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Religious Syncretism The Harmonization of Buddhism and Daoism in Macao's Lian Feng Miao (The Lotus Peak Temple)

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INTRODUCTION

Vacillating between two political entities and two dominant cultures at the periphery of South China, Macao's unique Sino-Portuguese identity has given rise to an interface of various religious beliefs. Since the arrival of the Portuguese some four hundred years ago, they had ardently and incessantly introduced Christianity in the guise of a "civilizing mission", but they failed to replace or erase the Buddhist and Daoist faiths. Apart from being a "Holy City" for Judeo-Christian tradition,¹ Macao is also a Chinese religious bastion where multitudinous deities proliferate. In particular, the polymorphism of Buddhism and Daoism allows a variety of religious experiences and liturgical traditions among the élites and the masses. There seems to be no invariable sectarian rule governing the Chinese temples in Macao, or distinguishing the religious attachment of one from another. The Chinese, at least in the instance of the

lived experience of Macao, apparently advocate a pantheistic spirit through religious inclusion, compromise and syncretism. Syncretism² and toleration of disparate beliefs have been central to the religious life of the Chinese since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), a period when the harmonization of the Three Teachings (*san jiao he yi* 三教合一), zealously advocated by Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩 (1517-1598), flourished to an unprecedented degree. This paper seeks to trace the syncretic practices in Lian Feng Miao 蓮峰廟 (the Lotus Peak Temple), and to illustrate the polytheistic tradition of the Chinese belief systems. As Lian Feng Miao transgresses religious boundaries to enshrine a whole gamut of divinities regardless of doctrinal differences, can we classify it as a Buddhist or a Daoist temple? How does its spiritual dimension lie for Buddhism and Daoism? The focus then shifts to examine the plethora of gods and goddesses dedicated in Lian Feng Miao. These mythological, legendary and historical characters have been systematically and "euhemeristically"³ represented over time so as to become immortals. One may wonder how Daoism incorporates and appropriates, if not speculates on, ancient Chinese beliefs, and how classical literary texts are made to serve as a vehicle for Daoism to consolidate its status as the Chinese autochthonous religion.

DAOIST MOVEMENTS

Daoism is purely of Chinese origin and a truly native movement of thought oriented to mysticism. The entire body of its doctrines has emerged from indigenous sources. There are essentially two different movements: philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism.⁴ The former is held to be founded by Laozi (c. 604-531 B.C.)⁵ and Zhuangzi (c. 369-286 B.C.), and the latter by Zhang Daoling (active in the mid-second century A.D.). While philosophical Daoism views Dao 道 (meaning the Way), or divine intelligence of the Universe, as the great cosmological principle that governs the operation of man and nature, religious Daoism consists in their teachings on how to practise alchemy in order to attain immortality. Philosophical Daoism is regarded as rational, contemplative, and non-sectarian, whereas religious Daoism is magical, cultic, esoteric, and sectarian. Daoism as a philosophy lasted only a few hundred years (up to the third century B.C.). It was not until Zhang Daoling founded a sect, which issued charms and talismans to protect the

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RELIGIÃO / Antropologia

faithful, that Daoism flourished and achieved considerable success during the Han and Three Kingdoms periods (from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D.). At the beginning of the fifth century, flourishing Buddhism⁶ began to eclipse Daoism. In 845, however, an imperial edict was issued proscribing Buddhism (and Nestorianism 景教), Daoism thus revived and thrived. It has been called the religion of the masses since the Tang dynasty (618-907), and is described by Holmes Welch in *The Parting of the Way: Lao Tzu and the Taoist Movement* as 'the most popular religious work in China' (Welch, 1958: 140). The powerful influence of Daoism is evidenced in Chinese popular culture.

Though Daoism is Chinese, it has been much influenced by Indian Buddhism. As Daoism borrowed the Buddhist system of organization, it also drew upon

Apart from being a "Holy City" for Judeo-Christian tradition, Macao is also a Chinese religious bastion where multitudinous deities proliferate.

ancient animism and nature-worship, thus shaping a phenomenon of polytheism and allowing a myriad of mythologies. Keith Crim has pointed out that Daoism, by emphasizing spontaneity, intuitional understanding, and the acceptance of the natural world, was actually able to bring Buddhism closer to the matrix of Chinese thought (Crim, 1989:741). In contrast to Confucian dislike of the fantasies and occultism of mythology, Daoists have speculated on ancient myths and beliefs and embraced mythical stories to create immortality legends. It is in Daoism that most of the mythological characters of early China were incorporated and appropriated. Like Greco-Roman mythologies, Daoism established a "divine" hierarchy for a vast and complex system of gods. These Daoist divinities were given responsibility for every conceivable aspect of human life, and each locality had its own particular "official"

deity. Not only did they play the role of intermediaries between man and heaven, but they also constituted a system of bureaucratic hierarchy in the supernatural world that was in fact modelled on this world. Despite the popularity of Daoism, one should disabuse of any misconceptions that China is an exotic and arcane land of Daoist mysticism. Rather, it is a cradle for the confluence for disparate religious beliefs.

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

The religious systems of Confucianism,⁷ Buddhism and Daoism have long been known in China as the Three Teachings or Three Great Religions, which dominated almost the entire spectrum of religious history in China. While the Three Teachings formed the mainstream of what anthropologists would refer to as a culture's "great tradition", folk religion⁸ constituted a "little tradition" (Redfield, 1956:67-104). These four "traditions" came to represent the wholeness of Chinese religion.

It was not until the Ming dynasty that a period of spiritual breakthrough and syncretic forces in religion was ushered in. Religious practices, beliefs, and traditions tended to react to and absorb into themselves appropriate elements from other philosophies and sects. The most noted syncretist was Lin Zhaoen 林兆恩 (1517-1598), who was born in Putian 莆田, Meizhou 湄州, in Fujian 福建 province.⁹ Having attained enlightenment and achieved insight into the understanding of the Three Teachings, he advocated and manifested religious syncretism. His main contribution was the re-moulding of religious ideas in the clearest and most detailed form. He developed a well defined system of study and practice for spiritual cultivation through a process of toleration, interaction and change in order to unite and harmonise conflicting beliefs. He was not only a syncretic thinker (integrating the ideas and doctrines of the Three Teachings to form his own philosophy), but he was also a syncretic teacher (combining believers in the Three Teachings into a single Way). His disciples believed he was the equal of the sages of the Three Teachings.¹⁰

Being central to the religious life of the Chinese, syncretism assumes an indispensable role. It attempts to reconcile and incorporate diverse elements selectively from a variety of religious praxes into an acceptable tradition. Believers are often eclectic,¹¹ and



Lian Feng Miao (Lotus Peak Temple). All photos by Wong Ho Sang, 1998 (IC Archives).

they try to advocate syncretism as a principle to attain the essence among different doctrines and ideas. One should bear in mind that syncretism is neither religious treason nor does it shatter traditions. Judith A. Berling has defined religious syncretism as ‘the borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation’ (Berling, 1980:9). In this way, the dynamics of syncretism allows a reformulation and substitution of traditions in religious experience. The religious syncretism, or harmonization, of the Three Teachings

has thus fostered a new religious tradition,¹² and the unity of the Three Teachings became the mainstream of Chinese culture’s “great tradition”.

