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The Reformatory Visions of Mediumship in Contemporary Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how mediums in contemporary Taiwan engage themselves in the complicated project of modernity. In 1989--around the period when the government lifted martial law--a group of mediums founded their own association. It represents a conscious self-recognition of a time-honored religious professional who strives to come to terms with modern frame of professionalization. It is also a spiritual endeavor that tries to respond to contemporary Taiwanese political and moral struggle by appealing to the traditional Chinese cultural resources and the modern educational design. This thesis investigates the theorizations of the Association and explores how its reformative vision combines the ancient Chinese mediumship with modern nationalist discourse and modern Chinese intellectuals' concern for "saving China." The intertwining of religious mission and nationalist concern is further explored by the discussion of the Association's religious practices and activities, including the Moral Maintenance Movement it promoted, the mediums' meeting for the visiting of spirits, the ritual of national protection and spiritual appeasement, and their pilgrimage to the Mainland. This thesis draws on the ideas of de Certeau about the "writing back the outlawed voice" and argues that the Association writes itself into the official discourse kaleidoscopically, creating a new topography by rearranging available fragments. It neither reiterates the dominant discourse, nor invents a new version; its practice of historical writing constitutes an
exercise of reflexive thinking within the structure of normative codes and power relations. The Association's concern for the further education and cultivation of mediums is investigated through their educational activities. Through the care of one's body and spirit, the mediums make efforts to constitute themselves into ethical beings who are able to change a degraded society. The cooperation of medium and spirit is regarded as a co-constituted ethical project. It is explored by Foucault's scheme of the four parameters of the ethical fields. The other reformatory visions of mediumship are further investigated through a college student's accounts of mediumistic experiences and a medium writer's works. In sum, these reformatory visions of mediumship have added a significant reflective power both to conventional mediumship and to the various trends of modernity.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Mediumship in Taiwan is a time-honored and vital cultural force with religious, medical, as well as political significance. The origin of Taiwanese mediumship can be traced to the religious tradition of Fujian\(^1\) province of the Mainland, where most Taiwanese immigrated. Mediums play the roles of healers, exorcists, and fortune-tellers in Taiwanese society. They also act as performers in religious festivals. Many scholars, especially anthropologists, have investigated Taiwanese mediumship from various perspectives, including popular healing and moral transformation (Kleinman, 1978, 1980, 1997), spirit-writing (Feuchtwang, 1999; Jordan and Overmyer, 1986; Lang & Ragvald, 1998), state of trance (Lane, 1987), social hierarchy (Seaman, 1980), ritual (Sutton, 1989, 1990), rhetoric (Davis, 1997), gender (Xie, 1986; Wolf, 1990), childhood learning (Stafford, 1995), and social resistance (Kagan & Wasescha, 1982), etc. Since mediums constitute a window for the exploration of different dimensions of popular religion, the recent upsurge and transformation of popular religion in the contemporary Taiwanese society has made the further study of mediumship more relevant and important.

Recently scholarship has noticed a tendency toward the rise of popular religion (minjian zongjiao) and decline of foreign religions (including Christianity and Catholicism) in Taiwan since the mid-1960s (Li, 1988). The rise of popular religion is manifested by the increased numbers of mediums and related temples and private altars. Moreover, the spread of mediums has extended from rural regions to urban areas.

\(^1\) My transliterations of Chinese characters follow Pinyin usage except for well-known spellings such as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek.
Although mediums were claimed to be found only in rural areas in the past, Kleinman noticed the growth and flourishing of urban spirit mediums during the time he conducted his fieldwork in Taiwan in 1970s (Kleinman, 1980:211). According to Li's (1988) analysis, the rise of popular religion demonstrates two opposite and contending modern tendencies: the tendency of utilitarianism and the upsurge of moral revivalistic sects. The tendency of utilitarianism is manifested by three aspects: first, individualistic goals outstrip the traditional communal meaning of religion. For instance, the progress of private altars founded and conducted by individuals exceeds the development of public temples founded by a village or a community. The former are usually founded for the worshippers who seek personal material and psychological needs. As for the latter, there is also a tendency to pursue individualistic goals. In the early period mediums mainly acted as ritual performers in the temple festivals. They entered a state of trance for the public ritual and communal interest. Nevertheless, the public ends have gradually been replaced by religious service for personal healing and problem-solving. The healing sessions offered by mediums have become more and more popular; therefore they constitute the regular activity of the temple. Some of the temples even charge a registered fee from clients, just like the practice of Western physicians. Should the mediums and the temples have different opinions about the distribution of "income" earned by the mediums' services, the mediums might establish other private, unregistered altars (usually in their homes) by themselves to solve the conflict (Ibid., 246-47). Second, the utilitarian tendency is reflected in the increasing number of deities worshipped at these private altars. Different deities' various functions are able to meet a wide variety of clients' needs. Therefore the increase of deities reinforces the utilitarian function of mediums' private altars (Ibid., 247-49). Following Li's analysis, Weller
describes the mediums' private altars as a "profit-oriented petty capitalist enterprise" that "expands its selection of wares" in order to meet the various needs of clients (1994: 147). Third, the pursuit of individualistic ends is further demonstrated by the speculative and adventurous dimension of Taiwanese popular religion. Li takes the popularity of illegal dajiale (everyone is happy) lottery since the 1980s as an example. The popularity of lottery has led to a boom in ghost temples and private altars. Besides the traditional healing session, the mediums offer their religious service for the gamblers' fortune by the "revealing" of lottery numbers (Li, 1988: 249-51). Such a world of "individualistic, utilitarian and amoral competition" emphasizes profit over community or family morality (Weller, 1994: 148-53).

Beside the utilitarian tendency, Li points out another countervailing tendency--the rise of moral revivalistic sects. These sects attempt to combat a perceived moral degradation of contemporary society by the promotion of the revival of traditional Chinese morality. Most of these sects hold a specific mediumistic ritual of spiritual writing, also called fuji. In these spirit possession sessions the messages from a deity or spirit are written down with a stick held by one or two persons. These messages frequently reclaim traditional Confucian or Buddhist values. The messages produced through spirit writing are widely published and freely spread for others to read. Furthermore, some of these sects manage their organization with an enterprising spirit. They found chain temples and related enterprises, such as travel agents, vegetarian restaurants, publishing companies, and kindergartens. Although such a search for moral renewal seems to be a countervailing force to the utilitarian tendency of popular religion, Li proposes that it is indeed a kind of

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2 Although the wielders of the stick or the spirit-writers do not show dramatic manifestations of trance, they sometimes claim a kind of spirit-possession (Lang & Ragvald, 1998: 314).
formalism that emphasizes ritualistic appearance more than real content. Fundamentally these moral revival sects share the similar ethos of this-worldliness and value of pragmatism with the first utilitarian tendency (Li, 1988: 251-53).

Li’s claims are congruent with Qu’s research of popular religion in Taiwan. Qu proposes several significant aspects of continuities and discontinuities of popular religion in Taiwan in 1980s. First, although popular religion still constituted an important social force for the solidification of community, its influence was declined in urban areas. As for the rural areas, there was an inclination of secularization. Most of the temples were managed by secular people rather than religious specialists (1997: 142-43). Second, its emphasis of mystical efficacy and ignorance of ethical connotation were more obvious than before. And this is related to its third characters: the pursuit of utilitarian ends (Ibid., p.143-45). This utilitarian trend was rapidly deteriorated following the popularity of illegal lottery game and the rise of amoral cults (Weller, 1994: 141-164). Last, the other religious practices of popular religion with utilitarian pursuit were still continuous, or more popular than before, e.g., fengshui (geomancy), fortune-telling practices, and buyun (patch of fate). There was also a tendency to apply the traditional methods of fortune telling to money games, such as the lottery game or the investment of stocking market (Qu, 1997:160-66).

The modern tendency of utilitarianism or pragmatism Li and Qu depict in Taiwanese popular religion is not a new attribution. It indeed corresponds to the long-term characterization of popular religion, especially when it is paired against elite religion or the more institutionalized religion. While the latter is characterized by its pursuit of meaning and wisdom, the former is only a small supplication for narrow and practical concerns. With the rapid social change and rise of capitalism in Taiwan since 1965, the
utilitarian aspect of popular religion manifests itself more bluntly than ever. The
economic boom and popular religious practices reciprocally influence each other and
delineate a world of utilitarian and individualistic pursuit. According to Li's analysis,
mediums play significant roles in the process of transformation. The popular religion's
care with practical ends is best represented by the practice of mediums. As the
intermediaries between the human world and the spiritual realm, mediums can be the
instruments and spokesmen of both sides. They mediate deities' or spirits' desire for
worship and humans' need for protection and pursuit of material or spiritual gains. The
utilitarian characterization of popular religion has made mediums become more suspected
figures, which corresponds to their long-term low prestige in the contemporary society.

In 1989--one year after the lifting of the 37-year-old martial law in Taiwan--a
mediums' group that made efforts to rectify the utilitarian tendency of religion was
officially founded. The Medium's Association gathers mediums from various private
altars and temples for the fulfillment of particular religious missions granted from the
gods; it also proposes a reformative vision for the spiritual progress and cultivation of
mediums. The founding of the Mediums' Association therefore can be considered an
endeavor to rectify the moral degradation they perceive in contemporary society, both for
the mediums themselves and for their adherents.

Lingji vs. Jitong

Members of the medium's association generally identify themselves as lingji, a
different kind of medium from the most notable medium--jitong--in Taiwan. Jitong is
the most common Mandarin term for spirit medium. According to lingji's reformativ
project, jitong seems to be a lower religious figure that needs to be transformed. The pamphlet of the Medium's Association intentionally distinguishes lingji from jitong. In contrast with jitong, lingji do not engage in spectacular behavior like self-mortification—an inferior way of mediumship for lingji (Pas, 1996:145). Some of the mediums from the Medium's Association were in fact jitong before they transformed themselves and became lingji. According to Wu, one of the cadre members of the Medium's Association, jitong serve deities in their temples. When they are no longer possessed by deities, they become ordinary people with mundane desires. That is why deities intend to transform uncultivated jitong into better religious figures. Lingji are those mediums who are transformed by deities to lead a life of religious cultivation. The Association distinguishes three different kinds of medium. Jitong is meditated by his or her body. Shenji is meditated by his or her heart, including the "civil" mediums who compose the morality books (shanshu) and the "martial" mediums who perform exorcisms to cure people. Lingji is meditated by his or her ling (spirit) and is the representative of Daotong (orthodox line of the Dao). This classificatory system points to different levels of mediumship. The Medium's Association follows the conventional understanding of jitong and places jitong in the lower orders of this system. Compared with Lingji, jitong's bleeding and shocking performances only brings limited educational effect to all living creatures.

The differentiation between jitong and lingji implies a complex identification issue for the members of the Association. It also indicates that people in Taiwanese society have an ambivalent attitude toward mediumship. Mediums are community healers and protectors (Kagan & Wasescha, 1982). Parents consult mediums about their children's

\[3\] The specific characterization of lingji will be discussed in chapter two.
Lottery fanatics appeal to mediums for magic numbers. Criminal investigators consult mediums in order to solve difficult criminal cases. Politicians cannot ignore mediums' opinions about the geomancy of their offices. Nevertheless, they are the most likely candidates for the infamy accorded to swindlers or charlatans among all the religious professions in Taiwan. Mediumship represents the vestige of ancient superstition that must be overthrown in the modern society. Yet, mediums also gather people's everlasting wishes, vulnerability, and wonder in their confrontation of daily experience. It is beyond dispute that there are various kinds of mediumship. Is it possible to develop a kind of mediumship that is strong enough to respond to the heaven's will and also progressive enough to meet contemporary needs? Is it conceivable that mediums might answer people's requests without spoiling their desire? Is it reasonable for the mediums to aspire to be like the ancient saints who were gifted with such clear vision that they could correlate the affairs of the world on high and the world below? The founders of the Mediums' Association were inspired by these ambitious aspirations. As sublime as these ideals sound, we need to take a look at the soil where they sprouted in order to understand the ground they have tried to transcend. Jitong's dramatic performances attract the most attention and ambivalence. Their gaudy performances at festivals includes walking on coals, playing with red-hot iron balls, bathing in hot oil or burning joss sticks, climbing sword ladders, cutting their foreheads or tongues with a sword or hitting their backs with a spiked club. It is conceivable that of all kinds of mediumship, the ecstatic and tottering jitong represents the teratism lingji try to expel, the shadow they try to overcome, or the surplus finger they attempt to amputate. Nevertheless, rather than a surgery undertaken by others, lingji's reformatory project is better comprehended as a self-amputation since most of the lingji have experienced the
weird movements and dances similar to those of the jitong in the beginning of their career. In the matter of professional capability as well as spiritual cultivation, the transformation from jitong to lingji means improvement and advancement.

Before I introduce the questions of this study and the founding process of the Mediums' Association, I first discuss the socio-psychological backdrop that they strive to transcend. The socio-psychological backdrop is a complex composed of multiple gazes, including the gazes of others, the introspective looking into the self, and the glance back from self to other. In the following discussion I adopt one novelist's brilliant work as the ground of analysis in order to explore the complexities of the multiple gazes and to locate the foundation of my study.

*The Medium's Body and the Island's Scar*

The self-mortificating jitong in the temple's festivals constitutes one of the most striking scenes of Taiwanese popular religion. His or her bloody performance brings excitement, terror and revolt. Song Zelai, a Taiwanese novelist who is notable for his chronicles of indigenous rural lives, depicts well the mixture of emotions that people experience when they witness a jitong's performance in his short novel "Scars." The story adopts a first-person narrative to describe the experience of several urban people who visit a rural area. These urbanites from Northern Taiwan visit Dajia--a town that is famous for its Mazu cult--for its yearly pilgrimage. They are touched by the grand spectacle of crowded worshippers. The narrator depicts how the urbanites were enchanted by the religious atmosphere with a passionate and exaggerated tone:

Under the beautiful sunshine of the south island, the roof and vault of the temple and the porcelain sculptures above the worshipper's heads shone a golden light. It was
like a city of paradise in a dreamland. It made us feel that we had returned to the
embrace of the god and our souls had arrived at the state of eternity. Oh, (listening
to) the voices of shouting, chegu zhen, niuli zhen (two kinds performances including
dance and drama in the temple festival), and the music of nanguan and beiguan (the
musical performance in the temple festival). They were all miracles of the god
(p.224, my trans.).

The narrator then describes a conversation of these urbanites as they sat around a table in
a night market and drank wine. One of them—Lee—raised his cup and said:

"What a miracle! Let's cheer for this spectacle! As you know, we see bustling
crowds all the day in the North. They rove in the stations, theaters and department
stores. But who are they? They are faceless people. They have no belief, no piety,
no righteousness. They are dregs!"

Chen stood up. He shook his drunken body and said: "Oh, my! When I saw the
crowd of pilgrims in Mecca in the film, I thought that was the exaggeration of the
camera. Now I understand the greatness of religious power. It's like the power of
the ocean, you cannot resist it (p.224).

Lee and Chen's zealous talk is dampened by a woman's comments:

A woman raised her hand and suppressed other people's talks. She said: "All right.
You think this kind of pilgrimage is great. Everyone is crazy for it. However, as for
my opinion, its flaw is just like all the aboriginal religions. Its worship is enthusiastic,
but its ritual is disgusting. Do you see those jitong who slash their backs with thorn
balls, pierce their cheeks with bamboo sticks and walk on fire? Those wounds are
harsh to the eye. I cannot eat anything whenever I think of those terrible wounds."

When she finished, no one talked loudly anymore. They became sober and they
started to criticize these phenomena reflectively. They were totally fascinated by
those savage wounds. They discussed those savage human customs one by one.

Lee's spirited emotion had been replaced by a sad face. He said: "Such a savage
custom lacks higher religious connotation. It still remains at the stage of superstition.
Especially those strips of scars. Every strip of scars is a chain that cannot be cast off.
I even saw one jitong use an iron tool to pierce through his tongue."

"Oh!" Everyone was very surprised at hearing this. They continued talking about every kind of startling scar they could imagine. Finally the women among them covered their ears (and refused to hear any more of it).

However, another man who sat beside the table never spoke a word. He was raised in the country. He buried his face in the dark corner and smoked a strong Golden Horse cigarette. Smoke floated around him.

"Why don't we ask Shu his opinion about the scar? He was raised in the country. He must know things that are beyond our imagination." One man said.

Everyone turned his head to Shu's direction

"Well..." Shu tried to offer an excuse to decline. But he changed his mind when he saw everyone's face. He said: "I don't have any special information to offer. But I am interested in your discussions of scar. In fact, this world is made by scars. Since I take it for granted, I don't think it is savage or horrible.... I have a story here. I witnessed it when I was a child. Do you want to hear about it?"

When Shu finished, he smoked another cigarette and started his story (pp.224-26).

Then Shu told a story about his father's comrades in the war. His father was sent to the Malay Archipelago during the World War II when Taiwan was governed by Japan. Shu witnessed the returned soldiers' striking scars that were caused by war in a meeting hosted by his father. The novelist describes the experiences of these soldiers through the conversation between them that Shu heard at their reunion. They talked about the hopeless wartime days they had spent on the island of Borneo. How they withdrew into the mountain and struggled for survival by eating plants, worms, and lizards. They even talked about how they witnessed their Japanese lieutenant eat the body of one Japanese soldier (because of hunger). Then they talked about how they were wounded in the battles. These returned soldiers showed their scars to each other. The narrator describes the horrifying wounds he witnessed in striking detail. At the end of his story, Shu says: "this is the story I know about scars. I don't know how these people are now
after twenty years. However, I always think that their scars have been indescribably imprinted on me. How disgusting and intimate, how miserable and how warm they are to me!"

In the beginning of the novel we encounter the degraded image of medium. However, the novelist does not choose a straightforward style to show the eccentricity and bloody self-mortification of jitong. Rather, a jitong's "savagery" is seen through a group of drinking urbanites. In other words, through the mediation of the urbanites' eyes, the jitong's violence becomes visible. In a sense, we can say that these urbanites become the mediums of the jitong, or they become jitong who reveal the violent scene. They are engrossed in the pious atmosphere just as jitong are seized by gods. Their words enthusiastically vacillate between eulogy and deprecation like the jitong's tottering bodies. Jitong spray alcohol on their wounds to alleviate pain. These urbanites also drown their sense of detachment in drink. Instead of depicting the eccentricity of jitong, the novelist portrays the grotesquerie of their urban observers with a tone of irony. These observers are lured by the crowded worshippers' devotion but repelled by the mediums' savage performance. For the urban observers, the rural worshippers represent the fetishized object to compensate for their nostalgia for a lost piety. The jitong and their wounds in contrast epitomize abject objects that need to be excluded from the civilians' eyes. The meaning of the abject scar was transformed by Shu's narrative of wound and scar. Shu smokes but does not drink. Like the jitong entering the state of ecstasy by sniffing incense, Shu's smoke brings his audiences to another world beneath the surface of the normal world. The jitong's self-infliction of wounds is not an extraordinary scene for Shu because life is itself composed of wounds and scars. While the novelist juxtaposes the contemptible wound of jitong with the veteran's scar, he seems to suggest a link
between jitong's body and Taiwan's historical suffering. And we can say that the urbanites' prejudice is critiqued by the novelist's literary transformation of the jitong's practice.

If we extend the meaning of mediumship beyond its religious connotation and define mediumship as the revealing agent through which we see the world, we read two mediumistic perspectives, represented by the urbanites and Shu, on the jitong's ecstatic mediumship. They represent two kinds of reflexive attitudes about ecstatic mediumship. First, the mediumship revealed by the perspective of the urbanites through the self-mortifications of the jitong is extraordinary, eccentric, and disgusting. The repulsion produced from such reflexivity is indeed a reaction; it is first a captivation with rural piety, then a rebuff of its violent manifestation. In the end of this story, the urbanites leave the pilgrimage site for the mountain--another site of the fun of danger and mystery--that indigenous people inhabit. The novelist seems to suggest the incorrigible emptiness and sense of alienation of these urban novelty hunters. In contrast, Shu reveals a world and history that were marked by scars. For Shu, the jitong's scar, like the scars of world and history, are not extraordinary. Instead scars constitute the fundamental key to Shu's world or the modern history of Taiwan. By linking the scars of the jitong with the people's suffering, the novelist complicates the issue of mediumship that I attempt to explore in this thesis.

Inquiries of Study and Research Materials

The novelist's vision that is represented by Shu's reflexivity is not identical with but close to the worshipper's unspoken understanding. In the worshippers' eyes, rather than the object of transformation, the jitong's performance embodies the descending and
protection of the god. It is transformative power itself. The god's presence and power leads the jitong to overcome his or her human fear of hurting. The more furiously he flagellates himself, the more faith he induces in the observers in the abundant power of the deity. Historian Lian Heng, in *A General History of Taiwan*, describes the jitong as "naked and disheveled, jumping up and down with a convulsive body, as if apoplectic; cutting his tongue and stabbing his back, drenched with blood; relying on god, therefore wounded but not hurt." The sentence 'relying on god' (shensuo pingyi) can also be translated as 'being relied on by god'. In other words, Lian Heng's way of expression hints at the symbiotic relationship between the jitong and his or her possessing god. The god's presence and power is manifested in the jitong's invulnerability. However, the jitong's invulnerability is not displayed in the integral and perfect state of his body. It is rather demonstrated by its surviving violence. The surviving body still retains the traces of wounds. These traces bear witness to the experience of survival. The novelist's literary transformation and the worshipper's understanding represent two alternative visions of the jitong. The former connects the jitong's visible wound to the invisible scars of the island's inhabitants who are colonized by different regimes in the island's history. The latter points to an eager call for the protection and redemption of the island's inhabitants. Both visions touch the most intimate experiences of people's daily suffering and the island's rugged fate. Linking these visions to my inquiry, I attempt to explore the modern reformatory vision of mediumship proposed by lingji. How do they mediate the everlasting issues that mediums face, that is, the suffering of people and their society? How do they respond to the socio-political conditions of the time? How do they define their religious mission? How do they transform conventionally ecstatic religious practitioners into a modern professional association? As a liaison between the
spiritual beings of tradition and myth and the humans of the world with their daily experiences, mediums offer a distinctive cultural, political and religious perspective on the occurrences of the world. The foundation of the Mediums' Association and its reformative vision provide a sharper and more systematic frame for the interaction of religion and politics, or the intersection of traditional and modern practices of spirituality.

If the suspicious perspective represented by the urbanites in the novel I have discussed is like the gaze of others, such a gaze--and the utilitarian critique of popular religion--prompts the lingji to further explore the essence of mediumship and its role in contemporary society. This is an introspective looking into oneself. Moreover, such introspective vision is realized through a glance back from self to other. The Mediums' Association pays special attention to the turbulence of contemporary society, including its political instability and moral degradation. As for the political dimension, through the concern for collective suffering, lingji strive to "patch" the historical wound that was produced by past political violence. The work of patching is not a new practice for the medium. The medium's role of community healer has been explored by scholars who conduct their research on the scale of the village. For instance, Lin's (2000) study in a village of southwestern Taiwan explores how mediums mediate the suffering of those spirits who did not live a "good life" while they were humans. Potter's study of Cantonese shamanism also focuses on how mediums mediate family fissures or communal fractures through their spiritual intervention:

The spirit medium is the high priestess of this black half of the villagers' supernatural world. She rules over the dark world inhabited by the malevolent ghosts of the unsuccessful, the discontented, the abnormal, and the exploited. Her major function in village society is to deter these discontented and dangerous beings from wreaking their vengeance on the living villagers (1974: 231).
The lingji's work of historical patching continues the medium's traditional role of community healer. Nevertheless, it also expands the traditional vision from a family or village scale to the broader collective misery that originates from historical and political turbulence. Besides the traditional roles of healers or ritual performers, which are more concerned with individual welfare or local business, the Association has broader cultural projects and national and global concerns in mind. Its members consider the contemporary mission of the mediums to be to help human civilization to enter the stage of self-mastery. In chapter two I discuss how the Association defines its modern religious mission through the exploration of the theorizations of its key founder Lai Zongxian. Lai's reformative vision combines the ancient Chinese mediumship with modern nationalist discourse and modern Chinese intellectuals' concern of "saving China."

The intertwining of religious mission and nationalist concern will be further explored in chapter three by the discussion of the Association's religious practices and activities, including the Moral Maintenance Movement it promoted, the mediums' huihe yanyi, the ritual of national protection and spiritual appeasement, and their pilgrimage to the Mainland. Through identifying themselves as the "peace-makers in a turbulent world," they propose the correlation between the appeasement of the dead and the well-being of living people. For instance, they deal with the political tense between Taiwan and Mainland China by listening to the voices of suffered dead. In this chapter I consider the founding of the Mediums' Association as a unique practice of historical writing and memory making. Such a practice intersects with other normative discourse-makers and code-producers, such as the Nationalists. I argue that the Mediums' Association kaleidoscopically writes itself into the official discourse, creating a new topography by
rearranging available fragments. Such a practice of historical writing on the one hand offers a potentially transformative model for current social conditions; on the other hand, it constitutes a site of power negotiation and self-transformation for the mediums.

As for the moral degradation of society they perceive, the Association specially emphasizes the further education and cultivation of the lingji. Through the care of one's body and ling (spirit), the mediums make efforts to constitute themselves into ethical beings who are able to change a degraded society with their moralized spiritual power. In this chapter I investigate their activities of "the modulation of ling (spirit) and exercise of the body." These religious practices are both for the redemption of the order of the world and for self-cultivation. The mediums offer a special social-psychological model of resentment and a design of compensation for the appeasement of the departed soul. In the design of compensation, morality and self-cultivation are the mediating links between unfulfilled desire and its possible transformation. In regarding their spiritual practices as an ethical project and "technologies of self" informed by cultural and religious concerns, I will explore the issue of how the medium teachers and their medium students conduct their self-politics in their pursuit of ethical and religious transformation.

The reformative vision proposed by the Mediums' Association is not the lone new voice of mediumship in contemporary Taiwan. In chapter five I discuss two other cases of modern mediumship. The first case is that of a college student who had mediumistic capacity and had engaged in mediumistic practice at a private altar. She proposed an anti-missionary perspective of mediumship. The second case is also that of a female medium with a college degree who practiced at a café and became famous because of her involvement with criminal investigations. She wrote her first book about her mediumistic experience in 2001. This is the first time that a medium has written down
her own experience and been published by a reputable press in Taiwan. By 2002 she had published three books and had won a wide readership. Both cases represent modern reflective discourses of mediumship outside the temples. Some of their accounts of ideal mediumship echo the moral vision of the Mediums’ Association. Some of them constitute heterodox discourses. Through the comparison of these reformative visions I try to show some of the important scenes in the modern landscape of mediumship, and how they overlap with other trends of modern discourses and practices.

The research materials I collected about the Mediums’ Association include three sources: the first one is interview data I collected from May to July in 1999 and from July 2000 to February 2002. I interviewed the Association’s President, ex-Presidents, cadre members, secretary and representatives in the Northern and Southern part of Taiwan about the aim, the establishment process, the educational programs and the ritual activities of the Association. The second source is the written materials, including the published materials of the Association and other unpublished written materials, such as the spiritual texts produced by the mediums. The third source is the data I collected from participant observation. In 2000 I participated in the final preparatory educational program offered by the Association. It was a twelve-day session offered in four three-day courses spread over four months from September to December. During that period I interviewed the sponsor, the teachers, and the medium students who participated in the program. Chapter five is based upon my interviews with the college student and the books published by the medium writer.

*The Founding of the Mediums’ Association*

The idea of founding the Mediums’ Association did not arise suddenly. Before the
official foundation of their association the mediums participated together in diverse religious activities. One of these was the Fahui, a Daoist renewal ritual. As in the past and still today, every medium belongs to a certain temple and serves different deities. Usually, when a particular temple hosts a Fahui, mediums from other temples will receive messages (from deities) and help to promote this worthy undertaking. Some mediums told me that in this early period, when the mediums needed to get together, there was no need to send the notice of the meeting by post. The host temple only needed to burn the letter of notice which tells of the time, place, and goal of its specific ritual in its incense burner; the other mediums would be inspired by this message. This does not mean that the other mediums had a very clear idea of where to participate in this meeting. When they received the message, they would rather be inspired by deities to follow certain directions. Relying on the indication of deities they could finally find the host temple. This early legend describes how the spirit of “following the indication of the deities” constitutes an important frame of reference for the mediums’ actions. The founding of their association represents their recognition of a greater mission that can only be fulfilled through their unification.

According to the report of their journal, Zhonghua dadao (which they themselves translate as Natural Law), the founding of the Mediums’ Association originated from a divine inspiration received during a mediums’ meeting in 1988. At this moonlight meeting, the mediums received a message from Heaven that commanded them to unite together in order to fulfill the following missions: to revive the common practice of Dao.4

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4 Dao literally means a “pathway” or “road.” While examines the meaning of Dao in antiquity, Nivison points out that its literary meaning was extended to mean “the correct or natural way something is done” by the time of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-256 BCE). Since then the meaning of Dao has shifted from “a way” to “a way to do” something, to “the way to do” things
to improve the moral tone of a disintegrating society, to enhance the Chinese tradition of Dao, and to accomplish the mission of shouyuan (collecting the origin) and Datong (Great Peace). Shouyuan and Datong can be considered as two epitomes of their mission, the two concepts that most thoroughly inform their utopian vision in the realm of spirituality and politics. Shouyuan was a popular eschatological doctrine within the secret societies of the Ming (1368-1644 A.D.) and Qing (1644-1911 A.D.) dynasties. It can be translated as “collecting the origin”, “collecting the circle”, or “collecting the linking.” Shouyuan indicates an eschatological task that concerns for universal salvation. Basically it is related to popular Chinese myths concerning an Eternal Mother who creates human beings. Human beings get lost on earth because of their wrongdoings. The Eternal Mother would one day bring her lost children on the earth back to the paradise where they originated. The salvific task is initiated by the Eternal Mother’s promulgation of the Dao. Those who turn themselves to the Dao will enjoy eternal happiness and liberate themselves from the suffering of samsara (the cycle of birth and death). According to the teaching of sectarian religion, the Eternal Mother will promulgate the Dao three times in order to call back her lost children to her realm. The contemporary period offers the final opportunity for the Eternal Mother to redeem her children. Shouyuan thus means the action of the Eternal Mother and the cooperation of

of highest importance, such as conducting oneself morally or governing the world. Ultimately Dao comes to mean “the way the whole universe operates.” It thus acquires the religious connotation which denotes the “ultimate reality behind or ‘in’ ourselves and everything we experience” (Nivison, 1987, pp.284-285). “The pursuit of the Dao” is a general term often adopted by Chinese religious pursuants to indicate the process of grasping the ultimate reality and the cultivation of the original self which is undifferentiated from this first principle of reality. In the context of sectarian religion, “the promulgation of Dao” denotes the spread of a particular doctrine which is related to its salvational project. Since the Mediums’ Association considers itself a religious specialist group that “transcends” the partisanship of different sects, when it mentions their mission of the “promulgation of Dao,” it indicates a more general religious connotation rather than a specific doctrine.
human beings to reencompass her children within their original purity. Later, shouyuan was adopted by not a few popular sects, all of which claimed it as their own eschatological mission.

Although the Medium's Association uses the term, it does not consider itself a sect. Rather, the Mediums' Association is a group whose members are religious professionals. Thus, they do not have a clear dogmatic identification with certain deities or a particular redemptive program. The mediums' understanding of the shouyuan emphasizes their mediating role among the three realms: heaven, earth and humankind. The realm of heaven is ruled by deities. Some mediums serve the realm of heaven by promulgating the redemptive messages that they receive from deities. The realm of earth is inhabited by the ghosts—those departed souls who are not worshipped like ancestors or do not accumulate enough merits to become deities. Some mediums serve the realm of earth by comforting these departed souls and persuading them to cultivate themselves in order to liberate themselves from their resentment. Resentment is an unstable state related to feelings of unfulfillment, disturbance, and dislocation; it is also dangerous because its negative power could have a harmful impact on the welfare of the human being. For example, the resentful departed soul may cause illness or warfare. Therefore, some mediums serve the realm of the human by offering such services as healing in order to help the living cope with their daily difficulties in this world. According to one cadre of the Medium's Association, being a cadre in the association to serve the members of the association is another manifestation of serving the human realm since mediums belong to the human realm. The Association serves its members by arranging meetings and educational courses in order to promote moral consciousness and professional progress.

Datong literally means "great peace." According to Schrecker (1991), Datong is one
of the most enduring representation of the good society in Chinese tradition. It primarily refers to a good society that relates like a great family, provides human equality, and integrates the best in human experience. It later developed a connotation of an international order of universal peace and harmony. The very thinkers and movements identified with Datong often tie it to the promotion of nationalism. Sun Yat-sen is one of the most important promoters among the Datong thinkers. Since the Medium's Association has a specific nationalist ideal in mind, it considers the fulfillment of this ideal political vision one of its religious missions. In the contemporary political context Datong is a utopian vision which emphasizes the harmonious co-existence of different ethnic groups within the nation and the harmony between different nations in the world. Of all human differences, why is ethnic difference politically emphasized at this particular moment? Although the medium's concern for peacefulness and harmony cannot be reduced to a merely political dimension and its religious connotation be ignored, it is deeply colored by symbols and terms adopted from the political discourses of Chinese nationalism—an important frame of reference that needs further exploration. I will explore this issue in the context of the nationalization process in chapter three.

During the first meeting of the 11 founders in 1988, after the communication between deities and the mediums, the mediums decided to name their association “Plum Flower United with One Heart Society.” The pronunciation of "plum (mei)" and "medium (mei) " is the same in Mandarin. Plum flower is the national flower of the Republic of China. It symbolizes the spirit of perseverance. Choosing the plum blossom as the title of their association thus symbolizes the mediums' determination to unify and to bear the heavenly mission with a common spirit. According to Lai Zongxian, there were about three hundred members in the preparatory stage of the Mediums' Association. In their first
meeting of the preparatory committee, they elected 31 committee members. Among them Gao Tianwen was elected as the head of the preparatory committee, and Lai Zongxian was elected as the head of the executive committee. When they registered as an officially recognized society in 1989, the name of their association was changed into "Republic of China Association of Mediums (zhonghua minguo lingji xiehui)" through the suggestion of a representative from the Ministry of the Interior. In the first meeting of the members' convention, a representative from the Ministry of the Interior was also present. According to Paper, the purpose of the Association was articulated in this meeting:

The religious functionaries of the people urgently need assistance and guidance. Hence, for several years, such people have gathered to explore and study the spirit realm, leading to an enhancement of their understanding. Therefore, they have been able to raise the character of the religious practitioners, particularly to increase their empathy, sincerity and willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of society. This will allow the improvement of the society, the reversal of the weakening morality, and the continuation of the traditional orthodox line of the Dao.

The society is for all religious practitioners, without concern for sect. The ensuing dialogue among the practitioners of the Association will have many benefits: the spirit of the dead will be pacified and the nation protected. People's spirits and bodies will be united and contending groups will be harmonized. The tensions causing unhappiness in dead spirits leading to problems among the living will be dissoloved. Guidance will be received from mountain spirits and the energy of Earth.

In sum, the purpose of the Association is to mediate with the spirit realm to assist the country and the people, so that nature will cooperate with the crops, the country and people will be in peace, and society will achieve Datong (great peace). A voluntary association of lingji will raise everyone's bodies and spirits, and the spirit realm will work cooperatively with the people. The soul of the organization is based on the understanding that every entity in the spirit realm is equal and false differentiations
into higher or lower spirits will not be made, that no differentiation will be made among the members nor among the different religious sects, and that members will not work from personal desires. The Association will abide by the natural method of the Dao and not work for self-aggrandizement nor engage with any political party or other interest groups. In this way, the path of the Dao can be established among the descendants of the Chinese people, in order that their lineage can continue and enhance the direction of the world. (Paper, 1996: 107-108, with slight changes)

In this meeting a representative from the Ministry of the Interior was also invited to deliver a speech:

"Congratulations. I represent the Ministry of the Interior to congratulate you, and to express our respect to you. The Republic of China Association of Mediums filed an application from the Ministry of the Interior to register the Association on the nineteenth of March and was approved (within two months). How does the Association form its power in modern society? (In the past) we have already some religious associations, including a Chinese Buddhist Association and a Chinese Taoist Association. But hitherto none for those who work with the spirit realm. Therefore the founding of the Mediums' Association is really an event that corresponds to the opportunity of the time vouchsafed by Heaven, geographical advantages and popularity with the people (tianshi dili renhe). The meaning of the opportunity of the time vouchsafed by Heaven (tianshi) means the help from the spirit realm. The meaning of the geographical advantages can be seen from the spread of members in the whole province. As for the popularity with the people (renhe), we are surprised to see the beginning of an association with two thousand members. Such power has been recognized by the Ministry of the Interior. The founding of such an association of people totally depends upon the contribution of its members. We sincerely respect your solidarity.

"In the application for registration you mentioned three goals of your association. The first one is to raise the quality of the mediums. The second one is to study and explore knowledge about the spirit realm. The third one is to rectify social customs. Since the contemporary society is so utilitarian-oriented, we are most touched by your commitment to the improvement of social customs. I hope your achievement will be the model for other associations."
The speech of the representative from the Ministry of Interior demonstrated the changing attitude of the government toward Taiwanese popular religion. Such change of attitude is partly due to the trend of indigenization in Taiwan since the lifting of martial law, partly due to the self-imposed mission of moral rectification proposed by the mediums, which is always welcome to the government.

_Membership and the Organization of the Association_

There are two kinds of membership in the Association, the individual member and the temple member. According to a pamphlet printed after the election of the current president in 1999, at present there are more than four thousand individual members and 480 temple members in the Association. According to the former secretary of the Association, the number of members has had a stable rate of growth every year since its foundation. Compared to the 392 temple members listed in 1999 before the election, it seems that the number of members is still in the process of growing. Almost all of the members are mediums; although there are also some members do not have mediumistic capacity but actively support the work of the Association. The temple members are of various kinds. Most of them, however, are temples that have developed around a particularly effective medium. Although some of the temples are predominantly Buddhist or Daoist in their focus, they are not linked to orthodox Buddhism or Taoism. The names of these temples-- "palace (gong or dian)," "office (yuan)," "hall (tang)," or "altar (tan)"--indeed have more Daoist connotation than Buddhist connotation. Paper points out that no Buddhist monks or nuns nor ordained Taoist priests seem to be associated with the Buddhist- or Daoist-oriented temples, but they have a relationship
with either the Buddhist or the Daoist associations (1996:109). The Association's finances are based on membership fees. At present the annual member fee is 3,500 NTD (about 100 USD) for the temple member and 500 NTD (about 14 USD) for the individual member. Other sources of income include sponsor grants from the government for specific activities, donations, and interest on savings (ibid., p.113).

Since its foundation, the Mediums' Association has elected four presidents to be in charge of different terms of office. In 1989 Huang Akuan--a senior and well-respected medium--was elected as the first president. In 1992, Lai Zongxian--the key founder and the main theorizer of the association--was elected as the second president. In 1995, Gao Tianwen--a key founder and senior medium--was elected as the third president. The current president, Cai Shinong--a businessman--was elected in 1999. The institutional structure of the Association is complex. The administration includes a provincial administration. At present there are eighteen district administrations and seven committees, including the Committee for the Ritual of National Protection and Spiritual Appeasement, the Committee for the Study of Lingji--which takes charge of the arrangement of lingji's meeting for the resolving of the resentment of departed souls--the Committee for the Study of the Doctrine--which edits the study materials for the lingji's education--the Committee of Lingji's Education--which designs and arranges lingji's educational program--the Committee of Public Relations, the Committee of the Association's Newsletter, and the Committee for the Study of Ritual for the establishment of the Association's rituals.

Until 1992, the Association published a journal called the Zhonghua dadao (Great Way of Chinese Culture). It also had an English title called Natural Law. The contents of the journal are quite diverse, including the reports on the Association's activities, the
academic papers from the seminar they sponsored, the discussion of mediumship, and other discussions about various religions. The discontinuation of the journal was due to a shift toward producing textbooks for their educational program.
Chapter Two: Lai's Theorization of Chinese Mediumship

Encountering of Mediums and Scholars

In his article about recent developments of religion in Taiwan, "The Modernization of Mediums," Paper (1996) describes a meeting between scholars and the mediums from the Association. What is atypical about this event is that this "dialogue between scholars and mediums" is arranged by the mediums themselves since they are interested in promoting study of mediumship and interacting with scholars. As one of the religious sponsors of an academic conference about Chinese religion held in 1989, the Medium's Association invited the scholars to the temple where the Association was organized after the conference. During the meeting there were approximately 40 mediums participating. The majority of them were women:

After formal introductions, a microphone was passed in order of seating among the mediums. As each received the microphone, the mediums went into an imperceptible to perceptible (rigid postures, muscular tremors, etc.) light trance. Through the mediums, various spirits spoke to us in a variety of language: Taiwanese, northern guanhua (similar to the speech of northern opera), Japanese, and unintelligible (to the unaware) spirit languages. Many otherwise shy mediums spoke with impressive theatrical diction or sang with magnificent voices. A few spirits wrote long messages to us on paper or a modern "blackboard." All of the scholars I talked with afterwards were not unpleasantly surprised that the "dialogue" was not to be with the mediums but with the spirits who possessed them. (Paper, 1996: 165)

Instead of dialoguing with the mediums, the scholars encountered the spirits through the various performances of the mediums. Speaking or singing through the microphone indicates how the mediums characterized their performance as a proclamation to the public rather than an involuntary accident. Moreover, arranging their public
performance in front of the scholars to some extent undermines the conventional relationship of the researcher and the object of research. The mediums are still the objects of being seen and being studied, but they are no longer the other who can only offer voices and do not know what they are saying. At least the mediums showed a certain degree of enthusiasm in exposing themselves in the system of academic discourse. Before they invited the scholars to their temple, Paper mentioned that several members of this Association, who had limited formal education, attended every session of the conference, constantly took notes, and made themselves useful at appropriate opportunities. Making themselves present at the conference and inviting the participation of the scholars to be part of their pursuit of self-understanding is a gesture of gazing at oneself through another objective and thus powerful language. This does not mean that the gap of seeing and being seen, or the cleavage between the one who speaks (in order to be interpreted) and the one who writes (in order to interpret) can be bridged easily. When the scholar was invited to partake with the “dialogue,” he was obliged to offer his voice, too, like the mediums:

Apparently, to test the spirits, one of the scholars asked about undisclosed will and related documents of Sun Yat-sen (I assume he had been doing research on the subject). The spirits of various deceased supporters of Sun Yat-sen came through the mediums and began to heatedly argue with each other concerning the topic. Finally, one of the mediums at the head table was taken over by the famous magistrate, Baozheng, who calmed the proceedings and brought order to the scene. In consequence, the scholar never received a direct answer to his question. (Ibid., p. 165)

Baozheng is a famous judge of the Song Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.). Remembered by a classical Chinese popular romance “Seven Chivalrous Figures and Five Righteous Men,” which has been performed many times in various forms of popular operas and on TV,
Baozheng symbolizes the spirit of impartiality and justice that transcends imperial power in the popular consciousness. However, even his spirit was unable to offer the last word to the scholar's question. Instead of acquiring a definite answer, the scholar's question had the irreconcilable voices of the mediums as its enduring response. The scholar's voice can be regarded as a performance of academic investigation through the posing of the true-false question. Nonetheless, the mediums' multiple voices should not be considered a failure to 'pass the test.' Rather, they validate and disqualify the scholar's question concurrently. The scholar who asked the question seems to possess a secret about a disclosed will. His access to the related documents grants him the position of secret-owner. The voice that utters a will might vanish soon. But the writing of the voice strikes the ephemeral and wins the prize of eternity. Eternity is acquired by the ossification of a specific past moment. Owning the key—the written document—to the past propels the scholar to participate with the dialogue. When the question is posed, the key to the past becomes a key to the battlefield. The scholar's possession of the secret (or the written document's possession of the scholar?) is dis-possessed by the multiple voices of the mediums. Perhaps the scholar should not ask the mediums the question about someone's will. For the mediums, when it comes to someone's will, especially one departed, it is not only a question to be solved; it is a complicated task that demands care, including understanding, negotiation and ritual services.

