatientan and Kuanningtang both worship the god Tzufuwangye as their main god and the two associations have good relationship. Due to the distance to where the event would take place, Fatientan
seven kilometres away from the Paominggung. As requested, I arrived at the tang at 11.30pm. The Kuanningtang was located in a residential area and situated on the ground floor of a detached house. Next to it were normal dwellings. Eight young girls who wore fashionable outfits were sitting around a table and chatting outside the tang. On the other side of the pavement in front of the Kuanningtang, some props, hats, headgear, and straw shoes were displayed on another red round table (figure 6.19). The dubious glances cast by the girls made me hesitate to enter the tang since the atmosphere was a bit uncomfortable. After walking into the house, I was greeted by the head of the Fatientan, Wu, and felt more comfortable to know that I was expected and welcomed at that moment. As a ‘welcoming custom’ in temple activities, Wu offered me some cigarettes, beer, and betel nuts. Before I arrived, Wu had begun to put some makeup on one performer’s face. Therefore, in order not to disturb him, I started looking around and observing the environment.

The tang was approximately six metres wide and eight metres long. In the middle of the house was a god’s table, on which were placed six statues of the god, an incense pot, some fresh fruit and three Chinese teacups. By the main table, there was also a similar but smaller god’s table displayed on the left side, where a statue of the Tzifuchensuei, the main god that the Kuanningtang and the Fatientan worship, was located. In front of the Tzifuchensuei’s statue, there were also statues of the god Nuocha and Generals Gan and Liou. Some photographs of the Fatientan Bajiajiang troupe were hung on the wall on both sides of the house. There was a passage on the right side by the main god’s table, which led to the kitchen and the toilet in the back of the house. In front of the gods’ tables, there was

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arranged to use Kuanningtang as their base for this occasion.

120 Tang and gung are also forms of Daoism temple. Traditionally, their sizes are usually smaller than temples and they can be located anywhere, on the road, street, or just on a floor of someone’s house. Nowadays, it is also common to see big tangs and gungs in some places.
a flat beach chair that allowed the performers to lie down for their makeup. Wu, who was also the makeup master and priest of the troupe, was sitting on a little chair and putting makeup on the performer who would be playing General Liou at that performance (figure 6.20). A number of other young boys were walking around inside the tang. Some chatted to the girls outside when they walked by and some were practising individual Bajiajiang dancing steps on the pavement. At that time, I was not sure if they were also the performers or were just playing around without wearing makeup and costumes.

While using a brush-pen to put makeup on the performer’s face, Wu explained the importance of makeup in a Bajiajiang troupe. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, face painting is always an essential element of a Bajiajiang ritual performance. Wu specified the ingredients that he mixed in the colours, which include baby oil, Vaseline, and titanium powder, but did not mention the ratios of each one (Figure 6.21). The mix of colour helps the makeup stay vividly on the performer’s face for longer (up to one day) and it is less harmful to their skin. Almost every Bajiajiang troupe has its own way to create distinct colour and the secret ingredient is normally only known by some key insiders. According to Wu, since the hat that General Xie wears has the words ‘lucky to see me’ written on it, for, it is believed that starting from this character also brings good luck to their performance. However, due to time limitations or lack of convenience, they do not always have the chance to do so. His interpretation explained that some changes that have been made in the Bajiajiang system can result in some practical reasons, such as time and location limitation under different circumstances. For example, in this case, General Liou was the first one to have makeup on because he was ready earlier than the others. As I did not catch the beginning of General Liou’s makeup, I decided to quietly observe Wu’s continuous work and wait for the next performer to turn up so that I could observe the whole procedure of the makeup action. At that moment, General Liou had already had the basic pattern on his
face - an uneven black bat pattern on his eyes and white face. Afterwards, Wu asked the performer to get up and invited anyone who was ready to wear makeup to come. A man came in from outside the house, walked to the beach chair and was ready to be made up. Wu grabbed a yellow long silky fabric and carefully tied it around the man’s head, which was meant to hold his hair properly in case it fell on his face. Then the man lay down and got ready for Wu to put his makeup on. Wu explained to me that two types of face painting techniques that are used in a Bajiajiang ritual performance, which include the ‘fill-in colour’ and the ‘contour’ techniques. The ‘fill-in colour’ requires a makeup master to use thick white or black lines to sketch the whole pattern, leaving some space to fill in other colours later on (figure 6.22). On the contrary, ‘contour’ skill is often used to draw very detailed and thin lines (figure 6.23). ‘However, the face painting skills should not be limited; kai-mien (makeup) masters ought to think and improve them all the time’ (Wu, personal communication, 14th May, 2011).

After the short conversation about the face painting, Wu firstly used his finger to put red paint on the young man’s right eye and right part of his lips. According to him, instead of using a brush-pen, he normally uses his finger to put colours on those areas because they are the most sensitive parts of a face, and it is easier for him to control the strength and colour with direct skin touch. After that, he wiped the red off his finger and used it again to put black around the performer’s left eye. He told me that the other reason why this method was preferred to draw the basic outline on the performer’s face was because this action allowed him think, design, and picture the complete work. Therefore, for him, the basic finger drawing outlines the characteristic for each role of Bajiajiang, and as long as the outlines are based on the principle patterns of the characters, the face painting can be varied and creative. After the finger drawing, he used a brush-pen with white colour to frame the red and black eyes and lips. Then he drew some curly lines over the performer’s
Meanwhile, a teenage boy came into the house and took out a few plastic chairs, placing them side by side on the pavement, and asked the first performer to go outside. The performer then went and lay across the chairs. Another man, who was about twenty-five years old, walked towards him with a number of makeup tools. He squatted down and faced the performer’s face, starting to draw some detailed lines on his face. The young man would be performing as General Xie in that performance. In order to make the lines very thin and detailed, the brush-pen the makeup master used was much thinner than Wu’s. He introduced himself as a mature member of the troupe who was cooperating with Wu to finish the performers’ face painting so that they could speed up the preparation procedure as time was limited. Normally, Wu would draw the main lines and patterns on the performer’s face, and then this person or other troupe members would then take over and finish the fill-in colour or contour work. I was amazed with his ability to control the very thin brush-pen without leaning on anything and squatting at the same time. Before starting to draw the thin lines, he took a deep breath and began. It seemed to me that every line he drew required full concentration and strength.

While they were all busy doing makeup for the performers, Wu explained the Paominggung event to me. The Paominggung is located in the centre of the Holongwan area, Northern District, Taichung City. For the locals, the temple is not only a religious locus, but also a place for people to gather together. Meanwhile, it also acts as a local information sharing centre. At temple events, greeting action is vital. Through a solemn operation, respect is shown to the other temple, as well as to the locals. Therefore, the Paominggong temple event that they would be participating in not only represented the temple itself, but also the people who lived in that area. Since the Fatientan troupe was invited to join the greeting and
guarding rituals at the Paominggong, it was better for them to abide by the regulations and procedures outlined by the host temple, including the timetable and the routine. In accordance with request of the host temple, the Fatientan was expected to carry out a short performance in front of the Paominggung at about 7am and then the troupe would join them to visit and greet the Anxifu Temple afterwards.

The girls drinking and chatting outside the Kuanningtang were still loud and did not seem to be finishing, even though by now it was about 2.30am. Wu, who held a cigarette in his mouth, was still busy with the face painting. The two makeup teams seemed to cooperate very well and smoothly. Some performers, who already had complete makeup on, joined the team outside and helped put makeup on the other performers. Compared to the young girls next to them, they were very quiet and concentrated on the face painting. Wu did not tell the other team about how to colour and finish his structured makeup; they just took over and continued his work without asking. Perhaps they had been told how to finish it in advance with previous experience, or they were granted creativity. In order to find out the answer to this question, I went back to Wu and asked him about how they organise the co-operative ‘taking turns’ makeup work. I was told that since the structure that was drawn by him was clear, and the other performers were all familiar with each other’s patterns, it was not difficult for them to continue his work with their previous experience. He trusted them and believed they were able to do it well, so he gave them some freedom to be creative in the face painting. To him, this was also a procedure of training, as well as his way of managing his Bajiajiang troupe.

Additionally, he also explained that the management of Bajiajiang troupe could be very difficult. Being a head leader who had to deal with teenage performers on a constant basis, there were always lots of things to do and learn. His responsibility in the troupe was not
only to train them to be good performers, but also to educate them, which includes the
knowledge of Bajiajiang ritual performance as well as their general behaviour in life. Holding
the responsibility for his troupe members, Wu also acts as a mentor to them even when
they do not perform. According to him, any young person under the age of eighteen who
wishes to join the Fatiantan Bajiajiang troupe has to inform their parents and arrange an
interview with him. He will then discuss the teenager’s involvement with the parents, after
receiving their assent and then he will decide whether to accept him or not. Being a reliable
troupe leader, he cannot let the teenagers and their parents down. After talking about his
thoughts on Bajiajiang troupe management, Wu described how he had started to set up a
Bajiajiang troupe.

Wu was born in a poor family, and he started to learn the Bajiajiang performance after
graduating from junior school. After being in a troupe for a while, he found his interests
were in the dancing patterns, the rituals, and makeup skills rather than the performance.
For this reason, he has never performed in a public event. While he was in the troupe, he
joined a local gang. He was involved in criminal activity and was sent to jail a few times, but
that did not diminish his passion for Bajiajiang. He was 42 years old at the time when I
interviewed him, and had been working on this religious activity for 26 years. After the last
time he came out of jail, he decided to focus on setting up his own Bajiajiang troupe - the
Fatiantan Folk Troupe. While he was in the gang, Wu realised that the relationship between
gang and Bajiajiang troupe was undeniable. Therefore, he chose to deal with the gang issue
instead of changing the situation, by adopting a gang management method to manage his
troupe. He treated his Bajiajiang members as his children, but they had to obey his discipline.
That is why he believes the responsibility of a troupe leader is very heavy - he does not only
have to provide a good Bajiajiang performance for religious aims, but also has to look after
the young troupe members. He does not mind the negative public stereotypes related to
Bajiajiang, nor the reputation of his troupe members. Since he had been through so many things in his life, he always shares his personal experience with his troupe members and respects them as individuals. To him, as long as Bajiajiang members do not commit crimes while they are performing or wearing the costumes, they do not deserve to have a bad reputation with the public. Since he is not able to change the public view of Bajiajiang troupes, he always asks his team members to just do their job and ignore the negative perceptions of others. He believes that they are doing a good thing for society and for the culture, as well as for the gods.

It took about twenty minutes for Wu to structure a performer’s makeup, and then took about another twenty minutes for the other team to finish it. Wu only stood up and relaxed for a few minutes after he finished the makeup for each performer. He stretched his body, looked around and checked everyone was there then went back to work. The other teenage performers were either watching how Wu did the makeup or helping the other makeup team. Due to the lack of space, I realised that sometimes I was in their way. With this, in addition to them trying to be polite and continually offering me and my informants cigarettes and drinks, we felt embarrassed to stay in the tang as guests. Therefore, at about 3.30am, we decided to give them some room and go to a 24-hour minimarket near the Kuanningtang.

At that time, I was feeling tired and needed some coffee to keep me awake. While we were talking outside the minimarket, an extremely loud noise suddenly startled me - it was a car accident. A young man who had a tattoo on his leg lay motionless on the street. As most of the troupe members have tattoos, at that time, the first thought came to my mind was, ‘is he a Fatientan troupe member?’ We were concerned for him and did not know what to do. Once the staff from the mini supermarket had called the ambulance, we decided to go back
to the Kuanningtang and make sure the man was not one of them. At the moment, I started to examine my automatic linking of the tattoo, Bajiajiang, and gangs. I suddenly realised that even though I had been trying to avoid engaging in the stereotypical impression of tattoos, Bajiajiang, and gangs, I had not succeeded. I was not sure if that was something to do with how I was used to receiving negative images from the media or if it was because I had just seen many young troupe members in the Fatientan who had tattoos. My immediate thoughts when I witnessed the accident indeed struck me.

