



INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM  
for Research in the Humanities

*Fate, Freedom and Prognostication.*

*Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe.*

Conference:

## **Spirit-Writing in Chinese History**

Collection of Abstracts  
(following the order of the presentations)



Vincent Goossaert (École Pratique des Hautes Études, PSL):

### **Five Questions for a Comprehensive History of the Spirit-written Literature**

This state-of-the-field presentation will attempt to take stock of the current, fast-expanding scholarly literature on spirit-writing. It will first identify the main areas in which the most recent research has made breakthroughs; it will then aim to propose five questions that remain unsolved to date. 1/ How to think the long-term development of spirit-writing from the beginnings under the Song to the present; more specifically, how to bridge the gap between the 12<sup>th</sup>-century emergence of the practice, and the well-studied rise from the late Ming onward? 2/ How to categorize spirit-written literature, in emic and etic terms? 3/ What about anti-spirit-writing attitudes, laws, and movements? 4/ How to understand the articulation between spirit-writing and individual religious practice and religiosity, and its relation to public/private distinctions? 5/ How and when did spirit-writing cease to be (if it was...) a purely elite practice and become adopted by “sectarian” and “popular” groups?

Michael Lackner (IKGF):

### **Between Belief and Skepticism: Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) on Spirit-Writing and the Mantic Practices.**

Ji Yun, one of the compilers of the Imperial anthology *Siku quanshu* (四庫全書, „Complete Library in Four Sections“) was vividly interested in different kinds of mantic arts (*shushu* 術數) and attended numerous séances of spirit writing. In his brush notes (*Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記) he relates his personal experiences and provides the reader with his assessments of various encounters with fortune-tellers and mediums. His descriptions oscillate between a firm belief in the veracity of predictive techniques and mediumistic practices on the one hand, and a selective criticism as well as an attempt at a theoretical explanation of these phenomena. The paper tries to analyze Ji Yun’s different approaches to fate and prognostication.



Daniel Burton-Rose (Northern Arizona University):

**Maternist Deities on Patriarchal Spirit Altars:  
The Gender Dynamics of Peng Dingqiu's (1645-1719) Spirit-Writing Circle**

The proposed paper differentiates the gender ideologies promulgated by individual spirit-writing altars based on the content of their moral exhortations and presence or absence of female immortals. The late Ming dynasty (1368-1644) was a time when gender conventions were greatly blurred. After the conquest by the Manchu Qing dynasty, many elites in the Yangzi delta blamed the liberality of late Ming elites for the fall of the dynasty. I contrast the prominence of female immortals on late Ming literati spirit-writing altars with their complete absence in the early Qing literati altar of Peng Dingqiu. I ask if the reason for this shift was exclusively a more conservative environment and revitalized patriarchal outlook, or if other factors were at play. Among the other possible explanations was a rejection in the early Qing of the late Ming eroticization of female immortals. Such a rejection would not have entailed a loss of interest in the high-ranking maternist deities of the celestial hierarchy, only a distaste for romanticizing recently deceased young women.

Zhu Mingchuan 朱明川 (Fudan University 復旦大學):

**扶乩与近代中国的忠烈成神：以了闲坛为例，1898-2018**

(Spirit-Writing and the Divinization of Civil Officials' Martyrs in Modern China: A Case Study based on the Liu Han Altar, 1898-2018)

本文关注近代以来中国的文人乩坛，重点分析清代以来明代殉节文人降乩成神的现象，并试图探讨扶乩参与者们的“遗民心态”。本文选取诞生于清末福州郭氏家族的“了闲坛”这一典型个案，郭氏这一宦官世家有着悠久的扶乩传统，在清末民初之际，南明英烈“娄真人”降乩显圣。这既能体现郭氏家族的政治态度，也与福州地方民间宗教系统有着密切联系；民国时期，了闲坛进一步吸纳精英人士，规模发展壮大，并传播至港台地区；香港的了闲坛依旧维持着文人乩坛的特色直至今日，却也随时代发生着变化。在本文中，笔者通过笔记小说、诗文集、鸾书、经卷、地方志等文献，结合田野调查，通过了闲坛这一持续百余年的个案，探究近代文人的宗教实践与政治态度之间的关系；并展示现代化的时代背景下，文人乩坛在当代的存在形式。

