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## 13 “Reviving” the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan

**Abstract.** As early as the first year into Japanese colonization (1895–1945), the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in Taiwan. Japanese Orthodox Church members had actively called for establishing a church on this “new land”. In the post-WWII period after the Japanese left and with the impending Cold War, the Russian community in China migrating with the successive Kuomintang government brought their church life to Taiwan. Religious activities were practiced by both immigrants and local members until the 1980s. In recent decades, recollection of memories was initiated by the “revived” Church; lobbying efforts have been made for erecting monuments in Taipei City as the commemorations of former gathering sites of the Church. The Church also continuously brings significant religious objects into Taiwan to “reconnect” the land with the larger historical context and the church network while bonding local members through rituals and vibrant activities at the same time. With reference to the archival data of the Japanese Orthodox Church, postwar records, as well as interviews of key informants, this article intends to clarify the historical development and dynamics of forgetting and remembering the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan.

**Keywords.** Russian Orthodox Church, Russia and Taiwan, Russian émigrés, Sites of Memory, Japanese Orthodox Church.

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## An Orthodox church in the Traditional Taiwanese Market

In winter 2018, I walked into a traditional Taiwanese market in Taipei and surprisingly found a Russian Orthodox church at a corner of small alleys deep in the market. Later I figured out that this whitewashed old concrete building was a ghost money<sup>1</sup> and incense shop before being turned into a church. The pictures of the church aroused great interest of friends, including those who lived in the neighborhood, without realizing that it was a Russian Orthodox church. A strong feeling of alienation was clearly there the moment one steps into the church from the hustle and bustle of the lively market. On the white façade of the church building, a sentence written in Chinese characters says: “*Jidu fuhuo le*; 基督復活了 (Christ is risen)”. This shows not only an important religious message, but also a message from the Church<sup>2</sup> to the local community: *fuhuo le* (復活了) in Chinese could also mean “revived” (see fig. 13-1). Efforts to “revive” the memory of a Russian Orthodox church on this island have been made by the Church through religious activities as well as recounts of its history.

With relatively few research on the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan, this article is based on the data of *Seikyō jihō* 正教時報 and *Seikyō shinpō* 正教新報 published by the Japanese Orthodox Church; *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* 臺灣日日新報; and data collected through on-site visits and interviews. It also aims to sort out the historical development of the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan. Overall, the religious development of the Orthodox Church has been closely related to various political transitions in Taiwan. This indicates chronologically unavoidable disruption and disconnection. Through the study of current data, three phases of the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan can be identified: The Japanese Period of the Harisutosu seikyōkai ハリストス正教会 (Haristos/Khristos Orthodox Church) (1895–1945), the Post-WWII White Russian Period (1949–1980s), and the Post-1990s “Revival” Period.

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1 Also known as “joss paper” or “hell money” used during the religious rites for offering to ancestors, ghosts, or the deities.

2 As a particular Christian organization, thus uppercased.



Figure 13-1: Church building in November 2018  
Photo taken by Min-Chin Kay CHIANG

## Japanese Period of the Haristos Orthodox Church ハリストス 正教会 in Taiwan (1895–1945)

The beginning of the institutionalization of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan cannot be separated from its development in Japan. The Russian Orthodox Church as an organization was founded in Meiji Japan and soon successfully attracted numerous followers. In 1900, the membership reached 25,700, which was double the number of Presbyterians and almost half of the total number of Catholics. The number increased to 32,000 at the end of the Meiji period.<sup>3</sup> This was quite surprising especially when the Russo-Japanese relation was challenged by the Tripartite Intervention in 1895 by France, Germany, and Russia. Most researches attributed the success to St. Nikolai (St. Nikolai), a charismatic missionary who introduced the Orthodox Church to Japan.

Nikolai (1836–1912; baptized as Ivan Dmitrievich KASATKIN) arrived in Hakodate 函館, Hokkaidō in 1861 as a chaplain at the Russian consulate. In 1868 he baptized his first three converts including SAWABE Takuma 沢辺琢磨 (1833–1913), originally a Tosa 土佐 samurai and an adopted son of a Shintō priest in Hakodate. He later became the first Japanese Orthodox priest in 1875. The conversion of SAWABE indicated that the social atmosphere veered toward Christianity in the Meiji period. The Meiji government was eager to promote the image of new Japan as a modern country. In the late Tokugawa period and the early Meiji period, many young ex-samurais were looking for a new direction in life; they were attracted by the charismatic Nikolai and the image of the Christian Church which linked to the advanced social ideology, although the Orthodox Church seemed to affiliate more with the conservative in Russia. With the assistance of SAWABE, Nikolai was able to expand the mission in northeast Japan and set up the first church in Sendai. In 1872 Nikolai moved to Tsukiji 築地 in Tokyo and since then Tokyo has become the headquarter of the Japanese Orthodox Church.

Although in 1889 the Meiji Constitution (Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kenpō 大日本帝國憲法, The Constitution of the Empire of Japan) finally announced religious freedom, which must be under the condition of not violating the social order and one's obligations as the subject of the country and the emperor,<sup>4</sup> the Christian

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3 BALLHATCHET, H. J.: "The Modern Missionary Movement in Japan: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox". In: Mark MULLINS (ed.): *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, Leiden: Brill 2003, pp. 35–68.

4 Cf. the clause no. 28 of the Constitution of the Japanese Empire: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief." In: "The Constitution of the Empire of Japan –

religion had long been banned especially during the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). In the Meiji period, the government pursuing Western modernization chose to be affiliated with the Church while pushing for the integration of religious and political regimes under the Emperor at the same time. Moreover, the interest in Christianity of some intellectuals overlapped with their human rights movements that might pose challenges to the status of the Emperor as the sole authority. The tension between religion and political power was inevitable in Meiji Japan, and was further exacerbated by the nationalist competition and colonial expansion in the early 20th century. In 1895, among other war profits, Japan seized the Liaodong Peninsula and Taiwan from Qing China; yet in the same year, Russia, Germany, and France intervened in the negotiation. In the end, Russia took away two treaty ports, Lüshun and Dalian, in north-east China. This event directly triggered the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905. This was the social atmosphere, in which Nikolai started his evangelical work and developed the Russian Orthodox Church in Japan. The tension could be felt in criticism against the construction of “Nikorai-dō” in 1891.

