

The Writing of History: The Religious Practices of the Mediums' Association in Taiwan*

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This article 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. This move represented the conscious self-recognition of a time-honored religious professional who strives to come to terms with modern frame of professionalization. This article explores the intertwining of religious mission and Nationalist concern through its consideration of the association's religious practices and activities, including the Moral Maintenance Movement it promoted, the mediums' meeting for visits by the spirits, the ritual of national protection and spiritual appeasement, and a pilgrimage the mediums made to the Mainland. This article argues that the association writes itself into the official discourse kaleidoscopically, creating a new topography by rearranging available fragments of that discourse. This practice neither reiterates the dominant discourse nor invents a new one; the association's historical writing constitutes an exercise of reflexive thinking within the structure of normative codes and power relations.

Keywords: spirit-mediums, the Mediums' Association, historical writing, nationalist discourse, popular religion

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Introduction

Mediumship in Taiwan is a time-honored and vital cultural force with religious, medical, and political significance. 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, attending in particular to popular healing and moral transformation (Kleinman 1978, 1980; Kleinman and Kleinman 1997), spirit-writing (Jordan and Overmyer 1986; Lang and Ragvald 1998), trance states (Lane 1987), ritual (Sutton 1989, 1990), rhetoric (Dai 1997), gender (Xie 1985; Wolf 1990), and social resistance (Kagan and Wasescha 1982). Since the practices of mediums constitute a window for exploring 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 even more relevant and important.

Recently the scholarship has noted a tendency toward the rise of popular religion and the decline of foreign religions (including Protestantism and Catholicism) in Taiwan since the mid-1960s (Li 1998). The growth of popular religion is manifested by increased numbers of mediums and related temples and private altars. Moreover, the spread of mediums has extended from rural regions to urban areas. Although mediums were claimed to be found only in rural areas in the past, Kleinman noted that urban spirit mediums were on the increase and flourishing when he conducted his fieldwork in Taiwan in 1970s (Kleinman 1980:211). According to Li's (1998) analysis, the rise of popular religion demonstrates two modern tendencies: that of utilitarianism and the upsurge of moral revivalistic sects. Utilitarianism is manifested in three ways: first, individualistic goals outstrip the traditionally communal meaning of religion. Second, the utilitarian tendency is reflected in an increasing number of deities worshipped at the mediums' private altars. Since the different deities' various functions are able to meet a wide variety of clients' needs, the growth in their numbers in turn bolsters the utilitarian function of these altars (ibid.: 247-249). 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* 大家樂 (everyone is happy) lottery since the 1980s as an example. Such a world of "individualistic, utilitarian and amoral competition" emphasizes profit over community or family morality (Weller 1994:148-153). The seemingly countervailing tendency—the rise of moral revivalistic sects—Li suggests in fact entails a kind of formalism that emphasizes ritualistic appearance more than real content. Fundamentally, he

argues, these moral revival sects share the ethos of this-worldliness and pragmatism with the first utilitarian tendency (Li 1998:251–253).

This modern utilitarianism or pragmatism Li sees in Taiwanese popular religion is not a new attribution; it clearly corresponds to scholars' long-standing characterization of popular religion, especially when it is contrasted with elite or more institutionalized religion. While the latter is characterized as the pursuit of meaning and wisdom, the former is viewed as only a minor supplication for narrow and practical ends. 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 pursuits. According to Li's analysis, mediums play significant roles in the process of social transformation, and popular religion's concern with practical ends is best represented by the medium's practice. As 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 view of popular religion as at base utilitarian has made mediums the objects of suspicion, and this is reflected in their 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 was founded to correct the utilitarian tendency of popular religion.¹ The Medium's Association gathers mediums from various private altars and temples who are charged to fulfill particular religious missions bestowed by the gods; it also proposes a reformative vision for the spiritual progress and cultivation of mediums. Members of the Medium's Association generally identify themselves as *lingji* 靈乩, a different kind of medium from the most well-known Taiwan medium—the *jitong* 乩童. *Jitong* is the common Mandarin term for spirit medium. But according to Association's reformative project, the *jitong* is in fact a lower religious figure that needs to be transformed. The pamphlet published by the Medium's Association intentionally distinguishes these two types of mediumship. Unlike the *jitong*, *lingji* do not engage in spectacular behavior like self-mortification—considered an inferior form of practice (Pas 1996:145). The Association in fact distinguishes three different kinds of medium. A *jitong* meditates through his or her body; a *shenji* 神乩 meditates by his or her heart-mind, including the “civil” mediums

¹ The main founders of the Mediums' Association are all Taiwanese, including Lai Zong-xian 賴宗賢 (also the main theorizer of the Association), Huang Akuan 黃阿寬 and Gao Tianwen 高天文 (both are senior and well-respected mediums).

who compose morality books (*shanshu* 善書) and the “martial” mediums who perform exorcisms to cure people. A *lingji* meditates through his or her spirit (*ling* 靈) and is the representative of Daotong 道統 (the orthodox line of the Dao 道). This classificatory system points to different levels of mediumship, in which the Medium’s Association follows the conventional understanding of *jitong* and places *jitong* in the lower orders of this system. Compared with the practice of the *lingji*, the *jitong*’s bleeding and shocking performances only effect limited edification for all living creatures.

The differentiation between *jitong* and *lingji* mediumship implies a complex identification issue for the members of the Association. It also indicates that people in Taiwanese society hold an ambivalent attitude toward mediums. On the one hand, mediums are community healers and protectors (Kagan and Wasescha 1982); parents consult them about their children’s lot; lottery fanatics appeal to them for winning combinations; criminal investigators consult them to solve difficult cases, and politicians cannot ignore their opinions about the geomancy of their offices. Nevertheless, they are also the most likely to be accorded the label swindler or charlatan among all the religious professions in Taiwan. Many believe that mediumship represents a vestige of ancient superstition that must be overthrown in modern society. Yet, mediums also represent people’s wishes, vulnerabilities, and wonder in their confrontation with daily experience. It is beyond dispute that there are various kinds of mediumship, but is it possible to develop a kind of mediumship 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 indulging their desire? Is it reasonable for mediums to aspire to be like the ancient sages 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 to just these ambitious aspirations. The founding of the Association therefore represents the consciously reflexive determination of a time-honored religious professional to come to terms with modern frame of professionalization. The Association’s mission is also a spiritual endeavor that tries to respond to contemporary Taiwanese political and moral struggles by integrating anew traditional Chinese cultural resources and the modern educational design.

In this article I explore the intertwining of religious mission and Nationalist concerns, examining the Association’s religious practices and activities. I discuss how the founding of the Mediums’ Association grafts it onto the larger Nationalist text. By juxtaposing the Nationalist discourse with the mediums’ discourse, I’d like to show that historical writing as practiced by mediums

plays an important role in their self-formation and missiology.²

The research materials I collected about the Mediums' Association came from three sources: the first is interview data I collected from May to July in 1999 and from July 2000 to February 2002. I interviewed the Mediums' Association president, ex-presidents, cadre members, secretary and representatives in the northern and southern parts of Taiwan about the aim, the establishment process, the educational programs, and the ritual activities of the Association. I also participated in the members' conventions and spiritual cultivation activities. The second source is written materials, including publications of the Association and unpublished materials, such as the spiritual texts produced by the mediums. The third source of data is my participant-observation experience. In 2000 I took part in the last educational program offered by the Association. This was a twelve-day session offered in four three-day courses spread over four months from September to December.

