

Printing and Religion in the Life of Fu Jinquan: Alchemical Writer, Religious Leader, and Publisher in Sichuan

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Abstract

This article explores the life and work of a 19th century author of Daoist alchemical works, religious leader and publisher: Fu Jinquan (傅金銓, fl. 1800). Fu, a native of Jiangxi and a very active Daoist intellectual, moved to Sichuan in 1817, attracted by the fertile religious milieu, the possibility of establishing an altar for the reception of writing from Lü Dongbin and the creation of vibrant community around this altar, as well as the flourishing printing culture, of which he took full advantage when he published his *opera omnia* at the

Elena Valussi teaches Chinese and East Asian History at Loyola University. She obtained her Ph.D. from the School of Asian and African Studies, University of London, in 2003, with a dissertation about Daoist meditation techniques for women (Beheading the Red Dragon: A History of Female Inner Alchemy in China). She has published several articles on female alchemy in peer reviewed journals, among them: “Female alchemy and paratext: how to read *nüdan* in a historical context,” *Asia Major*, 21.2 (2008): 153-193; “Blood, tigers, dragons. The physiology of transcendence for women,” *IASTAM Journal of Asian Medicine*, 4.1 (2009): 46–85; “Men and women in He Longxiang’s *Nüdan hebian* (Collection of female alchemy),” *Nannü, Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill), 10.2 (2008): 242–278. She is interested in the intersection between gender medicine and religion. More recently, she has been interested in the transmission of Daoist knowledge and texts among intellectuals in Qing China. She is one of the editors of the “Daozang Jiyao Project.”

printing press previously established by his relative Fu Jinduo 傅金鐸. Fu's case speaks to elements that are typical of the development of Daoist intellectual communities in the Qing (1644–1911) period: greater geographical mobility; the unprecedented spreading of alchemical literature through a wide network of writers and practitioners; widespread use of spirit writing séances as a means to receive and produce new writings; the growing influence of Daoist immortal Lü Dongbin in these séances; the use of Confucian as well as Buddhist ideas deeply interwoven with Daoist ideas and practices; the use of printing as a means to spread alchemical knowledge, the localization of production of religious knowledge through small printing houses, and the growth of lay organizations and politics. Despite the fact that Fu is only one example of the strengthening of local religious arenas, studying him highlights previously less known Daoist networks in Sichuan, as well as powerfully connecting the diffusion of religious knowledge to the rising of local commercial printing in Sichuan.

Keywords: Fu Jinquan, Daoism, Qing dynasty, printing, Sichuan

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