Unlike Christian hostility towards “pagan beliefs” (as evidenced in the Crusades and the Inquisition), Chinese religions clearly articulated a synthesis of differing doctrinal elements and embraced a bricolage¹³ of beliefs. While western Christianity laid a strong emphasis on its transcendent, exclusive and universal nature, Chinese religions espoused syncretic sentiments and engendered toleration, compromise and respect among one another’s belief systems.

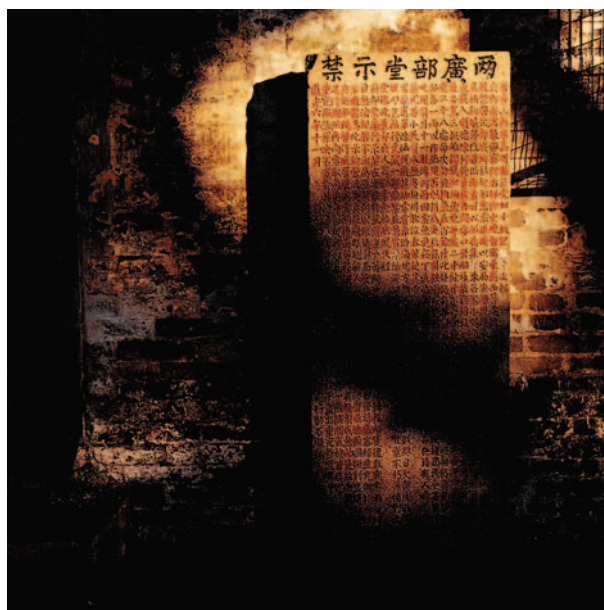
RELIGIÃO / Antropologia

This syncretic phenomenon, as pointed out by Christian Jochim, is buttressed by a number of sociological factors. First, the Chinese tend to lay emphasis on practice over doctrine. Secondly, the traditional family remains the *fundamental social unit* within Chinese religion, thus keeping other forms of religious groups from evolving to a high degree. Thirdly, the Chinese state, headed by the emperor, constituted another basic unit of religious organization in China, outshining the relatively minor role played by other religions, whether indigenous or foreign (Jochim, 1986: 21). As such, the delineation of the boundary of religious faiths does not dominate the common people's consciousness, but a functionally oriented religious view prevails. The question of religious identity is often relegated to an unimportant place. The following section examines the syncretic impact on Lian Feng Miao, which exhibits a syncretic pantheon in its full complexity.

TRANSGRESSION OF RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES

Lian Feng Miao is believed to have been first built in 1592. Expanded and reconstructed in the late nineteenth century, the present structure was renovated in 1980. It is located near the Barrier Gate leaning against Lotus Peak Hill (also known as Lotus Flower Hill) at northern Wang Xia, and strategically sits on the narrow isthmus that connects the Macao peninsula to Zhongshan county 中山县, in Guangdong province. This temple is among the best of the extant models of “formal” temple architecture in Macao. Its façade is resplendent with intricate clay bas-reliefs which were carved in the nineteenth century, and which depict stories from history and mythology. Just like most temples dedicated to sea deities in Macao, it once commanded an excellent sea view before massive land reclamation. It is a “sacred space” where the deities are asked to calm the roaring sea.

Formerly called Tian Fei Miao 天妃庙 (the Temple of the Celestial Concubine), it was dedicated to the Daoist goddess of the sea. By the name of the temple, it was unmistakably a Daoist temple. With regard to the appellation of Tian Fei, it is believed that ‘Heaven is regarded as the Emperor, because he is the greatest and noblest; after Heaven comes the Earth, and the Spirit of the Earth is the Empress, who ranks



Lotus Peak Temple construction dates back to 1592.

immediately after the Emperor. The Third dignity is reserved for the Spirit or Spirits of the Waters, and these female Spirits are the concubines of the Emperor, or of Heaven’ (Werner, 1932:503). In light of this divine hierarchy, Tian Fei—being a sea deity—was raised to a celestial position and considered a consort of Heaven.

Tian Fei has been looked upon as a symbol of coastal pacification and is the patron goddess of fishermen, sailors and maritime merchants.¹⁴ This water deity was the spiritual representation of a living maiden, Lin Mo 林默 (960-987), who was a native of Putian, Meizhou, in Fujian province. She first emerged as a minor and regional spirit during the eleventh century. She was officially recognised as a sea deity in 1123 in the Song dynasty. Since then she has been given a number of appellations, such as Sheng Nu 圣女 (Holy Maid) and Fu Ren 夫人 (Madame). It was not until 1278 that she was “ennobled” as Tian Fei 天妃 (the Celestial Concubine). The Qing dynasty Emperor Kangxi granted her an illustrious title, Tian Shang Sheng Mu 天上圣母 (Heavenly Saintly Mother) in 1680. In 1684 she was eventually “canonised” as Tian Hou 天后 (Empress of Heaven). Through a series of systematic apotheoses, Lin Mo was transmuted from a mortal to a celestial consort and climbed the imperial hierarchic ladder from concubine to empress. In this way, the myth of Tian Hou was



A stone lion guarding the Lotus Peak Temple entrance.

integrated as an official cult and incorporated into the Daoist pantheon of the state religion. She is regarded as a leading sea goddess of national importance.

Located at a peripheral region in South China, the temple was appropriately named after Lin Mo's ennoblement as Tian Fei when it was first built in the last decade of the sixteenth century. However, after she was elevated to the exalted position of Empress of Heaven, the name of the temple remained fixated on her concubine status. Her new "canonisation" as Tian Hou was apparently not celebrated.

In 1723 Lian Feng Miao was expanded, and a hall dedicated to Guan Yin 观音, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, was built at the rear of the temple. Guan Yin (literally, one who perceives the cries of the world) is generally considered a Bodhisattva,¹⁵ and is looked upon as an incarnation of Avalokitesvara,¹⁶ or the Lord Looking Down with Pity. Because of enshrining Guan Yin, the name of the temple was changed to Ci Hu Gong 慈护宫 (the Palace of Mercy and Guardian). Given this re-naming, the temple transgressed a religious boundary to be consecrated to both Guan Yin and Tian Hou. The name Ci Hu Gong had a direct reference to Guan Yin's mercy and the attribute of her compassionate providence—*da ci da bei* 大慈大悲 (great compassion, great mercy). It also spoke for Tian Hou's guardian role and the honorific rubric bestowed on her—*hu guo bi min* 护国庇民 (guarding the

country and protecting citizens). Ci Hu Gong thus straddled Buddhism and Daoism, and exemplified a syncretism of both.

As both Tian Hou and Guan Yin are often venerated as the saviours of shipwrecks and quellers of disorder on the seas, some commentators maintain that Tian Hou has been consciously created to "offset" Guan Yin (Watson, 1985:298). Perhaps due to increased sea transport and maritime activities, they were construed to share similar supernatural power, and hence became more or less identical counterparts.

