

Chinese Popular Religion: Linking Fieldwork and Theory
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A Northern God in the South: Xuantian Shangdi in Singapore and Malaysia¹

Jean DeBernardi

Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta

This paper explores the modern expansion of Daoist networks through a case study focusing on the veneration of Xuantian Shangdi in Singapore at a spirit medium temple. For decades Chinese who practiced popular Daoism in Singapore did so with little or no contact with temples and devotees

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in Mainland China. Today, open borders, convenient travel, and mass media have allowed practitioners of the religion in greater China to join a growing global network of Daoists whose participants frequently interact at pilgrimage sites, conferences, and festival events. Singaporean Chinese Daoists maintain links with Daoists in China, including the Daoist priests, nuns, and martial artist at Wudang Mountain. Singaporeans travel to this famous pilgrimage site, and Wudang's Daoist priests, nuns, and martial artists make frequent trips to Singapore to participate in conferences and temple events. Contemporary Daoists also make extensive use of the Internet and mass media to develop their network relationships and to promote better understanding and veneration of their religion.

Keywords: Daoism, Singapore, spirit mediums, mass media, globalization

For many years Chinese who practiced Daoism in Singapore and Malaysia did so with little or no contact with temples or devotees in the mainland. With open borders, convenient travel, and new media, Daoists now frequently interact at pilgrimage sites, co-celebrate ritual and festival events, and attend international conferences that bring together scholars and practitioners from the entire world. In this paper, I explore the extension of Daoist networks and the modern promotion of Daoism through a case study focusing on the veneration of Xuantian Shangdi (the Emperor of the Dark Heavens).

At Wudang Mountain, on dates commemorating the god's birth (3-3) and ascension days (9-9), devout pilgrims climb to a mountain top temple known as the Golden Peak to venerate Xuantian Shangdi. Many pilgrims also stop at Zixiaogong, a major Quanzhen Daoist monastery, to pray or to have statues of the god ritually charged. At Zixiaogong priests and nuns venerate the god by performing liturgies designed to influence the constellations to avert disaster and

bring peace, prosperity, and harmony to humans.

When Chinese from Southeastern China migrated to Southeast Asia, they brought with them the practice of venerating Xuantian Shangdi on the third day of the third lunar month and the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. Southeast Asian Chinese also retained the practice of performing a ritual of ascent during this juncture in the lunar cycle. In Penang Island, Malaysia, for example, pilgrims climb a steep hill to pray at Temple of Clear View (Cheng Kuan Si 清觀寺), a hilltop temple overlooking the sea. Singapore has no hilltop temples devoted to Xuantian Shangdi, but a temple recently build in an industrial zone and named “Wudang Mountain” supplies devotees with a ladder leading to a small platform.

Xuantian Shangdi is an astral deity associated with the North and the element water. The third Ming Emperor regarded the god as his patron deity and sponsored the development of an organized complex of Daoist temples and shrines dedicated to this deity (some of whose bronze statues are said to have been modeled on the emperor himself) at Wudang Mountain. During the Ming the god's cult became popular nationwide, including the coastal provinces of Southeastern China (Chao 2011; Seaman 1987). Veneration of the deity is widespread, but devotees still regard the temple complex in northwestern Hubei Province as Xuantian Shangdi's primary shrine.

In Min-speaking communities in Southeastern China and Southeast Asia, Xuantian Shangdi is one among many deities believed to enter into the body of spirit mediums. So embodied, the gods-in-their-mediums are said to “save humankind” by performing healing rituals and demonic expulsions. In Singapore and Malaysia, some Chinese further identify this god as one of the Nine Emperor Gods, who are venerated at a festival held during the first nine days of the ninth lunar month (see DeBernardi 2004: Chapter 8).