We went back to the Kuanningtang at about 4am and a couple in their forties just arrived with their six-year-old boy, who would be performing as the Wuchaiye at the Paominggong event on that day. They told Wu that they had also seen the man lying on the street when they drove past the corner and they were wondering if he was a troupe member of the Fatientan. Their concern was down to the fact of the timing and the location the accident happened. We greeted each other simply and I introduced myself to them. I was surprised that I had actually met them before, at the celebration ceremony organised by the Fatientan for the Mazu Festival in 2010. Their son was the one who had performed the tsuopao ritual in that event. The wife told me that they had known Wu for a long time. Their boy had been very interested in Bajiajiang ritual performance since he was little, and, due to the trust in the Fatientan troupe, they had decided to send him to learn and perform with the Fatientan. They told me that it was not only tough training for a child to learn Bajiajiang ritual performance, but sometimes it was also a hard task for the parents. For instance, when events started on an early morning like this one, parents had to get up earlier then their child and take him to have his makeup done. However, they felt responsible for supporting their child, as well as keeping up the traditional culture.
Wu asked the boy to have a quick wash and said to us, ‘without everyone’s full support, the Fatientan Folk Troupe would not become so popular and be respected in the religious society nowadays’. When the boy came back, Wu tied the yellow silky fabric on his head and made sure it was not too tight for him. Then the boy lay down on the flat beach chair and positioned himself comfortably to have his makeup done. The mother told us that makeup was also a training procedure for the child as he had to learn how to stay in the same position for at least twenty minutes, and that this was not very easy for many children at that age. I wondered if they ever had doubts about letting their child learn Bajiajiang, and if they had received comments from other people about their boy being a member of a Bajiajiang troupe. The father replied,

It’s our son’s choice. Being parents, all we can do is to have faith in him. Wu is a reliable person and we believe our kid will not become a bad person if he learns things from him. When our son eventually becomes a teenager, if he has the knowledge of what a Bajiajiang troupe is like and what a gang does now, we believe he will be able to find out what is good for him by himself in the future. Therefore, we suppose that joining a Bajiajiang at an early stage could actually benefit our son’s future (personal communication, 15th May, 2011).

From my perspective, the conversation with the parents of the boy not only presents the parents’ opinions of young people’s involvement in a Bajiajiang troupe, but more importantly, it also explains the current status and general impression of Bajiajiang troupes in the society, which still tends to be negative. Whether it is needed for its religious reason or for the entertaining factor that accompanies the ritual performance, the significance of the ritual deserves further respect. However, what is often ignored in the broader society is that the ritual performance is not only needed by people but also functions as culture.
Wu started to put some black colour on the boy’s eyes with his fingers. Then he used a white brush-pen to draw some thick lines around his eyes, his forehead, and then the rest of his face. After about fifteen minutes, the basic structure of white colour had been done. Wu stood up and walked out to help the other performers dress up. The other face painting master, who handled the secondary makeup team, came into the tang to continue putting some black, red, and sky blue colours on the boy’s face. The performer had an even pattern on his face, a big white flower symbol on his forehead, a big red mouth, and some curly white lines with sky blue paint filled in the gaps on his cheeks. During the whole procedure, the boy barely moved and did not say anything. I was amazed at his ability to be so capable of this for thirty minutes.

While the makeup was still going on, the other performers were putting their costumes on (figure 6.24). More people wearing black shirts turned up at this time and the young girls sitting outside had left. The performers put red trousers on in the back of the tang and came back out. Due to the dancing and moving in the performance, Bajiapijiang performers have to wear very loose trousers (Mr. Fang, personal communication, 20th April, 2010). The trousers had a wide black elastic fabric belt (about 10cm wide) stitched to it. The performers helped each other to put their costumes on. General Gan and Liou had a mix of light purplish and red costume, Xie had a white costume, Fan had a dark grey, Chen and Shen had blue with some red dots on the fabric. Jia had a white costume, and Shiou had dark brown. All of their costumes were uneven on their shoulders as well as the bottom edge. Generals Gan, Liou, Chen, and Shen had their right shoulders showing, while, Generals Xie, Fan, Chia, and Shou had the opposite. Afterwards, they helped each other put on a long and thick black or white fabric belt with fringes on both ends, and tightened and adjusted it in the front so that the fringe looked tidy and could be seen when they moved. After that, they each put on a small red trapezium shaped vest, which had a metal chain on the top corners and red
thin ropes on each side of the bottom part. The metal chain was hung on their neck and the thin ropes were tightened on their backs at waist level above the dress. All the performers then put on white socks and straw shoes. After that, they double-checked and adjusted the yellow long fabric belts on their heads, to make sure they were tight and stable. The performers told me that the yellow belt was very important for a Bajiajiang performer as it provided a base for their hat or headgear. If the belt is too loose, the hats/headgear might fall off during the performance; by contrast, if it is too tight, the pain might affect a performer’s performance. After the makeup, the boy’s parents helped him to get dressed and the other performers helped the Wenchaiye to dress up (figure 6.25). The two young performers had identical costumes, which included a yellow and black tiger-like pattern on their costumes, a red trapezium shaped vest, red trousers, white socks, and straw shoes. The Wenchaiye had a white feather fan and the Wuchaiye used a brown one. Unlike the other roles, these two characters had shawls, which also had the same pattern as their costumes, to cover their shoulders. These two characters’ waist belts were also different from the others; they were yellow and had the word ‘Fatientan’ written on them.

Some people began to carry the props to a van, and the others were helping prepare the blessing bags for their pilgrims.121 Wu asked his son who also played General Shen in the event to come to the gods’ table to prepare for a ritual before they departed. The teenage boy then asked the Wenchaiye and the Wuchaiye to join him. He first lit some incense sticks and prayed to the Tzifuchensuei; after that, he stood aside, and let the two performers pray to the god. Then he faced the two performers, holding a flag in his left hand and a plate in

121 It is common to see temples or troupes prepare their blessing bags to their pilgrims. They consecrate little bags to the god and give them away while they are on tour. Normally, each bag has the temple or troupe’s name stamped or written on it.
his right hand, and stepped forwards and backwards three times with his left hand constantly above his head. After that, he passed the flag to the Wenchaiye and the plate to the Wuchaiye. The two receivers then bowed to the statue of the god, turned their bodies, and walked out of the tang. This Bajiajiang pre-ritual is called ‘jieling’, which in Chinese means ‘receiving the order’ from the god. With this order, the Bajiajiang troupe was permitted to act as the god’s warriors. The main role of Wenchiye is to receive the order; on the other hand, Wuchaiye is to pass the order to the other generals. At this ritual, the young man who passed the order to Wenchaiye and Wuchaiye in this ritual represented the leader of the troupe for this occasion; although he had General Shou’s makeup on in that occasion, he did not act as the general but a priest who delivered messages from the god. The jieling ritual is rarely seen by the audience. For Bajiajiang troupes, this proto performance is only shared by insiders. This ritual is short, but sacred and vital for a complete Bajiajiang performance.

All the performers were ready to leave by about 6.30am. The performers jumped on the back of a van and departed for the Paominggung. It took about ten minutes to reach the avenue. It was quiet in the Sunday early morning on the main road. Wu led us to the gung with the troupe. It was located behind some residential houses and the lane leading to the Paominggung was about four metres wide and sixty metres long. Some elders were sitting on the chairs or wheelchairs; others were wandering around. A liangshen stitched with the word ‘Paominggung’ on it was displayed in front of the Paominggung and a god’s sedan was placed behind it. There were six people sitting in front of the displays testing their music equipments: two men were blowing suonas, a man was playing ba, another man had luo on

122 See footnote 12, Chapter Four.
his hand, a woman played a bigger luo, and another woman was playing two drums.\textsuperscript{123} (figure 6.26)

Once the music began, everyone started to move around outside the Paominggung at about 6.50am. Some more people turned up for the event and either stood or sat along the lane in front of the Paominggung. A man with an orange cap set firecrackers alight in front of the temple, which announced the start of the event. A tiger dance with the Santaitze troupe turned up from the other side of the lane.\textsuperscript{124} The tiger troupe walked to the temple and gave a very short greeting dance to the god. Following was a Shenjiang troupe, which was played by four men. They also walked to the temple and greeted the god by walking forwards and backwards.

At about 7am, the Bajiajiang troupe appeared in the entrance of the lane. They were led by the server, who carried a red shoulder pole with a number of miniature implements. The pole was made of bamboo and decorated with some bells and red ribbon flowers. The server wore black shirt, jeans, and black shoes. The troupe was walking slowly with steady steps towards the temple. People from the Fatientan troupe also walked with them. The order was - the server in the front middle, followed by the Wuchaiye and the Wenchaiye, then General Gan was on the right hand front, followed by Xie, Chen, and Jia, who were standing sequentially behind each other; on the left hand side were Generals Liou, Fan, Shen, and Shiou, who were also in the same order as the other line. The distinct feature in the Fatientan troupe is that the relative position of generals is different to the tradition. The

\textsuperscript{123} This simple form of music team is called Beiguan in the Chinese traditional music. They are very popular in Daoism temple events since this music troupe does not always require many people to get involved and it can make very loud noise even in a very noisy environment.

\textsuperscript{124} Tiger dance and Santaitze are also forms of ritual performance.
troupe switches the characters from left to right. From my aspect, this vital change in the performance does not affect the function of the ritual and that is why it is accepted by the Bajiajiang system and is considered to be a part of the transformation of the ritual performance.

After walking for about twenty metres and reaching a crossroads, Wu stopped the Bajiajiang performers and asked them to pause. He took the flag and plate from the Wenchiye and the Wuchaiye, stood in front of the troupe, faced them, and held the flag and plate in his left hand and some burning paper money in his right hand. Then he acted as a priest and waved the burning paper money around each performer’s body, from the head to the waist. This pre-ritual was to purify each performer’s body before they greet the host temple (Figure 6.27). After that, he stood and faced the performers in front of the troupe and then read aloud a spell, which announced that the troupe was on duty from that moment. In the meantime, the server shook his shoulder pole, and the other performers swayed their fans (figure 6.28).

After the ritual, Wu returned the flag and plate back to the Wenchiye and the Wuchaiye. The server looked at the performers and led them towards the temple. He firstly ran forwards for about three metres, then quickly ran back to the group. Then he faced the performers, lifted his left leg up and held it for a moment in the air, making a noise by shaking his shoulder pole, and then he stood in a pose. At the same time, the other performers moved quickly, lined up and posed in front of him. The server then shook his shoulder pole up and down and turned his body to face the Paominggung. After that, the whole troupe moved with him with big steps. They lifted their legs above their waists with every step and their arms were always above their head. By listening to the noise of the bells on the server’s shoulder pole, all the performers were walking in the same pattern and
speed. Every three steps, the server turned around, looked at the other performers, and then turned to the front and continued his walk. It took about two minutes for the whole troupe to walk to the temple. During the procedure, the server kept looking around the area as well as at the troupe, making sure there was no disturbance in their way. When he was about six metres in front of the Paominggung, he sped up, shook his shoulder pole so that it made a loud noise, and then turned his body to face the performers. Finally, he posed after a big shake, and the troupe posed after him. Afterwards, he shook the pole again and then walked away. The other people from the Fatientan came out to rearrange the positions of the performers.

At that time, someone from the Paominggung was burning some paper money on the ground in front of the troupe. The server walked in front of the troupe and headed to the burning paper money. He moved his body up and down and made a noise with his shoulder pole in front of it three times. Then he walked back to the Wuchaiye and shook his pole in front of him and stepped away. The Wuchaiye lifted his fan up with his right hand and walked to where the burning paper money was, he stepped forwards with his right leg and waved his fan at the burning paper, and then turned around and did it again. After that, he walked back to the troupe and posed. Meanwhile, the Wenchaiye also posed but opposite him in a bow and arrow position. They both lifted their arms with the fans up and stared at each other for about two seconds. After that, the Wuchaiye walked away and let the Wenchaiye make the same greeting to the god. When he had finished, he walked back to the team and posed. The front generals (Gan, Liou, Xie, and Fan) came out as a group at this point and also posed for a few seconds. Then the Wenchaiye walked away and made room for the front generals to perform.
Generals Gan and Liou stood as a pair and held their bamboo sticks in an overlapping formation. They stood in a bow and arrow position and lifted the other arm up to about the same height as their faces. Xie was standing straight and his arm with the fan was lifted up above and behind his head. Fan also stood in a bow and arrow position and with his wooden prop lifted up in front of his body. After posing for a few seconds, Gan used his bamboo stick to knock Liou’s one and then they walked to the front of the temple as a pair. They stepped forward to the burning paper and then backward, turned around in the opposite direction, stepped forward and backward again, and then walked back to the team. While they were at the front, the other two generals were walking in circles, keeping the same distance from each other, and then posed and waited for the other pair to finish their greeting. After Gan and Liou finished their greeting and returned to the team, Generals Xie and Fan walked forward to meet them in the middle. Gan and Liou walked across Xie and Fan and swapped their locations in the team.  