The cults of Tian Hou and Guan Yin share certain similarities. There is a popular image of Guan Yin portrayed as a beautiful young woman carrying a child in her arms. This representation is known as *Guan Yin song zi* 观音送子 (Guan Yin sends a child), and undoubtedly suggests her role as a giver of children and goddess of fertility. Similarly, Tian Hou is endowed with the power of divine intercession for gynaecological and childbearing problems. In a study of the cult of Tian Hou in the region of Fujian, it is observed that there is also a ritualistic performance called *Tian Fei song zi* 天妃送子 (Tian Fei sends a child) (Dean, 1993: 222).¹⁷ These two virgin goddesses are thus perceived as child-giving deities apart from their roles associated with the sea. As we can see, the Chinese religious systems have developed a syncretic matrix allowing differences in beliefs (and rites) to complement one another. Actually religious similarity is expressed as if it were religious difference as exemplified in the roles of Tian Hou and Guan Yin. This is the reason why they are enshrined in the same temple without religious friction.

After a lapse of thirty years, Ci Hu Gong was completely renovated in 1752. Given its new facelift, the Chinese called it *Xin Miao* 新庙 (New Temple). After a hundred years, the new temple became somewhat shabby, and in 1875 the temple complex was extensively refurbished and expanded. To commemorate the occasion, Magistrate Xu Nailai 许乃来 of Xiangshan county 香山县 (now called Zhongshan), bestowed an honorific tablet (dated 1876) with three well-written Chinese characters: 莲峰庙 Lian Feng Miao (the Lotus Peak Temple). The gilt wooden tablet bearing its official name has since been put up on the lintel of the door.¹⁸ This name has a direct reference to Macao's cartographic shape and its location. It is because Macao is likened to a lotus flower;

RELIGIÃO / Antropologia

the peninsula itself resembles the bud or flower and the isthmus the stem. The summit of the hill just behind the temple is called Lotus Peak.

In view of the naming and re-naming, it is not easy for the general public to distinguish whether it is a Buddhist or a Daoist temple. The name Lian Feng Miao is often mistaken for a Buddhist temple, chiefly because the lotus flower—denoting serenity and transcendence from mortality—is a salient identification of Buddhism. In fact, the temple embraces a double dedication to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy and the Daoist Goddess of the Sea. In this spirit, the demarcation of Buddhism and Daoism is blurred due to religious syncretism. Because of the syncretic sentiments, most of the Chinese in Macao would not insist on their specific religious identity, but they patronise this “sacred space” where a whole assortment of deities are ready to lend their ears.

Apart from transgressing Buddhist and Daoist boundaries, Lian Feng Miao specifically honours the Qing imperial commissioner Lin Zexu 林则徐 (1785-1850). Lin was an undaunted magistrate during the first infamous Opium War (1839-1842). Appointed by the faltering Qing government to curb the lucrative opium trade, he visited Macao seeking cooperation from the Portuguese officials. Given his tough measures and zealous drive, he antagonised the British, and war

broke out. This first Opium War led to the ceding of Hong Kong to the Union Jack. The Treaty of Nanjing signed in 1842 between Britain and China was the first in a series of unequal treaties that forcibly opened China to the West. Later, Lin fell out of favour and was sent off to a less important post in Xinjiang.

The temple was the historic venue of a conference between Lin and his entourage with the Portuguese officials. Standing near the entrance courtyard, Lin's statue was inaugurated on 10 December 1989, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his visit to Macao on 3 September 1839 and his patriotic contribution. In addition, the Lin Zexu Memorial Hall, built in the courtyard, was opened on 5 November 1997 commemorating the return of Hong Kong to China in July 1997. It exhibits photographs and memorabilia relating to opium trafficking during the peak era of western imperialism and colonialism. While thirteen friendship monuments built by the Macao Government during the last seven years of Portuguese rule are to stake their cultural legacies,¹⁹ Lin's statue and the memorial hall serve to arouse the collective memory of shameful foreign humiliation and to ensure the collective immortality of the Chinese people.

THE ABODE OF THE DIVINE

Lian Feng Miao is the abode of multitudinous divinities. To the right of the courtyard, there is a small shrine dedicated to Tu Di 土地 (literally, Soil-Earth), the Earth God, or the Protecting Spirit of Rural Places. Tu Di is in fact very low in rank in the hierarchy of the Daoist spirit world, and his supernatural power is limited. Adjacent to Tu Di is a guardian stone, Shi Gan Dang 石敢当 (the Stone that Dares to Undertake). Being commonly represented by the aniconic form²⁰ of a stone as an antidote to malign and inauspicious influences, Shi Gan Dang shares the same function as a stone carved lion in playing a guardian role. Both Tu Di and Shi Gan Dang are actually very minor Daoist deities²¹ attributed with minimal supernatural powers.

The temple complex consists of three blocks of inter-connected buildings. Each entrance of the three buildings is guarded by two stone lions.²² Just inside the entrance are two images of deities flanking the door, and each of them is put on a small altar. Unlike the four demon-like guardian gods in most Chinese



Courtyard of Guan Yin (Goddess of Mercy) Pavilion.

temples, the guardians here are human-like and scholarly. The central main building is comprised of a pavilion and two successive halls. The pavilion is enhanced by a raised stone platform (like an atrium), which is called the Four-cornered Pavilion. It is surrounded by tall pillars with stone railings, where there are a total of eighteen decorative lions serving to ward off malignant spirits. It was on this very stone platform that Lin Zexu met the Portuguese officials on 3 September 1839 in order to curb opium trafficking.

The first hall, spacious and magnificent, enshrines the image of Tian Hou, which is set on an elaborate altar. Her seated statue glows with golden colour, and a golden halo-like mandala is at the back. She holds a ceremonial blade, which is called a *gui* 圭, an auspicious object. Two attendants, Qian Li Yan 千里眼 (Thousand Mile Eye) and Shun Feng Er 顺风耳 (Fair Wind Ear), are flanking the altar. These two folk deities 'are credited with the possession of abnormally sensitive ocular and auricular perceptions' (Williams, 1988:338). They are portrayed in a fierce form and with a third eye. In Buddhism, the third eye is the eye of knowledge. While Thousand Mile Eye is holding an axe as his attribute, Fair Wind Ear is carrying a thunderbolt.

The second hall is dedicated to Guan Yin. Her golden image is seated on a lotus flower with a golden phoenix on each side. She is bedecked with three strands of pearls, and a halo topped by a lotus flower is meant to indicate her sainthood. Two Buddhist tutelary deities are flanking the altar: Di Cang Wang 地藏王²³ on the right and Wei Tuo 韦陀²⁴ on the left. Di Cang Wang (the King of the Subterranean Kingdom) is the Chinese manifestation of Kshitigarbha, the Buddha of Nether Regions. He visits Hell on errands of love and mercy and has an immense compassion for suffering souls. Wei Tuo is commonly known as the God of Justice. He is the Chinese manifestation of Veda (divine knowledge), a Hindu deity regularly invoked by the Chinese Buddhists as defender of the Buddhist faith and protector of monasteries. In the Buddhist world, Wei Tuo is the Prime Minister of Di Cang Wang, and this "political" relationship may explain their co-presence as guardian deities flanking Guan Yin. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the fearful and terrifying image of Wei Tuo with the pacific and calming forms of Guan Yin and Di Cang Wang may point to a



A detailed view of the temple's façade.

counteracting principle—harsh justice tempered by mercy and compassion.