This paper focuses on modern literati spirit-writing altars, attempting to analyze the deification movement of Ming martyrs since the Qing dynasty and discuss the "Ming loyalist mindset" of the spirit-writing participants. The paper takes the "Liu Han Altar", which was constructed by the Guo clan of Fuzhou in Late Qing, an official family with a long tradition of spirit-writing, as a typical case. In the Late Qing cataclysm, Southern Ming martyr "Master Lou" manifested in their altar. This incident reflected the political attitude of the Guo family and was closely related to the local folk religious system in Fuzhou. During the Republic of China, the Liu Han Altar further absorbed literati elites, expanded in size and spread to Hong



Kong and Taiwan. Until this day, the Hong Kong branch has maintained the characteristics of literati altars, even though the times have obviously changed. By combining the literati's brush notes, poems, spirit-written texts, religious scriptures, gazetteers and fieldwork, this paper explores the relationship between religious practice and political attitudes of modern literati through the case of the Liu Han Altar that has lasted for more than 100 years. This case also shows how literati spirit-writing altars persisted until the present day in an age of modernization.

Hu Jiechen 胡劫辰 (Yuelu Academy 岳麓书院):

### **A Typological Study on the Spectrum of Spirit-writing in Late Imperial China**

Extensive academic research on spirit-writing from various approaches has been undertaken. Nevertheless, most of the studies mainly focus on the texts received from or the community of spirit-writing, rather than the practice itself. More specifically, little attention has been paid to the boundaries or the connotations of the category "spirit-writing" and of its different expressions in Chinese, such as "*fuzi*" (to wield the stylus or to wield the sieve), "*fuluan*" (to wield the phoenix), "*feiluan*" (flying phoenix), etc.

By re-examining the relevant materials in late imperial China, such as the anecdotal records or novels, the anthologies, the personal chronicles, the morality books, and the cultivating manuals for spirit-writing, I will argue that spirit-writing in a broad sense is made of a spectrum of varieties of practices, the boundaries of which are also fluctuant under different contexts. Therefore, it is almost impossible to define each kind of practice in a coherent and exclusive way. However, several variables or traits could be introduced to help describing and understanding the spectrum, e.g. the technique, the purpose, the publicity, the status of the medium, the medium's attitude towards the deity, etc. This typological analysis discloses not only the social relationship among spirit-writing practitioners, but also the relationship between the transcendentals and the mortals, which mirrors the social intention in its historical context.



Shiga Ichiko 志賀市子 (Ibaraki Christian University 茨城キリスト教大学):

### **Spirit-Writing Cults in Western Guangdong: Their Position in the 19th-Century Spirit-Writing Cult Movement**

This paper is intended as an investigation of spirit-writing cults in Western Guangdong (Yuexi 粤西), especially Zhanjiang 湛江, Wuchuan 吴川, Gaozhou 高州 and Xinyi 信宜, all of which were prominent commercial centers along the Jianjiang River 鉴江, a tributary of the West River 西江. Although the position this region held in the spirit-writing cult movement of 19th-century Guangdong was not ignored, up until the current time, no studies have been done on this. According to my recent research, not a few spirit-writing cults established by local literati and merchants rose in this region since around the Tongzhi's reign (1862–1874). With the function of morality book presses, they not only became distribution centers for eschatological scriptures (jiujiejing 救劫经) carried from Sichuan and Yunnan but also produced their own eschatological scriptures containing a typical narrative that Guangdi, Wenchang and Lüzu save the world, when the plague broke out during 1891–92. The new scriptures soon spread to Hong Kong, Guangdong, Taiwan and Vietnam, and are still chanted today. In this paper I would like to explore the characteristics and functions of the spirit-writing cults in Yuexi, focusing on their savior deities and eschatological scriptures. At the same time, I would also like to show their present condition.