Interestingly, the founding of the Medium's Association originated from another encounter between a medium and a potential scholar—Lai Zongxian. The future scholar's encounter with a medium changes his life. He also has a great impact on the medium's self-understanding and reformation. When Lai met the medium, he was not invited by her to do 'research' about mediumship. As a matter of fact, he was facing a
life-threatening illness. And this is probably why their encounter inspired the later transformation of both parties rather than a farce of anarchy.

**Lai's Conversion**

Lai was born in 1943. After he graduated from college he became a very successful businessman. In his early forties, while he was at the apex of his career, a fatal disease fell upon him. While he was fighting for his life, he encountered a medium. The medium told him that if he wanted to keep his life, he had to abandon his career and to cultivate his spiritual and religious life with full-time effort. Lai felt resistant to the medium's words in the very beginning. But his business gradually declined. Finally he transferred the possession of his companies to others and left only one company to his wife. He gradually recovered and became a "pursuer of The Way," in his words.

The transformation from a businessman into a pursuer of The Way portrays Lai's experience of conversion. This is also a process of transformation from resentment to submission. His encountering of the medium plays a critical role in this process. Although Lai is not a medium, like most mediums, he was called to respond to a special vocation through personal suffering. After he was rescued from the verge of death, he started to visit temples and altars around the whole of Taiwan. It was during that period that he became acquainted with various phenomena of folk religion, including mediumship. It was a period of learning, investigation and reflection about the spiritual life. He began to understand the immense change of his life with a new vision: he gradually realized that his illness was an indication of his family karma. He needed to cultivate his spiritual and religious life in order to solve the karmic burden. Lai said this process was like genetic engineering. One needs to know one's genealogical defect;
thus one can fix it by religious cultivation.

Meanwhile he associated with many leading senior mediums and participated in many religious activities with them. He also knew a lot of mediums with less education. He understood more and more the special suffering and vocation of these mediums. He acknowledged their power and value. But he also realized that they were stigmatized because of others' prejudice and their own limited understanding of themselves. With the ideal of promoting the spiritual cultivation of mediums, Lai and some senior mediums planned to found an association and a school for mediums. When the Medium's Association was established, Lai was one of the most important core founding members. He was elected as the second president in 1991. After fulfilling his term, he followed the direction of 'the formless' (wuxing)--the unseen world or the spirit realm--that asked him to explore the origins of the Daoist thoughts. Therefore he went to Chengdu University in Sichuan Province--the leading university for Daoist studies in Mainland China--to pursue a doctoral degree in the field of Religious Studies in 1995. He got his degree in 1998 and committed himself to Daoist studies ever after. Besides the Medium's Association, Lai also established the Foundation of the Great Chinese Way and its affiliated publications The Chinese Orthodoxy of The Way Press (zhonghua daotong). Their journal Zhonghua dadao (translated as Natural Law by Lai et al.) was issued from 1986 to 1992. After Lai got his doctoral degree, this publications mainly published books in the realm of religious studies, especially Daoist studies.

Lai is the most important theorizing figure and educator in the Medium's Association. He wrote articles about Taiwanese mediumship based upon his observations and reflections. He planned every educational program of the Medium's School since the foundation of this school. The members call him Dr. Lai when they talk to him or when
they mention him. Being both an intellectual and a religious practitioner, Lai sympathizes with the situations of mediums but also criticizes their uncivilized manifestations. In many occasions when Lai addressed himself to the mediums, he described them as uncut jewels that need religious cultivation and education to chisel and polish their inner treasure. In other words, Lai's understanding and theorization of mediumship are not purely academic. He has a broader religious reformational project in mind. And this project is deeply related to his concern for Chinese civilization. In the following I introduce Lai's basic ideas of mediumship based upon his works and my interviews.

**Lai's Theorization of Mediumship**

Lai's discussions of lingji mainly appear in two articles. "My Understanding of the Phenomena of Lingji" was printed in *Natural Law* in 1989. The article is based upon Lai's observations during the two years that he associated with the mediums. Rather than being designed for an academic readership, Lai's writing is mixed with objective descriptions and enthusiastic encouragement to the mediums. Several years later, Lai published another article with a stronger academic tone after he got his doctoral degree. "The Rise of Mediumistic (wu) Culture in Taiwan" is one chapter of Lai's doctoral thesis *The Origin and Development of Daoism in Taiwan* (Taiwan Dao Jiao Yuan Liu). The thesis was published by The Chinese Orthodoxy of The Way Press in 1999. One earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Conference of Oriental Religions in 1998 with a different title, "The Primary Exploration of the Shamanistic Culture in Taiwan." The last several paragraphs of this version, about his theory of "the separation of heaven and earth," are omitted in the published version. Lai also wrote editorials for *Natural*
Law irregularly. And these articles will also be included in my discussion.

**Characteristics of Lingji**

Lingji are one kind of medium that are still popular in Taiwan. As the mediators between humans and spirits, they send the messages for deities from the realm of spirits when deities have persuasive or exhortatory messages, whether to all living creatures or to specific adherents. The deities also speak through lingji to answer their adherents' questions. Lingji's temples or altars are usually built by the adherents' donation when their wishes are answered by the deities through the mediums.

Lingji conveys the deities' messages by singing or writing. The songs sung by lingji are usually in the familiar tones of ancient melodies, of Taiwanese opera or popular Taiwanese songs with impromptu lyrics composed by the lingji (or the possessing deities). The improvised works written by lingji usually appear as poems of five-character lines or seven-character lines, with or without prescribed tonal pattern. The reliability of songs or works is dependent on lingji's quality. Lai proposes the following criteria of judgment to determine lingji's excellence: higher degree of moral cultivation, innocent state of mind, lesser desire and selfless consciousness. All these criteria point to the degree of transparency while lingji transports the deities' message. Therefore the process of becoming an excellent lingji is also a process of moral cultivation.

According to Lai's observation, most of the lingji have limited education and self-control, and are therefore easily tempted by fame and wealth, confusing their own intention with the deities' intention and gaining selfish interest from it. This is the reason why lingji are disreputable in Taiwan. The purpose of founding the Medium's School is the improvement of lingji's moral education and religious cultivation.
The Stage of Mediumship and its Correspondent Cosmology

Lai divides lingji into three categories according to the level of deities or spirits that possess his or her body. The level of deities or spirits is hierarchically differentiated according to the different realms they inhabit. Before introducing Lai’s categorization of lingji, we need to explore the cosmology he proposes. Lai follows the cosmology of Yiguan Dao\(^1\)--a popular religious sect once prohibited but now with widespread influence on popular religions in Taiwan-- to divide the cosmos into three realms: the realm of huangji (imperial ultimate), the realm of taiji (great ultimate), the realm of wuji (non-ultimate). This doctrine of three realms was proposed by Wang Jueyi (1821-1884), the main theorizer of Yiguan Dao. Wang's thought was influenced in turn by the neo-Confucianism (of Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties) which concerned about the questions of principle (li), vital force (qi), nature (xing), and form (xing). Basing himself upon two main neo-Confucian philosophers' works--Zhou Dunyi's (1017-1073) An Explanation of the Diagram of the great ultimate\(^2\) and Shao Kangjie's (1011-1077)

\(^1\) Yiguan Dao, which can be roughly translated as the Religion of One Unity, is the third most popular religion in Taiwan. They believe in a God beyond all other gods, called Mingming Shangdi. It is a syncretic faith draws upon Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religious terminology. According to Yiguan Dao adherents, this religion attempts to identify common principles underlying Daoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism. Yiguan Dao faithful believe that by uncovering a single set of universal truths, the "increasing chaos" of modern times can be defeated and the world can live peacefully in harmony. (Republic of China Year Book 2001)

\(^2\) The fundamental thoughts of Zhou Dunyi that influence the cosmology of popular religion can be found in the following texts extracted from An Explanation of the Diagram of the great ultimate:
Supreme Principles Governing the World—and synthesizing the ideas that were widely distributed in popular sects, Wang proposed his cosmological notions regarding the division of three realms, the calamity of the third eschatological period (sanqi mojie), and the salvation of three categories (sancao pudu). These notions have become very popular not only in Yiguan Dao, but also in other folk sects and popular religion. Li proposes that these notions are shared by the secret sectarian religions since Ming dynasty (Li, 1975:5-6). They constitute the fundamental cosmology for the Chinese folk religions.

Yiguan Dao is derived from the following passage in the Confucian Analects: "The Dao I follow is the one that unifies all." Wang Jueyi adopts the notion of "unification" to elaborate his understanding of the ultimate order of the cosmos. According to Wang

"The Ultimate of Non-being and also (or translated as "and then") the great ultimate (taiji)! The great ultimate through movement generates yang. When its activity reaches its limit, it becomes tranquil. Through tranquility the great ultimate generates yin. When tranquility reaches its limit, activity begins again. So moment and tranquility alternate and become the root of each other, giving rise to the distinction of yin and yang, and the two modes are thus established.

By the transformation of yang and its union with yin, the Five Agents of Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth arise. When these five material forces (qi) are distributed in harmonious order, the four seasons run their course.

The Five Agents constitute one system of yin and yang, and yin and yang constitute one great ultimate. The great ultimate is fundamentally the non-ultimate. The Five Agents arise, each with its specific nature.

When the reality of the Ultimate of Non-being and the essence of yin, yang, and Five Agents come into mysterious union, integration ensues. Qian (Heaven) constitutes the male element, and kun (Earth) constitutes the female element. The interaction of these two material forces engenders and transforms the myriad things. The myriad things produce and reproduce, resulting in an unending transformation." (translated by Chan, p.463)
Jueyi, the realm of li is the realm of wuji (non-ultimate). It is the noumenon and origin of the cosmos. It rules the existence and extinction of all things on earth. The realm of li should be our ultimate concern and the place or state to which we strive to return. Lai explains that the realm of wuji is the realm of the Absolute. It has different designations in different religions. For example, it is called God in Christianity and it is called Dao in Daoism. It is the ultimate principle and the origin of all things in the world.

Returning to the realm of wuji means the unification of limited life with its eternal origin. Therefore one's life is transformed into an absolute existence. The realm of wuji gives birth to the realm of taiji (great ultimate), also called the realm of qi. It is a realm operated by the relative forces like yin and yang, movement and tranquility, and life and death. The realm of taiji is inhabited by deities and spirits that are eligible for five hundred years' worship. The realm of taiji gives birth to the realm of huangji, also called the realm of xiang (image). It is the visibly phenomenal world that humans, animals and all sensual beings inhabit. All things in the realm of huangji are temporary and limited. These three realms are hierarchically related. The realm of huangji is operated and ruled by the realm of taiji. And the realm of taiji's principle of operation is ruled by the realm of wuji. According to Wang Jueyi, the creation and extinction of all things or the fall and redemption of all sensual beings is determined by the transformation of the three realms (Song, 1999:78).

By incorporating these cosmological notions with his understanding of mediumship, Lai rewrites the former and introduces new elements into the latter. According to the division of the three realms, spirits and mediums are divided into three correspondent categories. The spirits or deities before the creation of human beings inhabit in the
realm of wuji. They are ultimate spirits or deities that govern the whole cosmos. The spirits, deities and saints who inhabit in the realm of taiji are people who contribute greatly to the world's progression and become deities after they die. The spirits who have not achieved the status of deities stay in the realm of huangji to cultivate themselves in order to accumulate enough merits. And they are those spirits with whom mediums learn to deal in the beginning phase of their career.

According to the various categories of spirits, Lai distinguishes among three kinds of mediums: "lingji" is the medium who lends his or her body to the spirits of the realm of huangji or xiang. When the medium is possessed by the spirits from this realm, it is called "the unification of spirit and body." "Shenji" is the medium who lends his or her body to the spirits of the realm of taiji or qi. When medium is possessed by the deities from this realm, it is called "the unification of deity and human." "Lingji" (different Chinese character from the first kind of lingji) is the medium who lends his or her body to the spirits of the realm of wuji or li. When a medium is possessed by the deities from this realm, it is called "the unification of heaven and human." This categorization of mediums in fact implies a hierarchical understanding of mediums' quality and developmental level. In the beginning phase mediums are usually possessed by the spirits of their ancestors or the spirits who had karmic links with the mediums in previous lives. In other words, they are possessed by the spirits from the realm of huangji rather than the deities from the higher realms of taiji or wuji. After the mediums pass various ordeals by the incorporation and co-cultivation of the possessing spirits, they acquire the chance to move into the higher level, that is, becoming the representative of the deity from the realm of taiji or wuji to execute their higher religious mission.

The pairing of medium and spirit is not accidental. Lai proposes religious accounts to
explain the principle of pairing. As to the subject to be possessed, the spirits mainly pick the mediums who are consanguinely related with them. Or they prefer the mediums who have the greatest karmic relationship with them. Furthermore, if the medium took a vow in his or her previous life to be reincarnated again for the fulfillment of a specific religious mission, he or she is more easily to be chosen by spirits as the object of possession. The medium's vow for strenuous religious cultivation constitutes another condition of possession. Lai's religious accounts regard mediumship as a predestinated state to be fulfilled with the human body. This account offers an important justification for the new mediums to come to terms with their new identity. Not every medium welcomes his or her new identity in the very beginning. In fact, most of them feel confused and resistant since they encounter many unusual sensuous experiences. According to Lai's religious explanation, these extraordinary experiences are due to the connection of related spirits when the time is appropriate. The unusual perceptions are multiple. Sometimes they see things like watching film when they close their eyes. Or they hear someone talking to them while no one is beside them. Sometimes they see words shown before their eyes or they write down something they don't understand automatically. Or they involuntarily recite poems or sing songs that they were unable to compose before. Most of the mediums suffer greatly before they understand the meaning of these mysterious experiences. Some of them are diagnosed as psychotic patients. Some of them visit temples to seek a solution from gods. The senior mediums who are familiar with these spiritual matters are most helpful for these sufferers. However, not every one of these sufferers is called to be a professional medium. Sometimes these unusual experiences are only symptoms of temporary possession that can be cured by exorcism. If one is called to be a medium, one will be
identified by a senior medium by these unusual manifestations and be given appropriate
counsel to learn to be a medium. According to Lai's description, the first task for the
novice medium is to accept his or her new mission. One needs to understand that this
mission has originated from one's vow in previous lives to lend one's body to the service
of certain religious missions.

The first task for the novice medium is to face his or her own karma or retribution for
previous lives (from the Zhou Dynasty to the Republic period). Those unusual
perceptual experiences are due to the karmic obstructions which are accumulated from
the evil-doings of previous lives. Only through accumulation of merits in this life can
they be compensated. The possessing spirits are like creditors who demand the payment
of debt by bring punitive experiences to their debtors. Such tribulation that serve to
atone for one's wrongdoings have another significance, that is, to strengthen one's body
and will for a greater mission. The common tribulations include illness, poverty,
humiliation and failure. Sometimes the gods will test the medium with the temptation
of wealth or fame to see if he or she has released himself or herself from desire. One of
the most essential requirements of mediumship is the reduction of one's desire in order to
be able to give oneself to the service of religious affairs. Once the novice medium
realizes the irresistibility of heaven's command, he or she will be able to submit himself
or herself to the ordained mission. The medium can also help people by his or her
realization of the law of karmic retribution.

While the mediums cultivate virtues and accumulate merits to compensate for their
karmic obstructions, their ancestors in the previous three generations can also ask them to
compensate their debts for them. This is the so-called 'sharing of merits.' Lai observes
that in the very beginning lingji are possessed by the spirits of their ancestors who are
religiously cultivated but have not yet achieved the status of deity. After the mediums unite with these spirits and cultivate themselves together by solving their karma and accumulating enough merit, they become the servants of deities. If the descendant mediums are willing to share their merits with their ancestors, their ancestors will protect them and help them to accumulate merits. If the mediums' ancestors have already become deities, they can also be promoted to a higher status by the accumulation of their descendants' merits. Although the sharing of merits primarily applies to the lineal relationship, it is not limited to it. The spirits who have a special karmic relationship with the mediums can also borrow the mediums' bodies to do works of merit. They follow the same principle of sharing with the ancestors' spirits. As long as the mediums lend their bodies to the spirits, the latter will protect the mediums and help them to realize their missions. And hopefully both the mediums and the spirits can liberate themselves from the suffering of reincarnation. Consequently the mediums may build relationships with various spirits in their cultivational and professional process. The spirits from the realm of huangji are very diverse, including the spirits of ancestors, abortive children, royal families of various dynasties, the brave departed and martyrs who wish to cultivate themselves in order to realize the Dao. Lai proposes that learning how to grasp every relationship with a certain spirit and how to transform oneself to a higher level constitute the most important lesson for the medium. Some mediums rely upon certain spirits too much and feel reluctant to renounce the wealth and fame brought by the spirits, and thus miss the chance to build relationships with spirits from higher levels. Finally they can only feel regret when they face the failure of their missions.
The Circulation of the Cosmos and the Mission of Shouyuan (Collecting the Origin)

Another cosmological idea that related to the mission of mediumship is the circulation of the Cosmos. The theorizer of Yiguan Dao Wang Jueyi appealed to Shao Kangjie's cosmological theory of circulation and regarded 129,600 years as one cycle of the cosmos. All things on earth are created and extinguished recurrently cycle by cycle. Of the three realms only the realm of li is beyond such circulation. At the end of each cycle the world declines and corrupts. And the Master of the realm of li will send many messengers to the world in order to save humans from the crisis of extinction. Since the creation of the world, there have already been three cycles. The contemporary third cycle has almost reached its bottom of ruin; therefore it is called the calamity of the third eschatological period. Only when one receives the teachings of the saints sent by the realm of li and cultivates oneself can one liberate oneself from the suffering of reincarnation and return to one's origin—the realm of li. Moreover, Wang proposes that the objects of the salvation project are not limited to the humans in the realm of xiang. These objects include deities and spirits that belong to the realm of chi and ghosts that wander below the earth. This is the so-called "a salvation of three categories" that includes spirits, humans, and ghosts. Such a salvational project has another popular designation that I mention in the introductory chapter—shouyuan.

The Spiritual Lineage

Lai points out that the contemporary mission for the realm of huangji is to help the numerous spirits to return to their spiritual lineages. In a narrow sense the spiritual lineages only point to the religious line or sect to which one belongs. In a more broad sense the spiritual lineages can be extended to various factors that influence one's life by
the accumulated works of previous lives. Lai follows the Daoist categorization to divide three kinds of congenital relationships that influence our contemporary life. The first is blood ties that inherited from parents. This includes the karmic accumulation of ancestors. In other words, one bears the effect of one’s ancestors’ karma when one is born to the world. The second kind of congenital relationship is a vocational inclination constituted by the inborn temperament or ability one accumulates from previous lives. And one’s choice of career could be impacted upon by this effect. The third kind of congenital relationship is the system of Dao that originated from the center of the world. The center of the world is designated by different names in different religions. In Yiguan Dao, it is called the Eternal Mother. In Christianity, it is called God. In Daoism, it is called Dao, or Natural Law. It is the origin of the cosmos. Thus humans can never leave it and survive. Leaving the Dao is betrayal of one’s nature. Therefore one must understand the constitutional principle of the cosmos and cultivate oneself in order to return to the origin of one’s nature.

These congenital relationships not only influence one’s contemporary life, they also bring forth the obligations that one is required to fulfill. As to the blood ties, one inherits ancestors’ blessings that result from ancestors’ accumulation of merits but also bears the responsibility to compensate for one’s ancestor’s accumulated mistakes. Furthermore, one needs to accumulate merits for the blessing of one’s descendants. As to the vocational system, one needs to follow one’s temperament and inclination to actualize one’s gifts in order to serve other people. Moreover, the meaning of vocation in Lai’s characterization is not limited to its secular sense. Various vocations are guided by different deities. Each one of us has different patron deity to be our mentor for the actualization of our gifts. For example, if one belongs to the spiritual line of the
Guanyin pusa (boddhisattva, or the Goddess Mercy), one needs to follow the deity's spirit of mercifulness to undertake the philanthropic deeds. Taking Lai as an example, he worships a Daoist deity Chunyang Zushi as his patron deity. Hence he committed himself to the Daoist education for the modernization of Daoism. As to the system of Dao, returning to one's line of Dao constitutes the primary significance of the spiritual lineage. This idea is mainly elaborated in the so-called Sect of The Eternal Mother and it has an important impact on other related sects like Yiguan Dao and popular religion in Taiwan. In Yiguan Dao, the line of Dao is also called the Golden Line. It is a salvational line that originated from the Master of the Realm of wuji—the Eternal Mother—in order to save humans from their state of loss and fall by the spreading of the doctrine of Returning to the Dao.

Lai's depiction of mediumship is laden with reformative concern. The categorization of mediumship according to the hierarchical realms of spirits is to provide a theoretical scheme for mediums' religious cultivation. It does not necessarily completely explain the miscellaneous phenomena of mediumship. Nevertheless it provides a new frame of reference to map the old territory. Such a theoretical move offers a new perspective on the conventionally degraded understanding of mediumship. And the 'new' perspective is actually a restoration of the ancient image of mediumship. In the following we will discuss how Lai appeals to the archaic materials to reconstruct the representation of contemporary mediumship.

*Context and Origin of Mediumistic Culture*

Lai locates the phenomena of lingji in the context of Chinese and Taiwanese mediumistic culture. He juxtaposes the origin of Chinese mediumistic culture with the
origin of Chinese civilization and emphasizes its dominant influence on the latter. He characterizes mediumship as ancient religious culture without leader, organization, or distinct belief system. The ancient mediumship was organized by blood bond and patriarchal lineage. (Lai, 1999: 84) Although the modern scientific view considers mediumship superstitious and mystical, mediums are still very popular in contemporary Taiwan. They offer therapeutic healing and comfort to ease and cure people's suffering by exorcism or communication with deities. Based on his long-term observations and experiences, Lai regards mediumistic culture both as a gate to ancient thoughts and a window to investigate modern people's psychological problems and needs. Seeing mediumistic culture as a restoration of ancient ways, Lai proposes that exploring the thoughts of ancient Chinese mediums is a way to go back to the point of origin in order to create the Dao for the modern era. As the 'womb of philosophy', the thoughts of ancient Chinese mediums are worthy of being investigated further (184-185).

In order to elaborate the religiosity of mediumistic culture, Lai conducts a genealogical exploration of its origin and dissemination from the perspective of Chinese civilization. He identifies the Chinese mediums' first ancestor as Fuxi, one of the earliest legendary emperors who was reputed to discover the Eight Diagrams (bagua) and to invent writing. Lai then enumerates various kinds of mediumistic manifestations including historical, geographical and ethnic varieties and assembles them as various expressions of Chinese mediumship. In citing these examples, Lai does not intend to conduct a comprehensive survey since this is not the main theme of his essay. If his readers do not question why these materials and examples can be assembled under the canopy of Chinese mediumship, they can easily sense the blooming landscape he wants to show by following his sporadic examples.
Is Taiwanese mediumship inherited from Mainland China or is it an aspect of Taiwanese culture in itself? Lai discusses the flourishing mediumistic culture in Fujian Province of Mainland China. He proposes that Taiwan mediumistic culture is derived from and is influenced by the South Fujian culture. But the former is not transmitted directly from the latter. Lai's proposal is based upon his field observation and investigation: mediumship in Taiwan is not preserved by the transmission relationship between master and disciple. Mediums in Taiwan are possessed by the deities and accomplish their mission directly.

_The Resurgence of Mediumistic Culture: Psychological Account_

Why has mediumistic culture resurfaced and even flooded in modern Taiwan society? Lai proposes a psychological explanation and a religious account to answer this question. Nevertheless, rather than constituting a totality, both accounts are out of accord with each other. The religious theory offers a raison d'être for the mediums. Yet the psychological explanation sounds more like a critique of medium and society.

Lai's psychological explanation proposes that the spreading of mediumistic culture is a reflection of Taiwanese society's utilitarianism and competitiveness. When people feel dissatisfied and frustrated, they escape from the real world and turn to the religious world. Mediums are able to offer religious explanations--e.g., the haunting of ghost or deities, the evildoing already accomplished by ancestors and being accomplished by descendants -- for people's distress. They also solve people's problems by their mediumistic interventions--e.g. the invocation of the deities' help or the exorcising of ghosts-- or psychological consultation--e.g. repeating for one's improper acts and accumulating merits. For the mediums, their mediumistic capacities also increase their sense of
achievement and contribute to their mental health. Yet for Lai, the spreading of mediumistic culture represents the symptoms of the society in which it thrives. Although the cure offered by mediums alleviates the difficulty people face, it nevertheless brings peculiar negative effects, such as the overemphasis of mysterious religious culture, or other effects caused by the mediums' selfish manipulation of religious power. Therefore he proposes the transformative project for the mediums in order to rectify the negative effects they bring about.

The Resurgence of Mediumistic Culture: Religious Account

Fengshen Yanyi (Investiture of the Spirits)

Lai's religious account of the spreading of mediumistic culture is embedded in his interest in Chinese civilization. He adopts two ancient resources—-one fictional, the other historical—to develop his theory. First he appeals to Fengshen yanyi—a popular epic written in the latter half of the sixteenth century during Ming dynasty(1368～1644)—to describe the special mission of lingji. Fengshen literally means "investiture of the spirits," and Yanyi literally means "epic." It describes the process of change of dynasty from the Shang emperor (Zhou King) to the succeeding Zhou emperor (Wu King). The dynastic change was determined by the transfer of the Mandate of Heaven. And this transferring process involved both humans and deities. The epic's one hundred chapters include many episodes about the battles between the old regime and the new one.

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3 The idea of the Mandate of Heaven is the idea that Heaven chooses who is worthy to rule according to virtue. Even though it is usually unwise to upset the order of things, if a ruler is lacking in virtue it is acceptable for a more virtuous dynasty to rise and take over. The Mandate of Heaven could have been the Zhou Dynasty's way of justifying their taking power from the previous Shang Dynasty.
These battles saw the participation of officials who were still loyal to the utterly decadent Shang monarch and other officials who admitted the trend of the heavenly ordained fate that supported Zhou rule. The celestial beings and deities that belonged to different factions also participated into these battles. At the climax of *Fengshen yanyi* all the names of those spirits of martyrs and deities that were sacrificed in the battles appeared in the official register of Jiang Ziya—the Zhou prime minister who helped Zhou emperor to be enthroned—no matter what monarchs they served or to what faction they belonged. Jiang Ziya's divine proclamation declared the coming of a new era and the responsibility of these investitive gods. This proclamation expresses the intersection of the human realm and the god's realm. And such an intersection constitutes the core theme of the folk religious tradition to which the mediums belong.

In Jiang Ziya's divine proclamation, first stated are the reasons for the divine mission of the gods' investiture. Humans and gods were separated at the creation of the world and such separation led to the prevalence of evil. The investiture of gods contributed to a more intimate relationship between humans and gods. These investitive gods were like celestial officials that supervised human affairs. They would follow the Master of the unseen world to encourage good and to punish evil. And they would be rewarded by humans' worship. People would build temples for these investitive gods and respect them.

The investitive gods were those spirits who suffered and were killed in the battles. They fought for their own positions and beliefs. Some of the beliefs were based upon justice and loyalty; however, some originated from hatred, ignorance and jealousy. No matter what kinds of positions they fought for, they became wandering spirits when they died. Jiang Ziya had been empowered by the Master of the unseen world to save these
wandering spirits from the eternal wheel of transmigration by appointing them as gods that protect the welfare of the world. Here Jiang Ziya was characterized as a medium-like figure to mediate between the realms of heaven and earth.

The enthronement of the Zhou emperor and the investiture of the new gods marked the coming of a new era. The stability of the new era was based upon the erasure of conflict and the appeasement of resentment. Although the ignorant loyalty of those officials who served the Shang emperor was finally superseded by the benevolent cosmic will, the latter had to recognize both the resentment and fortitude of the former. The benevolent cosmic will needed to appropriate these brave spirits into the new system by granting them the new status of orthodox gods. In the official pantheon the old enemies who served different emperors cooperated with each other to serve the new regime. In sum, *Fengshen yanyi* is an epic of change. It depicts the decline of one dynasty and the birth of a new one. This transformation is replete with conflicts, battles, violence, sacrifices and resentment. The Mandate of Heaven drives the breakdown of the old regime; it also governs the operation of the new one. Behind the vicissitudinary change of dynasties is the eternal Mandate of Heaven. Following this vein, understanding the Mandate of Heaven and cooperating with it is therefore the most significant issue. It is at this point that Lai introduces his theorization of mediumship into this frame. In other words, mediums are destined to play a significant role in this special project of the Mandate of Heaven. How does Lai specify the medium's special call to their contemporary task? Here we come to another ancient resource to which he appeals—the theory of the separation of heaven and earth (juedi tiantong).

*The Separation of Heaven and Earth*
The myth of the separation of heaven and earth can be found in two ancient texts of Zhou date: the *Shangshu* (The Book of History) and the *Guoyu* (Records of the States).

The myth is first mentioned in *the Book of Zhou* of *Shangshu*:

In reference to the charge to the prince of Lu:--When the king had enjoyed the throne till he was the age of a hundred years, he gave great consideration to the appointment of punishments, in order to restrain the people of all quarters.

The King said, "According to the teachings of ancient times, Chiyou [the chief of Jiuli who was defeated by Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor)] was the first to produce disorder, which spread among the common people, till all became robbers and murderers, owl-like in their conduct, traitors and villains, snatching and filching, dissemblers and oppressors.

"Among the people of Miao [a tribe or confraternity, notorious as troublemakers during the reigns of Yao and Shun in xxiv-xxiii cent. B.C.] , they did not use the power of good, but the restraint of punishments. They made the five punishments engines of oppression, calling them the laws. They slaughtered the innocent, and were the first also to go to excess in cutting off the nose, cutting off the ears, castration, and branding. All who became liable to those punishments were dealt with without distinction, no difference being made in favor of those who could offer some excuse. The mass of the people were gradually affected by this state of things, and became dark and disorderly. Their hearts were no more set on good faith, but they violated their oaths and covenants. The multitudes who suffered from the

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4 *Shangshu* is also called *Shujing*, literally means *The Book of Documents* or *The Book of History*. It is a collection of documents which claim to go back to the Shang Dynasty (1751-1112 B.C. or 1765-1112 B.C.)--the first historical dynasty of China. The *Shangshu* is the earliest work of history and political science in Chinese history. It depicts history as a process of change and introduces the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, which constitutes an important idea then on in Chinese history. A religious system is also set down in the *Shangshu*, placing Heaven above, the Earth below, and humans as the link in between.

5 *Guoyu* (Records of the States or Dialogues of the States) is an early collection of historical dialogues, discourses and commentaries of eight feudal states between the Western Zhou and the Warring States periods (967-453 B.C.).
oppressive terrors, and were in danger of being murdered, declared their innocence to Shangdi, the Lord on High [name of the most prominent ancient divinity]. Shangdi surveyed the people, and there was no fragrance of virtue arising from them, but the rank odor of their cruel punishments.

"The August Lord [another name for Shangdi] felt compassion for the innocent multitudes who were in danger of being murdered, and made the oppressors feel the terrors of his majesty. He restrained and finally extinguished the people of Miao, so that they should not continue to future generations. Then he commissioned Chong and Li to make an end of the communications between earth and heaven, and the descents of spirits ceased." (Book XXVII. The Prince of Lu upon Punishments, following Legge's translation with some changes)

This myth is later accounted by Guan Yefu in the "Records of the States," a fourth-century B.C. text. The latter account is actually an early exegesis of the foregoing myth.

In the Records of the Chu recorded a conversation between King Zhao (514–488 B.C.) of Chu and one of his ministers called Guan Yefu. King Zhao was puzzled by the Shangshu's statement about the separating of Heaven and Earth, so he asked his minister:

"What is meant by what is said in one of the Books of Chou about Chong and Le, that they really brought it about that there was no intercourse between heaven and earth? If they had not done so, would people have been able to ascend to heaven?"

"That was not the meaning of the language at all," replied Guan Yefu, "Anciently, humans (min) and spirits (shen) did not intermingle. At that time there were certain persons who were so perspicacious, single-minded, and reverential that their understanding enabled them to make meaningful collation of what lies and above and below, and their insight to illumine what is distant and profound. Therefore the spirits would descend into them. The possessors of such powers were, if men, called xi (male medium), and if women, wu (female medium). It is they who supervised the positions of the spirits at the ceremonies, sacrificed to them, and otherwise handled religious matters. As a consequence, the spheres of the divine and the profane were kept distinct. The spirits sent down blessings on the people, and accepted from them their offerings. There were no natural calamities.
"In the degenerate time of Shaobao [traditionally put at the twenty-sixth century BC.], however, the Jiuli [a troublesome tribe like Miao] threw virtue into disorder. Men and spirits became intermingled, with each household indiscriminately performing for itself the religious observances which had hitherto been conducted by the mediums. As a consequence, men lost their reverence for the spirits, the spirits violated the rules of men, and natural calamities arose. Hence the successor of Shao hao, Zhuangxu, charged Chong, Governor of the South, to handle the affairs of heaven in order to determine the proper place of the spirits, and Li, Governor of Fire, to handle the affairs of Earth, in order to determine the proper place of men. And such is what is meant by cutting the communication between Heaven and Earth. Still later, however, the Miao, like the Jiuli before them, stirred up new disorders, obliging the ruler Yao to order the descendants of Chong and Li to resume the tasks of their forebears. Since that time members of the same two families have continued to maintain the proper distinctions between Heaven and Earth until Xia Dynasty(2183-1752 B.C.) and Shang Dynasty(1751-1112 B.C.). Under King Xuan of Zhou (827-782) Cheng Boqiu was the descendant of Chong and Li and he lost his inherited official position. In order to honor his ancestors and rebuild their prestige, he claimed that Chong ascended to heaven and Li descended to earth. This statement was never defeated because of the turbulence of the later world. Otherwise, heaven and earth have never changed since they were formed. How is it possible that humans from earth can ascend to heaven at will?" (following Bodde's and Legge's translation with some changes)

The relationship between humans and spirits passed through three stages of change in Guan Yefu's account. In ancient times, humans and spirits did not intermingle. Their communications were dependent upon certain noble and wise people called wu or xi. These extraordinary people were mediums into whom the spirits could descend. This beginning stage of order was maintained by the specialization of the mediums' profession. Therefore spirits received their proper sacrifice from humans and humans received their abundant blessings from spirits. The second stage was characterized by the breakdown of order when the humans and spirits intermingled and the profession of medium was
replaced by the common people's arbitrary overstepping. Zhuanxu's intervention was to recover the ancient order through the rearrangement of the officials who served heaven and earth. This constitutes the third stage of recovery. The later development basically follows this cycle of order, disorder, and recovery of order.

Guan Yefu offered a metaphorical explanation of what might be understood as the literal separation of Heaven from Earth (Bodde, 1961:391). In other words, his explanation of the separation of heaven and earth in the Book of History rewrites the myth and subtly alters its meaning. In the Book of History, the separation of heaven and earth is the outcome of God's punishment. In other words, the intermixture between humans and spirits was the original state. Only when the world became corrupted, heaven and earth had to be separated. However, such a separation becomes the restoration of ancient order in Guan Yefu's explanation. Guan Yefu's restoration of ancient order has in fact reversed the order and meaning of this myth (Yang, 1993:34). The separation of heaven and earth could be understood as the birth of a new order, or it could imply the loss of the original communication of humans and spirits. Here we have two different understandings that represent different normative accounts of the relationship between heaven and earth. Guan Yefu rejected the communication between human and spirits and regarded the separation of human and spirit as the well-regulated state. The myth of the Book of History depicts the deprivation of the original condition and insinuates a nostalgic longing for the initial state before the Chaos. Guan Yefu's re-accounting anticipates the later Chinese literati's humanistic attitude—e.g., Confucianism—that "keeps the ghosts and spirits at a distance."

Guan Yefu's explanation implies a rationalized understanding of the relationship between heaven and earth. Intermingling of humans and spirits or non-differentiation
between heaven and earth is an abnormal state that arises from the decline of control. Furthermore, such rationalization does not destroy the communication between heaven and earth. Instead it intervenes through governance and control. Zhang Guangzhi proposes that the rationalization in the myth of separation of heaven and earth designates the alliance of mediumship and political power. The division of heaven and earth is an important idea in ancient Chinese civilization. The world is divided into different levels, basically including heaven and earth. Different levels are not absolutely separated. The communication between different levels constitutes the primary task of ancient Chinese rituals and religions. Zhang thus characterizes the ancient Chinese civilization as shamanistic civilization (1988:4). Furthermore, Zhang proposes that the means of communication is directly related to political power. The monopolization of the means of communication between heaven and earth is the primary foundation of the possession of political power (11). Therefore, the differentiation of heaven and earth, the professionalization of the mediating figure and the combination of religious and political power constitute the primary order at the beginning of Chinese civilization. The myth of the separation of heaven and earth does not directly discuss the idea of the Mandate of Heaven. But it does point to how a good king established the new order by the control of the means of communication between heaven and earth. Weaving the epic of Fengshen yanyi and the myth together, Lai rewrites his allegory of Chinese civilization.

*Lingji and Chinese Civilization: The Third Separation of Heaven and Earth*

The writing of Chinese history is well-nigh the writing of cyclic rises and falls of successive dynasties. Lai's delineation of the development of Chinese civilization on the one hand corresponds to this conventional picture, but on the other hand expands this
picture in its explanation of mechanisms of change. The myth of the separation of heaven and earth constitutes the turning point of each stage of civilization. Following the cycle of the separation of heaven and earth, Lai proposes his theory of the third separation of heaven and earth to explain the resurgence and spreading of mediums in contemporary society. Lai divides the development of (Chinese) civilization into three stages: the stage of divine power, the stage of monarchical power, and the stage of democracy. Zhuanxu's revolution inaugurated the beginning of the stage of divine power. The humans and spirits were separated. The mediums who communicated between humans and spirits were monopolized by a few people who owned the political power. The myth of *Fengshen yanyi* represents the climax of this epoch. The period of divine power was superseded by the advent of feudalism. And feudalism anticipated the subsequent centralization of monarchical power. Lai specifies the commencement of the stage of monarchical power in the Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty (206 B.C-A.D. 220). It was the time when the idea of the unification of human and heaven matured. The Emperor's political status was authorized by the divine power or the Mandate of Heaven. In other words, the emperor's legitimacy was maintained by the claim of the unification of heaven's will with emperor's power. Heaven's will was supposed to adhere to the principle of benevolence. However, the inheritance of empire was determined by blood relationship. The Mandate of Heaven did not necessarily correspond to the logic of lineage. There was always a gap between them; hence the innumerable tragedies and resentments in the imperial court. Lai regards this turbulence as the decline of the stage of monarchical power. In other words, it needed to be contravened by a certain revolutionary power in order for the cosmos to move to another stage of development. And mediums once more played a special role in this
revolutionary process, resolving the accumulated resentment in order to make the advent of the next stage become possible. Lai calls this special mission for mediums "calculation of merits and mistakes for the investiture of spirits" (dingguo fengling). This is similar to Jiang Ziya's mission at the end of Fengshen yanyi to assign spirits various celestial offices according to their merits and mistakes. When the project of calculation is accomplished, the stage of monarchical power will come to its end. Lai mentions that in recent decades there were some lingji's temples and mediums, who were executing this important task largely through the holding of fahui or medium's meetings. He observed many mediums or common people who were possessed by resentful spirits during the temple festivals. These resentful spirits were people who suffered in courtly conflict or military violence during the transition of dynasties.

The third stage of (Chinese) civilization is the stage of democracy. Likewise, it needs another revolution to promote its birth. Lai characterizes the mediums' participation in this evolution as the third separation of heaven and earth. It corresponds to Guan Yefu's rationalization of the relationship between humans and spirits. In the stage of democracy, religion must transform itself into a "humanitarian religion":

In the future the substantive culture of Chinese religion needs to change itself. That is, to practice and to certify the Dao in concrete human lives rather than relying on the deities or spirits to liberate us. The deities or spirits should withdraw themselves to the back stage in order to help humans to learn to cultivate their own wisdom, to conquer their deep-rooted bad habits and to go back to an originally pure nature. (Lai, 1998: 8, my trans.)

In his delineation of the genealogy of mediumship, Lai traces back its prestigious origin in order to fabricate an ideal model for contemporary mediums. Mediums play
an important, quasi-clerical role in ancient China. For the mediums, returning to the ancients thus represents the reconstitution of their role in mediating the realms of heaven, earth and humankind through their enlightened understanding and special insight. Moreover, for the mediums, the collective karma chiefly derives from the political conflicts of the past and from those departed souls that suffered from them. To “deal with” this entangled karma is in fact a process of striving for a future of “self-mastery.”

