

Spirit-Writing and Salvation: The Development of the Ming–Qing Daoist Spirit-Writing Cults of Lüzu and Related Literati Spirit-Writing Altars

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Abstract

Since the mid-Ming period, Lüzu's 呂祖 (or Ancestor Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓) spirit-writing cult has been so popular within the Daoist milieu that it was regarded as the mainstream development of Daoism in the past few centuries. This paper focuses on exploring the overall development of Lüzu's spirit-writing cult from the late Ming Wanli reign (1573–1620) to the Qing Jiaqing reign (1796–1820). The present study shows that Lüzu's spirit-writing cult in this specified period was characterized by four religious features in general.

This research is based on the extant collections of multiple Lüzu scriptures that emerged from Lüzu's spirit-writing altars throughout China from the Ming Wanli period to the Qing dynasty. A holistic perspective is adopted to arrange and analyze these collected materials so as to explore

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the general historical context in which Lüzu's spirit-writing cult developed in the Ming–Qing era and to study the related literati spirit-writing groups. Besides, through investigating how devotees of Lüzu's spirit-writing altars in different places continuously built up Lüzu's spirit-writing cult, this paper reveals how Lüzu's celestial status and divine connotations had been promoted and expanded continually at these altars during the period 1573–1820. It is worth noting that the literature involved in this part of discussion includes nineteen pieces of “Lüzu gao” 呂祖誥 (Lüzu's Spirit-altar Proclamations) the author gathered from different editions of *Lüzu quanshu* 呂祖全書 (Complete Writings of Ancestor Lüzu). Lastly, this paper will discuss the underlying reason why the Qing imperial court conferred on Lüzu the title “Xieyuan Zanyun Chunyang Yanzheng Jinghua Fuyou Dijun” 變元贊運純陽演正警化孚佑帝君 and included him in the official worship in the ninth year of the Jiaqing reign, which led to an empire-wide worship (*tongsi* 通祀) of Lüzu as ordained by the Ministry of Rites. The author concludes that the worship of Lüzu at the official and local levels in the Qing dynasty was the result of a boom in the popularity of Lüzu's spirit-writing cult during the period 1573–1820.

Keywords: history of Lüzu's cult, Lüzu's spirit writing, literati spirit-writing altars, Ming–Qing Daoism, Daoism and spirit writing

降乩度世——明清道教呂祖降乩信仰 的發展及相關文人乩壇的研究

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摘要

從明中葉以降而迄當代，呂祖降乩信仰一直在道教裡盛行，且可說是道教在這數百年歷史發展中的主要一脈。本論文將集中考察明萬曆(1573–1620)至清嘉慶(1796–1820)年間，道教呂祖扶乩信仰的整體發展面貌。

本論文的研究文獻將依據目前可以收集到的從明萬曆至清代年間在各地呂祖乩壇所湧現的眾多呂祖道經的彙集並以整體研究的視野來把握、整理及分析明清時期呂祖扶乩信仰的歷史脈絡以及與之相關的文人乩壇群體。其次，透過研究不同地方的呂祖乩壇對呂祖扶乩信仰的不斷建構，本論文將探討呂祖乩壇在明萬曆至清嘉慶年間的發展過程中，呂祖的神格地位及其神明內涵如何獲得不斷的提升和擴大。特別值得指出的是，這部分的討論所依據的文獻資料將包括筆者在各種《呂祖全書》的刊本裡收集到的十九篇〈呂祖誥〉。最後，本論文將討論嘉慶九年呂祖受官方敕封為「燮元贊運純陽演正警化孚佑帝君」並被納入官祀，以至禮部飭令各省直地方通祀呂祖的背後成因，並得出結論：清代呂祖正祀的官方化及地方化都是由明萬曆至清嘉慶間的呂祖扶乩信仰熱潮所引發的結果。

關鍵詞：呂祖信仰歷史、呂祖降乩、文人道教乩壇、明清道教、道教與扶乩