Li Guoping 李國平 (Leipzig University):

### **The Rise of Spirit-writing Cults in the Chaozhou Area (1860-1949)**

By the end of Qing dynasty, the method of spirit-writing played a novel role in the changing society, and spirit-writing cults transformed into an energetic and extensive religious trend. While this new religious movement actively adapted to various social context, many believers of fu-ji discerningly caught opportunities to participate in it. In the Chaozhou area, spirit-writing cults began at the end of the 19th century, and were flourishing from 1930 to 1949 with the publication and production of many morality books. In regard to establishment of associations and buildings, after the outbreak of the 1890s' plague of rats in Guangdong Province, a multitude of spirit-writing groups emerged for the sake of saving the world. The history of charitable halls in Chaozhou could be dated back to Song and Yuan dynasties, they rocketed in quantities in the first half of 20th century though. A full understanding of the vigorous growth of charitable halls should be put into the national religious background of 19th and 20th centuries. A majority of charitable halls in Chaozhou were motivated by divine revelation through spirit-writing in the initial stage, or perform spirit-writing in the 20th century. There were more than 500 charitable halls in the Chaozhou area during the Republican period. Besides charitable halls, manifestations of spirit-writing cults also contained association, temple, altar, etc., and these spirit-writing organizations were widespread as well.



Luo Dan 羅丹 (Sun Yat-sen University 中山大學):

### 當代香港扶乩道壇的歷史與傳承：以飛雁洞佛道社為例子

(History and Transmission of Daoist Spirit-Writing Altars in Hong Kong: A Case Study of Fei Ngan Tung Buddhism and Daoism Society)

扶乩道壇是香港道教的主角，其眾多的扶乩道堂是在清末至民國時期因戰亂、經濟衰敗等原因從廣東地區傳入。以扶乩為核心的道壇至少從清代便開始活躍在中國宗教的舞台上，它們在台灣、香港、乃至東南亞的發展時至今日仍是持續進行著。它們是近代，乃至當代中國宗教的特別現象之一，在其發展中佔據了不可或缺的席位。近些年以來，一批學者已開始著手扶乩道壇的歷史研究，但對於這類宗教團體在當代的發展尚未引起足夠的關注。然而，只有對正在發展中的扶乩團體進行詳細的描述和探討，才能夠闡釋和理解扶乩在當代道教及中國宗教中所扮演的角色及地位。

本文是關於一個當代香港呂祖扶乩道壇——飛雁洞佛道社（下稱飛雁洞）的研究。希望以此個案來填補學界關於當代扶乩道壇發展史的缺失，及扶乩道壇在構建當代道教，或者說中國宗教中的角色。作為個案研究，本文梳理了飛雁洞從 1980 年創壇至現在的發展歷程。它由神諭創壇，藉助扶乩積聚信徒，隨後引進道教科儀，成功地由鸞壇轉變為道壇，並走上發展慈善事業的道路。

The Daoist spirit-writing altar is a crucial feature of Daoism in Hong Kong. Several Daoist spirit-writing altars moved to Hong Kong from Guangdong Province during the period from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republican Era for various reasons, such as the chaos caused by war and economic recession. Daoist altars focusing on spirit-writing had been playing an active role on the stage of Chinese religion at least since the Qing Dynasty, and they are still making progress in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and even Southeast Asia nowadays. These Daoist spirit-writing altars are a special phenomenon of modern and even contemporary Chinese religion and occupy an indispensable status in the development of Chinese religion. In recent years, a growing number of scholars have begun to undertake path-breaking research projects on the history of spirit-writing altars, but have largely ignored the development of these religious societies in the contemporary era. However, we could interpret and understand the current status of Chinese religion in the contemporary era only after we have made detailed descriptions and discussions about a developing religious society.

This article aims to examine the history of a Daoist spirit-writing altar located in central Hong Kong—the Fei Ngan Tung Buddhism and Daoism Society 飛雁洞佛道社 (hereinafter referred to as FNT), which reflects the basic characteristics of spirit-writing altar in contemporary Hong Kong. The goal of this paper is to fill in the academic gaps regarding the developmental history of contemporary Daoist spirit-writing altars and the role these altars have played in constructing contemporary Daoism, or in other words, Chinese religion. As a case study, this paper describes the history of the FNT since the date of its foundation (1980) until the present. The Society was founded according to the oracles of gods and accumulated believers through spirit-writing. Later on, the FNT introduced Daoist rituals and succeeded in



transforming itself from a spirit-writing altar into a Daoist altar, after which they began to promote themselves as a charity.