“Nikorai-dō ニコライ堂 (the Nikolai church)” refers to the cathedral built in Tokyo in 1891. With the elaborate Byzantine tower and ornaments, the impressive architecture received criticism not only from the public but also from the Church itself. Overlooking the Imperial Palace, the cathedral was criticized for its height; at the same time, the coworkers were against the construction plan due to the Church’s financial difficulty. Eventually the building was completed per Nikolai’s wish to build a *site of memory* that would become a part of the cityscape. The criticism against the “Nikorai-dō” represented the unenthusiastic relation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Meiji authority. When the Russo-Japanese nationalist tension rose, Nikolai showed great flexibility in localizing the Orthodox Church in Japan. With a relatively open attitude to local customs, death related rites in particular, he was also well aware of the intertwining relationship between religion and the political regime. He was considered adept at dealing with it. As he approached his Japanese coworkers during the Russo-Japanese War, he encouraged them to pray for Japan while he himself refrained from public prayer events; he had to remain loyal to his country. In this way, he was able to maintain the Orthodox Church’s expansion even during the tense period of Russo-Japan relation and after his death in 1912.<sup>5</sup>

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Birth of the Constitution of Japan”. Available online: <https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c02.html#s2> (last access 2020, May 3).

5 BALLHATCHET, H. J.: “The Modern Missionary Movement in Japan: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox”. In: Mark Mullins (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, Leiden: Brill 2003, pp. 35–68.

Japan took over Taiwan from the Chinese Qing Dynasty in 1895. Following the colonial government, Japanese religious groups came to Taiwan out of religious, as well as colonial, impetus. The Japanese Christian Church was one of the earliest and initiated its first missionary activity in 1896. Before the Japanese period, Christianity had already reached Taiwan when the major population, Han Taiwanese and Austronesian-speaking indigenous groups had various local beliefs. In the 17th century, the Dutch V.O.C. (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) brought the Dutch Reformist Church (De gereformeerde kerk) to southern Taiwan while Spanish Dominican missionaries came to the northern part around the same time. Both had some impacts on the indigenous groups yet reduced when the Dutch and Spanish powers retreated from Taiwan in the late 17th century. Before the Japanese colonial government took control in 1895, both the Dominicans and the Presbyterians were the major Christian groups on the island in the late 19th century as several Taiwanese ports were opened to Western traders under the Treaty of Tianjin (1858). In 1859, the Catholic Dominican Church from Manila became widespread over the entire island of Taiwan while the Presbyterian Church was brought to the southern area by British missionaries in 1865. In 1872, the Canadian missionary MACKAY brought Presbyterians with him into the north.<sup>6</sup>

At the time when the Japanese took over Taiwan, Japanese Christian Churches were introduced to the island by various interest groups, including the Nihon Kirisuto Kyōkai / *Riben Jidu Jiaohui* 日本基督教會 (Church of Christ in Japan), Nihon Seikōkai / *Riben Shenggonghui* 日本聖公會 in Japan (the Anglican-Episcopal Church NSKK), Nihon Kumiiai Kirisuto Kyōkai / *Riben Zuhe Jidu Jiaohui* 日本組合基督教 (Congregational Christian Church of Japan), Nihon Mesojisuto Kyōkai 日本メソヂスト教会 (The Methodist Episcopal Church in Japan), Nihon Seikyōkai / *Riben Shengjiaohui* 日本聖教會 (Japan Holiness Church), Salvation Army, and the Greek Orthodox Church<sup>7</sup> etc.<sup>8</sup> The “True Jesus Church” was also brought over from China in the early period of Japanese colonization. According to the report of *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* on July 18 in the year Shōwa 2 (1927), there were 168 assembly places, 223 missionaries, 2,374 Japanese, and 38,177 Taiwanese believers (including Han Taiwanese and Austronesian indigenous population). These numbers included all Christian sects of Catholic, Presbyterian, Japan Congregational Church, the Anglican-Episcopal Church in Japan, Orthodox

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6 WU Xueming 吳學明: “Zhongzhan qian zai Tai jidujiaopai guanxi zhi yanjiu” 終戰前在臺基督教派關係之研究 (Research of Christianity in Taiwan Before the End of the Second World War). In: *Taiwan Wenxian* 臺灣文獻 (Taiwan Historica) No. 63:4, 2012, pp. 101–136.

7 It was actually the Russian Orthodox Church yet appeared as Greek Orthodox Church in the *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* many times.

8 WU Xueming: “Zhongzhan qian zai Tai jidujiaopai guanxi zhi yanjiu” (2012).

Church, and Holiness Church. The total number of the Christian population was at 40,551, out of 126,534 of all religious believers in Taiwan.<sup>9</sup> The Orthodox Church was already included in the statistics in 1927. It means that the Orthodox Church was one of the identifiable Christian Churches in the mid-Japanese colonial period.

The establishment of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan was inseparable from the will of Nihon Harisutosu Seikyōkai 日本ハリストス正教会 (the Orthodox Church in Japan). According to the record of *Seikyō shinpō* 正教新報, the official publication of the Orthodox Church in Japan, on September 1, 1901,<sup>10</sup> the author Isaiya MIZUSHIMA (イサイヤ水島行楊 MIZUSHIMA Kōyō) mentioned that “the call for sending missionaries to Taiwan had been loud a few years ago. It has been even louder since Taiwan became a part of the imperial land of Japan”.<sup>11</sup> Fr. Simeon (YUKAWA Kinji 湯川謹次) was assigned to visit Orthodox followers in Taiwan and to inspect the missionary work in September and October 1901. It could be inferred from the record that before 1895 there had been discussion among the Orthodox Church in Japan about expanding the missionary work into Taiwan. Moreover, in 1901 there were already 29 Orthodox believers in Taiwan.<sup>12</sup> Fr. Simeon YUKAWA was assigned to visit Taiwan again in 1903 and asked for a regular priest to reside in Taiwan. By examining the diary of Nikolai and the *Seikyō shinpō* in this period, TSUKAMOTO Zenya 塚本善也<sup>13</sup> found that the Orthodox Church, especially Nikolai himself, had been enthusiastic about sending a regular priest to Taiwan and yet was intervened by the eruption of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. The war directly impacted on the finance of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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9 “Quandao ge jiaohui xiankuang he shendao fojiao jidu xintu ji shier wan liu qian wubai sanshisi ren” 全島各教會現況合神道佛教基督信徒計十二萬六千五百三十四人 (Current state of the religions of the whole island including Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian religions: the total number of believers are 126,534). In: *Kanbun Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* 漢文臺灣日日新報 (Chinese-language Taiwan Daily), no. 4, 1927, July 18, p. 4.