The Founding of the Mediums' Association

According to the report of their journal, *Zhonghua Dadao* 中華大道 (*Natural Law*),³ the founding of the Mediums' Association was inspired by a divine revelation received during a meeting of mediums in 1988. At this *moonlight* meeting, the mediums received a message from Heaven commanding them to unite in order to fulfill the following missions: to revive the common practice of Dao, to improve the moral tone of a disintegrating society, to enhance the Chinese tradition of Dao, and to accomplish the missions of *shouyuan* 收圓 (collecting the origin) and *datong* 大同 (great unity). *Shouyuan* and *datong* can be considered exemplary of the mediums' mission; these two concepts thoroughly informed their utopian vision in the realm of spirituality and politics. *Shouyuan* was a popular eschatological doctrine developed within the secret societies of the Ming (1368-1644 A.D.) and Ching (1644-1911 A.D.) dynasties.

² This article mainly focuses on the ideal vision of the Association's founding period. In 1999 the Association elected its fourth president. The new president is not really a medium but a businessman who runs a religious artifacts enterprise. This development disappointed many old members, especially the founding members. They considered the new president uninformed about mediumship, and they believed the election had been manipulated by those who intended to use the Association to make money. They suspected that the new leader would direct the organization away from its original ideals. As a result, most of the founding members and old cadres no longer actively participated in the affairs of the Association, and some of them even withdrew from it. Consequently the educational program for mediums has been discontinued since 2000. To a certain extent, the fission of the Association demonstrates the decreasing influence of its early ideal vision.

It can be translated as “retrieving the origin,” “gathering in the circle.” *Shouyuan* indicates an eschatological task that concerns universal salvation. Basically it is related to the popular Chinese myths concerning an Eternal Mother who creates human beings. Human beings get lost on earth because their wrongdoings, and the Eternal Mother one day brings her lost children on the earth back to the paradise where they originally came from. The salvation 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 teachings of this sectarian religion, the Eternal Mother will promulgate the Dao three different times to call back her lost children. 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 human beings to shepherd her children back to their original state of purity. Later, the shouyuan doctrine was adopted by not a few popular sects, all of which claimed it as their own eschatological mission.

Although the Mediums’ Association uses this term, they do not consider their group to be a sect like those of imperial times. Rather, the Mediums’ Association is a group whose members are religious professionals. Thus the membership does not have a clear dogmatic identification with certain deities or a particular redemptive program. The mediums’ understanding of the *shouyuan* instead emphasizes their mediating role among the three realms: heaven, earth and humankind.⁴ The realm of heaven is ruled by deities and some mediums serve this realm by promulgating the redemptive messages they receive from deities. The realm of earth is inhabited by the ghosts—those departed souls who are not worshipped like ancestors or have not accumulated enough merit to become deities. Some mediums serve the realm of earth by comforting these departed souls and persuading them to pursue self-cultivation 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 can have harmful effects on the welfare of living human beings.

³ Until 1992, the Association published a journal called the *Zhonghua Dadao* (great way of Chinese culture). It also had an English title, *Natural Law*. The contents of the journal are quite diverse, including the reports on the Association’s activities, 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.

⁴ The following explanation is based on my interview data from Lai Zongxian, the second president of the Mediums’ Association.

Datong literally means great unity. In the contemporary political context it is a utopian vision that 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? I will explore this issue in the context of nationalization process in a later section. Although the medium's concern for peace and harmony cannot be reduced to a merely political dimension, ignoring its religious connotations, it is deeply colored by the symbols and terms adopted from the political discourses of Taiwanese nationalism—an important frame of reference that needs further exploration.

During the first meeting of the 11 founders, after communication with the deities, the mediums decided to name their association "Plum Flower United with One Heart Society." The second meeting of the founders and the first meeting held for members occurred immediately after the first. Approximately one hundred members enrolled at the beginning. In 1989 the name of their association was changed to a more explicit one—The Mediums' Association of the Republic of China—by the suggestion of a representative from the Ministry of the Interior when they registered as an officially recognized society. According to the report in *Natural Law*, the design of the Association's flag and the adoption of the plum blossom as its symbol were intended to represent 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; plum blossoms symbolize perseverance in the face of adversity and eternal continuity, and they 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 stand for the five nationalities of the Republic of China all united with one heart, the interdependence of the five agents, and belief that all humans are siblings. [quoted from Paper 1996:107]

In this explanation of the Association's flag, national concern is mixed with cultural mission and spiritual revitalization. The Mandarin pronunciation of "plum" is the same as for "medium."⁵ Choosing the plum blossom for the name of their association thus symbolizes the mediums' determination to unify and to bear the heavenly mission with a spirit of perseverance. But the plum blossom has other connotations. It was chosen to be the national flower

⁵ It is interesting to note that although the group associates the Mandarin pronunciation of plum with "medium," the main language they employ in their gatherings and educational courses is Taiwanese.

by the KMT, the Chinese Nationalist Party, while it still governed the Mainland. The KMT thus asserts that the spirit of the founding of the Chinese nation carries the flower's spirit of steadfastness and perseverance since it blooms in the bitter winter. When the Mainland was taken by the Communist Party and the KMT "withdrew" to Taiwan, the plum blossom became the major symbol of the nationalization process. The Mediums' Association was founded around the time of the lifting of martial law, a period that witnessed the loosening grip of the ruling party and the flourishing of various social movements in Taiwan. Most of the latter rejected the Nationalist discourse. That the Mediums' Association emerged at the same time as these anti-Nationalist movements and yet obliquely embraced Nationalist symbolism is thus all the more curious.

There are at least two possible readings of this mixture of the Nationalists' tone and spiritual mission. It can be considered a "strategy" for seeking legitimation from the government, since mediums were long considered representative of backwardness and superstition that ran contrary to the nation's pursuit of modernity. By adopting symbols promoted by government, the mediums could perhaps break free of the shackles of disrepute. The Association's patriotic bent might also be considered an outcome of the "bureaucratic mentality" in China, which was rooted in its religious traditions (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 revolution less likely than rebellion. In other words, the idea of the Mandate of Heaven is not fundamentally challenged by the vicissitudes of dynastic rotation because the new regime still had to appeal to religious authority to legitimate its rule. The complicity between religion and politics underlies both readings.

Yet, neither reading is fully convincing. Both—the one seeing the Association's adoption of Nationalist cultural capital as a strategy of legitimation and 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 local politics and religious traditions. By situating the issue at hand within the broader context of the nationalization process and the religious redemptive tradition, other readings become possible.

