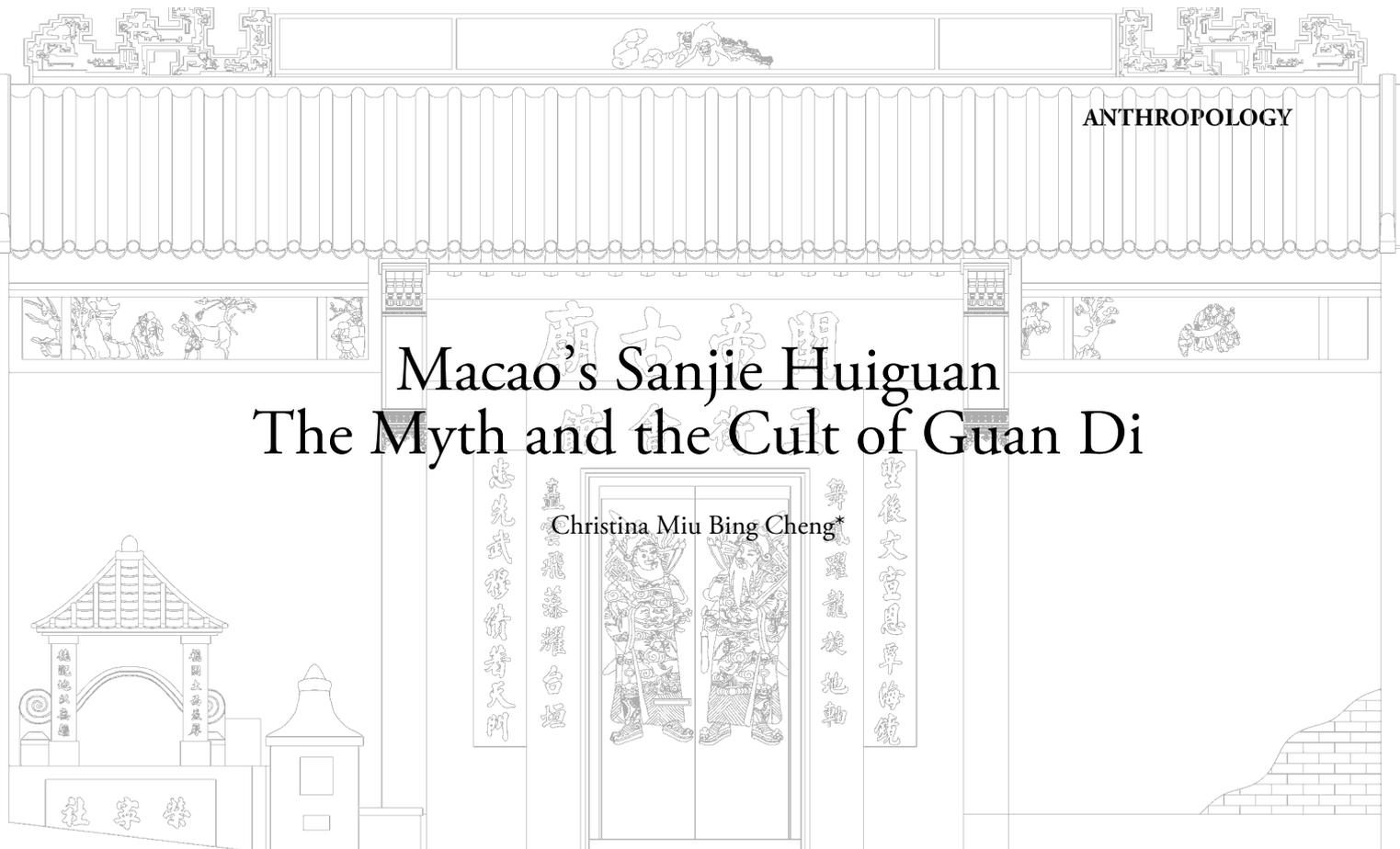


Macao's Sanjie Huiguan The Myth and the Cult of Guan Di

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At history's crossroads during more than four hundred years of Portuguese settlement (1557-1999), Macao was once a gateway for Westerners entering China and a window through which the Chinese perceived the world outside. Trade contacts and cultural encounters over the centuries have enabled Macao to take pride in itself as a remarkable example of the rendezvous of East and West in Asia. This East-West co-existence has helped shape Macao's distinct identity, which is evident in both tangible and intangible forms.

On the threshold of the 21st century, Macao's cultural significance was given a boost. On 15 July 2005, a mélange of characteristic Western and Chinese landmarks, comprising twenty-two architectural sites and eight public squares, was inscribed on the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). This

historic zone was given a distinguished appellation—'The Historic Centre of Macao'. Macao thus became the thirty-first World Heritage site in China.¹

The 'Historic Centre of Macao' includes the most comprehensive array of European architecture standing intact on Chinese territory. This group of buildings is located in the heart of the area where Westerners settled, which was known historically as the 'Christian City.' The unique legacies are woven into the original urban fabric, forming a walking trail in the historic zone. Once a sleepy backwater, this former Portuguese enclave has been put in the limelight on the world stage for its Sino-Lusitanian legacies. By now, Macao is crowned with a halo being a 'World Heritage City,' alongside its identity as Asia's foremost modern 'City of Gambling' (as of September 2009, Macao had thirty-three casinos).

Almost hidden among the grandiose and magnificent Western edifices in the historic zone, there is a humble Chinese architectural structure—Sanjie Huiguan 三街会馆, literally, the Guildhall of Three Streets. In the English version of the 'Description of the Historic Centre of Macao',² it appears with alternative spellings and different designations as Sam Kai Vui Kun Temple. One may feel baffled and somewhat confused by the name of this architecture: is it a guildhall or a temple?

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Sanjie Huiguan bears another name—Guan Di Gumiao 关帝古庙 (the Old Temple of Guan Di 关帝)—which is a temple dedicated mainly to the historical figure Guan Yu 关羽 (variant spelling: Kuan Yu).³ He is commonly known by different names: Guan Erye 关二爷 (Guan the Second Master); Meiran Gong 美髯公 (Lord of the Magnificent Beard); Guan Gong 关公 (Lord Guan); and Guan Di (Emperor Guan). The questions to be asked are: why did a trading guildhall become a ‘sacred space’ where Guan Yu is honoured by merchants as their ‘guild god’? Why is Guan Yu also revered as the ‘god of wealth’ in a culture that already has many deified givers of wealth? This paper traces the crucial relationship between a guildhall and a temple, as well as Guan Yu’s upward mobility to godhood. He has come to represent one of the most popular folk deities in the Chinese polytheistic tradition and a symbol of Chinese national culture *par excellence*.

In broader exegesis, this paper examines how Guan Yu is portrayed in the historical novel *Sanguo Yanyi* 三国演义 (*Three Kingdoms*).⁴ How was he dramatised and magnified in ways that allowed him to transcend his own biography as presented in the official history? Why was this mortal incessantly ritualised and glorified by the Chinese imperial authorities through the ages? Why has the cult of Guan Di endured for over a thousand years, untarnished by the passage of time?

SANJIE HUIGUAN / GUAN DI GUMIAO

Sanjie Huiguan is the guild headquarters for trade and commerce. It was built by the local Chinese community residing on three nearby streets, namely, Rua dos Ervanários, Rua das Estalagens, and Rua dos Mercadores. These three streets were once the centre of the old Chinese commercial district. Sanjie Huiguan is located in the vicinity of Senado Square, and near the renowned Leal Senado Building, the Holy House of Mercy, and the Spanish

St. Dominic’s Church. Its urban location is also adjacent to the Chinese bazaar area, today known as St. Dominic’s Market, at the heart of the city.