10 Isaiya MIZUSHIMA Kōyō イサイヤ水島行楊: “Shimeon YUKAWA-fu no Taiwan-gyō o okuru” シメオン湯川父の臺灣行を送る/水島行楊 (Seeing Fr. Simeon YUKAWA off to Taiwan). *Seikyō shinpō*, no. 498, 1901, September 1, pp. 5–8.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

12 “Taiwan-jima zaijū shinto” 臺灣島在住信徒 (The believers residing in Taiwan). *Seikyō shinpō*, No. 502, 1901, pp. 18–19. On the website of *Orthodoxy in Taiwan*: in 1901 the “Christ the Savior Parish” was established in Taiwan. In 1900 there were 15 or 17 believers, and went up to 29 the following year. The number reached forty-four in 1903. See. OrthodoxWiki contributors: “Orthodoxy in Taiwan”, 2016, May 16. Available online: [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy\\_in\\_Taiwan](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy_in_Taiwan) (last access 2019, December 8).

13 TSUKAMOTO Zenya 塚本善也: “Nihon Harisutosu seikyōkai no Taiwan dendō” 日本ハリストス正教会の台湾伝道 (Missionary Work of the Japanese Haristos Orthodox Church in Taiwan). In: NAKAMURA Yoshikazu 中村喜和 et al. (eds.): *Haruka nari: Waga kokyō – Ikyō ni ikiru III* 遥かなり、わが故郷-異境に生きる III (Faraway Homeland – Living in a Foreign Land III), Yokohama: Seibunsha 2005, pp. 157–169.

As Japan and Russia competed for the control over northeast China and Korea, in November 1903, only a few months before the Russo-Japan War, a report on *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* states that, “[d]ue to the tension between Japan and Russia, the priest Nikolai announced that he would return to Russia and would not fund the missionary work in Japan. Hence the Japanese missionaries and servants were anxious about this possibility”.<sup>14</sup> Under such circumstances, the pastoral work was still officially launched in Taiwan in 1911. The priest Fr. Titus KOSHIYAMA (KOSHIYAMA Shō 越山照) arrived in Taiwan in July and the Christ/Haristos Orthodox Church (Kirisuto seikyōkai 基督正教會) was officially founded.<sup>15</sup> In the *Seikyō shinpō* in August 1911, “the official beginning of the missionary work in Taiwan” was announced and documented by one article entitled “Important record of the Board of the Church”.<sup>16</sup> On September 21, 1911, the *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* reported the missionary plan of KOSHIYAMA:

The priest of the Orthodox Church KOSHIYAMA Shō (越山照) arrived in Taizhong and founded the assembly place on the 14th of this month. He used this as the base and sent missionaries to Taipei, Tainan and important locations on the island to fully promote the Orthodox belief. This church belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>17</sup> KOSHIYAMA has been ordained by Bishop Nikolai, as aforementioned; this time he was assigned as priest to the Taiwan parish. Furthermore, the number of believers living on the island including the Secretary Officer SAITŌ (齋藤), Councilor SAKURAI (柵瀨) et al., are around fifty.<sup>18</sup>

However, KOSHIYAMA did not stay in Taiwan for long. TSUKAMOTO suggested that KOSHIYAMA was not in the service in Taiwan even before August 1912.

After Fr. Titus KOSHIYAMA, the priest Antoniï TAKAI (TAKAI Makio 高井万亀尾) was assigned to continue the missionary work in Taiwan. With the main base in Nagasaki, he only visited Taiwan annually. The *Seikyō jihō* 正教時報 carried detailed records of his two visits: February 4 to March 7 in 1913; and February 28 to March 31 in 1914. He arrived in Keelung port (Jilong gang 基隆港) and visited Taipei, Miaoli (苗栗), Taichung (Taizhong 台中), Chiayi (Jiayi 嘉義),

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14 “Eguo zhengjiaopai shuashì” 俄國正教派衰勢 (Decline of the Russian Orthodox Church). In: *Taiwan Nichinichi shinpō*, 1903, November 7, p. 4. (Article in Chinese.)

15 “Kirisuto seikyō dendō kaishi 基督正教傳道開始 (The Start of Evangelical Work of the Christ/Haristos Orthodox Church). In: *Taiwan Nichinichi shinpō*, 1911, July 22, p. 1.

16 “Sōkōkai jūyō kiji” 總公會重要記事 (Important record of the Board of the Church). In: *Seikyō shinpō*, 1911, August 1, no. 736, p. 10.

17 It was actually the Russian Orthodox Church.

18 “Kirisuto seikyōkai kaisetsu” 基督正教會開設 (Founding of the Christ/Haristos Orthodox Church). In: *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō*, 1911, September 21, p. 2.



Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong 高雄), and Pingtung (Pingdong 屏東).<sup>19</sup> From his travelling route, Orthodox followers in the early 1910s seemed to aggregate mainly in the cities, especially along western Taiwan. In 1915, Fr. Foma (MAKI Tsunetarō 真木常太郎) replaced TAKAI and served as the resident priest in Taiwan until 1930. He resided in Chiayi in southern Taiwan. Although Fr. Foma MAKI was the official priest assigned by the Japanese Orthodox Church, his activities were rarely shown on the *Seikyō jihō* or the *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō*. In comparison, both frequently reported about the activities of the Taipei Orthodox Church conducted by MATSUDAIRA Yoshihiro 松平慶宏 who was already active in the late 1890s by frequently appealing to Nikolai for a resident priest position in Taiwan.

