

Before 1989, migrant workers¹ were hardly seen in Taiwan, but by 1990, the situation became apparent that the labor intensive sectors of Taiwanese economy, mainly fishery, construction or manufacturing sectors, will not be able to sustain the performance without foreign working force. In 1992, the introduction of law was to legalize foreign workers. Since then, hundreds and thousands of foreign workers flooded in. The Statistics showed that in year 1992, there were 15,924 of migrant workers, by year 2000 the number increased to 300,000 and in 2014, 484,367, according as the national statistics of 2014. However, the introduction of foreign workers was only part of human inflow, as globalization gains its momentum, various sorts of foreigners began to come in. These are, e.g. foreign students, professionals, “foreign wives” and others. On the other hand, great number of Taiwanese migrate to foreign countries. It is indeed an era of human inter-flows among nation-states. The impact of the mass migration has its own impacts on Taiwanese society and deserves our attention and it is an area of study waiting to explore. From the national statistical figures collected by Taiwanese government, religious affiliation has not been a category for classifying foreign workers. However, judging from the nationalities of foreign workers, we will be able to capture a rough picture of the immigrants’ impact on Taiwan’s religious picture when most of foreign workers are Muslims and Catholics who are coming from Indonesia and Philippines respectively. In 2000, the Indonesian workers scored 23.8% of all Taiwan’s foreign workers and in year 2013, its number raises to 43.6%.

¹ “Immigrants” as a term refers to all three categories of persons in this study: 7.1% are either self-employed or professionals, 68.7% are manual/fishery workers and 23.7% are students, also only males are in the target population of this study. Since migrant workers, all of them are Indonesians, are the main body of the sample, we choose to start this paper with them.

Among them, 18.3% were industrial/fishery workers, Now their percentage has increased to 21.3%.² It is interesting to ask why and how do these Indonesians who are mostly Muslims changes into Taiwanese Muslims. In this context, this paper hopes to explore the religiosity of Muslim immigrants with the purpose to explain the changes/stability of their religiosity and the causes of their changes/stability.

Taiwanese/Chinese Muslim Community in Taiwan

Before WWII, Muslim community did not exist in Taiwan³. The majority of Chinese Muslims only immigrated to Taiwan after 1949 when Chinese Communists took over China mainland with “20,000 Muslims from around China (some estimate 70,000) retreated from China with the National Government” (Lin 2011). This historical event certainly marked a set of definite characters on this minority community, e.g. politically they “were mostly Kuomintang (KMT) members and were public government officials in public administration, especially in the military, diplomatic and legislative sectors” (Lin 2011). During 1960s to 1970s, when many nations severed their diplomatic relations with Taiwan, several Arabian nations still kept their formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan and were considered to be the most “loyal” friends to Taiwan. The Chinese Muslim community in Taiwan served as a substantive “bridge” to these nations with Taiwan. Thus it won high

² Statistics are obtained from Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training, R.O.C. and then re-calculated for use accordingly.

³ Around 17th century, there were some immigrant Muslims, however their descendents largely lost their Muslim identity and had become Taiwanese folk religionists.