According to Wong Tak Hong 黄德鸿, Sanjie Huiguan originated simply as a meeting place for Chinese traders and merchants. More than two hundred years ago, Macao’s business activities were expanded to the neighbourhood of these three comparatively small streets. A building was soon constructed for the sake of liaising with one another, promoting transactions, and solving problems arising from business dealings. Gradually, the building became the guild headquarters, as well as a favourite rendezvous for local businessmen. It was also the only institution through which the Portuguese could communicate with the Chinese regarding commercial and business matters.⁵

As the guildhall for these three streets, it was not originally open to the general public for worship.⁶ In the ebb and flow of time, however, it attracted worshippers who came to ask for blessings, even though there was already a plethora of temples offering various divine services in Macao. Sanjie Huiguan was once associated with long-standing Chinese business organisations, which were the precursors to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Macao, established in 1912. This guildhall is now only a reminder of the active participation of the local Chinese community in general civic affairs inside the ‘Christian City’.

The exact year in which this guildhall came into existence is difficult to trace, but it certainly has a history of more than two hundred years. It is believed that the structure was built in the 1750s, and the oldest extant stone stele inside the building, which commemorated its first renovation, bears the date of the 57th year of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong (reigned 1736-95), that is, 1792. A major expansion and renovations were carried out a few decades



The Door Gods of Sanjie Huiguan.

The façade of Sanjie Huiguan.



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Guan Di, flanked by Liu Bei and Zhang Fei.

later, which were again commemorated by another stone stele dating the 15th year of Emperor Daoguang (reigned 1821-50), that is, from 1835.

On the lintel of the entrance there are four Chinese characters in stucco, which read horizontally: Sanjie Huiguan; a subordinate name, Guan Di Gumiao, is superimposed just above the original name. This suggests that the patron deity of the guild is the historical personage Guan Yu. In addition, the names of two other deities are inscribed vertically. They are Cai Bo Xingjun 财帛星君 (the God of Wealth) and Tai Sui Xingjun 太岁星君 (the Minister of Time). In this way, the temple was integrated into the guildhall, and this architectural structure emerged as a guildhall-temple dedicated to a trio of Daoist divinities.

In discussing the functions of occupational guilds, C. K. Yang 杨庆堃 has pointed out that the guild headquarters played a prominent religious role. The religious rites and the solidarity of the guild were inseparable. The annual meeting of a guild was an occasion on which all the guild members were brought together. They would first register and pay their dues,

and then go straight to the altar, either singly or in groups, where they knelt and bowed to the patron god. The guildhall was an important spot where the sacred altar for the guild god was placed. It was also a meeting place, where group business was discussed and transacted under the divine surveillance of the guild god. In front of the image, standard sacrificial rites were performed, such as burning incense and candles and offering food and drink.⁷

In the guildhall, trials and punishments for guild members who had committed transgressions were also conducted before the altar. Fines were announced and the names of offenders were read aloud. Those who had violated the rules were summoned for trial in the presence of the guild god. The offenders were required to kneel before the image as a sign of contrition for their wrong-doings. Such procedure was, in effect, intended to call for supernatural intervention in order to mete out justice and punish the guilty, whose actions threatened the guild's solidarity.⁸ Individualistic interests were often a leading cause of interpersonal disputes, and thus became a potentially dysfunctional factor in group unity. In this respect, C. K. Yang has put it thus:

The difficult task of constraining aggressive individualist tendencies in competitive occupational fields called for the use of sacred symbols of awe and respect for the collective interest of the group as a means of elevating the members' views above the level of immediate individual advantage.⁹

Religious rites (including processions and pageantry) were occasionally performed as a means of seeking supernatural blessings, on which occupational guilds intrinsically depended. Guild members would pray for divine supervision to govern the reliability and justice of contractual relationships. Based on the integration of religious forces and secular functions, these occupational headquarters emerged as guildhall-temples.

The integrating functions of the guildhall-temple were especially important to the cohesion of the group members' materialistic interests. Again, C. K. Yang maintains that the guildhall-temple and the religious pageantry were sacred collective symbols of the group, which served to enhance the solidarity of the organisation and to impress upon the community their distinctive group existence, thus strengthening the pride and loyalty of the members toward the group.¹⁰

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The cult of Guan Di, in this context, is an occupational cult of trade and commerce. Guan Di is appropriated as the guardian deity of traders and merchants, apart from his other numerous divine roles. By adopting Guan Di as the patron god of the Guild of Three Streets, members were conscious of the vital religious nature of the guild.

Throughout the ages, the historical mortal Guan Yu has been promoted as the incarnation of 'yi' 义. The concept *yi* comprises the virtues of honour, righteousness, loyalty, faithfulness, honesty, and friendship. Hence, the cult did not simply serve as an integrating force for traders and merchants; it also helped to bolster their 'yi' in business dealings. As such, the occupational cult of Guan Di displayed crucial sacred elements to justify the purely utilitarian activities of secular businessmen.

On the special relationship between a guildhall and a temple, C. K. Yang has cited an example. On the outskirts of Shanghai, the guild headquarters of masons and carpenters was called the Lu Ban Miao 鲁班庙 (the Temple of Lu Ban), where the patron Lu Ban 鲁班 (507 B.C.-440 B.C.)¹¹ was honoured.¹² The integrating functions of the guildhall-temple are also exemplified in Hong Kong, where Lu Ban is revered as the patron of builders and contractors in the Lu Ban Xianshi Miao 鲁班先师庙 (the Temple of the Master Lu Ban), which was built in 1884 by the Contractor's Guild with donations from people connected with the trade.¹³ Located at Ching Lin Terrace 青莲台 in Kennedy Town, this is the only urban temple

dedicated to the occupational cult of Lu Ban in Hong Kong. The inseparable link between a guildhall and a temple may well explain why the Guild of Three Streets was integrated with the Old Temple of Guan Di in Macao.

THREE PATRON DEITIES

The layout of Sanjie Huiguan/Guan Di Gumiao, which enshrines the three deities Guan Di, Tai Sui 太岁 and Cai Shen 财神, is simple and symmetrical. It consists of only one building, with a small courtyard inside (for receiving natural light). The structure is divided into three halls. The main hall is called Guan Di Shengjun Baodian 关帝圣君宝殿 (the Precious Hall of Guan the Sainly Emperor), which is dedicated to the patron deity—Guan Yu (A.D. 162-220), a historical warrior of the Three Kingdoms era (A.D. 220-265). He is also known as Guan Yunchang 关云长 (another courtesy name, Changsheng 長生). In general worship, Guan Yu is widely referred to as Guan Di, an abbreviated version of his noble title Guansheng Dijun 关圣帝君 (Sainly Emperor Guan).

A large golden statue represents Guan Yu seated on the throne inside an exquisitely carved altar, while two smaller statues of his sworn brothers—Liu Bei 刘备 (A.D. 162-223) (left) and Zhang Fei 张飞 (A.D. 191-223) (right)¹⁴ flank the altar.¹⁵ The historical Guan Yu and Zhang Fei served as generals in the court of Liu Bei (ruler of Shu 蜀), but Zhang and Liu now assume a guardian role and are treated like



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Guan Yu's acolytes or attendants. Such placement of the trio immediately demonstrates the fact that the populace views Guan Yu as superior to both Liu Bei and Zhang Fei.

A couplet of identical words hangs on both sides of the altar, extolling Guan Yu's Confucian virtues:

忠义仁勇关圣帝君
(Loyal, righteous, benevolent, brave Saintly Emperor Guan)

On the left side of the main hall, there is a smaller hall dedicated to Tai Sui Ye 太岁爷, also known as Tai Sui Xingjun, or simply Tai Sui 太岁 (the Minister of Time, or the God of the Annual Cycle). He is in charge of fortune and misfortune. Tai Sui is believed to be the historical figure Yin Jiao 殷郊, the elder son

Tai Sui.



of the tyrannical King Zhou 纣王 (1154-1121 B.C.) of the Shang dynasty. Deified as a stellar god, Tai Sui travels across the sky, passing through the twelve sidereal mansions. He is also a dangerous spirit, and whoever offends him (*fan Tai Sui* 犯太岁) is likely to get into trouble. In order to avoid calamities and to take precautions against his evil influence, Tai Sui must be appeased, and a talisman is hung to this effect.