Memory Work and Culture Writing: The Nationalist Edition

KMT's nationalization of Taiwan began in 1949, when the KMT was defeated

by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and forced to withdraw to Taiwan. The nationalization can be considered 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, and he declares that its processes are essentially the “politics of the unreal.” By inventing a common sacred origin—for example, “we are all descendants of the Yellow Emperor”—and creating a cultural history that transcends the upheaval of diverse dynasties, the ethnic populations of territorial China becomes synonymous with the concept of a single political community (Chun 1994:51). For the Republic of China on Taiwan, the resuscitation of “traditional Chinese culture,” shared beliefs and moral consciousness, and the heightening of societal consciousness not only attributed to Taiwan the sense of a bound polity but also constituted a defense against the domination of Western imperialism and the threat of Communism. In 1966, KMT initiated the “Cultural Renaissance Movement.” This movement on the one hand served the goal encouraging national solidarity; on the other hand, it “introduce(d) traditional social values through socializing practices into the conduct of everyday behavior” (ibid.: 58). Chun makes a succinct comment about the relationship between the nation building and the cultural monopoly:

In historical terms, the KMT’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.:58]

In the Nationalist discourse, culture is understood as an object to be investigated and protected to secure a sense of continuity and worthiness among its bearers. By identifying itself as the protector of traditional Chinese culture, KMT immediately constituted itself as the legitimate heir to China. The doctrine “Harmony of the Five Ethnic Peoples” was proposed under the context of branding itself as the rightful ruling party. (This “Harmony” doctrine is ironically resonated by the CCP which tries hard to appropriate various ethnic peoples into a Greater China. While CCP appeals to a socialist modernization to incorporate the ethnic differences, KMT resorts to the traditional cultural homogenization to promote its doctrine of unification.) Therefore, the “Har-

mony” doctrine is political propaganda aimed at validating the imagined right of the KMT to govern “Greater China” rather than a guideline for the political realities of Taiwan. It fails altogether to acknowledge the ethnic diversity of Taiwan, which is marked by the conflicts between indigenous peoples and different immigrant groups from different regions of the Mainland.

When Chun describes this 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” possible, like the “evil Communist party” or “Western imperialism.” Such active identity construction by the projection of an antithetical other eventually erases indigenous understandings and ignores their heterogeneity.

“Counteroffensive on the mainland and regaining possession of lost territory” was the most popular slogan for the initial phase of the KMT’s national formation. However, the active formation of the national self cannot be completed only by appealing to the Golden Cultural Past, it must also participate in the banquet of modernity. Among the items of cultural capital appropriated for the latter purpose, the “Thought of Sun Yat-sen” was one of the most important. Sun Yat-sen’s “Three Principles” was a required subject for the college entrance examinations until just recently. By adding two supplementary chapters on the principle of livelihood to Sun’s “Three Principles,” Chiang Kai-shek transformed its revolutionary message into a modern and scientific treatise. Thus “Ethics, Democracy, and Science” would become the new agenda of KMT’s modernity project, part of which would consist of eradicating those old cults based only in backward superstitions. During the 1970s and 1980s 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.:47). Democratization, liberalization and Taiwanization gradually came to constitute the new consciousness of self-formation (Tien 1988). In 1986 the opposition party DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) was formed without being repressed. In 1988 following the lifting of martial law, DPP became a legal opposition party. That same year strict censorship of the press was relaxed. Moreover, since the fall of 1987 the residents of Taiwan have been permitted to visit their relatives on the Mainland. These trends toward democracy and liberalization can be considered a kind of rectification

of the earlier myopia, and with them things 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 these demands was met with the official recognition of the February 28 Incident, which had occurred in 1947 when the recently decolonized Taiwanese drive for self-government and the Nationalist desire for reintegration with the Mainland 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 1998), has been recognized by the official remembrance of those victims and their families’ memories.

In order not to reduce the founding of the Mediums’ Association to a one-dimensional political event, the Nationalist project itself must first be unleashed from its function as a strictly “political context.” To do so I will try to read its process as equally one of cultural writing and memory creation. Thus it can operate in juxtaposition to the medium’s self-formation process, which proceeds sometimes by similar and sometimes by different moves and strategies. When the Nationalist project 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. In the Nationalist project of modernity, the mediums are 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 a “timeless other” (Fabian 1983), somehow outside the historical process. On the contrary, they are most sensitive to the turbulence of society 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 modernization trends in postwar Taiwan.

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

When compared with the Nationalist project and its modernization processes, the records of activities and essays about mediums and their association in *Natural Law* contain both familiar echoes and novel modulations. The intersection between official discourse and mediumship emerges in various ways from the five following examples, each of which presents a unique perspective on the mediums’ reworking of orthodoxy history.

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

In 1987 Dr. Lai Zongxian 賴宗賢 (the second president of the Mediums' Association) and several mediums initiated a Moral Maintenance Movement in Zhanghua 彰化, a county in the middle of Taiwan, with the cooperation of local government and several local temples. According to the reports in *Natural Law*, this movement was inspired by the revelation of deities of the Luyuan Si 爐源寺 (temple) in eastern Taiwan. The year Dingmao 丁卯 (1987)⁶ was also the special year for the beginning of the "actualization of Dao" as had been revealed by the Guanyin Pusa 觀音菩薩 (bodhisattva, or the Goddess Mercy) through a medium in Taipei County two years prior. Therefore adherents had to seize the moment and cultivate themselves to be able to undertake the mission of Dao. The Moral Maintenance Movement was one of the activities that emerged in response 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 moral culture." The revitalization of traditional ethics and idea of the unification of heaven and human was the solution for the social disorder. The mediums asserted that "the fire of culture transmitted for over five thousands years cannot be extinguished in our hands." This burning sense of cultural mission to some extent corresponded to the Nationalist's self-defined role as cultural bearer. To promote their mission, the mediums published and distributed a "Moral Newsletter" and held three *fahui* 法會, 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 Chiang Kai-shek in 1934. Deng Wenyi 鄧文儀, a member of the Blue Shirts⁷ who had drafted "Guidelines for

⁶ Dingmao is the Chinese calendric designation for that year, reckoned by the cycles of Tiangan 天干 and Dizhi 地支. Tiangan (Heavenly branches) is a decimal cycle of cosmic computation and Dizhi (Earthly stems) is a duodecimal cycle used for the hours in a day. The combination of one character from Tiangan and another from Dizhi forms a term by which a year or a given date is known; the orderly series of such possible combinations yields 60 different terms to designate a cycle of 60 years; when one cycle ends, another begins. Ding 丁 is the fourth of the 10 characters in Tiangan cycle. Mao 卯 is the fourth of the 12 characters in Dizhi cycle.

⁷ 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 a corrupt China. They also provided most of the cadres of the New Life Movement.

the New Life Movement,” was one of the Moral Maintenance promoters besides Lai and Huang Shicheng 黃石城, the mayor of Zhanghua. Lai further proposed that the promotion of this movement should also commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the goddess Mazu’s⁸ ascent to heaven as well as Chiang Kai-shek’s 101st birthday. Clearly, the mutual engagement of the mediums’ movement with other broader concerns was meant to double back into spiritual advancement across the board. And when we consider the Moral Maintenance and New Life movements together, their juxtaposition reveals interesting parallels.

When the New Life Movement (abbreviated as NLM below) was heralded by Chiang’s Nanchang 南昌 government on the Mainland, China was besieged with corruption, factionalism, and opium addiction. The changing political landscape forced the critical liberalism proposed by the intellectuals of May Fourth Movement to give way to the NLM’s reactionary policies.

The NLM was designed 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 Sun Yat-sen’s thought, one part traditional Confucianism and one part the reformist social strategies of Christianity. He believed that these would revitalize the moral fiber of the people and create a new national consciousness. Chiang’s view of Confucian virtues emphasized the spirit of loyalty, the notion of self-cultivation and moral rectification.