Figure 1 Spirit medium possessed by Xuantian Shangdi at the Nine Emperor God's Festival. George Town, Penang, 1980. (Photograph: Jean DeBernardi)

In 1980, at one major Nine Emperor Gods temple, a muscular male spirit medium possessed by Xuantian Shangdi fell into trance together with spirit mediums possessed by Nezha, a child warrior, and the acrobatic Monkey God. Together the gods-in-their-mediums performed martial arts displays and a spectacular ritual in which they blew liquid onto a pan of hot oil, igniting columns of fire in the temple.

In 1980, Penangites knew the *Journey to the West*, which tells the Monkey God's story, and which had been made into animations and films, and also recommended that I read the *Romance of the Investiture of the Gods* (*Feng Shen Yenyi*) in which Nezha (whom Penangites affectionately call the “Baby God”) plays a major role. But no one could answer my questions about Xuantian Shangdi, nor could Penang booksellers offer me any books that retold his story.

My quest for the god's story finally led me to Master Lim Peng Eok, an English-educated spirit medium who had privately published his own translation of the *Journey to the North*. Although he translated the story into English, he supplied Chinese characters and romanized Southern Min for personal names, titles, place names like Wudang Mountain, and religious terms like the *dao*. Throughout the translation he referred to Xuantian Shangdi as *Chosu Kong* (*Zushigong*), the ancestral patriarch, which implies that he was the founder of a sect (see DeBernardi 2006: Chapter 6).²

The *Journey to the North* offers the story of a god who chose to be born human because of his desire for a jeweled tree, then pursued a quest to regain heaven through successive rebirths. In an interview with me, Abbot Li Guangfu at Wudang Mountain explained that the god was one reincarnated soul of the Jade Emperor; he also appears to be Shakyamuni Buddha in one of his reincarnations. Through the literary device of a life story involving multiple rebirths, the story syncretizes elements of Daoism and Buddhism, creating a founding myth for Quanzhen Daoists whose ascetic practices and monastic lifestyle are modeled on Buddhist practices. In his later rebirth he cultivated the *dao* at Wudang Mountain, where he excised his intestines and stomach, a transparent symbol of his success in overcoming human desires, and finally ascended to heaven. His excised organs became transformed into a snake and tortoise. Statues represent the deity as a warrior seated on a throne holding a sword, his right foot planted on a snake, and his left on a tortoise.³

2 Unlike other vernacular novels like the *Journey to the West*, *Romance of the Investiture of the Gods* or the *Story of Jigong*, *Journey to the North* was not available in Chinese at local bookstores and I am unaware of any popular translations.

3 Historians explain the god's association with the snake and tortoise in light of the fact that the god was originally an astral deity associated with the north, and that the snake and the tortoise were named northern constellations.