The other hall, to the right of the main hall, is dedicated to Cai Bo Xingjun, or simply Cai Shen 财神 (the God of Wealth). The cult of the various Wealth Gods is very popular among all Chinese classes, especially the mercantile class. Almost no gods in Chinese culture are more worshipped than the givers of wealth. Their presence is ubiquitous and their images and portraits are to be found in nearly every household and temple.

Just like many other Chinese gods, the God of Wealth is said to have originally been a mortal, although his human identity has been ascribed to several persons. The original Wealth God is considered to be the deified spirit of Bi Gan 比干, who was the uncle of King Zhou and served as Zhou's Prime Minister. Zhao Gongming 赵公明 of the Three Kingdoms period is another God of Wealth.¹⁶ He was the younger brother of Liu Bei's general Zhao Zilong 赵子龙. Liu Hai 刘海, a chubby child, is also honoured as a money-giver. He often carries a mystical three-legged toad, and has a string of coins hanging around his neck. Other acolytes of the God of Wealth are a pair of supernaturals called Hehe Erxian 和合二仙 (Twin Genii of Harmony). They are mostly venerated by merchants because they 'understand the value of union and peaceful harmony in business, and the dependence of wealth upon happy partnership'.¹⁷

It is worth noting that Guan Yu, constructed as the paragon of Confucian virtues, was deified as Wu Cai Shen 武财神 (the Military God of Wealth). In *Sanguo Yanyi*, he rejects Cao Cao 曹操's extravagant gifts (discussed below), and is regarded as an upright person who can resist the temptation of inappropriate rewards and the immoral acquisition of wealth. Given these multiple attributes of the cult of Guan Di, C. K. Yang points out that he is worshipped not simply for his supernatural power to bring wealth, but also for his spirit of justice and generosity: principles that should govern the dispensation of wealth.¹⁸

Similar to Grecian euhemerism,¹⁹ the Chinese used to espouse the practice of raising historical characters

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to 'godhood'. The personages mentioned above were canonised as money-givers at different times in the Daoist pantheon. These deified mortals are collectively labelled as the God of Wealth and are honoured in this guildhall-temple for bringing in profits.

In Chinese society, however, growing rich by trade was considered ethically incompatible with the Confucian teachings of virtues. The mercantile class was often morally despised, socially degraded, and on some occasions even politically suppressed because they engaged in the acquisition of wealth as a profession. The prevalence of the worship of the Wealth Gods may well reflect the belief among merchants and traders that their wealth was the result of supernatural blessings as well as their own effort. Based on this belief, they felt constrained to abide by the moral tenets of the wealth cult.

With regard to the wealth cult, C. K. Yang notes that in Chinese religion there exists virtually no prominent cult against avarice or the immoral acquisition of wealth. The deification and worship of the Wealth Gods itself entailed ethical injunctions—to acquire wealth justly and through the proper channels and, once prosperity had been achieved, to dispense wealth in a spirit of righteousness and benevolence.²⁰

Following the Chinese syncretic and polytheistic tradition in religious praxis, this guildhall-temple also enshrines a Buddhist deity—Dicang Wang 地藏王 (the God of the Subterranean Kingdom). Like a niche in a church, the statue of Dicang Wang is placed on an altar just next to the God of Wealth. Dicang Wang is the Chinese expression of Kshitigarbha, who is the Bodhisattva of Nether Regions. He visits Hell on errands of love and mercy and has immense compassion for suffering souls. Dicang Wang is held to be the Overlord of Hell, and is senior to Yan Luo Wang 阎罗王 (Yama), the God of Hell.²¹

DEITIES OUTSIDE THE GUILDHALL-TEMPLE

Adjacent to the entrance of the guildhall-temple, there is an elevated stone structure in the form of a diminutive shrine. Topped by a pointed roof and supported by four pillars, it looks more like a pavilion than a shrine. It is dedicated to She Ji Fushen 社稷福神 (the Fortune Gods She and Ji). These two Daoist deities are represented in aniconic form;²² the tablet bears only their names. In front of it stands a large incense-burner,



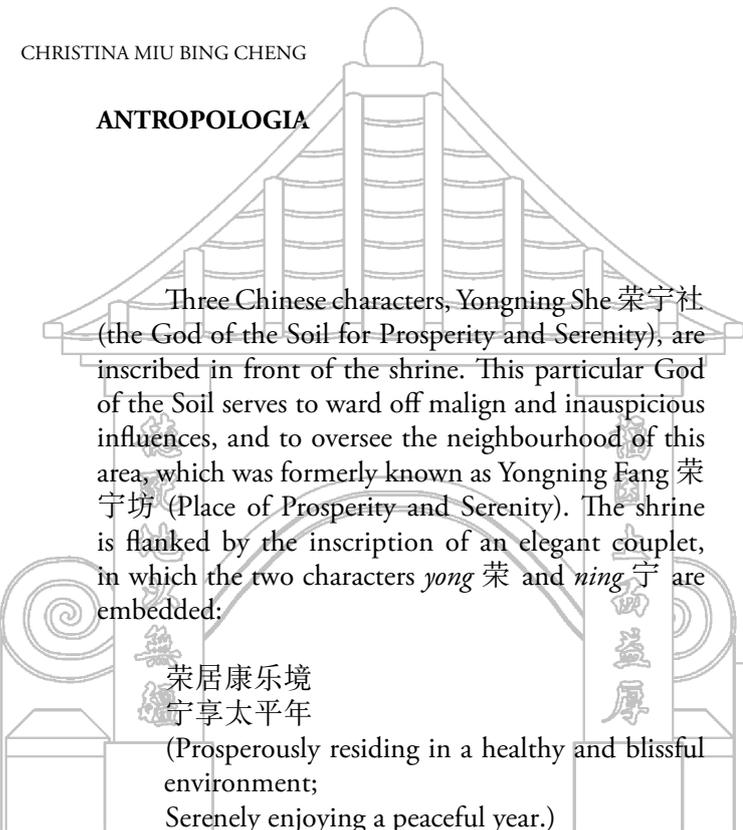
Dicang Wang.

used for the ritual of worship. This tiny shrine thus becomes an integral part of the guildhall-temple.

She Ji 社稷 are two minor deities. She 社 is the God of the Soil, who takes charge of the five directions: east, south, west, north, and centre. This supernatural being is also worshipped as a collective deity representing the five Terrestrial Spirits—Spirits of the Mountains and Forests, Rivers and Lakes, Tablelands and Hills, Mounds and Dikes, and Springs and Marshes.²³ Ji 稷 is the God of the Five Grains (also translated as the God of Harvests, or the God of Agriculture).

The God of the Soil and the God of the Five Grains were worshipped in the most ancient times in China. While the emperor alone could worship Tianxia She 天下社 (Sovereign Earth), as the whole earth was under his care and control, the subject people worshipped their own God of the Soil, who protected their local neighbourhood. It is believed that each locality has its own neighbourhood god.

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Three Chinese characters, Yongning She 荣宁社 (the God of the Soil for Prosperity and Serenity), are inscribed in front of the shrine. This particular God of the Soil serves to ward off malign and inauspicious influences, and to oversee the neighbourhood of this area, which was formerly known as Yongning Fang 荣宁坊 (Place of Prosperity and Serenity). The shrine is flanked by the inscription of an elegant couplet, in which the two characters *yong* 荣 and *ning* 宁 are embedded:

荣居康乐境
宁享太平年

(Prosperously residing in a healthy and blissful environment;
Serenely enjoying a peaceful year.)

Just near the aniconic representation of She Ji, there is a pair of porcelain statues of Tu Di Gong 土地公 and his wife Tu Di Po 土地婆. Tu Di 土地 (literally, soil-earth), is the Earth God, or the Protecting Spirit of Rural Places. He is in fact very low in rank in the hierarchy of the Daoist spirit world and his supernatural powers are limited. The Earth God is often enshrined in a miniature niche close to the ground.