The prevailing activities of the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan could be seen from the *Seikyō jihō* 正教時報 published by the Orthodox Church of Japan. The Taipei Harisutosu Seikyōkai 臺北ハリストス正教會 (Taipei Haristos Orthodox Church) was officially established on December 13th, 1916 with MATSUDAIRA's efforts. The Female Society of Taipei Orthodox Church was founded in the following year.<sup>20</sup> Self-funding his missionary work, MATSUDAIRA applied to the Taipei state government for establishing the church and received official approval. The number of newly baptized believers reached 48; with another 27 believers migrated from the Japanese mainland, the total number of believers reached 75 in 1919. However, MATSUDAIRA and his family moved back to Japan in May 1919, three years after he founded the Taipei Church. During the period from late 1916 to 1919, the *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* published weekly reports on Sunday activities of the Taipei Orthodox Church<sup>21</sup> with little reference to MAKI's activities; mainly concerning his visit to the church in Taipei. The frequent reporting on the Taipei church ceased in 1919 after MATSUDAIRA's departure. Even though the priest MAKI Tsunetarō kept his residency in Chiayi and later carried on the missionary work in Taipei, after MATSUDAIRA's leave, there were nearly no important religious activities in Taiwan recorded by the *Seikyō jihō* during this period. The last related record before WWII was in 1934, a detailed note on the proto-priest TAKAI Makio's trip to Taiwan.<sup>22</sup>

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19 “Takai shisai Taiwan kikō” 高井司祭臺灣紀行 (Record of the priest TAKAI's visit to Taiwan). In: *Seikyō jihō*, vol. 2, no. 7, 1913, April 5, pp. 49–55.

20 “Taihoku seikyō fujinkai setsuritsu” 臺北正教婦人會設立 (Founding of the Female Society of the Taipei Orthodox Church). In: *Seikyō jihō*, 1917, August 15, p. 42; “Taihoku seikyōkai” 臺北正教會 (Taipei Orthodox Church). In: *Seikyō jihō*, 1918, January 15, pp. 34–35.

21 The Church located at MATSUDAIRA's house at the address Bajiazhuang (八甲庄) in the current Wanhua District in Taipei.

22 TAKAI Makio: “Junkai nisshi” 巡迴日誌 (Diary of the visit). In: *Seikyō jihō*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1934, pp. 30–32.

TAKAI's visits were recorded in vol. 22 no. 3 in 1933 and vol. 23 no. 3 in 1934 by the *Seikyō jihō*.<sup>23</sup> Both records showed that after 1930, the Orthodox Church in Japan assigned TAKAI to Taiwan again and restarted the annual religious visit after 1930. This was related to MAKI's death on November 27, 1930.<sup>24</sup> During these two trips, different from his previous visits in the 1910s, TAKAI went to a larger area including eastern Taiwan. It is noteworthy that several names of Russians were mentioned during his second trip in 1933 when visiting Taipei, Chiayi, Kaohsiung, and Tainan.<sup>25</sup> The report on April 9, 1925 of the *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpo* indicated that "[t]hirty Russian sellers still resided on the island." Whether they are related to the Orthodox believers aforementioned or to Belo emigrants (a term for white émigrés, especially Russian émigrés) staying after the Russian Civil War (1918–1922) remains unanswered.<sup>26</sup>

Through two detailed records of TAKAI's Taiwan visits, it is clear that Russian Orthodox Church believers were distributed all over western Taiwan and part of the east coast in the early 1930s. Most of time, he stayed in Taipei, and then the area between Chiayi and Tainan. This is not surprising because the priest MAKI based in Chiayi. Yet the considerable number of believers in Taipei showed the impact of frequent evangelical activities conducted by MATSUDAIRA before 1919. We can also see different groups of immigrants from the Japanese mainland to Taipei. Furthermore, as shown in the record, most believers he visited were Japanese, few Russians and only one mention of Taiwanese. This indicated the ethnic composition of believers in the 1930s. The activities of the Orthodox Church went down after the mid-1930s under the impacts of MAKI's death and the prewar atmosphere.

The Orthodox Church in the Japanese mainland was seriously affected by the Russian Civil War particularly due to the shrinkage and eventually cut of financial support from Russia. Salaries of priests, catechists, and clerks were cut off; schools and related organizations were suspended. The situation worsened in the pre-WWII period. In 1939 Japan announced that they began the wartime "national mobilization," and intended to control and appropriate religions, treating them as the nationalist and imperialist propaganda instruments. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education led the policy to unite religions, putting them into the officially defined "orthodoxy"; on the other hand, the National Army promoted a "Pan-Asian Orthodox Church" as an anti-Soviet propaganda tool. Under these conditions, in

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23 Hence it is suggested that the visits were at the end of 1932 and 1933.

24 TAKAI visited the "widow" of MAKI and held the farewell ceremony for him. Cf. "TAKAI chō-shisai no Taiwan junkaiki" 高井長司祭の臺灣巡回記 (Record of the visit of proto-priest TAKAI). In: *Seikyō jihō*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1933, pp. 15–20.

25 TAKAI Makio: "Junkai nisshi". In: *Seikyō jihō*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 30–32.

26 TSUKAMOTO: "Nihon Harisutosu seikyōkai no Taiwan dendō" (2005), pp. 157–169.

1940 the Japanese Orthodox Church cut off the link with the Russian Orthodox Church and was forced to accept the new Bishop through the Manchuria Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. The Church almost stopped running in 1944 when most of the first generation of Church leaders passed away.<sup>27</sup> As a result, it is not surprising to see the Church become inactive in Taiwan after the mid-1930s as the principal Church in Japan was undergoing large changes.

## The Postwar Period

After the war, the elites of the Japanese Orthodox Church in Tokyo applied to the Moscow Patriarchate or the “American Metropolia” for a Russian Orthodox “rescue mission”. The result was out of hand with the ongoing Cold War separation of blocs and their affiliates.<sup>28</sup> In 1947, the bishop of the American Metropolia, Benjamin (BASALYGA) of Pittsburgh, visited Japan, led pastoral tours, and ordained ten people as new clerics. Yet the full recovery of the Japanese Orthodox Church came only when the activist Metropolitan Irenaeus (Irineĭ) (BEKISH) took charge of the Japanese Church in 1953. According to KHARIN (2011), “It was undoubtedly under Irenaeus ‘the reconstructor’ that the Japanese Orthodox Church regained coherence and entered a new ‘American’ phase in its existence, which would last until the major U.S.-USSR ecclesiastical settlement of 1970, and in many cultural trends until the present”.<sup>29</sup>

Similar to the Japanese Orthodox Church after the war, the Orthodox Church in Taiwan also entered the new era with the Cold War realignment. After WWII, Taiwan was ceded by Japan to the reign of Kuomintang (*Guomindang* 國民黨, the Chinese Nationalist government, henceforth KMT) led by CHIANG Kai-shek (蔣介石 JIANG Jieshi) in China. Defeated in the following Chinese Civil War by the Communist Party, the KMT government retreated to Taiwan in 1949. Affiliated to the Western Bloc led by the U.S. in the Cold War, the KMT government in Taiwan was against the USSR-led Eastern Bloc and the Communists from the People’s Republic of China.