Lai’s ideas seem to share a humanitarian ideal with Confucianism and the realization of Dao with Daoism. Lai did conclude this passage with quotations from both traditions (and Sun Yat-sen’s idea of “civil rights”!). If democracy is the mark of the modern era, what is special in this comment is that nothing is erased from the map of modernity. Deities and spirits are not excluded from it. In fact, the task of democracy has to be fulfilled by the cooperation of all of them: humans, deities and spirits. The transition from imperial period to the democratic stage therefore acquires both political and religious implications.

Lai’s idea of the third separation of heaven and earth is written in his article "My Understanding of the Phenomena of Lingji" and the early version of a paper that was presented at the Conference of Oriental Religions. The rewriting of this conference paper deleted this part in his later published version of his doctoral thesis. In his original conference paper Lai admitted that the proposal of his theory (the third separation of heaven and earth) was tentative, bold and immature. Probably this is the reason why this tentative idea disappeared in the latter scholarly-oriented version. It is not difficult to imagine why his theory may be unacceptable from the perspective of scholarly writing. And Lai is correct in reckoning his proposal to be bold since it proffers more suppositions than verifications. His accounts move between myth and
history as if they are the same discourses that refer to the same level of reality. Fictional
time and historical time are freely connected as if they are of homogeneous constitution.
Supernatural account and secular understanding intertwine without conflict. However,
rather than regarding Lai as a scholar in the strictest sense of the term, and to examine his
theorization according to the rules of academic argumentation, I would like to place his
works in its proper context and to analyze his theorization according to its practical logic.
Although Lai has committed himself to publications in Daoist studies and has made
himself acquainted with the academic circle both in Taiwan and Mainland China, his
religious devotion to the mediums mainly centers on the promotion of mediums' quality.
Lai's theorization of mediumship is an important foundation for his educational project
for mediums. Therefore Lai's more important readers and audiences are not scholars,
but the mediums that he has theorized in his works. In comprehending Lai's thoughts,
we have to grasp both his identity as a religious practitioner who has dedicated himself to
the enhancement of mediumistic culture and his status as an intellectual who has formal
training in religious studies. Accordingly I will read his accounts of mediumship as
works that are written on the border of academic and religious discourse.

Lai adopts the metaphor "genetic engineering" to describe his conversion experience;
he also uses this term to symbolize the cultivational exercise of the religious practitioner,
e.g., the mediums. The religious connotation of "genetic engineering" is a thorough
reification of merits and mistakes including the balance inherited from ancestors.
Religious cultivation therefore includes the comprehension of one's "genealogical
defects" and their transformation. In other words, one's progression is built upon the
appropriation of ancestral heritages in both its positive and negative sense. Following
Lai's metaphor, his theorization of Chinese mediumship is also an appropriation of
various ancient and modern resources. In the following discussion I want to borrow Lai's metaphor to explore the influences and forces that he inherits and how he juxtaposes these heritages to answer his present call at hand. My discussion includes two parts. First I discuss the ancient idea of the co-constitution of heaven and earth through the further analysis of the Fengshen yanyi that Lai mentions in his theorization. Then I explore the more recent "heritage" of modern Chinese intellectuals who strove for a "Chineseness" in order to "save China," which originated in the late nineteen century when "China" (accurately speaking, the Qing Dynasty) was invaded by various imperial forces. Lai's theorization of Chinese mediumship implies his reformative vision of both Chinese civilization and its religious culture. I propose that this reformative vision corresponds to the striving of modern Chinese intellectuals.

The Co-constitution of Heaven and Human

No matter how the concept of heaven has developed and changed over time in Chinese civilization, the interrelation between heaven and human always constitutes an important issue for both high culture and popular religion in Chinese society. Heaven (tian) used to be an anthropomorphic conception of a deified ancestor a millennium ago, and later it was transformed into an abstract conception of cosmic function (Mote, 1971:22). The interaction of heaven and human is therefore framed within the spectrum from worship of spiritual beings to the moral cultivation of selfhood. The interrelation of heaven and earth is contextualized in the scope of ancient Chinese civilization, which Zhang Gangzhi characterizes as a "civilization of continuity." Zhang's proposal is mainly based upon his archeological evidence of the earliest historical civilization of China under the Three Dynasties--Xia, Shang, and Zhou--around 2200 to 256 B.C. By dividing the meaning of continuity into three aspects--the continuity of human and animal, the continuity of heaven and earth, and the continuity of culture and nature--Zhang proposes a kind of
civilization that is different from the conventional definition of civilization that emphasizes the rupture between the above-mentioned dimensions (Zhang, 1990: 142).

For Zhang, the civilization of continuity is rooted in a special cosmogony of totality. In Motes's words:

The genuine Chinese cosmogony is that of organismic process, meaning that all of the parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic whole and that they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process. (1971: 9)

Tu Wei-ming furthermore elaborates this idea of continuity:

The organismic process as a spontaneously self-generating life process exhibits three basic motifs: continuity, wholeness, and dynamism. All modalities of being, from a rock to heaven, are integral parts of a continuum which is often referred to as the "great transformation" (dahua). Since nothing is outside of this continuum, the chain of being is never broken. A linkage will always be found between any given pair of things in the universe....The continuous presence of qi in all modalities of being makes everything flow together as the unfolding of a single process. Nothing, not even an almighty creator, is external to this process. (Tu, 1985: 38)

Such a cosmogony of totality is later developed by the "School of Yin and Yang" during the Third century B.C. as the doctrine of the "Interrelation of Heaven and Man."

In seeking an English term to describe this doctrine, Schwartz adopts "correlative cosmology" or "correlative anthropocosmology":

The essential preoccupation lying behind the correlative cosmology seems to be that of finding in the homologies between human and natural phenomena a means of controlling human civilization as well as human individual life by "aligning" them with cycles, rhythms, and patterns of the natural realm. (Schwartz, 1985: 355)

Unlike the earlier conceptualization that emphasizes the vertical relationship between
human and spiritual beings and valorizes the establishment of a connection between two initially separate domains, the later developed doctrine emphasizes the horizontal relationship between concrete phenomena like animals, plants, the four cardinal directions, kinship organizations, human traits, and celestial bodies (Ibid, p.352). Although both represent the organismic thought that is predominant in Chinese culture, the earlier conceptualization has more religious connotation. Besides the aspects we mentioned above—the degree of abstraction of the concept of heaven, and the vertical or horizontal emphasis—there are many other dimensions of difference to illustrate the interrelation of heaven and human. If we try to locate Lai's theorization of mediumship within the above spectrum, it is near to the pole that emphasizes the vertical interrelations and the direction that regard the heaven as the dwelling place of spiritual beings. In Lai's account of mediums' religious mission, he adopts Fengshen yanyi as an analogy. Although Fengshen yanyi is not an epic about mediums, it best represents the peculiar cosmology and worldview of mediums that Lai delineates in his theory. In the following I speak of the "co-constitution of heaven and earth" to describe this specific characterization of heaven-human interrelation.

In Fengshen yanyi, Jiang Ziya represents the medium-like figure who mediates between heaven and earth. He successfully helps the Zhou emperor to defend against imperial forces and to achieve final victory. Zhou's victory brings about the creation of a new era. It reconstitutes the order of heaven and earth, entailing as it does a reconstitution of the realm of divinities. The correspondence of heaven and earth is well illustrated in Campany's fine analysis of Fengshen yanyi:

From the early Confucians and Daoists onwards, Chinese had spoken of orderly, cyclical patterns of change which continuously create and sustain the world. These
creative patterns were actualized in distinct spheres or levels of activity. There was seen to be a correspondence or resonance among these spheres, so that the same patterns of creation were actualized in each, and each corresponded to the other in an interlocking pattern of influence-response. (Campany, 1986: 80)

The opening poem of Fengshen yanyi, which reveals the archetypal processes which underlie the rest of the narrative, describes how a mythical being, Pangu, broke Chaos and began to construct the universe. The creation of the universe is followed by the rising of civilization through the agency of culture heroes who endow human world necessary techniques and proper norms. After the Golden Age of the Three Emperors and Three Kings, the Xia Dynasty, built by the virtuous Yu, was ended by the corrupt Jie and was replaced by the Shang Tang. The Shang Dynasty lasted for thirty-one generations and was inherited by the last wholly corrupt emperor. The Fengshen yanyi is just about the transformation process from the vicious Shang to the righteous Zhou. Nevertheless, dynastic change is not confined to the rise and decline of emperors. It also involves the reconstitution of the spiritual realm and individual transformation. Those important figures who participated in this process, whether human beings or spiritual beings, all engaged in "a career of fashioning the microcosm that is the self, either by Daoist means or by a late-Ming blend of Daoist, Buddhist, and Neo-Confucian techniques." Consequently, this transformation is a "multi-layered actualization of cosmogonic process" that relates the Mandate of Heaven, the response of humans and spirits to overcome the conflicting forces, and the individual process of self-cultivation (Ibid., p.87).

In Fengshen yanyi, two kinds of figures represent the forces that counter the actualization of Heaven's will. Evil spirits (jing) represent the obvious demons that
disturb the ruler's mind and bring about the process of cosmic devolution. The other force that counters the process is more complicated. They are not vicious human beings or spiritual beings. Their failure comes from their non-observance of the Heaven's time (tianshu) and stubborn loyalty to the corrupt regime. Contrarily, Zhou emperor and Jiang Ziya are "consummate master of timeliness" who know how to recognize Heaven's will and then act accordingly (Ibid., p.98). The counter-forces were finally incorporated into the scheme of cosmic order and ordained a specific mission in the new pantheon. Here we see that the counter-force and the defending force do not represent good and evil in their absolute sense. What matters in the self-formation process is not whether they embody a certain moral quality, but how they respond to the evolutionary direction guided by the Heaven's will.

In regard to Lai's characterization of medium's contemporary mission, it corresponds to the idea of the co-constitution of heaven and human delineated in Fengshen yanyi. Firstly, the investiture of the gods in the concluding three chapters of Fengshen yanyi marks the overcoming of corruption and chaos, and the arrival of a new era with renewed cosmic and social order. One of the most important tasks the mediums accomplish is to rescue the departed souls from their miserable state in order to reach the realm of salvation. By lending their bodies to the departed souls to accumulate merits, mediums help the departed souls end their the wandering state and acquire a new register in the pantheon. The transformative process from suffering souls to the status of deities resembles the incorporation process depicted at the end of Fengshen yanyi. Here the medium plays the role of restorer of order and healer of suffering.

Secondly, the anarchy of the spiritual realm resonates with the disorder of human realm. The order of the human world and the order of heaven correspond to each other.
According to *Fengshen yanyi*, while the human world experienced turbulence, the deities or spirits of the heavenly realm were also entangled in conflicts and battles. Similarly, the landscape of civilization sketched by Lai basically includes both human and spirits. In other words, human and spirits "share the same fate" (gongming) in the constitution and creation of civilization. Moreover, in their participation in the civilization process, both humans and spirits need to progress with the development of the new stage in order to operate in coordination with the evolutionary direction. The idea of cyclic transformation underlying the *Fengshen yanyi* is further developed in Lai's sketch of Chinese civilization as spiral evolution. *Fengshen yanyi's* worldview represents the first stage of Chinese civilization, which emphasizes divine power. The scope of the following stages transcends the previous stage. Consequently, the realm of spirits plays different roles in different stages. Nevertheless, however the civilization evolves, the realm of spirits is never excluded in Lai's sketch.

Thirdly, resonance with Heaven's will and time plays an important role both in *Fengshen yanyi* and Lai's theorization. Mediumship is a predestined vocation that requires for the submission of the medium's will at specific time of his or her life course. The encountering of various spirits in the medium's training process is also a matter of time. How to grasp the right time to fulfill specific religious mission therefore constitutes one of the most important "professional" tasks for mediums. Another important religious task that is deeply related with the issue of time is to recognize Heaven's timetable for the current trend of events. Accordingly, assisting the cosmic process and not obstructing it constitutes the sage act. Such a sage act is well expressed in a Neo-Confucian's words: "The mind of Heaven and Earth is to produce and reproduce. The sage participates and assists Heaven and Earth in this process of transformation and
nourishment so that all things will fulfill their nature and destiny correctly (quoted from Campany, 1986: 98)." Listening to the Mandate of Heaven is peculiarly important in the time of turbulence. In Lai's theorization of mediumship, the mediums are born within this extraordinary time in order to respond to its special needs. The increase in mediums therefore marks the coming of a turbulent time and its prospect for the birth of a new era.

Lastly, the idea of cyclic transformation insinuated in Fengshen yanyi is further developed in Lai's account of how the mediums contribute to the coming new epoch through the idea of cyclic cleaning. As the mediators of heaven and earth, mediums have special contribution to each stage of civilization and its evolutionary process. They are like sweepers who clear away the previous records of mistakes in order to prepare a smooth ground for the landing of a new age. They are the channels through which the resentful spirits have their voices heard. They are like the intermediators of a conciliatory court who arbitrate the debts of resentment or gratitude between spirits or humans and spirits. The resentment of the spiritual realm and the trouble of the human world are reciprocal causes of each other. The injustice of the human world produces resentful spirits. When the resentment of the spirits accumulates to a certain degree, the human world resonates with a state of disturbance and manifests various troubling phenomena. For Lai, the decline of an era is accompanied by the resurgence of mediums. Mediums are like the symptom of the transitional process; they allow the trauma of the epoch to be seen by the possession of the furious or aggrieved departed souls. Mediums are also the healers of these pains to help the departed souls to return to the cosmic order through the religious investiture. When these wandering souls are incorporated into the religious order, e.g., by becoming certain deity's representatives, guards or assistants, the order of human world can be recuperated and the arrival of a new
era can be anticipated.

_In Search of a Modern China_

Magnificent! Our Chinese nation.
She is the greatest nation in the world's greatest continent.
Twenty Provinces constitutes a family.
She has abundant natural resources and fertile land.
It is not exaggerated boast to call her a heavenly mansion and a glorious country.
Don't you see that even England and Japan with only three islands rise abruptly,
Not to mention our magnificent China!

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Elegant! Our culture.
It has an old history over five thousand years.
Its blaze transmits successively.
The works of sages appear one after another,
Clear the filthy and precipitate the darkness to show the splendid essence (of our culture).
Don't you see the abrupt evolution of Europe.
However, our culture has stagnated and isolated for a long time.
If we unite together and brace up our spirits in the new world of the 20th century,
We will rise in the universe overriding the past.
Lovely! Our people. Lovely! Our people.
( Liao Qichao, The Patriotic Song ⁶ )

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⁶ Liao Qichao (1873-1929) was one of the most influential intellectual in modern China. He was also one of the major contributors who introduced the Western concept of nation to China. In his most celebrated series of articles, titled "On the New Citizen," he called for the creation of a consciousness of the citizenry among Chinese in building a genuine Chinese nation. The Patriotic Song was written in 1903 when Liao fled to Japan because of the failure of the Hundred Days Reform of 1898. During the period Liao stayed in Japan, he proposed the birth of a "young China." The Patriotic Song well expressed his state of mind.
The Chinese nation originated from Three Emperors and Five Kings. The Yellow Emperor established the nation by the spirit of the middle way. He respected the Heaven and worshiped ancestors. The stage of divine power enjoyed peace and harmony for thousands of years until the decline of the later emperor... There have been five thousand years since the Yellow Emperor bore the Mandate of Heaven and established the nation.... Now the Chinese nation will again undertake Mandate of Heaven for another great revolution of humans. And this responsibility cannot be fulfilled unless we unite the visible and invisible power. It is easy to divide the One into multiplicity. But it is very difficult to restore the multiplicity into the One. As to the realm of the visible, the unification of Chinese nation is the Mandate of Heaven. However, we need consensus of opinion before achieving unification. What is our consensus? Recognition of our origin and returning to our root? The orthodoxy of the line of Dao? The middle thought that reconciles idealism and materialism? The basic principle of Three People's (Sanmin) Doctrines? All these need to be recognized by the people of this generation who selflessly bear the mission and are determined to serve their nation with filial piety. As to the realm of the invisible, the main tasks are the unification of each lineage of spirits and the cultivation of their spirits. If the mediums can appease the spirits of their related lineage, cultivate their moral virtue, and accumulate merit to improve their qualities, then the peace of earth and the paradise within the world is near to us. (Lai, 1989: 67-8.)

Why will the 21st century be the century of the Chinese? The 19th century was the age of Metal. The Mandate of Heaven fell upon the West for the beginning of material revolution. The 20th century is the age of Water. The Mandate of Heaven falls upon the North for the utmost development of material civilization. The material development improved human's lives; nevertheless, it also brought great disaster, e.g., the nuclear problem and environmental pollution. The 21st century

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7 Three People's (Sanmin) Doctrine, or "Three Principles of the People" include the Principle of People's Rights, the Principle of People's Livelihood, and the Principle of Nationalism. They are proposed by Sun Yatsen and have been propagated as the guiding principle for the reconstruction of China as a modern democracy. Sun began to write the Three Principles of the People around 1919 in Shanghai. Those manuscripts became prey of the flames in a fire of revolt. The text of Three Principles of the People available today are from his lecture notes in 1924.
will be the age of Wood. The Mandate of Heaven will fall upon the East for the re-emergence of the ancient Eastern civilization. The 21st century will be the century of the Chinese people. The Chinese culture of "middle way" will bring peace to the world. Therefore the Chinese culture needs to rebuild itself by the perseverance of the good and abandonment of the bad in order to meet the contemporary needs.... The Mandate of Heaven in the 21st century for the improvement of spiritual civilization falls upon the Chinese nation. And the hope the Chinese people rests upon the fairy island of Penglai (the alias of Taiwan). (interview of Lai on May, 20, 1999)

Lai's impassioned quest for the Chinese nation to fulfill its new revolutionary task sounds like an echo one hundred years later of the late Ching intellectuals in the last fin-de-siècle who strove for the naissance of a new China while China was facing the threat of its ruin. How to build China into a modern nation and what path should China take to modernize itself are burning questions for the Chinese intellectuals during the aftermath of the Opium war (1839-1842). The Sino-Japanese War of 1895 furthermore forced them to understand the power modern nation-states were able to possess. The raising of nationalistic consciousness therefore constituted the most dominant discourse of cure for the seriously ill China. And the task of modernization became the project of building a modern nation-state in the face of the threat of national dissociation. The building process comprises various projects of imaginative works (Anderson, 1991). For the Chinese nationalists in late Qing, it at least consists of the invention of the myth of Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor) as the primogenitor of the Chinese nation (Shen, 1997), the construction of the genealogies of Chinese "national heroes" for an exclusive ethnic community of Han descendants or an inclusive state-centered political community (Shen, 2000), the identification of a unified body, the quest for a new kind of citizen (xinmin) for the new China (Liang, 1902-05), the adoption of the idea of a century in order to
incorporate Chinese history into the world map (Liang, 1898), and a high sense of purpose coupled with the desire of progress and evolution proposed by Yen Fu (1854-1921), etc. In the following I discuss how Lai's scheme of Chinese civilization inherits and rewrites the nationalist project in its emphasis on Daotong, or the "orthodox line of the Dao."

**Supplementing the Daotong**

Daotong, or the "orthodox line of the Dao," is originally referred to by Zhu Xi (1130-1200) as representing the Confucian way. (Ching, 2000) Later it indicates the Chinese mainstream culture represented by Confucianism. Consequently Daotong has become the orthodox cultural inheritance that has been inherited by generations of Lineage Patriarchs. In other words, it transcends the dynastic changes and becomes the representation of political legitimacy. Every ruler "naturally" became the protector and inheritor of Daotong in order to establish his legitimacy. The founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen, also claimed that his "Three Principles of the People" inherited the Daotong of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Duke Zhou⁸, and Confucius. And Sun proposed that his political thoughts were based upon the traditional Chinese ethical ideas of philanthropy, benevolence, democracy, and universal peace. Following Sun's elaboration of traditional Chinese culture, Lai considers Daotong the most essential

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⁸ Yao and Shun are names of legendary sage kings. Yu is the founder of the Xia Dynasty (2183-1752 B.C.?). Tang is the founder of the Shang Dynasty (1751-1112 B.C.). Wen King and Wu King are the founders of the Zhou Dynasty (1111-249 B.C.). Duke Zhou is the prime minister who assists the Chen King of Zhou. These legendary or historical figures represent the sage rulers of Chinese Golden Age. Confucius claimed that his thoughts was not invented by himself, but only inherited from these sage figures.
foundation of the Chinese nation:

The traditional Chinese religious thought is Dao...Essentially speaking, Dao is the most primal seed of all visible and invisible creatures. Dao represents the Chinese thought of the unification of heaven and human. Fu Hsi invented the Eight Diagrams, Shen Nung tasted hundreds of herbs and healed hundreds of illness. Huangdi founded the nation by the spirit of the middle-way. Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Duke Zhou, Confucius, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek all consider the transmission of the Dao their responsibility. If we abandon the orthodox line of the Dao, then the nation can hardly survive. The orthodox line of the Dao is the essence of thoughts transmitted by the past sages and scholars. If we lose it, we will bring ruin upon ourselves. (Lai, 1988)

Furthermore, the renaissance of Chinese traditional culture is the cure for the degrading world:

Recently there are some Westerners who worry about the future of the world. They propose that the shortage of West material culture can be mended by the East spiritual culture. However, the Easterners do not cherish their own cultural treasure. They abandon their own culture and follow the West material culture. Is it the ill luck of the fin-de-siècle?...Yijing says that the most destitute situation leads to transformation, and transformation leads to smoothness. The West Renaissance is also a movement of restoration, by which they built the modern European civilization. The world is badly in need of transformation. And The East Renaissance is imminent. The responsibility of turning peril into safety lies y upon the shoulders of the East people. And China especially plays the leading role [for this special mission]. (Lai, 1988)

Lai and the Chinese nationalists of the early 20th century share the similar goal of incorporating China into the world system and endowing China with a definite standpoint in the territory of the world. They also share the same sentiment of burning concern for the trend of their times and the collapse of specific ground--their beloved country or
traditional culture. Nevertheless, contrary to the critical spirits of the intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement in 1919—the so-called Chinese Renaissance—who proclaimed the overthrow of traditional Confucian culture as the hope of the nation's survival, Lai's "East Renaissance" embraces the traditional Chinese culture as the cure for the progress of China and transformation of the world. Although Lai adheres to the idea of traditional culture, his articulation of Daotong is not as 'orthodox' as its literal meaning implies. Lai proposes that the kernel of Chinese culture—the unification of heaven and human—has been ignored since the foundation of modern China. The unification of heaven and human is misunderstood as a superstitious idea; therefore the human becomes the center and the idea of heaven is disregarded. In the preface of Natural Law, Lai's advocacy of the rectification of Dao combines the Confucian idea of sages with the religious idea of spiritual beings, which is a very 'unorthodox' interpretation of the orthodoxy:

In the fairyland of Taiwan people have the freedom of religious beliefs. Numerous Buddhist deities, Daoist immortal beings and spiritual beings guard various territories. Therefore temples and altars are everywhere in Taiwan. It's a pity that rather than promoting the Dao or educating the worshippers, most of the temples and altars only offer services for the utilitarian ends of their worshippers, e.g., changing lots or beseeching fortunes....Buddhist deities or Daoist immortal beings are the deification of the sages and virtuous humans. When they were alive they compiled works, made contributions and performed the deeds of virtues. Their words and conducts are worthy of our imitation and respect. Their spirit is everlasting. If we are able to convert to their religious lineages, we should feel proud....The abbots of temples or the spirit mediums should follow the solemn rituals and become the examples of all worshippers. Then they should serve their patron deities with filial pieties, and rescue the worshippers from their hardship and distress. Finally they should educate the worshippers to imitate the Dao and perform the deeds of virtues. In this way, we will be able to actualize the mission of grand shouyuan for this specific time. (Lai, 1986)
In *Natural Law* we also see how the idea of Daotong is appropriated by various temples or sects in order to establish their status in the lineage of the orthodox. For example, the Five Dragon Temple traces its origins to the mythical figure Pangu who created the world, the legendary figures who established the Chinese civilization, and the Yellow Emperor who founded the Chinese nation. Their genealogy includes various Daoist figures and deities evolving through the change of dynasties. (*Natural Law*, Vol. 21) Therefore the idea of Daotong in Lai's depiction or in the popular religious understanding breaks with the lineal Confucian orthodoxy and includes miscellaneous elements that are originally excluded by Confucianism. As Lai proposes that the new cultural movement for the transformation of contemporary China needs to seriously consider the cooperation of visible and invisible realms, the inheritors of Daotong are no longer monopolized by the rulers. The popular religion becomes the inheritor and promoter of Daotong by its impartial encompassment of both realms.

While the singular line of Daotong is supplemented by many miscellaneous branches, the identification of a congenital "right line" becomes an important issue. Everyone has a specific congenital line to be discovered and to which to convert. And this is where mediums intercede between the person and his or her patron deity. However, although theoretically the main congenital line is singular, this does not restrict people from establishing relationships with other deities or spiritual beings. Just as the mediums establish relationships with various deities or spiritual beings at variant times with the transition of karmic links, people may have several karmic links with different deities or spiritual beings. Lai's religious interpretation of Daotong according to his observation of popular religion does not replace Daotong's lineal connotation but expands its complexities and invests mysterious savor to the acquisition of one's line. One's origin
is no longer like the conventional definition of singular Daotong that can be inherited naturally and easily since there is only one. The appropriation of tradition becomes a laborious searching process colored with sense of imminence and uncertainty. It is not unlike T. S. Eliot's delineation of the writer if we replace "writer" with the religious pursuer:

Tradition....cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense......and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence......(it) is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal(together).....(the sense)makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity (Eliot, 1920)

To come back to the question of the nationalist's imagination of modern China and Lai's supplement, we see a lot of similarities. For example, the adoption of the myth of Yellow Emperor, the construction of the genealogy of sages and virtuous beings, the identification of the Chinese nation, the reformation of citizens, and the expectation of China's rising and progress. Lai's supplement nevertheless introduces significantly new elements to the nationalist imagination. And these new elements are in fact a restoration of the ancient values and worldview according to Lai's interpretation. Whether deviation or restoration, Lai attempts to incorporate the long excluded element of mediumistic culture into the scheme of Chinese civilization. On the other hand, mediumistic culture is destined to transform itself in its confrontation with modernization. Lai's proposal of the revolution of Chinese religion or the third separation of heaven and earth is actually imbued with a modern humanistic spirit: "Humans are their own masters. Everyone who contributes to the well-being of the world is eligible for deification. One's life depends on one's hands rather than on god's hands" (Lai, 1998). Deities do
not disappear; they only withdraw to the backstage. As the Chinese nation faces the task of evolution according to the trend of the world, so do deities, spiritual beings, mediums, and their adherents. In Sun Yat-sen's words: "The revolution has not yet succeeded, therefore the comrades still need to work hard." There are still many obstacles that need to be overcome on the road of revolution. And this requires the corporation of the comrades including humans, deities, spiritual beings, and mediums.

Eliot's understanding of tradition can also be applied to Lai's appropriation of mediumistic culture. The latter half of Lai's life starts with an affliction cured by the mystical power of the god through a medium. The cure implies both medical and moral significance. It is like someone intruding into another's dream. Lai's fatal disease leads him to the medium's dream. And he spends the rest of his life deciphering the meaning of the stranger's dream. By locating the stranger's dream into the frame of national fable, Lai finds a way to decode the unfathomable and mysterious dream. And the national fable becomes another dream to be dreamt. By the mixture of his waking memories and the fantastic dream language, he finally becomes the representative of the mediums and the mediums' dream becomes his own dream.
Chapter Three: The Writing of History

Introduction

Mediumship is frequently characterized by its mediative function of transmitting the message of those beings who no longer or never belong to the human realm—the dead, the spirit, the demon or the god, if we are able to give them proper names. Mediumship therefore exposes and blurs the borderline of the human and non-human realms concurrently. Mediums utter, some of them write, the will of an intractable other—the voice of the dead, the exclamation of the demon, or the revelation of god. As long as the will is discharged, it disturbs the status quo and invokes change. Thus the patching of the wound of those tongueless beings interweaves with the perturbation of the regular motion of the human trajectory. As an idiom of intersection, mediumship disturbs the delimited regime through giving way to the utterance of alterity. Such disturbance can be understood vertically according to the human and non-human axis. It can also be understood horizontally through the writing of “enlightened reason” and its un-writing. According to de Certeau, such writing of “enlightened reason” represents a modern practice of regime delimitation:

As a practice…writing symbolizes a society capable of managing the space which it sets up for itself,…of changing the tradition which it receives into a text which it produced, in short, of constituting itself as a blank page upon which it can itself write. (de Certeau, 1988: 5-6)

Here writing is a process of writing the other out, not through elimination, but through productive appropriation of avowed name. By resorting to the voice of the possessed,
de Certeau writes the other back and reverses the conventional order of possession and dispossess. The "impropriety of the proper name" is exposed; the possessed is understood as the dis-possession of the inscribed code. Nevertheless, writing the other back does not mean that the voice of the other is restored. De Certeau does not presuppose a lost discourse that "exists somewhere, like a hidden treasure to be exhumed from under the interpretations piled over it" (Ibid., p. 248). The voices of the possessed disturb, but do not replace. Following de Certeau in regarding possession as a process of writing back in the outlawed voice allows us to reflect upon the focus of this chapter in a similar vein. De Certeau's protagonists disturb the "enterprise of denomination" by their slippage of different names (Ibid., p.256). They do not invent any new name; they just destabilize the extant system of discourse.

In this chapter, I will show how the Taiwanese Mediums' Association demonstrates a similar but more complicated move. It writes itself into the official discourse like playing a kaleidoscope: it creates a new topography by rearranging the available fragments. In other words, the Mediums' Association is not as ephemeral as Jeanne des Anges—one of de Certeau's protagonists—who can only speak but cannot write as a possessed woman (Ibid., p.254). But the Mediums' Association does not create an opposite discourse, either. While I posit the founding of the Mediums' Association in the vein of a Certaurean practice of writing, I attempt to read it as a practice of historical writing and memory making. And such practice intersects with the other normative discourse-maker or code-producer, e.g., the nationalists. In the following I will discuss how the founding of the Mediums' Association writes itself on the nationalist text. By the juxtaposition of the nationalist discourse with the mediums' discourse, I seek to show that the mediums' special way of historical writing plays an important role in the
constitution of their self-formation and missiology.

*Mediums and the Nationalist Code*

In his paper about the "Chinese consciousness" of popular religions in Taiwan, Yang Huinan (1999) proposes that the rise of the moral revitalization of new religions in Taiwan attempts to rectify the utilitarianism of popular religions, e.g., the family altars or the ghost-worship temples. Nevertheless, they fall into a dangerous political ideology of "grand unification" that ignores the "Taiwanese consciousness." The Mediums' Association is among the objects of his critique. Yang's critique was brought to the notice of the Association by another researcher. Apparently they did not agree with Yang's comment and felt misunderstood. They expressed their sense of being wronged and complained of Yang's "careless" judgment to me. I did not tell them that it is always a temptation for the researcher to overstate the implied meanings of their subjects, especially the case like the Mediums' Association in which you see "nationalist" symbols almost everywhere. For example, the Association's concern for peacefulness and harmony is deeply colored by symbols and terms adopted from the political discourses of Taiwanese nationalism—an important frame of reference that needs further exploration. And Yang's critique actually represents another kind of nationalist discourse that proposes the independence of Taiwan from Mainland China. Both kinds of nationalist discourse represent the peculiar symptom of Taiwan's contemporary ambiguous status.

*The Anachronistic Plum*

According to the report from *The Natural Law*, the design of the Association’s flag and the adoption of a plum blossom as the Association’s symbol are based upon the
cooperation between deities and the mediums:

The symbolism of the Association's flag is indicative of its intentions: The twelve plum-flower stars on the field of blue represent the national soul and the Chinese people, symbolize perseverance in spite of adversity and eternal continuity, and also represent the spirit of East Asia and the original mother of humans. The blue sky and the sun represent the light of the spirits on the world. The five petals of each plum flower represent the five nationalities of the Republic of China all united with one heart, the interdependence of the five agents, and that all humans are siblings. (translated by Paper, 1996: 107)

In this symbolic explanation of the Association's flag, national concern is mixed with cultural mission and spiritual revitalization. In Chinese the pronunciation of "plum" is the same as "medium." Choosing the plum blossom as the title of their association thus symbolizes the mediums' determination to unify and to bear the heavenly mission with a spirit of perseverance. Nevertheless, the plum blossom has other symbolic connotations. It was chosen to be the national flower by the Chinese Nationalist Party while it still governed the Mainland. The Nationalist Party associates its spirit of national founding with the symbolic meaning of the flower's spirit of steadfastness and perseverance since it blooms in the bitter winter. When the Mainland was taken by the Communist Party

\[\text{The design of twelve plum-flower stars combines two national symbols: plum blossom and the number twelve. The plum blossom was officially designated by the Central Government to be the national flower on July 21, 1964 with the symbolic value of its resilience in harsh winter. The number twelve is related to the twelve points of the white sun in the national emblem of the national flag. Originally designed by Lu Haodong, a martyr of the Chinese revolution, the twelve points of the white sun represents the twelve two-hour periods of the day, symbolizing unceasing progress. The current national flag of Republic of China was officially adopted on May 5, 1921. (The Republic of China Yearbook, 1998, pp.1 and 3.)}\]
and the Nationalist Party "withdrew" to Taiwan, the plum blossom became the major symbol of the nationalization process. Since the patriotic song "Plum Blossom" was taught in Taiwanese schools and the patriotic film "Plum Blossom" was shown everywhere, every student knows the symbolic meaning of the plum blossom even though he or she can hardly see a real one in subtropical Taiwan. Beyond the title of its association, the Mediums' Association's flag adopts symbols similar to those found on the National flag. The latter was also designed by the Nationalist Party. Throughout the process of the sinization of Taiwan, under the rule of the Nationalist Party, the national flag has been an icon to which Taiwanese students have to pay respect every day. The national flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremony was held every morning and every afternoon from primary schools to high schools with the participation of all students until a few of the mayors who belonged to the Democratic Developmental Party (in opposition to the Nationalist Party) cancelled it in the counties where they ruled. But the ceremony is still held in most other counties. After martial law was lifted in 1988, the symbolic meaning of the plum blossom started to shift from its patriotic register to a more critical register. The flowers became one of the exemplary signs of how the Nationalist Party dislocated indigenous memory through its nationalist programs. The Mediums' Association was founded around the time of the lifting of martial law, a period that witnessed the loosening of the grip of the ruling party and the flourishing of various social movements in Taiwan. Most of the latter rejected nationalist discourse. The Mediums' Association, however, emerged together with them, and its oblique embrace of nationalist symbolism is thus all the more curious.

There are at least two possible readings of this mixture of nationalist tone and the spiritual mission of the Mediums' association. It can be considered a 'strategy' for
seeking legitimation from the government since the mediums were long considered representative of a backwardness and superstitiousness that were contrary to the nation's pursuit of modernity. By adopting the available cultural capital which was promoted by the government, the mediums could perhaps break free of the shackles of disrepute. The Association's patriotic bent also might be considered the outcome of the "bureaucratic mentality" in China which was rooted in its religious tradition (Seidel, 1989/1990: 256). Although Seidel argues that the primary concern of the supernatural bureaucracy was not politics and domination, but "the integration of absolutely everything into one coherent system," the traditional role of Daoist priest as the guarantor of the Mandate of Heaven still makes the revolution less possible than the rebellion. In other words, the idea of the Mandate of Heaven is not fundamentally challenged by the vicissitudes of dynastic rotation. The new ruler who overthrew the old empire frequently identified himself as the new bearer of the Mandate of Heaven. The new regime still had to appeal to the religious authority to legitimate his legitimacy. The complicity between religion and politics constitutes the shared presupposition of both readings.

Yet, neither reading is fully convincing. Both—the one seeing the Association's adoption of nationalist capital as a strategy of legitimation, the other seeing it as a symptom of political conservatism—presuppose a fixed power relation between the nation and the people. Both further ignore the diversity of contexts of local politics and religious tradition. By situating the issue at hand within the broader context of the nationalization process and the religious redemptive tradition, other readings become possible. In the following I first discuss the process of nationalization—as a certain way of culture-writing and memory-making—in postwar Taiwan. Then I discuss how the Mediums' Association, in pursuing its religious concerns, manages its own
culture-writing and memory-making, a writing and a making that at once iterate and twist official discourse.

**Memory Work and Culture Writing—the Nationalist Edition**

The Nationalist Party's nationalization of Taiwan was initiated in 1949, when the Nationalist Party was defeated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and forced to "withdraw" to Taiwan. Nationalization can be considered as a memory-creating and culture-writing process. In an essay that discusses state formation in postwar Taiwan, Allan Chun argues that nationalism is a modern invention in Chinese history and he epitomizes its processes as "politics of the unreal." By inventing a common sacred origin—for example, "we are all descendants of the Yellow Emperor"—and creating a successive cultural history that transcends the upheaval of diverse dynasties, the ethnic population of territorial China becomes synonymous with the concept of a single political community (Chun, 1994: 51). For the Republic of China\(^2\) in Taiwan, the resuscitation of "traditional Chinese culture," shared beliefs and moral consciousness, and the heightening of societal consciousness not only attributed to the sense of a bound polity but also constituted a defense against the domination of Western imperialism and the threat of Communism. In 1966, the Nationalist Party initiated the "Cultural Renaissance Movement." This movement on the one hand served the goal of national solidarity; on the

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\(^2\) The Republic of China (ROC) is the government formed by the revolutionary movement led by Sun Yat-sen after it overthrew the Qing dynasty (1866-1925), China's last imperial dynasty. The ROC has been dominated by the Chinese Nationalist Party KMT, which was founded by Sun. Since 1949 the ROC has been the government in Taiwan; Mainland China has been governed by the People's Republic of China, which the Chinese Communist Party established in 1949 after it defeated the KMT in a civil war and forced the Nationalists to flee to Taiwan.
other hand, it “introduce(d) traditional social values through socializing practices into the
conduct of everyday behavior” (Ibid., p. 58). Chun articulates a succinct comment about
the relationship between the nation building and the cultural monopoly. In historical
terms, the Nationalist Party's cultural policy

...arose from the politics of national survival in a rapidly changing global situation.
Cultural discourse was literally synonymous with the cultural policy in the sense that
throughout the postwar era, the government designated itself as the sole voice of culture.
The authority of culture was backed by the imposition of martial law, which reinforced
the impression that culture was itself a matter of national defense. In effect, culture
was made a kind of totalizing force insofar as its fate was perceived to be a
synonymous with the national destiny itself. On the other hand, culture was an
individualizing force insofar as it was perceived to be inseparably linked to the minds
and actions of its constituent citizens. (Ibid., p. 58)

In the nationalist discourse, culture is understood as an object to be investigated and to
be protected in order to secure a sense of continuity and worthiness for its bearers. By
identifying itself as the protector of traditional Chinese culture, the Nationalist Party
immediately constitutes itself as the legitimate heir of China. The doctrine of the
“Harmony of Five Ethnic Peoples” was proposed under the context of imaging itself as
the rightful ruling party of the China. (This “Harmony” doctrine is ironically resonated
by the CCP who tries hard to appropriate various ethnic peoples into a big China. While
CCP appeals to a socialist modernization to incorporate the ethnic differences, the
Nationalist Party resorts to a traditional cultural homogenization to promote the doctrine
of unification.) Therefore, the “Harmony” doctrine as political propaganda aims to
validate the imagined right of the Nationalist Party to govern the “Big China” rather than
to serve as a guideline for the real politics of Taiwan. It fails altogether to acknowledge the ethnic reality of Taiwan, which is marked by conflicts between the indigenous people and different immigrants from different parts of the Mainland.

When Chun describes this project of mystification of Chinese culture as “oriental Orientalism,” he points out that it “was perhaps less a deliberate effort to falsify than an unconscious effort to create a positive and productive ideology of truth (about the Chinese self) in a way which simultaneously distanced itself from an implicit Other” (Chun, 1995: 31). The implicit Other can be the projection of an antithesis that makes the “Self” becomes possible, like the “evil Communist party” or “Western imperialism.” Such active construction of identity by the projection of an antithetical other eventually erases indigenous understandings and ignores their heterogeneity.

“Counteroffensive of the mainland and regaining possession of lost territory” was the most popular slogan for the beginning phase of the Nationalist Party’s national formation. However, the active formation of the national self cannot be completed only by appealing to the Golden Cultural Past without also participating in the banquet of modernity. Among the cultural capital to be appropriated for the latter purpose, the “Thought of Sun Yat-sen” was one of the most important resources. Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles was a required subject for the College Entrance Examination until recently. By adding two supplementary chapters on the principle of livelihood to Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles, Chiang Kai-shek mutated the revolutionary tone of the latter into a modern and scientific treatise. Thus “Ethics, Democracy and Science” would become the new agenda of the Nationalist Party’s modernity project, part of which would consist in eradicating those old cults which were based only in backward superstitions. During the 1970s and 1980s Jiang Jingguo (i.e., Chiang Ching-Kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek) initiated a scientific
reformism that "actively promoted economic modernization, indigenization of the KMT, defusing longstanding ethnic tension, and the depoliticization of culture by creating a committee for Cultural Reconstruction to advance cultural/aesthetic activities in line with a rising economic standard of living" (Ibid., p: 47). Democratization, liberalization and Taiwanization gradually constitute the new consciousness of self-formation (Tien, 1988). In 1986, the opposition party DPP was formed without being repressed. In 1988, following the lifting of the 37-year-old martial law, DPP became a legalized opposition party. This was followed by the lifting of strict censorship over the press in the same year. Moreover, since the fall of 1987 the residents of Taiwan have been permitted to visit their relatives on the mainland. These trends of democracy and liberation can be considered a kind of rectification of the earlier myopia. The rectification of sight not only finds itself a new anchor in order to look forward; the earlier unseen—those heterogeneous modes of cultural writing and memory—demanded to be seen anew, or for the first time. One of the most important of such demands was met with the official recognition of The February 28 Incidents\(^3\) which happened in 1947 when the

\(^3\) The February 28 Incidents took place in 1947. It was a conflict between Taiwanese civilians and the Nationalist Party-appointed Chen Yi administration. This incident began on February 27 when Monopoly Bureau agents harassed a woman selling untaxed cigarettes in Taipei. This event touched off the public anger. Mass demonstrations were held the next morning. Military guards fired on protesters; mainlanders were attacked by the protesters after this military violence. Within days, the upheaval had spread throughout the island. Lin Xiantang, a public opinion leader, and other prominent members of the Taiwan elite initiated negotiation with the authorities to seek a reasonable resolution of the incident. They organized the February 28 Incident Management Committee on March 2, and proposed democratic elections for county chiefs and city mayors, the abolition of government monopolies, government guarantees for human life and property, and protection of the freedom of speech, publication, and assembly. Governor Chen Yi turned to the mainland for help. On March 9, the 21st division of the Nationalist army landed at Jilong. By March 14, many local leaders and members of the Management Committee had been arrested. These people included landowners, entrepreneurs, doctors, and teachers. A considerable number of them were executed. Reliable estimates of deaths caused by the incident and the subsequent suppression range from five-thousand to twenty-thousand, many of whom were innocent victims of the violence. Chen Yi was later replaced by a moderate
decolonized drive for self-government and the Nationalist desire for reintegration collided (Phillips, 1999). The period of “white terror” that followed in the 1950s, during which people “dared not to criticize the government, make comments on current politics, or voice grievances to strangers” (Wang, 1999), was recognized by the official remembrance of those victims’ and their families’ memories.