In popular thought, the Earth God is supposed to control a small district with distinctly parochial jurisdictions. Given that every district has its own Earth God, the deity of one place cannot control another domain. As such, when one goes to a new place, one must worship at the shrine, or niche, of the local earth god in order to seek his protection and blessing.²⁴

She Ji are senior to Tu Di, since they may control a larger area, or even a province. Yet She Ji and Tu Di together have come to be responsible to Chenghuang 城隍, the City God (or the Guardian Divinity of the Walls and Ditches), who is a kind of Celestial Mandarin of a city or town, responsible for maintaining peace and order in the territory he governs. Needless to say, Chenghuang has greater powers and a broader jurisdiction.²⁵ Chenghuang, in turn, has to report to the God of Hell.

Daoism has established a 'divine' hierarchy involving a vast and complex system of gods. Like Greco-Roman mythological deities, the Daoist supernaturals have responsibility for every conceivable aspect of human life, and each locality has its own particular 'official' deity. Holmes Welch states that the

spiritual hierarchy of immortals, divinities, gods and goddesses from the lowest to the highest is an analogue of the bureaucratic hierarchy of secular society—it is a kind of spiritual bureaucracy that mirrors the civil one, so that in a sense two parallel bureaucracies govern people's lives.²⁶ The system of bureaucratic hierarchy that has been created in the spiritual world is in fact modelled on this world.

STRADDLING HISTORY AND FICTION

The worship of Guan Yu is nation-wide in China and in Chinese communities around the world. His widespread popularity is partly due to the wide circulation of the historical novel *Sanguo Yanyi*, in which the mortal Guan Yu is dramatically portrayed. This literary work was compiled by Luo Guanzhong 罗贯中 (c. 1330-c.1400), and was first published in 1522 (with a preface dated 1494). The novel, covering a time span from A.D. 168 to A.D. 280, tells of the story of heroic warriors and strategic battles in the wake of the division of the Chinese empire into three rival states after the fall of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). It is considered one of the four masterworks of the Ming novel.²⁷

The Three Kingdoms competing for dominance were Wei 魏 (A.D. 220-265), Shu (A.D. 221-263), and Wu 吴 (A.D. 222-280). Wei was ruled by Cao Cao, Shu by Liu Bei, and Wu by Sun Quan 孙权. However, none of the three rulers could take the lead; instead, the three war-torn kingdoms were reunited by the Sima 司马 clan, and a new ruling dynasty, Jin (A.D. 265-420), was founded after almost a century of civil strife.

Folk stories, legends, and mythic elements about the Three Kingdoms period existed in oral tradition long before the written compilation by Luo Guanzhong. He skillfully reworked, reshaped, and transformed a variety of source materials into a masterpiece in its own right.²⁸ The main historical source for the novel was *Sanguo Zhi* 三国志 (*Records of the Three Kingdoms*) compiled by Chen Shou 陈寿 (233-97).²⁹ Other materials were taken from Liu Yiqing's 刘一清 (403-44) *Shishuo Xinyu* 世说新语 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*); Sima Guang's 司马光 (1019-86) *Zizhi Tongjian* 资治通鉴 (*Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*); and *Sanguozhi Pinghua* 三国志评话 (*Story of Sanguozhi*, published sometime between 1321 and 1323).

The author combined his profound historical knowledge with a gift for storytelling to create a rich

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tapestry of lively characters and fascinating episodes. Stylistically known as *zhanghui xiaoshuo* 章回小说 (the novel-in-chapters), this emerging novel genre became the precedent for other great novels of the Ming dynasty. The voluminous work (twenty-four volumes) was later edited by Mao Lun 毛纶 and his son, Mao Zonggang 毛宗岗, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi in the mid-1660s. The whole text was reduced to 120 chapters for a smoother and more effective flow in the narrative. The Mao edition has since exclusively circulated in China, and eclipsed the 1522 version.³⁰

Moss Roberts is of the opinion that *Sanguo Yanyi* spans three genres: epic, drama, and novel. This is because this literary work has the scale and mythic atmosphere of an epic; the action and dialogue of a drama; and the texture and design of a novel.³¹ The narrative deftly maintains a collage of historical fact and fictitious accounts. It dabbles in real history while historicising mythical and legendary materials through storytelling. An 18th-century scholar, Zhang Xuecheng 章学诚, has remarked that *Sanguo Yanyi* contains seven-tenths fact and three-tenths fictitious fabrication.³² More recently, C. T. Hsia 夏志清 (b. 1921) lauded this 'fictionalisation' as the primary achievement of the work.³³ The narrative mode—both historical and ahistorical—offers a fine example of the literary tradition typical of the Ming dynasty.

GUAN YU IN *SANGUO YANYI*

By the time of Luo Guanzhong's compilation of *Sanguo Yanyi*, the historical Guan Yu had already attained an iconic status in popular tradition, and assumed an important role in folk religion. Notwithstanding Guan Yu's existing image, however, Luo Guanzhong adopted extensive literary exaggeration in presenting him as the archetypal military hero in the novel. In a cast of hundreds of characters, Guan Yu is one of the most altered and aggrandised personages.

At the outset of the novel, readers are only given a perfunctory portrayal of Guan Yu (Chapter 1). He

was from Jieliang 解良 in Hedong 河东. He had to flee 'after killing a local bully who was persecuting his neighbors and had been on the move these five or six years'.³⁴ He had an extraordinary stature and physiognomy, which tellingly suggested his physical prowess and manliness:

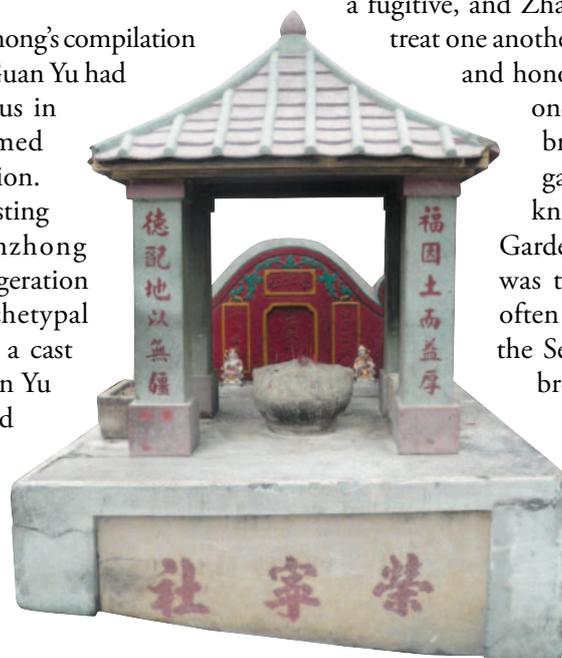
A man of enormous height, nine spans tall, with a two-foot-long beard flowing from his rich, ruddy cheeks. He had glistening lips, eyes sweeping sharply back like those of the crimson-faced phoenix, and brows like nestling silkworms. His stature was imposing, his bearing awesome.³⁵

His image is typified by the two-foot-long beard, so he is also known by the nickname Meiran Gong (Lord of the Magnificent Beard). His 'ruddy cheeks' alludes to his red face. This facial trait is predicated on a legend of the Song dynasty (960-1279).³⁶ As the legend goes, Guan Yu killed a corrupt magistrate who wanted to take by force a beautiful girl as his concubine. Guan had to flee and took refuge in a Daoist temple. A sorceress at the temple had him wash his face in a mountain stream. The water turned his face red, so that he could not be identified by the officers who came to arrest him.³⁷ From that time on, the red face became his trademark. His unusual height, long beard, and red face readily signify a strong male essence; these characteristics are conspicuous symbols of masculinity.³⁸

Liu Bei, a descendant of the Han clan, spontaneously formed a brotherhood with Guan Yu, a fugitive, and Zhang Fei, a butcher. They swore to treat one another as brothers, and pledged in faith and honour (*jieyi* 结义) to live and die as one. They consecrated the celebrated brotherhood ceremony in a peach garden, and the scene is popularly known as the 'Oath in the Peach Garden' (Chapter 1).³⁹ Since Guan Yu was the second sworn brother, he is often addressed as Guan Erye (Guan the Second Master). The emphasis on brotherhood and the observation of the oath are the skeleton of the storyline.