125 Xie and Fan also gave the same greeting as Gan and Liou; however, when they walked back to the team, Gan and Liou were waiting for them in the same position as earlier but facing in the other direction to the rear four generals. Xie and Fan joined the front team and posed. The rear team was facing the Paominggung and holding the same poses as the front team. At that time, the two teams were like each others’ reflections. A few seconds later, the front generals walked aside the rear four and passed them to the side. The rear four gave the same greeting as the front four, and finally posed in the middle of the area and walked towards the back row. The server came out to the front of the team again and turned to the other performers. He made some noise by lifting his shoulder pole up and down. The performers also came out and lined up as they were at the beginning of the ceremony. The server turned to face the

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125 At the beginning, Gan was in the right hand side, and Liou was in the left hand side. However, after their greeting to the god, they swapped their positions in the team.
temple and then turned back to the performers. Afterwards, he walked into the middle of the team and headed away from the Paominggung. The other performers followed his steps and tempo to walk away; they followed each other and walked in the original pattern and changed their direction backwards from the gung. The greeting ceremony had finished at this point. The whole ritual had taken about eight minutes and the greeting performance about three minutes.

The Bajiajiang troupe was led by the server to an empty space in front of the temple where they waited for the Paominggung to depart to other temples. During their break, other members of the Fatientang helped the performers to rearrange their costumes. Most of the time, the performers were very quiet and even when they talked, they whispered. They lined up and stood in their original order even when they were not performing. A man from the Fatientan troupe took over the server’s shoulder pole and replaced his position at that time. In the Paominggung, two people were holding a very big flag, which was about three metres wide and one metre long, standing in front of the team. Twelve people with smaller flags stood behind them. The liangshen and god’s sedan were at the back. At about 7.10am, the whole team from the host temple was about to leave. The new server of the Bajiajiang troupe shook his shoulder pole which made some noise to let the performers know of the departure. The flag team of the Paominggung started to move and walked in front. Then Fatientan Bajiajiang walked behind the flag team but in front of the liangshen and the god’s sedan. By walking in front of the sedan, the Bajiajiang generals acted as the god’s guards who purified the road for the god as well as protecting the god during his visit to the Anxigung. According to Wu, since the Fatientan troupe was only participating in the

126 The original order here means they stood as pairs, from right hand side to left hand side were Wenchaiye-Wuchaiye, followed by Generals Gan-Liou, Xie-Fan, Chen-Shen, and finally Jia-Shou.
Paominggung’s activity, the flags that had the host temple’s name on them had to be in the front so that people could acknowledge the host temple. Being a participant troupe, it is always vital to follow the host temple’s order at any time. At about 7.15am the locals were standing along the lane and seeing the whole team off and then walked back to their houses. After the team walked out the lane, they got in different vans and headed to the Anxigung.

-Between being a host and a guest - how difference status encounters a Bajiajiang performance

The performance that was given for the brotherhood temple event was very different to the Fatientan’s host event in 2010. Being a guest, the Bajiajiang troupe had to pass the authority to the host temple and respect their decision. From my viewpoint, the host-guest relationship, to a certain extent, could be one of the reasons that force Bajiajiang performances to change in Taiwanese religious society. Since a guest troupe has to fit in with the host temple’s schedule, the performance has to change on some occasions. For example, in the Fatientan’s host event, the tsoupao ritual was the key performance but it did not occur in the brotherhood event. By contrast, while they perform for other temple events, they had to respect the host temple and did what they were asked to perform. The action does not mean a troupe will lose its identity by being a guest troupe, but it does represent the main concern in the Daoist religion - respect. This issue may not directly appear in the performance but occurs in how the guest and host co-operate. From the different performances that were given by the Fatientan Folk Troupe for dissimilar occasions, I argue that the diverse statuses of a Bajiajiang troupe is one of the main reasons that pushes a troupe to transform from a ghost-catching ritual to a multi-functional performance.
By observing this occasion, I realised that even a short performance like this requires a lot of effort and time to prepare. In the case of the event that took place in the Paominggung, the Bajiajiang troupe had to start their preparation at least eight hours before, excluding the daily training procedure. Although the basic performance training was not done only for that occasion, the troupe had to make some changes to their performance due to the different nature of the event. For that reason, I argue that a contemporary Bajiajiang ritual is more flexible. What is more, it is interesting to consider and discuss what keeps the ritual as a tradition in the culture with all the changes that are happening continuously. Without a doubt, taboos and the complex customs are the main factors that mark a Bajiajiang performance as ‘Bajiajiang’. However, what should not be ignored in this ritual is how these changes are made and how the audiences respond to those alterations. Therefore, from my point of view, ‘Bajiajiang’ is not only a name or a form of a folk troupe but more importantly, it should be considered as a cultural representative due to its close relationship to the society.

6.4 Conclusion

-The Ritual and the Society

The two events that were provided by the Fatientan both took place in Taichung City centre. The first event was held by the troupe, while in the second event, the troupe participated as a guest in the activities organised by another temple. From these two events, I suggest that being a ‘host’ troupe/temple and a ‘guest’ troupe is very different; one has the right to decide the form of the event as well as the performance but in contrast, a guest troupe respects and follows the order imposed by the host temple. Consequently, how a performance is framed and presented has a strong relation to the function of the particular
event. This factor is also directly linked to the issue of how different authorities take place in a Bajiajiang troupe as well as in an event. In addition to that, in order to understand the role that Bajiajiang troupes play in the culture, the relation between the ritual and the locals is also worth investigating.

In a religious event, the original function of a Bajiajiang ritual is either to purify the space or protect the god’s sedan. However, it cannot be ignored that its importance in attracting the audience to participate has recently become more significant. Troupes not only aim to serve the gods’ requirements but also to provide entertainment. In his ‘Efficacy-Entertainment’ braid Schechner suggested that when efficacy dominates, performances are universal, allegorical, ritualised, tied to a stable established order. On the other hand, when entertainment dominates, performances are class-orientated, individualised show business, constantly adjusting to the taste of fickle audiences (1988, p. 123). In the first performance that was given by the Fatientan troupe, although the aim of the event was to tour the god’s monitored area, as well as to celebrate the International Mazu Tour Festival, it cannot be ignored that the troupe was also intending to improve its own fame and status. When the function has transformed from a basic religious aspect ritual to a popular social activity, it is when the ‘tight’ braid of efficacy and entertainment (Schechner, 1988) appears in Bajiajiang performances. Furthermore, this braid does not only represent the factor that emerges in the culture nowadays, but also explains how a religious ritual transforms to fit in the society. Of course, the need for this ritual performance still exists in the wide audience; however, the aim of giving a Bajiajiang performance is still continually transforming.

From my viewpoint, the audience is definitely the main factor of a performance. In a Bajiajiang ritual, although the audience is separated from the troupe performers and the
other troupe helpers, the connection is very close. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, this ritual performance requires an audience’s imagination to achieve its intended purpose; therefore, the stage of a Bajiajiang performance is not limited to a performance area, but it also exists in the imagination of the audience. Whether the audience is composed of pilgrims (who aim to participate in the ritual) or just onlookers (who do not hold the same belief), they both contribute to the performance and complete the aim of the ritual, but perhaps in different ways. A pilgrim visualises the performers purifying a space as a religious function; meanwhile, an innocent watcher witnesses a colourful performance. Most of the time, the performance itself does not change, due to the aim of its participants; nevertheless, the atmosphere that is created in the ‘shared moment’ (between the performers and the audience) to some degree confirms the ritual in diverse ways. To a certain extent, this inclusive experience of imagination also occurs in theatre performances. Nevertheless, by reflecting on the question raised in Chapter Two regarding whether ritual is theatre, from the functional perspective, the involvement of the troupe in the ritual is more than just a theatrical performance in the case of Bajiajiang. While the main function of a Bajiajiang performance is still based on its religion or folk belief, the satisfaction of its audience becomes fundamental. Still and all, when more commercial need is raised and less emotion involved, ritual then can be considered as theatre.

Furthermore, this discussion could be diverted to Turner’s liminality approach (1967). As it is revealed, the imagination of the audience plays a vital role in completing a Bajiajiang performance. The liminal space that develops in the performance undeniably limits an audience’s imagination; on the other hand, the space that the performance creates provides extra room for the audience to fit their creativity in. Therefore, I assume that the engagement between the ritual and the audience completes a Bajiajiang performance. In other words, with the group behaviour, the troupe may objectively encourage its pilgrims
and audience to get involved in the ritual; however, what watchers gather through the same ritual is very subjective. Although the ritual is rigidly structured by its strict taboos and customs, the artistic creation generated by the performers and audience is not bound by tradition. What is more, different forms of Bajiajiang performance represent the entertainment and efficacy needs of the ritual. In my view, that is why the performance is able to survive and transform constantly with modern society.

In addition, Bajiajiang performance also reflects what Turner (1980) and Schechner (1977) have argued about social drama. The kind of performance creates a space that is under the shared cultural background. The audience gather what they wish by attending the event and participating in the performance. In fact, no-one will be able to find out if the gods are satisfied with those performances that are given by the troupes, or to know if the space is purified by the Bajiajiang. However, by sharing the same belief and participating in the event altogether, the audience believes the ritual will heal illness and bring them happiness. At the same time, I suppose every participant would presume that the gods are satisfied and that the ghosts are caught during the performance.

These two events by the Fatientan represent the different forms of performance depending on the status of the troupe - host and guest. While the focus is on the troupe, the ritual not only plays a role for its religious need, but also contributes to advertise and promote the troupe. In order to gather more attraction, the troupe demonstrates their distinctions (such as the tsoupao ritual and its formal authority) to the public in its host event. Nonetheless, the troupe minimises its name when it participates in activities organised by other temples. On the one hand, this phenomenon represents the order in the religious culture; on the other, it also shows that the switch of the efficacy and entertainment need is always happening in a modern Bajiajiang troupe. Since organising a Bajiajiang troupe does not only
require an enormous amount of effort with regard to training, but also material funds to support the training procedures and the performance day, so having a stable and reasonable income becomes essential to support a troupe. Therefore, a troupe has to find a balance between maintaining performance traditions and introducing some new elements in their performance to gather more audience and acquire additional funding. When the single purpose has changed to multiple principles, some changes are therefore demanded. As a result, this feature elucidates the need of Bajiajiang transformation in present day Taiwan.

Nevertheless, whilst examining the function of change in a Bajiajiang troupe, the role that the ritual plays in the society should also be taken into consideration. Apart from the religious aspect, Bajiajiang performance also functions to strengthen a community. Both performances that were given by the Fatientan showed that even without the religious aspect, people still turned up and participated in the ritual. Evidently, Bajiajiang is not the only troupe that gathers people to participate in the event; nonetheless, it is the troupe that received the most attention and is always the centre of temple ceremonies. It is not only because of the fancy costumes or the makeup that the performers wear, but also the mysterious folklore of the performance. According to the head of the troupe leader, Wu, audiences are more aware of Bajiajiang performers than of performers of other religious rituals. The makeup that the performers wear is normally unpleasant and ghost like, and most of them have either a big mouth, uneven eyes, green or red faces, or animal-like appearances. Such masks increase the mystery of the performers as well as the ritual. What is more, in some rituals, Bajiajiang performers even go into trance states, believing themselves possessed by their roles. This strengthens their authority in the ritual, and their credibility to the audience. Those are all the elements that make the ritual distinct and unique in temple fairs.
-The Troupe and the Performers

In the ritual, most roles are played by teenage boys. They learn the dance steps and other skills from the masters in the troupe. According to the observation regarding the performance of the Fatientan, I suggest that the troupe is more like an organised company which provides the basic training for its employees - the performers. The performers then contribute the ritual and gain some pocket money as extra benefit. The management system normally reflects on the quality of the performance and affects the reputation of the troupe. As Wu commented,

The troupe is a place that enables the teenagers to express their talents to the public. Although the general public supposes that Bajiajiang performers are gangs or bullies in the society, their contributions to the religious events should not be ignored. Therefore, as a troupe leader, it is essential to find a way to manage the troupe and bring the beneficial side of the performers to the attention of the public (personal communication, 1st June, 2011).

This statement points out the importance of the troupe to the teenagers, as well as the management in a troupe. In religious fairs, a systemic management controls the fluency of the event. It cannot be denied that sometimes customs account for aspects of the administration; however, the progress of modern thoughts involved in the manner in which a leader manages the troupe is even more essential to the teenage generation. Therefore, though a Bajiajiang troupe’s primary function lies in its religious meaning for society, it is also worth considering its educational function. For the Fatientan Folk Troupe, the leadership’s authority is vital: the troupe members have to listen to the leader or their shixung.127 However, when they are not in the process of giving a performance, the leader

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127 Shexung is a respectful way to address the people who have seniority in the troupe.
and the members can be friends. Though in current society, the negative impression of Bajiajiang is still stronger than the positive value that it brings to the society, the success of an individual ritual has much to do with the troupe organisers, and whether they are able to live up to their responsibilities as leaders, to keep troupe members disciplined at all times.