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27 KHARIN, I. N.: *Self-Realization of the Japanese Orthodox Church, 1912–1956*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2011.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 72.

As opposed to the prewar period, the call for an Orthodox Church in Taiwan emerged from another community: the émigré Russians. When the KMT government resettled in Taiwan, some Russians joined the retreat and formed a new group of Orthodox believers. In response to their call, the Bishop John (Ioann) (SHAKHOVSKOI)<sup>30</sup> took his first visit to Taiwan during the Korean War (1950–1953). In 1957 the Metropolitan Irenaeus (BEKISH) from Tokyo visited Taiwan and hosted services in a family style church named John the Baptist until the mid-1960s.<sup>31</sup>

According to Gleb RAHR (RAR),<sup>32</sup> during his stay in Taiwan from 1957 to 1960, he met several Russians who had come to Taiwan through different means: George Konstantinovich ELSNER (Georgii Konstantinovich ÈL'SNER), the owner of Café Astoria in Taipei where the Russian community gathered, had moved to Taiwan from the Russian emigrant colony of Shanghai; Yury (ĪUrii) Romanovich LARIKOV, a former member of the Kolchak army, worked in an artillery laboratory of the Chinese National Army (ROC).<sup>33</sup> There was also a comparatively larger group of Russian women who immigrated with their husbands, mostly members of the Flying Tigers (American Volunteer Group or AVG) or officers of the Chinese National Army. The last immigrant group was Russian women from Xinjiang

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30 See introduction in: OrthodoxWiki contributors: “John (SHAKHOVSKOY) of San Francisco”, 2012, March 11. Available online: [https://orthodoxwiki.org/index.php?title=John\\_\(Shahovskoy\)\\_of\\_San\\_Francisco&oldid=107655](https://orthodoxwiki.org/index.php?title=John_(Shahovskoy)_of_San_Francisco&oldid=107655) (last access 2019, December 14).

31 LAI Yingchuan: “‘Luoye Shenggen’ yi ‘Huhua Chunni’? Shitan Taiwan ‘Baie’ de Lisan Jingyan (1949–1989) (Yi *Wuchangjie yiduan qihao ji Yige eguo jiazushi huiyilu weili*)” 「落葉生根」抑「護花春泥」？試探臺灣「白俄」的離散經驗(1949–1989) (以《武昌街一段七號》及《一個俄國家族史》回憶錄為例) (‘Stayers’ or ‘Passers-by’? A Preliminary Research on the Diasporic Experiences of Belo emigrants in Taiwan (1949–1989) (Memoirs of No. 7, Sec. 1 of *Wuchan Road and the History of a Russian Family*)). In Section of Digital Collection of the Library of the National Chengchi University (ed.): *Zhenshi yu Xiangxiang: Bainian Tai-E Guanxi Lueying* 真實與想像：百年臺俄關係掠影 (Reality and Imagination: One Hundred Years of Russia-Taiwan Relation), Taipei: Chengchi University Library 2018. pp. 257–277.

32 Gleb RAR: *I budet nashe pokolen'e davat' istorii otchet: Vospominaniia* (...And our generation will report to history: Memoirs), Moskva: Russkii put' 2011.

33 “Gregore R. LARIKOVE”, i.e., Y. R. LARIKOV, was born in Siberia and graduated from a military school in 1916. He followed the Russian army, retreated to Japan through Russian Kamchatka after the Russian Revolution, and then moved with the army to Shenyang in China. He advised the Chinese military government to develop canons and artillery as a Russian advisor, and later joined the Chinese army in 1936 to design artillery. He became a Chinese citizen in the same year. See JIAN Jinzhui 簡錦錐 and XIE Zhufen 謝祝芬: *Minxing Kafetiguan* 明星咖啡館 (Café Astoria), Taipei: Ink 2015, p. 107.

(China) who fled to Taiwan through India.<sup>34</sup> Gleb RAHR described their migration route to Taiwan. Some Russians settled in Chinese Turkestan during the period of the Russian Empire. At times of the Russian Civil War, thousands of refugees from Orenburg, Ural, and Semirech'e Cossacks flooded into Chinese Turkestan and thereafter established the Orthodox Church parishes, Russian primary schools and a Russian gymnasium in Urumqi. During the Chinese Civil War, the young officers of the 9th Army of Kuomintang bastioned in Xinjiang married Xinjiang Russians.<sup>35</sup> They then moved to India with their husbands for internship and fled with the KMT government to Taiwan in 1949. Their living conditions were bad with underpaid army salaries and the negative image of Russian wives in the KMT army career. In some other cases, such as the mother of Mrs. Lidia CHANG (or Nina CHANG) who was married to Councilor CHANG Ta-tien (ZHANG Datian 張大田), both (Nina and her mother) were Russians from Harbin, China.

RAHR and his family came to Taiwan in 1957 from Germany as he worked as the director of the Free Russia Radio. When invited to Taiwan, RAHR was working for the NTS (Narodno-Trudovoi Soiuz, the National Labor Union) in West Germany and the NTS had an agreement with the Asian Peoples' Anti-Communist League (APACL) and the KMT government to broadcast radio programs to Russia and Siberia from Taiwan. The Free Russia Radio was set up by the Free Radio under the funding from the U.S. parliament under the terms of the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty<sup>36</sup> after the Korean War. In 1957, the Russian radio station was set up in Tamsui (Danshui 淡水), a district of the current New Taipei City. This “meant that the number of Russian émigré intelligentsia increased”.<sup>37</sup> As a journalist, RAHR was actively involved in promoting Orthodox Christianity and Russian culture, and “had great impact on reuniting the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia with the Moscow Patriarchate amid the dissolution of USSR”<sup>38</sup>. In his memoir, RAHR provides the names of Russian colleagues at the Free Russia Radio Station including Dima IVANOV, Kostia FEL'ZING, and Dima ZHANG (a half Chinese, half Russian radio engineer). Their salary and living standard were similar to the members of the Flying Tigers; much different from those from Xinjiang.