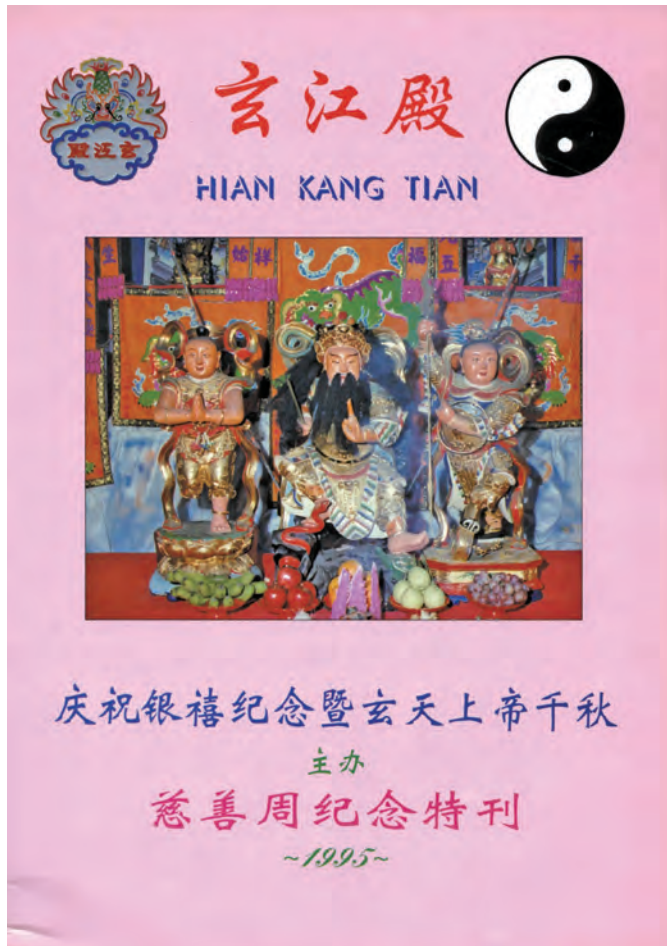


Figure 2 Cover of Xuan Jiang Dian's 1995 anniversary volume, showing a statue of Xuantian Shangdi standing on the god's emblems the snake and tortoise. Singapore, 1995.

A reader who lacked the pilgrim's first-hand experience of Wudang Mountain could not know that the story's episodes were set in real locations, or that shrines in those locations commemorated key episodes in the god's spiritual progress. The reader can only fully comprehend the story by traveling the mountain, and

experiencing the different episodes through the landscape. Indeed, the connection between Wudang Mountain and the story are so intimate that historian of religion John Lagerwey regards the god's story as a guidebook to the mountain (1992). To give but one of many examples, from the Southcliff Temple (*Nanan Gong*) pilgrims may follow a narrow mountain trail to a stone platform where Xuantian Shangdi is said to have meditated and achieved the *dao*, discarding his body into the mountain abyss while his spirit ascended to heaven.

The god's story connects him both with the mountain and with the northern asterism known as the Northern Bushel, which Westerners call the Big Dipper. On the ninth day of the ninth lunar month—the so-called double *Yang* date—the Daoist priests and nuns at Wudang Mountain perform the lengthy *lidou* ritual, venerating the Bushel Star, which is an astral clock that appears to rotate around the still pole star once every twenty-four hours.

Those who seek to understand Xuantian Shangdi not only need to walk the mountain trails, but also experience the night sky at Wudang Mountain. There, the Northern Bushel appears enormous and its nightly and seasonal movements strikingly evident. But the astral veneration that is central to Daoist worship—including that of the pole star and the Big Dipper—loses its real-world referents in Southeast Asia. In Singapore, which is slightly more than 1 degree north of the equator, the pole star is on the horizon if visible at all and other constellations are more prominent than the Northern Bushel. Nonetheless people are aware of the symbolic significance of the Big Dipper, which some describe as the Emperor's seat.

Although awareness of Wudang Mountain was low as recently as 25 years ago, today the flow of cultural ideas and practices from Wudang Mountain and other authoritative Daoist centres to Southeast Asia is strong. In Singapore and Malaysia, practitioners of Chinese traditions now have many opportunities

for contact with government-approved Daoist temples and practitioners. The influence of mainland Chinese Daoism can be seen at many Southeast Asian temples large and small. To give but one example, a number of Singaporean temples have created altars or entire altar rooms dedicated to the Bushel Mother (*Doumu*) and the Sixty Year gods, who are said to govern the Ministry of Time in a cyclical rotation. This form of altar is typical of mainland Quanzhen Daoist temples, but until recently was not widely found in Southeast Asia⁴.

Daoist priests and practitioners in China now network globally with Daoists in



Figure 3 The Wudang Daoist nuns perform a ritual to venerate Xuantian Shangdi at Zixiao Gong, Wudang Shan, 2002. (Photograph: Jean DeBernardi)

4 A Daoist priest in Hong Kong, Leung Tak-wah, has advised several temples, including Singapore's Sanqing Gong, whose premises include a major Daoist columbarium, how to set up shrines to Doumu and the Sixty Year Gods. Master Leung's home temple in Fanling, Fung Ying Seen Koon, has a magnificent altar to Doumu.

other countries, seeking to promote a religion that was long despised for its magical rituals and occult mysteries. Daoists recognize that their own philosophical class, the *Daodejing*, has been translated and read in many languages, and Chinese Daoists are proud of their contribution to cosmopolitan world culture.