Bajiajiang troupes are always misrepresented by the mass media—they focus more on the crimes that Bajiajiang members do in their private life rather than the performances they offer for religious events. The meaning of Bajiajiang is not only offering a good performance for the God and the audience, it is more about passing the traditions and the attitude on our next generations. For the Fatientan, this is the true value of Bajiajiang. We appreciate our performers identifying themselves with this value and participating in the troupe, and that’s why the troupe receives so much support from the pilgrims (Fatientan master Chang, personal communication, 24th April, 2010).

The quote indicates some important issues that are currently of concern to Bajiajiang troupes. First, is how this form of ritual is considered by the public, as well as how the troupes judge themselves. While the Fatientan is considered as a religious organisation as well as a Bajiajiang troupe, there are still some debates about the organisation. According to some conversations with local people during the event that I participated in on 24th April, 2010, some people believe that the Fatientan represents a big gang association. During an interview with the troupe leader Wu on 17th May, 2011, he explained that in a normal situation, religious organisations should not be anxious about the involvement of gangs as long as they are not harmful to the organisation or to the other participants. On the contrary, sometime gangs can bring advantages, such as maintaining order during events and strengthening the authority of the organisation. As it has previously emphasised, gangs and religious troupes are indivisible. Although as far as the general public is concerned this issue is not always acceptable, this situation occurs in the culture and should not be ignored.
Moreover, in order to understand a Bajiajiang performance, it is vital to understand the position that a host temple/organisation holds in a ceremony. In the Taiwanese religious culture, temples hold different events for diverse functions. Most of the events are held for their host gods’ birthdays, and sometimes temples co-operate for their brotherhood/neighbourhood temples’ great projects.\textsuperscript{128} Regardless of the aim of the events, the host temples/organisations have the responsibility to choose the form of their events and organise activities for both the gods and the pilgrims. According to Wang (2010), to the pilgrims, ritual is a transformation from the evil power of ghosts to the protective force of god; it rebuilds relationships between human beings, gods, and ghosts and it also creates an ideal ordering of society (p. 345). Temple fairs occur due to the needs in the society, and the role that host temples/organisations play in the ritual is to set up a number of activities and offer people a place to participate in as well as to feel the power of the gods.

In the first setting, the aim of the activity was given in the event title - ‘Fatientan’s Celebration Ceremony for the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival’. The title clarifies the status of the Fatientan as an organisation and the function of the ceremony. On the other hand, the troupe did not stand out as an individual troupe in the parade; instead it performed as a part of the Paominggung in the second setting. The two performances that the troupe gave were therefore very different. This shows that being a host or a guest troupe has a strong relation to the form of performance. In the host event, the troupe was able to provide their famous rituals in favour of gaining fame from them; on the other hand, being a guest, they became an assistant troupe in the event. Although the two

\textsuperscript{128} Generally speaking, most temples have one main god’s graven image that is set in the main hall and assist with some other gods’ statues display in the temple. The main god (zhushen) is the core of the temple (Hung, 2009).
performances that I observed did not last longer than ten minutes, the authority that they transmitted was diverse but clear. As a result, I argue that the status of a troupe in a religious event is an important issue to understand to help examine the performance. Without a clear understanding of it, the gathering from settings may have different explanations. Furthermore, the transformation of the performance is also related to the function of the ceremony. In the past decade, Bajiajiang has transformed from a ghost catching to an attraction in many temple fairs. As Turner revealed, ‘No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment. The matter is complicated because one can look at specific performances from several vantages; changing perspectives change classification.’ (1988, p.120) Although the efficacy of the Bajiajiang performance is, to some extent, descending, it is still a ritual that has very strong religious connotations.

After examining different settings of Bajiajiang performances that took place in 2010 and 2011, the next chapter expounds the discussions of how Bajiajiang as a religious ritual plays its role in generating a new balance for the society in a very limited time, how functional changes are related to the modernisation of the society in present Taiwan, and the social significance of the ritual.
Figure 6.1. The temporary stage for the event from a fair distance

Figure 6.2. The Server and two Xiaochaiyes
Figure 6.3. Wencaiye and Wuchaiye

Figure 6.4. General Gan (right) and Liou (left)

Figure 6.5. General Xie (right) and Fan (left)

Figure 6.6. General Chen
Figure 6.7. General Shou

Figure 6.8. Bajiajiang and their assistants
Figure 6.9. Bajiajiang performers practices on the street before the actual ceremony

Figure 6.10. Tsoupao by Wuchaiye
Figure 6.11. Tsoupao by General Liou

Figure 6.12. Troupe members re-arrange Xiaochaiye’s outfit before his performance
Figure 6.13. Xiaochaiyes greet the Server

Figure 6.14. Wen/Wuchaiyes greet Xaiochaiyes
Figure 6.15. Wen/Wuchaiyes greet the front Generals

Figure 6.16. The front team and rear team meet in the centre of the performance area
Figure 6.17. General Gan uses his bamboo stick to knock General Liou's, and then the front team start to move

Figure 6.18. The front team and the rear team give individual performances at the same time
Figure 6.19. Props, headgear, and straw shoes are displayed outside

Figure 6.20. Niouge puts makeup on General Liou

Figure 6.21. Materials for Bajiajiang face painting
Figure 6.22. Fill-in colour technique

Figure 6.23. Contour technique
Figure 6.24. Bajiajiang performers help each other dress up before leaving the tang to perform

Figure 6.25. The young performer’s father helps him to put costume on
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Figure 6.27. Purifying the performers before they start
Figure 6.28. Delivering message from the God to Bajiajiang
Chapter Seven - Transformation of a Ritual Practice

Subsequent to the detailed descriptions and discovery of the different Bajiajiang performances in 2010 and 2011, the aim of this chapter is to discuss my findings as well as to examine the relations between the religious troupes and broader Taiwanese society. In this chapter, I argue that flexibility and unpredictability play important roles resulting in the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual performance. As I have noted in the previous chapters, Bajiajiang, as religious theatre, takes different forms on different occasions. This phenomenon to some extent demonstrates the transformation and development of Bajiajiang ritual performance; it also provides some stimulating connections between the troupes and society that go beyond the performance itself. In order to clarify the consequences of this to Bajiajiang ritual performance and to Taiwanese society, in this chapter I discuss the interactive relationship between performance, audience, and society. By addressing the religious ritual process and its transformation in the first place, and then applying these findings to the relationships and interactions between the ritual and social authorities, I aim to engage in the discussion as both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ to identify how Bajiajiang serves as both religious theatre and as a microcosm of Taiwanese culture.

The first part of this chapter examines the ritual aspect of the performance, including the transformation of troupes, the performance’s changing function, and its relation to past and current Taiwanese culture. The second section focuses on the affiliation of Bajiajiang troupes and the wider environment, which involves different authorities and their negotiation, which affect the transformation and development of Bajiajiang’s ritual practices. With the discussion of the close but tense relationship between Bajiajiang ritual performance and Taiwanese society, I argue that the religious ritual is flexible and
unpredictable, and discuss its interactions with Taiwanese society.

7.1 Between Tradition and Modernisation - The Transformation of Bajiajiang

The rapid and diverse transformation of Bajiajiang ritual performance has been recognised at temple fairs in Taiwan over the past decade (Wu & Fang & Huang, personal communication, 17\textsuperscript{th} May, 2011\textsuperscript{129}). For this reason, I first address the changes that have been made to Bajiajiang troupes as a means of engaging with modern society, based on the four settings that I have observed and taken part in. The transformations to Bajiajiang troupe performances, as well as the functional changes in the ritual, are discussed, followed by further elaboration of the possible reasons for these significant changes, the interactive relationship with society, the reactions from the audience and mass media, and how the ritual acts as religious theatre in Taiwanese culture. According to Geertz (1973), the anthropological study of religion is a two-stage operation; first is an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and the second is the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes. As Geertz argued, the first stage has been neglected in contemporary social anthropological work (p.125). Geertz’s approach to some extent raised the two key stages of what doing human behaviour-related research requires; meanwhile, it also pointed out that knowing a culture

\textsuperscript{129} The interview was held at Mr. Wu’s office, Taichung City. It was a group discussion with Fang, Mr. Huang (Masters student who was researching the Tainan Ruyitzengshoutang Bajiajiang troupe at that time), and two other mature Fatientang troupe members. It was an informal conversation focused on not only the Fatientang troupe, but also the happenings and changes in Bajiajiang in the past decade. During the interview, the three ‘outsiders’ - Fang, and Huang and I asked questions about Bajiajiang and Mr. Wu answered our questions. For personal security reasons, a group interview was arranged and conducted since the unfamiliarity with Mr. Wu and the possibility of gangs being involved in the troupe.
is not only to see the visible circumstances but also what is underneath it.

Antonin Artaud (1993) argued, ‘Once a form is used it has no more use, bidding man finds another form, and theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, is never repeated in the same way (p.56).’ As a religious performance, even though Bajiajiang ritual performance is still enveloped by strict taboos, its transformation cannot be denied. From my viewpoint, the unrepeatable factors are the reasons that encourage the ritual to transform. In a very traditional Bajiajiang ritual performance, the aim is very clear and simple - to act as demi gods and help the gods to catch unsettled ghosts. However, in the present day, the ritual is not only used for ghost catching, but has also been adapted as a way to worship the gods, and to show respect to local authorities and troupe leaders. It has also developed to act as a representative of localities. To a certain extent, the multiple functions that a Bajiajiang troupe now performs no longer satisfy its original purpose of ghost catching. Instead, its various forms now relate to a number of social and cultural factors. The different means of performing demonstrate the unpredictability and the variety of possibilities in Bajiajiang ritual performance.

I suggest that the changes that are occurring in Bajiajiang ritual performance represent an ongoing negotiation between individual troupe cultures and the wider societal contexts in which they operate. Examining these changes could provide some valuable information about how new social practices and understandings are being established. As I have mentioned in my discussions of the four individual Bajiajiang ritual performances in the previous chapters, the freedom that performers possess in a ritual performance is very limited; they obey strict rules and follow their leaders’ suggestions not only during the performance but sometimes in their private lives as well. However, in the past, due to the duty of catching ghosts, most of the performers were more religious, independent and self-
motivated to work for the gods. This phenomenon is thought to be a result of the historical fishing society, the unstable living environment, and the primitive lifestyle at that time. Pilgrims looked for peace as well as help to survive from the god they believe in, and providing troupe performances like Bajiajiang was a means of worship (Shi, 1984, p 1-9). The difference between past attitudes and those of the present in some way accounts for the changes that have occurred in the ritual practice. Undoubtedly, to understand a culture requires long-term observations and careful study. Analysing the changes in the Bajiajiang ritual performance from its more traditional forms to its increasing contemporary diversity offers a way of identifying the interplay between religious and secular culture.

Geertz (1973) suggested that, ‘[culture] denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’ (p.89). Based on this approach, I first look at the trends that are occurring in the performance, which involves the different elements, the makeup, and creativity of the choreography, and then argue what those symbols mean to the ritual as well as to the culture. Secondly, I discuss changes in the function of the Bajiajiang ritual, examining the diversity of functions it now performs, and then review the impact of modernization on existing traditions. By analysing these changes, I seek to clarify the relationship between the Bajiajiang ritual and broader Taiwanese society. The analysis of functional changes in Bajiajiang is intended to provide a fundamental basis for examining the interactions between the performance, locality, society, and the way Bajiajiang troupes are able to act as local representatives.

Richard Schechner (2006) has argued that the performance process is a time-space sequence which contains proto-performance, performance, and aftermath stages, and the
process applies to all kinds of performances, including rituals (p.191). The preparation procedure for a Bajiajiang performance plays a vital role in completing the ritual. This is not only due to the complex, strict cults that are involved in it; instead, I argue that the strict cults exist precisely because this is the arena of transformation. In a Bajiajiang troupe performance, what normally appears in front of the audience or the pilgrims is the performance itself, which I suggest is a ‘second’ part of the performance. The ‘first’ part of it, by which I refer to Schechner’s proto-performance stage, is not always seen by the public. As I have mentioned earlier, regardless of the length of the performance, the proto-performance stage for a Bajiajiang ritual on average requires at least four to five hours.\(^{130}\) Since the preparation procedure is so important for the performance, it is worthwhile paying some attention to it as a means of understanding a Bajiajiang ritual. To do this I begin with the discussion of the changes that have been made in Bajiajiang membership and female participation. Then, I discuss the flexibility of taboos and the freedom allowed in the ritual, and interpret the changes have been made in it. Finally, I examine the changes in function of Bajiajiang ritual performances and the significance of these.