Paul R. Katz (Academia Sinica 中央研究院):

### **A Motley Phoenix? On the Diversity of Spirit-writing Groups in Modern Taiwan**

This paper will present an overview of Taiwanese spirit-writing traditions based on both secondary scholarship plus my own historical and ethnographic research. Its goal is to assess the cultural significance of spirit-writing in Taiwan, including the rituals themselves and the groups that perform them. The paper's theme is that of diversity, including: 1) Differences in practice by geographic area; 2) Discrepancies among members, including by age, gender, education, etc.; 3) Variations in activities these members engage in, which are not limited to spirit-writing but also include philanthropy, publishing, and other ritual activities like scripture chanting. In short, the study of such groups suggests that while spirit-writing constitutes a core activity, it is hardly the sole practice that binds their membership together.

Tam Ngo (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen/  
Department of Comparative Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen):

### **Spirit writing and Sinophobia in Contemporary Vietnam**

Communication with the supernatural offers a seemingly unending variety of possible expression of feelings, affects, aspirations, and resentments. This variety forms common patterns discernable in events of communication with and through spirits in Vietnam broadly defined as spirit writing (*giang bút*) in contemporary Vietnam. After half a century hidden from the public, spirit writing came out of secret realm around the 1990s to render divined words of powerful spirits and deities into script, which possess what Webb Keane (2013) points out to be “a distinctive material quality and form. They appear on some physical medium, and so are both durable and destructible”. By analyzing a number of spirit writing groups in and around Hanoi, this paper addresses two issues. First, the continuity and novelty in the form and content of spirit writing practice in Vietnam today in a historical comparison of how it was done in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Second, as spirit writing today are mainly used as a weapon in the spiritual warfare organized by Vietnamese spiritist against China, the paper shall address the issue of Sinophobia and civilizational discourses in Vietnam.



Janet Hoskins (University of Southern California):

## **Reveal and Conceal: Spirit-Writing as a Clandestine Practice in Vietnam and its Diaspora**

Caodaism is a new religion born in Vietnam in the 1920s which has received its sacred scriptures through the practice of spirit writing. The “spirit pen” or co but (literally the “pen as an instrument” of the spirits) can actually refer to several different things: a phoenix-headed basket which is held by two different mediums and writes out spirit messages, a dragon-headed basket with a similar function, an alphabetic “planchette” where a device is used to point to the letters, and even a special red and gold pen which is used by a medium to write messages that he receives “directly” from the spirits. The forms that spirit writing takes come from the Sino-Vietnamese heritage of the once secret redemption societies called the “Five Minh”, but it also sometimes combined with techniques used by French spiritists like Alain Kardec.

The practice of spirit-writing (which is called “co but” or the “spirit pen”) is technically still illegal in Vietnam, although it is an open secret that it is practiced discretely in some people’s homes, but no longer openly in Caodai temples as it was before 1975. Nevertheless, I have been able to interview some spirit mediums and even to see some of the texts they have received, but I often have to promise not to reveal the identities of those who have shared their texts with me. It is this “living tradition” which I would like to focus on, and situate it within the challenging context of clandestine practice combined with the anonymous circulation of some of these texts on the Internet. Looking at the various techniques which have been used to both share these spirit messages and conceal their origins is in itself an intriguing problem.

Since spirit-writing is technically illegal, many temples do not like to reveal that they have devices like the phoenix-head basket (called the “precious instrument” or ngoc co) since that would seem to provide evidence that they use them regularly. Simply having a special pen is much less likely to draw suspicion, so the “adaptation” that some places have made is to stipulate that in the highest, most advanced form of meditation people learn to “have conversations with divinities” without using one of those devices. (But since many say it is still “easier to make contact” with these devices, they often do still use them).

I was able to videotape a spirit séance in California. Some Caodaists disapproved of our having video-taped this, since as esoteric practitioners they did not find it appropriate to share these techniques with those who were not initiated. But others agreed that since spiritism is the way in which Caodai scriptures were transmitted it was important to document it. The problems created by the requirements of secrecy are also part of the mystique of occult practices, so they may both constrain and enhance beliefs in the efficacy of spirit writing.