Liu Bei had the finest smith forge for Guan Yu a

Yongning She, outside the temple.



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weapon—*qinlong yan yue dao* 青龙偃月刀 (Green Dragon Crescent-Moon Blade) weighing 82 *jin* 斤 (catties). This weapon resembles a halberd, and is also called *dadao* 大刀 (big blade). It is more commonly known as *guandao* 关刀 (the blade of Guan), named after Guan Yu because tradition has it that it was designed by him. That is why Guan Yu is often depicted holding a blade as his attribute.

In Guan Yu's debut in *Sanguo Yanyi*, his marvellous martial arts skills and boundless self-confidence are portrayed in the episode called 'killing Hua Xiong 华雄 before his wine has time to cool' (Chapter 5). The other pivotal episodes of heroic exploits assigned to Guan Yu are narrated in 'beheading Yan Liang 颜良' (Chapter 25) and 'slaying Wen Chou 文丑' (Chapter 26), both of whom are Cao Cao's enemies. As a maverick warrior, Guan Yu is described in 'riding alone for thousands of leagues' (Chapter 27) and 'the lone swordsman attending a banquet' (Chapter 66). No doubt, all these scenes consolidate the image of Guan Yu as a supreme warrior possessing extraordinary physical strength and martial prowess.

What makes Guan Yu an enduring cult figure is his unswerving loyalty to Liu Bei. His exceptional integrity and moral rectitude are narrated during his brief sojourn in Cao Cao's camp (Chapters 25 to 28). Cao Cao greatly admired Guan Yu and praised him, 'Truly, a man of honour'.⁴⁰ Throughout the novel, Guan Yu is the only person whom Cao Cao holds in the highest regard.

In order to win Guan Yu's heart in service to him, Cao Cao showed him exceptional generosity. He gave him the famous steed 'Red Hare' and ten beautiful maidens to serve him. But Guan Yu in turn sent the maidens to wait on Liu Bei's two wives, Lady Gan 甘 and Lady Mi 糜, who were also stranded in Cao Cao's camp. Despite the lavish treatment, he refused Cao Cao in order to assist Liu Bei. Guan Yu's steadfast refusal of Cao Cao's blandishments and benevolence was plainly guided by absolute loyalty to his sworn brother.

During the journey back to Xuchang 许昌 (the capital), Cao Cao came up with a plan to disrupt the proprieties between lord and liege man: one night, he assigned Guan Yu and his two sisters-in-law (the two wives of Liu Bei) to a single chamber. Guan Yu never entered the chamber; he remained at attention outside the door, holding a candle that burned through the

night until dawn (Chapter 25). He thus eluded Cao Cao's stratagem, and displayed the virtues of abstinence and decorum.

Firm in his decision to join Liu Bei, Guan Yu killed six of Cao Cao's generals who tried to prevent him from leaving, at five mountain passes (Chapter 27). On the surface, the episode of slaying six generals and breaching five passes illustrates his military prowess and determination to leave Cao Cao, but it is also a brutal way to fulfil his personal bond to Liu Bei. These generals fall victim to Guan Yu's overwhelming sense of personal honour, or righteousness (*yi*).

After a hazardous journey of thousands of leagues, Guan Yu managed to escort the two ladies back to Gucheng 古城, where they were reunited with Liu Bei (Chapter 28). The two episodes 'holding a candle until dawn' and 'escorting the sisters-in-law for thousands of leagues' may well intend to commend Guan Yu's propriety and sexual abstemiousness. Guan Yu's ability to withstand feminine charms makes him a great hero in the novel.

Above all, Guan Yu's excessive sense of personal honour was manifested in his 'honourable release' of Cao Cao at the Huarong Trail 华容道 after the Battle of the Red Cliffs (Chapter 50). In this decisive episode, Cheng Yu 程昱 told Cao Cao, 'Guan Yu is arrogant toward his superiors but displays sentimental weakness toward those in an inferior position to him'.⁴¹ But later, Cheng Yu suggested quite the opposite about Guan Yu, 'He knows clearly the difference between obligation and enmity, and he has ever demonstrated good faith and honour'.⁴² Cao Cao then made an eloquent petition for release. Still grateful to Cao Cao for his past generosity, Guan Yu agreed to release Cao Cao and his men unharmed.

In this instance, Guan Yu committed a capital crime. Under martial law, Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 (chief advisor to Liu Bei, also confirmed as director general after Liu Bei's ascension as King of Hanzhong in Chapter 65) ordered the guards to execute him. But he was promptly saved by Liu Bei, who honoured their former covenant 'to live and die—as one'. Zhuge Liang was certainly annoyed by Guan Yu's breach of discipline.

In popular tradition, the association between Guan Yu and the concept of honour, or righteousness, constitutes an integral part of the veneration of Guan Di. But in the words of Andrew Plaks, 'Guan Yu's overblown sense of personal honour raises one of the

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most agonised issues of the entire work: the conflict between private and public standards of morality, or that between self-image and responsibility to others'.⁴³ Guan Yu sacrifices the interest of Liu Bei's court for his own personal honour, and in fact he totally betrays Liu Bei, though he always displays ostentatious loyalty. The 'honourable release' of Cao Cao eventually spells the tragic fall of the strategic Jingzhou 荆州, and his own death.

In the episode called 'Hua Tuo 华佗 scraping the poison from Lord Guan's bone' (Chapter 75), Guan Yu displayed an incredible force of will. His right arm was wounded by a poisoned arrowhead in a battle. The surgeon Hua Tuo scraped his arm open to the bone with a knife, with no indication of using anaesthetic. While everyone present blanched and covered their face, Guan Yu continued eating and drinking, laughing and talking and playing chess, showing no sign of pain. This scene offers a most heroic and impressive image of Guan Yu's stoic forbearance.

GUAN YU'S HUMAN FLAWS

In spite of the fact that the divine image of Guan Yu had been nourished in popular consciousness over the centuries before the publication of *Sanguo Yanyi*, Luo Guanzhong probed beneath the heroic surface of Guan Yu. He did not totally brush aside his mortal weaknesses as described by Chen Shou in the official history.⁴⁴ Throughout the novel, Guan Yu's staunch pride, arrogance and haughtiness are covertly narrated.

When Guan Yu was charged with the defense of Jingzhou (Chapter 63), he planned to divide his army and repel Cao Cao and Sun Quan's joint attack. Zhuge Liang, knowing Guan's over-confidence and overweening pride, advised him instead to repel Cao Cao in the north, but conciliate with Sun Quan in the east. Obviously, Zhuge Liang was displeased with Guan Yu's lack of strategic skill in combating the two intruding forces by dividing his army.

Guan Yu also proved himself to be both jealous and naïve in the episode when Ma Chao 马超 was honoured with the title 'General in charge of Pacification of the West' (*ping xi jiangjun* 平西将军) (Chapter 65). He felt hurt and wanted to challenge Ma Chao to a contest to determine who was the better warrior. Zhuge Liang, having a clear understanding of his narrow-minded personality, sent Guan a letter in Jingzhou

assuring him that his martial prowess was incomparably superior to that of Ma Chao's. Only then was Guan Yu's foolhardy temper tamed; only then did he lose an interest in challenging Ma Chao to a trial of skill.