What is special in this hall is that there is a "Guan Yin safe" near the altar. Every year, on the 26th day of the first lunar month, the safe is opened. On that day, believers flock together as early as possible and enter the temple with joss sticks in order to "borrow money" from Guan Yin. If they can make a profit during the year, they will come back and "repay" her by making offerings. Thus, Guan Yin's role as a "money-lender" is invented.

On both sides of the central main building, there are semi-detached wings. On the right, the lintel carries the name Wu Di Dian 武帝殿 (the Hall of the God of War). Inside the first hall, moreover, there is a tablet with an inscription Guan Sheng Di Jun Dian 关圣帝君殿 (the Hall of Guan the Saint King). This hall is dedicated to Guan Yu 关羽 (162-220 A.D.) a historical hero of the Three Kingdoms era (220-265 A.D.). He is better known as Guan Gong 关公; "Gong" is a ducal title bestowed on him. In 1594, Guan Yu was ennobled as Guan Di 关帝 (Guan the King), a title that honoured him as supporter of Heaven and protector of the kingdom. In 1813, he was grandiloquently canonised as Wu Di 武帝 (the God of War),²⁵ in recognition of his military prowess to defend the country from external threat. In 1856, he was given another title—Guan Da Fuzi 关大夫子 (Guan the

RELIGIÃO / Antropologia



A general view of the elaborate altar to Tian Hou goddess, flanked by the attendants Shung Feng Er (Fair Wind Ear), on far left, and Qian Li Yan (Thousand Mile Eyes).

Great Sage and Teacher).²⁶ Besides, he was deified as Wu Cai Shen 武财神 (the Military God of Wealth).²⁷ He is also one of the patron deities of literature, and in this respect he holds a book as an attribute. Guan Yu is venerated by the literati chiefly because he was traditionally credited with the ability to recite The Spring and Autumn Annals *Chun Qiu Zuo Zhuan* 春秋左传²⁸ from beginning to end.

After numerous steps of glorification, Guan Yu became a “divine human” and was eventually raised to “godhood”. He is taken as tutelary guardian of all brotherhoods, secret societies, and the police force. He is not only looked upon as the very personification of integrity, but he is also the embodiment of righteousness, loyalty, courage, justice, and generosity. The historical mortal gained recognition from Daoism,

Buddhism and Confucianism and eventually attained full stature as a supernatural protector and a symbol of Chinese national culture. By and large he is one of the most popular folk deities.

Guan Gong is flanked by Liu Bei 刘备 on the right and Zhang Fei 张飞 on the left outside the altar,²⁹ both are historical personages. Liu Bei (162-223 A.D.) was the emperor of Su 蜀 during the period of the Three Kingdoms, and Guan Gong was only his official. Given Liu's vocation in his youth of making baskets, he was deified as the God of Basket-makers. Zhang Fei (191-223 A.D.) is an assessor of Guan Gong. He is described as being eight feet in height, with a panther's head, round sparkling eyes, a voice like thunder, and a swallow's chin. After Guan's death, he became an itinerant pork-seller. He was thus defied as one of the gods of butchers.

This triadic group³⁰ represents three popular characters in the Chinese classic novel, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yan Yi* 三国演义), written around 1394 by Luo Guanzhong 罗贯中. In the novel, they swear to treat one another as brothers, and to offer mutual assistance in order to fight against the intruding Yellow Turbans. This famous scene is known as the "Oath in the Peach Garden". In the hall dedicated to Guan Gong, however, his two "brothers" are not treated with the same brotherly equality, but they just stand flanking their deified brother, like acolytes or attendants.

The second hall houses the spirit tablets of the deceased, arranged along the walls in tiers. The tablets bear the names and dates of birth and death. The Chinese revere their ancestors by putting their tablets in a temple. Only those who pay a certain sum of money can acquire a place there.

On the left of the central main building, the entrance bears the name Ren Shou Dian 仁寿殿 (the Hall of Benevolence and Longevity). The first hall is called Yi Ling Shen Nong Dian 医灵神农殿, which is dedicated to the Spirit of Healing and the God of Agriculture. Their golden statues, each with a halo at the back, are put side by side on the altar. They are flanked by two divine attendants: Cai Yao Tongzi 采药童子 (Herb-picking Lads). While Yi Ling is represented with two horns on the forehead, Shen Nong is portrayed with a long beard. Yi Ling is simply a collective name honoured to dispel epidemics. Shen Nong 神农 (2838-2698 B.C.) is the legendary second



Qian Li Yan (Thousand Mile Eye).

Emperor,³¹ and the divine farmer. Legend has it that he was eight feet seven inches in height and had the body of a man surmounted by the head of a bull. He represents the age of agricultural pursuits during which permanent settlements were established. He is said to have invented the cart and various kinds of agricultural tools, and established markets for the exchange of products. In *A Record of Researches into Spirits* (*Sou Shen Ji* 搜神记), a fictional and imaginary narrative of short stories compiled in about A.D. 317 by Gan Bao 干宝 (born c. A.D. 285), Shen Nong is described as both the God of Agriculture and of Medication. He is credited to have found ways of cultivating land for agriculture, and of using herbs for medication.

The next hall is called Wen Chang Dian 文昌殿 (the Hall of the God of Literature),³² but there is

RELIGIÃO / Antropologia



Shun Feng Er (Fair Wind Ear).

no Wen Chang statue. This Daoist deity is believed to have lived as a man named Zhang Ya 张亚 (A.D. 755-805). Born in Sichuan during the Tang dynasty, he was a brilliant writer and held an appointment in the Board of Rites. He was apotheosised in 1314 as Wen Chang and took his place among the gods of China. In Wen Chang Dian, two golden statues—Cang Jie 仓颉 and Ju Yong 沮诵—are honored on the altar. Both are the Gods of Writing. Tradition maintains that they invented the art of forming ancient Chinese characters by imitating the footprints of birds, which were known as “bird foot-prints writing”.³³ History relates that Cang Jie was appointed by Huang Di 黄帝 (the Yellow Emperor) (2698-2598 B.C.),³⁴ as the president of a commission of learned men to continue and complete the labors of Shen Nong on natural

history and the medicinal properties of plants (Werner, 1932:518). Cang Jie was given the title Shi Huang 史皇 (Prince of Scribes). The statue of Cang is put on the right side of the altar, and Ju is on the left. This placement indicates that Cang is the “Right Official”, and the right hand man of Huang Di, whereas Ju is the “Left Official”. Unfortunately, the Chinese inscriptions wrongly label Cang as the “Left Official” and Ju the “Right Official”.

Daoism used to appropriate ancient mythological lore in order to consolidate its status as the Chinese autochthonous religion. It even claimed that its original inspiration came from Huang Di. This mythical third emperor has been upheld as its primordial founder, thus going far back beyond Laozi in point of time and prestige. Hence, Huang Di comes to represent the starting point of Daoism.