Fan Chunwu 范純武 (Foguang University 佛光大學):

### 碟仙：《靈乩指迷》與民初扶乩技術的改革

(The Transcendent of the Plate: The *Lingji zhimi (A Guide to the Spirit Stylus)* and the Reform of Spirit-Writing Techniques during the Early Republic)

扶箕，又稱做扶乩、扶鸞、飛鸞、扶鶴、降筆……等等。做為一種降神術，討論這種儀式的操作方式的並不多。在民初社會標榜科學主義，打倒迷信的風潮下，扶乩盛行被當批判的現象，與此同時，也開啟了對扶乩進行學術研究的契機；民初學界開始從現代心理學的角度研究扶乩，代表的研究學者有陳大齊、黃翼和許地山等人。科學至上的思維下，其實更直接衝擊了扶乩技術的變化，產生了所謂的「科學靈乩」，即後來為人所熟知的碟仙。碟仙和扶乩之間的關係，過去較未見人論及，本論據上海圖書館所藏民國二十三年(1934)左右刊行的《靈乩指迷》進行討論。這本書發行人與影響似乎並不太大，在後世流傳的民國相關出版書目中多未見著錄；不過，本書詳述了科學靈乩的由來，明白的指出是為了扶乩的科學化而設計的。《靈乩指迷》在詮釋上特別標示出科學的特色，它以電學理論來解釋扶乩的原理，這類的說法在民初其他的救世團體解釋扶乩時，也可以看到類似的詮釋。

本論將從《靈乩指迷》做為探討的基點，來觀察民初科學化社會意識中扶乩技術變化的意義。民初的扶乩趨向之一是跨入到「靈學」，扶乩走出傳統扶乩的求藥治病、問事或宗教救劫的範疇，轉而用此儀式來探尋靈魂、生死議題和鬼神世界等被視為不可知的層面。各種靈學團體經由辦雜誌，招募會員和刊登報刊廣告等各種現代的新方法來進行。碟仙的出現是推動此波探討風潮的動力之一。從《靈乩指迷》可以觀察到它與民初接受世界上靈學觀念的背景與理念，扶乩如何演變到碟仙的過程，以及民初社會接受碟仙的情況。

Spirit-writing, which is variously called “wielding the stylus”, “wielding the phoenix”, “flying phoenix”, “wielding the crane”, or “descending into the stylus”, is a spirit-possession practice, but there is little research discussing the way in which the methods behind this practice operate. During the Republican period, with its praise of scientism in society and its anti-superstition tendencies, the flourishing of spirit-writing was a phenomenon that attracted criticism. At the same time, however, it was the beginning of the scientific study of spirit-writing and academic circles during the time set out to study spirit-writing from the viewpoint of modern psychology. Representative studies include those by Chen Daqi, Huang Yi and Xu Dishan.

Indeed, this scientific mindset had a direct impact on the transformation of the technique of spirit-writing. It led to the emergence of the so-called "scientific spirit stylus" which is nothing else than the later well-known transcendent of the plate (*diexian* 碟仙). The relation between the transcendent of the plate and spirit-writing has not really been discussed so far and this article will offer an elaboration based on the book *Lingji zhimi* 靈乩指迷 (*A Guide to the Spirit Stylus*), which was published in 1934 and is now stored in the Shanghai Municipal Library. The sales figures and the impact of this book have been limited and it is rarely listed



in any of the relevant bibliographies of the time. However, from looking at the origin of the scientific spirit-pen, which is described in detail in the book, one can see that it was intended for the scientization of spirit-writing. In its explanations, the *Lingji zhimi* is particularly marked by scientific characteristics and uses electrical theories to explain the principles of spirit-writing. Similar explanations for spirit-writing can also be found with other redemptive societies in the early Republican period.

This article uses *Lingji zhimi* as a starting point to look at the significance of the changing technique of spirit-writing in light of the scientific social mindset of the early Republican period. One tendency within early Republican spirit-writing is the engagement with "spiritualism" (*lingxue* 靈學) due to which spirit-writing went beyond the traditional scope of the practice which was confined to seeking medical prescriptions, asking individual questions or religious apocalypticism. Instead, the practice was used to pursue topics such as the soul, life and death, the spiritual world or other aspects which were perceived as unknowable. Numerous spiritualist organizations operated using modern methods such as setting up newspapers, recruiting members, and publishing newspaper advertisements. The emergence of the transcendent of the plate was one impetus driving this wave. *Lingji zhimi* enables us to observe the background and the rationale behind its reception of the global spiritualist ideas of the early Republic, the process through which spirit-writing evolved into the transcendent of the plate, and the circumstances under which the early Republican society accepted the transcendent of the plate.