It is impossible to summarize a complicated historical process within such short passages without simplifying its complexities. Moreover, the history of the nationalist process in post-war Taiwan is not merely a political history. In order not to reduce the founding of the Mediums’ Association to a one-dimensional political event, the nationalist process must first be detached from its function as a “political context”—something operating like a background that allows a figure to become visible. The relationship between background and figure easily leads itself to deterministic modes of thinking. Rather, I try to read the nationalist process as a process of cultural writing and memory-working. Thus it can operate in juxtaposition to the Mediums’ self-formation process, which proceeds sometimes by similar and sometimes by different moves and strategies. When the nationalist process and the founding of the Mediums’ Association are juxtaposed as two cases of self-writing, the former no longer ideologically determines the latter and the latter no longer becomes the mystifying object of the former. The process of self-writing is usually based upon the process of writing the other. For the ruling party, in the nationalist’s project of modernity, the mediums are

administrator. This incident has had a tremendous impact on Taiwan’s postwar development. Proponents of Taiwanese independence often trace the genesis of their movement to this incident. However, this incident was not allowed to be remembered or to be mentioned in the textbook of history until the lifting of martial law. Historians are still arguing how much Chiang Kai-shek was responsible for this incident. In the official version of this incident, Chen Yi is the main convict who is responsible for this tragedy. (See Modern China, 114-15, and The Republic of China Yearbook, 71)
considered irrational others that need to be expelled. However, the ruling party
sometimes has had to appeal to medium-like strategies to justify its claim to be the sole
legitimate heir of Chinese culture. As for the mediums, we should not consider them
the “timeless other” (Fabian, 1983) who are somehow outside of the historical process.
On the contrary, they are most sensitive to the turbulence of the social and the
vicissitudes of history. The founding of an association of their own indicates that
they are fully conscious of their social image and of the trends of the modernization in
post war Taiwan.

From Historical Rewriting to the Suturing of Wounds—The Mediums’ Edition

Compared with the nationalist movement and its modernization project, the records of
activities and essays about the mediums and their association in The Natural Law contain
both familiar echoes and novel modulations. In the following I will discuss their
intersection from five perspectives according to their records of activities and my
interview data. Each perspective represents a unique way of Mediums’ rewriting of
nationalist discourse or orthodoxy history.

The Moral Maintenance Movement in Zhanghua vs. the New Life Movement in Nanchang

In 1987 Lai and several mediums initiated a “Moral Maintenance Movement” in
Zhanghua, a county in the middle part of Taiwan, with the cooperation of local
government and several local temples. According to the records of The Natural Law,
this movement was inspired by the revelation and demonstration of the deities of Luyuan
si (temple) in eastern Taiwan. The year of dingmao⁴ (1987) is also the special year for the beginning of the "actualization of Dao" revealed by the Guanyin pusa (boddhisattva, or the Goddess Mercy) through a medium in Taipei county two years prior. Therefore the adherents had to seize the moment to cultivate themselves in order to incorporate the mission of Dao. And the "Moral Maintenance Movement" was one of the activities that responded to the deities' revelation. This movement was inspired by a sense of the social disorder and moral degradation of contemporary society. The latter was diagnosed as being due to the "total transplantation of Western culture and the ignorance of our traditional culture of Dao." The revitalization of traditional ethics and idea of the unification of heaven and human is the solution for the social disorder. The mediums asserted that "the fire of the culture which has been transmitted over five thousands years cannot be extinguished in our hand." The burning sense of cultural mission to some extent corresponds to the nationalist's self-imposed role as cultural bearer. In order to promote the mission, the mediums published and distributed a "Moral Newsletter" and held three fahui, the popular Daoist ritual assembly for the protection of the nation and the appeasement of spirits, in different temples in the related area. The "Moral Maintenance Movement" in many ways echoed the New Life Movement proposed by

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⁴ The year of dingmao is the Chinese calendar year of tiangan and dizhi. Tiangan is the decimal cycle of reckoning time. Dizhi is the duodecimal cycle of reckoning the hours of a day. The combination of one character from tiangan and another from dizhi forms a term by which a year or date is known; the orderly series of such possible combinations yield sixty different terms to designate a cycle of sixty years; when one cycle ends, another begins all over again. Ding is the fourth of the ten characters in tiangan decimal cycle. Mao is the fourth of the twelve characters in dizhi duodecimal cycle. According to the cycle of tiangan and dizhi, 1987 is the year of dingmao.
Chiang Kai-shek in 1934. Deng Wenyi, member of the Blue Shirts⁵ and the drafter of "Guides for the New Life Movement," was one of the promoters besides Lai and Huang Shicheng, the mayor of Zhanghua. And Lai proposed that the promotion of this movement was also for the commemoration of the 1000th anniversary of Goddess Mazu's⁶ ascent to heaven and Chiang Kai-shek's 101st birthday. The sponsor of this movement was also instructed by the Goddess Mazu through the revelation of mediums to conduct the activities of the movement. When we juxtapose two movements together, we see interesting comparisons.

When the New Life Movement (abbr. as NLM below) was heralded by Chiang's Nanchang government, China was besieged with corruption, factionalism, and opium addiction. The changing political landscape forced the critical liberalism suggested by the intellectuals of May Fourth Movement to give way to NLM's reactionary policies. The NLM was design as a "lifestyle revolution" aimed at overcoming the "moral degeneration" and "spirit-lessness" of the Chinese people (Smith, 1998: 1188). Chiang adopted a set of beliefs that included one part the doctrines of Sun Yat-sen, one part traditional Confucianism and one part the reformist social strategies of Christianity in order to revitalize the moral fiber of the people and to create a new national consciousness. Chiang's view of Confucian virtues partially emphasizes their spirit of loyalty, notion of self-cultivation and living rectification for the revitalization of China.

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⁵ The Blue Shirts were organized in the 1930s by a small group of young military officers and functioned as Chiang Kai-shek's 'secret police'. Members of the Blue Shirts wore shirts of coarse blue cotton and pledged themselves to lives of ascetic rigor. They considered fascist doctrines the best cure for corrupt China. They also provided most of the cadres of the New Life Movement.

⁶ Mazu is one of the most popular deities in Taiwan. She is the patron goddess of the sea and fisherman. In 1987, worshipers celebrated the 1,000th anniversary of Mazu's ascent to heaven with a round-the-island parade of her image.
Chiang proposed the four traditional virtues of politeness (li), righteousness (yi), integrity (lian), and self-respect (chi) as the fundamental guide for people's lives.⁷ And the cadres of NLM adopted a wide range of mass communications to spread the spirit of NLM. In Chiang's own words:

What is the New Life Movement that I now propose? Stated simply, it is to militarize thoroughly the lives of the citizens of the entire nation so that they can cultivate courage and swiftness, the endurance of suffering and a tolerance for hard work, and especially the habit and ability of unified action, so that they will at any time sacrifice for the nation (Chiang Kai-shek, quoted from Fairbank & Feuerwerker, 1986: 146)

In other words, traditional Confucian virtues were considered "a moral ingredient that would contribute to the cohesiveness of the Chinese people as they moved forward to a new society" (Ibid., p.146).

Moreover, Chiang attempted to build a thoroughly regimented and militarized society by extending his controls down to the local level and trivia of people's daily lives including the length of women's hem lines and the rectification of such undisciplined acts as spitting, urinating, or smoking in public, casual sexual liaisons, and provocative clothing (Spence, 1990:415). In "The Meaning and Goal of the New Life Movement"

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⁷ It is interesting to point out that in 1928 when Nationalist Party just came to power, they initiated several campaigns to suppress various kinds of "superstition," including old cosmological beliefs and practices of fortune telling. They also ordered the abolition of official Confucian rites in the names of "modernity." The principles of Confucius was considered despotic and vestiges of absolutism that should be effaced from the memory of citizen (Smith, 1998: 1187). A few years later when China was in a state of crisis both within and without, the ancient Confucian virtues became the cure of the degrading society.
Chiang proposed that "the contemporary Chinese live a life of filth, laziness, decadency and savageness. This is not humans' life, we can only call it 'the life of ghosts'" (cited from Huang, 1998: 170). Chiang's narrative constructed a grotesque image of people's lives that needed to be disciplined (Ibid., p.190). The daily life of people became the target of critique and the survival of China was connected with its revolution. Deng Wenyi also suggested that "the success of the New Life Movement is the success of the revolution. And the success of the revolution leads to the enrichment and strengthening of China. Otherwise, the failure of the New Life Movement is the failure of the revolution. It is also the destruction of China" (Ibid., p.175). With the curious combination of serious national revitalization and a minute focus of private lives, no wonder Thomson characterizes NLM as a movement that "attempted to revitalize the nation by the toothbrush, mousetrap, and flyswatter" (quoted from Huang, 1998: 170).

Fifty-three years later, after Chiang has deceased for twelve years, Deng Wenyi, the former member of ascetic Blue Shirts who withdrew to Taiwan with the Nationalist government, announced the much smaller-scaled Moral Maintenance Movement in a middle but not central county of Taiwan with the incorporation of local government and religious groups. From Nanchang to Zhanghua, the corresponding movements have ebbed away from center to margin. The power of exclusion endowed to the headwaters debilitates, which leads to the heterochromous scenes of the downstream. Among the extraordinary scenes, fahui, the popular Daoist ritual assembly, constitutes the most noticeable of such activities. These fahui were held for the "protection of the nation and appeasement of departed souls" in three villages and towns of Zhanghua county. Although the "regulated attitude, right conduct, clear discrimination and real self-consciousness" proposed by Chiang are still emphasized in the new version of NLM,
the local religious rituals and festivals become its new body of actualization. Deng participated in these activities as the officiant or adjutant officiant of religious rituals and he pointed out that the Moral Maintenance Movement could be considered as the contemporary version of the New Life Movement. In these religious rituals people prayed for the prosperity of the nation and the peacefulness of people. They also offer sacrifices, especially for the general deliverance of the ancestors of the Chinese nation and the spirits of the brave departed fighting for the nation during its wars. These activities were also partaken by mediums for the advent of deities. The solemnity of the ritual was offset by the agility of the medium while he or she was possessed by the deity. The possessed medium pronounced the admonitions of the deities and offered healing services for the needy.

At first glance, the moral tone of this movement and the way morality was promoted—by the promulgation of written propaganda—are almost a reiteration of the governmental version. However, the religious appeal of peacefulness and the magical healing of illness overflow the bounded regime of nationalist concerns and constitute an interesting re-writing of the nationalist agenda. The mediums' self-critique and image-rebuilding echoes Chiang's stigmatization of people's lives fifty-three years ago in the New Life Movement. The project of the mediums' reformation emphasizes clean appearance, dignified deportment, and proper conduct, which is very like the Blue Shirts'--the core cadres of the NLM--pledge to lead ascetic lives, including rejecting gambling, whoring, or excessive consumption of food and drink (Spence, 1990: 416). The grotesque image of people's private lives constructed by Chiang's government is also like the Mediums' self-critique. It seems that mediums are the last uncivilized citizens that live the "lives of the ghosts" characterized by Chiang. While the NLM shifted the
focus of national building from its contemporary difficulties to the militarized discipline of all citizens, which made excuse for the incompetence of the nationalist government and consolidated its power (Huang, 1998: 172), the mediums strive to win their lost respect by their self-diagnosis and self-rectification. And the model propounded by the NLM of channeling the unruly forces in a more effective direction proves to be the best. Moreover, as long as the mediums become the co-promoters of the contemporary movement with the "minister of the preceding emperor," they turn into the inheritors of the national revolution. It is correct for Deng to say that the NLM in Nanchang could set an example for the Moral Maintenance Movement in Zhanghua. The latter witnessed the farcicality of the former and contributed its self-imposed seriousness and imposing goal to "save" the former. If such a pastiche of the mimetically grand moral discourse, the cooperation of the spiritual realms and the performance of the medium, does not really overturn the validity of the nationalist position, its blunt caricature at least transfuses a certain degree of vigor into the latter’s anemia. And we should not regard the mediums as the last uncivilized people to be disciplined and reformed in the project of national revolution. On the contrary, the Mediums’ self-inducing reformation teaches us the art of "citationality." Compared to other dissent groups or members of the different social movements who challenge the policies of government by direct confrontation and seek to unmask governmental mystification, the mediums’ “echo” of the ruling party’s agenda is more like what de Certeau characterizes as “poaching” or as the tactics of “la perruque,” which plays its own game with others’ resources. As history-writing, it takes full tactical advantage of that semiotic quality that Derrida has called “citationality”:
Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be cited, put in between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchorage (ancrage). This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly, it is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called “normal.” What would a mark be that could not be cited? Or one whose origins would not get lost along the way? (Derrida, 1988: 12, emphasis in original, quoted from Schein, 1999)

The mediums cite the dominant discourses in the writing of their mission statement. Dissenters seek to bring statesmen down from their lofty heights. Mediums proceed forward to the opposite extreme in deifying them. While Chiang Kai-shek writes two supplements to Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles, the mediums derive their special version of post-hoc discourses from listening to the ‘spirit’ of Sun Yat-sen. In their journal they sometimes recorded the “spiritual texts” which were produced by the spirit of deities, Sun Yat-sen and even Confucius. And this leads to our next topic, the deification of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek.

The Deification of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek

Sun Yat-sen is considered the father of the Chinese republican revolution. "Although he died in 1925, his 'spirit' is always with us"—this cliché that has been taught over and over again in Sun's memorial ceremonies is indeed a truth for the mediums who experienced the advent of his "spirit." For example, his spirit visited all the time in the ritual of planchette performed by Honghua Yuan, a religious group founded in 1969 by officials and professors from Mainland who follow the Nationalist Party to Taiwan.
They propose that Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek have ascended to heaven and become deities of the reverend restorers of China. Sun's and Chiang's spirits visited Honghua Yuan many times and revealed various messages by mediums. The messages include their experience of revolution, the way to revitalize China, and the analysis of the contemporary political situation (Cheng, 1988: 351). For example, Sun's spirit visited Honghua Yuan on National Day in 1970 and wrote an article titled "the Way of Revolution" via mediums:

Today is the day for the revival of our great Chinese tradition. The Chinese people celebrate this day whether they are inside or outside the country. Even the people inside the iron curtain of the Mainland celebrate this day in public or in private. If we want to express it, we can say that the whole world joins in the rejoicing. Tonight I am invited by the Holy Buddha of Salvation to visit Honghua Yuan to preach. What I am going to preach is not the way followed by the Most High of Five Denominations, but the way I inherited from the mercifulness of the Most High of Five Denominations in order to deliver the nation from its oppressive state. My way is the revolution that follows the will the Heaven and corresponds to the wish of people....The way of revolution can be divided into three periods. The revolution of Xia and Zhou Dynasties is the revolution of monarchs. They fought for the public but turned into selfish needs in the end. The revolution of Han and Ming Dynasties is the revolution of ordinary people. They were sincere in the beginning but turned false in the end. The revolution I led is the revolution of the citizen. It begins with sincerity and ends with righteousness. Today I am invited by the Buddha to preach the way of revolution to you. You should be able to understand my heart since you are all my disciples. As to what happened after I passed away and what will be in the future, some of you have experienced or meditated upon them, therefore you do not need to wait for my revelation. All you need to know is that the benevolent person has no enemy and tyrannical rule is destined to be extinguished. It will be beneficial for you to meditate upon my words. (quoted from Cheng, 1988: 352, my

8 Honghua Yuan proclaims the unification of five denominations including Confucianism, Christianity, Daoism, Buddhism and Mohammedanism. This idea has been very popular in the
trans.)

Chiung's spirit also visited Honghua Yuan on April 14th, 1976, around the first anniversary of his demise, and sent the following messages:

The reverend restorer of China is my titular honor in Heaven. I leave a message on the anniversary in order to thank you for offering anniversary sacrifice for me. Now I can console you all by telling you that I have reported the crime of Mao to the Most High. Your wish and will on earth are now correspondent with the people who are against Mao in Mainland. Therefore the extinction of Mao can be expected very shortly by the unification of Heaven and earth. When we join the forces within and without, the recovery of the Mainland will be achieved. If the Russian Communists still covet the eastern north of the Mainland, eventually they will be overthrown by our national righteousness. You can wait and see." (Ibid., p.352)

The messages sent by the spirits of Sun and Chiang were formulated like the message from the president issued on important occasions, just like the way they spoke when they were still alive. The deification of Sun and Chiang is further elaborated in the Mediums' Association. According to their understanding, Sun Yat-sen is not only an ordinary person to be deified after he was deceased. He is the reincarnation of the spirit of Jiuwu tianzun (the spirit of the royal prerogative). When Wu, one of the cadres of contemporary appointed time, explained the Mediums' contemporary mission to me, he said:

The contemporary task for mediums is to procure the peacefulness of the strait (between Mainland China and Taiwan). Furthermore, we want to realize the goal of Datong (great unity), the ideal of the Father of the Republic (Sun Yat-sen). From the perspective of the popular religious sects since the 1930s.
realm of spirits, although the Father of our Nation is known by his name Sun Yat-sen, actually he was the spirit of Jiuwu tianzun descended to the world. The spirit of Jiuwu tianzun experiences multiple reincarnations in various dynasties. When the spirit was reincarnated as Sun, he was ordained to overthrow the Manchu dynasty and imperialism in order to lead us to enter the stage of democracy. Democracy is a trend. It is also the direction of Heaven's intention. However, probably because the epoch has not matured yet, China still has calamity to face. And this is the reason why there are so many problems and conflicts between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Sun is given different celestial titles in Honghua Yuan and the Mediums' Association. This is not uncommon in popular religion since each group or sect adopts a different "channel" to connect with the spirit and therefore acquires various images of the spirit.

Wu's explanation might not be shared by every member of the association, but the connection of an important political figure with the reincarnation of certain spirit is very prevalent in popular religion. The peculiarity of the Association's understanding is the incorporation of Heaven's will and the earth's order. And this understanding leads to the Mediums' special role in human civilization. Furthermore, mediums are not only the senders of a spirit's message; they make the mediation between spirits possible and thus have an important impact on the cosmic order. Lai once told me of an episode during a mediums' meeting in which the mediums helped the departed souls of former political figures to solve their entangled complex of gratitude toward and resentment of each other:

Just when Mainland China had opened up, one time during our mediums' meeting for the encountering of the spirits, the spirits of Mao, Chiang and the Emperor of Japan descended. The spirit of Mao tried to take revenge on Japan for the Nanjing Massacre by the initiating of anti-Japanese sentiment. He also asked the Emperor of Japan to account for his crime. Since Chiang and the Emperor of Japan were
brothers in their prior lives, the Emperor of Japan asked Chiang to mediate this issue for him. Chiang proposed that Mao could not take revenge by taking one life as payment for another since the Heaven could not allow this happen. Chiang suggested Japan repay its guilt by using its economic power to help Mainland China move toward its modernization.

The antagonism and resentment seems solved too easily. But we have to remember that it is the settlement of the spiritual realm. And the harmony of spiritual realm is important for the peacefulness on earth. Lai says that like the human world, the spiritual realm also has to face the issue of ethnic unification. And the continuous conflict between the Mainland China and Taiwan is represented by the antagonism of the spirits of Mao and Chiang. According to Lai, Mao is reincarnated by the spirit of a serpent and Chiang is reincarnated by the spirit of a turtle. Their antagonism must be solved by Sun, the reincarnation of Ziwei Star. However, since their conflict has not settled yet, the hostility between the Mainland and Taiwan persists. The antagonism of ethnic groups constitutes the shared karma for the Chinese nation. And mediums are obliged to resolve this special karma in order to help the Chinese nation to enter its next stage of civilization. Furthermore, as followers of the doctrine of Datong (great unity) they desire the universal order of harmony. The Mediums' intervention is characterized by their unyielding obsession for the deliverance of people's suffering and achievement of universal peace. Therefore the boundary between antagonistic nation-states is easy to abolish and they can even receive complaint of grievance from the Japanese emperor.

If we want to epitomize the entangled complex between Japan and China, the Taiwanese mediums indeed choose a very unusual perspective. Rather than focusing on the departed souls who were killed in the Nanjing Massacre, they attend to the affliction
of the old Emperor of Japan. Why? Does the fifty-year experience of being "Japanese" makes the Taiwanese mediums have more sympathy for the Emperor of Japan?  

Do the mediums only seek for an easy reconciliation and ignore the unforgettable crime committed by Japan? Neither explanation is fully convincing. Seeing the heavy anguish of people slaughtered in massacre through the comparatively light grievance of Emperor of Japan indeed reveals the unbearable heaviness of the former. Compared to the suffering of the Emperor of Japan who was able to find a voice, the unaccountable silence of the slaughtered mass is actually more powerful and devastating. Since the anguish of faceless mass is frozen in silence, only through its deflection are we able to take a temporary glance at it. Furthermore, the long overdue public acknowledgement of Japan's wartime responsibility was not admitted until 1993 by Hosokawa, the Prime Minister of Japan. The mediums' easy resolution actually did not dissolve the wartime responsibility of the Emperor of Japan. Contrarily, they related the lingering illness of the Emperor of Japan because of his crime. And only his promise of future compensation was able to rescue him from suffering punishment.

Chiang's mediation between Mao and the Emperor of Japan is beyond the logic and imagination of our worldly understanding. For the mediums, however, the consequential effect of the mediums' meeting can be validated by evidence "in the world." The negotiation meeting with the Emperor of Japan has happened several times. You Meiling, one of the most experienced mediums of the association, the Executive Director of the Natural Law Foundation and one of the key figures in the founding of the Mediums' Association, mentioned another episode that dealt with the resentment between

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9 Taiwan was ceded to Japan by Qing Dynasty in 1895. When Japan surrendered in the World War II, Taiwan was returned to China in 1945.
Chiang's troops and the Emperor of Japan.

The Emperor of Japan was very ill before he passed away. He had lost his consciousness but still lay in bed. Why he could not die? That's because he was undergoing the trial. In our meeting his soul visited us to complain of his grievance and to wonder why he was not able to die. That was because the souls of the soldiers who were killed in the war harassed him and asked him to return justice to them. Finally he asked their head--Chiang Kai-shek--to negotiate with him. I represented Chiang's soul and used different languages. Sometimes I spoke Japanese, sometimes I spoke with the accent of Zhejiang Province where Chiang was from. We conversed with each other as in a play or the confrontation of two parties in a trial. The Emperor of Japan said that he hoped the souls of these victims would stop haunting him. But the souls of these victims confronted him and asked him why he bullied them so terribly and brought so much infliction on them. They did not have anywhere to appeal. Therefore they wanted to take revenge. When Chiang negotiated with the Emperor of Japan, he said that you could only persuade others by your virtues. And the resentment you produced could only be solved by virtues. Chiang's soul then talked to the souls of soldiers and asked them to "return good for evil." They calmed down after listening to Chiang. These soldiers came to Taiwan with Chiang. Of course they must obey Chiang's order. You need to solve your resentment by "returning good for evil." And they stopped harassing the soul of the Emperor of Japan and let him go. After the conversations, it was told that the Emperor of Japan should be able to pass away in three days. How did we know that what we experienced in the meeting was true? We watched TV. And we really knew of his death three days later through the report of TV news. It sounded impossible but this is how things happened.

Again, the Emperor of Japan appeared first on the stage as the afflicted soul. Next we hear the roaring protest of victim soldiers. Then the resentment of the sufferers

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10 When the Japan surrendered without condition, Chiang advocated the spirit of "returning good for evil" and did not ask compensation from Japan. Chiang's attitude was later propagated as the representation of his benevolence and magnanimity.
dramatically appeased by Chiang's famous "returning good for evil." The magical pacification nevertheless follows the ways of the world. The resentful souls of the soldiers still listened to the command of their general. And the appeasement would not have come so easily had the soldiers' loyalty not persisted through life to death. The soldiers' anachronistic loyalty points to an outdated myth--the mythical status of Chiang--once shared by whole society by the painstaking promotion of the nationalist party. The success of Chiang's (or Chiang's soul's) command therefore marks the last territory where the myth still lasts. And these soldiers become the last descendants of the myth carriers who are abandoned by the succeeding demystified society. The Mediums' effective intervention cannot be regarded as a parodic show of Chiang's cliche of "returning good for evil." Rather, the mediums reactivated the myth these soldiers followed throughout their life and turned the cliche into magic. These soldiers were probably the only people who adhered to Chiang's proposal since they had nothing left except being "good" to fight against the evil inflicted on them.

There are always some absent figures in every play that constitute a curious lacuna. For example, the Taiwanese soldiers who fought for the Emperor of Japan or the comfort women never appear in the above theater. Does their silence imply the impossibility of mediating suffering? Or since they never live in the center of myth, therefore can their distorted lives only be seen through the debris of myth? I asked You Meiling why they did not receive messages from the resentful souls of the February 28 Incidents. She gave me an interesting answer. She said the February 28 Incident was a repressed history that was recognized later. Therefore even had they connected with these resentful souls before, these souls might not have able to express their suffering in the
term of the February 28 Incident. These souls only expressed how they were attacked or raped in battle or ethnic conflicts. And the mediums resolved the resentment for these souls by religious means immediately after they listened to their suffering. Her answer reminds me that there even exist some resentful souls that are unable to point out their suffering through a collective designation before the society is able to recognize the collective dimension for them. Accordingly, the capacity of a society (or the human realm) to recognize or to identify its various collective oppressed voices also constitutes a very important part of the Mediums' redemptive mission. In other words, the recognition or identification of collective suffering makes the Mediums' operative intervention possible. And the recognition of specific suffering is usually based upon the breakdown of a specific myth. We don't hear voices of the comfort women or other less attention-getting suffering souls in Mediums' focal mediation, probably just because we do not work enough to listen to those more feeble voices.

The deification of Sun or Chiang does not really change their worldly identities. In other words, the spirits of Sun and Chiang are still expected to participate into their not-yet-realized revolutionary goal. The famous end of Sun's will-- "The revolution has not yet succeeded, therefore the comrades still need to work hard"--unexpectedly foretells his future, or his spirit's future. Sun's spirit and Chiang's spirit should be among the happier spirits partaking of the long revolution. There are still many other unhappy departed souls waiting to appear on the stage of revolution. And we will encounter them in the mediums' special meeting--huihe yanyi.

_Huihe Yanyi_

The mediums' meeting for the visiting of various departed souls or spirits has a specific
title called huihe yanyi. Huihe means "to meet" or "to assemble" and yanyi originally means the historical novel or romance. In the previous years since the founding of the Association, mediums gathered on the 20th day of every month at Huangyi gong (temple) in Taipei County. Mediums who participated in the meeting felt the strong pressure of expression (of the departed souls or spirits) through some physical and psychological indication. If the need for expression was repressed, mediums would experience various physical and psychological indispositions including stomach ailments, weakness, pain, crankiness, and confusion until they sang, spoke or danced for the expression of the spirits. The more the spirits were able to be expressed, the stronger and healthier the mediums became. Before the start of the meeting, mediums did not know what spirits would arrive. Therefore they sat quietly and waited in the beginning of the meeting until the spirits visited. Sometimes if a certain medium received message before the meeting, he or she could validate the message by the corresponding messages received by other mediums in the meeting.

According to the mediums, the main goal of such meetings is to pacify the resentment of the departed soul. By resolving the karmic cause and effect for the spirits and settling disputes in the spiritual realm, peacefulness can be restored both in the human realm and spiritual realm. Seeking for peacefulness has been a time-honored concern for the Daoist tradition and Chinese popular religion. In the Mediums' Association, the mediums identify themselves as just such religious specialists. One of the most important roles is that of being the "peacemakers in a turbulent world." While they put a lot of work into the consolation of the departed souls, they pay special attention to the appeasement of failed generals, soldiers, and those who were killed in the revolution or in one or another of the wars of the Chinese past. These departed souls are former political
figures who are special contributors to the turmoil of different dynasties. Therefore the mediums associate them with the contemporary political instability. For the mediums, the contemporary political turmoil is a symptom which indicates the unsolved resentment of those departed souls. When their resentments are appeased, the order of the human realm can be restored. The mediums instruct these souls in the law of heavenly justice. They encouraged these souls to ‘cultivate’ themselves by accumulating merit, for example, by performing good deeds or by helping the human beings with their efficacious power; thus they will be rewarded by acquiring certain official positions in the realm of Heaven.

Although the mediums do not articulate a specific eschatology like religious Daoism or the sectarian religions in Chinese history, they seem to share a similar religious sensitivity to the calamity of changes. Unlike Daoist eschatology, which appeals to the cosmological model and sees the world as “an unceasing recurrence of fateful calamity and salvation from calamity” (Li, 1996), the mediums understand the instability by appeal to a social-psychological model of resentment and consider the origin of disorder as the outcome of entangled karmic retribution. In order to appease the resentment, the mediums yield their bodies to the departed souls during their meetings. Thus the departed souls obtain a further chance to solve their entangled relationships with each other:

During these meetings, when the departed souls encountered the spirits of their relative, they cried hard and told each other of the sorrow of separation. Sometimes if the departed soul encountered another soul that owed him/her a debt, he/she would ask the debtor to offer an account, or ask the judge to restore justice for him/her. Sometimes the related spirits would mediate between those who were in debt to each other; the resentment was thus solved. Then they could cooperate with each other to
accomplish the mission of salvation for this specific period. (Lai, 1989, my trans.)

Huihe yanyi therefore can be interpreted as a special kind of encounter that aims to write or rewrite history as the collective record of the dialogues between descended spirits. The above episode and the example mentioned in the previous section about the confrontation of Chiang, Mao and the Emperor of Japan indicates that the action of writing history is not only limited to writing the past, but also extends to creating the history of the future. Thus resentment can be mediated and solved. It seems that the mediums twist the dominant discourse by taking it seriously and taking it to its extreme. This is a mystification of mystification or duplication of mystification. When the myth is duplicated, it paradoxically breaches its original bounds and jumps into an unexpected trajectory, even though its leap still has to follow the rule of gravity.

According to You Meiling, huihe yanyi is like a Taiwanese opera without script:

We are like the actors. The actors perform their drama according to the script. But we don’t need the script, nor do we need rehearsal. We just go on the stage and play the drama directly. For example, there is one drama about royal resentment in Sung Dynasty. It’s a story about the real and the false prince. Do you remember there is an imperial concubine who was a victim of this event? She became blind because of suffering too much. She was the mother of the real prince. When her son became the Emperor and recognized her as his mother, she was still blind. When we “played” this episode, the medium who “played” the role of the imperial concubine became really blind during the drama. Our meeting replayed the drama. And it was ended by the judgement. Thus the resentment could be solved. That is the reason why we replay the drama. Through the resolution the disturbing spirit can be appeased. Some people say we mediums are like fools because what we have done is just like the work of nameless heroes. Our purpose is to settle the spiritual realm, not to let the unappeased spirits disturb the world.
The analogy of the play also helps us to rethink the question of historical writing. The play You Meiling mentioned is called "Exchanging the Prince with the Leopard Cat." It is a popular drama based on an anecdote about the courtly power struggle in Song Dynasty. And it is rewritten as the script for various local operas. This drama has been performed many times by the Taiwanese Opera at the Festival of Temples and on TV. Such a drama is not the cultural heritage of which the official discourse feels proud, but it nevertheless stores the folk memory of the vicissitudes of dynasties. We all learn the great success of the revolution and the founding of the Republic from our school textbooks. We all learn that the success of revolution swept away the rotten empire and restored power to the People. So we are our masters now. This textbook perspective was not free from attack by certain intellectuals who proposed that the success of revolution did not necessarily lead to the "modern-mindedness" of people generally. And here the mediums hold a similar idea. Compared to the official historical writing which fixes the scope of history between the puritanical present of the Republic and an inaccessible ancient Golden time, the folk's works of memory pay attention to those feudal and backward memories which the Nationalist strives to expel. For them, the past has not really passed yet. Thus the historical drama of power struggle has to be replayed in mediums' meetings until resentment is settled and justice is restored.

Furthermore, adopting the term "play" instead of "being possessed" to describe the spiritual meeting, You Meiling shows us the importance of understanding the phenomenon of mediumship from the perspective of doing and making rather than locating it in a state of personal consciousness. Following Foucault's methodological reflection on the "historicity of forms of experience," mediumship can be explored as a practice of "thought" that operates in a certain social relation with specific historical
By “thought” I mean what establishes, in a variety of possible forms, the play of true and false, and consequently constitutes the human beings as a knowing subject; in other words, it is the basis for accepting or refusing rules, and constitutes human beings as social and juridical subjects; it is what establishes the relation with oneself and with others, and constitutes the human being as ethical subject... “Thought,” understood in this way, is not to be sought only in theoretical formulations such as those of philosophy or science; it can and must be analyzed in every manner of speaking, doing, or behaving in which the individual appears and acts as knowing subject, as ethical or juridical subject, as subject conscious of himself and others. In this sense, thought is understood as the very form of action—as action insofar as it implies the play of true and false, the acceptance or refusal of rules, the relation to oneself and others. The study of forms of experience can thus proceed from an analysis of “practice”—discursive or not—as long as one qualifies that word to mean the different systems of action insofar as they are inhabited by thought as I have characterized it here. (Foucault, 1997: 200-201)

Moreover, the historical materials with which the mediums work breach the boundary between history and fiction. The anecdote replayed in their meeting may not be a true historical event, but the power struggle it describes, the moral meaning it teaches and the attitudes it condenses are no less “true” than the historical event. If the history written in the official discourse can be considered a fiction of progression, then the version of the mediums is epitomized as a fiction of resentment. The moral tone of the progressive version is tempered in the Mediums' version, which frames history within the blunt and vacant desire for power. The progressive version follows the economy of frugality since every element of anti-progression has to be expelled. For the medium, however, the game of justice has to be played in an economy of excess. The heavenly recompense theoretically has to be limitless in order to be able to pacify all remorse and unfulfilled
desire. In the design of compensation, morality and self-cultivation are the mediating
links between unfulfilled desire and its possible transformation. To be is to be in the
battlefield, for human beings and for spiritual beings. To be also means being-with.
The departed soul cannot cultivate itself without the body of the medium. The medium
cannot fulfill his or her mission without helping these resentful souls. The unification of
the medium and the departed soul represents the sharing of each other’s merits and errors.
By the bearing of the ancestors, or other departed souls’ merits and errors, the medium
and these spirits constitute a body of ethical and spiritual exercise. Some of the
departed souls participate in this exercise voluntarily. Others are still entangled in their
resentment; thus the medium has to deal with this resentment first by transforming its
destructive power into a structured scheme of merit accumulation and spiritual
cultivation.

The combination of ethical and spiritual concern is manifested in their interpretation of
their religious task—shouyuan. According to *The Natural Law*, shouyuan is divided
into an inner aspect and an outer one. The inner dimension is an inward training of
one’s true self and of conquering one’s own wrong ideas and restraining oneself from
one’s evil inclinations. The outer aspect emphasizes the manifested actions of
performing good deeds and helping others to overcome their resentment, hatred, jealousy
and revenge. Both inner and outer ethical practices have to be understood from a
relational perspective if we want to grasp their meaning better. They can be understood
as a spiritual “team” work that needs the cooperation between the mediums and the spirits.
Such teamwork is not totally unlike Foucault’s analysis of self-examination and
confession that constitutes a “government of men by each other” (Foucault, 1997: 84). It
is “the government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations with others”
(Ibid., p.88).

_The Ritual of National Protection and Spiritual Appeasement_

The rewriting of history is a magical transformation of an undesired past. It is also a yearning for a better future. However, the better future would not arrive automatically unless the wounds of history were sutured. For the medium, the wounds of history are best represented by the haunting spirits who disturb the order of the society. In order to pacify these spirits and restore the order of society, the Mediums' Association offers elaborate rituals to spirits periodically (in spring and fall each year) and irregularly when the members are inspired to do so. The special ritual offered by the association is called huguo anling fahui, or the ritual of national protection and spiritual appeasement. _Fahui_ is a Buddhist term, originally meaning Dharma-meeting. But the rituals performed by the association are predominantly Daoist and more like the Daoist mass for departed souls called jiao (Paper, 1996: 116). The rituals are organized by the Association's Committee of huguo anling fahui, and sponsored rotationally by the Association's districts. The precise dates, focus, and sponsoring temples are chosen via divination (Ibid.). And the length of fahui can last for one day, three days, five days or seven days. According to the manual of the Association, the goal of Committee of huguo anling fahui is the determination of spiritual lineage, the resolution of collective karma, the return of the ancestral root, the co-cultivation of spirit and body, and the prosperity and peace of the nation. And the main purpose of the fahui is:

...to respectfully invite the sages, deities, realized adepts, and masters to (mediumistically) descend to the _fa_ altar to make peaceful the spirit (ling) realm, and
harmonize the source of ling, in order to serve the needs of the public. The meaning of fahui is to seek help from the upper realm to save the spirits of the dead from purgatory, to transpose the spirits of the dead to a better place and raise their status, to protect the country and the people, and create unity through a peaceful reconciliation of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. (quoted from Paper, 1996:116)

Unlike the rite of General Salvation held in July (lunar calendar) for the hungry ghosts, the association's fahui has more specific objects of pacification according to the inspiration received from the spiritual realm for the solving of contemporary social problems—e.g., the motorcycle-race gatherings of teenagers, armed crime, and the gambling problem. According to the theory of the mediums, the resentful souls disturb teenagers, hooligans or gamblers and bring about related social problems. Thus the Association's fahui helps the resentful souls to return to their spiritual lineages to cultivate themselves instead of spreading and making turbulence.

During fahui the mediums preach to the departed souls and persuade them not to take revenge for their resentment. The mediums recite scripture or write talisman, to appease the grudge of the departed souls. The contents of scripture and the way to write talismans are both inspired by deities. If the spirits are willing to renounce their grudge and to follow the way of religious cultivation, the mediums will help them by sending them to the temples that are endowed with heavenly decrees to stabilize the spiritual realm. Different departed souls will be sent to different temples, according to their karmic connection, spiritual lineage, the status of cultivation, and even nationalities or ethnicities. For example, the foreign departed souls who were killed in battle will be sent to the Christian church nearby. The departed souls of veterans will be sent to the martyrs' shrine. And some departed souls are not welcome in certain "higher" temple
until they achieve a certain moral status by the cultivation in other temple. The
talisman are used as the pass to the temples authorized by the
power of the deity. These temples become the new "homes" in which the resentful souls
can settle. While these departed souls "inhabit" in the temple, they cultivate themselves
by performing virtues through the mediums they possess. They will be assigned the
duty as the soldiers of the spiritual realm to protect the temple and the community from
the harassment of wandering ghosts, the roles they used to play. Or they will assist the
mediums in offering religious services to people, like healing illness, telling the future or
changing fortunes. The merits accumulated by these acts of virtue will be shared by the
mediums and their possessing souls. After the merits are accumulated to a certain
degree, the departed souls will be able to return to their spiritual lineages. Or they will
be received by other mediums or temples that have special karmic connections with them
in order to realize another cultivational process.

If the lifting of martial law can be considered the threshold of the liberation of various
social powers and the releasing of voices unheard before, then the unheard voices that
catch the mediums' attention are those of souls who suffered from the political turmoil.
One category of the unappeased spirits with whom they deal comprises those veterans
who were living in the dream of "recovering the lost mainland" but never got the chance
to go back before they died. According to You Meiling:

The fahui focused on the departed souls of the armed forces, especially those soldiers
who followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan and dreamed of counterattacking Mainland
China. These soldiers had been loyal to Chiang's ideology of counterattack through
their whole life. But the goal of counterattack was never realized. Therefore their
hearts are full of grudges, resentment, and fury. In the fahui I could hear their
fierceness. Sometimes I even saw their furious image full of murderous ideas.
That's because they intended to solve the problem between the Mainland and Taiwan by means of war. Therefore we had recourse to the spirit of Chiang to pacify their wrath. In our fahui for the departed souls of soldiers you could see many veterans showed up and shouted in the field of ritual. When we showed them the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen, they all quieted down and listened to them. Now that Chiang is deceased, we should seek for the peace between Mainland and Taiwan. We are originally from the same root. And siblings should not fight with each other. We should learn how to communicate rather than start a war. Their (the Mainlanders') ideology also aimed at war. So we mediums labor to mediate between them. This is what the fahui for.

The veterans from the mainland are the victims of the war. It was claimed that six hundred thousand soldiers followed the KMT government to go to Taiwan in 1949 when the KMT was defeated by the CCP. Behind the six hundred thousand soldiers there are six hundred thousand stories of bitter sorrow. Most of the soldiers were still very young men who had never left their homeland before. And they unexpectedly spent most of their lives in Taiwan with the never-fulfilled dream of "recovering the lost mainland." They lived on the dream until they died in Taiwan. Moreover, most of the lower-class soldiers lost their "real names"; consequently the appropriate rites of soul-raising for deceased person were impossible for them. Therefore their departed souls become hungry ghosts without descendants to offer worship. Unlike deities or ancestors whose spirits or souls are well tended by adherents or descendants, hungry ghosts get people's attention by haunting and harassment. They also earn the infamy of order-breakers or troublemakers who need to be appeased. These soldiers' dislocated lives are constituted

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11 According to Chao (2002), most of the lower-class soldiers were illiterate and unable to speak Mandarin. When they came to Taiwan and registered in the military force, their names were usually wrongly registered by the ignorant registrar. Or the registrar instead registered new names with politically-correct sense for them. Since the real name constitutes the material base for the identity of the ancestral line, the soldiers who carry the wrong names are theoretically unable to
of the many-layered experience of exile (Wu, 2001). When they fought for the nationalist dream, they experienced the first exile from their home. When the dream of "recovering the lost mainland" was broken, they became the anachronistic "old soldiers" who still adhered to outdated and useless values. And they are banished again by a disillusioned society. After they die they are assigned to the most marginal group of departed souls and become the cause of turbulence and objects of pacification. The unsettled diaspora who roared in the field of fahui indeed became the counterparts of their departed comrades who were drifting in the nether land. Only the statues of Sun and Chiang were able to calm them down. And the departed souls of soldiers will be sent to the martyrs' shrine. In other words, Sun and Chiang constitute one unique spiritual line beside the other religious lines like the Daoist deities or Buddhist deities.