-Changes to Member Involvement and Female Participation

In the past, Bajiajiang performers considered performing as a means of worship, and their age was not an issue. According to Huang’s recent research into the first established Bajiajiang troupe - the Tainan Ruyitzenhoutang Shijiajiang Troupe - performers in the troupe are mainly adults aged from 30 to 50 (2012, p.154). However, most of the performers that I met in the three troupes I encountered were teenagers. Many research

\(^{130}\) This depends on the numbers of performers involved in the particular event. (Wu, personal communication, 17 May, 2011)
projects have revealed that young people’s involvement in Bajiajiang has become a common phenomenon (See, for instance, Tsai, 2001; Wang, Y.-L., 2001; Chang, Z., 2002; Wu, 2002; Chuang, T.-H., 2004; Kang, 2005; Hsieh, W.-C., 2005). In practice, adults have jobs and have less time to practice and participate in temple fairs and other events. Since Bajiajiang ritual performances are time consuming and are physically involved, it is easier for young people to undertake the strict training and perform in temple fairs. For this reason, the majority of Bajiajiang performers are teenagers (Wu, 17 May, 2011). Apart from that, by performing in a Bajiajiang ritual performance, young people also gain individual and social benefits including self-satisfaction, friends, and income. Bajiajiang troupes provide an environment for them to gain these benefits.

In a discussion of Bajiajiang members in his 2012 research, Huang mentioned a generation gap in the Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiajiang Troupe. The troupe has, apparently, been having difficulty attracting new members. Interestingly, Huang argued that one of the reasons for this is because the public has come to view the ritual as largely a performance art due to the impact of a Westernised education system. This thinking has resulted in the troupe’s incapability to attract participation by younger people (2012, p.154). This argument is unclear and certainly debatable. Being a ritual, Bajiajiang achieves its religious aims by means of its performance. Although the aesthetic facet in the ritual may now be emphasised, the form and method that the ritual adopts to deliver its function is through performing. I propose by suggesting so, Huang aimed to bring up the original focus to the religious ritual; however, the lack of explanations about what the Western education system and performance are in his statement has made the argument debatable. Also, Huang’s argument was based on the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiajiang, which does not always apply to other Bajiajiang troupes, in which most of their performers are teenagers. For those reasons above, I argue that viewing Bajiajiang ritual as a performance should not
influence the structure of member involvement. Instead, by considering what Bajiajiang performers wish to gather through the ritual as well as what the ritual and troupe bring to them are the main factors that affect the involvement of members in the Bajiajiang system.

One of the very strict taboos in the Bajiajiang system relates to female involvement. In the traditional Bajiajiang ritual performance, it is unacceptable for females to touch, talk, and even get too close to a troupe. As a female researcher, who knows that strict cults and taboos play vital roles in the ritual, I had to pay extra attention when watching performances and observing troupe members in different settings. Being a female, the relationship between me and the troupe I observed becomes vital in this study. For instance, the leader of the Taichung Fatzetang troupe allowed me to walk among the troupe and take photographs freely before they performed but not to talk to the performers. At the ceremony that was held by the Faitentan Folk Troupe to celebrate the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival, I was permitted to closely observe the performance and have simple conversations with the performers before they performed. At the brotherhood event when the Fatientan Folk Troupe was invited to perform, I gained complete access. By contrast, at the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple in Tainan, the troupe preferred to be observed from a certain distance because I was female and an outsider. I propose that these different interactions with different troupes were partly directed by the aims and conditions of the ritual rather than just gender issues. According to Wu, the dissimilar attitudes of different troupes regarding female involvement are the result of different explanations for the prohibition of women. For instance, in those troupes which obey taboos, such as the Tainan Ruyitzenshoutang Shijiajiang troupe, not only are women banned from touching anything which belongs to the Bajiajiang troupe, but the performers also cannot have any sexual contact with females (including their wives) during the seven days before their performance. However, a taboo like this is no longer strict in many contemporary Bajiajiang troupes. It is
difficult for troupe leaders to know every performer’s personal life, especially when a taboo is very private. Additionally, in the past, while performers performed purely for their belief, taboos were kept due to the performers’ worship to the gods. Due to the transformation of the ritual performance, many Bajiajiang troupes perform for money or other commercial events, the motivation of the ritual performance is no longer the same as it used to be. As a result, while some troupes emphasize a traditional ban on female participation to respect the religion, some adjust the taboo to accommodate social trends that emphasise the equality of the sexes. Wu also indicated the difficulty of avoiding female participants on some chaotic occasions (personal communication, 17th May, 2011). However, Huang indicated that in his experience the ban on female participation still exists and is firmly obeyed by many troupes (personal communication, 24th April, 2010).131

Another significant debate relating to this issue is the existence of female troupes in Taiwan. One of the most famous female troupes is the Tzentsung Female Bajiajiang Troupe, which was established in 2008 in Kaohsiung City in Southern Taiwan. Unlike the male Bajiajiang troupes, this female troupe focuses on concert-like performances and participates in some Bajiajiang performance competitions. Most of the performers have a background in dance at schools, and most of the time, they perform for their own interest.132 In addition, because this troupe does not perform for religious events, they sometimes only put half of the makeup on instead of the complete pattern. According to the leader of the Na-Chia Folk and Arts Troupe Kao (2010), since Bajiajiang performers have to transform into demi gods

131 Before I started the first Bajiajiang fieldwork in 2010, I consulted Huang and Feng for the important issues that I needed to be aware of when going to the field. The prohibition on female participation is the first issue that was raised during my meetings.
132 Tzentsung Arts Troupe’s official blog is available at: http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/tang-1980/;
Online news about the Tzentsung Arts Troupe is available at:
for the ritual, and their real human identities are hidden behind their makeup, it is suggested that unhappy ghosts would not be able to recognise them and hurt them when their makeup is removed. In other words, wearing makeup is thought to protect the performers after they finish their ghost-catching duties (Stories in Taiwan, 2010). Since the performers in the Tzentaung Female Bajiajiang Troupe do not perform for religious purposes, the distinct half and half makeup method they use is one means of demonstrating the more purely aesthetic aim of their performance to their audience. The establishment of female Bajiajiang troupes is to some extent a challenge to traditional Bajiajiang culture and is not accepted by more traditional troupes (Fang, personal communication, 20th April, 2010). Since it could be offensive to some stricter temples and troupes, their involvement in the ritual is a vital change to the Bajiajiang culture. Even though this is still a debatable phenomenon in the Bajiajiang system, it cannot be denied that the phenomenon is happening. This phenomenon also shows that to a certain extent, even strict taboos are negotiable and can be broken. This situation is an example that again demonstrates the continual and ongoing transformation of the ritual.

**-Taboos and change**

In a similar way to other forms of performance, a complete Bajiajiang ritual procedure requires preparation, the ritual proper, and an end. The proto-performance in a Bajiajiang ritual contains the understanding of the ritual and strict training, as well as rehearsals. What makes the ritual distinct from others is its engagement with taboos. While observing the four events that took place in 2010 and 2011, it was not difficult to distinguish the differences in taboos in the three different troupes. Whether this is a result of diverse understanding among cults, or whether troupe leaders wish to bring the ritual closer to its audience, I suggest that taboo changing is one of the causes of the performance
transformation.

In this study of Bajiajiang ritual performance, I have noted that the issue of taboos exists almost everywhere in the ritual. As other scholars have noted, approximately every step in Bajiajiang is firmly structured by various taboos (Chang, 2002; Lu, 2005; Shi, 1984; Sutton 1990 & 1996 & 2003; Wang, 2002; Wu, 2002). Based on those restrictions in the ritual, it seems to be unlikely that Bajiajiang troupes would be able to change their practices. However, troupes have transformed, and are still transforming in contemporary Taiwan. One of the noticeable and visible findings about taboos is the communication between the performers and their audience. In the example of the Fatientan troupe, communication with its pilgrims on the street, such as talking and physical contact, were not forbidden before their actual performance.\(^{133}\) However, at the Nankenshen Dai Tien Temple event, the Bajiajiang troupe members did not have any contact with ‘outsiders’.\(^{134}\) According to tradition, it is taboo for Bajiajing performers to talk to each other or to the audience before and during their performances. However, this taboo does not seem to be strictly held by many current troupes. Troupe leaders like Wu (Fatientan) and Yun (Fatzetang) suggested that as long as the performers do not talk during their performance, it does not affect the quality of their performance. They do, however, make sure the performers know the taboos beforehand so that the performers are aware of what they can do or not before, during, and after their performance. To them, knowing the taboos is a vital procedure of being a Bajiajiang performer.

In some circumstances, changes are allowed due to disorderly situations that prevail at

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\(^{133}\) See Chapter Six.

\(^{134}\) See Chapters Four and Five.
some events. Many changes are made for the convenience of the troupe leader as well as the performers. For instance, performers once performed more out of a sense of obligation, but now do so more out of a sense of personal satisfaction (Shi, 1984, p.1; Ling, 2004, pp.42-44).¹³⁵ Due to the changes in aim, the relationship between the gods and the performers has also changed. Most troupe leaders nowadays tend not to force their members to obey some harsh taboos since the performers are needed for their performance. Also, the general environment is unlike what it used to be. For instance, it is not easy to ask performers not to work and to stay and sleep at a temple for seven days before their performance, or to ask them not to speak after they have makeup on when some communication is needed. Some taboos have been altered to fit in with different lifestyles, and the main goal for many troupe leaders nowadays is to ensure the performance is given successfully (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011). Although some changes in different troupe are perhaps the result of oral heritage or changes in the performers’ status in the Bajiajiang culture, it also demonstrates the surprising flexibility in this taboo-enveloped tradition.

According to Geertz (1973), religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other (p. 90). Without doubt, the performers’ appearance is the most eye-catching figure in a Bajiajiang ritual performance. The outfits that the performers wear include colourful individual makeup patterns, detailed costumes, and meaningful props. To a certain extent, these visual elements not only strengthen the impression of the characters, but also contain the concepts from basic and traditional Chinese cosmology. To

¹³⁵ Based on a Bajiajiang member’s confession on the discussion board on the internet that was revealed by Ling in her research of Bajiajiang configuration, many adolescents perform for self-satisfaction, some even perform for extra pocket money from their troupe leader.
prepare for a Bajiajiang performance always requires a few hours for the masters to put makeup on the performers before the actual performance.\textsuperscript{136} In addition to the basic time that the makeup procedure requires, the rituals that are involved in the proto-performance stage are more meaningful to Bajiajiang troupes from a religious perspective than its presentation. In other words, sometimes what is presented in front of an audience might not be as vital as what is behind it, and those unseen strict cults are the true heart of the matter in the ritual.

For instance, in the Bajiajiang tradition, General Gan has a yin/yang (black/red)-based face, General Liou’s face features an uneven face and mouth, General Xie’s makeup has to be white, and General Fan’s has to be black. These principles define the basic patterns of those Bajiajiang characters. Although different troupes may develop their own ways to make their teams stand out in temple fairs, these basic cults are unlikely to change even in the future (Shi, 1984; Lu, 2008). Explained by Wu, the basic patterns are adopted from their troupe’s ancestors, and obeying what they have been taught is a way to show their respect to their masters. Additionally, since every general in a Bajiajiang troupe has his own background, the individual makeup patterns are based on Chinese cosmology not only tell the folklore that belongs to them but also strengthen their power in the ritual performance (personal communication, 17\textsuperscript{th} May, 2011). However, although it is generally believed that the first Bajiajiang troupe in Taiwan was the Zuyitzengshoutang Shijiajiang troupe from the White Dragon Temple in Tainan City, there is not much documented evidence to show the characters’ makeup or costume, and all the customs that are used nowadays have been passed on from ancestral masters orally or gleaned from old black and white photographs.

\textsuperscript{136} In some cases, the makeup can be done by mature or senior troupe members. See Patientan’s brotherhood performance in Chapter Six.
For this reason, some traditions may have transformed for diverse reasons in individual Bajiajiang troupes (Wu & Fang & Huang, personal communication, 17th May, 2011). For that reason, I argue those subtle and elusive changes and debates that occur in the ritual practice can result in its flexibility and unpredictability.

In order to continue the discussion of the changes that are being made in a Bajiajiang ritual, it is vital to examine the different symbols that are attached to the ritual. As Liu (1983) argued,

Ritual behaviour is a method that to address people’s psychological and emotional needs by referring to symbolic objects and actions; there is no real relation between those symbolic objects or actions and emotions, the only link between them is the relation that is accepted through common practice in the society (p. 183).