Matthias Schumann (IKGF Erlangen):

### **‘Protecting the Dao and Transmitting the Classics’: The Confucian Dimension of Spirit-Writing in Republican China**

In recent decades, scholars have directed attention to the reinvigoration of Confucianism after the revolution of 1911. Members of the former scholarly elites founded new institutions dedicated to “national learning” (*guoxue* 國學) and the study of the classics (*jingxue* 經學). This trend went hand in hand with a “religionization” of Confucianism that saw the establishment of religious organizations modelled on the Christian church model. Simultaneously, we see a novel engagement with Confucian texts and deities among spirit-writing groups which were traditionally oriented rather towards Buddhism and Daoism. The most vivid expression of this new tendency was certainly the novel role of Confucius as a deity transmitting spirit-written messages. Many groups dedicated themselves to the promotion of Confucian values within society and based this endeavor on writings that they received at spirit-writing altars. Thereby, spirit-writing became intimately connected to the transformation of Confucianism in early Republican China.

This paper will discuss the role of Confucianism within Republican spirit-writing organizations by looking at the case of the Wushanshe 悟善社 (Society for Awakening to Goodness) and its sub-organization the New Religion to Save the World (Jiushi xinjiao 救世



新教). The Wushanshe, founded in 1920 and growing out of a small altar dedicated to Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, developed a strong interest in the study and commentary of core Confucian writings in the 1920s. Among others it published commentaries to the *Great Learning (Daxue 大學)* and the *Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸)* which were put in the context of the correct “transmission of the Dao” (*daotong 道統*). While claiming merely to “rediscover” their original meaning, transmitting commentaries via spirit-writing was a way to infuse Confucian texts with a new significance and adapt them to the social and political conditions of the Republican period. Confucianism was presented as the “national essence” and, ultimately, as the means to reform and strengthen China. This social and political utility allowed the Wushanshe/New Religion to draw in the support of many who were educated in the Confucian examination system, among them high military and political figures. What is more, its Confucian emphasis allowed the New Religion to gain recognition by the Guomindang 國民黨 in the 1930s, after it had been prohibited in 1928. The case thus shows how spirit-writing organizations engaged with Confucianism to maneuver a changing social and political context and find a meaningful place for themselves.

Xia Shi (New College of Florida):

### **Spirit Writing and Daoyuan’s Gendered Teachings**

The Daoyuan, a major religious and charitable organization in Republican China, heavily used the ritual of spirit writing to instruct its members on various issues related to self-cultivation. It thus has left some unusual sources for us to examine its teachings. In particular, an investigation of those deities’ exhortations towards their female members can bring a much-needed gender perspective to the twentieth-century history of spirit writing. Its sacred texts can help understand how this powerful medium was regularly used to give authoritative instructions to their female members, most of whom were domestic-focused, relatively older married women without (modern) educations, who joined the organization along with their husbands to seek spiritual salvation. Often written in colloquial language more accessible to women, these instructions, as this paper shows, reveal Daoyuan’s fundamental goal was to save the crisis of the world through reconstructing gendered morality in a period of flux and instability. They redefined Confucian gender doctrines to accommodate the challenges of modern gender ideologies and promoted charity as an alternative method to accumulate religious merit over those “superstitious” activities long favored by the female populace. Therefore, Daoyuan’s use of spirit writing was not merely to seek deities’ protection and blessings so as to avoid personal calamities, which had been a common pursuit among many “secret societies” and sectarian religious groups in Chinese history. It had a broader mission to edify society through systematically reconfiguring Chinese traditions, particularly Confucian gender norms, to be compatible with the modern age.



Elena Valussi (Loyola University Chicago):

**A Female Lineage for Female Practitioners: Goddesses, their Poems, and Bodily Practices in the Female Alchemy Corpus**

This paper discusses the gender dimensions present in collections and texts received through spirit writing. I will start by introducing how, according to lore, it was a female community worshipping the goddess Zigu which initiated the practice of spirit writing. I will also discuss the presence and role of women in spirit writing communities of the Qing.