The third hall is called Jin Hua Dou Mu Dian 金花痘母殿, which is dedicated to two Daoist deities: the Goddess of Child-bearing and Fecundity, and the Goddess of Smallpox and Child-disease. On the altar, the two golden statues are put side by side. Jin Hua is also known as Jin Hua Furen 金花夫人 (Madame of Golden Flower). Folk tale maintains that she was the wife of Hua Tuo 华佗. She is usually flanked by twelve midwives, six on each side. The midwives are portrayed in different postures taking care of babies³⁵ such as nursing a baby, putting a baby on her lap, playing with a baby at her knees, etc. There are, however, two postures depicted without babies: while one midwife holds a mirror and combs her hair, the other is engaged in sewing. Women who are desirous of babies will pray to the goddess and use their hours and dates of birth (as a base for calculation) to count on these twelve midwives in order to augur whether they can have offspring or not. If the count stops at one of the last two postures, it may suggest a mere chance. It is because the midwives are simply “idling” without taking care of babies.

Dou Mu 痘母 (Mother of Smallpox) is also known as Dou Shen 痘神 or Dou Mu Niang Niang 痘母娘娘. Legend has it that she had four sons; all were afflicted with the disease of smallpox. She was then granted the power to protect humankind against this scourge. She is believed to be a contemporary of Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 (will be discussed in the following section) and is one of the specialists appointed by Huang Di in Tian Yi Yuan 天医院 (the Celestial Ministry of Medicine).³⁶ She is sometimes represented

RELIGION / Anthropology

wearing a large shawl to protect her from cold. On the altar, there is a baby on her lap, an image mirroring the Holy Mother and Child. Her role is generally extended as the protectress of all kinds of child diseases, such as polio, diphtheria, measles, tetanus, etc. She is, however, rarely regarded as an important deity.

The glamour and popularity of the divine are susceptible to change. A few decades ago, it was a common phenomenon for a Chinese couple to bear six to ten children. Towards the end of the twentieth century, however, parents preferred minimizing childbearing even though there was no state policy (i.e. the one-family-one-child policy launched in 1979 on mainland China) to govern the birth rate in Macao. Even though the aura of the goddess of child-bearing and fecundity is eclipsed, she is still worshipped by women who seek to solve gynaecological problems or by those who wish to have a male heir for the continuity of the family tree. The goddess of smallpox and child-disease shares the same fate because advanced technology in medicine and improved hygiene have almost stripped the deity of her lustre. In particular, chicken pox is no longer regarded as the most fatal disease to children.

In every hall, there is a bronze bell and a wooden drum. In Hinduism the drum represents the first sacred sound “Om”, hence the drum alludes to the beginning

of life. In Buddhism the bell symbolises sound, and is intended to call hearts to the Awakening. Since the sound is generally very brief, the bell represents the belief that everything is of short duration, that all is fleeting (Frédéric, 1995:65). The bell and the drum used to serve as ritual instruments, but now they have become merely decorative motifs.

A BRICOLAGE OF POPULAR DEITIES

Lian Feng Miao also enshrines a plethora of euhemerised divinities. Some of their names are simply written on the tablets, while others are placed *en masse* as adjuncts near the altars. In spite of their unimportant placement, they never fail to attract a considerable number of worshippers. These deities are mostly drawn from Chinese classical texts, i.e. Creation of the Gods *Feng Shen Yan Yi* 封神演義,³⁷ The Romance of the Three Kingdoms *San Guo Yan Yi* 三国演义, and The Record of a Journey to the Western Paradise *Xi You Ji* 西遊記.³⁸ Such literary works provide abundant inspiration for the making of popular cults. We now turn to trace their origins.

Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 (1210-1120 B.C.) is also known as Jiang Taigong 姜太公 because he was given an honorific title as 太公望 Tai Gong Wang in 1129 B.C. Jiang is the pivot of Chinese mythology and one of the most fascinating characters in *Feng Shen Yan Yi*.³⁹ In this mythological novel, he is a warrior and a counsellor, being brave and magnanimous. He is given the Investiture Roster and assigned to euhemerise a total of three hundred and sixty-five good and evil spirits (corresponding to the days of a year) into the Daoist pantheon. This celestial, bureaucratic system consists of eight departments in charge of mundane world affairs. He thus eliminates the polarity of good and evil and creates the mythic theme of ultimate harmony between heaven, earth and man. In this way he is *de facto* the God of Chinese gods.

Legend claims that he practised Dao (the Way) on Mount Kunlun⁴⁰ for forty years. At the age of 72, he was sent by his master, the Heavenly Primogenitor *Yuan Shi Tian Zun* 元始天尊 (the Grand Master of Daoism), to descend the mountain to assist the sage Emperor Wu 武. At the age of 80, he was appointed Prime Minister and helped overthrow Emperor Zhou 紂 (1154-1121 B.C.). One of the most notorious tyrants in Chinese history, Emperor Zhou was the 28th



This page and overleaf, some aspects of the temple.

RELIGIÃO / Antropologia



descendant and the last ruler of the Shang dynasty (1523-1027 B.C.). Jiang Ziya is also worshipped as the god of fishermen because he used to angle not with a hook but with a straight needle, indicating that he would achieve success with straightness but not crookedness. His picture is often pasted on the walls of houses to ward off inauspicious spirits.

Xuan Tian Shang Di 玄天上帝 (the Lord of Black [Pavilions of] Heaven) is believed to have been active in the time of Emperor Zhou. He is also popularly known as Zhen Jun 真君 True Master. At the feet of his image as the true master, a tortoise and a serpent are placed. He is believed to have been born on a ray of light. At fifteen years of age, he left his parents and went to Tai He Mountain 太和山 in pursuit of magical charms. On an elevated peak of this mountain, he practised some wonderful exercises for forty-two years and acquired the ability to float in the air.

Tai Sui 太岁 is the minister of time and also known as the god of the annual cycle, being in charge of fortune and misfortune. His name is Yin Jiao 殷郊, the elder son of Emperor Zhou. In *Feng Shen Yan Yi*, he is only a minor character. Given his filial piety and bravery in a battle against demons, Jiang Ziya canonised him with the title Tai Sui. (His younger brother Yin Hong 殷洪 was made God of Five Grains [Wu Gu Shen 五谷神] being in charge of agricultural affairs.) The worship of Tai Sui was first noted in the reign of Shen Zong 神宗 (1068-1086) of the Song dynasty.

Being a stellar god, he 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. He can cause injury to people. In order to avoid calamities and to take precautions against his evil influence, he must be appeased, and a talisman is hung.

Cai Shen 财神, or Cai Bo Xing Jun 财帛星君, is the god of wealth. Lu Xing 禄星 (the Star-God of Affluence) is also looked upon as Cai Shen. The wealth god is a much-adored deity, who often holds an ingot as his attribute. Almost no god in Chinese culture is more universally worshipped than this giver of wealth. His images and portraits are to be found in nearly every household and temple. Like many other Chinese gods, the proto-being of the god of wealth has been ascribed to several persons. The original one is considered to be the deified spirit of Bi Gan 比干. In *Feng Shen Yan Yi*, Bi Gan is the uncle and Prime Minister of the tyrant Emperor Zhou. He committed suicide by pulling his heart out in order to show his loyalty and immense indignation to Daji 妲己, Emperor Zhou's notorious concubine.