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34 See English translation in Gleb RAR: “Historical Notes about Orthodox Church Life in Taiwan during 50–60 years of 20 cent” (Kiril MIRAKOVSKI, trans.). Available online: [http://orthodox.cn/localchurch/taiwan/glebrar\\_en.htm](http://orthodox.cn/localchurch/taiwan/glebrar_en.htm) (last access 2019, August 14).

35 As the local population in Xinjiang, the Uighurs and Kazakhs, were a nomadic population and Muslims as well, the Russians preferred to marry the Chinese officers who also had the problem of finding spouses since local Uighurs and Kazakhs did not like the Chinese.

36 The official full title is “Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China”.

37 LAI: “‘Stayers’ or ‘Passers-by’ ?” (2018), p. 264.

38 Ibid.

Many of the aforementioned groups left Russia after the 1917 Revolution and moved to China through Siberia. Nearly 300,000 White Russians were in this wave of emigration and settled in China in the 1920s.<sup>39</sup> Some of the former anti-Bolsheviks army members assisted the KMT in military trainings and equipment maintenance in China and followed the KMT's retreat to Taiwan after 1949. Mostly Orthodox believers, they formed the major group to request for building a Russian Orthodox church in Taiwan after the war. A couple among the earliest arrivals in Taiwan, Roman Nikolaevich and Liudmila Glebovna REDLIKH invited the Metropolitan Irenaeus (BEKISH) from Tokyo in 1957<sup>40</sup> and had divine services at their home in Taipei.<sup>41</sup> After that, the family of RAHR continued this role in 1958. As RAHR moved to Japan in 1960 and his and his wife's role was replaced by A. A. and E. R. PERUAN. Since the REDLIKH's, the RAHR family and the following PERUAN's resided at the same house overlapping or at different times, this location in Taipei was the most active Orthodox religious place of the period. In RAHR's memoir, one photo reveals that Metropolitan Irenaeus chaired the Orthodox service in a room with an iconostasis at RAHR's house; and the other shows Metropolitan Irenaeus on the three-wheeled rickshaw in front of the RAHR's house. RAHR particularly mentions that the time when Metropolitan Irenaeus served the liturgy on September 11 1958, the day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, the Taipei parish gained a patron saint. Around 40 people attended the service.

An article in the Japanese *Seikyō jihō* documents the visit of the Metropolitan Irenaeus (BEKISH) from April 2-9, 1959, one of his annual visits between 1957 and 1959. According to the article, believers in Taiwan reached around 100 in 1958; mostly from Russia, the U.S., China, and Greece. There was no church, hence they gathered at RAHR's home for religious activities. During Irenaeus' visit, 15 people were baptized including 14 Chinese and one Russian child.<sup>42</sup> This description suggests that a larger portion of locals, although not sure whether they were Chinese immigrants or local Taiwanese, converted to Orthodox Christianity in the late 1950s.

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39 CHEN Tianquan 陳天權: "Dongzhengjiao chuanru Xianggang licheng" 東正教傳入香港歷程 (The Journey of the Orthodox Church to Hong Kong): <https://www.master-insight.com/東正教傳入香港歷程/> (Accessed 20 August, 2019).

40 Based on the memoir of Gleb RAHR.

41 The address was: No. 18, Lane 132, Jianguo North Road, Taipei City (台北市建國北路 132 巷 18 號).

42 "Irinei daishukyō. Taiwan hōmon saru" イリネイ大主教 台湾訪問さる (The visit of Patriarch Irenaeus to Taiwan). In: *Seikyō jihō*, no. 834, 1959, May 5, p. 12.

The last record directly related to Taiwan in the Japanese *Seikyō jihō* was in the edition of January 20, 1965 (Shōwa 40),<sup>43</sup> describing the five day visit of the Metropolitan of Japan Vladimir (NAGOSKY),<sup>44</sup> the American Air chaplain Peter ZURNOVICH, and Fr. Kirill ARIHARA (有原) from December 26-30, 1964. As described by the author, the total number of Orthodox believers in Taiwan in the 1960s was around 200, most of which lived in the area of Taipei. They did not have a church to go to; believers expected to have a resident priest who could plan building their own church. During the five-day visit, Taipei, Taichung, and Chiayi were the three major cities where services were held. The locations remind the distribution of believers in the pre-war period. However, the relationship between the believers before and after the war seemed to be disconnected. This is reflected in the content of the report, written by the only Japanese member of the group, Fr. Kirill ARIHARA: “After an approximately two-and-a-half-hour flight we arrived in Taiwan, which until twenty years earlier had been Japanese territory but which was now a foreign country. After reaching a place where many Japanese believers had lived, there was a kind of lonely feeling.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the report showed that priests of the Episcopal Church long helped to perform services for sickly or dying amongst Orthodox followers in Taipei since there had been no regular resident Orthodox priest. The situation was similar to that in the prewar period.

Although the believers in Taipei planned to initiate building their church, the expectation has never been fulfilled. Similar to the 1950s and 60s, the religious activities continued to be held at a believer’s home or a Catholic church, for instance the Holy Family Church Taipei during the 1970s.<sup>46</sup> However, the religious activities became very few. Some former Orthodox believers joined the Catholic Church instead. The anti-communist propaganda and the political atmosphere of White Terror until 1987 quieted down many local believers; the image of Russians was very often directly linked to communism and the USSR. JIAN Jinzhui 簡錦錐, the Taiwanese partner of Café Astoria, recalled the 1949 negotiation to rent the place for the cafe, in which the property owner immediately refused to let the house to the “communists” when he noticed that other partners of the cafe were

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43 “Taiwan no seikyōto o tazunete” 台湾の正教徒を訪ねて (Visiting the Orthodox Christians in Taiwan). In: *Seikyō jihō*, no. 901, 1965, January, p. 7.