The core element of a spirit written text is the close, intimate connection and dialogue between a divinity and a community of receivers, or a single receiver. Specifically for this paper, I want to look at this interaction as it is portrayed in collections of female alchemy. I will focus on the question of women and gender within this tradition, the texts of which were transmitted by spirit writing, often within a lineage of goddesses, and often addressing an audience of women. These texts, and the goddess who transmit them, also clearly address the challenges of the female body in its path to transcendence. One collection in particular will be the center of this paper, the *Nüjindan fayao* received in Sichuan by Fu Jinquan in 1817, as well as other materials related to female practice, received by Fu, but found in different collections. Texts in this collection are received from a variety of divinities, many of them female, like Xiwangmu, Sun Bu'er, He Xiangu, and others. These divinities are not generally pre-eminent in other, non gender-specific transmissions of alchemical texts. Here, the majority of the texts is received from male divinities like Lü Donbgin, Wenchang, Guandi. Thus this collection, featuring a female lineage of divinities, appeals specifically to women. I want to explore the specific intimate connection between a female divinity and a female audience, and how goddesses can better guide women towards transcendence.

Wang Chien-chuan 王見川 (Southern Taiwan University of Science and Technology 南臺科技大學):

**與亡靈對話:清代扶乩的另類現象與功能初探--以雲南、台灣為考察中心**

(Conversing with the Dead: A Preliminary Discussion of an Alternative Phenomenon and Function of Qing-Dynasty Spirit-Writing—An Investigation Focused on Yunnan and Taiwan)

從《夷堅志》等資料，可以得知早在宋代扶箕中，與亡靈交談對話，即是其活動之一！雖然受限於資料，無法知道更多的細節，日本學者合山究認為明末葉紹袁透過扶乩，與亡故的愛女靈交。《竊聞》、《續竊聞》等就是記載，他藉由扶乩聽聞冥間往來情形與冥界消息。<sup>1</sup>確實，從《午夢堂集》可以知道葉紹袁在家人陸續有人去世，他開始尋求入冥召亡者的幫助，想了解死去家人的情況。但是，這種方式並不全是扶乩。筆者，在這篇論文主要利用清代雲南、台灣扶乩團體著作的鸞書中的信眾與亡故親友的對話資料(陰陽會談)，嘗試勾勒當時扶乩的另一種現象，並探索其功能與原因，希望補上扶乩史中的空白。

<sup>1</sup>合山究著·蕭燕婉譯注《明清時代的女性與文學》頁 319-320。



From works such as the *Yijian zhi* we know that already as early as the Song dynasty conversing with the dead was one of the main driving forces of spirit-writing. Even though the specific circumstances are hard to know due to a lack of sources, the Japanese researcher Gōyama Kiwamu believes that Ye Shaoyuan used spirit-writing during the late Ming period to interact with the soul of his beloved daughter who had passed away. According to the accounts contained in sources such as the *Yaowen* and the *Xu yaowen*, he used the practice to receive news about her whereabouts in the netherworld. Indeed, from the *Wu meng tang ji* we learn that when his family members passed away one after another, every time Ye Shaoyuan attempted to enter the netherworld to seek out the help of the dead to learn about the circumstances under which his family members had died, even though he did not only rely on spirit-writing. For this article, I have mainly used materials contained in spirit-written books of Qing dynasty spirit-writing organizations from Yunnan and Taiwan that detail the conversations between followers and dead relatives. I attempt to give an outline of this different phenomenon within spirit-writing during that time and discuss its function and origins in the hope of filling a blank page in the history of spirit-writing.

Philip Clart (Leipzig University):

### **Spirit-writing as a Technique for Individual Divination: Themes and Patterns in the Divination Records of a Modern Taiwanese Phoenix Hall**

The present paper introduces a body of data that holds great promise for the study of popular beliefs, consisting of thousands of records of individual divination sessions published in the magazines of Taiwanese spirit-writing cults, so-called phoenix halls (*luan tang* 鸞堂). These texts were initiated not by researchers, but by believers themselves in the form of questions posed to the presiding deities of the phoenix halls in question, and can thus be assumed to reflect faithfully the religious concerns of the individual in question. At the same time, the large number of such records makes it possible to categorize and tabulate the questions (and their answers) and derive from them a general view of key notions in popular belief in Taiwan, of the relative importance of particular beliefs, and of their changes over time (as the records go back to the 1980s).