Zhao Gong Ming 赵公明 of the Three Kingdoms period (220-265 A.D.) is another god of wealth (Werner, 1932:515). He was the younger brother of the famous hero Zhao Zilong 赵子龙. In addition, Lui Hai 刘海, a child often depicted with a mystic three-legged toad from a Daoist legend, is worshipped as a money-giver. Other acolytes of the god of wealth are a pair of Daoist deities called He He Er Xin 和合二仙 (Twin Genii of Harmony).⁴¹ They were two historical figures called Han Shan 寒山 and Shi De 拾得 active around the mid-seventh century. As attributes, one holds a lotus flower 荷 and the other a box 盒. The two Chinese characters (荷 and 盒) are the homophones of their names (和 and 合), which carry the rebus of "harmony and union bearing wealth".

Hua Tuo 华佗 (active at the end of the 2nd century A.D., died 220 A.D.) is the most celebrated member of the Chinese apotheosised medical profession.⁴² In *Sou Shen Ji*, his healing skills are exaggeratedly dramatised by his pulling a snake out of a sick girl's body. A historical figure, he is the Chinese surgeon specialist *par excellence*, and the patron deity of surgeons and physicians. In *San Guo Yan Yi* he is a key character who cured Guan Gong's

arm, poisoned by an arrow wound, by opening the flesh and scraping the bone.

Lu Zu 吕祖, also known as Lu Tongbin 吕洞宾 (755-805), is popularly dubbed as Lu Chunyang 吕纯阳, meaning the pure essence of the universe. He is believed to have attained to immortality at the age of 50 and was deified as one of the Daoist Eight Immortals.⁴³ It is said he acquired the mysteries of alchemy and the magic formula of the elixir of life. He generally carries a sword across his back and holds a flywhisk as his symbol. The flywhisk alludes to his ability to fly at will through the air and to walk on the clouds.⁴⁴ He is worshipped as a fertility deity and honoured by scholars as the god of ink-makers. He is also regarded as the patron of barbers.

Pao Cheng 包拯 (999-1062 A.D.), better known as Pao Gong 包公, is a brilliant scholar and political critic of documented history. In the Song dynasty, he was appointed magistrate in the capital at present-day Kaifeng 开封, in Henan 河南 province. In his lifetime, he was dedicated to public service and became known as a champion of justice. He stood out as an honest, stern and upright official. He was respected for administering the law without partiality. Hence he was called Pao Qing Tian 包青天 (Pao the Blue Sky) alluding to his uncorrupted character. He eventually assumed legendary, even mythic proportions. Pao is the embodiment of impartiality, courage, severity, sympathy, sincerity, generosity, and good faith. His moral qualities as magistrate are the requisites for an attribute that would play a crucial part in the development of a tradition to respect law and order. Stories of magistrate Pao being the courtroom judge are favourite topics of storytellers, chanteurs, and actors.⁴⁵ He has become an icon to satisfy people's hunger for justice in law, and is venerated as the god of justice.

Hua Guang Tai Di 华光大帝 (Great Ruler of Glory and Light) is one of the principal disciples of Sakyamuni. It is said he died with Sakyamuni but is destined to return under the name of Hua Guang Buddha 华光佛. He is often referred to as She Li Buddha 舍利佛 (Padmaprabha). A protecting deity of temples, he is also one of the gods of goldsmiths and silversmiths.

Xuan Zang 玄奘 (602-664 A.D.) is a saintly Buddhist monk. He is also known as Tang San Cang 唐三藏 (meaning Tripitaka, the three holy treasures of

Buddhism). Under the patronage of the Tang Emperor Tai Zong 太宗 (627-650 A.D.), he travelled in 629 A.D. from Xi'an, China to Nalanda, India. He spent sixteen years (629-645 A.D.) in India where he studied Buddhism. On his return from the "Holy Land" he brought back many Buddhist scriptures and relics to the Middle Kingdom. He laid the foundations of a re-interpreted Confucianism. He is regarded as the great Chinese master of law. His adventurous account of his journey to India was novelised, and he became the protagonist in the mythological work, *Xi You Ji*.

Sun Wukong 孙悟空 is the Monkey King. Wukong is a philosophical-religious name, which means aware-of-vacuity (or emptiness). This Buddhist-oriented name implies satiric allusion to his witty antics and foolish pranks. He is the animal-turned-god, who is dramatised as the chief mythic character in *Xi You Ji*. In the novel, Sun Wukong is the self-proclaimed King of the Monkeys in Hua Guo Shan 花果山 (the Mountain of Flower and Fruit). He possesses transcendental powers of seventy-two metamorphoses into human or animal forms. He then becomes proud, fun-loving, restive, rebellious and even antagonistic to the immortals. In order to make use of his supernatural power and to suppress his Prometheus-like mischief, the Jade Emperor in Heaven assigns him, together with Sha Seng 沙僧 (the River Genie) and Zhu Bajie 猪八戒 (the Pig Fairy), to accompany and protect Xuan Zang all



RELIGIÃO / Antropologia

through the arduous journey to India. The Monkey King's unchallenged magical powers eventually overcome the most adverse circumstances during the mission, which is rife with all sorts of hindrances, obstacles, misfortunes and pitfalls. He has, therefore, long been honoured in temples and often in Chinese households for his unusual ability and agility in averting undesirable situations, and overcoming all kinds of hardships in the journey of human life. Being a prankster, he is the very emblem of the queller of tribulations and an iconoclastic fighter against hypocrisy and pomposity.

Unlike Confucianism's hostility to the so-called fantasies and occultism of mythology, both Daoism and Buddhism go hand in hand with popular beliefs and Chinese classical texts, out of which these two religions incorporate historical, mythological and legendary characters, many of which can be found in Lian Feng Miao.

CONCLUSION


The Gods and goddesses enshrined in Lian Feng Miao are numerous. No Chinese temple in Macao has ever been dedicated to such a *mélange* of divinities from Buddhism, Daoism and folk religion in order to serve the needs of worshippers. The idea of belonging exclusively to one particular spiritual organization or religion is not common among the majority of Chinese. Most of them are polytheistic, and they would go to temples to pray for blessings from certain deities according to situational need rather than permanent religious affiliation. Lian Feng Miao best illustrates the syncretic idioms advocated by Lin Zhaoen in the Ming dynasty. The dynamics of syncretism has effectively harmonised, reconciled and incorporated diverse religious elements. As such, worshippers from both Daoism and Buddhism, and even those without a clear idea of what religion they belong to, will gather there to pray for divine blessings. While earthly values, such as wealth, happiness, righteousness, longevity, and loyalty are projected to particular deities, economic prosperity and health care are ascribed to specialized patrons. The whole pantheon of deities thus offers a potpourri of beliefs and provides people from different social strata with chances to select and adopt what suits best their fancy or meets their requirements in the mundane life.