Looking into Bajiajiang as religious theatre, I adopted Lee’s approach to examine the links between the visual elements, the performers, and the audience. From my viewpoint, those visible symbols in the ritual practice would be meaningless if they were not connected to the people who experience them. However, the relations between objects and emotions do not just happen; instead, the same beliefs and shared life experiences are the main factors that keep the tradition going and make the ritual meaningful. Under this circumstance, even though cults and taboos are vital and supposed to be consistent, as long as the ritual that is provided by a troupe shows its respect to the belief, performance does not have to be shown in a particular standard way. This finding on the one hand implies the importance of the cults and taboos in the Bajiajiang culture; on the other hand, it explains why different Bajiajiang troupes display diverse appearances in characters and provide varying performances simultaneously.
Another noted change in Bajiajiang performance is its choreography. According to Wu (2000, 2002) and Bluesky (2008), the basic moving patterns of Bajiajiang are ‘Xia Ma’ (the Getting Off), ‘Ba Tzi Bu’ (the Tiger Step), ‘Long Hu Bu’ (the Dragon and Tiger Step) and ‘Chi Xin Bu’ (the Seven Stars Step). The ‘Ba Gua Tzen’ (The Eight Trigrams Pattern) and ‘Ta Si Men’ (the Four Door Step) are the most popular dance patterns that are used in the performance. There are up to twelve other dance steps in Bajiajiang.\(^{137}\) In the performances that I have observed in the different settings in the middle of Taiwan, the main patterns mentioned above were widely used in welcoming, temple praying, and guarding the gods. However, apart from the Fatientang self-organised event, the other performances seemed to be simplified due to time or environmental limitations. For instance, in the Fatzatang’s welcoming Mazu ritual, the performers walked in Ba Tzi Bu towards the god’s sedan, and performed Chi Xin Bu and Ta Si Men in front of the temple to pray and welcome the god’s stay. On the other hand, in the performance that was provided by Fatientan at their host event, apart from those basic steps, they offered extra choreographed moves such as the opening tsoupao ritual, the two Wen/Wuchaiye’s performance, and the repeated but delayed performances that were presented by the front and rear generals. Most of the time, the differences are caused by time limitations as well as the needs of their employer, which is why Bajiajiang performers need to be flexible in order to be able to work in different situations (Wu, personal communication, 17th May, 2011).

The balance between obeying the cults and being creative is always negotiable. As Chang

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\(^{137}\) According to Wu (2000, pp.30-45), the first Bajiajiang troupe Tainan Zuyitzenshoutang has three basic dancing patterns—the Ta Si Men, the Ba Gua Tzen, and the tsoubei (a performance is provided by General Xie and Fan); however, in the Tainan Sanwujia Bajiajiang troupe has twelve basic patterns. Nevertheless, after observing and examining the Zuyitzenshoutang performance on recorded video and referring to with Wu’s statement, I personally think that the choreographies that are mentioned in Tainan Sanwujia Bajiajiang troupe are the detailed patterns that were developed from the Tainan Zuyitzenshoutang’s performance.
argued, ‘ritual itself is not changeable, only when the leader of the religion observes and senses some necessary adjustments from the new needs in the culture, he makes some changes to let rituals fit better in the society (2008, p.113).’ This argument not only shows that the possibility of change in a ritual is conditional, but also indicates the importance of social needs, as well as a willingness to accept change in religious leaders. Chang’s approach points out the obligation of a religious leader in Taiwanese society; however, on the Island, even though Daoism is the dominant religion, there is no actual official leader in the folk belief. Therefore, the leaders or masters of individual Bajiajiang troupes have to sense the different needs in their local area so that they can work out the most suitable way to train and run their own Bajiajiang troupes. As long as a Bajiajiang troupe still delivers its functions and satisfies its audience, some changes are acceptable to its participants and to the Bajiajiang system. This phenomenon explains why more and more distinct Bajiajiang troupes have been established, supported, and have become the representatives of their locality in recent years. The possibility for differentiation in Bajiajiang society also signifies why regional names are always added in front of each troupe’s name.

-Changes in the Functions of Bajiajiang Ritual Performance

Bajiajiang has transformed into different forms due to the changing needs of Taiwanese society since the ritual was established. According to Wu (2000), the multiple functions that the ritual holds includes praying at temples, touring and guarding local areas, purifying spaces and scaring away unsettled ghosts, as well as maintaining social order. Praying at temples is the most performative ritual (p. 30). Wu plainly reveals the functions that Bajiajiang ritual holds; however, what is lacking in his account is a discussion of the consequences of transformations to troupes, the changing social function of Bajiajiang, and the way in which broader social factors affect and influence these changes. In what follows,
I discuss the factors that are influencing changes in Bajiajiang ritual performance and the significance of the functional transformations.

Before discussing the transformation of Bajiajiang, it is vital to examine the religious culture in Taiwanese society. According to Cheng (2010), folk belief and ritual are extensions of metaphysical life and the development of them requires long-term procedure. This continued spiritual activity contains people’s social life and accounts for a shared cultural consciousness as well as ideology (p. 1). He also argued that the values of folk belief are the unity of humanity and the universe, the unity of humanity and his/her inner world, and the unity of mankind and society (2010, p. 6). In Taiwanese society, it is common for people to hold beliefs in multiple gods, and praying for rewards from different gods is a common phenomenon. Therefore, temple fairs for different aims take place all year round. Providing ritual performance is one of the ways to worship the gods as well as to satisfy the pilgrims’ needs, and because of that, more and more religious rituals are emerging in the society as a result. Whether it is intended for praying to gods, purifying areas, or catching ghosts, all the needs of a Bajiajiang ritual performance are required by its pilgrims or temples. Because of that, when discussing the ritual transformation, it is vital to go back to the relationships between god and the people as well as the needs in society. Most of the time, changes that happens in the ritual are due to local factors, and the forces that influence the transformation of the ritual are varied. However, it cannot be ignored that ‘human beings’ are the keys to set up and complete the ritual.

In contemporary Taiwan, what the symbols in Bajiajiang ritual performance mean does not

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138 Praying for rewards in the culture does not only mean financial profit, but also includes the blessings from gods.
seem to be noted by many people. To some extent, they have been involved in the people’s life and have merely been noticed. When the symbols have become the agencies that allow individuals to find their satisfactions, they become functional and essential parts of the people’s daily lives. On the one hand, this phenomenon explains why the ritual is so well known, accepted, or even becoming representative of a locality and national identity in some international contexts. On the other hand, this situation also gives an arena for Bajiajiang troupes to free themselves from the strict principles and distinguish themselves. The circumstances of the Bajiajiang tradition show that it could be in danger of losing its original implications. However, the changes in Bajiajiang are unstoppable due to social needs. Without doubt, in order to gather more attention from the public, making changes is a strategy to improve the visibility of individual troupes in the established Bajiajiang system. What is more important here is, that by doing this, it is supposed to produce more economic contributions from the public to support the individual troupes. Therefore, unlike the historical Bajiajiang ritual, which was purely meant to protect local areas and perform for the gods, nowadays, many Bajiajiang troupes are heavily influenced by financial pressure, whether is from the needs of the troupe they belong to, the host temple, or from the performers’ personal needs.\textsuperscript{139} The balance between keeping the religious aspect and supporting the financial need becomes debatable and fragile. In addition, since the financial issue is heavily involved in some Bajiajiang troupes, to keep the ideal and reality in balance is not always simple.

While rituals are a means for people to pray and gather what they need, the meanings behind the actions are far more vital than the demeanour. From the proto-performance -

\textsuperscript{139} Providing cigarettes, betel nuts, food, and sometimes some pocket money for the performers before, during, and after their performance as rewards seems to be a common phenomenon in Bajiajiang society nowadays.
the preparation procedure, to the performance itself, and the conclusion of the activity, the Bajiajiang ritual performance is enveloped by different small rituals; the kai-mien, the delivery and receiving of the god’s messages rites, the purifying ritual for the performers, the ‘getting on the horse’ ceremony, the actual performances of ghost-catching, temple-praying, welcoming, guarding, purifying, and so on. Even if an actual performance that is performed in front of the public is as short as three minutes, traditionally, the proto-performance is non-negligible as it provides a fundamental structure of a performance. The only difference may be the length of those rituals due to varying situations. However, due to the situation at the scene, nowadays some rituals in the proto-performance are omitted. For instance, when the Fatientan performed for their brotherhood temple, they went through all the important procedures from the night before until they had finished the performance. On the other hand, another Bajiajiang troupe, which I observed in the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival, did their makeup and dressed up at a temporary shrine on the street, skipped the delivering and receiving ritual, and were ready to perform.\textsuperscript{140} From my observation, the simplified ritual performance is a significant transformation of the ritual, which could also be seen as a challenge to the tradition; at the same time, it shows that a Bajiajiang ritual performance may still achieve its aim without following a step-by-step procedure. Although the liminality that occurs in the ritual performance remains the same, by making the ritual a formulated performance risks lessening its social function. My main argument here is that when a Bajiajiang ritual performance is no longer religious, and merely serves as an aesthetic performance which can be displayed at any occasion, then its rebalancing function is lost. In this situation, the life of the ritual is endangered due

\textsuperscript{140} The Bajiajiang troupe that I observed on the first day of the 2010 International Mazu Tour finally did not perform due to the chaos situation. After all the preparation work was done on the street, the troupe decided to call off the performance in the public and just left without explanation.
to its superficiality.

It cannot be denied that Bajiajiang has become popular in Taiwan because of the eye-catching appearance of the performers and the atmosphere it creates when performed. It is not only a tool for pilgrims, individual troupes, or temples. Instead, it performs an important function in Taiwanese culture. In what follows, I argue that despite the social expectations of the tradition that forces Bajiajiang troupes to change, economic considerations should not be ignored. For that reason, in the next part of this thesis I analyse Bajiajiang ritual and its relation to broader Taiwanese culture.

7.2 The Performance and Social Response

As argued, transformations in a Bajiajiang ritual performance occur in different ways, including the functional aspect, the performance, and the structure of a troupe. The changes that have been brought to the ritual to certain extent show an interactive relationship between the ritual and the social response. Therefore, I argue that to examine Bajiajiang ritual performance and how it encounters a society, it is vital to clarify the inner and outer ritual, discuss the consequences of each, and then examine their significance to the culture. According to Sutton, while the outer ritual demonstrates the origin of a Bajiajiang troupe, the inner rituals are the keys to identification (1997, p.48 & 2003, pp.45-54). Sutton’s argument to a degree conducts the researcher to an in-depth viewpoint in investigating Bajiajiang as a religious ritual performance. The inner rituals could be seen as the elements that structure the performance, and the outer rituals are the results and the aims of it. Based on the data that I gathered from the field, most individual Bajiajiang troupes have their own inner rituals in producing a performance; on the other hand, the outer rituals have a stronger relation to other related authorities, such as the host temple,
the funders, and the locals.

When Bajiajiang ritual performances become ready-packed products to satisfy different occasions, the inner rituals become the means by which the quality of the troupe is established. To Taiwanese society, the performance does not only stand as a representative of Daoism or folk belief. Instead, it is a social activity that engages them in their life (Lee, T.-W., 2008, p.113). From the past to the present, the aim of Bajiajiang ritual has transformed due to its multiple functions. By observing a Bajiajiang ritual performance at temple fairs, marketplaces, or on a stage, believers can satisfy their religious needs through it, and the non-believers can enjoy it as a street performance. The Bajiajiang tradition could be considered as a microcosm of Taiwanese society due to its complex and heavy engagements with different authorities. To understand the ritual as a social activity and its relationship to the people, I take into account the additional involvements of authorities that are engaged in it, as well as the expectation from the audience. From the different settings of the ritual performance, it is not difficult to note that diverse authorities appear everywhere. At the proto-performance stage, troupe leaders and masters have the authority to manage and conduct the performers. Once a troupe goes out to perform, the host temple or organiser has the power to administer the troupe. Nevertheless, what is seen in front of the public is normally the result of negotiations beforehand.

-Diverse Authorities and Negotiations in the Ritual Activity

Subsequent to the broad introduction about the complicated relationship of the tradition and society, in this section, I provide further discussion about the different authorities that engage with the Bajiajiang system. I also discuss the unavoidable negotiations between diverse authorities that appear in the Bajiajiang ritual performance.
In Taiwanese religious culture, the gods are the principal authority of the world. Because of their belief, pilgrims obey and do anything the gods request them to do, which includes regular prayer, special missions, or other sacrificial behaviours. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the most common and direct ways for gods to deliver messages to their followers are by doing the *bua-buei* ritual and through the *tang-ki* system. For important and regular events such as a god’s birthday or special occasions for a god’s area of dominion, *bua-buei* is normally held by the chairman of the temple or the organisation. For some other unplanned events, gods possess a medium - *tang-ki* to deliver messages about their needs. In Daoist belief, a god’s messages are unquestionable and temples organise events for their gods. The relationship between the god, the medium (temple chairman or *tang-ki*), and the pilgrims is never equal. Instead, a principal and subordinate relationship always exists. In a Daoist temple fair, the host temple or organisation has total authority to plan and produce the event. For instance, at the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival, the committee from the Da Jia Jenn Lan Temple had total control in Da Jia Town over how the opening ceremony would be conducted, and because of the decision that was made by the temple committee, all Bajiajiang troupes were secretly banned at the opening event. However, although the ban was not announced publicly, the decision must have been communicated to Bajiajiang troupes before the event started so that no Bajiajiang troupe appeared in Da Jia Town on that occasion. In a similar way to the Mazu Tour example, at the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple event, which the temple members controlled the time and the order of presenting troupes, and at the Jiufenggong event, for which the temple planned the method to maintain the god’s sedan, in both events, the host temples had the strongest authority to direct the situation. According to some conversation with the local people at those events, I suspect that pilgrims respect and believe that the power has passed to the host temple from the moment the god delivers her/his requests to it. Those examples to some extent demonstrate the structure of authority in Daoist belief; it also indicates how the religious
environment is structured.