For example, in the fahui held in 1987 for the martyrs who were sacrificed in the 1911 revolution or later battles, the altar of the nation's protection was situated beside the Buddhist altar and Daoist altar. This fahui also offered sacrifices for the ancestors of Chinese nation and the wandering ghosts who contributed to the gambling problem. Each object of sacrifice was beseeched to return to their spiritual lines.

The fahui for the departed souls of soldiers was held numerous times around the beginning years of the Mediums' Association. According to You's observation, these fahui indeed achieved their effect of pacification and many fewer resentful souls of soldiers have visited them in recent years. Why did these soldiers' souls choose to express their resentment to the mediums from the Association? You said that it was probably because their association also erected the National Flag and proposed Sun Yat-sen's thoughts of fraternity and Chiang's thoughts of justice. Ironically, for these

return to their real ancestral line through the rites appropriate for deceased people.
unsettled soldiers, Sun's fraternity and Chiang's justice are never truly realized by the ruling party for whom they sacrificed their whole lives. The unreserved loyalty demanded by the nation is rewarded with experience of deceit and betrayal (Chao, 2002). Mediums' paying attention to the dislocated soul is an indirect critique of the ruling party's policy. While the whole society wakes up from the dream of "counterattack," bids farewell to Chiang's regime and moves forward, those soldiers whose lives were deeply imprinted by Chiang's ideology become a nightmare out of tune with the contemporary society. The death of these old soldiers only indicates the withering and failing of a worthless collective memory that the society strives to wash away (Luo, 2001:18). Among the battalion march forward in order to escape from the fire of annihilation, mediums look back to the old city like Lot's wife (Genesis 19: 23-26). And the old soldiers are like the people of Sodom that are unable to respond to the enthusiastic summons of the good and disillusioned citizens to let go their outdated dream and to become the real "Taiwanese." Mediums look back, but they do not turn into a pillar of salt like Lot's wife since they have tactically incorporates the head of the old soldiers—Sun and Chiang-- into the troop of progress. Through the backward glance of the mediums, the resentful souls of old soldiers are able to be re-appropriated into the progressive march and continue their duty of "protecting our homes and defending our country." No one becomes the pillar of salt or is left behind the troops of evolution. The Mediums' story is always less cruel than the sanguine history "that we learn about."

*Pilgrimage to the Mainland*

Seeing the Mediums' writing of history as an alternative mode of official discourse
does not imply that it is a free creation of its own. The reenactment of past memories is still more or less bounded by the regime of nationalist discourse. Since "the state never stops talking"—through education, through media, through the disciplines of everyday life, political framing has constituted one thread of inscribed memory that people find hard to escape. The dislocated patriotic sentiment plus the religious sensitivity of the mediums thus leads to certain impressive events. If the resentful old soldiers from the mainland we discuss above represent a complex, an ambiguous intersection between the abandoned myth and the disillusioned void, then the "mainland frenzy" of visiting the homeland constitutes another example of complex intervention and history rewriting. When the residents of Taiwan were allowed to visit their families and relatives on the mainland in 1987, there was a period of "mainland frenzy" in Taiwan. Such a frenzy did not only come from the affection of those veterans who came to Taiwan with the Nationalist government and were separated from their families for a long time, but also reflected the success of the dislocated education of the Nationalist government. By claiming the territory of the mainland as the origin of the Chinese People and building the dream of "repelling the Communist party and recovering our homeland," the Nationalist government ironically cultivated in Taiwanese people a certain longing for a land to which they may have never been before. The great mountains and rivers in the mainland constitute the womb of Chinese traditional culture, as the textbook says. While the recovery of the lost land began to seem like an impossible dream, the particular ways that "people's innermost topographies of memory and affect" had been shaped could not be erased easily (Mueggler, 1998).

The Association has sponsored a variety of occasional pilgrimages to Mainland China since 1990 which are called the "trips to the shenzhou (the Divine Continent)"--China.
These pilgrimages include trips to the famous religious sites like the paramount sacred mountain throughout the history of Chinese religion, and famous memorial sites like the *Huanghua Gang* Mausoleum of Seventy two Martyrs, the Forbidden City, the National Palace Museum, the tomb of the Yellow Emperor, the Yellow River, and the Great Wall, etc. The members of pilgrimages include mediums and their adherents. The Association's magazine has published many photographs of these trips. Besides the introductory words about the place of the sites, sometimes we see spiritual poems composed by the mediums during the trips. Different sites were inhabited by various spirits that gave the mediums different inspirations. For example, in the Altar of Heaven in Beijing where the emperors used to offer sacrifice, one Medium's poem treated how the descendants of the Yellow Emperor gathered together in the middle land (i.e. China) and continued the Chinese orthodox line of the Dao. In the Thirteenth Imperial Mausoleum of the Ming Dynasty, another Medium's poem treated how the karma created from the imperial violence should be resolved by the accumulation of merits, and how Sun Yat-sen was leading the restoration of the ancient way and that we needed to cooperate with each other. Most of the sites mediums visited were the most popular sites visited by the tourists from Taiwan, especially those sites with Chinese historical significance. Some of the sites were visited by mediums for special religious goals, which will be discussed in the following.

The trip to the Mainland was inspired by deities in Taiwan. According to Lai, the trips of the Mainland was inspired by the order of the realm of wuji to realize the Way of Sun Yat-sen:

"Sun founded the modern Chinese nation. But it was divided into the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China. Hence the reunification of the Mainland
and Taiwan constitutes the main concern of his spirit. This is also the reason why the Mediums' Association mediates the conflicts between Mao and Chiang so many times in the mediums' meetings. Since the Mainland proposes an atheist idea, the messages from heaven are sent to Taiwan. The message from heaven proposes the idea of peace. The Chinese people can no longer fight with each other or start a war. China has undergone too many battles for thousands of years and has accumulated too much karma. The message from heaven asks us to stop hating each other and to unite together. Many people have sacrificed their lives because of the conflict between Mao and Chiang. Therefore Heaven has managed some ways to resolve the resentment of these departed souls. These resentful souls are sent to various sacred mountains according to their spiritual lineages in order to cultivate themselves. When they become the soldiers of spiritual realm, they endeavor to protect the peace of China. When the Mainland opened, the deities of Taiwan contrived to influence the deities of the Mainland to realize the contemporary religious mission of Chinese Renaissance and World Peace. The deities from Taiwan traveled to the Mainland through mediums and preached to the deities of the Mainland about the idea of peace and reunification. This is a great ideal. Although it is easily to be regarded as fantastic and absurd."

The "absurd" ideal nevertheless conforms to the Mediums' correspondent understanding of the spiritual realm and the human realm. According to the theories of the mediums, the harmonization of the spiritual realm between the mainland and Taiwan contributes to the peacefulness between them. Therefore the communication of the deities between the Mainland the Taiwan constitutes a primary part of their religious task. You, the leading medium in the tourist group, describes her sense of mission as a peace-maker through the instruction of the Goddess Chen Jinggu (The Lady of Linshui), and she makes an analogy between her state of mind and a heroine of Chinese history: Wang Zhaojun (53B.C. -?). Wang Zhaojun was sent to the ruler of the Xiongnu—a powerful nomadic tribe in Mongolia on China’s northwestern frontier—by the Han emperor in order to maintain peaceful relations between China and the borderland tribes:
I came from a temple in the eastern part of Taiwan. I've never thought that I would go to Taipei one day. There were so many people who visited me and asked for help when I was at my original temple. So I thought that I would always stay there like a frog staying at the bottom of its well. Well, when time passed, the patron deity of our temple, the Goddess Chen Jinggu, gave me a command, saying that it was time for me to do something for the public. I did not know what she meant by offering service for the public. But I remembered when I left the temple, I wrapped myself with the national flag and sang the popular song 'Wang Zhaojun.' And I was grief-stricken. My master helped me to wrap myself in the national flag with the national emblem on my back. Singing 'Wang Zhaojun' made me cry without stopping. I felt the distress of "recovering the lost nation." I did not have much formal education, but the Goddess told me that "the burden is heavy and the road is long" at that moment. I started crying again when I heard her words. I cried so hard, it seemed that I was facing a pretty turbulent situation, and she asked me to be a peace-maker, just like Wang Zhaojun was asked to be the emissary for the harmony between China and its neighbor. The concrete job she wanted me to do was to harmonize the spiritual realm.

The story of heroine Wang Zhaojun is famous because of the popular song "Wang Zhaojun" which describes the heroine's state of mind when she had to leave her homeland and depart to a barbarian land. The song has become increasingly popular with the spread of TV sets from 1970s to the present. Singing this song is a challenge because it amalgamates solemnity and distress. The moods it expresses are dramatic. The sense of distress is expressed by the tour it relates, which moves from the middle land (i.e. China) to the border and from the border into an unknown area. The mission of peace-making is solemn; quoting the Goddess's words: "the burden is heavy and the road is long." In Chinese history, the women who were sent to the "barbarian" land not only function as peace-makers, but also bear the responsibility of "cultivating the
barbarians with Chinese culture.” When You adopts the analogy of Wang Zhaojun to
describe her mission, she does not consider her tour as a move from the center to the
periphery since she describes her original state as a frog in the bottom of the wall. But
the sense of committing herself to a goal which serves the public through the sacrifice of
self is similar.

The general purpose of the Mediums’ trip to the Mainland was to meet the spirits of the
Mainland with goodwill mission. Some mediums told me that some of the spirits were
expelled from the Mainland to Taiwan during Cultural Revolution. Since the Mainland
was more open, they would help these spirits to return to their homeland. Some of the
adherents followed the mediums to the pilgrimage in order to resolve the karmic
connection they had with the spirits of the Mainland. In 1989, the first trip to the
"Divine Continent," the mediums visited the Forbidden City and the Altar of Heaven in
Beijing, and the Lingyin si (temple) in Hangzhou. The more special site was the
Mausoleum of Seventy-two Martyrs in Huanghua Gang Commemoration Park visited on
the memorial days for these martyrs. When the mediums visited this historic relic of
revolution, You brought a national flag of the Republic with her and constituted an
impressive scene:

When I went to the mainland I brought the national flag with me. Of course the
mainland could not accept our flag. Some people told me that it was dangerous for
me to bring our national flag to the mainland. I answered that if the deity
commanded me to do so, I would do it. I brought the national flag to the
Mausoleum of the Seventy-two Martyrs (for overthrowing the Qing dynasty and
founding the Republic). I spoke Mandarin automatically when I was there. I gave
those souls a talk about the thought of Sun Yat-sen and explored the issue of the great
peacefulness of the world. I cannot remember every detail of this talk. Generally
speaking it was about the spirit of Sun Yat-sen. When I gave the talk, their
policeman came to me. I told him that we were compatriots and brothers. We all came from the same blood. And I was coming back to my mother country. He accepted my argument! So I was not sent to the police station. When I was in a dangerous situation like this, I told myself that as long as the deity wanted to use my body, I would give it to her without any hesitation. Even though other people might beat me to death, I did not care. People would say I behaved like a fool. For me it is a sense of mission. Surely some [mediums] can use their gift to make money. I cannot accept such a kind of utilitarianism. For me if you want to be a person who serves the deity, you must have a compassionate heart. Otherwise it is impossible for you to keep going on.

The heroes who sacrificed were sacrificed for the utopian vision of Sun Yat-sen. For the mediums, they constitute another category of unappeased spirits like the departed souls of the old soldiers we mentioned above. Bringing the national flag of the Republic and talking about the thought of Sun Yat-sen in front of their tombs is not only an act of pacification but also an affirmation of their ideal. In the official discourse these revolutionary heroes have been put forward as the exemplars of the Taiwanese people time and again. While they are ossified by nationalist discourse, You's talk of the thought of Sun Yat-sen in front of their tombs can be considered a counter-movement that reenacts the original time of revolution. Instead of speaking for the souls of these heroes, You spoke to them. In other words, she represented the spirit of the ideal rather than the departed soul. This is one example of the Mediums' role as a teacher. Many earlier studies of Taiwanese mediums, which locate them in the context of healing, more or less ignore this important aspect of their roles. They do not only heal by appealing to the supernatural power, they also heal by teaching. And teaching is always related to a certain kind of looking-forward that unleashes the fetters of the past.

In 1990, the association sponsored another trip to the Mount Putuo in Zhejiang
Province, the Temple of Lady Linshui in Fujian Province, the Mount Tai in Shandong Province. The main goal of this trip was to participate the memorial festival for the birthday of Confucius in Qufu, where Confucius was born. This festival proposed to achieve a peaceful unification between the Mainland and Taiwan by the foundation of Confucian precepts. When they visited Mount Tai, You was inspired by the deity of Tai and started to sing and dance with the gesture and voice of the deity. This spectacular performance was recorded by BBC for forty minutes. The mediums were apparently very proud of this.

In 1991, several members of the Mediums’ Association took part in a Tomb Sweeping Festival pilgrimage to the tomb of the Yellow Emperor in Shanxi Province of the mainland. The Yellow Emperor is the mythic founder of Chinese civilization. Visiting his tomb symbolizes the action of “pursuing the root and exploring the origin”—the subtitle used by one mainland newspaper to describe the Taiwanese people’s tour of “returning home.” The report of this participation in Ancestor Worship on the mainland in The Natural Law was composed of excerpts from mainland newspapers. According to the newspaper, this pilgrimage involved the participation of 15,000 people including about 100 people from Taiwan. One mainland newspaper uses the title “Originally from the Same Root” to report the “Taiwanese Compatriots’ Tomb Sweeping activity at the tomb of the Yellow Emperor.” According to the report, one Taiwanese woman (i.e., You Meiling) in a white dress stood in front of the Yellow Emperor’s temple with a solemn expression, singing out her frame of mind:

We are all the descendents of the Chinese ethnos. After five thousand years’ transmission it is hard to avoid the conflicts between brothers...Right now we have to work hard for the peaceful coexistence between Taiwan and the Mainland and for the
peacefulness of the twenty-first century.

You’s expression won the applause of her audience. Right after this episode other members of the Mediums’ Association used Taiwanese to express their respect to the Yellow Emperor, the common ancestor. These expressions were followed by another local woman’s resonance, who sang out her respect to the Yellow Emperor in her local tongue. The newspaper describes this episode as “different tongues singing the same song.” Such an identification with the Yellow Emperor and passion for the reunification of the “Chinese ethnos” are sentiments structured by the official discourse. Taiwanese used to be a prohibited language in school while the KMT strove to sinologize Taiwan. Perhaps Taiwanese would not be prohibited if the Taiwanese people could have learned how to express their admiration for the Yellow Emperor in their Taiwanese tongue earlier?

At the first glance, these trips reported in the Association's magazine were full with the political language of "united front work." Nevertheless, these "structured dispositions" should not be overemphasized since the mediums' religious sensitivity cannot be read merely through its political dimension. You and other mediums’ “expressions” were less a personal statement than a mediumistic performance for the religious mission of spiritual communication. You is one of the most experienced mediums in the association. In the mediums' touring group she is also the medium of most capable of receiving the "messages" from the deities or spirits of the Mainland. And these messages were "performed" by the special gesture of walking or dancing and in a unique voice of speaking or singing. You explained that the deities from different temples had different magnetic fields, and she was inspired by these forces to embody the presence of
these deities. In every temple they visited, You's performance always attracted many Mainlanders whose religion had been prohibited for a long time. Consequently it is hard to say who was appropriated by whom. While the offices of Mainland welcome the "Taiwanese compatriots" who return to the "mother country," the Taiwanese compatriots also brought the deities or spirits they expelled during the Cultural Revolution back to their homeland. The animation of deities or spirits therefore can be understood reciprocally. Mediums are animated by deity or spirits to realize their mission, and the deity or spirits also need mediums to animate them to come back to the world. Moreover, You mentioned several episodes of spiritual healing in the trips of the Mainland. Interestingly, You performed these healing activities through the aid of the local deities or spirits rather than her own patron deity or familiar deities in Taiwan. In one episode You mentioned that when she took a walk in the mountain area beside the temple, she came across a boy from a poor family with head injury. She sympathized for this boy. So she connected with the local spirit to cure him. You could not communicate with the family in the local language, but she was able to summon the local spirit to give this child aid. When the local spirit was with her, she spoke the local language, which she herself did not understand, and performed the healing gesture inspired by the local spirit. Then the boy stopped bleeding. When the boy's mother knelt down and expressed her gratitude, You told her that it was the local spirit who cured her child. She was rewarded with an egg, a precious food for the family. Instead of taking the egg she gave the poor family a few coins she had taken with her. This episode was not scheduled in the trip and it was not as spectacular as You's dramatic performances in various temples with many audiences' approbation. Nevertheless it well expressed the nature of the Mediums' mission. Quoting You's words, we "give
ourselves to the command of gods, no matter where the gods ask us to go." Hence they are ready to be the mediating tool of deities when they feel the needs of people. Trips to the Mainland brought back the exiled deities and relocated the relationship between deity and local people. According to this perspective, these exiled deities were redeemed by the mediums. Will the reconnection between deities and Mainlanders like the last spark of fire soon be extinguished? Or will it be the seed of future prosperity? We need more time and observation to see its future.

Conclusion

In this chapter I focus the Mediums’ Association and their activities around the time it was founded, that is, around the time of the lifting of martial law. By the juxtaposition of the nationalist discourse and the mediums’ practice I try to show how mediums offer a different and insightful perspective on writing history. Not simply a reiteration of the political discourse, nor a thorough invention of a new version, the Mediums' practice of historical writing is an exercise of reflexive thinking within the structure of normative codes and power relations. On the one hand, it offers a “potentially transformative model” (Feuchtwang, 1991:265) for the current social condition; on the other hand, it constitutes a site for the negotiation of power and self-transformation. Such an exercise is resonant with Peter Brown’s analysis of the cult of the saints in late antiquity. Brown suggests how this cult enabled the Christian communities to articulate and to reflect about their own society by projecting a creative replicating model of ideal relationships onto the unseen world:

The cult of the saints in late antiquity, therefore, did more than dress the ancient dead in
contemporary upper-class costume. It was a form of piety exquisitely adapted to enable late-antequ men to articulate and render manageable urgent, muffled debates on the nature of power in their own world, and to examine in the searching light of ideal relationships with ideal figures, the relation between power, mercy, and justice as practiced around them. (Brown, 1981: 63)

The praesentia of the saints had been made available to them in gestures that condensed the poignant yearning for concord and solidarity among the elites of the Western provinces in this last century; yet, once available, the imaginative dialectic that surrounded the person of the saint insured that the shrine would be more than a reminder of the ideal unity of a former age: the shrine became a fixed point where the solemn, necessary play of “clear power”—of potentia exercised as it should be—could be played out in acts of healing, exorcism and rough justice. (Ibid., p.105)

In her study of Chinese ritual and politics, Emily Martin Ahern proposes a similar notion of how religious practice offers a creative replication of the political reality by the idealized resemblance of religion and politics. In opposition to the arguments that consider that Chinese ritual “conceals the true nature of authority from the ruled, thus enhances the position of rulers,” Ahern suggests a “teaching function” of the Chinese religious and ritual system for peasants. Through analyzing and learning to manipulate the rules and practices of their religious system, peasants learn to understand how one gets power, how one gets access to those with power, and how one is limited by those with power (Ahern, 1981: 92). Religious practice not only operates as an analytical mirror to teach the peasants to learn the game of power. In his reading of Ahern’s argument, Feuchtwang further proposes a critical operation of these ritual practices:

All these ritual aspects appear to imitate the actual protocols and the paperwork of the courts and the military ranks and arts of the imperial state. But unlike the imperial authorities, to which the common household had little or no access, the gods of popular
cults are accessible. They represent a possibility of fair judgement and material
benefit which could not be expected from the imperial bureaucracy, though it might
have been hoped for from the higher authorities to whom access was blocked by
corrupt underlings...They are realistic as a resemblance, but idealized as an expectation.
They are, according to Ahern, a learning game, in which what is learned is a critical
version of the real political thing. They are also a means of expressing the repeated
problems faced by the needy and the powerless seeking help from authority.
(Feuchtwang, 1991:265)

Feuchtwang’s reading of Chinese ritual practice as an “analogy” and “disanalogy” of
current political relations is resonant with de Certeau’s reading of the possessed woman
who disturbs the normative discourse by her slippage of the denominational system. In
the same essay, de Certeau quotes Freud’s quoting of Goethe’s remark: “‘we must
therefore resort to the sorceress’—and expecting that she will elucidate (or disturb?) our
discourse” (de Certeau, 1988: 255). Perhaps we can also regard the reading of the
mediumship as a hermeneutic of multiple layers of quotations and an incessant exercise
of writing in and writing out. And it would probably not be worth the trouble of
engaging into such thought process if they, quoting Foucault, “failed to teach the author
something he had not known before, if they did not lead to unforeseen places, and if they
did not disperse one toward a strange and new relation with himself.” (Foucault,
1997:205)
Chapter Four: The Technology of the Self

The Varieties of Ling

The categorization of god (shen), ancestor (zuxian) and ghost (gui) has long been accepted by scholars of Chinese religion to be the fundamental framework of Chinese spiritual beliefs (Jordan, 1972; Wolf, 1974). According to Harrell, "gods are the souls of especially powerful or meritorious people; ancestors are souls of one's own agnatic forebears; and ghosts are souls of those who died violent death or who have no descendants to worship them as ancestors (1979: 519)." The concept of gui (ghost) is set in opposition to the concept of zuxian (ancestor); since it is a pitiable being without the worship of descendants. The concept of gui is also set in opposition to the concept of shen (god). The gods in the tradition of popular Chinese religion are human beings with exceptional virtue that are deified and appointed to a position in the celestial bureaucracy. They are recognized by worshippers through their spiritual efficacy. The ghosts, on the contrary, are vicious and less cultivated, spending their days in misery and attacking human beings. Although the concepts of god and ghost are polarized as oppositional dyads in this framework, there is indeed continuity between god and ghost. And this is related to the concept of spiritual hierarchy that differentiates the high rank deities from the low rank ones. According to DeBernardi's research about the Hokkien Chinese medium in Malaysia:

In Chinese popular religious culture, the social body of rich and poor, educated and illiterate, is mirrored in a cosmology that ranks spiritual difference as if it were a difference in social class. Many deities with high rank in the spiritual world are humans who earned that rank through self-control and the transcendence of desire. By contrast, lower deities (and ghosts) feel desire and attachment, and for this reason
may be tempted to possess spirit mediums in order to enjoy life's pleasures (DeBernardi, 1995:151).

Accordingly, the spiritual status is represented by cultivational language. Self-discipline and self-transcendence implies higher spiritual status, while passion marks those ranked lower (Ibid.,152-53). In this conceptualization of spiritual hierarchy, the dichotomy of god and ghost is replaced by the miscellaneous spirits with various spiritual statuses. Following the similar vein, the medium's Association proposes their framework of spirit realm based on their theory of religious cultivation.

The Mediums' Association adopts a general term "ling"--roughly translated as spirit or soul in Chinese -- to describe the invisible beings of spiritual realm, including the departed souls or spirits that are still in the process of cultivation before they transform into deities. Although the deities with higher status also belong to spiritual realm, they are usually referred to as shen (god). There are many kinds of ling, including ancestral ling, dynastic ling, karmic ling, original ling, and various ling of animals or plants, etc.. Ancestral ling are the departed souls of ancestors. Mediums might be requested by their ancestors to share their merits with them by helping their descendants to realize their religious mission. Moreover, according to mediums, many statues of deities worshipped in the medium's altar are in fact inhabited by the spirit of their ancestors.

Dynastic ling are the souls of the previous dynasties. They are the departed souls of medium's previous lives that transmigrate in various dynasties. Or they are the departed souls with karmic relationship with the mediums in previous dynasties. Therefore the dynastic ling is one kind of karmic ling. According to Lai's observation, most mediums are possessed by the dynastic ling when they offer religious services to the adherents. The dynastic ling visits the altar of the medium who has karmic entanglement with it in
previous lives and borrows the medium's body to realize the unfinished mission that it promised to fulfill in previous lives. Such incorporation is executed under the title of a specific spiritual line. For example, if the dynastic ling worshipped the Goddess of Mercy while it was alive, and the medium belonged to the clan of this ling in one of his or her lives, then the medium would offer religious services to the adherents under the title of the Goddess of Mercy through the spiritual power of the dynastic ling. This point will be further discussed later. When the mediums refer to the dynastic ling, this category especially denotes the departed souls of royal household. If the related dynastic ling arrive during mediums' meeting, they would confront each other or complain about their suffering according to the karmic entanglement of gratitude and grudges they had before. From the perspective of education and cultivation, the recognition of a previously dynastic relationship is not a goal but a state to be transcended. I will discuss this point in a later section.

Karmic ling is the soul with the karmic relationship to mediums or the ones it possesses. It includes the dynastic ling but with a broader denotation. Karmic ling includes a less cultivated kind and a more advanced kind. If we compare the framework of god/ancestor/ghost with the medium's categorization, the less cultivated karmic ling is correspondent to ghost. According to the conventional understanding of ghost, ghost represents the resentful soul that occupies the lowest level of Chinese spiritual beliefs. The ghost remains in a wandering state without the attentive worship of descendants or adherents. Possession and harassment therefore become its means of acquiring attention. People who are harassed by the ghosts manifest various physical and psychological symptoms that cannot be cured by physicians. If people seek help from mediums and their symptoms are diagnosed as "spiritual illness," the mediums will exorcise the
possessing ghosts for them. Instead of adopting the term ghost, mediums of the Association adopt the general term "ling" to describe a departed soul and emphasize its incomplete state of cultivation. Accordingly, rather than "exorcism," they employ "education" to describe the medium's intervention process. Although the means of coercion or threat applied in exorcism are also employed by the medium, there are more complicated tactics adopted by mediums in their educational process, e.g., listening, consolation, admonition or dialogue.

For those karmic ling in the more advanced stage of cultivation, in order to raise their spiritual quality and status, they need to rely upon mediums' bodies to perform virtuous deeds or to offer spiritual counseling or healing to their adherents through their spiritual power. The medium lends his or her body to the karmic ling to which he or she was in debt in previous lives, or to the ancestral ling that promised to actualize a certain religious task for the deity. Through the incorporation they realize the religious mission granted from heaven. And medium also clears his or her debt. Every relationship of incorporation has its time and lasting period. When the karmic ling accumulates merits to a certain degree and fulfills its religious mission, it attains its meritorious remittance and leaves the medium. If the medium performs well in the process of incorporation, heaven sends another spirit to incorporate with him or her to continue his or her religious mission. On the contrary, if the medium is remiss in his duties, he or she will eventually lose the spiritual power acquired through the possessing spirit.

Furthermore, as we mentioned above, while the ling visits the altar and possesses the medium, it comes to the medium's aid with the title of a specific deity. The real deities seldom descend to altars. Instead they send their representatives to the altar to help mediums. The representatives they send are the spirits that are devoted to their spiritual
lineages. This concept of representation answers the question of why there are so many mediums who claim to be the representatives of the same deity. Wu Mingxi, a current cadre, explains the relationship of spirit and deity in the following statement:

Sometimes people wonder why there are so many mediums claiming they represent the same deity, like Mazu, Guanyin pusa (bodhisattva, or the Goddess Mercy), Jigong or Guangong.¹ For example, there is only one Mazu, why there are so many mediums claiming that they represent Mazu? As a matter of fact, the ling that descends to the altar is not the deity itself, but the representative sent by the deity to manage the religious task. If one performs virtuous deeds and cultivates oneself while one is alive, one will be invested by heaven and be sent to serve a certain deity to be the representative of this deity after one passes away. When this ling descents to an altar, he or she helps the adherents in the name of the deity through the body of the medium. The title of the deity is like the denomination of the spirit's boss. The ling needs to help the human beings through its spiritual power in order to earn meritorious retribution. As long as the merits are accumulated to a certain degree, this ling can return to its origin, that is, the realm of Wuji. There is only one real Mazu, i.e., the real original soul of Mazu. But Matsu has many representatives to help her with her religious tasks.

According to You Meiling, borrowing the title of deity is an expedient of ling for the convenience of their merit accumulation. The ancestral ling or karmic ling needs to borrow the title of deity in order to win respect and trust from mediums and their adherents. However, the representative relationship between higher deities and the ling that borrow their titles should be acknowledged by mediums, who would not then be entrapped by the vanity of deity's title.

Besides the ling with karmic entanglement with a medium in previous incarnations, karmic ling include a medium's own ling of previous transmigrations. According to Wu Mingxi:

¹ All of these titles are very famous deities of popular religion in Taiwan.
People have three souls\(^2\): the primary soul (benling), the living soul (shengling) and the sensual soul (jueling). These souls and our bodies constitute our action. If we pass away, the primary soul goes to the underworld to be judged and waits for the next incarnation. All the merits and mistakes accumulated by our deeds are carried by the primary soul. When the primary soul reincarnates in the next life, it still carries those accumulated merits and mistakes. The living soul disappears with the extinction of body. And the sensual soul is led by the Daoist priest to the wooden tablet of ancestors to return to its ancestral line. The primary soul does not change with the distinct identification of each life. But the sensual soul varies with different lives. That is, when we reincarnate one more time, we have one more sensual soul. The departed souls that possess the medium are the sensual souls of former lives who lived in various dynasties. Sensual souls of former lives carry all the positive and negative habits they learn through different lives. When the mediums are possessed by these souls of former dynasties, they will be influenced by these habits and will express them in their conduct. That's why the mediums need more education to raise their spiritual qualities. In the medium's meeting of spiritual encountering, these souls arrive and manifest themselves through the bodies of the mediums. During the spiritual encountering these souls are exhorted and guided by the deity; they are also educated by reason. Therefore their quality can be raised. This is a long process. In the medium's cultivational process the various souls would possess our bodies. If we once were born as animals, the souls of animals would also possess our bodies. The souls of animals are not bad souls. As a matter of fact, we have lived in various realms in our prior lives, including the realm of heaven, the realm of the human and the realm of earth. And we have been deities, humans or beings of the underworld in our various lives.

Accordingly, the sensual souls of each incarnation constitute one category of karmic ling with which mediums incorporate. They are also the objects of education for the reform of past bad habits. The primary soul is like the hard disk that records the merits and

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\(^2\) The notion of "three souls" is very popular in Chinese folk belief. But the description of three souls proposed by Wu is somewhat different from the general understanding. According to Chinese popular religion, "three souls separate at the death of the adult to whom they belong. One soul resides in the ancestral tablet. Another lurks in the coffin or the grave, and the third departs to the infernal regions to undergo its merited punishment" (Harrell, 1979: 522).
mistakes accumulated in various incarnations. Its appearance changes in different lives, e.g., as human being or animal, according to its accumulated merits and mistakes. But it is the same soul that transmigrates through various lives. Therefore it constitutes the subject of liquidation in the period of Judgment. The period of Judgment is also the critical time for the repayment of debts and accumulation of merits in order to return to one's spiritual origin. According to Wu Mingxi,

The unique religious task for the contemporary period is the investiture of ling. Unlike the former epoch of the investiture of gods that invested various gods with hierarchically different positions, the ling are invested various religious tasks without hierarchical difference. The meritorious remittance of ling is determined by the special mission they achieved. And the goal of the investiture of a ling is to send the ling back to its origin. The ling to be invested is the primary soul. Its investiture is dependent upon the meeting of primary soul and sensual soul. What does this mean? In the mediumistic motion of medium's cultivation, the sensual soul that transmigrated through different dynasties needs to be united with the primary soul. By the inspiration of the primary soul, the sensual soul comes to know its past. During the spiritual encountering, when the sensual soul ascends to the body of the medium, it vents its grievances to the deity. Hence its past is revealed. In the medium's meeting we often see the scene of how a ling pours out its woes to the Mother Goddess (the Eternal Mother) and cries incessantly, just like having reunion with the long separated mother.

In addition to the various ling discussed above, the original soul (yuanling) constitutes the most special status. It is the soul of the first transmigration that originated from the realm of wuji. Compared to the various kinds of ling discussed above, the concept of original ling proposes an internalized understanding of ling. If various karmic ling represent the objects to be transformed, the original soul denotes the purest and clearest state to be pursued or recovered in the cultivational process. However, rather than
something outside of oneself, it points to the innermost state of one's true self. Multiple transmigration leads the primary soul to a state of degradation and corruption. Therefore the primary soul is fallen into the cycle of transmigration. It is proposed that since the original soul carries the least karmic barrier, if one encounters it during cultivation, one's spiritual quality will be further raised by the aids of one's original soul.

Since the encountering of various ling has its specific time and goal to be realized, it is difficult to encounter one's original soul unless one has achieved a certain level of cultivation. One needs to exercise oneself into a better physical and spiritual condition for the descending of the original soul. According to Wu Yu—a senior medium of the Association and the director of the Taipei office—in order to encounter one's original soul, the medium first has to cultivate his or her nature until he or she becomes a merciful and courteous person who can love others by sacrificing himself or herself. According to other mediums, a strong and pure body and a cultivated state with a spiritual quality of mercifulness, emptiness and devotion are the necessary conditions for the encountering of the original soul. The unification with one's original soul finally can lead one to freedom from the suffering of transmigration and to a return to one's spiritual origin. Different original souls belong to different spiritual lineages. Accordingly, the task of shouyuan (collecting the origin) on the one hand points to the encountering with one's original soul; on the other hands it indicates the gathering of adherents who belong to the same spiritual lineage.\(^3\)

\(^3\) In the sects that worship the Eternal Mother, the meaning of the original soul is somewhat different from the one referred to by mediums and is related to the doctrine of shouyuan: there were ninety-six hundred million original souls from wuji that fell into the world. After the previous two promulgations of the Dao from the Eternal Mother, there are still ninety-two hundred million original souls left in the world that wait for the salvation from the Eternal Mother in order to return to their origin—the realm of wuji. Since mediums in the Association do not all belong to the sects that worship the Eternal Mother, when they refer to the task of shouyuan, it
In sum, medium's career is indeed constituted by the encountering and incorporation of his or her body with various ling. It is also a recurrent process of meeting and parting with different unfinished karmic relationships. The process of meeting and parting is furthermore understood as a bond of debt or obligation. And the religious mission is actualized by the transformation of the bond of entanglement into a cooperative production. Furthermore, the boundary between a wandering departed soul, a spirit in the process of cultivation, and a deity from the higher realm is not absolute. There indeed exists a hierarchical distinction between these categories. But the transition from the lower stratum to the higher stratum is possible through the accumulation of merits and the performance of virtuous deeds. And the transition is achieved through the medium's participation. If the wandering departed souls can be relocated in specific temples in order to cultivate themselves, they would become spirits in the process of cultivation. If a spirit in the process of cultivation has accumulated enough merit and been approved and invested by heaven, it emanates radiance and becomes a deity. The transgression of the boundary between higher ling and lower ling does not imply that the distinction between them is insignificant. On the contrary the differentiation of varied spiritual qualities is a very important educational issue for mediums that we will discuss later.

The Goal of the Medium's Education

According to Lai, the main theorist and the second President of the Medium's Association, the religious cultivation of medium plays a central role in the mission of the third "separation of heaven and earth." The idea of the third separation of heaven and earth has been discussed in the second chapter. Briefly speaking, it denotes an epochal transition from imperial dominance to the humanitarian trend. In other words, it

refers to a broader meaning of returning to one's spiritual lineage.
signifies a special religious mission for the termination of an old era and the birth of a new age. According to the understanding of the Association, the mission is actualized by means of education. Both mediums and ling constitute the objects of education. As to the mediums, most of them are people with gifts of spiritual communication but limited education. The further education not only enhances their spiritual quality, it also helps them to become more professional representatives of deities with progressive religious ideas for the advent of the new era. Since mediums play critical roles in their temples, the development of their spiritual quality can lead to the improvement of the temple's custom and culture. As to the varied ling, especially the ling of the lower level that persistently cling to their resentment or their past, they need to be educated and be cultivated for the enhancement of their spiritual quality and to accommodate themselves to the modern world. Since the mediums live in the modern era, they become the best teachers for those old souls needing to come to terms with the “presence.”

One of the goals of the medium's education is to settle both the people who are harassed by ling and the possessing ling. In other words, instead of being controlled by the harassing ling, the educational class helps the people to transform karmic entanglement into a beneficial relationship. For mediums, they are expected to be a good clergy in the service of their adherents and the departed souls. Since mediums are obliged to deal with the matters of karmic entanglement, they first need to understand themselves, that is, whence are their spiritual origins and what special religious mission are they expected to achieve. And mediums are endowed with the specific task of spiritual integration through helping the departed souls of the former dynasties to return to their spiritual origins. According to the understanding of the Mediums' Association, the turbulence of society is partly caused by the wandering departed soul who cannot find
a body to settle it. When one is possessed by a departed soul, one is disturbed and influenced by the resentment of the departed soul. It is the obligation of mediums to admonish and to educate these departed souls and to help them to find a temple in which to cultivate themselves in order to transform their character and to accumulate merits. The education of mediums and departed souls is accordingly co-constituted. Mediums' self-understanding and cultivation play an integral role in their religious mission of transforming departed souls. And the transformation of departed souls also relies upon the education and cultivation they receive with the mediums. According to Lai:

When the students attend the class, the ling with them also participate in the class. And the goal of the class is to liberate them from the domination of the ling. Therefore they can return to their normal lives without the harassment of ling. However, if they intend to pursue the career of mediumship and want to offer religious services in a temple, then we will offer them further education. Our final educational goal is to educate them to become spiritual counselors. If they start their service in a temple, they would encounter many people who suffer from various problems. With their spiritual power and the religious education they receive from the class, they are able to offer better service to people. For example, if people with suicidal intent look for their help, they can give them proper religious advice, like the theory of karma, or the Daoist perspective of live, to help them face their frustrations.

Accordingly, those who are harassed by possessing ling might be ordinary people or the potential mediums. The suffering caused by the possessing ling might be an indication of an unfinished entanglement, or it might be a sign from heaven to ask them to become a medium. According to Wu Mingxi:

How does one become a medium? First we experience strange bodily trembling. It is a force driven by our ling (spirit) that transmigrates through various dynasties. And
this phenomenon is called the motion of ling (lingdong). Unless we are propelled by such strange physical force, we would never start our pursuit of the Way. In order to solve the physical problem, we request advice (from a religious specialist). And we will be led by an experienced medium to consult the deity about the identification of our ling, including its origin and its special mission. The process of identification is like the (criminal's) confession in court. As long as the identification is confirmed, it will proceed to its new post, whether in a temple or in society. We and our ling need to do their best to serve the public. If they perform well, they will be affirmed by the deity as a responsible adherent. So far, this is the stage for the general ling. Nevertheless, if the ling ascend to this life with a special religious mission, we need to request the recommendation from gods in heaven to allow us to receive our mission. We need to go through this process because our ling probably received a special mission in prior lives but did not accomplish it. Therefore our ling need to reapply for permission from the deity. While we and our ling receive the order of mission, we do not accomplish our mission immediately. Instead we await the time for the fulfillment of the mission. That is, we need to understand the specific religious task in this year and whether we are assigned a special position for the actualization of this task. If we do, god will send a deity to unite with us. Since we continue train our bodies and our spirits during the cultivational process, the deity can borrow our bodies and let our ling work. This is the process of the medium's cultivation.

The Educational Program of the Medium's Association

The educational class for mediums was started in 1987 before the Association was officially founded. This class was called the "Seminar of Chinese Spiritual Studies" and sponsored by the Council for the Promotion of the Chinese Great Way convened by Lai and Huang Ziwei, the Daoist priest of Luyuan Temple. This council can be considered the forerunner of the Medium's Association. Its purpose included the rectification of religious customs, the elevation of Chinese culture, the achievement of the religious task of shouyuan, and the promotion of worldwide unity. Hundreds of students participated in the first seminar on 6th day of the June (lunar calendar). And it was decided that a
one-day seminar would be held on the 20th of every month until May of 1988. In the opening class Lai articulated that the aim of this seminar was to improve the quality of mediumship, and to help mediums recognize their educational mission to the whole society. The design of each seminar combined lectures, sharing of personal experiences by senior mediums, and the activity of the "modulation of ling (tiaoling)." The topics of lectures varied broadly, including studies of mediumship, Chinese medicine, the thought of the Middle Way, traditional Chinese manners and customs, the great way of Chinese culture, and the execution of the work of Dao.

When the Mediums' Association was founded under the title of 'Plum Flower United with One Heart Society' in 1988, another educational program was started as the Class of Puming, roughly meaning the universal light. Two experimental courses preceded the formal class. The first experimental course was started on the 8th of December (lunar calendar) from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. for the members to partake and to offer suggestions. This first course was opened by a ritual report to Heaven about the plan of the following courses. This initial course lasted much longer than planned, until midnight. The second experimental course was offered ten days later. There were special regulations for students who attended to class: no tea, no smoking, no food, no talking, and no mediumistic trance during the class. The students were asked to be punctual. And any leave of absence had to be requested. The formal class began on the 18th of January in 1989 and lasted for fifty weeks. The courses were composed of five sections and each section lasted for 10 weeks. The five sections included 1) special topics and seminars 2) introduction of classics of religions and religious cultivation; 3) introduction of the principle of wuxing (five qualities including metal, wood, water, fire and earth) and the pathology of wuxing (five qualities); 4) the training of etiquette, including stage manners,
oral presentation and speech skills; 5) the understanding of heaven-ordained fate (tianming), heaven-ordained time (tianshi), and the mission of shouyuan. The lecturers include college professors and religious specialists.