Even for those who have not yet visited Wudang Shan, the mountain and its patron deity represent an authoritative, magnificent form of Daoism. Daoists often describe Wudang Daoism as imperial in its grandeur, and its ritual traditions as aristocratic. Xuantian Shangdi and Wudang Mountain epitomize the connection between heaven and earth, the stars and human fate, representing Chinese traditions to contemporary Chinese.

The god and his mountain temples also enter into modern activities and projects. Whereas *Journey to the North* spread the god's cult in the Ming Dynasty, today readers may have heard of Wudang through martial arts novels like Jin Yong's *Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre* and films like *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. Meanwhile, practitioners of Taijiquan claim Wudang Mountain as the place of its invention, and the martial arts troop associated with the temple complex now travels widely to exhibit so-called Wudang martial arts. The priests and nuns perform traditional rituals daily at Wudang's temples, but they too travel to



Figure 4 The Wudang Daoist martial artists perform at a festival celebration at the Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong [City God] Temple in Singapore, 2007. (Photograph: Jean DeBernardi)

perform rituals elsewhere, sometimes exhibiting ritual music at cultural festivals and events.

Although the trip to Wudang Shan may be a rare experience for many Singaporean devotees, anyone who has a computer now has access to remarkably rich resources on the god and the place, including China Central Television (CCTV) videos about Wudang Mountain. These include interviews with Daoism and Wudang Shan experts like Prof. Wang Kang at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Professor Yang Lizhi of Yongyang Teacher College.⁵

Singaporean and Malaysian temples maintain complex networks of linkages with mainland Chinese temples. Although many of their relationships are with temples in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces, many Southeast Asian temples regard the Daoist temple complex at Wudang Mountain as the source of Daoist traditions. Since around 2000, many Southeast Asian Daoists have visited Wudang Mountain, and they also include Wudang's Daoist priests, nuns, and martial artists in their networks. The case of a small spirit medium temple, Xuan Jiang Dian, richly illustrates the importance that Wudang Mountain as imagined and experienced has had in transforming the practice of contemporary Daoists.

Xuan Jiang Dian and the Veneration of Xuantian Shangdi in Singapore⁶

Xuan Jiang Dian is a branch of a Singapore temple that boat workers founded

5 See. <http://space.tv.cctv.com/act/video.jsp?videoId=VIDE1233656030754162>. Consulted 25 November 2012. I thank Victor Yue for drawing my attention to this website.

6 I provide a short history of this temple based on Victor' Yue's interviews with Tan Eng Hing. I discuss a temple dedicated to this deity in Penang in DeBernardi (2004:30-36). The Penang Sian Chye Tong spirit medium temple now maintains a blog that cites this book as a 'favorite.' <http://www.blogger.com/profile/12228773109403090654>

in the 1950s. The original temple was an altar inside a house on Amoy Street, but in 1970 two of the original members founded an offshoot of the original temple in a new location. One founder was regularly possessed by Xuantian Shangdi, and in 1985 his sixteen year old son was 'caught' by Nezha (also written Nazha), whom they called the Marshal of the Central Altar (*Zhong Tan Yuan Shuai*).⁷ Another child deity, Sian Chye Ya (*Shancai Tongzi*), an acolyte of Guanyin who is also known by his Buddhist name Sudhana, reportedly tutored the novice medium and now regularly possesses him.