After Liu Bei proclaimed himself King of Hanzhong 汉中王 (A.D. 219), Zhuge Jin 诸葛瑾 (brother of Zhuge Liang) advised Sun Quan to plan a joint action against Cao Cao by arranging a marriage between Sun Quan's son and Guan Yu's daughter (Chapter 73). Binding the two houses together would destroy Cao Cao's camp. However, Guan Yu proudly ignored Zhuge Jin's advice and responded instead with a burst of anger. His arrogant rejection of Sun Quan's offer of a marriage bond, on the one hand, was detrimental to Liu Bei's interests in forming an alliance with Sun Quan against Cao Cao; and on the other, it was one of the reasons leading to his beheading at Sun Quan's hand.

Guan Yu's unmitigated arrogance was evident in his burst of wounded pride in 'the ranking of the five generals' (Chapter 73). Liu Bei honoured Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Zilong, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong 黄忠 as the 'Five Tiger Generals' (*wu hu da jiang* 五虎大将). Although Guan Yu was appointed chief of these generals, he nevertheless reacted violently against being in the same league with the old warrior Huang Zhong. Fei Shi 费诗, a captain in the forward unit, tactfully soothed his rage by reminding him of his bond of sworn brotherhood with Liu Bei. Guan Yu was flattered and instantly received the seal of office with due reverence. This incident plainly reveals his ignorance, vanity and hostility towards his own peers.

Guan Yu's ultimate downfall lay in his stubborn refusal to listen to Wang Fu 王甫, who told him to escape Sun Quan's ambush by taking the main road. Guan Yu instead insisted on continuing to travel along small pathways. He was thus caught and decapitated at the age of 58 (Chapter 77). His death is mainly due to his stupidity and haughtiness. In addition, there are two decisive instances in which Guan Yu wreaks irreparable havoc on Liu Bei's court. Had he not released Cao Cao at the Huarong Trail, and had he not refused Sun Quan's offer of a marriage bond, Liu Bei would not have been tortured between two powerful enemies.

In a posthumous comment, the author puts into Zhuge Liang's mouth the historian's evaluation of Guan Yu as *gang er zi jin* 刚而自矜 (unyielding and self-important) (Chapter 78).⁴⁵ In discussing Guan Yu's tragic delusions of grandeur, Andrew Plaks points out, 'In each

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of the major scenes focusing on Guan Yu as an individual, we witness what might be called an overplaying of the role of the noble hero. This is brought out at several points in the narrative where his insistence on cleaving to his own self-image as an honorable man leads to serious moral quandaries or else to costly defeats.⁴⁶ Guan Yu's surfeit of valour, willful arrogance and towering haughtiness are the shortcomings that ultimately lead to his own destruction. Regardless of the hero's human flaws, his image has never ceased to be admired, and the cult of Guan Di enjoys surging popularity.

UPWARD MOBILITY OF GUAN YU

In his lifetime, Guan Yu was not granted any imposing titles. During his brief service in Cao Cao's camp, Emperor Xian (a puppet ruler of the Han dynasty under Cao Cao's control) conferred on him the title Adjutant General (*pian jiangjun* 偏将军) (Chapter 25). Soon Emperor Xian raised him to the title Marquis of Hanshou Precinct 汉寿亭侯 (Chapter 26). When Liu Bei assumed the protectorship of Yizhou 益州, Guan Yu was promoted to the rank of General Who Eliminates the Rebels (*dangkou jiangjun* 荡寇将军) (Chapter 65). After Liu Bei proclaimed himself King of Hanzhong, Guan was appointed Chief of the Five Tiger Generals (*wu hu da jiang zhi shou* 五虎大将之首), and General of the Front (*qianjiangjun* 前将军) (Chapter 73).

Guan Yu's divine upward mobility started soon after his death in A.D. 220. Over the centuries, he has been systematically promoted as a symbol of loyalty and guardianship by the Chinese imperial state, and various honorific titles have been conferred on him.⁴⁷ His posthumous career first developed in A.D. 260, when he was given the title Brave and Faithful Marquis (*zhuang miu hou* 壮缪侯).⁴⁸ He was revered as a deity as early as the Sui dynasty (581-618). It is believed that Yuquan Temple 玉泉寺 in Dangyang county 当阳市, Hubei 湖北 province (where he died and where his tomb lies) is the oldest temple dedicated to him, and the place where the worship of Guan Yu originated.⁴⁹ During the Tang dynasty (618-907), he was magnified into a deity of mythic proportions, and became a favourite character in the genres of oral storytelling and operatic drama.

In the Song dynasty, he was given a ducal title, *gong* 公, in 1102, and was called the Loyal and Benevolent Duke (*zhong hui gong* 忠惠公). Ever since, he has been commonly known as Guan Gong 关公

(Lord Guan). In 1108, he was first ennobled as *wang* 王 (king) and gained the title Military and Protective King (*wu an wang* 武安王). This title was extended in 1187 and a higher princely status was conferred on him—Brave, Faithful, Righteous, Courageous, Military, Protective, Heroic and Supportive King (*zhuang miu yi yong wu an ying ji wang* 壮缪义勇武安英济王). The ennoblement of Guan Yu with these titles was contingent upon politics. It readily pointed to the need for divine assistance to defend the weakening Song court against the increasing pressure of attacks from the intruding Mongols in northern China. Under the Mongolian rule in the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), moreover, Guan Yu continued to enjoy imperial favour: in 1335, he was given the title Apparitioned, Righteous, Courageous, Military, Protective, Heroic, and Supportive King (*xianling yi yong wu an ying ji wang* 显灵义勇武安英济王).

In 1594, during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Guan was officially elevated to godhood, and grandly ennobled as Guansheng Dijun (Saintly Emperor Guan), an appellation that honoured him as Supporter of Heaven and Protector of the Empire. Since then, he has widely and popularly been referred to as Guan Di (Emperor Guan). In 1614, this title was extended to The Celestial Honoured Saintly Emperor Guan, the Great God who Subdues Demons of the Three Worlds and Whose Divine Power is Formidable (*san jie fu mo da di shen wei yuan zhen tian zun Guansheng Dijun* 三界伏魔大帝神威远震天尊关圣帝君).

During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Guan Yu's divine status was further elevated. In 1652, an honorific title was conferred on him—Loyal, Righteous, Divine, Military, Saintly Great Emperor Guan (*zhongyi shen wu Guangsheng Dadi* 忠义神武关圣大帝). Moreover, a hagiography of Guan Yu, entitled *Guansheng Dijun shengji tuzhi quanji* 关圣帝君圣迹图志全集 (*A Complete Collection of the Writings and Illustrations concerning the Holy Deeds of the Saintly Emperor Guan*), was compiled by Lu Zhan 卢湛 and published in 1693.⁵⁰ The hagiography idealises him as a man of great filial piety and good knowledge of Confucian classics.

Legend has it that Guan Yu made a special study of the Confucian classic *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左传 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*).⁵¹ In *Sanguo Yanyi*, Guan Yu's association with this Confucian classic was put in the words of Cao Cao. When Cao Cao begged Guan Yu's

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mercy to release him at the Huarong Trail, he flattered him by saying that as a result of his familiarity with this important work, he must have a sense of honour as massive and solid as a mountain (Chapter 50).

Thus Guan Yu is also popular for his erudition (according to Kam Louie he was probably illiterate) and is regarded as one of the patron deities of literature.⁵² He is venerated by the literati chiefly because he was traditionally credited with the ability to recite the whole text of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* from beginning to end.⁵³ When he is depicted as the God of Literature, he holds a book as his attribute.

In 1813, Guan Yu was canonised as Wu Di 武帝 (Military Emperor)⁵⁴ in recognition of his military prowess defending the Qing court from external threats. In 1856, during the internal disturbances of the Taiping 太平 Rebellion (1851-64), he was given a prestigious title—Guan Tafuzi 关大夫子 (Guan the Great Sage and Teacher). It is an honour equalling to that bestowed upon Confucius, and he is revered in Confucian culture. Nowadays, he is juxtaposed with Confucius in Wenwu Miao 文武庙 (the Temple of Literature and the Military). While Confucius is considered the personification of *wen* 文 (literary) qualities and honoured as the icon of scholarly attainment, Guan Yu is seen as the carrier of *wu* 武 (military) essence and revered as the icon of martial valour. In this sense, the combatant warrior is put side by side with the literary immortal in the religious pantheon.