44 “In March 1970, Abp. Vladimir was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan by the Moscow Patriarchate when the Patriarchate granted autonomy to the Church of Japan” in: OrthodoxWiki contributors: “Main page”, 2017, October 19. Available online: <https://orthodoxwiki.org/> (last access 2019, December 14).

45 English translation by Fr. John BARTHOLOMEW quoted from the website of the “Orthodoxy in China”. See: “Taiwan jiaotang” 台灣教堂 (Churches in Taiwan). Available online: <http://www.orthodox.cn/localchurch/taiwan/index.html> (last access 2019, December 15).

46 Interview with Fr. Kirill at the Taipei Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, Songshan District, Taipei. 2018, November 27.

Russians<sup>47</sup>. The political situation also made White Russians hesitant to stay in Taiwan. The Korean War in the early 1950s caused the fear that communists of the People's Republic of China may eventually capture Taiwan. Many chose to emigrate to Australia, Brazil, the U.S., and other countries in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>48</sup> It suggests that the composition of Orthodox believers in Taiwan was in constant change. Believers in the 1980s either left or deceased, and religious activities soon became inactive. Many local Orthodox Christians either converted to Catholicism or completely retreated from the Christian religion. As Taiwan was under White Terror until 1987, the fear of being labeled as a communist suppressed some local believers who couldn't even dare admit their Orthodox belief.<sup>49</sup>

After the Second World War, the number of Orthodox Christians in Taiwan increased from 100 in the 1950s to 200 in the 1960s. Although Taiwan was ceded from Japan in 1945, the Cold War placed the development of the two Orthodox Churches in the same bloc. Missionary work of both Churches was taken care of by the U.S.-channeled Orthodox priests. The Japanese Orthodox Church rebuilt relations to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970 and became an autonomous Church while Taiwan was still cared for by the U.S. army chaplains in the 1970s. Since the U.S. army withdrew from Taiwan in 1979 after the U.S. ended the official relationship with the Republic of China, the Orthodox U.S. army chaplains have not continued to cover Taiwanese believers. This may be the core reason of the drastic drop of Orthodox religious activities in Taiwan in the 1980s.

## The Orthodox Church in Taiwan After the 1990s

Orthodox religious activities started to become more active again only after the 1990s when the global and domestic political circumstances changed. In 1991, the USSR dissolved and Taiwan also went through an intensive process of democratization after lifting herself out of the Martial Law in 1987. Liberated from the Chinese Nationalist "anti-communism and anti-USSR" propaganda, the new political environment started up new diplomatic relation between Taiwan and Russia. In 1992, Taiwan and Russia signed the mutual agreement for establishing the Moscow-Taipei Coordination Commission on Economic and Cultural Cooperation

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47 JIAN / XIE: *Café Astoria* (2015), p. 74.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

49 Interview with Fr. Kirill at the Taipei Elevation of the Holy Cross Church, Songshan District, Taipei. 2018, November 27.



(MTC). As a result, the MTC in Moscow was founded in July 1993 and the MTC in Taipei was officially set up in December 1996. In 2002, the semi-governmental Taiwan-Russia Association was founded. In September 1993, the direct flight route between Taipei and Moscow was approved by both countries. With this welcoming environment, it attracted more Russians to Taiwan as well as lead the believers to call for establishing an Orthodox parish in Taiwan.<sup>50</sup>

Noticing the demand from Orthodox Christians in Taiwan, the proto-priest Di-onisiĭ POZDNIĀEV from Hong Kong visited Taiwan first in 1999 and thereafter every two years to deliver divine liturgies.<sup>51</sup> In 2005, Bishop Ilarion ALFEEV from the Moscow Patriarchate visited Taiwan. Later, the Moscow Patriarchate sent personnel three times to examine the possibility of building a parish in Taiwan.<sup>52</sup> Yet, due to the Church’s financial situation, the official announcement of establishing the parish was postponed to 2012. Fr. Kirill SHKARBUL<sup>53</sup> was assigned by the Moscow patriarch to rebuild the parish. In February 2013, the Taipei parish was officially “reactivated”. This was aimed at “reviving” the Taipei Orthodox Church founded in “1901” during the Japanese colonial period. This Church, based in Taipei City,<sup>54</sup> was named the Taiwan Orthodox Christian Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (*Taiwan jidu zheng jiaohui – Mosike da mu shouzuo* 台灣基督正教會-莫斯科大牧首座).<sup>55</sup>

In Taiwan, there has been another Orthodox church active since the 1990s: the Orthodox Church in Taiwan (*Taiwan jidu dongzhengjiao hui* 台灣基督東正教會), belonging to the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Church is based in Xindian, New Taipei City, and is led by Fr. Jonah (李亮).<sup>56</sup> The Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, led by Metropolitan Nektarios TSILIS, in fact started religious activities in Asia earlier than the Moscow Patriarchate. The parish in Hong Kong was established in 1997, and Fr. Jonah assigned by the Metropolitanate as the priest of the Taipei parish in 2001. The Church was officially

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 More information can be found on “Brief History of Taiwan Orthodox Church” (Taiwan zheng jiaohui jian shi 台灣正教會簡史). In: “Taiwan jidu zheng jiaohui” 台灣基督正教會 (the Orthodox Church in Taiwan). Available online: <http://orthodoxchurch.tw/> (last access 2019, December 15).

53 Fr. Kirill SHKARBUL’s nationality is Canadian.

54 The location was moved from Songshan District to Zhongzheng District in July 2019. It was named the Taipei Elevation of the Holy Cross Church (Taibeijuyangshengshizijiaotang 台北舉揚聖十字教堂).

55 “Taiwan jidu zheng jiaohui” 台灣基督正教會 (the Orthodox Church in Taiwan). Available online: <http://orthodoxchurch.tw/> (last access 2019, December 15).

56 V. Reverend Archimandrite Jonah MOURTOS. Fr. Jonah is of Greek nationality.

registered by the government in 2004. In response to the “reactivation” of the Taipei parish of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Metropolitan Nektarios issued an encyclical letter in June 2013 to denounce the deed of having “created a schismatic ‘Church’”.<sup>57</sup> The tension between the two parties rose over time.