When the Association officially founded, the educational class was called "the Class of Spiritual Studies." It was held in the educational enterprise called the Chinese Ling College. Tuition, as well as room and board, are free (Paper, 1996:115). There are four levels of courses. When the student completes the course of a certain level, he or she would be honored by certification. The first level is the "preparatory class" with no requirements for enrollment, such as age or educational background. However, the students are required to follow the regulations of the class, to be sincere in the pursuit of Dao, and not to be absent from class. The preparatory class is a 12-day session taught in four three-day courses spread over four months (March to June or September to December) in specific temples. Various topics of introductory lectures are offered during daytime, e.g. the definition and explanation of the cosmology of the Three Realms, the classics of Confucianism, and the scriptures of Daoism and Buddhism. At night there are sessions of the "modulation of ling" for students.

The initial class is offered for mediums who complete the preparatory class and become members of the Association. The students meet for ten days in each of three successive months from March to May or September to November for a total of thirty days. The aim of the initial class is to "purify the spiritual quality" and to "understand oneself." In order to help the students to purify their ling, the courses are held at various temples in quiet and secluded mountains or the countryside. The intermediate class is offered for students who complete the beginning class. It meets for ten days per month for a total of 120 days. Its courses include those on unifying the spirit and the body,
uniting the deity and the body, the inspiration and cultivation of the spiritual mentor, and understanding the way of nature through the study of yin yang, and the principle of five qualities, as well as meditation. Since the mediums qualified for the intermediate class were very few, it was offered only in the beginning period of the Association. Now it is temporarily suspended. The advanced class is planned for the cultivation of the superior mediums. And it is an ideal rather than a realized plan. Lai, the designer of the medium's educational program, describes the most superior medium as the one who achieves the state of unification with heaven. The most superior mediums have pure spiritual quality. They are trained to sustain a high voltage of electric power. Hence they can and only receive messages from the highest god. Their hearts are quiet and clean with few wants and ambitions. They no longer use their mediumistic power to secure material rewards, nor is their body offered for private use. Their public service includes helping the leaders of various domains, e.g., scholars, politicians, decision-makers, and scientists to "recognize their original spiritual roots" for better actualization of their potential. Lai also proposes the prospect of official mediums who are supported by the government. If these official mediums do not need to worry about earning a living, then they can concentrate on religious cultivation and become better mediums who incorporate the power of the visible and invisible realms to create a better society. The not-yet realized advanced class in fact reflects the great gap between the

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4 Mediums frequently describe their feeling of possession as linking with the source of an electric current. When the possessing deity is from the higher spiritual realm, the electric power felt by the mediums is stronger. According to Lai's explanation, only the more superior mediums are able to sustain the strong electric power of higher deities and send messages for them.
privatized role of the contemporary medium and the officialized clerical status of the medium in ancient China. It also represents the Association's endeavor to retrieve the ancient ideal of mediumship.

According to the understanding of the Association, the educational program of the medium is a religious mission inspired by gods. Therefore its success requires the incorporation of humans and deities. In the early period, the promotion of the medium's education was not supported by many mediums from various temples. You, the senior medium and one of the head instructors in the Association's college, emphasized that the purpose of the Association's educational endeavors was to heighten the qualities of the mediums, rather than to instruct them on how to be a medium (Paper, 1996:114). Most mediums considered themselves the representatives of deities, hence they were resistant to the idea of further education. Lai, the main sponsor and course designer, mentioned that in the very beginning when the courses for mediums had just been advertised, they worked very hard to persuade mediums from various temples to enroll. In order to attract more mediums to participate in these courses, the tuition and board were all free. The student mediums were even paid for attending class. The sponsors raised funds from the Foundation of the Chinese Great Way and other resources who identify with their ideal. Furthermore, the sponsors had to visit various temples to appeal to the help of their patron deities. If these patron deities identified with the Association's educational ideal, they would encourage their medium to go to the class. According to Lai's description, a magical sign was shown that gods helped with the success of the class: there were some mediums who registered but did not plan to show up in the class; therefore the gods made them sick to their stomachs. When they realized that this might be a punishment from the gods, they eagerly attended the class and their nausea was gone.
automatically. In the open ceremony of each class, the names of the students are reported to the gods. One medium student told me that when the students registered at the medium's college, their names were also registered on the lists recorded in heaven. Hence the failure to attend the class was equal to breaking a promise to the gods.

The awareness of the participation of the spiritual realm is also reflected in the design of the courses. All the lecture courses are offered by various professors or religious specialists. And the activity of "modulation of ling" is led by senior mediums with the help of deities. In other words, the design of the course emphasizes both the studies of religious scriptures and the practical training of religious cultivation. In Lai's words, the courses combined the human's visible endeavor and the gods' invisible power. Moreover, the classes are not only attended by the human students who sit in the classroom, they are also attended by the unseen spirits or departed souls who accompany the students. Before the student acquire the ability to receive the vital force from the higher spiritual realm, they first need to overcome the disturbance of varied ling or to help these disturbing ling to transform themselves. The student mediums are very susceptible to attracting ling to follow them. It is said that the more temples they visit, the more ling follow them back to their temples. And these ling also follow them to the educational program. You also mentioned that before the student mediums attend class, they report to their ancestors about the class and ask the ling of ancestors to follow them to the class. Accordingly, the student mediums who own their own temples brought the ling that gathered at their temples to attend the class with them. After these ling raised

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5 Temple visiting is a very common and important religious activity for mediums. They visit various temples to worship specific deities, to participate in the religious activities, or to receive a particular command from a deity. Since temples are regarded as the place where various ling gather, sometimes the medium would be "followed" by specific ling who have a karmic
their spiritual quality by means of education, they became more cultivated and stabilized. Moreover, their progress had a beneficial impact on other ling of the mediums' temples that did not attend to the class. Consequently the atmosphere of the mediums' temples became more purified and peaceful. Beyond the ling mentioned above that followed the student mediums to the class, there were other kinds of ling that participated in the class, e.g., the ling that inhabited the mountain where the class was offered, the ling of animals or the ling of plants. However, if the student mediums are followed by too many ling, it could become a barrier to their progress. Quoting You's words, the student who was "occupied" by too many ling was not able to receive the vital force from the higher spiritual realm. He or she was like a filled cup that was unable to hold more water.

In the following section, I focus on the most special aspect of medium's education—the activity of the "modulation of ling." And I explore the unique educational and cultivational scope of this activity. The discussion is based upon my participation in the final preparatory class offered by the Association in 2000 and interviews with the teachers and students. The preparatory class of 2000 was a twelve-day session offered in four three-day courses spread over four months from September to December. The class was designed by Lai and was executed by You. Since You was the leading teacher who conducted the courses of the "modulation of ling" and also participated in the courses from the beginning to the end, she became the primary subject of my inquiry. The preparatory class was held in a remote temple specifically for religious cultivation in Tainan—a county in the southern part of Taiwan. Following the schedule of the previous preparatory class, various topics of introductory lectures were offered during the daytime, including health care in Chinese medicine, scriptural studies of Daoist literature—*Daode*
jing and Qingjin jing—the principle of wuxing (five qualities), astronomical geography
and You's sharing of mediumistic experiences. The course on the "modulation of ling"
was held at night after dinner. In September there were thirteen students who
participated in the class. Two of them withdrew from the class in October. But
another two students joined the class during October. Therefore the class always
maintained thirteen students from September to December, including seven female
students and six male students. Compared to the previous preparatory class, the number
of students in 2000 has sharply decreased.6

Modulation of Ling and Exercise of Body

Definition and Goals

The course of spiritual training (xunling) held at night is also called tiaolong xunti. It
is a healing session designed to harmonize the student’s spirit (ling) and the spirits (ling)
with whom they work (Paper, 1996:115). T’iao literally means regulation, adjustment,
modulation or mediation. Therefore tiaolong can be translated as the modulation of ling

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6 According to the organizers of the 2000 course, the sharp decrease of student numbers was
partly due to the inner change of the Medium's Association. The Association elected the new
President in September 1999. The new President is not really a medium but a businessman who
runs a business in religious artifacts. Such an outcome disappointed many old members,
especially the founding members. They considered the new President to know nothing about
mediumship. And they thought that the election was manipulated by those who intended to use
the Association to make money. These founding members worried that the founding
ideal—including the educational ideal—of the Association would be destroyed by the new
President. Most of the founding members and old cadres no longer actively participated in the
affairs of the Association. Some of them even withdrew from it. The execution of the
preparatory course of 2000 was not proposed by the new President. Instead it was organized by
the old cadres like Lai and You who still felt the importance of the education of mediums. The
new cadres of the Association were not familiar with the operation of the mediums' educational
program. Their passiveness and reluctance made You very frustrated. The new President
showed up in the opening ceremony and closing ceremony in haste. And this made future
cooperation between the new cadres and the founding members still more difficult.
or the adjustment of ling. Xunti literally means the training or exercise of the body. According to You, the modulation of ling and training of body has many goals, including healing, government, and incorporation. A medium's "spiritual disease," caused by the harassment of disturbed ling, is cured and his or her body is pacified through the modulation of ling and body. Furthermore, some of the diseases of ling can be cured by the remedy of the medium's body.\(^7\) Through the religious intervention of the teacher medium, the disturbed ling are also appeased and transformed in the modulation process. Hence the student mediums are able to free themselves from the disturbance and dominance of possessing ling and to achieve a state of autonomy. Here the modulation of ling implies the medium's ability to restrain and control of the desire of ling. As to the goal of incorporation, it signifies the productive and creative relationships with deities or benevolent ling. By the exercise of the body the student mediums learn to adjust themselves to tune in to the frequency of deities or beneficial ling. While the medium and the ling achieve a better state of cooperation, they are able to execute assigned religious tasks. For mediums, the training field and other sacred spaces like temples are replete with vital forces of various ling. Accordingly, how to protect themselves from the invasion of malicious ling and to correspond to the frequency of benevolent ling

\(^7\) You mentions one kind of sick ling that borrows the medium's body to cure its own disease. A sick ling possesses the body that is correspondent with its magnetic field. And its disease must be cured by medication. You gives an example about a ling that died because of a certain disease. It was not able to get the proper medication while it was still alive. Therefore it asked the medium it possessed to visit the hospital it indicated to get the proper medication. When the medium took the medicine and the ling scented the smell of the drug, the ling was satisfied and stopped harassing the medium. In this case the healing of the ling is indeed a psychological compensation rather than a physical recovery. Nevertheless, it shows the blurred boundary between "earthly" remedy and spiritual intervention.
constitute the most important lessons for the medium in the training sections.

Setting

The course of ling modulation was usually held in a spacious outdoor setting after dinner. In the preparatory class of 2000 in which I participated, the activities of adjusting ling took place at the vacant area in front of the main hall of the temple where the lecture courses were held. A long table was set near the main hall. An incense burner was placed on the table with the burning sticks of incense. The teachers who led the activities sat behind the table and faced the arch doorway. The male students and female students sat in separate rows face-to-face with an empty space between. The arch doorway, the row of teachers, male students and female students constituted an empty rectangular field for the training. In the beginning each student randomly chose a seat in which to sit. Once the training began, their seats could not be changed since each seat was guarded by the student's patron ling, and other ling might participate in the spiritual training with the students beside their seats. Therefore other people were not allowed to occupy any one person's seat. The training field was like a delimited sacred

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8 The main instructor of the activity of the modulation of ling for the preparatory class of 2000 was You. You also invited three other senior mediums to serve as teachers. Two of them came from the Medium's Association. One of them was the abbot and medium of the sponsored temple.

9 The first time I participated in the training section without a camera recorder with me, I sat with the female students in the middle of their row. I did not choose that seat but happened to sit there to chat with the female students before the course began. The female students I chatted with did not know me yet. They asked me if I had the experience of "motion of ling (ling-dong)." I said no and asked them about their experiences. When the training section began I did not change my seat because I thought that seat was a good site for me to observe and to write down my records. After the training course was finished I realized that I had mistakenly
arena with an invisible but important boundary. Outside the rectangular field a few chairs were placed behind the seats of female students for the audience. Usually only students were allowed to participate in the training session. But this was not a strict rule. Sometimes when member of the audience were also influenced by the atmosphere and felt inspired by the vital force, they entered the field and even engaged in dialogue with the teachers.

*Preparatory Stage*

Although the training course was scheduled from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., it usually lasted longer than two hours, depending on the performances of the students. In the opening and the end there were simple ceremonies of salutation to the deities. The student leader reported to deities about the beginning of the training section and invited them to descend to the training field to help them with the training section. All participants faced the main hall and bowed to the deities three times. Then everyone sat quietly and listened to the instruction of You. This was a time to prepare students' taken the seat specifically for student mediums. I should have sat in on the chairs for the audiences. Although I constituted a strange scene for the student mediums because of my continuous note taking, no one asked me to leave the seats for students through the whole section. When You explained to me in the later interview the significance of the seats and why they could not be changed, she referred to me as an example and said that since I was the disciple of Jesus (she knew I was a Christian then), while I sat within the medium students I represented the disciple of Jesus. And Jesus would send his angel to be with me if he could not come by himself. Apparently for You the identify of researcher was not in conflict with the religious pursuant, hence she did not ask me to leave the seat for student mediums. Nor was the religious difference of concern to her. For You, everyone can participate in the training session no matter what religion on claims.
minds and bodies before they felt the inspiration of vital forces from ling. The preparation included two parts: a walking exercise and sitting meditation for the emptying of the mind. The aim of the walking exercise was that of lifting the spirit and conducting vital forces. You first instructed students to walk around the rectangular field with uniform steps and to call numbers loudly like a march of troops. Then You asked them to go back to their seats and to sit quietly. The students were instructed to sit properly with a straight back. They were also instructed to breathe with a slow and even tempo in order to relax their bodies and to empty their minds. The preparatory stage is called jiatai (jia: to drive, tai: a prop or a foundation). You explains that tai signifies the body of the medium. Following the literal meaning of jia in Mandarin and Taiwanese, You elaborates the meaning of tai as the car for the visiting deity to drive, or as the foundation with which the deity might unify. Therefore jiatai indicates to the preparation of one’s body for the visit of deity and ling.

*Conduction of Ling*

The preparatory stage was the quietest moment of the whole training session. About ten minutes later, the student mediums started to enter the training field to practice various exercises, including Chinese boxing, dancing, singing, or other movements, according to the various vital forces of ling that inspired them. Different students needed differing amount of preparatory time to feel the inspiration of the vital forces of ling. Before the students moved to enter the training field, they usually had specific physical manifestations such as trembling, hiccupsing or yawning. If You sensed that they were about to move but still needed one more push, she would adopt various methods to conduct the expression of ling according to the character of ling, e.g., a stick
of incense, rhythm of knocking, or tone of voice. A stick of incense is frequently used for the preparation of medium's trance. In the spiritual exercise an incense burner was held by assistants and carried around the bodies of students in order to help them to feel the inspiration of ling. But the stick of incense is not regularly used in every training session. It is applied only when the expression of ling is blocked. Another method adopted by You was for the concentration of the student's attention and for the conduction of the more vigorous ling. You knocked on a table with certain tempo and power in order to induce reverberation from ling. Moreover, when the students were propelled by the vital force of ling and began their exercise, You's rhythm of knocking would adjust according to the movement of students. Sometimes You would combine knocking with a powerful shout to amplify the effect of inspiration. Usually the technique of knocking and shouting is applied to animate male medium students or the more masculine ling. According to You, the sound and rhythm of knocking not only helped the students to stabilize their steps but also granted them a sense of righteousness.

Similarly, You applied tone of voice to conduct varied ling. When You conducted the student mediums' ling through a specific melody, she represented the voice of the spirit or deity from the higher spiritual realm. The voice from the spirit or deity with higher spiritual quality was not only able to soothe the unstable and disturbed ling and to make them more peaceful, it also played the role of mentor to help the less cultivated ling to express themselves more fluently. According to You, the conduction of a vocal melody is like the reception of vital force in the traditional Chinese martial art of breathing. Moreover, the ling from various spiritual lines respond to various melodies. And certain melodies help the medium students to relax their bodies and to empty their minds. Therefore their ling can be expressed more smoothly. For example, some female
mediums are more likely to be accompanied by the karmic ling or dynastic ling full of grievances. Therefore they are more inclined to be moved by the melody of lamentation. When You felt the forces of these suffering ling, she conducted them with specific melodies. The melodies she sang included the popular folk melody, the melodies of Taiwanese opera or Taiwanese popular songs. But the lyrics she sang were an improvisation due to the inspiration of deity. You's singing was just like the best actress of Taiwanese opera, with abundant affection and power. Her melody not only showed sympathy but also expressed unspoken pains for these ling. When the suffering ling felt they were touched and understood by someone like You and the deity she represented, they then felt encouraged to express their suffering by themselves. Pitiful scenes of weeping and crying in the training sections are not uncommon, especially in the beginning stage of a ling's expression. Once the resentful ling finds the channel to express itself, its suffering will be heard and its resentment will be pacified. Consequently the spiritual illness of the medium students will be cured gradually. As to the male students or the more masculine ling, You's conductive voice was more tough and vehement. You described it as the sound of righteousness that attracted the ling of a similar spiritual line to respond to it and to be empowered by it. When You sang in such a sonorous and forceful way, her voice seems capable of resounding miles away. Such a powerful voice also represented the descent of a deity and its proclamation of a contemporary religious task for mediums. The most dramatic episode of a deity's arrival that I saw happened in the fourth section of the training course. It was approaching the end of the training and You entered the field to demonstrate a special
movement for one male student. Suddenly You was possessed by a very powerful deity\textsuperscript{10} with awe-inspiring movement. While You was possessed by the deity, she proclaimed the contemporary religious task for mediums with a resounding voice. The message of the deity was about the inner conflict of the nation and the importance of the peacefulness of the spiritual realm. You's proclamation inspired many students to re-enter the field. Some of the male students followed You and imitated her steps. Other female students moved with their own gestures. According to You, the arrival of the deity brought a powerful force to the training field, which constituted the most efficient method to conduct the student's spiritual exercises. The students were like batteries that were recharged by the power of the deity. When the deity left You's body and You returned to her seat, many students still stayed in the field and kept exercising. Quoting You's words, the arrival of the deity was like the climax of a song. When the vocalist had stopped singing, the enchanting voice still reverberated in the air and the listeners still felt intoxicated in the climax of the song.

\textit{Entering the Training Field}

The students usually took turns entering the field. In the beginning stage of the training session, usually only one or two students entered the field. And the exercise period of every student varied. Sometimes it lasted only ten minutes. Sometime it could be as long as forty minutes. Most of the students entered the field once. Or they might be influenced by the current atmosphere and enter the field again. Various

\textsuperscript{10} You later told me that vital force of the deity was one of wulao, five reverend deities of five directions.
students had different movements. Usually they maintained similar movements from the first session to the last. According to You's explanation, different students were inspired by different vital forces of ling. They would be trained by the same ling for a specific duration. That was the reason why they maintained similar movements through different training sessions. The deities that are invited in the opening ceremony of the training section are regarded as the invisible mentors of the student mediums. They instruct the student mediums through the exercise of mediums' bodies. If the student mediums follow the movement of the deity's vital force and achieve a correspondent state, they will become stronger and healthier after the training.

When students are propelled and led by the forces of ling, their manifestations might be considered abnormal or psychotic by the general public. Therefore students are encouraged to embrace their period of exercise in the training field and to let the possessing ling express itself without feeling embarrassed. According to You, the expression of ling, however eccentric, constitutes the essential turning point for the healing and transformation of the medium. You says that it is like the broadcasting of a recording tape. One needs to go through it first. Then one can remove it and insert a new one. The process is also like passing through various critical tests or going through ordeals. Mediums themselves have adopted the word "chuan" to describe the process. "Chuan" literally means turning, transportation or migration. Therefore it signifies both the gesture of the student medium's movement and its implied meaning of transformation.

The Incorporation of Body and Ling

The incorporation of the medium's body and the ling or deity's vital force constitutes one of the most important training tasks for the novice medium. The medium's body is
the mediatory tool of the deity. Its strength and vigor are required for the better transmission of the deity's message. The professional mediums usually offer religious services at night or in the wee hours of the morning. They solve people's problems by enabling the deity that possesses them to express itself through the laboring of their bodies. It is a common impression that when the mediums are possessed by deities, they are energetic and vigorous; nevertheless, when the deities leave their bodies, they become exhausted and weak. In order to overcome the general deficiency of the medium's physical condition, the design of the medium's educational program emphasizes the care of body in various ways. The courses of Chinese medicine were offered for the health care of the mediums, including the understanding of each organ and the flow of blood and chi (vital force). Contrary to their ordinary habit of living, every morning the student mediums were required to rise at 6:30 a.m. to take gymnastic exercise together. The gymnastic exercise was based upon those Chinese martial arts that emphasized the modulation of breath and the inspiration of vital force. In the night class of tiaoling xunti the healing of student mediums' "spiritual disease" and the training of their bodies were also emphasized.

According to You and other mediums' description, the visitation of the ling feels like a strong electric current. In the process of modulating the vital force, usually the medium manifests the physical symptom of hiccuping or trembling. Were the mediums' bodies are not strong enough, or they are not skilled at the modulation of ling, they would probably experience difficulty in breathing, trembling, or even shock or fainting while they are "bumped" by the vital forces of the deities. Therefore skill at breath modulation and stable steps of movement are very important in the process of spiritual exercise. And it is very important to have someone beside the novice medium when he
or she is still in the early stage of spiritual exercise. If the novice medium loses his or her consciousness, the teacher will call his or her name until he or she awakens.

In the early stage of the modulation of ling, the ling and the medium's body have not yet achieved the state of unification. Therefore the mediums' bodies cannot smoothly and confidently express the ideas and movements of ling. The unstable ling is just like a babbling child learning to talk. The messages they send cannot be clearly expressed by the medium. Hence the conduction of ling is designed to limber up the ling by singing, talking, performance of Chinese martial arts, or other movements. Quoting You's words, "heaven does not speak, earth does not enunciate, therefore they borrow the human body and language to express for them." In order to become a better messenger of specific ling or deity, sometimes the medium is required to adjust his or her body to more closely resemble that of the ling or deity. For example, one female student who was trained by the ling of bird only ate fruits or drank water through the whole educational program. When I asked her the reason for her abstention from other foods, she said that she just felt that she wanted to do so, and it seemed like a very natural thing for her. During the course of spiritual exercise she always moved like a bird. In the lecture course You referred to her as an example of the modulation of medium's body to the state of the ling. You explained the female student's "natural inclination" as a sympathetic reverberation of the state of a bird. It was also a request and instruction from the ling of the bird for the better cooperation of the two parties. You further proposed that various ling or deities had various modes of instruction and communication. Hence it was important for the student mediums to grasp the characteristics and style of their ling mentor.

You's Pedagogy
The teachers for the course of spiritual training included the senior mediums of the Association and the medium of the sponsor temple. Teachers play significant roles in the whole training process. Nevertheless, not every senior medium is qualified to be a teacher of the training course. According to Lai:

…the teacher who is qualified to lead the course of the "modulation of ling" must be able to be the spiritual counselor of both mediums and the possessing ling. In the course of ling modulation, various ling possess the student mediums' bodies and express themselves. The teacher must be someone who is able to interact with these ling. Most of the ling possess the student's body in order to vent their woes. The teacher pacifies their resentment by listening to them and expressing sympathy for them. When the resentful ling feel they are understood, they will be able to transform themselves by listening to the teacher's advice and admonition.

In the training sections teachers help students on the basis of their own experiences. They are experienced mediums who are more familiar with the secrets and arts of the movements of ling, the organization of the spiritual realm, the origin and characteristic of each deity, and the specific manner and gesture of different deities. Moreover, they also play the role of mediums who embody the presence of higher deities to offer spiritual instruction to the students and the ling that accompany them. According to You, the higher deity is like a powerful flashlight that emanates strong electricity. When it arrives at the training field through the teacher's body, it shares its spiritual power with the medium students and helps them to train their bodies and to modulate their ling. Taking You as an example, she was the leading teacher who participated in the whole training sessions from the first course of modulation of ling to the last one. She shared her personal experience of how she became a medium in the lecture course. She sat in
the classroom with students when she was not occupied with other business. She was consulted by students during the time of recess. And she was considered the mentor of both student mediums and various ling. Accordingly, the roles of medium and mentor are intensely connected for her. And her specific pedagogical vision also characterizes her understanding of mediumship.

In the course of spiritual training, You paid attention to the students' movement and gave them helpful advice. She watched the steps of students and reminded them to open their eyes to avoid staggering or falling. She entered the training field to hand the crying students tissues and to comfort them. She demonstrated the movements of a deity for the students who belong to the spiritual line of that deity. In order to offer useful instruction, understanding the state of students seems to be the most important condition for the teacher. According to You,

Someone says that the most important thing in the beginning stage of spiritual exercise is to lead the student mediums to move or to dance like the ecstatic medium. But I think there are other important things that need to be attended to. In the student's early stage of spiritual exercise, I seize the opportunity to observe the states of students. I can tell their emotional state or family situation according to the gestures of their movement, they way they cry or the trace of their steps. Hence I can understand their suffering and give them adequate instruction and help. How do I perceive their states? I care for them and I forget myself. You need to renounce yourself and concentrate on their condition. Therefore you can tune in to the right frequency and receive the messages they send through their movements. The perception is due to the resonance of the vital force.

Furthermore, the sympathetic resonance of the student's state is not a completely mysterious correspondence without any certain principle to follow. You told me two
principles of observation when I interviewed her after the training sections. The first
one is the principle of mutual promotion and restraint among the five qualities
(including metal, wood, water, fire and earth). According to You, the expression of
spiritual being can be generally understood through the framework of five qualities.
Basically speaking, the theory of the five qualities proposes that all the phenomena in the
cosmos—e.g., tastes, tones, directions, countenances, characters, emotions—can be
encompassed within the framework of five qualities. And every phenomenon can be
correlated with its corresponding quality. Taking direction as an example, east implies
the direction of wood, west implies the direction of metal, south implies the direction of
fire, north implies the direction of water, and middle implies the direction of earth.
Among the five qualities there exists a mutual relationship of promotion and restraint.
As to the relation of mutual promotion, wood promotes fire, fire promotes earth, earth
promotes metal, metal promotes water, and water promotes wood. As to the relation of
mutual restraint, wood restrains earth, earth restrains water, water restrains fire, fire
restrains metal, and metal restrains wood. Accordingly, one's character can also be
categorized by the framework of five qualities. Following the theory of five qualities,
Wang Fengyi (1853-1937) developed an elaborated system of "character of five
qualities." Wang's system has much impact on the practice of popular religions. The
Medium's Association introduces his theory in its educational program. And You also
adopts this system to classify the character of students and their possessing ling or deities:

Different deities have different characters. For example, the deities of the east are
specialized in the exorcism of evil spirits. Therefore they usually look severe and
furious. The deities of the west on the other hand are more merciful. They exhort
and guide people with patience. The deities of the south have regard for reason.
Although they are sometimes impulsive, they can always follow the persuasion of reason.

Relying on the framework of character of five qualities and her many years of experiences and observations, You can therefore adopt the principle of mutual promotion or mutual restraint to help the student mediums. Sometimes the students need to find the correspondent vital force of deity to nurture their spiritual quality. Sometimes they need to restrain the vital force of deity to subdue the disturbance of the lower ling.

Another principle You adopted in the conduction of ling is the principle of ethnicity:

When I observe the students' movements, one of the basic principles is to grasp the ethnicity of their ling. For example, I watch their movement and the way they cry to tell whether the possessing ling are from the tribe of Qiang, Taiwan Aborigine, the army of Netherlands or Japan. As long as you know where they are from, you know how to conduct them to express themselves. Some may regard these possessing ling as deities. But I don't think so. I respect these possessing ling and consider them equal spiritual beings. However, since the students are still in the process of adjusting to ling, they easily become complacent and fascinated by the titles of deities. (Hence) the differentiation of the spiritual quality of ling is quite important in the training process."

The character of five qualities and principle of ethnicity both emphasize the ideas of "categorization" and "origin," which is accordant with the mediums' emphasis on one's spiritual lineage.

*Technologies of the Self*

According to the above discussion, the relationship between medium and ling, whether
they are ancestral ling, dynastic ling, karmic ling, or original ling, constitutes the core axis of medium's religious cultivation. As a figure of mediation, the medium's practice and cultivation is always a matter of intersubjectivity rather than of psychological interiority. In other words, medium and ling cooperate with each other to actualize each other's specific religious mission. And their cooperation can be regarded as a co-actualized "technology of the self." According to Foucault, technologies of the self are those technologies that "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1998: 225). The cooperation of medium and ling is also a co-constituted ethical project, if we understand ethics as "conscious practice of freedom" (Ibid:284). The possessed medium achieves his or her final self-mastery by helping the possessing ling to realize its unfulfilled wishes or religious mission. The possessing ling frees itself from the resentful state through the performance of virtuous deeds with the aid of medium. The complex issue of intersubjectivity can be enriched by Foucault's scheme of the four parameters of the ethical field—ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, ethical work and telos. In the following discussion, I adopt Foucault's four parameters of the ethical field in analyzing the medium's religious practice and attempt to answer the questions about how the medium problematize her/himself and her/his present circumstances, in order to construct her/himself as an ethical being.

Ethical Substance: Body and Ling

11 Qiang is an ancient tribe in West China.
The incorporation of medium and ling constitutes the ethical substance of the ethical concern. In the lecture class or the spiritual training sessions, the idea of "borrowing the falsehood for the cultivation of the truth" is frequently emphasized. It is originally a Buddhist term about the dialectical relationship between truth and falsehood: "to show the truth by falsehood, and to realize the false by truth." Truth signifies the eternal self, and falsehood indicates transient appearance. Popular religion adopts this term to encourage the religious pursuants to cultivate their soul by the cultivation of their bodies: "in order to pursue the supreme Way and to return to our origin, we should cultivate ourselves while we are corporal beings." According to You:

The false body means our five viscera (the heart, the lungs, the liver, the kidneys, and the spleen) and six entrails (the stomach, gall bladder, bladder, the big intestines, the small intestines, and sanjiao\textsuperscript{12}). It is finite since it experiences birth, age, disease, and death. It is only a false and transient assemblage that weakens and fades away as time goes by. The truth is the Way, the true God, or our true self. In other words, it is the true origin that we must pursue.

Compared to the profound and delicate idea of the dialectical relationship between body and soul or truth and falsehood that has been explored and developed in Buddhism, You's explanation sounds like a simple and mediocre reiteration of the conventional Buddhist emphasis on truth/soul and disregard of false/body. Nevertheless, if we explore You or her Association's understanding of "borrowing the false for the cultivation of the truth" based upon their special understanding and interactive experience of the spiritual realm, it is more like grafting rather than parroting. As the representatives of the deities of varied

\textsuperscript{12} In Chinese medicine, sanjiao means the channels made by the space between entrails or inside the entrails. It is divided into three parts: the upper part, the middle part and the low part.
ling, mediums' bodies constitute the intersection of the visible and invisible realms. Hence for the mediums, the interaction of body and spirit cannot be reduced to a simple emphasis on one and ignorance of the other one. Their specific experiences lead to their distinct understanding of the concept of "borrowing." And the meaning of "borrowing" and the dialectical relationship between truth/false or soul/body can be discussed from two perspectives.

The first meaning of borrowing indicates the deities or ling's appropriation of mediums' bodies. Mediums' bodies are the indispensable passages and instruments for the progress of ling and the religious tasks of deities. For the wandering departed souls, mediums' bodies retrieve them from homelessness and enable their integration into the redemptive structure of the spiritual realm. For the ling in the process of merit accumulation, mediums' bodies constitute the hub of their human connection for the execution of their spiritual power. For the deities from the higher spiritual realm, the mediums' bodies represent the incarnation of their mercifulness, justice or power. When mediums lend their bodies to the various deities or ling, it is analogous to Poulet's understanding of reading: "I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me"(Poulet, 1969:1215). It is a reciprocation of materiality and spirituality, or alteration of form and formlessness. While the medium cedes his or her body to the ling, the spirituality of the ling acquires a form through which to express itself, and the medium's substantial body empties itself to become a hollow channel of passage. Accordingly, the medium's body is the "falsehood" that allows the "truth" to be manifest. In this sense, the mediums' vigor and strength are emphasized in the training course. Therefore their bodies are able to sustain the power of deity or ling. Nevertheless, medium's body cannot be the goal or final destination of the spiritual being.
It is rather a halfway house for the further movement. According to You:

If the medium tries to help those who are harassed by lower ling and he or she becomes weaker and weaker, that's because the medium bears others' sufferings without knowing how to transform those sufferings. The medium's body is gradually destroyed while he or she offers religious healing for the patients. How does this happen? The medium is like the mediator between patient and the disturbing ling. If he or she attempts to resolve their entangled karma without reminding the patient to perform virtue or to accumulate merit, then the medium has to bear the karmic debt for the patient and suffers from the spiritual illness that originally belongs to their patient. On the other hand, if the medium has thorough understanding of the spiritual realm and can be sensitive to its multifarious appearances and transformations, he or she will not be hurt by the disturbing ling.

In other words, container or collector is not an adequate metaphor for the description of medium's ideal bodily state. A medium with greater capacity is like the responsible mailman who is able to deliver letters to the right destination. And he or she knows how to transform his/her client's problem with the help of mighty deities. Furthermore, the medium's mediation cannot overturn the principle of justice or the regulation of karmic retribution. Therefore the religious cultivation and merit accumulation are stressed for both mediums and their adherents. The emphasis on cultivation leads to the second understanding of body and ling.

Compared with the first perspective, the second perspective accords more with the conventional understanding that takes the truth/soul seriously and depreciates the status of falsehood/body. We can examine it through the following example. In the meeting for the study of a Daoist scripture "Yinfu jing," the Eternal Mother possessed You and instructed her adherents:
The special mission for this period is just like the time of "Investiture of God" that involves fighting for the investiture. Everyone is invested according to one's achievement. In previous times deities constituted the objects of investiture. In the contemporary epoch our original ling constitute the objects of investiture. We are no longer invested by Master Jiang Ziya of the "Investiture of God." Instead we are invested by the origin of our spiritual lineage....Therefore we must perform virtues and accumulate merits in order to clean our karmic debt. Then our original ling can be brought out and protect our false bodies. By 'borrowing the false for the cultivation of the truth' we are able to accomplish the mission of this life.

The original ling is like one's true self that is alienated from oneself. It cannot be retrieved without the work of cultivation. The proposal of the original ling implies an existing state of loss and unfulfillment that must be overcome by the labor of cultivation. The original ling signifies the true and eternal self, and the body indicates false and transient appearance. Although the second perspective underestimates the value of the body, the body still has an indispensable role in the labor of cultivation. The body is the instrument of virtuous performance. It is also the foundation for the descending of original ling. The unification of body and original ling does not negate the role of the body. Instead the original ling protect the body for the advancement of merit accumulation and religious cultivation. Accordingly we can say that in mediumistic cultivation the body and the ling (the ancestral ling, the dynastic ling, the karmic ling, the original ling, or the spirit of deities) do not constitute contradictory dichotomies that deny each other. Rather, the cooperation of body and ling is more like the mutual help of the crippled and the blind--one with the vision of origin, past and future, the other with the substantial endowment to perform and to practice.
Mode of Subjectivation and Telos

I was very stubborn. I did not believe those invisible matters. I went through the process of economic breakdown, illness, and finally I broke my leg and walked with a cane for eight months. They were ordeals from god. The god even tested me through my child. We had very good relationship. But when I broke my leg and asked him to buy a meal for me, he told me: ‘Aren’t you a capable person who can do everything by yourself without relying on others? If you want to eat, just make it by yourself!’ At that moment I started to reflect what kind of person I was to incur such reproach of my arrogance from my own child. And I knew that it was time for me to repent. (Mrs. Huang, a medium)

When I knelt down before the Buddhist master with my daughters, he supported me with his hands and asked me rise up. Suddenly he cried, and I cried with him. He told me that I would have a very heavy task to fulfill in the future and I had to cultivate myself in order to spread the Way of Buddhism and Daoism. I was confused because I was only a woman. What kind of great task would be granted to such an ordinary woman like me? (Cultivating Moon, a medium)

When I met with the brothers (two senior mediums), I felt that finally there was someone, some gods in this world that still had a mind to discipline me... (a novice medium) (Li, 1996)

The way in which mediums are invited or incited to recognize their ethical project (the mode of subjectivation) can be characterized as both obligatory and stimulative. Karmic entanglement demands recognition through a coercive gesture. Most mediums experience illness, poverty or other affliction before they respond to the call of deities. Nevertheless, as soon as they are willing to undertake the specific religious mission granted to them, they identify themselves as the servants of deities and offer their bodies as the instrument of deities. The karmic entanglement with karmic ling is only a sign of calling from the deity. Its solution brings about the recognition of a special vocation
decreed by the deity. The spiritual ideal to which mediums submit themselves is also the source of inspiration and devotion for their spiritual development. Therefore the mode of subjectivation for the medium moves through a the spectrum that includes obedient surrender and faithful realization of religious mission.

The peculiar modes of being (telos of the ethical project) pursued by the medium can be characterized in two related ways: one is the selfless instrument and representative of deity, the other is the pursuer of "Dao." The first one concerns the special religious mission for the contemporary epoch, e.g. performance of religious healing, or propagation of the admonitory and salvational messages of deities. The second one is related to the cultivational goals such as the unification of one's contemporary self with the original ling, or the understanding and realization of Dao.

**Ethical Works: Identification and Differentiation**

In order to transform themselves as better collaborators of deities or ling, the novice mediums undergo series of religious practices under the instruction and supervision of senior mediums. Compared to the conventional preparation and training of novice mediums, the educational program of the mediums' school is informed by a more elaborated ethical concern and reflexivity about the complicated relationship between mediums and the various ling. The course of the modulation of ling and exercise of the body especially constitutes the representative ethical work of the medium's religious project. In the following discussion I explore how such religious practices characterize the unique ethical work of mediumship.

The activities of ling modulation and exercise of the body have interrelated functions of healing and training. When the student medium is harassed by the resentful ling from
the lower spiritual level, he or she is healed by a teacher medium who pacifies the ling. When the inarticulate suffering of the resentful ling is expressed by the student medium and is listened to by the teacher medium, the ling is able to accept the admonition of the deity represented by the teacher medium to raise its spiritual quality. Once the resentful ling starts its practice of cultivation, it no longer harasses the student medium. The ling is then sent to a temple or finds the body of a medium to begin its cultivation. When the student medium is visited by the ling in the process of cultivation, then the student and the ling are both trained in the activity of ling modulation in order to achieve a better state of incorporation. In the training process, however, the student's progress may be hindered by the disturbance of varied ling that intend to share the merits of training or to receive attention. When this happens, the teacher medium needs to deal with the problem with different tactics, depending on the state of the harassing ling. If the harassing ling needs an outlet to express its sorrow, the teacher medium will listen to it and console it as if treating a frustrated child. However, if the harassing ling rigidly clings to its sorrowful past, the teacher medium will admonish it in a more authoritative tone to transcend its suffering through elevating its spiritual quality. If the harassing ling behaves like a villain who intends to share the merits of training without its own contribution, the teacher medium will drive it away or oppress its dishonest desire by exercising the righteous power of the deity.

Accordingly, the functions of healing and training are connected with each other. Moreover, human being and spiritual being are associated as each other's double. And the meaning of double can be understood from two countervailing movements: identification and differentiation. Firstly, the suffering of the invisible ling is incarnated as the psychological and physical distress of the medium. The medium's personal
misery is also extradited to the possessing ling and so acquires a ground on which to land, no matter how unusual the ground is. In other words, the possessing ling and the possessed medium articulate their distress by the mediation of each other. Therefore they constitute each other's double and tell one's stories by means of the other. The connection of the medium and the ling is possible because of the common experience of unutterable suffering. According to You's observation, the possessing ling and the person it possesses are brought together by a rough principle of identification because of corresponding thought, emotion, and "frequency." For example, a resentful ling and a person who bears suffering are more easily attracted to each other. So, too, a furious ling and a cantankerous person. Accordingly, a more cultivated and righteous medium is more likely to solicit the visit of a deity from the higher spiritual realm. Nevertheless, it is the distinct difference between them makes the "changeling" possible. Take the meeting of the resentful ling and the distressful medium as an example. The medium and the ling reverberate with each other's distress and express it dramatically in the training field. The normal medium student changes into an eccentric figure. A quiet and ordinary medium student may cry with a bleak and harsh voice in the training field. It is like an actor or actress who is completely engrossed in his or her character and sheds his or her tears in the other's story. You explained the meaning of crying in her lecture course to the mediums:

The long repressed emotion of torment needs to be conducted and to be vented by the modulation of ling and exercise of the body. The process is like a chick that pierces through the shell and emerges from an egg. If the ling tries to express its suffering and is got repressed, it would become more and more painful and make the student medium ill. Therefore crying constitutes an important process for the spiritual exercise of medium. And it is also a method for the healing of the medium's spiritual disease.
The medium's crying has various meanings. It might complain of a hard lot. Or it might express the suffering of wandering in the world. Crying is not the goal to pursue, but it is a necessary process for the medium. If a medium has never cried in the training process, I don't think he or she can be considered a real medium. If the mediums are able to cry, we should congratulate them since their crying shows that they have entered the spiritual realm. When the invisible spiritual being enters their bodies, it is just like the birth of spiritual children. You need to know how to cultivate them and lead them. Therefore the teacher is very important in this process.

The medium's crying signifies the birth of a spiritual child--a child that is born from the resonant suffering of medium and ling. Nevertheless, the newborn child looks like an ugly and eccentric changeling that marks the gap between "what was" and "what should be." It calls for a redemptive action of reversed change to get the "original one" back. For the possessing ling the "original one" means the recovery of its innocent spiritual nature. For the medium it is dissociation from entanglement with a malign possessing ling. And both are attained by the subsequent training process.

The dissociation of medium and malign ling is based upon acquiring the capacity to differentiate between the benevolent ling with higher spiritual quality and the malign ling that are less cultivated. Many senior mediums propose that the capacity for differentiation constitutes one of the most important lessons for every medium. According to their experience, the first criterion of differentiation is temperature. When they are possessed by a deity, they usually feel warm. When the ling from the lower realm approaches, they usually feel cold. Secondly, the expression of deity and lower ling is different. The deities are more serious, rigorous, and emotionless. Contrarily the lower ling are more inclined to express oscillating emotions like jealousy, revenge, and competition. Therefore when the student mediums are possessed by the lower ling,
they have more emotional expressions such as crying and laughing. Thirdly, the
ingitious deity brings beneficial influence to the medium. The malign ling causes
spiritual disease or mental illness to the person it possesses. Most of the karmic ling and
the dynastic ling are categorized as lower ling. However, they are not easily recognized
since they prefer to present themselves as deities from the higher realm rather than
nameless spirits. In the training course the teacher medium discerns the type and
character of the student's possessing ling. If the false claim of a lower ling is recognized
by the teacher medium, it would be admonished to stop disturbing the student mediums.
In the lecture course You also instructed students a self-help method for negotiating with
the lower ling and repelling them at will. For example, the students can persuade the
lower ling to be the subordinates or guards of a specific deity. They can also conduct
the lower ling to leave their body through the palm and sole of the foot through the
exercise of their own will, as if they were excreting a poisonous thing. In sum,
identification and differentiation signify the two transformative movements of the student
medium and the possessing ling. Their encounter reveals their distress by the
phantasmal reflection of the oppositional party. In other words, they constitute each
other's double and deflection. And their transformation is achieved by the capacity for
differentiation and dissociation.