Kam Louie is of the opinion that Chinese masculinity can be theorised as comprising both *wen* and *wu*, and this *wen-wu* paradigm is perceived to be essential for men of substance.⁵⁵ When Guan Yu gained the posthumous titles—Military Emperor and the God of Literature, he was constructed to excel in both *wen* and *wu*. He became an ideal man, embodying the balance of *wen* and *wu* in the Confucian tradition, thus epitomising the construction of Chinese masculinity.

In line with the practice and tradition of syncretism among diverse religious beliefs that flourished in the history of Chinese religion,⁵⁶ Guan Yu has gained recognition from Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. In Buddhism, Guan Yu is venerated as a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Sangharama 伽蓝菩萨 who guards and protects monasteries.⁵⁷ In 1104, he was formally honoured as a Daoist immortal. The Song dynasty Emperor Huizong, who reigned during the era of Chongning 崇宁, bestowed upon him the title True

Immortal of Chongning (*chongning zhenjun* 崇宁真君). In the Daoist pantheon, he is regarded as a leading subduer of demons. Above all, he is viewed as the epitome of all Chinese *de* 德 (virtues) in the Confucian ideal.⁵⁸ The historical mortal has attained full stature as a supernatural being, and is one of China's most popular folk deities. Prasenjit Duara contends that no god is more identified as a representative of Chinese culture than Guan Yu.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

Most Chinese temples in Macao are inclined to transgress religious boundaries to enshrine myriads of Buddhist divinities, Daoist immortals and folk deities. In the polytheistic tradition, worshippers pray to a whole assortment of supernatural beings for different purposes. These temples thus provide the populace with abundant choices to select and adopt what best suits their fancy or meets their requirements. The syncretic Lian Feng Miao 莲峰庙 (Lotus Peak Temple) and Bao Gong Miao 包公庙 (the Temple of the God of Justice) are cases in point. Sanjie Huiguan / Guan Di Gumiao, however, only enshrines three main deities—Guan Di, Tai Sui, and Cai Shen.

Sanjie Huiguan was once the guild headquarters for traders and merchants from three streets in Macao. The guild's secular functions were tightly interwoven with religious elements for the sake of governing the contractual relationships in business dealings. As the guild was tarnished by time and gradually declined, the former guildhall has turned into a 'sacred space' and now opens to the general public to supplicate for divine blessings from the guild god, Guan Di. And this guildhall is simultaneously known as Guan Di Gumiao. The inseparable relationship between the guildhall and the temple points to the business activities integrating with religious supervision and sanction. The integrating functions of the guildhall-temple thus encourage the guild members to uphold honesty and fairness in business transactions, and to observe reliability and fidelity to trading contracts under divine surveillance.

As Guan Di has long been taken as the signifier of probity and justice, he was consecrated as the patron of traders and merchants in Sanjie Huiguan, and assigned the duty of seeing to proper business discussions and conclusions. The incorruptibility and trustworthiness are the requisites that would play a

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crucial part in trade and commerce, and traders and merchants are expected to be upright and fair in the Chinese community. Apart from Guan Di's role as the guild god in this guildhall-temple, he is also honoured as one of the wealth gods. This attribute does not only extol his spirit of righteousness; but also palpably speaks for the virtuous principle of acquiring wealth through rightful and lawful channels; and to dispense wealth under legal and moral tenets.

The portrayal of Guan Yu in *Sanguo Yanyi* has transcended the real personage presented by Chen Shou in the official history. Roy Andrew Miller maintains, 'the fictional Guan Yu has completely replaced the historical one in the Chinese imagination'.⁶⁰ Notably, Guan Yu starkly surpasses his two sworn brothers in the divine realm. Liu Bei was only deified as the God of Basket-makers,⁶¹ since his early vocation was making straw shoes and straw baskets. Zhang Fei was once an itinerant pork-seller, and was honoured as one of the Gods of Butchers.⁶² In contrast to the scant celebrations of his two sworn brothers, there are major festivals of the cult of Guan Di, which fall on the 15th day of the 2nd lunar month, and on his birthday—the 13th day of the 5th lunar month.

Despite Guan Yu's exaggerated sense of his own importance in the novel, his mortal flaws do not seem to have affected the development of the myth, nor invalidate the sustained veneration by all classes of people. There are a number of reasons for the cult of Guan Di to survive timelessly. First, the Chinese state authorities played a pivotal role in the standardisation of religious culture. Throughout the ages, the Guan Di myth had been expanded, reconfigured, and upheld by the imperial state. The ethico-political concepts of loyalty (to the ruling class) and bravery (in defending the country) provided the basic motivation for the imperial sanction of the cult of Guan Di. In the wake of scrupulous processes of glorification and canonisation, Guan Yu was groomed to be a divine-human and raised to godhood. The official bestowal of varying grand appellations to Guan Yu enabled the cult to flourish in the mainstream of Chinese culture. Significantly, the cult was incorporated into the pantheon of the state religion. Just like the cult of Tian Hou,⁶³ the cult of Guan Di illustrates yet another typical example of the process of apotheosis common in China.

Second, the cult espouses time-honoured socio-ethical values, such as justice, courage, patriotism, and

self-sacrifice. These values are required to pander to the common interests and needs of the general public to observe the virtues of righteousness and benevolence in brotherhood. Third, the cult has periodically been revived by mythical legends and mythological lore. Fourth, the wide circulation of *Sanguo Yanyi*, in a way, helps keeping the image of Guan Yu alive. That the cult of Guan Di can enjoy the aura of glamour for over a thousand years appears to have depended on these indispensable elements.

Similar to many mythic stories, the myth of Guan Di is not fixed but susceptible to change as time goes by. The development of the Guan Di cult is, in essence, 'invented traditions' of the repertoires of memory, symbol and myth for the purpose of inculcating ideology and beliefs to serve the imperial state and ethnic interests. The invention of tradition, as Eric Hobsbawm has put forward, 'inculcate[s] certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past'.⁶⁴ In some way or another, the popularity of the Guan Di cult reflects the ever-elevated status he enjoyed as a result of repeated imperial honourings in the past.

Guan Yu has been incessantly constructed as a valiant warrior with scholarly acumen, and comes to represent the ideal of Chinese maleness, which embodies the *wen-wu* qualities. The deified Guan Di symbolizes an all-encompassing icon in all walks of life. He is taken as the protector of temples; patron of merchants, actors; and tutelary guardian of all brotherhoods, the police force, and even secret societies. His image, or statue, is often placed facing the entrance of houses as a talisman to drive away demons and ghosts. It is believed that no malevolent spirits would dare enter into his presence. In the pantheon of Chinese popular religion, the worship of Guan Di is beyond the confines of sectarian beliefs, and he is an almost unsurpassed iconic figure.