Xuantian Shangdi-in-the-medium [the father] decided in 1990 that his son was ready to give consultations. Both went into trance, and they went to the Altar of Heaven (*Tiangong Tan*) on Havelock Road. Spirit mediums usually throw the divining crescents to learn if they have received the mandate from Heaven. If the Lord of Heaven indicates his approval, the temple stamps the new medium's flag with the temple seal, which symbolizes the spirit medium's mandate to act on behalf of heaven.

In Singapore, however, Xuantian Shangdi is called Shangdi Gong (Southern Min: *Siongte Kong*)—the Supreme God. Perhaps for this reason, Xuantian Shangdi-in-his-medium [the father] assumed the authority to confer the mandate, stamping the Lord of Heaven's (*Tiangong*) seal on the younger spirit medium's new flag. For a decade father and son went into trance at a private altar in their home on different days of the week. Since his father's death the son has continued to work as a medium for the child god, and occasionally goes into trance possessed by *Xuantian Shangdi*.

In space-limited Singapore, many temples that once had a free-standing temple have been displaced by government-controlled urban development. The

⁷ On Shancai's relationship to Guanyin and sacred sites connected with him at Putuo Shan, see Yü (1992).

cost of developing new temples is extraordinarily high, with the result that many small temples moved their altars into private residences. When I first met the spirit medium in 2004, he maintained a private unregistered altar (known in Singapore by the Southern Min name *sintua*, or *shentan*) in an apartment that was also a shrine to the god. When I visited this unassuming altar, one of his assistants gave me copies of two richly illustrated commemorative volumes. Although only five years separated their publication dates, together these two volumes demonstrated this spirit medium's growing connections with international Daoist networks. The second of the two volumes also revealed a new awareness of the significance of Wudang Mountain and Quanzhen Daoism.

The practice of privately publishing richly illustrated commemorative volumes is well-established in Southeast Asia, and the 1995 volume includes predictable photographs of temple committee members and reprints of articles from Chinese newspapers reporting charitable events. But the 1995 commemorative volume also included a 1992 essay by the Daoist Master Huang Xinyang of Beijing's Quanzhen Daoist temple Baiyun Guan, who had visited Singapore's Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong City God Temple. The volume also offered the temple's devotees a detailed explication of the *Lidou* ritual whose liturgy venerates the Northern Bushel asterism, a liturgy performed at Wudang Mountain on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, as well as birthdates, titles, and authoritative short historical accounts of the Jade Emperor, Xuantian Shangdi, Taishang Laojun and the Goddess of Mercy.

The second anniversary volume, which carries a publication date of 2000, demonstrates the small temple's new awareness of Wudang Mountain. Led by Abbot Wang Guangde, a delegation from Wudang had visited Singapore, and Xuan Jiang Dian hosted a special event for them in Chinatown. Abbot Wang, who passed away in 2002, pursued international connections and support from

overseas Chinese for the restoration of Wudang's temples and shrines. He also sought UNESCO World Heritage status for the temple complex at Wudang Mountain, which it received in 1994. The anniversary volume's cover featured a photograph of his successor, Abbot Li Guangfu, looking heavenwards, beside an image of Xuantian Shangdi's emblems, the bronze turtle and snake. The volume



Figure 5 Cover of Xuang Jiang Dian's 2000 anniversary volume, with a photograph of Daoist Abbot Li Guangfu at Wudang Mountain and Xuantian Shangdi's emblem, the tortoise and the snake, with a hazy outline of the Golden Peak in the background. Singapore, 2000.

itself was filled with photographs and information about Wudang Mountain.

Unlike commemorative magazines, which typically are only distributed among temple members, the Internet now offers small temples like Xuan Jiang Dian open resources to promote the veneration of its deities and to publicize its events. The temple has developed a website whose content is primarily in Chinese, the logo for which is Wudang's famous tortoise and snake bronze sculpture. The website includes a practical calendar of annual events, but also essays on Xuantian Shangdi beliefs and records, and a number of scriptures. The website also provides links to 49 Xuantian Shangdi divination charms and photographic essays regarding recent temple events. The depth and range of information supplied is impressive, from remote history and scriptures to the documentation of contemporary worship.