Lian Feng Miao succinctly demonstrates the eclectic complexity of Chinese religious culture, which embraces myths, legends, history and folklore. In the legends and history of early China, there were plentiful sources about heroes, fairies, and devils. These mythological and historical accounts are a central component in the development of popular cults in China. History can then be conceived as not at all separated from but a continuation of mythology. Moreover, history and mythology are juxtaposed and textualised in classical literary works, from which a myriad of supernaturals is created. In this way, ancient texts are made to serve as a vehicle for Daoism to consolidate its status as the Chinese autochthonous religion.

Like the Grecian notion of euhemerism, the multitudinous Chinese divinities are almost all mortals who have been deified. The interpretation of Chinese myths hence cannot ignore traditional accounts of historical personages and events. In contrast to Confucianism's rejection of ancient myths and legends, Daoism thoroughly confounds mythological lore with real history and espouses the practice to euhemerise historical characters. The deification, depending on the recommendation of the people, takes place in the Cheng Huang Miao 城隍廟 (the Temple of the City God),⁴⁶ which is more or less like the Vatican, the centre of power in religiosity.

In Lian Feng Miao we can trace a rich repertoire of Chinese myths and religious symbols. These mythic and religious memories are enduring cultural forces that serve to buttress social institutions and are crucial for the continuing hold of national cultures. Anthony D. Smith argues that myths and symbols are seen as cultural attributes, which inspire and sustain collective experiences of a sense of dignity, solidarity, and identity for human populations; hence the "myth-symbol" complex is vital in social and cultural processes (Smith, 1986:13-31). Bronislaw Malinowski has even emphasised that myth is not rooted in ignorance; it is neither an idle rhapsody nor an aimless outpouring of vain imaginings, but an indispensable ingredient of human civilization (Malinowski, 1954:97-101). He contends, 'The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events' (Malinowski, 1954:146). Lian

Feng Miao enshrines legendary emperors, mythological deities and historical characters, and traces them back to the initial Chinese history. They are believed to have lived in the third millennium B.C., a period of “primordial” nobility and pristine purity. They are held to be founders of the ancient Chinese Empire and presented as the country’s heroes. The Chinese myth-symbol thus binds the ages together and becomes part of the daily life in Macao. Lian Feng Miao apparently reflects a nostalgic longing for Chinese myths and rituals in the distant past.

Macao is a unique urban receptacle able to celebrate its religious toleration and various cultural infusions. The harmonious coexistence of a mélange of religious faiths, such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam,⁴⁷ and Bahá’í,⁴⁸ not only indicates its syncretic cultural matrices and religious compromise among one another’s belief systems, but also testifies to a negotiated accommodation of East-West religious praxis. Macao, on the threshold of the third millennium, can perhaps serve as a vicarious model to some places where destructive religious confrontations and ethnic clashes are a matter of daily reality. 

NOTES

- 1 After the Diocese of Macao was formally established in 1576, Macao was believed to have built more churches and chapels for its size than any other country. It was soon bestowed with a sanctified name, “City of the Name of God”, and prided itself as the “Christian City” and “Holy City”.
- 2 The word “syncretism” derives from a historic incident in which the citizens of Crete overcame internal disputes and united against a common enemy. See *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Hence, “syncretism” denotes the reconciliation or fusion of conflicting religious beliefs or principles.
- 3 The term “euhemerism” was named after the fourth century B.C. Greek mythographer and philosopher, Euhemerus. He advocated a theory that the gods of mythology were merely deified mortals.
- 4 On philosophical and religious Daoism, see Keith Crim (ed.), *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religion*, pp. 738–745.
- 5 Laozi is the reputed author of the Daoist masterpiece *Dao De Jing* 道德经 (Classic of the Dao and Its Virtue), written in 550 B.C.
- 6 Buddhism entered China from Central Asia in 67 A.D. It was not until under the reign of Wu Di (502–550 A.D.), the founder of the Liang dynasty, that it flourished.
- 7 It has been argued that Confucianism is not a full-fledged religion in the theistic sense, since it set up no god as the premise of its teachings, and its basic principles were developed mainly from pragmatic considerations. Confucianism is only regarded as a socio-political doctrine having religious qualities. See C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, pp. 26–27. See also Xinzhong Yao, “Chinese Religions” in Jean Holm (ed.), *Myth and History* (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1994).
- 8 Folk religion is the unwritten religious beliefs and practices of average people within traditional Chinese society. See Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*, pp. 5–6.
- 9 Lin Zhaoen shared the same surname and birthplace as Lin Mo, who was deified as Tian Hou in 1684. Unlike Lin Mo, Lin Zhaoen did not become a figure of national importance in his own time or after his death.
- 10 On Lin Zhaoen’s contribution to religious syncretism, see Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), Chapter VIII “The Legacy of Lin Chao-en.”
- 11 Similar to the term syncretism, eclecticism denotes the selection of doctrines or elements from various and diverse sources for the purpose of combining them into a satisfying or acceptable style.
- 12 On the harmonization of the Three Teachings, see Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, Chapter III “The Heyday of Syncretism.”
- 13 The term “bricolage” is defined as the assembly of heterogeneity.
- 14 On the origin of Tian Hou, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Local Cultures of South and East China*, p. 402. See also Li Xianzhang, *Mazu Xinyang Yanjiu*. On Tian Hou in Macao, see Zhang Wenqin 章文钦, *Aomen yu Zhonghua Lishi Wenhua* 澳门与中华历史文化, pp. 248–62.
- 15 In Sanskrit, *Bodhi* means “enlightenment”, and *sattva* means “of essence”. “Bodhisattva” embraces the idea of grace, and is the image of perfect compassion and perfect knowledge, which is virtually the emblematic representation of human ethics. A Bodhisattva can be considered an “apprentice Buddha” or “Buddha-in-the-making”.
- 16 In Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara means “all-seeing one and all-hearing one”. *Avalokita* means “looking on”, and *svara* means “sound”.
- 17 It has been argued, however, that the effigies of Guan Yin shown with a child on the knees are probably the Buddhist transposition of the Daoist “child-giving” deity, namely Tianxin Songzi 天仙送子. See Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism: Iconographic Guides*, pp. 178–9.
- 18 Despite its official name, the Portuguese used to call it *o Templo das Portas do Cerco*, or the Temple of the Barrier Gate, because it was located near the Barrier Gate.
- 19 On the Friendship Monuments, see Christina Miu Bing Cheng, “Macao: the Farming of Friendship.”
- 20 The term “aniconic” used to refer to a depiction in which the Buddha’s presence is indicated by an “absent signifier”, such as a *bodhi* (pipal) tree, a wheel, a golden deer, etc. It now denotes a representation of an image through symbols or emblems, while the anthropomorphic (human) form is absent.
- 21 On various Daoist deities honoured in Macao, see Huang Zhaohan 黄兆汉 and Zheng Weiming 郑炜明, 香港与澳门的道教 *Taoist Religion in Hong Kong and Macao*.
- 22 Originated in Iran, lions serve as the symbol of strength and courage throughout Asia. In Buddhism, the lion is regarded as guardian of the Law, and its roar represents the “voice of the Law”. In China, it is considered a beneficial animal and called the “Buddha’s dog”. See Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism: Iconographic Guides*, p. 249. Apparently the lion transcends religious designations but is adopted widely as a motif to guard against evil forces.
- 23 Di Cang Wang is held to be Over-Lord of Hell and is senior to Yan Lo Wang 阎罗王 (Yama), God of Hell. Yan Lo Wang and his ten