The transformative movement of identification and differentiation not only marks the
entangled relationship between student medium and the lower ling, it also accounts for
another double relationship, that is, between the medium and the higher deity. The
spiritual encounter between the ling of higher level and the ling of lower level is
incarnated by the interaction of teacher medium and student medium. Here the teacher
medium and the deity or spirit from the higher realm become each other's double. If the
student medium and the possessing ling attract each other through common suffering, then the teacher medium and the deity echo each other in such positive characters as righteousness and mercifulness. The identification of deity and medium is especially emphasized from the perspective of the mediums' deportment and conduct in their daily life, including refraining from smoking and chewing betel nut, elimination of bad temper, and reform of character, etc. Consequently, inner cultivation and outer reform become a necessary requirement for the more advanced mediums. And the worship of a deity is not only a supplication for blessings and protection but also a committed imitation of the spirit of the deity. You elaborated this idea on an occasion when she was consulted by a student medium who was confused about his future as a medium:

The task of the greatest urgency at present for you is to closely follow your mentor deity. Let the deity become your master. In our hearts live many rioters and thieves that usurp the position of our true self, therefore we are lost and confused. Now you must concentrate on the teachings of your mentor deity by understanding his accomplishments during his lifetime, how he cultivated himself and how he attained enlightenment. If you understand these, you will be able to receive more clear messages from him. And you will gradually develop your own opinion and realize which direction to go.

The meaning of identification can be also explored through You's metaphor of "actor" or "actress." I have briefly mentioned this metaphor in the preceding chapter. Now it can be further discussed from the perspective of education. In the lecture course, You mentioned several times that good mediums are like excellent actors or actresses.

Good mediums do their best to play their roles and completely forget themselves. When they empty their minds and renounce selfish desire, they then are able to tune
in to the frequency of deity and to perform like the corresponding deity. Different deities have different manners, magnetic fields, characters, and religious goals. Hence being a medium is like a person with thousand faces.

Accordingly, imitation or identification of the manner and spirit of the higher deities helps the mediums to raise their physical and spiritual quality. Nevertheless, the work of identification has its danger if the medium ignores another ethical exercise, that is, the work of differentiation.

The differentiation of deity and medium constitutes a subtler lesson for the religious cultivation of mediums. The lesson of differentiation can be discussed from the perspectives of the medium and the deity. For the mediums, total identification with deity can lead to the state of loss, that is, the trap of self-magnification. According to the principle of resemblance mentioned above, such self-amplification is caused by the egoistic desire of medium. If the possessing ling sees through the medium's desire, it can easily control the medium.\textsuperscript{13} Taking the dynastic ling as an example, You critiqued the phenomenon of over-identification:

There was a medium who was possessed by the dynastic ling who liked to wear clothes in the ancient style with an embroidered dragon. The medium was obsessive with the idea of being the Prince of the Ninth Dragon and he had no idea of how eccentric he looked. From my perspective this person was controlled by the spiritual realm and lost his own judgment and identity. I told him that you were a human,

\textsuperscript{13} Generally speaking, the deities mentioned in the following discussion are not higher deities of distinguished spiritual quality. Instead, they are karmic ling or dynastic ling that are in the process of religious cultivation. When they possess the medium and offer religious service to people, they borrow the title of specific deity with more prestigious position in order to win the trust and admiration of people. They are ling between the higher deities and the less cultivated ling that are usually categorized as ghosts. Since they are still in the state of "in-between," vanity constitutes the greatest temptation for them. Accordingly the mediums they possess are easily tempted by the same falsehood.
therefore you had to return to the state of human. The visit and departure of the
deity had its time. You could regard yourself as the queen or emperor of a prior
dynasty all the time. As a matter of fact, such over-identification is a blasphemy to
the deities. It is also a degradation of one's personality. In the mediums' class I
told the students that such over-identification was due to a misunderstanding or
ignorance of self. You did not know who you were; therefore you were intoxicated
by the title of the deity. However great your possessing deity was, after all you were
only an ordinary person that needed provisions and rests. The grand title of deity
could lead you astray. You must be careful.

According to You, most of the mediums have only limited education. And some of
their thoughts and ideas still belong to the time of the dynastic period. The teachings of
medium's school remind them to distinguish the contemporary self from the dynastic ling.
You's critique of over-identification with dynastic ling can be also applied to the
phenomenon of "reunion of relatives of former lives." In the mediums' gathering (huiche
yanyi), or the mediums' spiritual encountering that I discuss in previous chapter, the
dynastic ling manifests itself through the medium's body. The ling encourage, reproach
or quarrel with each other, especially when the ling from the same dynasty with karmic
entanglement encounter each other in the meeting. If the ling with blood relations or
predestined ties recognize each other during the meeting, a scene of embrace and bitter
crying is not uncommon. This is the "reunion of relatives of former lives." According
to the understanding of the medium, the recognition of previous ties contributes to the
solution of an unresolved entanglement or cleaning of past karma. However, it is not a
totally safe matter to explore. If one is over-identified with the previous incarnation and
loses one's present identity, one's life might fall into a state of confusion and chaos. The
scandal of an extramarital affair heard in the medium's circle is one of the negative side
effects of such "reunion."\(^{14}\) You does not encourage the recognition of predestined ties because it might bring about obstacles for the contemporary identity. Rather than a goal to be pursued, the previous identification is something to be transcended. In the lecture course You articulated this idea to students:

Our spiritual expression must change itself to be in accord the contemporary world. Otherwise we only make eccentric impressions on the public. Some of us are obsessed with the idea of wearing the clothes in the style of a previous dynasty. We can play various roles. But we shouldn't indulge ourselves in those roles. You are modern people who live in modern era. Each one of you has an I.D. card with your name on it. If I am called You Meiling, then I need to be responsible to my name. You contrive to return to the past. But the past is not as good as you imagine. Through religious cultivation you learn your previous identifications. This is good as far as it assists you in realizing the previous wisdom to help yourselves and to help others. Nevertheless, this is not good if such a previous identification only makes you magnify yourselves and be intoxicated with the vain titles of the past. Someone said that he was an emperor in his previous life. I told him that if you were really an emperor you would live in misery in this life. Why? Just think about how many debts the emperor owed to his queen and concubines! And think about the condition if these queen and concubines demand the repayment of debts together once for all. Some of us indulge in the vain titles of the past like emperor or general. Being a general was indeed very brave and fierce. Nevertheless, who needed to be responsible for the sins of killing in the war? The general did! Understanding the transmigration of your ling is due to your religious cultivation. However, you are making big mistakes if you are enchanted by the empty titles of the past.

Consequently, "knowing oneself" constitutes the fundamental lesson for the medium's education. Knowing oneself on the one hand indicates the realization of one's previous

\(^{14}\) This does not imply that mediums are more inclined to have extramarital affairs than other people do. As a matter of fact, according to Lin's(2002) investigation, mediums in Taiwan have a much lower percentage of divorce than that of the general population.
transmigration. On the other hand it emphasizes the significance of one's contemporary life. Hence one dissociates oneself from the delusive confusion of one's identity and the deity's or ling's identity. In other words, rather than self-amplification, the true meaning of knowing oneself implies the acknowledgment of one's debt and the readiness to shoulder the responsibility of one's past. Quoting You's words:

Many people are confused by ling. They cannot let go of the vain titles of the previous lives. This is what I meant by losing oneself. As a matter of fact, if you start your path of religious cultivation, you need to repay the debt you owed in your previous transmigration. You may encounter various difficulties in your family and your career. In the beginning you do not know the reason for these hardships. Therefore you seek for the answer through the experienced and more cultivated mediums. As long as you understand the karmic entanglement that contributes to your suffering, you need to repay your debt with deference. The suffering you go through is indeed a reminder for you to start on your path of religious cultivation. You need to work very hard to survive the ordeal of karmic entanglement. Entering the program of mediums' education means that you strive to know yourself and to enhance yourself. Therefore you can be responsible for yourself, and for the karmic ling and ancestral ling that come here with you. Moreover, you will be able to help those student mediums who wander like orphans in the future.

The lesson of differentiation can be also explored from the perspective of the deities. The dynastic ling that lived in the past also encounter the issue of adjusting themselves to the contemporary world. You explicated this point by sharing her own experiences:

Some of the ling are able to teach you how to use a computer. They have caught up with the modern age of information. However, some of the ling still live in primitive times and adhere stubbornly to ancient ideas. If the ling want you to wear leaves like the primitive people, will you follow its instruction? I was once possessed by a ling that was very obsessed with the idea of wearing white clothes.
During the time when I cooperated with her, I was not allowed to go out with clothes of other colors. If I did not wear white clothes, my whole body would feel itchy until I changed. Hence I tried to negotiate with her and asked her why she forced me to do so. Wasn't she the Goddess of Mercy? She said that although she only borrowed the title of Goddess of Mercy to execute her religious mission, she would finally reach the spiritual state of the Goddess in the future. She said that the things she taught me were all on the right course. And the reason she liked white clothes was because her status of princess when she was alive. White clothes made her feel beautiful and elegant. I told the ling that I could wear white clothes when I went out, but she could not make me looks eccentric like a person from ancient times. She agreed. As time passed by, I felt I needed to break through the rigid state. Therefore I negotiated with her again. Finally she let me wear anything I liked when I walked on the street. But I still had to wear white clothes when I offered religious services to people. I was willing to accept her regulations if they were reasonable. Indeed, reasonable regulations can help us to become a dignified and righteous messenger of the deity.

Furthermore, the language of ling that cannot be understood by common people is not promoted in the mediums' educational program as much as in the temples where the mediums come from. Although the ability to speak the language of ling is regarded as a marvelous sign of successful contact with ling, it is also a stage to be transcended in the medium's education. Therefore student mediums are encouraged to express the inspiration of the deity with contemporary vernacular language that can be understood by common people. Moreover, as we mentioned above, the mediums' classes are designed not only for the advancement of student mediums but also for the reformation of ling that follow the mediums to the class. As to the progress of ling, Lai has an interesting observation. In the medium's class they offered an exegetical course on the Diamond Sutra (Prajna-Paramita Sutra) and discussed the idea of renouncing one's stubborn persistence. After the ling received this idea, they brought the new knowledge they
learned in class back to their original temples. While they possessed the medium in offering religious service to people, they profoundly elaborated these new ideas with their knowledge of the past. This is an example of how the ancient ling renounce the inflexible expression of ancient ways to come to terms with the modern world.

**Conclusion**

Many scholars have demonstrated how possession and trance constitute empowering experience that brings transformation both in social scale and in the level of body-self (see Boddy 1989; Comaroff 1985; Lewis, 1971; Ong 1987). In their studies the subaltern voice is expressed through an authorized trance state and offers its criticism to the power of patriarchy and other oppressive social institutions. Kleinman & Kleinman in their study of folk healing in Taiwan also described how women from impoverished households were reclaimed from their powerlessness through the possessing agent who demanded that their grievances be heard and compensation be executed. Quoting their words,

The presence of the possessing agent offers face, energizes experience, and demands favor from family and friends. Thereby, moral experience is transformed. Illness through possession criticizes a local world; healing opens up a few more options in the social field. The changes usually are modest in scope but often can be significant nonetheless (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1995:110).

To a certain degree, the activity of ling modulation and its related course have the similar effect of empowerment for the participants. In the Preparatory Class of 2000 I asked some of the students about what they learned from the courses. Most of them gave me the similar answer: knowing better what were going on with themselves.
While the scientific or medical discourse regards the experience of possession as "dissociative trance disorder" (Gaw, Ding, Levine & Gaw, 1998) or indigenous pattern of psychological defense mechanism (Wen, 2001), the Mediums' Associations frames the possession experience in an educational context. Through the teachings of the senior mediums they offer the students a meaningful and beneficial discourse for them to come to terms with their possessing experiences, whether these students were about to be called to be professional mediums, or the experience of inspiration (or possessing) of ling was only a temporary phenomenon indicated a certain karmic entanglement calling for recognition. Their teachings reduced the students' anxiety of ignorance and recognized their confused experience of possession as meaningful experience. In other words, they were no longer possessed or controlled by certain incomprehensible power. Through the understanding of the spiritual structure and the experience of ling modulation, the origin, identification and intention of the mysterious power is gradually revealed. Here knowledge is power. Once the students' selves are reclaimed from the entanglement of spirits, the meaningful cooperation between humans and spirits become possible.
Chapter Five: Beyond the Discourse of Temples

In the previous chapters I discuss the intersection of mediumship and various modern forces from several perspectives, including Lai Zongxian's theorization of mediumship, the intertwining of mediumistic discourse and nationalist discourse, and the making of the cultivated self basing on the cooperation of humans and spirits. All the preceding discussions concern the innovative aspect of mediumship, that is, how mediumship is reconstructed in the various fields of modern discourse and practice. Following a similar vein, this chapter examines the intersection of modernity and mediumship by the exploration of two unconventional cases of mediumship. The first case is a college student with mediumistic capacity who strives to rid herself of the conventional "missionary" discourse of the medium's temple and to get her life back to its "normal" state. In the following discussion she will be referred to as Pia, her nickname. The second case is a woman called Cai Lingji\(^1\) who began to have mediumistic experiences in her thirties. Unlike the other professional mediums who offer their religious services in temples, she offers her religious service of "seeing" people's karmic chain of cause and effect (yinguo) at a café. She has written three books about her mediumistic experiences. And these books have all been published by a reputable publisher between 2001 and 2002. Compared to the members of the Medium's Association, Pia and Lingji have a higher educational background (college degree) and choose unconventional modes to confront their "destined" mediumistic gift. They both propose disillusioned accounts of mediumship, although in different ways. Pia understands mediumship through her

\(^1\) Interestingly, the pronunciation of her first name is the same as "lingji," the term adopted by the Medium's Association to address themselves, meaning medium.
major--social work, a modern specialization. Lingji proposes a theory of cause and effect to be the fundamental moral of mediumship. Some of their understanding of mediumship echoes Lai's and You's delineation of ideal mediumship that we discussed in the previous chapters. Some of their accounts problematize the phenomena of mediumship differently from the conventional temple discourse. They therefore offer us another new avenue to explore the question of how mediumship and modernity tell each other's story in contemporary Taiwanese society.

**Pia's Confusions**

Pia (nickname) was a senior college student majoring in social work when I interviewed her for the first time in August 2000. Since she graduated from college she has been working as an administrative and teaching assistant in the college. Pia is a smart and humorous woman. The first time I saw her she looked like a high school student with tomboyish appearance. Like every ordinary college student with unique passion for one thing or another, Pia is crazy about baseball and she is determined to commit herself to a career in social work, especially social work for adolescents. Unlike her classmates, she has had an unusual childhood and adolescence because of her special "gift" of "seeing and hearing things." Pia accepted my interview at a time when I was full of questions about mediumship but had difficulty in posing those questions bluntly to the mediums I knew from the Association. This was also a time when Pia was full of skeptical doubts about the meaning and value of mediumship. In other words, Pia strove to find an alternative solution beyond the answer she learned from the temple in which she participated in order to deal with her mediumistic experience. Consequently my conversations with Pia are quite different from the ones I had with the mediums from
the Association. If the mediums from the Association are like well-informed tour guides who introduce their intimate world to an outsider with the language of their own world, Pia is more like a suspicious reporter of the mediumistic world with a language of alienation. In the following discussion I arrange Pia's narration according to different narrative themes in order to demonstrate her mediumistic passage from identification to disillusion. In the interviews, Pia talked about her peculiar childhood, how she was initiated to be a medium, her spiritual being friends, her patron deity, the conflict, doubt and pressure she went through in the later period of her mediumistic service, and the temporary solution she devised. Pia's disillusioned experience is worthy of investigation since it offers a kind of self-extrication different from the conventional superstitious accusations of mediums proposed by outsiders and skeptics. Rather than an overall negation of the plausibility of mediumship, Pia's confusion and doubt in fact expose the ambivalent state of mediumship in its entanglement with the human desires.

_A Special Childhood_

Since I was a little child I saw or heard things other people could not see or hear. For me it is just like seeing the image or hearing the voice of a real person. Did you watch the "Sixth Sense" played by Bruce Willis? I was just like the boy in the film who suffered from his supernatural vision. Although my experiences were not so heavy as his, I did feel very confused. My parents told me that they did not understand my suffering until they watched this film. They even apologized to me for their ignorance. I don't know why I have such (mediumistic) capacity. My parents are not pious worshippers of any deity or enthusiastic adherents of popular religion. They even sent me to a Christian kindergarten when I was a little child. My parents were aware of my condition since I started to tell them things about our dead relatives, such as my grandma and my cousin. I still remembered when I was eight or nine years old one day my father told me that he would pick me up after
school. I told him that it was not necessary because my grandma sent me to school and picked me up after school everyday. For me it was quite normal because that was my grandma. But for the adults it was abnormal because my grandma has passed away when I was five years old. My schoolteacher also detected something strange with me because I often talked to the air. Although my parents detected something strange with me, they just wanted me to stop saying or thinking these nonsensical things. Gradually I realized that the people I saw were of two kinds, the living ones and the dead ones. But I did not tell my parents that I could see the kind of people that they could not see. Because I still did not know how to distinguish them. Sometimes I would be scared by the images of the dead people. And I could only cry and hide myself in the closet. I did not tell my parents what I saw because I did not know how to express my experience to them.

In Chinese culture the person who is able to see things other people do not see is referred to as some one with "yinyang yan," which means the person with eyes (yan) that are able to see things of both the yang (visible) realm and the yin (invisible) realm. The term yinyang yan is not a neutral description of people's peculiar sensation; it indeed implies how such sensation is framed in the cosmology of Chinese popular religion. People with yinyang yan are consequently considered more susceptible to contact with spiritual forces. Although yinyang yan is a cultural phenomenon that is well known to the public, it is not a favored trait. People with yinyang yan are considered abnormal and queer due to ordinary people's fear of the spiritual forces. Yinyang yan may be a temporary phenomenon of children since children are regarded as people with more vulnerable souls in Chinese popular religion. It can also be a perennial trait that accompanies peculiar persons forever. If children with yinyang yan are recognized by their parents, the problems are usually dealt with through religious means, that is, the intervention of mediums, since mediums are the religious specialists who are able to exorcise the harassment of the spirits or to remove a special sensation. The intervention of the
medium does not only solve the problem, it also offer a cultural and religious frame for the understanding of the peculiar sensation. Similarly, Pia's confused state also found its expression through cultural and religious articulation of a medium. Nevertheless, instead of removing her peculiar sensation, the medium revealed to Pia a special destiny that she was not realized before.

*From Repression to Recognition*

I lived in such a state of confusion until I met Muqing--the father of my brother-in-law--when I was a first grade student in senior high school. I was sixteen years old then. Muqing was a medium. Before he became a medium he was a businessman who sold flowers. His wife passed away soon after the birth of my brother-in-law. Muqing then indulged himself in gambling and lost everything he had. Finally he retired to a temple and cultivated himself there for over ten years. When he left the temple he became a medium-master. He then founded his own altar. Muqing recognized my (mediumistic) capacity and told my parents. My parents and I felt shocked and did not know what to do. Muqing said that there was nothing we can do because I was destined to be like this. Before I knew Muqing, although I saw things other people did not see, I did not know what they meant. After I knew Muqing, he taught me how to live my life (with such mediumistic capacity). When I was a second grade student in senior high school, I started to know how to employ my mediumistic capacity through the teaching of Muqing and my (ghost) friends of the spirit realm. For example, I can use the capacity to heal people's illness or to provide people funeral and religious services. Since then until I was a junior in college, I committed myself to this field (of mediumistic services). Except for the time for school, I spent most of my time at Muqing's altar to offer people religious services. I did not receive any reward or money for my services because I considered what I was doing a benevolent action. And it corresponds to my ideal of being a social worker. Originally I planned to choose foreign languages to be my major when I was at high school. But my teacher suggested to me to choose social work to be my major. Ever since I became a student of social work, I have felt very lucky. Committing myself to the field of social work gives me a
meaningful life. If I had not chosen it to be my major, I might have become a person who values wealth above other things. I might have regarded the operation of the temple as the management of a business and cared only for its scale and number of adherents.

Pia's process of initiation fits into the general understanding that mediumistic ability is a gift that cannot be acquired by individual effort but can be advanced through training. Through Muqing's recognition and training, Pia's peculiar sensation became a useful instrument for the offering of healing sessions or other religious service. The ambiguous sensation of seeing was refined into the capacity for communication with and manipulation of the spirit realm. Pia did not convey her hesitation about being a medium and being a college student at the same time. Rather she saw the congruity between a professional medium and a social worker. For her both occupations lead to meaningful lives because both are altruistic services that do not seek reward. After she was initiated into the mediumistic world, Pia encountered various beings from the spirit realm. Most of these spiritual beings were departed souls who helped her in the healing sessions or wandering souls that she accidentally came across on the road. Pia referred to the former ones as her friends in spirit realm and to the latter ones as ghosts.

_Elder Brother Li—a Friend in the Spirit Realm^2_

At Muqing's altar I provided healing service to people mainly through the help of

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^2 Elder Brother is a polite form of address for a man about one's own age in Chinese and Taiwanese societies. Pia considers those spirits she knew as friends of hers, therefore addresses them by the appellation of the same generation. Although these spirits may come from earlier ages. Furthermore, ghost is also addressed as "good brethren (hao xiongdi)" in Taiwanese popular religion due to people's respect for and fear of ghosts (Jordan, 1972:34). This might be another reason why Pia called her "ghost friends" brother.
Elder Brother Li—a friend of mine from the spiritual realm. Elder Brother Li was a spirit of Qing dynasty from Zhejiang Province. He was a doctor specializing in Chinese medicine. I met him in a temple in Xinzhu when I looked for my grandfather's spirit after he passed away. Elder Brother Li did not have his own medium. He offered people healing services through yaoqian—the divination lot with medical prescriptions that worshippers draw by themselves for the cure of illness. And he was identified as Baosheng Dadi in this temple. He received people's worship in this temple until people worshipped Mazu instead of Baosheng Dadi. When I visited the temple he asked me to bring him to Taipei with me. Therefore he could continue his healing service through me. According to our understanding there are two kinds of disease. One is physical disease. The other is spiritual disease. Before I met Elder Brother Li I could only help people to cure their spiritual disease. For instance, if I saw a ghost at my client's heart when I closed my eyes, I ask the client if his or her heart had any problem. That was how I diagnosed people's disease. After I met Elder Brother Li, I could help people to cure both their spiritual and physical disease. I could provide people Chinese medical prescriptions through the instruction of Elder Brother Li. The period when I cooperated with him was the climax of my healing career. Later when I decided to leave Muqing's temple, I could no longer find the spirit of Elder Brother Li. I heard that he was expelled by the new medium. It's really a pity for me.

The World of Ghosts

According to my understanding, the world of ghosts is quite competitive. They struggle for a territory such as the statues of deities in temples. If they occupy the statues, they can receive the worship of people. They don't need food, drinks, or money. But they need a stable place to say. Otherwise they might be bullied by other more powerful ghosts. When they struggle for a territory they compete with each other through their spiritual power. Hence sometimes we heard about how one temple was occupied (by another ghost). It is quite like the world of the humans. The more powerful ones finally occupy the territory.

Other ghosts with less spiritual power are indeed very pathetic beings without

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3 Baosheng Dadi is a famous deity in Taiwanese popular religion who is specialized in medicine.
freedom of movement. The wandering ghosts are not allowed to go to other places freely since many places are guarded by soldiers from the spirit realm. Sometimes when I felt bored and I happened to see a ghost around, I chatted with him or her if he or she wanted. Our conversations were usually like idle talks. How did you die? What's your name? What are you doing here? There had been a time I tried to understand how they lived their life, such as how they spent their time. But I did not acquire a satisfactory answer. Some of them were still in a confused state. Therefore they did not know how to give me a clear answer. Some of them even gradually forgot their own names. The name constitutes the basis of one’s identity. I know I am Pia because everyone calls me Pia. I know my name, and my past. Nevertheless, once no one interacts with you by your name (when you die), you gradually lose your ground. And the memory of your ling (spirit) gradually fades. The state of confusion is pitiful. I remember one time I came across a ghost who sat on my bicycle when I was waiting for someone. I felt bored and talked to him. I asked him why he sat over there. He said he had been there all the time. I told him that he was sitting on my bicycle. He said I could still ride it if I wanted. I asked him why he was hanging around over there. He said he could not go any place because he died over there. I asked if he wanted to go home. He asked me what home did I mean. I said I could not help him then. He said that was all right. I said: "so you stay here and wait for someone to bring you for reincarnation?" He said okay. Most of the ghosts I know spend their time like this. It is very boring state. They no longer live in the idea of 'time.' They don't need to eat, drink, or sleep. Just hanging on in that kind of state. Some of the temples recruit yin soldiers as their defending troops. When the ghosts register they become the yin soldiers and live in the temple. Therefore they are able to leave the state of wandering. Nevertheless, most of them still want to be reincarnated and be humans again.

Pia's depiction of the spirit realm is congruent with the conventional understanding of popular religion that attributes to the spirit realm very human-like characters, e.g., fighting for territory, concern for survival, and needs for commemoration and worship. If we adopt the spiritual structure as it is understood by the Mediums' Association to understand Pia's delineation of her "spiritual friends," Elder Brother Li is like the ling or
spirit in the process of cultivation and merit accumulation. The wandering ghosts are like the ling of the lower hierarchy that are waiting to be recruited into the spiritual structure for the next transition. For Pia, the ling with a status similar to Elder Brother Li's constitute the main group of interactive subjects that help mediums to offer their religious service. And the wandering ghosts constitute the group that needs to be helped by deities or religious specialists for their further advance. Although we can find a parallel between the accounts of Pia and the Mediums' Association, the reciprocal relationship between humans and spirits is significantly different between their accounts. For the Association, the bonding of mediums and the ling that assist them in their religious practice can be traced to a predestined cause; the pairing also implies a project of co-cultivation and a particular mission to be fulfilled. For Pia, the connection between humans and spirits does not point to any obligatory responsibility. Instead it is more like a voluntary reciprocity between friends with equal status. Pia expressed this spontaneous and voluntaristic characterization when telling me of her decision to leave Muqing's temple:

When I made the decision to quit Muqing's temple, I also told my ghost friends and apologized to them because I could no longer serve them. I treated these ghosts like friends. I don't have the obligation to help them. Nor do they have the obligation to help me. But I can help them when I feel happy. As a matter of fact, I told them all the time that I was a human being and we should not know each other. You should interact with other ghosts rather than with me.

In Pia's world of spirits there is a patron deity that is beyond the other ghost friends. Pia considered the patron deity her creator. The patron deity is from the higher spiritual hierarchy. The language of reciprocity or exchange can no longer be adequately applied
to the relationship between human and deity. Pia learned an important lesson from her interaction with the patron deity: that it is beyond the exchange system upon which the mediumship relies.

*The Patron Deity*

The spirits whom I contact are principally ghosts. As for the higher deities of heaven, I cannot be in touch with them unless they want me to be. According to Muqing's exposition, the deities of heaven will "acknowledge" me when I achieve a certain rank. You ask if I have ever been in contact with any higher deity. I have. She is my Master, my patron deity, and my Creator. I called her Fomu (Buddha Mother). I had an encounter with her last year (1999). It was the date we enshrine the deities' statues in our temple. All of a sudden I heard a voice calling my name. It was a female voice from very far away, just like a mother's calling. At the moment I heard this voice I burst out crying. I hid myself in a corner of the temple and cried for awhile. I felt embarrassed. Later Muqing told me that I had encountered my Master. And he told me that my Master is Fomu. That was indeed a very wonderful experience.

I still remember my first impression of Fomu. It happened a very long time ago when I was about three or four years old. I stayed in a hospital because of a very serious disease. My mother told me that she even knelt down to the doctor and asked him to do his best to save me. I remember when I lay on the sickbed there was a child with green skin jumping out from the wall. The child asked me why I stayed there all the time just for medication. The child said that it was boring and invited me to play with her. I thought that it was a good idea to play with the child. Suddenly I heard a very gentle voice saying that: "no, it is not yet time to take her away." The child was scared by the voice and jumped back into the wall again. That was the first time I encountered my Fomu.

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4 When I asked Pia who Fomu was, she explained that Fomu was in fact "the Guanyin pusa (bodhisattva, or the Goddess Mercy) with one thousand hands and one thousand eyes." But the deity's formal name is too long. Therefore Pia refers the deity as Fomu, which literally means the Buddha Mother.
I did not contact Fomu as often as ghosts. Nevertheless when I encounter difficulty I can feel her existence and pray to her. If I felt that the evil ghost of spirit were gonna hurt me, her words protected me from harm. I still remember during the time when I was very confused about what happened in Muqing's temple, what she told me was very helpful for me. She told me that all of the illusory came from the covetous thoughts. People's covetous thoughts make them vulnerable to the invasion of evil spirit (mo). Then I understood that I needed to get rid of the covetous thoughts I had in my heart. And the crisis I faced was then solved.

The people from Muqing's temple have told me about the cosmological structure and the system of the gods. But however complicated that system is, I think it is irrelevant to me. For me it is just like the classification of plants. I only know Fomu. She is the only god that I encounter. People would tell me which god is higher than Fomu. But I just consider Fomu my only god. My family asked me why I did not seek to understand things thoroughly. They said I could ask my Fomu many things, such as the system of the world. I said Fomu is a god, not someone being called by your intention. The encountering is more like the lower to the higher. I did not get any chance to speak. But I really obey her words from the bottom of my heart. When I communicated with the deity, I closed my eyes and listened to her. As a matter of fact, the deity never asks you to do anything. If the deity really intends to do anything, he or she can just do it by himself or herself. To tell the truth, the message from the high god of heaven is usually succinct. The message with the most words that I have ever seen was the one sent by Fomu in February (lunar calendar) of 2000. This message indeed constitutes my basic religious view. The message was sent in the form of a poem that was composed of thirty-seven-character lines. Fomu recited it to me in Taiwanese and I wrote it down. In this message Fomu sighed about the degraded state of human beings and how humans were lost in their covetous desires and forgot to return to their origin. The message also includes a prophetic message similar to the idea of the millennium. It pointed out that a disastrous catastrophe is falling upon the world. Those who disobey the moral way must be careful. Good and evil will finally be judged by the law of Heaven. Everyone creates his karmic effect. It is one's responsibility to resolve one's own karma. No kind of learning or way can be separated from the cultivation of the heart.
Fomu never asked me to go to any temple to receive a specific mission granted from the god, like how the mediums are usually called. And this makes me feel relieved. If one day she really asked me to fulfill any mission like mediums, I think I would become very confused and my life would be doomed. Since what I learned from her is the concept of "governing by doing nothing (wuwei er zhi)." There were spirits who told me who I was in my previous incarnations. But I never care to ask Fomu who I was in the past, and what I would be in the future. There is only one concern in my mind: when I pass away, please receive (my soul) and not make me be human any more. Nor would I ask her to test me (like many mediums go through). Because I do not think that she wants to test humans. I feel that the only thing she asks from humans is to be content to be what they are. Fomu never asks me to do anything for her. Nor does she ask me to worship her with sticks of incense. She never admonishes me to adhere to the conventional values through all ages, such as honoring to my parents. Never. But I feel very at ease with her. And I can totally trust in her.

Compared to other spirits or deities that still attend to the business of human world, the higher deities are too distant for a beneficial reciprocal relationship with ordinary people. The teaching of Pia's patron deity indeed contributes to her uncompelled perspective on mediumship. Later when Pia started to doubt the value of mediumship, the teaching of Fomu also justified her renunciation of this career. If non-reciprocity constitutes the principal and ideal relationship between human and deity, the necessity of mediumship is also cancelled. Or the function of mediumship must be reformed. In the following narrative of her experience of conflict and confusion Pia offers us a complicated backdrop for this idea.

*Conflict, Doubt and Confusion*

When I was a sophomore, Muqing's altar moved out of his residence and expanded into a temple. I became the core member of this temple and participated in its
affairs more actively than before. Nevertheless, the more I participated in
the temple, the less I felt satisfied with its development. For me it has become a place
of striving for power rather than a place of religious belief. The Fomu had
instructed us to hold the ritual for General Salvation in eight years. But another
medium persuaded them to hold the ritual as soon as they could in order not to be left
behind by other temples. They said that this was a chaotic time for religious
development. Every temple claimed that they received the true order of heaven.
Therefore we needed to make some significant contribution as soon as we could to
prove ourselves. For me they had become the tools of ghosts, rather than the
instrument of god. We also had other small conflicts, such as the style of my dress.
I don't like to be in the spotlight. It's not like me. Nevertheless they often asked
me to wear clothes with a famous brand in order to appear good. Still I wore short
pants and sandals when I went to the temple.

I used to believe the religious system they told me. I used to believe that Muqing
was a medium who received Heaven's bestowal for specific religious missions. I
used to believe that if I continued helping people I would be able to return to heaven
without falling into the process of reincarnation again. Strangely enough, now I feel
that what I pursued were all falsehoods. Muqing is a man with little education. I
do not blame him. Nevertheless his credulousness led his temple into the hands of
those people who tried to manipulate the temple. These people excluded people
they did not like. But they think I should help anyone who was related to them.
For instance, there was one man I considered a bad guy because he killed a girl in his
previous life. He came to the temple and asked me to change his lot for him. I
refused. But they insisted they I should help him and they accounted for his crime
by appeal to the theory of karmic cause and effect. For me the theory of karmic
cause and effect was only a rationalization for his crime. Nevertheless, if someone
they did not like came to the temple and asked for help, they refused to help him or
her based on the same theory of karmic cause and effect. I cannot accept any
religion that delineates its Truth like this. Was this the Truth, I think the God really
made a big joke. A real religion should be serious and sacred. But here they only
cared about blessings, reward, and status. So finally I made up my mind to leave
and told them that I decided to quit.

To be a medium is like taking a sauna bath. When you have (spiritual) power you
win people's respect. However, the power is (based on something) like an illness,
such as hallucination or illusion. Don't you think so? I say it is illusion because it is difficult to ask different mediums to sit together and to cross-examine the objectivity and validation of their messages. Hence I hope there will be more scholars to do researches about mediums. So they can tell us if we are sick or not. I have to admit that in some way being a medium is a very attractive career. Everyone considers you the god. It's another kind of self-realization. Most of the people who hang around the temples are from the laboring class. They may not be respected through their whole lives. Nevertheless, once they become the mediums of gods in the temple and everyone worships them and respects them, it would be very difficult for them to give up such status.

If people are sick because of the bothering of a yin spirit or ghost, I can deal with the problem for them. Usually I persuade the ghost to stop possessing another's body and invite the ghost to stay in the temple without harassing other people. If the ghost is very stubborn, I ask Fomu to help me. Or I ask Muqing to exorcise the ghost with a stronger method. However, if people ask me to improve the academic performance of their children, I would suggest that they find tutors for their children. Nor could I solve life confusion for other people. I can deal with the problem that is due to the harassment of spirit or ghost. But I couldn't offer people moral advice or life direction like other mediums did. This is how I defined my task in the temple.

People in the temple always encouraged me to make efforts to cultivate myself in order to receive the Mandate of Heaven. They said that in ancient times the Mandate of Heaven was handed on to the emperor. But the emperor no longer existed, so the Mandate of Heaven was instead handed on to the ordinary people—the mediums in each temple. That's why every medium claimed that he or she received the Mandate of Heaven for the fulfillment of a religious mission. Since you have some understanding in this field, you should know that everybody regards himself as the real owner of the Truth and the inheritor of the Mandate of Heaven.

Once I felt disappointed in the situation of the temple, I could no longer accept such a claim. I told them that I did not want to receive any mission and they could not force me to. They became very angry with me. People in the temple are occupied with the concern to expand the scale of the temple and spread their religious doctrines. But I just want to live an ordinary life. Managing a temple, one has to face many pressures, such as economic pressure and the number of adherents. I can understand
why every temple strives for prosperity and why it is always concerned with the fulfillment of a specific religious mission. Nevertheless, if one can purge one's mind of desires and ambitions (qingxin guayu), one really does not need a temple. Nor does one need to concern oneself with the expense of a temple.

Although I can communicate with the spirits, I only ask for a peaceful coexistence with them. People in the temple like to ask deities to deal with their business. Why can't they stop bothering the deities or spirits and just leave them alone? I guess I just cannot fit into the culture of temple. I cannot figure out what the god wanted me to do. And I have no motivation to know. I wouldn't be so sad if I knew how to live my life. I wouldn't be so down if I could really find the answer through them.

**Pressure of the Mediumistic Work**

In the movie "The Sixth Sense" we see a happy ending because the boy is understood and accepted by his mother. And he realizes that his mediumistic power can be useful for helping others. Nevertheless, judging from my own experience, should the movie continue, the boy might undergo another kinds of unbearable experiences. Even though he is able to transmit messages for the spiritual beings, his mediumistic capacity might be diverted by the intervention of the adults of the human world. Taking me as an example, I was often asked by a bereaved family to deal with their funeral affairs for them. For instance, communicating with the dead about the site of burial or about the will he or she was unable to make while he or she was alive. In the beginning I was very grateful to god for giving me the capacity to help others like this. However, as time went by and I became famous, people had more and more expectations of me. For instance, the living people wanted to know if the deceased person hid any money at anywhere. Or they only concerned about the division of the property left behind by the deceased person. Although the message from the deceased person was clear, it was difficult for me to send the message to his or her family if the message was in conflict with their expectations. It was painful for me to deal with the expectations and desires of different people. I think this kind of job does not need a medium like me. It needs an eloquent person who is able to mediate between various forces or pressures.

I was asked to participate in several investigations of criminal cases. They were also
something beyond my capacity to bear. These cases were all requested by the family of the victims. There was one case about a secret agent who was killed in Russia. The National Security Bureau was unable to solve the case. Therefore they suggested to the family of the victim that it find a medium. Aren't they very irresponsible? When the victim's family asked for my help, I asked my Fomu to lend me her soul in order to visit the criminal scene. The victim showed me the murderous process. And the horrible scene replayed in front of my eyes just like the showing of a movie. I told the family what I saw and the hiding-place of the murder weapon. The way he was killed according to my description also corresponded with his wounds. At first the National Security Bureau suspected that one man from Mainland China killed this person. But the murder scene showed that the victim was killed by another Taiwanese who went to Russia with him. This was really a horrible and sad experience for me. In the future I don't think I will be able to do a similar thing again.

I used to feel very sad and confused. And I made great efforts through various religious means in order to get rid of my mediumistic capacity. But they all failed. My brother-in-law asked me why I could not learn to get along with these spirits or ghosts peacefully like the boy in the film 'the Sixth Sense.' I challenged him that if everyone asked the little boy to deal with his problem of his mediumistic capacity just like the situation with me, would the film still end happily? Nevertheless, as time goes by, I gradually realize that I have the right to say no to the people who ask me to help them through my mediumistic capacity. I know they are very upset because of the problems they face. But I also know that I am not able to help them as they expect. In the past I was proud of my mediumistic capacity for healing. Now I am learning to value my worth and capacity as an ordinary human being. And I commit myself to my study and training in social work. With the progress of my specialty in the field of social work, I hope my mediumistic capacity can gradually weaken or fade away. I think education will eventually be very useful for me. It helps me to stay calm in order to think of my future.

Most medium go through the experience of "running away from mediumship" when they are just "grabbed by the gods" and called to be mediums. However, their resistances are usually conquered by the gods through the befalling of various misfortunes, like illness,
accidents, or bankruptcy. Unlike most other mediums, Pia did not reject the task of mediumistic service in the very beginning. The mediumistic services offered her a significant frame to locate the positive meaning of her particular extraordinary ability. It was also congruent with her professional ideal of social work. Nevertheless, following her further involvement with the temple's operation, the exalted religious ideal of service was gradually challenged by the conditions of power struggle. Consequently Pia was suspicious of the missionary claim that was emphasized in the temple. Moreover, the mediumistic practices also exposed Pia to other kinds of power struggle—e.g., the conflict of various people's desires or the conflict between a human's desire and the deity's will—or the consequence of power struggle—e.g., the murder case. Pia's objection to the mission-oriented culture of the temple and the pressures of mediumistic work finally estranged her from her mediumistic practice.

Pia's painful experience of alienation could not find an easy solution through the gesture of absolute rejection because the mediumistic capacity is not something easily to be gotten rid of. Nevertheless, the religious teaching of her patron deity and the influence of modern education constitute two resources for her to extricate herself from her difficulties. Unlike the other deities or spirits that interfere in the concerns of the human world, in Pia's experiential and idiosyncratic characterization, Fomu is more like a distant god that stands beyond magical manipulation. Although Pia appealed for Fomu's aid when she confronted the confused situation in Muqing's temple or when she was involved with the investigation of the difficult criminal case, she understands Fomu to be more like a transcendent god who constitutes the ground of her ethical code. Furthermore, Pia did not regard the commitment to mediumistic service as an obligation or fate assigned by Fomu. Instead she considered mediumistic practice a voluntary
service for her ghost friends and suffering human beings. While mediumistic mediation gradually became an unbearable burden, she hid herself under another canopy—the modern professional training as social worker—in order to slough off her mysterious mediumistic power. Pia's voluntaristic account of mediumship makes the displacement of magical power by modern profession possible since both converge into a transcendent ideal of service and both must be guided by the frame of a rationalized ethical code.