Victor Yue, who works in Singapore's technology sector and is a talented photographer and videographer, introduced me to this temple. I met Victor in April 2004 when I went to Singapore seeking temples that had made the pilgrimage to Wudang Mountain. While at Wudang Mountain in 2002, I had seen a large poster filled with photographs that Ling Yun Dian, another Singapore temple, had left in Taizipo when they visited Wudang Mountain. When I arrived in Singapore, I went immediately to this temple, and participated when they celebrated the 3-3 festival. His mother was the spirit medium's assistant in that temple and he urged me to approach the altar and take photographs after temple devotees made a swift procession around a city block. When I explained my research aims, he offered to help me to locate Xuantian Shangdi temples. He also introduced me to Tan Eng Hing, the spirit medium at Xuan Jiang Dian, and I interviewed both his mother and Tan.

In order to locate temples and events, Yue posted a query to the Singapore Heritage Yahoo Group. He received many responses, and decided to launch a

Taoism-Singapore Yahoo group. The group swiftly grew to include hundreds of active members. The group has been shifted to Google groups, and Yue also maintains a Taoism-Singapore Facebook page. After both spirit mediums at Ling Yun Dian died, and no clear successor appeared to replace them, his family (including his mother) became increasingly active at Xuan Jiang Dian temple.

In the decade since, Xuan Jiang Dian has sought to increase its public presence, not only through the Internet but also by moving into a more accessible space. Initially the spirit medium set up a new unregistered temple in a private house. Many came to consult with the child god-in-the-medium, but when the neighbors complained about the traffic, they were forced to move. The spirit medium and his devotees chose a discrete space at the ground level of a high-rise apartment building, and combined the temple with a small interior design business. Here too they encountered obstacles to continuing their work. They now are sharing space in a small temple on a hillock that they have extensively renovated. The temple has created a weblog reporting recent events at this temple, written and illustrated by Yue. The god-in-the-medium occasionally sends messages to his devotees via Twitter.⁸

Xuan Jiang Dian has made more extensive use of the Internet than many temples. When Xuan Jiang Dian made a pilgrimage trip to Fujian in October 2009 to fetch a new statue of Xuantian Shangdi from Quanzhou's Wudang Mountain (a temple with a small ascendable hillock in its grounds), Yue emailed illustrated reports to the Taoism-Singapore group. He also makes short videos of Daoist rituals and traditional musical performances that he posts on Youtube, and he posted a video of the procession that they held on their return to Singapore.

The devotees took the new Xuantian Shangdi statue, seated in an antique

⁸ Their website is primarily in Chinese. <http://xuanjiangdian.org/> For reports on recent events in English, see <http://www.xuanjiangdian.blogspot.com/>

sedan chair, on a tour of Singapore. Among the places that they visited was the private house where the temple began, at 111 Amoy Street. Amoy Street was part of Singapore's old Chinatown, named after a port city in Fujian from which many Southern Min immigrants embarked. Behind Amoy Street is one of Singapore's oldest temples, Thian Hock Keng (Mandarin: *Tianfu Gong*), which before extensive land reclamation stood by the seaside. When the government redeveloped Amoy Street in the 1970s, some buildings were torn down, and others restored as heritage buildings. Many of these now house modern businesses: a popular Taiwanese porridge restaurant stands next door to the former premises of Xuan Jiang Dian's mother temple.

Almost a quarter century after first meeting the delegation from Wudang Mountain in Singapore, members of Xuan Jiang Dian travelled to Wudang Mountain in December 2012. Victor Yue and his family had visited Wudang Mountain in 2000, led by the spirit medium at Ling Yun Dian, who also led pilgrimages to Fujian Province twice a year for many years (see DeBernardi n.d.). Yue returned in 2012 with his wife and his mother, and wrote a series of detailed illustrated reports that he posted to the Taoism-Singapore group.