Chiang proposed the four traditional virtues of politeness (*li* 禮), righteousness (*yi* 義), integrity (*lian* 廉), and self-respect (*chi* 恥) as the fundamental guide for people’s lives.⁹ And the cadres of NLM adopted a wide range of mass communications to spread the spirit of the movement. 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” (Chiang Kai-shek, quoted from Fairbank and Feuerwerker 1986:146).

Moreover, Chiang attempted to build a thoroughly regimented and militarized society by extending his control to the local level and into the

⁸ Mazu 媽祖 is one of the most popular deities in Taiwan. She is the patron goddess of the sea and fisherman. In 1987, Nanyao 南瑤 Temple of Zhanghua celebrated the 1,000th anniversary of Mazu’s ascent to heaven with a round-the-island parade of her image.

⁹ It is interesting to point out that in 1928 when Nationalist Party had just come to power, it initiated several campaigns to suppress various kinds of “superstition,” including old cosmological beliefs and fortune telling practices. They also ordered the abolition of official Confucian rites in the name of “modernity.” The principles of Confucius were considered despotic and vestiges of an absolutism that should be effaced from the memory of citizens (Smith 1998:1187). A few years later, when China was in crisis from pressures both within and without, the ancient Confucian virtues became the cure for the degradation of society.

trivia of people's daily lives, including the length of women's hem lines and the corrections of such undisciplined acts as spitting, urinating or smoking in public, casual sexual liaisons, and wearing provocative clothing (Spence 1990:415). In "The Meaning and Goal of the New Life Movement" Chiang proposed that "contemporary Chinese live a life of filth, laziness, decadence and savageness. This is not human life, we can only call it 'the life of ghosts'" (cited from Hwang 1998:170). Chiang's narrative constructed a grotesque image of people's lives then asserted that they needed to be disciplined (ibid.:190). Deng Wenyi has also suggested that "the success of the New Life Movement is the success of the [Chinese] 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.:175). With the curious combination of serious national revitalization and a tight focus on the details 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 Hwang 1998:170).

Fifty-three years later, after Chiang had been deceased for 12 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. From Nanchang to Zhanghua, the movement for ethical rectification had drifted from center-stage to the margins.

Although the "regulated attitude, right conduct, clear discrimination and real self-consciousness" proposed by Chiang were still emphasized in the new version of NLM, local religious rituals and festivals had become its new realm of actualization. Deng participated in these activities as the officiant or adjutant officiant of the rituals and he pointed out that the Moral Maintenance Movement could be considered the contemporary equivalent of the New Life Movement. Among the various activities, the *fahui*, the popular Daoist ritual assembly, was the most extraordinary. These *fahui* were held for the "protection of the nation and appeasement of departed souls" in three villages and towns of Zhanghua County. In these ritual gatherings people prayed for the prosperity of the nation and the peacefulness of people. They also offered sacrifices, especially for the general deliverance of the ancestors of the Chinese nation and the spirits of the brave departed, who had fought for the nation during its wars. These events were also occasions for the mediums to communicate with the deities. Although the solemnity of the ritual might be thrown off by the physical aspect or activity of the medium while he or she was possessed, the possession itself allowed the mediums to pronounce the admonitions of the deities and offer healing services for the needy.

At first glance, the moralizing tone of this movement and the way its message was promoted—by the promulgation of written propaganda—are almost a reiteration of the earlier governmental version. However, the religious appeal of peacefulness and the magical healing of illness go well beyond the bounded regime of Nationalist concerns and constitute an interesting re-writing of the Nationalist agenda. The critique of mediumship¹⁰ and image-rebuilding echoes Chiang's stigmatization of people's lives 53 years ago in the New Life Movement. The project of the mediums' reform emphasizes a clean appearance, dignified deportment, and proper conduct, very like the Blue Shirts' pledge to lead ascetic lives, including rejecting gambling, whoring, or excessive consumption of food and drink (Spence 1990:416). Here it is the mediums who critique themselves and stand in for the last uncivilized citizens that live the "lives of the ghosts." While the NLM shifted the focus of nation building from the arena of public officials to the militarization of civil society, essentially excusing the incompetence of the nationalist government and consolidating its power (Hwang 1998:172), the mediums strive to win back lost respect through self-diagnosis and self-rectification. And the model propounded by the NLM of channeling the unruly forces of the medium community in a more effective direction proves to be the best. Moreover, as long as mediums remain co-promoters of the contemporary movement with a figure like Deng, the "minister of the preceding emperor," they become in a sense inheritors of the national revolution. Therefore the mediums should not be regarded as the last uncivilized people to be disciplined and reformed in the project of national revolution; on the contrary, their self-induced reformation demonstrates the art of citation. Compared to other dissent groups or members of the different social movements who challenge government policy by direct confrontation and seek to unmask official mystifications, the mediums' "echo" of the ruling party's agenda is more like what de Certeau characterizes as "poaching," or the tactics of "*la perruque*," which plays its own game with others' resources. The mediums cite the dominant discourse in the writing of their own mission statement. While dissenters seek to bring statesmen down from their lofty heights, the mediums proceed toward the opposite extreme in deifying them. Where Chiang Kai-shek wrote two supplements to Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles, the mediums derived their version of post-hoc discourse from listening to Sun's "spirit." In their journal they sometimes recorded the "spiritual texts" produced by the likes of Sun Yat-sen and even Confucius. And this leads to our next topic, the deification of figures like Sun and Chiang Kai-shek.

¹⁰ Here I refer to *lingji*'s critique of *jìtong*.

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

Sun Yat-sen, of course, is considered the father of the Chinese republican revolution. "Although he died in 1925, his spirit is always with us"—this is a cliché that has been invoked over and over again at memorial ceremonies, but it is in fact a truth for the mediums who experienced the arrival of his "spirit." For example, Sun's spirit visited frequently during the ritual of planchette performed by the Honghua Yuan 弘化院, a religious group founded in 1969 by officials and professors from the Mainland who followed the Nationalist Party to Taiwan. They proposed that Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek have ascended to heaven and become deities as the revered restorers of China's sovereignty. Sun's and Chiang's spirits visited the Honghua Yuan on many occasions and conveyed various messages through mediums. These messages included their experience of the revolution, directions on how to revitalize China, and analysis of the contemporary political situation (Cheng 1988:351). The messages sent by the spirits of Sun and Chiang were formulated like messages issued by the president on important occasions, just as when they were still alive. The deification of Sun and Chiang has been further elaborated in the Mediums' Association. According to this most recent iteration, Sun Yat-sen was not only an ordinary person deified after death, he was also the reincarnation of Jiuwu Tianzun 九五天尊 (the spirit of royal prerogative). When Wu 吳, one of the cadres of the Association, explained the mediums' 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 (that is, Sun Yat-sen). From the perspective of the realm of the spirits, although the Father of our Nation is known by the 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 into 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 was given different celestial titles by the 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 a spirit and therefore acquires various images of that spirit. Wu's thinking might not be shared by every member of the Association, but the connection of an important political figure with the reincarnation of a certain spirit is certainly prevalent in

popular religion. The peculiarity of the Association's understanding is its incorporation of Heaven's will and the earth's order, which informs the mediums' special role in human civilization. Furthermore, mediums not only convey a spirit's message, they make mediation between spirits possible and thus have an important impact on the cosmic order. Lai once told me of an episode during a meeting in which the mediums helped the departed souls of former political figures resolve their tangled complex of gratitude and resentment toward each other:

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

According to mediums, the spirit realm, like the human world, has to face the issue of political tension. And the continuous conflict between Mainland China and Taiwan is represented by the antagonism between the spirits of Mao and Chiang. According to Lai, Mao is reincarnated as a serpent spirit and Chiang as turtle spirit. Their antagonism must be resolved by Sun, who is the reincarnation of Ziwei (紫微) Star. However, since their conflict has not been settled yet, the hostility between the Mainland and Taiwan persists. This antagonism constitutes the shared karma of the Chinese nation. And mediums are obliged to resolve this karma to help the Chinese nation enter its next stage of civilization. Furthermore, as followers of the doctrine of *datong*, they desire universal harmony. The mediums' intervention is characterized by their unyielding commitment to the deliverance of people from suffering and achievement of universal peace. Therefore they are specially capable of resolving the antagonism between nation-states and they can even accommodate the grievance complaint from the Japanese emperor.

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 consequence of their meeting can be validated by evidence "in the world." "Negotiations" with the emperor occurred several times. You Meiling 游美玲, 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 of Chiang's troops toward the emperor:

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 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 gives them justice. Finally he asked their head, Chiang Kai-shek, to negotiate for him. I represented Chiang's soul and used different languages. Sometimes I spoke Japanese, sometimes I spoke with the accent of Zhejiang 浙江 Province where Chiang was from. We conversed with each other as in a play or the confrontation of two parties at a trial. The emperor said that he hoped the souls of these victims would stop haunting him, but the souls of the victims confronted him and asked why he bullied them so terribly and inflicted so much suffering on them. They did not have any place to appeal, so they wanted to take revenge. When Chiang negotiated with the emperor, he said that you can only persuade others by your virtue. And the resentment you produced could only be resolved by virtue. Chiang's soul then talked to the souls of his soldiers and asked them to "return good for evil."¹¹ They calmed down after listening to Chiang. These were soldiers who had come to Taiwan with Chiang, so of course they must obey Chiang's orders. You need to resolve your resentment by "returning good for evil." And they stopped harassing the soul of the Japanese emperor and let him go. After these conversations, it was said that the emperor 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 truly heard of his death three days later through the report of TV news. It sounds impossible, but this is how things happened.

This magical pacification still followed the ways of the world. The resentful souls of the soldiers responded to the command of their general, and their appeasement would not have come so easily had the soldiers' loyalty not persisted through life to death. The soldiers' anachronistic loyalty points to the mythical status of Chiang once shared by whole society by virtue of the painstaking promotion of the Nationalist Party. The success of Chiang's (or his soul's) command therefore marks the last territory where this myth still persists, and these soldiers are the last descendants of the myth carriers who have been gradually abandoned by an increasingly demystified society. Yet the mediums' effective intervention cannot be regarded as a parodic show of Chiang's cliché "returning good for evil." Rather, they reactivated a myth that these soldiers followed throughout their life and turned the cliché into magic.

¹¹ When the Japan surrendered without condition, Chiang advocated the spirit of "returning good for evil" and did not ask compensation from Japan. Chiang's largesse was later promoted as representative of his benevolence and magnanimity.

These soldiers probably represent the only constituency who might adhere to Chiang's proposal since they had nothing left except being "good" to fight against the evil inflicted on them.

But in every historical episode, certain figures are overlooked, and this leaves room for future dramatic developments. For example, Taiwanese soldiers who fought for the Japanese and Taiwanese comfort women are not accounted for in the account above. Does their silence imply the impossibility of mediating their suffering? Or, since they did not inhabit the center of the myth, can their distorted lives, therefore, only be seen through as that myth's debris? When I asked You Meiling why the mediums did not receive messages from the resentful souls of the February 28 Incident she gave me an interesting answer. She said that the February 28 Incident was repressed history that was recognized only later. Therefore even had they connected with those resentful souls before, they might not have been able to express their suffering in terms of the February 28 Incident. These souls only expressed how they were attacked or raped in battle or ethnic conflict. And the mediums resolved their resentment by religious means immediately after listening to their accounts of suffering. Her answer reminds me that there exist souls unable to point out their suffering through a collective designation because society is not yet able or willing to recognize their collective dimension. Accordingly, the capacity of society (or the human realm) to recognize or identify its various collectively oppressed voices also plays a critical role in the mediums' redemptive mission. In other words, the recognition or identification of collective suffering makes the mediums' intervention possible. And the recognition of specific suffering is usually based upon the breakdown of a specific myth. We do not hear the voices of comfort women or other less attention-getting suffering in mediums' focal mediation, probably because we do not work hard 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 in 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 spirit's future. Sun's spirit and Chiang's spirit should be among the happier ones partaking in the long revolution. There are still many unhappy departed souls waiting for their chance to appear on the stage of this revolution. And we will encounter them in the mediums' special meetings—the *huihe yanyi* 會合演義.

The Huihe Yanyi

Huihe means "to meet" or "to assemble" and *yanyi* usually refers to the histor-

ical novel or romance. In the years since the founding of the Association, member mediums have gathered on the 20th day of every month at Huangyi Gong 皇意宮 (temple) in Taipei County. Mediums who participated in the meetings experienced strong indications of expression (from the departed souls or spirits) through some physical and psychological sign. If the spirits' expressive need was repressed, mediums would experience various physical and psychological indispositions, including stomach ailments, weakness, pain, crankiness, and confusion until they sang, spoke, or danced to express the messages of the spirits. The more the spirits were able to express themselves through the mediums, the stronger and healthier the mediums became.

According to the mediums, the main goal of their meetings was to soothe and overcome the resentments of the departed soul. By resolving the karmic cause and effect for the spirits and settling disputes in the spiritual realm, peace can be restored both in the human and the spirit realms. Seeking peace and tranquility is a time-honored concern of the Daoist tradition and Chinese popular religion. By their membership in the Mediums' Association, the mediums identify themselves as just such religious specialists. One of their most important roles is acting as "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 often former political figures who have contributed to the turmoil of different dynasties, and the mediums readily associate them with contemporary political instability. For the mediums, contemporary political turmoil is a symptom of the unsolved resentment of these departed souls, and only when their resentments are overcome can the order of the human realm be restored. The mediums instruct these souls in the law of heavenly justice and encourage them to "cultivate" themselves to accumulating merit, for example, by performing good deeds or by helping people with their special powers. This way they can earn the reward of acquiring 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 calamities change can bring. 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 instability by appealing to a social-psychological model of resentment and considering disorder as the outcome of tangled karmic retribution. To appease the spirits, the mediums yield their bodies to the departed souls during their meetings. Thus these souls get

another chance to resolve their tangled relationships:

During these meetings, when the departed souls encountered the spirits of their relatives, 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 give him or her justice. Sometimes the related spirits would mediate between those who were in debt to each other and thus resolve their mutual resentment. Then they could cooperate to achieve salvation for [all people of] this specific period. [Lai 1989, my trans.]