If Pia's rejection of mediumship represents a kind of modern gesture that self-consciously distances herself from a naïve past or situation, the meaning of her movement is different from the conventional disenchanted discourse that considers mediumship a superstitious or backward religious practice. Pia's confusion and doubt did not fully challenge the basic presupposition of mediumship, that is, the plausibility of the communication between humans and deities or spirits. It is not an epistemological reflection on the truth/falsehood or rationality/irrationality of mediumship. Instead, Pia's confusion proposes an ethical critique of the application of mediumship. What is critiqued is not the mysterious communication between mediums and the deities or spirits, but the mediums' self-inflation represented in the missionary discourse, and the vanity of

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5 You Meiling from the Mediums' Association told me that she was invited by one television program to perform her "peculiar mediumistic capacity" on TV. In the design of this program they wanted her to "see" the ling behind someone and to describe it to a painter in order to draw it. You turned down this invitation since she considered such a "magical performance" a distortion of the meaning of mediumship. According to You, the peculiar realm of spirit that was considered unusual or abnormal for others was indeed an ordinary world for her. She also critiqued the media's mysterious representation of mediumship since it only touched the surface of mediumship. Your comment on the media is resonant with Pia's critique. For both of them, the critical issue of mediumship does not consist in the choice between the dyad of mystery and disenchantment. The crucial point for a reflexive vision of mediumship should be ethical.
human wishes exposed in utilitarian supplication. Here Pia's critique is consonant with
the self-critique of the Mediums' Association and their project of ethical transformation.

Pia's experience revealed various difficult positions that mediums frequently encounter in their practices. It might not be a difficult task for a medium to transmit the message of the deity. Nevertheless, what if this message is in conflict with the message of another medium? What if the message is in discord with people's wishes? What if the message reveals something very difficult to face that even the medium resists admitting? These questions can be framed as epistemological issue of mediumship, the hermeneutic of mediumship and the ethical issue of mediumship. For instance, how do mediums validate the accuracy of the message they receive from the deity or spirit? Are they more like the interpreter who translates the message of deity without the intervention of personal subjectivity, or are they more like the mediator who interprets the deity's message according to their sensibility and understanding of the condition of the world? How do they consider the ethical consequences of their mediumistic intervention? How do they reconcile the potential ethical conflict between the human realm and the spirit realm? In the following discussion, through the writings of Lingji—a modern medium who practices outside the temple—we will see how these issues are tackled from a different and more direct angle.

**Lingji at Wenlu Café**

Cai Lingji was first known to the public because of her involvement in the investigation of a famous criminal case of kidnapping and murder in 1997. Through her mediumistic specialization in telling people's karmic chain of cause and effect (yìnguò), she assisted police in the investigation and arrest. While the fugitive broke into the
house of a military officer of the South Africa and held the whole family of the officer hostage, Cai was one of the few persons who was permitted by the criminal to enter the house and to talk to him. In their meeting Cai successfully persuaded the criminal to surrender and to release the hostages through the theory of karmic chain of cause and effect. The public was impressed by her assistance in the resolution of the thrilling crisis. Cai was known as Mrs. Chen then and she refused to reveal her real name. A few years later she wrote down her mediumistic experiences upon the encouragement of a friend, also the former director of the police headquarters while Cai was participating in the investigation of the criminal case. Her writing was soon accepted by a famous publisher and was published with the title *The Little Lotus of Buddha: A Self-Narration of a Modern Medium* in February of 2001. Her second book, *The Love, Mercifulness and Wisdom of the Lotus Realm* was published in October of 2001 soon after the enthusiastic reception of the first one. In June of 2002 the same publisher published her third book *The Daughter of the White Jasmine*. She imagines the readers she addresses to include those who are interested in or curious about mediumistic phenomena, those who are bothered by their mediumistic ability, and those who suffer from various life problems. The publisher held many discussion meetings for the promotion of these books. In these discussion meetings Cai attracted many readers. Some of them were people with mediumistic capacity. Part of the discussions between Cai and the medium readers were also recorded in the second and the third book.

Lingji started her mediumistic practice in 1992 when she was in her thirties. Before she became a medium, she was an ordinary housewife with a college degree. Like many other mediums, she was considered abnormal by her family in the very beginning when she started to have special communicative ability with the spirit realm. When her
new role as someone with mediumistic capacity was finally accepted by her family, she began to serve those people who were confused by various life problems. Unlike the other mediums that practice in temples or private altars, Lingji offers her consulting service at a friend's (also with mediumistic capacity) café. The name of the café happened to be Wenlu, literally meaning "inquiry for direction" in Chinese. Lingji does not accept money or gifts for her service. Those people who need to meet her for consultation make a reservation in advance and visit her at the café. They pay for the drinks and service in accordance with their situation. The service fees are paid to the owner of the store and are used to pay the rent.

Lingji writes down her own experience with a highly modern self-consciousness. This can be seen from the subtitle of her first book: "a self-narration of a modern medium." Lingji emphasizes several times that her writings are mainly aimed at the elimination of superstition or the mystification of mediumship. And she writes down her mediumistic experience in a frank and rational style. Through her writings she also intended to offer her mediumistic experiences as the material for research (Cai, 2001a: 17). Lingji's writings did attract the attention of psychiatrists. In the beginning of 2002 she cooperated with psychiatrists to conduct various brain tests. During the experiment Lingji entered various mediumistic states, including the states of being possessed by various subjects, and the mediumistic state of "seeing" people's karmic

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6 When Lingji began her mediumistic practice, she was fairly aware of various temptations a medium might encounter. Therefore she negotiated with the spirit realm and came to an agreement with "them" that she would never follow a master, never accept a disciple, never set up a temple, nor would she receive money or gifts for her service. These principles or regulations are in fact contrary to conventional mediumistic practice in temples. But they allow Lingji to enjoy more freedom in her mediumistic practice.

7 In the preface of Lingji's first book written by the former director of the police headquarters it was mentioned that ever since Lingji started to practice, she refused all rewards, including money or gifts, for her service. She would suffer from diarrhea if she disobeyed this regulation.
chain of cause and effect. Interesting patterns of brain waves were detected in these states. The experimental report was accepted by the Association of World Psychiatry and was represented in its Annual Meeting of 2002. For Lingji, writing down her mediumistic experiences means to expose herself to the examination of the modern mind-set she herself belongs to. Her acceptance of the scientific experiment is therefore another way of contributing herself (or her brain!) for the intersection of modern scientific discourse and perennial mediumistic practice. In the following sections I explore Lingji's accounts of mediumship. Through the analysis of her writings I attempt to demonstrate the innovative vision she offers of "modern mediumship."

**General Accounts of Mediumship**

Lingji proposes a bleak characterization of mediums in her first book. Such a bleak characterization to a certain degree counteracts the mysterious image of mediums. For her, being a medium is not something great or mysterious. Instead mediums are subject to much misunderstanding from the public. Mediums cannot plan their future since they are only instruments that are controlled by spirits from extra dimensions. Mediums transmit the messages from deities or spirits like machines of extempore interpretation. It is not so bad if they are controlled by the deities. Nevertheless, it is a misfortune if they are controlled by a devil or ghost. While mediums practice, they live their lives in fear and trepidation since they must be very cautious in order not to make mistakes. When they are called to be mediums, they cannot resist the stories of karmic chains of cause and effect forced upon them through the spirit realm. Being a medium is like being a volunteer worker. It is not a right, nor is it a power. It is just a "bitter and sweet obligation."
Lingji proposes four requirements for a qualified medium. Firstly, like a qualified doctor who needs a license to practice, a qualified medium also needs a license granted from heaven as the permission for his or her mediumistic practice. There are various kinds of license. Different licenses apply to different mediumistic specialties. Therefore a medium needs to understand his or her own specialty in order to know his or her own strengths and limitations. The granting of license is not only determined by the medium's capacity, it also depends on the medium's degree of cultivation. If someone with mediumistic ability does not know whether she is allowed to use her ability, she can make a judgment by considering the consequences of her mediumistic practice. If one becomes ill or suffers an accident after one offers consultation to others, this is a sign to indicate that one is not ready yet for mediumistic practice. In other words, one needs to further cultivate one's heart and nature in order to become a qualified medium (Ibid., pp.10-11). The principle of license not only applies to mediums, it also applies to the deities or spirits that offer messages during the consultation. Therefore it is also important for a medium to judge the qualification of the deities or spirits.

Secondly, a qualified medium needs to know how to transmit the deity's message according to the client's language and his or her character. In other words, a qualified medium cannot merely translate the literal meaning of message; he or she must find an appropriate way to explicate the message. Moreover, a qualified medium needs to be familiar with the new knowledge and "fashion" of the world in order to come to terms with modern concerns and to contribute to the process of progress. In Lingji's account a medium's role is not only that of a passive translator. He or she is also an educator and promoter of modern progressive ideas. This characterization is quite similar to the modern depiction of mediumship proposed by the Medium's Association.
Thirdly, a qualified medium needs to resist various temptations of mediumship, for instance, the pursuit of wealth, fame, self-inflation, and the luxury. Some of these temptations originate from the tests from heaven. Some of them come from the ignorance of the mediums themselves. Overall, these tests are meant to keep the medium in a state of alertness. Only then can they offer their service with a clear state of mind without the entanglement of desires.

Lastly, a qualified medium needs to live with the vicissitudes of his or her mediumistic power with a flexible and peaceful mind. He or she needs to be aware of his or her own mediumistic state: is the mediumistic capacity still with him or her? If not, can the medium honestly tell his or her client that he or she is unable to receive the message? If the medium's license is taken away temporarily or eternally, can the medium cope with this frustrating situation? The last requirement proposed by Lingji manifests the uncertain and transient aspect of mediumship. In other words, the mediumistic power a medium owns is not a permanent possession free of vicissitudes of rising and falling.

Reminders and Suggestions for Persons with Mediumistic Power

Like many other books of self-help published in Taiwan that help people to get along with their depression, neurosis, or other psychological ailment, Lingji's writings can be considered a kind of self-help handbook for people who suffer from their mediumistic power. Her books are the first ones in Taiwan that acknowledge the existence and suffering of people with mediumistic power. Although there are some academic writings or media reportage about mediumship in Taiwan, these writings mainly focus on the mediums as religious specialists who offer their service in temples or private altars. Some of these writings consider mediumship a kind of psychosis and discuss it in the
context of indigenous psychiatry. Or they consider mediumship a kind of occult phenomenon and report it in an exaggerated and provocative tone. Lingji's writings are different from the above ones because she adopts a phenomenological and demystified language to describe her life world as a medium. They are not simply cultural or religious accounts of mediumship, nor do they consider mediumship a kind of psychosis or occult phenomenon. For those people who are confused about their mediumistic power, Lingji's writings "normalize" their experience to a certain degree. In other words, they do not have to consider themselves abnormal psychotic patients or lofty supermen with mysterious and great power. Mediumistic power is indeed bewildering, but it is not incomprehensible or irrational. In her writings she suggests that those who are bothered by their mediumistic power seek help from doctors or discuss their experiences with others as early as possible. She also suggests that physicians and psychiatrists abandon their scientific prejudice against mediumship and understand this phenomenon with an open mind.

Lingji's demystified and rational account of mediumship can be discussed from three perspectives. First, she considers medium a profession or occupation rather than a mission or bounded duty. Although sometimes it is difficult to differentiate the difference between profession and mission, Lingji emphasizes the role-like character of the former and denounces the mysterious connotation of the latter. Lingji rejects the conventional understanding of mediumship that regards the medium as someone chosen by the god to be the god's representative or someone with a higher cultivational degree in his or her former lives. For her, a medium is just someone with a proximate frequency or a correspondent magnetic field to that of the spirit realm. Mediumistic power does not imply higher religious cultivation. A medium is someone with a specific capacity
and so he or she meets the requirement of a mediumistic occupation. But it is not a bounded duty that one is compelled to fulfill without considering the other obligations and responsibilities of one's other roles.

Second, Lingji emphasizes the importance of knowing one's mediumistic specialty and the kind of mediumistic service one can offer. In other words, mediumistic power can be divided into various specialties and understood within the frame of the division of labor. Taking her experience as an example, Lingji describes how she negotiates with the spirit realm about her "specialization." In the very beginning the spirit realm endowed her with the mediumistic power of healing. But she felt uneasy about this specialization since she knew nothing about medicine. While she performed healing practices, she felt that she was just a puppet or a double without knowing what she was doing. She finally decided to renounce such power since she did not want to mislead others by wielding a power that she did not comprehend. Later she settled down to another specialization, that of "seeing" people's stories of karmic chains of cause and effect. This mediumistic power is close to psychological counseling which she felt she was able to handle and so be of benefit to suffering clients. Lingji regards her mediumistic specialty as a kind of psychological counseling that is based upon the theory of cause and effect. Such a specialty combined the mediumistic gift and her disposition and aptitude. In Lingji's writings she offers her theory of cause and effect in terms similar to the theorization of various schools of psychological counseling. Through the proposal of "clinical" theory Lingji endows her mediumistic practice with a modern soul and rationalized sensibility.

Last, in considering mediumship as a kind of profession, Lingji proposes some professional regulations that are often ignored by practitioners. These regulations are
proposed mainly to check the misuse or abuse of mediumistic power. Lingji reminds her colleagues that mediumistic power can only applied for the service of the public. One's own life problems need to be solved by appeal to one's own wisdom rather than through the misuse of mediumistic power. Mediums are supposed to help others. If they cannot deal with their own problems by resorting to their own wisdom, it implies that they are captivated by their own "magical power." Furthermore, Lingji reminds her colleagues of the limitation of mediumistic power since the deities or spirits that assist them in their practices are not omnipotent and infallible. These deities and spirits have their specialties and limitations; they also need to follow the regulations of service and the law of cause and effect.

"They"--Accounts of the Spirit Realm

In Lingji's writings she calls the beings from spirit realms "they." As mentioned above, "they" are not infallible and omnipotent spiritual beings. If "they" were really omnipotent, they would not need the mediation of mediums. "They" are more like volunteer workers who are sent from the spirit realm to serve the human realm. According to Lingji's understanding, "to serve and to learn" constitutes their raison d'être. The spirit realm operates like a bureaucratic organization. Different spiritual beings have different functions, power and cultivational level. Similar to mediums, "they" also need licenses in order to incorporate with mediums. Heaven assigns different roles and functions to them for the various needs of human beings. In accordance with the understanding of the Medium's Association, the titles of deities designate different spiritual duties and functions, rather than any personalized identification. The same duty is cooperatively executed by spiritual beings from different levels. Therefore the
spirits with the same title that serve the mediums may not come from the same bureaucratic level. For example, the Boddhisattva from different ranks of heaven have different limits of authority. The bureaucratic organization of the spirit realm has established a supervisory system to evaluate the performance of mediums and the spiritual beings. Therefore the medium and the spiritual beings are promoted or demoted according to their performance. Their licenses may be taken away when they commit mistakes.⁸ Or the deities or spirits might be transferred to new posts for a change of duties.

According to Lingji, the paring of medium and the spiritual being are determined by their cultivational levels. When mediums request deities to assist them, Heaven sends the deities or spirits with the corresponding level of spiritual and ethical cultivation to their assistance. This principle of pairing is also congruent with the understanding of the Mediums' Association mentioned in the former chapter. For them the old Chinese saying xincheng zeling (If there is sincerity, then there is spiritual power) should be rewritten as xinzheng zeling (If there is rectitude, then there is spiritual power).

Furthermore, during the process of cooperation, mediums and the spiritual beings may have a positive or negative influence on each other. In other words, the spiritual beings may be led astray by degraded companion mediums. Here Lingji offers us an intimate and humanized image of spiritual beings. "They" are the spiritual companions to whom you can talk and complain. Since they are sent by Heaven to cooperate with the medium for serving and learning, the human realm constitutes their training field. In other words, offering religious service is also a way of leaning and training for them.

⁸ According to Lingji, the disappearance of mediumistic power does not necessarily signify punishment from Heaven. It might be a lesson for the medium to lay down his or her
For instance, Lingji mentions in her book that one of the lessons she and the spirits need to learn is how to be more patient with "stubborn" clients. Moreover, the phenomenon of glossolalia, which is considered the sign of spiritual manifestation is not highly valued since it is incomprehensible to human beings. Lingji's perspective is in accordance with the teaching of You Meiling from the Mediums' Association in emphasizing the importance of vernacular or modern language. Speaking the language of human beings thus constitutes one of the required lessons for the spiritual beings if they really intend to offer their help.

According to Lingji, the cosmos is composed of multiple realms. Consequently the spirits who incorporate with mediums are from various realms. Lingji mentions that after she published her first book, the spirits that she knew as friends from the Realm of Boddhisattva said farewell to her and asked her one by one to move forward by herself. She missed them very much and felt lost and abandoned. They no longer communicated with her. Later another groups of spirits from other realms started to contact her and revealed messages about their realms to her. The spirits from the Lotus Realm of Egypt are very serious and emphasize law and regulation. The ways they confront the client are more direct and more frank. The spirits from the Realm of Star and Moon on the other hand propose a more complicated theory of cause and effect and emphasize the spirit of forgiveness.

Lingji does not follow the conventional spiritual framework of Chinese popular religion--the division of god, ghost, and ancestor--to describe the spirit realm. The role of ancestor is missing in her accounts. The dichotomy of the deity and ghost is also replaced by miscellaneous spiritual beings that are hierarchically structured or are

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dependence of the mediumistic power.
scattered in different realms. Furthermore, the genealogy of spirits delineated by Lingji is not limited to the traditional Chinese pantheon. The spiritual beings from the Lotus Realm originate from Egypt. In her books she also describes a spirit who identifies himself as an American Indian. The overlooking of ancestral line and the breaking of national boundaries in fact correspond to Lingji's depiction of the world as a cosmic training field. Consequently the secular concern with family continuity or with national confines are not the main concerns of the cosmos that is governed by the spirit of perpetual learning and service.

*Rationale of Mediumistic Counseling: the Theory of Cause and Effect*

In the chapter written for her mediumistic colleagues, Lingji emphasizes the importance of establishing a basic rationale or theory of their mediumistic service when they encounter people's suffering and problems in the counseling session. The theory or rationale of mediumistic service proposed by Lingji is built upon her mediumistic specialty—seeing people's karmic chain of cause and effect. It is like a fundamental guideline of conduct or a philosophy of life. According to Lingji, the theory of cause and effect for mediumistic counseling serves two goals: first, it dispels the mysterious fog of the mediumistic practice and transports it from a kind of superstitious discourse to a rationalized cosmological and ethical principle. Second, it constitutes a kind of reference or guide for people who suffer from their life problems but cannot afford to consult fortunetellers or psychological counselors.

The rationale or theory proposed by Lingji according to her mediumistic specialty is called the theory of the black box or super computer. According to Lingji, a black box, like a flight recorder, is an intricate device with the recording function. Everyone brings
a black box with him when one is born. One's black box is connected with Heaven for "them (the spiritual being)" to execute the information processing. Everyone's black box includes three special tapes. The content of the first tape is the so-called predestined fate. Its contents cannot be changed. The second tape is blank when one is born. It records the conducts and thoughts of one's whole life. Its contents cannot be changed, either. The third tape is originally the replicated copy of the first tape. But it could be changed by the contents of the second tape. In other words, the conducts or thoughts recorded in the second tape could change the not-yet-realized content of the third tape. For instance, if one performs a meritorious behavior at a certain time that is not shown in the first tape, this behavior will eliminate certain predestined misfortunes in one's future. And the change will be presented in the third tape. Therefore when one is born, the contents of the first tape are the same as the contents of the second one. When one is dead, the contents of the second tape are equal to the contents of the third one. When one is reborn, one's merits and demerits in the third tape will be calculated and its sum will become the basis for the making of the first tape for the next life, that is, the predestinated fate of the next life.

When Lingji "sees" one's story of the karmic chain of cause and effect in the mediumistic session, she is appealing to "them" to retrieve the information from one's black box. Here Lingji introduces another modern metaphor to describe the retrieval process--the computer. The black box is just like a super computer. The spiritual beings are able to obtain access to the information of the computer because they know the password to our black box. However, different spiritual beings have various limitations of power. Therefore they can get access only to a certain level of information. Some of "them" can only retrieve the contents of the first tape; therefore "they" can help the
mediums to reveal the "fate" of their clients. But they cannot tell the client about their future. Some of "them" are able to retrieve the contents of all tapes; through the analysis of the difference of the first tape and the third one, the mediums can give clients more direct advice about how to improve their fate. When mediums are assisted by the spiritual beings like this, they are more like analysts that help their clients to analyze their "fate" from an objective perspective.

While Lingji proposes the theory of cause and effect, she also invites readers to reflect upon its "after-effect" and limitation. For instance, is the one who suffers in the karmic relation always the debtor? Not necessarily! Sometimes the suffering one goes through is a choice made in one's former lives. In other words, the meaning of suffering can be regarded as a kind of cultivation, trial, or vocation. It does not necessarily signify punishment for former mistakes. Moreover, the theory of cause and effect cannot explain everything since not everyone is karmically related with each other. Furthermore, the theory of cause and effect has the pitfall of becoming the excuse for one's contemporary behavior. Here Lingji reminds readers to remember that once the calculating process starts off, it never stops. Since there is always the time when the sum of debt and credit or merit and demerit is offset and becomes zero, the safest (and the most rational) strategy is to consider every moment the zero-point of fresh beginning. Therefore the theory of cause and effect no longer constitutes the excuse of one's mistakes or the only explanation of the source of suffering. Through the proposal of the zero point Lingji attempts to counteract the limitation and "after-effect" of the theory of cause and effect.

In Lingji's second book she introduces a different elaboration of the theory through the revelation of the spiritual beings from the Lotus Realm. If the debtor and the creditor
are reincarnated in the same realm, their karmic entanglement will operate by the
principle depicted in the theory of the black box or super computer. The moral for a
situation like this is to be responsible for one's conducts and thoughts, and to seize the
chance to resolve the entanglement. Nevertheless, the resolving of karmic entanglement
does not necessarily depends on punishment and recompense. In a situation when the
creditor is reincarnated in a higher realm than the debtor because of his or her more
advanced cultivational degree, the more cultivated one has a new lesson to learn: instead
of demanding repayment, to learn to forgive. In other words, one encounters different
lessons in different cultivation stages. In sum, the moral of the theory of cause and
effect can be epitomized in two sentences: Life indeed has its cause and effect. The
succession of every reincarnation is a perpetual process of learning and service. The
moral can be applied to both the human realm and the spirit realm. Consequently the
whole cosmos is a training field for both human beings and spiritual beings.

The presupposition of supernatural or cosmic retribution in Lingji's theory of cause and
effect is heir to the time-honored fundamental belief of Chinese religion shared by
Confucianism, the Daoist cult of immortality and Buddhism (Brokaw, 1991:28-32).

Briefly speaking:

The belief in retribution is the faith that some force—either a supernatural force like
heaven or the gods, or an automatic cosmic reaction—inevitably recompenses human
behavior in a rational manner: it rewards certain "good" deeds, be they religious
sacrifices, acts of good government, or upright personal conduct, and punishes evil
ones (Ibid.p.28).
Compared with Brokaw's proposals of the basic principles of merit accumulation across various religious affiliations and different periods in China, Lingji's accounts of cause and effect manifest two significant differences—a rationalizing twist and an individualized emphasis. First, the mediating role of spirits and gods in the bureaucratic system is less emphasized in Lingji's accounts. According to Brokaw, in the system of merit accumulation, a rather vaguely defined heaven is replaced by a bewildering array of spirits drawn from both Buddhist and Daoist pantheons for the scrutiny of human's deeds and thoughts. Therefore rewards and punishments are engineered by an extensive network of interfering gods and spirits (Ibid. p.33). Whereas in Lingji's theory of the black box or super computer, the retribution system is more like a spontaneous and rational process that governs both the human realm and the spirit realm. Although the spiritual beings that assist Lingji in her mediumistic service are able to reveal part of the stories of cause and effect for clients, they are not the controllers of human's fate. Nor can they transcend the cosmic principle of cause and effect and bear the karmic effect for human beings. In other words, life is not predetermined. One is the final controller of one's fate. One is also the final bearer of one's effects of conducts and thoughts. The more we push this rationalized scheme of cosmic retribution to its extremity, the lesser space of manipulation is left. Consequently the intervention of spirits or mediums also becomes less significant. Such a devaluation of mediumship does not clash with Lingji's role as a medium. Rather, she regards those who rely upon a philosophy of life to cultivate themselves and to solve their own problems instead of appealing to mediumistic intervention as wiser and more admirable beings.

Furthermore, in Brokaw's depiction of the traditional scheme of merit accumulation, the family system constitutes an important context for the operation of the retribution
system. The individual not only carries with him the burden of his ancestors' accumulated merit. He also strives to accumulate as much extra merit as possible in order to pass it on to his descendants. Therefore the continuation and prosperity of the family line can be assured (Ibid. p.33-34). Since the role of ancestor is not emphasized in Lingji's account of the spirit realm, the goal of family continuation and prosperity does not occupy a central position in her accounts of her theory of cause and effect. For Lingji, retribution is based on the individual's conducts and thoughts alone. The individual is also the only one who is responsible for the consequences of his conducts and thoughts.

Following the rationalized and individualized principles, Lingji voices her suspicions of various practices of Chinese popular religion. She challenges the ultimate value of the practice of fengshui (geomancy) that attempts to manipulate the "fortune" of an individual or a family. She questions the presupposition of certain Buddhist or Daoist practices that attempt to resolve karmic debt by the performance of religious rituals such as chaodu (a ritual for releasing the departed soul from suffering) and fahui. For Lingji, people who adopt those religious practices mentioned above to beseech good fortune or to evade their obligations ignore the fundamental law of cause and effect and its ethical commands. Therefore in the consultation session when her clients realize the effect of their former behaviors and try to make recompense for their mistakes, Lingji suggests to them that they conduct themselves virtuously rather than perform religious rituals to amend their faults. For instance, one man suffered from his illness due to his abusive behavior to pigs in his former life. Lingji suggested to him that he conduct himself virtuously toward animals, by sponsoring, for example, the project of animal ligation--to make recompense for his mistakes. A girl suffered from skin disease because in one of
her former lives as a man in the sausage business she added harmful ingredients to her products. Lingji suggested her to sponsor the project of food safety for the Foundation of Consumers.

Although Lingji proposes a life philosophy of perpetual learning and serving, she does not articulate the final goal of the retribution system, such as the Buddhist goal of rebirth in a higher plane of existence, or the Daoist goal of immorality or longevity. Since the continuation of the human realm and the spirit realm is emphasized in Lingji's account and the higher spirit realm is also incorporated into the scheme of perpetual learning and service, the Buddhist ideal of rebirth into a higher plane of existence or the Daoist pursuit of immortality cannot be the "final" goal of the attainment of spiritual rewards. Leaving the final goal unstated and stressing the eternal character of striving estranges Lingji's teachings of life philosophy from any particular religious tradition. Nevertheless, such estrangement precisely constitutes its accessibility for people from various religious backgrounds.

*Explication of Mediumistic Process*

Being religious specialists, mediums seldom talk about how they receive, interpret or validate the messages from spirit realm. Mediumistic communication or transmission seems to be an uncanny or occult process that is difficult to comprehend.

In Lingji's writing, nevertheless, she does not follow the constant gesture of veiling. Instead she explains the process of her mediumistic service in the form of a discussion of cases, which is similar to the case report proposed by psychological counselors in their professional case conferences. In her writings Lingji first emphasizes that the idiosyncratic methods of mediumistic communication and interpretation are based upon
her individual experiences, rather than a general description of mediumship. Although her mediumistic experiences may not be applicable to other mediums, through laying her experiences on the anatomical table as the object of scientific investigation she intends to unveil the "mystery" of mediumship and to peel off the "superstitious" skin of mediumship.

Since "they" are not omnipotent, Lingji has set up a screening process in her mediumistic service in order to evaluate their "capacity." In the beginning of the counseling session, she first asks the client to tell her the members of his or her core family. Then she will write down the characters of each member without the clues of the other information, such as the name, address, and time of birth that are usually requested in mediumistic service. If the client agrees with her about the characters she describes, the counseling session will be continued. If not, the session will be ended since it implies that "they" have retrieved the wrong information. In other words, "they" first need to prove their capacity by pointing out the character or illness of the client; then Lingji is willing to serve "them." For her, such rational method of screening is a useful guard against "superstition."

If the consultation continues, she draws the picture of cause and effect to indicate the relationship of debtor and creditor between the related members. The picture of cause and effect is based upon the message received from the spirit realm. When she receives the messages, she either closes her eyes or opens her eyes. When she opens her eyes, it looks like she is looking at somewhere very far away. While Lingji receives messages she mainly sees things; only on very few occasions she can hear voices. The images or words she sees may be still or continuous. They are all fleeting and vague. And most of them are black-and-white. Following the images are the rapid messages transmitted
to her head, just like her own thoughts. Sometimes the messages are sent once for all. Sometimes they are intermittent, which means "they" will offer further information when clients ask more questions. Lingji describes her mediumistic process as "seeing pictures and telling stories." She records some examples in her books to demonstrate the process of analysis. During the mediumistic session she told one client the content of the picture she saw and the messages she received, the implied meaning she grasped, and the moral of the message. Lingji admits that she cannot explain why she is capable of receiving message and explaining them. According to her experiences, the messages just come "naturally" and she knows their meaning "automatically." In other words, the messages from outside are just like her own thoughts from inside. For her it seems that she is equipped with a "machine of extempore interpretation" in her head.

Although Lingji cannot offer an explanation for her mediumistic power, she attempts to demonstrate "how" she uses this power through the records of the mediumistic processes and the conversations between her and her clients that she records in her books. The people who consulted her came from various backgrounds. And they

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9 In her second book she offers this example:

The wife visited me alone. She wanted to know the karmic relationship between her and her husband.
I saw a picture with a doctor and a nurse who were conducting an operation for a patient. The doctor stood at the right side of the patient. The nurse stood at the other side. I saw this scene from above through right side of the doctor.
I said: "You get along with each other well."
"Yes, we do."
"You work very hard, but you have no savings."
"This is true."
"Yes. You get along with each other well. But you have no savings. Do you know why? You did wrong things together in your former lives. Let me tell you what I see. You were a nurse.
brought a great variety of problems with them. Lingji reminds the readers that the "original" messages from "them" could be wrong, and her "interpretations" could be wrong, too. Unlike the other reports about mediums on TV or in magazines that are tinged with a mysterious aura or enlightened scorn, Lingji presents these cases with an analytical tone and she emphasizes the moral she enthusiastically promotes in her books--the exactness of cause and effect, and the life philosophy of learning and serving. Although she demonstrates the limitation of mediumship, she also offers a theoretical account of such limitation. Since one's "fate" is not wholly predetermined, theoretically it is impossible for the medium and the cooperating spirit to foresee one's future with one hundred percent accuracy. Furthermore, mediumistic power is not omnipotent. It has its specific field of application. Not all problems can be solved through the application of mediumistic power. And this raises to the next theme Lingji discusses in her books.

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Your husband was a doctor. You cooperated with each other and executed some unnecessary operations. Therefore you earned money from it. In this life you are supposed to pay your debts. No wonder you do not have a fortune in this lives. I suggest you to do something that is beneficent to patients."

"Frankly speaking, I am a nurse. But I am a very responsible nurse. My husband is a businessman who sells medical equipment. Do you have any suggestion about the job I should do in the future?"

Then I saw three cabbages planted in the earth. Each one of them was as big as a fist. I told her what I saw. And I said: "I need to emphasize that these cabbages are planted in earth, not water. Perhaps you can invest in the business of vegetables and fruits with others."

She said: "Mrs. Chen, can I explain the image of earth and cabbages you see as the vegetable? Since I am thinking about using my profession to establish a care center for vegetables with my friends."

Lingji does not record her response to the woman's analysis. Rather she invites the readers to think about it.
Render Therefore unto Caesar the Things That Are Caesar's

Although Lingji became famous because of her involvement with the investigation of criminal cases, she states frankly in her books that mediumistic power is "useless" for criminal investigation. First, even if the mediums are able to "see" the original criminal scenes, the images are usually vague, fragmented and intermittent. Therefore the information they are able to offer to the police is in fact limited. Second, even though mediums are able to "sense" certain clues, their information cannot be considered real evidence since the investigation of criminal cases must be built upon "scientific" ground. Last, even if the mediums can lend their bodies to the departed souls of the victims, usually they can only "experience" the misery of the victims rather than reconstructing the course of the crime.

As for her mediumistic specialty of "seeing" the karmic chain of cause and effect, it is even more "useless" for criminal investigation. Her information about karmic entanglement might be able to offer a "reason" for the case. But it cannot answer the question of the identification of the criminal. As to the question of "responsibility," the matter becomes even more complicated. Lingji admits that when people--usually the family of the victim--came to her for the investigation of a criminal case, she was caught in the conflict between human justice and the spiritual justice if she was able to "see" the karmic entanglement behind the crime. The family of the victim seeks a justice that is protected by the human law. The story of karmic chain of cause and effect nevertheless reveals to her another kind of justice--spiritual retribution--that demands actualization. When Lingji faces a difficult situation like this, she chooses to remain silent to her clients. And this constitutes one of the saddest moments of her mediumistic practice.
In dealing with the conflict of human justice and cosmic justice, Lingji offers a principle: "Render unto the visible realm the things that belong to the visible realm. Render unto the invisible realm the things that belong to the invisible realm. Render unto human law the things that are governed by human law. Render unto the rule of retribution the things that are governed by the rule of cause and effect." Here Lingji follows the modern principle of differentiation of labors and specialties as the criterion of judgment. The individual is responsible for his or her contemporary identification and role. Consequently, if one is a policeman, then the theory of cause and effect is irrelevant to one's professional concern. One is responsible for one's role, rather than for the karmic entanglement of others.

**Conclusion**

Being a loosely structured amalgamation of beliefs and practices, popular religion in China or Taiwan is generally referred to as "worshiping the deities (baibai or baishen) " or of worshiping at a specific cult shrine or temple. The implied meaning of baibai or baishen in Chinese manifests one of the fundamental characters of the Chinese or Taiwanese popular religion—supplication for protection, peace and fulfillment of life. The persistent invocation of wish fulfillment actually indicates the fragility and the hardship of lives. Through one of the most important religious figures of Chinese popular religion—the mediums who mediate between deities and humans—we get a closer look at the complicated intertwining of privation and religious compensation.

For Pia, such intermingling is unbearable; thus she "chooses" to extricate herself from the vocation of mediums and to commit herself into another vocation of modern specialization—the social work. For Lingji and the mediums from the Mediums'
Association who continue their practices--and I suppose also for Pia--the critical issue of mediumship is not its plausibility, but how it answers to contemporary society, especially its disorder and moral degradation. Does it act in collusion with the decadent pursuits of contemporary society? Or it is capable of offering a critical vision based on mediumistic insight? The reformatory visions of mediumship in Taiwan--whether they are based on the reflection of a group of mediums from temples or the individual outside the temple--manifest a similar trend toward reframing the mysterious transaction of mediumship within a context of religious cultivation and ethical endeavor. Accordingly, besides the traditional roles of healer and exorcist, mediums also play the roles of teacher and public educator for the spiritual cultivation and moral improvement of the public.
Epilogue

So it would be necessary to learn spirits. Even and especially if this, the spectral, is not. Even and especially if this, which is neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, is never present as such.
Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

In this thesis I explore the interweaving of mediumship and different modern discourses through the analysis of various mediumistic practices, including the Mediums' Association and two other cases of modern mediums. If progressive consciousness constitutes one of the basic characteristics of modernity, the stable spiritual structure of Chinese religion represented by the triadic framework--god, ghost and ancestor--is accordingly replaced by miscellaneous ling or spirits that strive for spiritual advancement in order to come to terms with modern evolutionary consciousness. Just as the resurgence of popular religion in Taiwan demands an account, the resurgence of mediumistic culture also calls for an explanation. While scholars consider the former a fashion of utilitarian pursuit, Lai Zongxian--the theorizer of the Mediums' Association--interprets the latter as a "symptom" of modernity: a representation of unsolved resentment in the past that calls for disentanglement and a state of turbulence that asks for regulation for the preparation of a more civilized era--the third separation of heaven and earth. The spirits that appear on the stage not only represent the silhouettes of a bleak civilization, but also its redemptive prospect. They incorporate the resentful dynastic ling asks for recognition and pacification, the spirits who never forgot their great enterprise of nation-building, the spirits who were expelled from their "disenchanted" homeland, the wandering karmic ling that wait to be incorporated into the salvational
system, the more advanced karmic ling that cooperate with mediums for the accumulation of merits, and the spirits that are bound by the duty of eternal learning and service. The unfulfilled wishes of these spirits are all realized, extinguished, or transformed through the mediation of the mediums.

The project of modernization is complicated. And mediums contribute themselves to it through their specific mediumistic power and religious vision. They resolve the poignant resentment and collective karma that has originated from political conflict in order to clean a way for the further development of Chinese civilization. They educate the spirits and orient them to come to terms with the modern world. They participate in the project of "disenchantment" by rendering themselves as the subjects of scientific research in order to contribute themselves to the "demystification" of mediumship. They offer their own "disenchanted" vision through the combination of mediumistic practice and a kind of ethical rationalization represented by the theory of cause and effect. They propose a profound cultivational practice based on the dual movements of mediumistic engrossment and self-aware autonomy. In sum, the reformative visions of mediumship proposed by the Mediums' Association and the reflections offered by Pia's critique and Lingji's writing demonstrate an active mediumistic engagement with modernity. And their visions have added a significant reflective power both to conventional mediumship and to the various trends of modernity.
Glossary of Chinese Characters

bagua 八卦
baibai 拜拜
baishen 拜神
Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝
Baozheng 包拯
beiguan 北管
Beijing 北京
benling 本靈
buyun 補運

Cai Shinong 蔡仕農
chaodu 超渡
che gu zhen 車鼓陣
Chen Jinggu 陳靖姑
Chen Yi 陳儀
Cheng Boxiu 程伯休
Chengdu 成都
chi 耻
Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石
Chiyou 蚩尤
Chong 重
Chu 楚
Chunyang Zushi 純陽祖師

dahua 大化
Dajia 大甲
dajiale 大家樂
Dao 道
Daode jing 道德經
Daotong 道統
Datong 大同
Deng Wenyi 鄧文儀
dian 殿
dili 地利
dingguo fengling 定果封靈
dingmao 丁卯
dizhi 地支

fa 法
fahui 法會
Fengshen yanyi 封神演義
fengshui 風水
fuji 扶乩
Fujian 福建
Fuxi 伏羲

Gao Tianwen 高天文
gong 宫
gongming 共命
Guan Yefu 貳射父
Guangong 關公
guanhua 官話
Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩
gui 鬼
Guoyu 國語

Han 漢
Hangzhou 杭州
hao xiongdi 好兄弟
Honghua Yuan 弘化院
Huang Akuan 黃阿寬
Huang Shicheng 黃石城
Huang Ziwei 黃紫薇
Huangdi 黃帝
Huanghua Gang 黃花岡
huangji 皇極
Huangyi gong 皇意宮
huguo anling fahui 護國安靈法會
huibe yanyi 會合演義
jiatai 駕（架）台
Jiang Jingguo (Chiang Ching-kuo) 蔣經國
Jiang Ziya 姜子牙
jiao 醫
Jie 桀
Jigong 濟公
Jilong 基隆
jing 精
jitong 卍童
Jiuli 九黎
Jiuwu tianzun 九五天尊
juedi tiantong 絕地天通
jueling 覺靈

kun 坤

Lai Zongxian 賴宗賢
Li 黎
li (principle) 理
li (politeness) 礼
lian 廉
Lian Heng 連橫
Liang Qichao 梁啟超
Lin Xiantang 林獻堂
Linshui 臨水
ling 靈
lingdong 靈動
lingji (medium who serves the spirits of the realm of huangji) 靈乩
lingji (medium who serves the spirits of the realm of wuji) 靈機
Lingyin si 靈隱寺
Lu 魯
Lu Haodong 陸皓東
Luyuan si 爐源寺

Mazu 媽祖
mei (plum) 梅
mei (medium) 媒
Miao 苗
min 民
Mingming Shangdi 明明上帝
minjian zongjiao 民間宗教
mo 魔

Nanchang 南昌
nanguan 南管
Nanjing 南京
niuli zhen 牛犁陣

Pangu 盤古
Penglai 蓬萊
puming 普明
Putuo 普陀

qi 氣
qian 乾
Qiang 羌
Qing 清
Qingjing jing 清靜經
qingxin guayu 清心寡慾
Qufu 曲阜

renhe 人和

sancao pudu 三曹普渡
sanjiao 三焦
sanmin 三民
sanqi mojie 三期末劫
Shandong 山東
Shang 商
Shang Tang 商湯
Shangdi 上帝
Shangshu 尚書
shanshu 善書
Shanxi 山西
Shao Kangjie 邵康節
Shaohao 少昊
shen 神
shenji 神乩
shengling 生靈
shensuo pingyi 神所憑依
shenzhou 神州
shouyuan 收園
Shujing 書經
Shun 舜
Sichuan 四川
Song 宋
Song Guangyu 宋光宇
Song Zelai 宋澤萊
Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙

Tai 泰
taiji 太極
Taiwan Daojiao yuanliu 台灣道教源流
tan 坛
tang 堂
Tang 湯
tian 天
tiangan 天干
tianming 天命
tianshi 天時
tianshu 天數
tiaoling xunti 調靈訓體

Wang Fengyi 王鳳儀
Wang Jueyi 王覺一
Wang Zhaojun 王昭君
Wen 文
Wenlu 问路
wu (medium) 巫
Wu (King) 武
wulao 五老
Wu Mingxi 吴明熙
wuji 無極
wuwei er zhi 無為而治
wuxing (invisible) 無形
wuxing (five qualities) 五行
Wu Yu 吴鬣

xi 現
Xia 夏
xiang 象
xincheng zeling 心誠則靈
xing (nature) 性
xing (form) 形
xinmin 新民
xinzheng zeling 心正則靈
Xinzhu 新竹
Xiongnu 匈奴
Xuan 宣
xunling 訓靈

Yao 堯
yaoquian 樂甄
yi 義
Yiguan Dao 一貫道
Yijing 易經
yin 陰
Yinfu jing 陰符經
yinguo 因果
yinyang yan 陰陽眼
You Meiling 游美玲
Yu 禹
yuan 院
yuanling  元（原）靈

Zhanghua  彰化
Zhejiang  浙江
Zhonghua dadao  中華大道
zhonghua daotong  中華道統
zhonghua minguo lingji xiehui  中華民國靈卌協會
Zhou (emperor; dynasty; Duke)  周
Zhou (King)  紂
Zhou Dunyi  周敦頏
Zhu Xi  朱熹
Zhuanxu  顛頏
ziwei (star)  紫薇
zuxian  祖先
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