The group of 38 went on an organized tour whose highlights included visits to



Figure 6 Members of Xuan Jiang Dian visit Wudang Mountain's Zixiao Gong in 2012. (Photograph: Victor Yue.)

Zixiaogong, where some stayed back for the evening prayer liturgy performed by the Daoist nuns, a trip to the Golden Peak, where every member managed to reach the bronze temple at the mountain top, and a nostalgic visit to Taizipo, which is the temple where Ling Yun Dian had left its poster of photographs spanning decades of the temple's history. On the earlier visit, Victor recalled, Ling Yun Dian's male spirit medium had fallen into trance at the temple possessed by Xuantian Shangdi. Xuan Jiang Dian's spirit medium, Tan Eng Hing did not fall into trance, at least not publically.

Victor's emails report the changes at the temple complex, including the growth of stores selling religious items, special foods, and souvenirs. He noted with disappointment the signs prohibiting picture taking inside the temples, but managed to photograph members of their group examining Ling Yun Dian's poster. His reports connected some of the sites they visited with events in Xuantian Shangdi's life, but he also noted the incongruous developments.

When they visited the South Cliff Temple, for example, Victor and his wife decided to follow the trail to the mountain top from which Xuantian Shangdi was supposed to have ascended to heaven, discarding his body into the abyss below. The tour guide herded the rest of the group to the bus, and chased after them. Undeterred, Yue and his wife together with some of the younger members of their group reached the small mountain top:

Interestingly, at the top of this mountain, there was a shrine but it was dedicated to Guan Yin. And there was one lone man who manned a stall selling all kinds of souvenirs. It was shopping in a lonely part of the mountains. Well one cannot stop the Singaporeans from shopping right? There was a comb placed next to the shrine and it was said that it helps one to comb in front of Guan Yin. I am not exactly sure why. Anyone knows?

We had a great time here, taking our time to pay respect to Guan Yin and taking

pictures, and yes shopping. When one buys, you bet the next person will follow. And since only the young and able were there (ahem, save Doris and me) it was like a bonding session of the young!

Slowly we made our way back. Ah, this was when one knew how tough it was going to be as it would be continuous uphill now, over uneven steps of different height. After a continuous climb, there was one convenient stop. A row of shops. Talking of strategic positioning of the shops. Would be the first when the visitors arrive, or one where the visitors leave. In this case, it was when the visitors leave.

They bought eggs cooked in tea leaves, sweet potatoes, T-shirts, and red ribbons with auspicious words printed on them. The Singaporeans haggled, buying in bulk.

Although Wudang Mountain is proudly claimed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Yue repeatedly commented on the commercial nature of Wudang Mountain. Although it is a site sacred to Daoists and Zixiaogong is a monastery, like many of China's most famous pilgrimage sites, Wudang Mountain also is managed as a business.

For these visitors, the hike along a peaceful trail was a brief respite from the guided tour of the mountain, which was designed for tourists not devotees. On arrival at their destination, however, Yue puzzled over the unexpected. Why is there a shrine to the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy at the location where Xuantian Shangdi had abandoned his physical body? And what does it mean to comb your hair at that shrine? But also, the Singaporeans marveled over the entrepreneurial nature of the ancient temple complex at Wudang Mountain, which offers the visitor things to buy even in a remote hilltop far from the tourist crowds.

Conclusion

Southeast Asian Chinese continue to venerate Chinese deities like Xuantian Shangdi at traditional temples that are chronotopes of traditional China. But travel and the Internet have created new opportunities for the spread of the cult of Xuantian Shangdi and endowed that veneration with changed significance. Many Chinese from greater China, including Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, but also Hong Kong and Taiwan, have visited Wudang Mountain. There, they encounter magnificent temples and statues as they travel the pilgrim trail, but also historical plaques and proud notices announcing that Wudang Mountain is a UNESCO World Heritage site, a key cultural relic, and a top-rated tourism site.