RELIGIÃO / Antropologia

- judges are in a subordinate position under him. See E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 498.
- 24 Wei Tuo, a tutelary *deva* (spirit of heaven) borrowed from India and Tibet, is a military Bodhisattva.
- 25 Guan Yu is no bellicose war-mongering god. It has been argued that the translation of Wu Di to “God of War” is not very accurate. Rather, it should be “God who defends the state, civilization and morality”. See Jonathan Chamberlain, *Chinese Gods*, “Kuan Ti: God of War”.
- 26 On Guan Yu’s posthumous titles since 220 A.D., see Edwin D. Harvey, *The Mind of China* (New Haven, p. 264).
- 27 On the various Gods of Wealth in Chinese folk beliefs, see Basil M. Alexiev, “The Chinese Gods of Wealth,” a lecture delivered at the School of Oriental Studies, the University of London (published by the School of Oriental Studies in conjunction with the China Society, 1928).
- 28 It covers a time span from 722-468 B.C. recording historical events of some 250 years by a number of writers.
- 29 Guan Yu is often represented in a group of three, sometimes flanked by Zhou Cang 周倉, his bodyguard, and Guan Ping 關平, his adopted son.
- 30 A triadic group is different from a trinitarian group. The former consists of heterogeneous elements and lacks the essential homogenous element of a trinity (e.g. the Greek mythological triad of Zeus, Poseidon, Hades). The latter appears in three distinct manifestations but embodies one spiritual power (e.g. the Christian Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost—three persons in one substance).
- 31 Fu Xi 伏羲 (the God of Hunting), Shen Nong 神農 (the God of Agriculture) and Huang Di 黃帝 (the God of Architecture) are known as San Huang 三皇, the Three Emperors. This ancestral triad may rightly begin an account of the primordial myths of China, and has been arranged in such a way as to explain the development of early Chinese civilization. On the Three Emperors, see Canon J.A. MacCulloch (ed.), *The Mythology of All Races*, Vol. III, Chapter II.
- 32 Formerly, at the back of the hall of Guan Yin, there was Wen Chang Garret, but it was demolished for urban development.
- 33 From early pictographic symbols, Chinese written characters evolved to highly abstract ideographic writing.
- 34 Huang Di’s given name is Xuan Yuan 軒轅, so he is also known as Xuan Yuan Huang Di 軒轅黃帝. Legend maintains that he was a great inventor. He helped improve upon agricultural work and studied the properties of various herbs, which he made into medicines. He is taken as the starting point of all miraculous and fabulous national events and a source of the early myths of China. He reputedly founded the Chinese Empire after defeating the aboriginal chief Chi You 蚩尤. He is the only one (among the Three Emperors) to whom a distinct personality is assigned. In him there is a semblance of human individuality associated with great achievements that brought about the beginning of Chinese civilization. Being the last mythical character at the dawn of the historical period in China, he represents the central point of departure from mythological fancy.
- 35 As I cannot gather any written source on Jin Hua Furen, I turn to a knowledgeable informant, my mother.
- 36 Fu Xi, Shen Nong and Huang Di are a sort of ancestral triad of medicine gods, superior to the actual god or king of medicine. See E. T. C. Werner, *A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology*, p. 505.
- 37 *Feng Shen Yan Yi* was developed over the centuries as a folk tale. According to historical documents, it first appeared in book form in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). It is believed that a Daoist named Lu Xixing 陆西星 is the most plausible author. See Pin Pin Wan, *Investiture of the Gods (“Fengshen Yanyi”): Sources, narrative structure, and mythical significance*, p. 3. The author wove the tale of Emperor Zhou’s downfall from historical fact and popular folklore images of fairies, sprites, gods, goddesses, and their feudal rulers. It is an interplay of myths, legendary sources and historical accounts. On the English translation, see Zhizhong Gu (Trans.), *Creation of the Gods*.
- 38 *Xi You Ji* by Wu Chengen 吴承恩 was first published in 1592. Like *Feng Shen Yan Yi*, it also had a long historical growth from the folk art of storytelling before it assumed its written form.
- 39 There is a supplementary short story extolling Jiang Ziya’s virtue as a magistrate. See Gan Bao 干宝, *Sou Shen Ji* 搜神记, pp. 27-9.
- 40 In Chinese mythology, Kunlun Mountain is a paradise where immortals dwell.
- 41 The Twin Genii of Harmony are also patron deities of merchants. They are mostly worshipped by merchants because they ‘understand the value of union and peaceful harmony in business, and the dependence of wealth upon happy partnership.’ See Basil M. Alexiev, “The Chinese Gods of Wealth,” p. 5.
- 42 Other famous gods of medicines or remedies are Bian Que 扁鹊 (active during the first quarter of the 6th century B.C.) and Sun Simao 孙思邈 (died 682 A.D.)
- 43 The “Eight Immortals” are legendary beings of the Daoist sect. The eight represent all kinds of people—youth, old, female, male, civil, military, poor, rich, afflicted, cultured and noble. Only three of them were historical personages; the others are mentioned only in fables or romances. They are said to have lived at various times and attained to immortality through their studies of nature’s secrets. Having been deified, they dwell in mountains and hills; to whom no temples are consecrated. See C. A. S. Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs*, p. 151.
- 44 The fly-whisk represents obedience to the Buddhist law and a symbol of the compassion of Avalokitesvara towards all beings. However, it transgresses religious boundaries and becomes the typical accessory of Lu Zu.
- 45 Most Chinese probably know of Pao Cheng, not as the minister and political critic of documented history, but as the courtroom judge of popular drama and fiction. On Judge Pao plays, see George A. Hayden, *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).
- 46 Cheng Huang is the guardian divinity of the walls and ditches, who is equivalent to the celestial mandarin of a city or town in human life. He is held responsible for peace and order in the territory he governs. Cheng Huang was claimed to be of Daoist creation, but this deity was mentioned in the Zhou 周 dynasty (1122-221 B.C.), long before Daoism became a religion. See C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, p. 25.
- 47 Even though Macao’s Muslim community has only about 500 members, they have formed the Islamic Association of Macao. The Muslims plan to build a new mosque for local and visiting Muslims in 2004. See *South China Morning Post*, October 18, 2002.
- 48 The Bahá’í Faith, founded in 1844, is based upon the teachings of the Persian prophet Bahá’u’lláh, and was recognised by the United Nations in 1948. He is regarded by his faithful as God’s latest divine messenger after Buddha, Jesus and others. In Macao, the Bahá’í Faith has attracted about 2,000 followers since it was introduced in 1953. Macao’s first international school—the School of the Nations—is run by Bahá’ís, though not as a Bahá’í school.

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