According to an anonymous Bajiajiang troupe leader whom I met at the Tainan Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple event, Mr. Yun from the Fatzetang Bajiajiang troupe, and Wu from the Fatientan troupe, Bajiajiang performers have to comply with any request from their troupe leaders or masters without questioning when they go out to perform. They are not allowed to act as themselves during the performance; instead, they are demi gods who are on a particular mission at that particular time. Therefore, they do not need to communicate with each other through language but only through gestures and eye contact. In other words, although the demi gods own the sacred power to purify spaces or scare ghosts away when they perform, with the forces they are granted by the gods and their troupe leaders, they still have to work under ‘human beings’. To some extent, this is ironic, and tricky, but interesting to me as an observer. In the religious culture, gods are supposed to be the main authority in charge of a religious event, but in the Bajiajiang system, the under-the-table authority that humans hold is perhaps stronger. However, from the religious aspect in the Taiwanese religious society, this sensitive approach is untouchable.

Although spectators know that Bajiajiang is a performance in which performers play the demi gods, many followers still believe that Bajiajiang performers possess a special control over a situation when they act as the generals. Furthermore, they believe that their voices can be heard, and their problems will be solved by a mythical religious power simply by observing the performance. In his research into Balinese *Rangda-Barong* performance, Geertz (1973) noted, ‘For the Balinese, not merely a spectacle to be watched but a ritual to be enacted. There is no aesthetic distance here separating actors from audience and placing the depicted events in an unenterable world of illusion (p.116).’ Based on Geertz’s statement, the liminal space that is created in the ritual performance does not require a
virtual space but the participants’ belief. From an observer’s aspect, doubting the power of the demi gods could be seen as a sin in the ritual. ‘The moment’ in the ritual perhaps is short, but it explains the social attitude towards the culture; at the same time, it also illustrates the authority structure in the society. Pilgrims would not challenge the unexplainable power which is supposed to be passed from gods; however, that does not mean they are not aware of how the other authorities work to make the ritual happen (Fang, personal communication, 20th April, 2010).

This phenomenon surely does not only happen in the Bajiajiang system in Taiwanese culture; nonetheless, Bajiajiang performance is definitely one of the most distinct religious events which provides a clearer aspect to understanding how a religious troupe plays its role in society in favour of strengthening the social structure. As argued, the operation of authority in the ritual plays a vital part in generating a social system. On the occasions that I have observed in 2010 and 2011, from the interviews and conversations with the locals and the visitors in the setting, Bajiajiang performances seemed to be one of the most in-demand troupes for those religious events. On the one hand, this is due to the mythical charm of the performance as well as the demi god performers (Lu, 2008, p.21). On the other, it could be led by the unpredictable excitements, which includes the performance itself, the erratic atmosphere of the unseen (ghosts or some sort of unclean spirits), and uncontrollable situations, such as political, economical, local contests, and even gang involvement in some cases.

The political issues involved in the Bajiajiang system are especially tense and obvious compared to other troupe performances at temple fairs. A complete traditional Bajiajiang does not only require the performance itself, but other side issues that accompany it are vital for a performance to be presented in front of its audience. A distinct example is given
in the 2010 International Mazu Tour Festival. Major temple fairs not only gather pilgrims to participate, many politicians also take part to increase their political power. The more religious events they engage in, the more attention they receive from voters and supporters. Host temples welcome politicians’ participation since politicians always bring mass media to the events, which also increases the visibility of the event as well as the temple to the public. Furthermore, temples might receive extra financial support from the government, local councils, or donations from their potential pilgrims. In recent years, it has been common to see local governments engage in religious activities. For instance, the A-hou Bajiajiang Competition, which is held every year, is jointly held by the Pindong Tzifonggong and the local council. The International Mazu Tour Festival is jointly held by the Da Jia Jenn Lan Temple and the Taichung City Council.

Another important issue in Bajiajiang is its relation to the local area. Based on the folklore of Bajiajiang characters, the eight generals are the guards of gods who help them to protect a local area. For that reason, at the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple event in 2011, the Bajiajiang troupe played the role of guarding their main god to greet the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple. However, as discussed, the Bajiajiang troupe was actually hired by another temple that did not have their own troupe. On that occasion, the employing temple held complete control over the Bajiajiang troupe and made the troupe not only an employee but also the local representative in front of the audience. Nonetheless, being a guest visiting the host temple, the Nankunshen Dai Tien Temple held the main authority in controlling the whole event. In the 2010 International Mazu Tour, the Bajiajiang troupes were the only ones that were banned in the Da Jia town centre, because of the fights Bajiajiang troupes had caused in previous years. However, the organiser would not announce the information to the audience but just let the news spread by word-of-mouth. From my point of view, by doing this, they did not disappoint the audience in advance; at the same time, this action
may provoke the audience’s curiosity in a subtle way as a result. That situation explains why although a Bajiajiang ritual performance did not appear at the opening ceremony in the Da Jia City, people still talked about it and expected to see it on that occasion. To some extent, hoping to see Bajiajiang could be viewed as an expression of the audience’s dissent; however, what is more interesting behind the circumstance is the obligation between the host temple and Bajiajiang troupes. Even though the host temple coordinated with the Bajiajiang troupes about their attendances when organising the event, they could not ban Bajiajiang ritual performance during the whole touring process. Since organisers should not assume that those gods’ representatives, the Bajiajiang performers, would be the troublemakers in their events, they have no right to ban their participation outside their area of control. Therefore, while reducing the potential for unnecessary arguments or fights in their authorised area of the Da Jia town centre, the Da Jia Jenn Lann Temple allowed any forms of ritual performance to participate in the Tour in other places. That is why Fatzetang was able to stop, welcome, and take control of the god’s sedan to the Jioufonggong when the Mazu tour walked past the temple.

Similar to the two events above, the Fatiantan Folk Troupe played the roles of both host and employee in two different events. When they acted as a host, they organised and held complete control over the event, which not only included their performance but also the routine of the event. By contrast, when they performed for their brotherhood temple, they became an element of the host temple’s event. This kind of role switching is becoming more and more common in the Bajiajiang system nowadays. Many Bajiajiang troupes organise their own events in favour of gaining fame and reputation; meanwhile, they also perform for other temples to increase their visibility as well as gather extra income. The existence of the ritual performance and its significance in some way reflects on the religion and the believers, but moreover it offers a different insight to understanding broader cultural
operations.

Many research projects and reports in the mass media have discussed the issue of gang involvement in Bajiajiang ritual performance (Lee, 2012; Wu, 2012; Chung, 2005; Wang, 2001; Kang, 2002; Huang, 1996). While observing the Bajiajiang performance in the Mazu Tour, this issue was evident. I argued in Chapter Five that gang involvement in Bajiajiang troupes sometimes could benefit the performance by offering some order in the chaotic situation. However, when arguments appear during the performance, gangs may cause some fights and damage the reputation of troupes. During an interview, the Fatientan’s leader Wu mentioned that many Bajiajiang troupe leaders have been or are involved in gangs. Since a large proportion of the performers in Bajiajiang are young, Bajiajiang ritual performance is a way of showing themselves to others. However, some of the youngsters arguably get lost in their roles during their transformation into character. When they lose the ability to judge, gangs may take advantage of them and encourage the teenagers to join their groups (2011, 17th May). What makes the situation more complicated is that in Bajiajiang ritual performance, the status of demi gods is between god and ghost, so for immature performers to capture the spiritual core of the role is not always easy. Also, the characters in a Bajiajiang troupe are supposed to be tough so that ghosts are afraid of them. With a training that emphasises becoming a tough demi god during the performance period, it is easy for young performers to become confused by their new roles. Therefore, although the reasons why gangs take part in Bajiajiang vary and can be personal, the engagement is unlikely to change in Bajiajiang society in a short time.

In this chapter, I have discussed the diverse authorities, the interactive relations between them, and the negotiations in a Bajiajiang ritual. Based on the discussions, I argue that the flexibility enjoyed by the ritual is granted by those strict and complicated elements. The
reason is that too many side effects influence the existence of a performance. For instance, a host temple has the privilege of making a ready-to-perform Bajiajiang ritual happen or not at their event. In addition, politics, gang involvement, and other unpredictable issues could lead to the same result. Between the different contests and operations, Bajiajiang troupes have to make themselves visible and stand out from other forms of religious performance in temple events to satisfy dissimilar social needs. Because of those unpredictable issues, they also have to become flexible to meet different demands.
Chapter Eight - Conclusion

This research project offers a way of examining Biajiajiang ritual in terms of theatre and performance. In the previous chapters, I have described some instances of the ritual performance, and have also discussed its transformation and the interaction between the ritual and broader Taiwanese society, as well as the theatrical and performance elements evident in it. The development of Biajiajiang performance is based in the Daoist religion and has played a vital role in temple fairs in Taiwanese religious society. Although the four ritual performances that were chosen and discussed in this thesis have only shown a partial perspective of the religious activity, they have provided different facets and attest to its possibilities. Therefore, I argue that apart from the respective development in individual troupes, the different responses and demands from the audience are also key factors that have influenced the transformation of Biajiajiang ritual performance.

From a religious perspective, Biajiajiang is a ritual which satisfies particular needs in Taiwanese culture. To the followers, the ritual performs a significant function in bringing them a better life, whether in providing personal blessings or enriching the whole community. Based on my observations and discussions of some Biajiajiang performances, it is clear that the distribution and negotiation of authority in the ritual plays an important role in its modification. To some extent, battles over authority and negotiations not only reshape and repackage the ritual performance and encourage its development; more importantly, these are the main methods that are used to achieve the religious doctrine - living in harmony with the Dao. From my viewpoint, this co-operative and balanced phenomenon in the society has crossed beyond the fundamental meaning of the religion. In terms of understanding how Biajiajiang functions as a religious ritual which also acts as
theatre, I suggest that the religious activity could be discussed both from theatrical and a sociological aspect.

8.1 Bajiajiang as Theatre

Due to the popularity of Bajiajiang ritual in temple fairs, more and more troupes have been established in Taiwan during the last decade. Whilst this development brings a new life to the ritual, the complex operational system behind the performance should not be ignored. Since the ritual continues to transform, it is important to examine how the ritual encounters people’s religious life, and then to discuss the interaction between the ritual practice and the society. As I have argued in previous chapters, from a religious perspective, Bajiajiang is a multi-functional ritual which offers different performances to gratify diverse occasions in temple fairs. Southern (1962) emphasised that theatre does not lie in the thing done but rather in something that arises from the manner of doing; theatre is doing and is an act (p. 22). In the case of Bajiajiang ritual performance, performers act as gods’ representatives and they work for gods as well as work as gods. Through the performance that is given by a troupe, the multiple functions in the ritual provide a liminal space for its audience. The liminality which is underneath the co-operative ritual system acts as a foundation and offers rites of passage for the ritual to achieve its sacred mission.

To understand a ritual, it is important to analyse the signifiers and signified that are contained in a cultural sequence (Saussure, 1960). In a Bajiajiang performance, from those strict taboos to the whole systematised ritual procedure, every step has its own meaning in structuring as well as restructuring the ritual. Those principles provide a solid base for the ritual and support its transformation. The signified in the ritual function as indications in the ritual process and offer obvious methods for troupes, performers, and the audience to
achieve their religious aim; however, signifiers account for understanding a ritual as well as the structure of a culture (Geertz, 1973). For that reason, I suggest that the functional significance of a Bajiajiang ritual should not be limited to its religious aspect; on the contrary, its functions in breaking, restructuring, rebuilding, and rebalancing a community as well as a society are far more important. For instance, taboos are obeyed by both insiders and outsiders without advance announcements, and unexpectedly, they are never challenged during any events that I have participated in. From my observation and analysis, this speedy repairing phenomenon has a strong connection to the social relations in the religious society and the doctrine of the religious - living in harmony with the Dao. The ‘betwixt and between’ state (Turner, 1967) that exists in the ritual on the one hand increases the sacredness of the religion; on the other, it offers capacity for negotiations, and the aim of the negotiations between different authorities is to seek for a new balance. The new balance that takes place in the ritual practice at most accounts for a co-operative social status which is efficacious and entertaining.