The *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 between Chiang, Mao and the emperor of Japan indicates that the action of writing history is not limited to writing the past, but also extends to creating the history of the future. Only thus can resentment be mediated and resolved. In this project the mediums seem to 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 must obey the law of gravity.

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

We are like actors. The actors perform their drama according to the script. But we don't need a script, nor do we need rehearsal. We just go on stage and play the drama directly. For example, there is one drama about royal resentment in the Song dynasty. It's a story about a real and a false prince. Do you remember there is an imperial concubine who was the victim in this event? She went blind because of suffering so much. She was the mother of the real prince. When her son became emperor and recognized her as his mother, she remained blind. When we "played" this episode, the medium who "played" the role of the imperial concubine really became blind during the drama. Our meeting replayed the drama, and it was concluded with the judgment of the famous magistrate Pao Zheng 包拯.¹² Thus the resentment could be resolved. That is the reason why we replay the drama. Through resolution the disturbing spirit can be appeased. Some people say we

¹² Pao Zheng is a famous judge of the Song 宋 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, Pao Zheng symbolizes the spirit of impartiality and justice that transcends the imperial power in the popular consciousness.

mediums are like fools because what we do is just like the work of unsung heroes.
Our purpose is to settle the spiritual realm, and not let unappeased spirits disturb
the world.

The analogy of the play also helps us to rethink the issue of history writing. The story You Meiling described above is called "Exchanging the Prince with the Leopard Cat," and it has been rewritten into a script for various local operas. This drama has been performed many times by the Taiwanese Opera at the Festival of Temples and on TV. This type of drama is not the cultural heritage of which the official discourse boasts, but it nevertheless is a repository of the folk memories about dynastic vicissitudes. We all learned about the great success of the revolution and the founding of the Republic from our school textbooks. We all learned that the success of revolution swept away the rotten empire and restored power to the People, so we are our own masters now. But this textbook perspective has not been free from attack by certain intellectuals who point out that the success of revolution has not necessarily led to the "modern-mindedness" of people generally. And here the mediums have a similar idea. Compared to official historical writing, which fixes the scope of history between the puritanical present of the Republic and an inaccessible ancient Golden Age, folk works pay attention to those feudal and backward memories that the Nationalists strive to expel. For the folk, the past has not really passed yet. Thus the drama of a court power struggle has to be replayed in mediums' meetings until resentments are settled and justice achieved.

Furthermore, by adopting the term "play" instead of "being possessed" to describe the spirit meeting, You Meiling indicates the importance of understanding 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 connotations (Foucault 1997). Moreover, the historical materials with which the mediums work breach the boundary between history and fiction. The anecdote replayed at their meeting may not have been a true historical event, but the power struggle it describes, the moral meaning it teaches, and the attitudes it condenses are no less "true" for all that. If the history written in the official discourse can be considered a fiction of progression, then the mediums' version may be considered a fiction of resentment. The progressive version follows an economy of frugality since every element of anti-progression has to be expelled. For the medium, however, the game of justice must be played in an economy of abundance. The heavenly recompense

theoretically has to be limitless to soothe all remorse and compensate unfulfilled desires. 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 bearing the merit and errors of the ancestors, or other departed souls, the medium and these spirits create a body of ethical and spiritual activity. Some of the departed souls participate in this exercise voluntarily. Others are still entangled in their resentments and so the medium has to deal with the resentment first by channeling its destructive power into a structured scheme of merit accumulation and spiritual cultivation.

The combination of ethical and spiritual concern is manifested in the mediums' interpretation of their religious task—*shouyuan*. According to *Natural Law*, *shouyuan* has both an inner aspect and an outer one. The inner dimension involves the inward training of one's true self, conquering wrong ideas, and restraining oneself from evil inclinations. The outer aspect emphasizes the manifested actions like 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 better grasp the meaning of *shouyuan*. It can be understood as spiritual "teamwork" that requires cooperation between the mediums and the spirits.

The Ritual of National Protection and Spiritual Appeasement

The rewriting of history is a magical transformation of an undesired past. It also entails yearning for a better future. However, the better future will not arrive automatically; the wounds of history must first be sutured. For the medium, the wounds of history are best represented by haunting spirits who disturb the order of society. To pacify these spirits and restore societal order, the Mediums' Association offers elaborate rituals to spirits seasonally (in spring and fall each year) and irregularly when its members are inspired to do so. These special rites are called Huguo Anling Fahui 護國安靈法會, 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 resemble the Daoist mass for departed souls called *jiao* 醮 (Paper 1996:116). These rites are organized by the Association's Committee of Huguo Anling Fahui, and are sponsored

rotationally by the Association's district branches. The precise dates, focus, and sponsoring temples are chosen via divination (*ibid.*). And the *fahui* may last for one day, three days, five days or seven days. According to the manual of the Association, the goals of these committees include the determination of spiritual lineages, resolution of collective karma, leading the wandering souls to return to their ancestral root, the co-cultivation of spirit and body, and the prosperity and peace of the nation. The main purpose of the *fahui* is:

. . . to respectfully invite the sages, deities, realized adepts, and masters to (mediumistically) descend to the *fa* 法 altar to make peaceful the spirit (*ling* 靈) 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 the seventh lunar month for hungry ghosts, the Association's *fahui* has more specific objects of pacification, according to the inspiration received from the spiritual realm for solving contemporary social problems—e.g., motorcycle-race gatherings of teenagers, armed crime, and the gambling problem. According to the mediums' theory, it is resentful souls who disturb the teenagers, hooligans and gamblers and bring about related social problems. Thus the Association's *fahui* assists these souls in returning to their spiritual lineages and cultivating themselves rather than spreading dissatisfaction and creating chaos.

According to You Meiling's description, during *fahui* the mediums preach to the departed souls and persuade them not to pursue revenge. The mediums recite scripture or write talismans, to appease the departed souls. The contents of scriptures and the way the talismans are written are both guided by deities. If the spirits are willing to renounce their grudges and take up religious cultivation, the mediums will help them by sending them to the temples that have been awarded heavenly decrees to stabilize the spiritual realm. Different souls will be sent to different temples, according to their karmic connection, spiritual lineage, the status of cultivation, and even nationality or ethnicity. For example, foreign souls killed in battle will be sent to the Christian church nearby. The departed souls of veterans will be sent to the martyrs' shrine. Some souls are not welcome in certain "higher" temples until they have achieved a certain moral status by the cultivation in another temple. The talismans written by the mediums are used as a pass to the temple authorized by the power of the deity. These temples become the new "homes" in which the

resentful souls can settle. While these souls “inhabit” the temple, they cultivate themselves by demonstrating virtues through the mediums they possess. They will be assigned duty as soldiers of the spirit 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 services to people, like healing illness, telling the future or changing fortunes. The merit accumulated by these virtuous acts will be shared by the mediums and the possessing souls. After merit has accumulated to a certain degree, the souls will be able to return to their spirit lineages. Or they will be taken on by other mediums or temples that have special karmic connections with them in order to realize another step in the cultivation process.