They also confront religious commercialization and China's new obsession with wealth. Wudang Mountain is not alone in offering tourists high-priced incense, deity statues, and souvenirs (including the Daoist martial artist's Taiji sword). In July 2012, the managers of another famous pilgrimage site, Guanyin's shrine at Putuo Island, sought to list Putuo Island as an initial public offering on the Shanghai stock exchange, following the example of Emei Mountain, which was listed in Shenzhen in 1997 (Jiang 2012). As Yue's report reveals, the commercialization of Wudang Mountain transforms the visitor from religious pilgrim to consumer.

Although Daoists in Singapore and Malaysia offered devotion to Xuantian Shangdi even when Wudang Shan was a place that could only be imagined, now that they can physically or virtually visit the place, they are much better informed of its history and rich scenery. Even in the face of its commercialization, the magnificence of Wudang Shan and its imperially styled temples and rituals enhance the prestige and numinous energy of the deity in the Nanyang.

Although not as magnificent or historic as Wudang Mountain, small temples

like Xuan Jiang Dian once energized Singapore's traditional neighborhoods with ritual performances, festivals, and mass processions. Today Singaporeans who wish to process from temple to temple cannot stage their events in streets as they once did (and as Penangites still are allowed to do) but must travel from place to place on buses and trucks. Xuan Jiang Dian's spirit medium and his supporters have retained a vision of who they are and what image they wish to present to a wider world in the face of repeated loss and dislocation.

In 2010, Victor started a Facebook page called *Diaspora of Amoy Street*, inviting Singaporeans who once lived there to contribute photographs and memories to the site. The contributors to *Diaspora of Amoy Street*—including those who still recall Xuantian Shangdi's original temple on Amoy Street—once or twice in a lifetime may revel in the experience of Wudang Mountain's vast landscape and brilliant night sky. But they are nostalgic not for a China that they know as tourists and consumers but for old temples in neighborhoods that no longer exist.

In recent decades, Singaporean Daoists have both renewed their existential connections with the central sites of Chinese Daoism, and used the Internet to promote an appreciation of Daoist heritage. In so doing, they assert their loyalty to religious traditions that Singapore's program of urban redevelopment had pushed away from the public stage and into the margins of society. Daoism does not define Chinese national identity in either China or among Chinese in Southeast Asia, many of whom are secularists or converts to Christianity. Nonetheless, Daoism remains China's oldest indigenous religion. Although Xuantian Shangdi and his epic story are not widely known, and Quanzhen Daoism is only starting to become a global presence, Daoists revere the god as a universal savior much like Buddha or Jesus. And as this case study demonstrates, the development of the Wudang Temple complex as a UNESCO World Heritage site is an important event

in the history of the Daoist religion, lending enormous support to Daoists like the members of Xuan Jiang Dian who seek to protect and transmit their traditions to a new generation.

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北神南傳：玄天上帝在新加坡

白瑾教授

加拿大艾伯他大學人類學系

本文透過新加坡一個玄天上帝神壇探討當代道教傳布的網絡。新加坡道教信徒在過去數十年來很少與中國大陸道教廟宇或人員接觸。今日，國界開放，旅遊方便，與大眾傳播科技讓華人宗教信徒可以加入一個全球道教網絡，彼此之間可以透過進香，會議，宗教慶典來互相交流。新加坡的華人宗教信徒與中國道教徒，包括與中國武當山的道士，道姑與武術師保持聯繫。新加坡人到武當山旅遊進香，武當山的道士，道姑，與武術師則到新加坡開會或參讚慶典。當代道教徒還可以運用電腦網路與大眾傳播媒體發展彼此之間的關係，促進雙方的交流與信仰。

關鍵詞：道教 新加坡 神媒 大眾傳播 全球化

(張珣翻譯)