Wolf (1974) argued that the most important point to be made about Chinese religion is that it mirrors the social landscape of its adherents (p. 131). In those Bajiajiang rituals that I have engaged in the Tainan and Taichung areas, I noticed that individual development and creativity in a performance were barely discussed by the audience. Instead, what the entity ritual performance that they participated in have benefited them were far more imperative. According to the Fatientan Folk Troupe leader Wu, in their experience of performing at temple fairs, individual development and creativity in a Bajiajiang ritual performance are generally not mentioned by the audience (personal communication, 17th May, 2011). However, why are Bajiajiang troupes eager to bring changes to their performances? From my viewpoint, it is perhaps the awakening of a regional consciousness that encourages the transformation of the ritual. As I have mentioned, the original Bajiajiang troupe that has
been confirmed in history is the Ruyitzenshoutang in the Tainan area, and most of the active troupes accept that they are offshoots of it. However, many current troupes have lost direct connection to the Ruyitzenshoutang and have learnt Bajiajiang skills from those branch troupes derived from it. Therefore, some of the newly developed Bajiajiang troupes have formed their own ‘brands’ and state their names with their regions. To some extent, the localisation that exists in the Bajiajiang system not only represents the independent awareness of local troupes, but also indirectly inspires and accelerates the transformation of the ritual. Those Bajiajiang troupes that I encountered always introduced themselves with the title of their region, followed by their troupe name, such as the Taichung Fatzetang, and the Taichung Fatientan. Wu (2011) pointed out the importance of showing a troupe’s region and suggested that clarifying the region as well as the name of a troupe not only provides a way to promote a troupe, but also increases the troupe’s fame (personal communication, 17th May, 2011). The religious meaning of the Bajiajiang ritual has developed beyond its religious aspect. It is a ritual demanded by the religion and the pilgrims, but more importantly, it is an activity that shows the distinct spirit of the area they are from. When the identification of a local area plays a part in the ritual performance, it increases the regional awareness and unites the strength of a particular area. This regional cognition also indirectly stimulates the growth and development of the Bajiajiang ritual performance. As a result, to answer one of my research questions, I suggest that it is not the audience responses that encourage the changes happening in Bajiajiang ritual, but a growing awareness of regional and self-identification which is fuelling the transformation of the ritual.

For the participants, Bajiajiang ritual could be seen as a religious behaviour which strengthens their belief in the gods. The performance acts as a ritual, in which the ‘betwixt and between’ status to some extent provides a liminal state to its participants, playing a
vital role to re-balance society. However, what the ritual provides to the society is unlikely to change, even with the transformation of the ritual. In other words, the performance may constantly change and transform, it does not affect the aim of the ritual. In Chapter Five, I argued that the different authorities, which include local people, host temples, local businesses, politics and governmental support, and gangs, are perhaps the main factors that contribute to the transformation of the ritual in order to satisfy different needs and aesthetics. The negotiations, which take place in the ritual, have a direct influence on the ritual practice and make it unpredictable and flexible. Whilst those outer issues have encouraged the transformation of Bajiajiang ritual, they also provide a solid ground to fuel ongoing transformation. From a religious aspect, Bajiajiang performance is a means to achieving particular religious aims and through complex integration and negotiations, a co-operative culture seeks harmony.

8.2 The Future of Bajiajiang

Although some Bajiajiang troupes have developed distinct kinds of performance to show their identities, most traditions in Bajiajiang ritual are still well kept by many troupes (Lu, 2002; Wu, 2002). In the sense of keeping customs, most of the changes do not aim to challenge the traditions but to be creative. New choreographies, makeup patterns, costumes, and props have been introduced to the ritual. It is common to see combinations of traditional and modernised elements in a contemporary Bajiajiang performance. To some people, including event organisers, performers, and religious adherents, this sacred ritual is a serious activity which offers invisible blessings through its performance; to others, this social activity provides an opportunity of ‘re’nao’ (Sutton, 2003). By adopting Richard Schecher’s ‘efficacy-entertainment’ braid approach (1974) to examine the ritual, I have argued that this religious activity offers pilgrims a sacred power from the gods; at the same
time, to those who do not hold the same belief, this temple activity provides a chance to enjoy the moment of watching. The psychological functions of the ritual may differ to people; however, in some way, they encourage the development in Bajiajiang ritual performance and provide an entertaining facet to the activity.

What is more, the function of the ritual itself is also changing. In the past, catching ghosts might not have been the only purpose of a Bajiajiang ritual but was but the main one. Nevertheless, this performance form does not take place often nowadays. One of the reasons for this is that ghost-catching performances require hours to perform and training is not always easy (Lu, 2005). Therefore, in recent years, short performances such as purifying a particular space, welcoming gods, and greeting temples become more and more popular since they only require from three to twenty minutes to perform. For host temples and Bajiajiang troupes, although those performances are short and do not maintain the original mission, they still attract people to observe and participate in the ceremony. In other words, the function of gathering people together in a community does not change due to the forms of performance. This factor again emphasises the new balance of the ritual, between efficacy and entertainment.

When traditional customs meet new generations, the sparkle that occurs in the ritual is inescapable. For instance, in the tradition, females are banned from having any contact with anything that relates to the performance and the performers. However, there are now more and more female Bajiajiang troupes being established in Taiwan. It is believed that this taboo breaking phenomenon was initiated by the professional theatre company Golden Bough Theatre (1993- ), which introduced the first female Bajiajiang troupe to the public
and performed in front of Xiahai City God’s Temple in Taipei City in 1999.\textsuperscript{141} Since then, female Bajiajiang troupes have started to develop in Taiwan. Although for some very old and historical troupes this change is not acceptable, the public seem to acknowledge it without too much questioning.\textsuperscript{142} According to Wu, there are about five to six established female Bajiajiang teams in Taiwan (2000). This example suggests that principles in the ritual are also transforming. Transformations such as female performers’ involvement have brought up another facet of the ritual and have indirectly encouraged its entertaining function.

Over the past 400 years, Taiwan has developed from a fishing and agriculture-based nation to one that is primarily industrial. With the improvement of living standards, the contrast of a traditional ritual like Bajiajiang and the busy traffic and high-rise buildings is extraordinarily sharp. However, the value of Bajiajiang ritual has not been noted until the last decade. Since most of the performers who are involved in Bajiajiang troupes are from what might often be considered disadvantaged or lower class groups, even if the performance was popular in temple fairs, people tended to stay away from it in their personal lives. Not until politicians and local governments began to take advantage of the ritual and promoted it with their own names, has Bajiajiang started to obtain respect from the general public.

Whilst some troupes are anxious to move beyond the traditions, some have start to value them in the ritual. They go back to their origins and hope to restore traditional elements to

\textsuperscript{141} http://library.taiwanschoolnet.org/cyberfair2001/C0112220228/taboo-2.htm

\textsuperscript{142} At the interview with Feng, Huang, and Lee on 21st April 2010, we discussed female Bajiajiang troupes in Taiwan today. According to them, the issue of female involvement is unacceptable in the Bajiajiang system, therefore most female Bajiajiang performances are given at less explicitly religious occasions.
their performance. Due to the different trainees and the oral transmission of customs in the ritual, even troupes that belong to the same original temple or troupe, have different ways of performing (Lu, 2005). The interaction and impact between the traditional and the new therefore becomes interesting and provides an ever-changing condition to the ritual. As Ying (2005) argued, by breaking through the limitation of rationality, we seek for the ‘root of human beings’ to find the nature of theatre (p. 52, translated by Hsieh, W.-J.). Bajiajiang performance acts as a practical ritual in normal people’s life and provides essential roots in the culture. The new experience of seeing Bajiajiang performances break the boundary between religious activity and participants, furthermore accelerates the communication between the performers and the audience.

Bajiajiang has nowadays developed from a purely religious activity to a more secular social display. With its transformation and functional changes for different occasions, from performing for gods and its pilgrims to performing as a theatre production on a proper stage, what has not changed in the ritual performance is its close relationship to the people. Regarding the negative impressions that have emerged recently in the general society through the influence of the mass media, I hope this research can highlight certain social concerns for Bajiajiang troupes, and encourage people to re-think that what they consider a ‘low art’ may contribute to the whole society.

As a religious activity, Bajiajiang has been promoted by the government in recent years. Although the misuse of images and the misunderstanding of the ritual is still common in Taiwan, the significance that the ritual brings to the society and the way it reunites the culture cannot be ignored.¹⁴³ Through a theatrical form, the ritual offers a way to connect

¹⁴³ On the Taipei Representative Office in the U.K. website, Bajiajiang troupe was mentioned in their news
with its audience and reach its religious aim. From my perspective, Bajiajiang is not only a religious ritual, but also a social behaviour that represents a sense of collective identity. This statement explains why even if the images of the ritual sometimes are misused or mistaken in some circumstances, there is no doubt about the position that the ritual holds in the culture. This phenomenon also shows the strength of a religious theatre, which may be based on a religion but should not be limited to its religious purpose. Although it is not entirely convincing that the ritual can represent the Taiwanese culture, it is obvious that the Taiwanese government is using the frame of the ritual as a brand to promote its national identity.

Since the transformation is an ongoing process in Bajiajiang ritual, it is not easy to anticipate a specific future for it. Nevertheless, it does not mean the ritual is unpredictable. With my discovery in this research, I argue that the diversity and its multiple functions have brought new life to the ritual; however, in terms of being a religious theatre, Bajiajiang will never be able to survive without its religious principles. Even though more and more Bajiajiang performances are given at commercial or non-religious related occasions nowadays, the ritual will always be considered as a product of Daoism. If the religious elements are withdrawn, a Bajiajiang ritual is no longer a meaningful performance but simply an eye-catching exhibition. Based on the events that I have participated in, the significance that the ritual brings to the society has gone beyond its religious meaning with multiple integration in the culture through its ritual processes. To conclude, Bajiajiang not only accounts for satisfaction for individuals with its religious functions, but it also provides a new balance in the culture through a co-operative atmosphere, in which it also reveals a release but introduced with a photo of Guanjiangshou. The link of news release: http://www.roc-taiwan.org/uk/ct.asp?IItem=64012&ctNode=898&mp=131&nowPage=7&pageSize=45; the link of the image with the news release: http://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/Attachment/87182013771.pdf.
fundamental structure of a society.

8.3 Contribution and Potential Research of Bajiajiang Ritual

In this research, I have examined Bajiajiang ritual as religious theatre through the application of approaches drawn from theatre and performance studies. By doing this, I have brought to light a new facet of the ritual practice, which is the way in which the ritual acts in rebalancing Taiwanese culture. In the existing research into Bajiajiang, most attention is placed on the social phenomenon and the current status of the ritual in the society. However, those discussions of Bajiajiang rituals do not justify the importance of the ritual nor its fundamental meaning. What I have contributed in this thesis is another way of seeing the ritual practice by looking into its relations with other surrounding elements.

With the detailed descriptions of those Bajiajiang rituals that I have observed in the field, I have offered vivid scenes with a reflective viewpoint to my readers. Although my status in the field as a researcher and as a storyteller has not been comprehensive, I have truthfully represented the ritual and its interactions with broader Taiwanese society. The discussions of the ritual and its relationships to the society aim to provide the perspective of seeing Bajiajiang performance as a facet of theatre. As Wilshire (1982) has argued, life is theatrelike; theatre is lifelike (p. ix), Bajiajiang ritual not only stands for its religious function, but it also presents a lifestyle through its performance. For that reason, this thesis offers a different viewpoint to examine the ritual performance by seeing it partly as theatre, opening up other possible discussions.

This research into Bajiajiang ritual is based on my personal experience and encounters and was limited by circumstance and time. I suggest that by spending more time with one
particular Bajiajiang troupe, engaging with it, participating in its training procedures, observing the whole ritual process and how it ends the ritual, would be one useful way of extending the research approach undertaken here. From my personal experience of engaging with Bajiajiang troupes, I have realised that the taboo regarding female involvement in existing troupes may not be as strict as has often been described in the religious culture. With extra respect and concern, most troupes are open-minded about female participation. On the contrary, it could be seen as an advantage to gather some extra help in the crowd (such as at the celebration ceremony for the 2010 Mazu International Tour Festival which was held by the Fatiantan Folk Troupe, Chapter Six). Although such opportunities are not always guaranteed to happen in the field, it is the unpredictability and flexibility of the ritual and of the research progress, as well as the relationships with the troupes, which make research into Bajiajiang attractive.
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