The Taiwan Orthodox Christian Church (Moscow Patriarchate) was officially registered with the government in 2016. According to Fr. Kirill, there were already four regular locations in November 2018 for divine services of the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan: Taipei, Hsinchu (Xinzhu 新竹), Taichung, and Kaohsiung. Here is the number of attendants in Taipei: Regular attendants for the Sunday service are around 20; attendants in the two most important services, Christmas and Easter, are around 60. The total number of “claimed” believers is around 500–600. The number of attendants at other places is similar. Half of the attendants are from the former USSR region such as Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia; around 30 percent from Taiwanese locals and the rest from other countries, including the U.S., the Philippines, and Greece. The services are thus held in three languages: Mandarin, English, and Russian.<sup>58</sup> During one observation visit, the number of attendants to the New Year ceremony in Taipei on January 6 2019 were around 24–30, among which nine were Taiwanese.

## Conclusion: Building Sites of Memory for Being Orthodox

Orthodox Christianity arrived in Taiwan with Japanese followers amid political transition in the late 1890s. The early development of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan was hence inseparable from the Japanese Orthodox Church built by Nikolai (later known as St. Nikolai of Japan) from the Church of Russia in the Meiji period of Japan. Under Nikolai’s anticipation of integrating Taiwan into the pastoral area and assistance, Fr. Simeon arrived in Taiwan in 1901 while the official resident priest, Fr. Titus (KOSHIYAMA), was assigned a decade later in 1911. With Nikolai passed away in 1912 and the later strong impacts of the Russian Civil War on the Japanese Orthodox Church, the Church in Taiwan rather refrained from external influence. This may also be due to Taiwan Church’s ‘autonomous’ status particularly in terms of finance during most of the Japanese colonial period. The

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57 Ecumenical Patriarchate Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and South East Asia (OMHKSEA): “Excommunication of the Schismatics in Taiwan”, 2013, June 10. Available online: <http://www.omhksea.org/archives/4619> (last access 2019, December 15).

58 Interview on November 27, 2018.

influential catechist MATSUDAIRA had himself devoted time to introducing Orthodox Christianity to Taiwan from the late 1880s. He had the parish of Taipei officially established in 1916 without financial support from the Japanese or Russian Orthodox Church. After his leave in 1919, the resident priest Fr. Foma (MAKI) continued divine services until 1930 albeit less active. Without the resident priest, the Orthodox Church in Taiwan gradually lapsed into inactivity before the Second World War.

After the war, Taiwan was no longer a part of the Japanese territory and thus the connection to the Japanese Orthodox Church was also cut off. Moreover, as a result of being affected by the Cold War, Orthodox Christians, both in Japan and Taiwan, could only seek to follow Russian Orthodoxy through the U.S.-affiliated channels and mainly within the context of Russian émigrés. Noteworthy is that at this stage the Orthodox Christian community in Taiwan was vastly different from the community under Japanese rule. Postwar Russian émigrés and their families became the core of the community. However, this composition changed again after the 1960s as many of them were gone and left the Church to local Orthodox Christians. In the 1980s, the Church further subsided after the separation of the official relationship between the U.S. and the Republic of China. During the Cold War, the Orthodoxy in Taiwan had little connection to the Moscow Patriarchate.

In the 1990s, the change of the political-economic context of Taiwan played an influential role. With another group of Orthodox Christians emerging with new demand, two Orthodox churches were built in Taiwan subsequently. Under the tension between Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, retrieving the connection to authority for the canonical development history became important. On the official website of the Taiwan Orthodox Christian Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the “Brief History of [the] Orthodox Church in Taiwan” particularly focuses on the year of 1901 when Nikolai assigned Fr. Simeon to Taiwan. September of that year saw the start of the priest’s annual visits and believers’ regular meetings at a gathering place. Although the Taipei Orthodox Church was only officially registered by the government in 1916, its missionary work, as written on *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō*, began in 1911. The year 1901 is recognized as the beginning for the “revival” of the “Taipei Christ the Savior Orthodox Church” (*Taipei jidu jiushizhu zhengjiaotang* 台北基督救世主正教堂). In February 2013, the believers in Taiwan celebrated the 112th Anniversary of the Taipei Christ the Savior Orthodox Church and the Anniversary of Church’s “reactivation”. The icon of St. Nikolai was fixed on the wall near the entrance to present the historical link and the “origin”. The Church also regularly brings significant religious objects into Taiwan in order to “reconnect” the country, the

larger historical context, and the church network while trying to bond local members through rituals and vibrant activities.



Figure 13-2: Icon of St. Nikolai at the Russian Orthodox church in Taipei  
Photo taken by Min-Chin Kay CHIANG

In the long process of development in Taiwan, the Orthodox Church never had a fixed location and architecture as the physical church. Believers usually gathered in their peers' residence. Before the war, the place of MATSUDAIRA at the address Bajiazhuang (八甲庄) in the current Wanhua (萬華) District in Taipei often appeared on newspaper as the site for divine liturgies before 1919. Believers needed to use Anglican churches and asked Anglican priests for important rituals most of the time. During the postwar period, private houses, such as the house of the RAHR's at Jianguo North Road in Taipei, were used for services, so were Catholic churches. The previous gathering places in Taipei are mostly gone due to urban

rezoning or reconstruction. Even the site used by the Russian Orthodox Church has, since 2012, also become unsecure; the Church had to move to a new address in Taipei in July 2019. Fr. Kirill mentioned during the interview about the church’s intention to set up monuments at some previous gathering locations to commemorate the history and to connect the Russian Orthodox Church to Taiwan.

Particularly in the competition for “orthodoxy” after the 2000s, the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan has been trying to connect itself to the past through “naming”, recounts of historical events and acts of materialization. In the “reviving” process, the Orthodox Church in Taiwan seems to support the idea of building the “sites of memory”. These “sites of memory” come from the modern fear that “there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally”.<sup>59</sup> Whether in material or non-material form, Pierre NORA’s popular notion of “sites of memory” implicates the intention for a fixed, bounded place to anchor memories and memorialization. It further triggers the question of whose memory this would be. As the historical narration of the Orthodox Church has always been in relation to immigrant believers coming and leaving due, largely, to the political transitions in Taiwan, how local believers react to the version of narration, and whether the struggle of the denominations may or may not be compatible with their theological understanding will be the core of further investigation.

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59 Pierre NORA: “Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*.” In: *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, pp. 7–24. Quoted from p. 12.