Guan Yu's posthumous upward mobility indicates a personal triumph unparalleled by any historical personage. He is looked upon as the very personification of integrity, the protector of faith, and the embodiment of loyalty, righteousness, courage, benevolence, fidelity, bravery, generosity, and martial valiancy and chivalry. His metamorphosis to godhood has transcended a particular territorial identity, and he is worshipped by the Chinese world-wide. All in all, Guan Di stands for a significant religious symbol of Chinese national culture. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 China has the third largest number of inscribed World Heritage Sites in the world.
- 2 *Macao World Heritage*, pp. 2-3.
- 3 For the sake of uniformity in spelling, the different version in the quotations is standardized in *pinyin* romanization as Guan Yu.
- 4 There are two English translations of *Sanguo Yanyi* 三国演义. In C. H. Brewitt-Taylor's 1925 translation, the title was *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In Moss Roberts' 1994 version, he simply used *Three Kingdoms*. Roberts' dropped the word 'romance' for *Yanyi* because romance 'denotes a world removed from reality'. See Moss Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, p. 1463. The English texts quoted in this paper are based on Moss Roberts' translation.
- 5 Wong Tak Hong 黄德鸿, *Aomen Xinyu* 澳门新语, p. 111.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 C. K. Yang 杨庆堃, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*, p. 74.
- 8 These religious rites were also observed by fraternities and secret societies.
- 9 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, p. 75.
- 10 Ibid., p. 76.
- 11 Lu Ban was born in the State of Lu 鲁 during the Spring and Autumn Period. His original name was Kungshu Yichi 公输依智 and is respectfully addressed as Kungshuzi 公输子 (Master Kungshu). His birthday celebration falls on the 13th day of the 6th lunar month.
- 12 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, p. 75.
- 13 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lo_Pan_Temple.
- 14 In Chinese tradition, the description of the placement of images in temples is from the perspective on the altar, not from the spectator's view. According to *Zhouli* 周礼 (*The Rites of Zhou*), dated to the middle of the 2nd century B.C.), in ancient ancestral temples, the correct placement followed the principle of *zuozhao youmu* 左昭右穆. That is, Zhao 昭 (father) belonged to the left, while Mu 穆 (son) belonged to the right. This was in order to indicate the relative importance of the 'left side' over the 'right side'. See *Ci Hai* 辞海, p. 638.
- 15 Guan Yu is often represented in a group of three figures, sometimes flanked by Zhou Cang 周仓, his bodyguard, and Guan Ping 关平, his adopted son.
- 16 E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 515.
- 17 Basil M. Alexéiev, 'The Chinese Gods of Wealth,' p. 5.
- 18 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 79.
- 19 The term "euhemerism" was named after Euhemerus, a Greek mythographer and philosopher in the 4th century B.C. He advocated the theory that the gods of mythology were merely deified mortals.
- 20 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 79.
- 21 E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 498.
- 22 The technical term "aniconic form" refers to a representation through sign and symbol without any figural image (contrast to anthropomorphic form).
- 23 E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 412.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 414-15.
- 25 In ancient times, the worship of She Ji began much earlier than the worship of Chenghuang. See E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 49.
- 26 Holmes Welch, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way*, pp. 137-9.
- 27 The other three masterworks are: *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*), *Xiyou Ji* 西游记 (*Journey to the West*), and *Shuihu Zhuan* 水浒传 (*The Water Margin*, or *The 108 Heroes*). The expression *si da qi shu* 四大奇书 'four masterworks' was coined at least as early as the 17th century probably by Feng Menglong 冯梦龙 (1574-1646). See Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 5.
- 28 Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), a leading critic and analyst of traditional Chinese culture, blatantly denies the prominence of *Sanguo Yanyi*, claiming '*bu neng suan shi ye bu you wenxue jiazhi de shu*' 不能算是一部有文学价值的书 ('the book cannot be counted as having any literary value'). See Hu Shi 胡适, 'Sanguo Zhi Yanyi Xu' 三国志演义序, collected in *Hu Shi Wencun* 胡适文存, *juan* 2, vol. 2, pp. 470-3. His comments are meticulously refuted by Dong Meikan 董每戡 in his *Sanguo Yanyi Shilun* 三国演义试论, pp. 1-13.
- 29 *Sanguo Zhi* 三国志 was annotated by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372-451), who added his own commentary.
- 30 Luo Guanzhong's 1522 version had fallen into oblivion and remained undiscovered until early in the 20th century. See Moss Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 1463.
- 31 Ibid., p. 1462.
- 32 Quoted in Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 374.
- 33 C. T. Hsia 夏志清, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, p. 35ff.
- 34 Moss Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 12.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Luo Guanzhong did not include this legend in *Sanguo Yanyi*.
- 37 Qiu Zhensheng 丘振声, *Sanguo Yanyi Zonghengtan* 三国演义纵横谈, p. 47. On the English version of the story, see Jonathan Chamberlain, *Chinese Gods*, 'Kuan Ti: God of War', pp. 49-50.
- 38 Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*, pp. 27-8.
- 39 The expression 'Peach Garden pledge' often refers to forming a brotherhood, but it is also implicitly riddled with connotations of homosexuality. See Wolfram Eberhard, *Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*, pp. 227-8. On the implied sexual relationship between the men in the novel, see Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, Chapter 2 'Portrait of the god of War Guan Yu: Sex, Politics and Wu Masculinity'.
- 40 Moss Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 305.
- 41 Trans. Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 409 n. 163.
- 42 Moss Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 593.
- 43 Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 413.
- 44 See Chen Shou 陈寿, *Sanguo Zhi*, *juan* 36, annotated by Pei Songzhi, vol. 4, pp. 939-42.
- 45 In the official history, Chen Shou sums up Guan Yu's character as *gang er zi jin* 刚而自矜 (unyielding and self-important). See Chen Shou, *Sanguo Zhi*, *juan* 36, annotated by Pei Songzhi, vol. 4, p. 951. In commenting on the tragic hero, Hu Shi seems to repeat Chen Shou's remarks that Guan Yu is *yige jiao'ao wumou de wufu* 一个骄傲无谋的武夫 (an arrogant warrior with no sense of strategy). See Hu Shi, 'Sanguo Zhi Yanyi Xu', collected in *Hu Shi Wencun*, *juan* 2, vol. 2, p. 473.
- 46 Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 411.
- 47 On Guan Yu's posthumous titles over the centuries, see Lu Zhan 卢湛 (compiled), *Guansheng Dijun Shengji Tuzhi Quanji* 关圣帝君圣迹图志全集, *juan* 1. See also Qiu Zhensheng, *Sanguo Yanyi Zonghengtan*, pp. 42-3.
- 48 The Chinese character 繆 and 穆 were used interchangeably in olden times, embracing the concept *yi* 义.
- 49 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guan_Yu.
- 50 The compilation of Guan Yu's hagiography was prompted by the alleged discovery of his genealogy hidden among some bricks in a well in his birthplace in Xiezhou. See Prasenjit Duara, 'Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War', *The Journal of Asian Studies* (vol. 47, no. 4, 1988), p. 784.
- 51 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左传, covering a time span from 722 B.C. to 468 B.C., was written by a number of authors.

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- 52 Two other historical personages who have been deified as gods of literature are Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), and Lu Tongbin 吕洞宾 (755-805).
- 53 E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 229.
- 54 Wu Di 武帝 is often translated as 'God of War' by foreign writers. However, Guan Yu is no bellicose war-mongering god. It has been argued that the translation of Wu Di should be translated as 'God who defends the state, civilisation and morality.' See Jonathan Chamberlain, *Chinese Gods*, 'Kuan Ti: God of War', p. 55.
- 55 Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, p. 11.
- 56 Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩 (1517-98) advocated and manifested religious syncretism of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) in its clearest and most detailed form in the history of Chinese religion. See Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*.
- 57 The Sangharama refers to a group of devas and spirits who guard monasteries and Buddhist *dharma*.
- 58 The Chinese *de* 德 (virtues) denote *wuchang* 五常 (the five principles), which are constitutive of humanity. These are: *ren* 仁, *yi* 义, *li* 礼, *zhi* 智, *xin* 信 (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and fidelity).
- 59 Prasenjit Duara, 'Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War', pp. 779-95.
- 60 C. H. Brewitt-Taylor (trans.), *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, p. x.
- 61 E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 34.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 The cult of Tian Hou has been systematically ritualised, standardised and advocated by the intelligentsia and the imperial state in order to generate a religious structure for assuring collective dignity, national identity and solidarity. See Christina Miu Bing Cheng, 'Beyond a Cultural Register: The Charm of Tian Hou'. *China Perspectives*, Special Macau Issue, no. 26, November-December 1999, pp. 72-81.
- 64 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 1.

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