If the lifting of martial law can be considered the threshold of liberation for various social powers and the release of voices unheard before, then the new voices that have been catching the mediums’ attention are those who suffered from the earlier political turmoil on Taiwan. One category of these is the veterans who lived for the dream of “recovering the lost mainland,” but were never able to return 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 a counterattack against Mainland China. These soldiers remained loyal to Chiang’s ideology of counterattack through their whole life. But this goal 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 images 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 to resort to the spirit of Chiang to overcome their wrath. During our *fahui* for the departed souls of soldiers many veterans showed up and shouted at us in the ritual site. When we showed them the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen, they all quieted down and listened. Now that Chiang is deceased, we should seek peace between Mainland China 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 aims at war. So we mediums labor to mediate between them. This is what the *fahui* is for.

The old veterans from the mainland are the victims of the war. It was claimed that six hundred thousand soldiers followed the KMT government 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 never fulfilling the dream of “recovering the lost mainland.” But they lived on that

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 the deceased became impossible for them.¹³ Therefore their souls become hungry ghosts with no 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 get the bad reputation of order-breakers or troublemakers who need to be appeased.

These soldiers’ dislocated lives constitute the many-layered experience of exile in Taiwan (Wu 2001). When they fought for the Nationalist dream, they experienced first exile from their home villages. Once the dream of “recovering the lost mainland” was clearly impossible, they became anachronistic, “old soldiers” who still adhered to outdated and useless values. And they were alienated further by a disillusioned society. After they die they are assigned to the most marginal group of departed souls and become known as the cause of social discord and objects to be pacified. The dispossessed diaspora who roared at the site of the *fahui* indeed were the counterparts of their departed comrades drifting in the netherworld. Only the statues of Sun and Chiang could calm them and in this sense Sun and Chiang have come to constitute one unique spiritual line beside the other religious lines like the Daoist deities or Buddhist deities. In the *fahui* held in 1987 for the martyrs sacrificed in the 1911 revolution or later battles, the altar for the nation’s protection was situated beside the Buddhist and Daoist altars. This *fahui* also offered sacrifices for the ancestors of Chinese nation and the wandering ghosts who contribute 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 in the early years of the Mediums’ Association. According to You’s observation, these *fahui* indeed achieved their goal of pacification and many fewer resentful soldiers’ souls have visited them in recent years. Why did these souls choose to express their resentment to the mediums from the Association? Most probably it was because the Association flew the national flag and invoked Sun Yat-sen’s thought on fraternity and Chiang’s thought on justice. Ironically, for these unsettled soldiers, Sun’s fraternity and Chiang’s justice have never been truly realized by the ruling party for whom they had sacrificed their

¹³ 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 a politically correct sense for them. Since their real names constitute the material base for the identity of the ancestral line, the soldiers who carry the wrong names are theoretically unable to return to their ancestral line through the rites appropriate for deceased people.

lives. The unreserved loyalty demanded by the nation was rewarded with deceit and betrayal (Chao 2002). Mediums' attention to these dislocated souls was an indirect critique of the ruling party's abandonment of them. The deaths of these old soldiers only indicate the withering and failing of a worthless collective memory that society still strives to wash away (Luo 2001:18). By looking back to these failings, the mediums are able to reintegrate the resentful souls of old soldiers into society's march onward so they can achieve a new place and continue their duty of "protecting our homes and defending our country."

Pilgrimage to the Mainland

Seeing the mediums' writing of history as an alternative mode of official discourse does not imply that it is a freewheeling creation. The reenactment of past memories is still more or less bounded by the regime of Nationalist discourse. The dislocated patriotic sentiment plus the religious sensitivity of the mediums may lead to certain impressive events. If the resentful old soldiers from the mainland represent a complex, ambiguous intersection of the abandoned myth and the disillusioned void, then the "frenzy" of visits to the homeland constitutes another example of complex intervention and history rewriting. The residents of Taiwan were allowed to visit their families and relatives on the mainland for the first time in 1987. The massive enthusiasm for these visits came not only from veterans who had come to Taiwan with the Nationalist government and had been separated from their families for a long time, it also reflected the success of the Nationalist government's indoctrination on Taiwan. 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 longing for a land to which they may have never been before. Although the recovery of the lost land began to seem like an impossible dream, the particular ways "people's innermost topographies of memory and affect" had been shaped could not be erased easily (Mueggler 1998).

The Mediums' Association has sponsored a variety of pilgrimages to Mainland China since 1990; they are billed as "trips to Shenzhou 神州 (the Divine Continent)." These pilgrimages include trips to famous religious sites like Mount Tai, the paramount sacred mountain throughout the history of Chinese religion, and famous memorial sites like the Huanghua Gang (黃花崗) Mausoleum of the Seventy-two Martyrs, the Forbidden City, the National Palace Museum, the tomb of the Yellow Emperor, the Yellow River, and the Great Wall. The participants in these pilgrimages include the mediums and their adherents. The Association's magazine published many photographs of

these trips. Besides the introductory text about the sites, sometimes we see spirit poems composed by the mediums during the trips. Different sites are inhabited by various spirits that give the mediums different types of inspiration. For example, at the Altar of Heaven in Beijing where the emperors used to offer sacrifice, one medium's poem described 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 considered how the karma created through imperial violence should be resolved by the accumulation of merit, how Sun Yat-sen was leading the restoration of the ancient way, and how we should cooperate with each other. Most of the sites mediums visited were those popular generally with Taiwanese tourists, especially the sites with Chinese historical significance. But mediums also visited some sites for special religious reasons, as with the following case.

According to Lai, trips to the Mainland were undertaken by order of the realm of Wuji 無極. The goal was 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 has mediated conflicts between Mao and Chiang so many times in the mediums' meetings. Since the Mainland follows atheist ideas, the messages from heaven are sent to Taiwan. The messages from heaven propose 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. Many people have lost their lives because of the conflict between Mao and Chiang. Therefore Heaven has managed to devise ways to soothe the resentment of these departed souls. These souls are sent to various sacred mountains, according to their spirit lineages, to cultivate themselves. When they become soldiers of spirit realm, they endeavor to protect the peace for China. When the Mainland opened up, the deities of Taiwan contrived to persuade the deities of the Mainland to recognize the contemporary religious mission of the 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 easy to regard it as fantastic and absurd.

This "absurd" idea nevertheless conforms to the mediums' understanding of the correspondence of the spirit 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 maintaining peace between them.

Therefore fostering communication between the deities of the Mainland the Taiwan constitutes a primary part of their religious mission. The general purpose of the mediums' trip to the Mainland was to meet with the spirits of the Mainland on a goodwill mission. Some mediums told me that certain spirits had been expelled from the Mainland to Taiwan during Cultural Revolution. Since the Mainland was now more open, they would help these spirits to return to their homeland. Some of the adherents followed the mediums on their pilgrimage in order to resolve karmic connections they had with spirits on the Mainland. In the first 1989 trip to the "Divine Continent," mediums visited the Forbidden City and the Altar of Heaven in Beijing, and the Lingyin Si 靈隱寺 (temple) in Hangzhou 杭州. The more special site was the Mausoleum of the Seventy-two Martyrs (commemorating the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic) in Huanghua Gang Commemoration Park visited on the memorial days for these martyrs. When the mediums visited this historic relic of the Chinese Revolution, You brought a national flag of the Republic with her and created 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 flag to the Mainland. I answered that if the deity commanded me to do so, I must do it. I brought the national flag to the Mausoleum of the Seventy-two Martyrs, and 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 peace in the world. As I gave the talk, a policeman came up 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 say I behaved like a fool. For me it was a sense of mission. Surely some [mediums] can use their gifts to make money. I cannot accept this kind of utilitarianism. For me, if you want to be a person who serves the deity, you must have a compassionate heart. Otherwise it will be impossible for you to keep going.

The heroes who sacrificed their lives did so for the utopian vision of Sun Yat-sen. As for the mediums, they constitute another category of unappeased spirits like the souls of the old soldiers. Bringing the national flag of the Republic of China and talking about the thought of Sun Yat-sen in front of this tomb is not only an act of spirit pacification but also an affirmation of the ideal they had died for. In the official discourse these revolutionary heroes have been put forward as exemplars of the Taiwanese people time and again. While they have become ossified in the Nationalist discourse, You's talk about

Sun's thought before their tomb can be considered a counter-movement that reenacts the revolutionary moment itself. 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 medium's role as 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.¹⁴ 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 unlocks the fetters of the past.

In 1990 the Association sponsored another trip to the Mount Putuo 普陀山 in Zhejiang Province, the Temple of Lady Linshui 臨水夫人 in Fujian 福建 Province, and Mount Tai 泰山 in Shandong 山東 Province. The main goal of this trip was to participate the memorial festival for the birthday of Confucius in Qufu 曲阜, where the sage was born. This festival proposed to achieve the peaceful unification of the Mainland and Taiwan on 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 gestures and voice of the deity. This spectacular performance was recorded by a BBC cameraman for 40 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 陝西 Province on the Mainland. The Yellow Emperor is the mythic founder of Chinese civilization and 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 "returning home" tour. The report of this participation in ancestor worship in *Natural Law* was composed of excerpts from Mainland newspapers. According to the newspapers, the pilgrimage involved 15,000 people, including about 100 from Taiwan. One Mainland newspaper used the title "Originally from the Same Root" in its report on 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 loudly (under possession):

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 must

¹⁴ The teaching role of mediums has been stressed by Jordan and Overmyer in their study of the sectarian moral reform and teaching of spirit writings and publications of them. But the moralizing aspect of mediumship is not prominent in oral spirit possessions in the past. I want to express my gratitude to one of my reviewers to point out this to me.

work hard for peaceful coexistence of Taiwan and the Mainland and for the peace in the twenty-first century.

You's performance won applause from 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 were followed by a local woman, who sang out her respect to the Yellow Emperor in her local tongue. The newspaper describes the episode as "different tongues singing the same song." Such a strong identification with the Yellow Emperor and passion for the reunification of the "Chinese ethnos" are sentiments structured by the official discourse. Taiwanese was a prohibited language in schools when the KMT was trying to sinologize Taiwan. Perhaps Taiwanese would not have been prohibited had the Taiwanese people learned how to sing praises of the Yellow Emperor in Taiwanese earlier?

At first glance, these trips reported in the Association's magazine were full of 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 in the religious mission of spiritual communication. You was one of the most experienced mediums in the Association, and in the tour group she was also the medium of most capable of receiving "messages" from the deities or spirits of the Mainland. And these messages were "performed" through special gaits of walking or dancing, a unique speaking or singing voice. You explained that the deities from different temples had different magnetic fields, and she was inspired by these forces to embody their presence. In every temple they visited, You's performances always attracted many Mainlanders for whom religion had been proscribed for a long time. Consequently it is hard to say who was appropriated by whom. While Mainland officials welcome "Taiwanese compatriots" to return to the "mother country," the Taiwanese compatriots also bring along deities or spirits expelled during the Cultural Revolution. The animation of deities or spirits therefore can be understood reciprocally. Mediums are animated by the deities or spirits to realize their mission, and the deities or spirits also need the mediums to animate them and bring them back into the world.

Moreover, You mentioned several episodes of spiritual healing during the trips to 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 felt sympathy for the boy, so she connected with a local spirit to cure him. You could not communicate with his family in the local language, but she was able to summon the local spirit to give the 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. The boy then 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 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. Nevertheless it expresses well the nature of the medium's mission. Quoting You's words, we "give ourselves to the command of the 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.

Conclusion

In this article I focus on the Mediums' Association and its activities around the time of its founding, that is, around the time when martial law was first lifted. I consider the founding of the Mediums' Association part of a unique practice of history writing and memory making. This practice intersects with that of other normative discourse makers and code producers, most notably, figures and institutions of the Nationalist Party. By the juxtaposition of 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 is an exercise of reflexive thinking within the structure of normative codes and power relations. It kaleidoscopically writes itself into the official discourse, creating a new topography by rearranging available fragments. 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 (1981) suggests how this cult enabled early Christian communities to articulate and to reflect about their own society by projecting a creative and replicating model of ideal relationships onto the unseen world.

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 through the idealized resemblance of religion and politics. In opposition to arguments that Chinese ritual “conceals the true nature of authority from the ruled, thus enhances the position of rulers,” Ahern suggests a “teaching function” for Chinese religious and ritual systems for peasants. Through analyzing and learning to manipulate the rules and practices of their religious system, peasants learn to understand how one acquires power, how one gets access to those with power, and how one is limited by those with power (Ahern 1981:92). But religious practice does not only operate as an analytical mirror to teach peasants the game of power. In his reading of Ahern’s argument, Feuchtwang proposes a further critical operation of these 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 judgment 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 expect that she will elucidate (or disturb?) our discourse” (de Certeau 1988:255). Accordingly, we may also regard the reading of mediumship as a hermeneutic with multiple layers of quotations and as an incessant exercise of writing in and writing out.

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做為神、鬼，或祖靈的代言人，靈媒是中國宗教或臺灣民間信仰中源遠流長的宗教角色。他（她）們沒有隨著社會的理性化、現代化或國家化而消失，反而與這幾個過程形成一種有趣而深富意義的並置與互動。民國七十七年，臺灣第一個由靈乩組成的團體「梅花聯盟同心會」成立。次年，經內政部建議更名為「中華民國靈乩協會」，正式成為宗教社團。靈乩協會的成立一方面是靈乩首度企圖以協會的組織方式彼此串聯，以「神職人員」自我界定，並提昇此宗教角色之品格與「靈質」的嘗試；另一方面也表達了靈乩如何以其獨特的宗教視野，結合傳統文化資源以及現代教育的設計，回應臺灣社會當前的政治處境與道德困境。本文以歷史書寫的架構來理解靈乩協會成立初期的宗教實踐（道德紮根運動、會合演義、護國安靈法會、神州之旅），分析靈乩協會如何在其宗教關懷中進行其獨特的文化書寫與記憶形塑，他們的觀點又如何同時複寫而又扭轉了官方的國家論述。靈乩協會模擬國家論述的發展目的論（telos of development），將靈乩自身寫入文明進程（化解共業，進入民權時代）。當靈乩協會將自身宗教傳統的救贖視野巧妙地編織入官方的啟蒙進步論述時，它既不是對國家論述的直接顛覆，也不能單純地理解為國家論述對宗教論述的收編。在宗教追求圓滿救贖的視野中，靈乩的宗教論述對當前政治境況不但提出一個間接的批判，也呈現了宗教理解架構如何為當代心靈提供國家論述無法提供之歷史文化視野。

關鍵詞：靈乩，靈乩協會，歷史書寫，國家論述，民間宗教