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Fu-luan (扶鸞) or Chinese Automatic Writings: Its Historical Background and Present Practice.

Hiroaki KANI

In a series of my reports on Chinese popular Taoism, Fu-luan (扶鸞) or Automatic Writing ought to be examined at first. The study on popular Taoism cannot go without the study on Fu-luan. Indeed, it was the sole way of communication with deities by means of "characters", in which the divine prophecy was given in the form of verse. This is why Fu-luan was performed only by literary men throughout the dynastic periods.

In the early stage, Fu-luan was performed in order to read poetry appreciatively. In Ch'ing dynasty, however, the main purpose of Fu-luan was to apply to deities to prophesy the questions for candidates of the Imperial Examination, or to be predicted the official appointment in future. Socially speaking, the most important role that Fu-luan played in feudal China was to compile a book with a moral purpose. The book consisted of precepts and admonitions given by deities through Fu-luan performance, always laying emphasis on the "system of sure penalty and certain reward".

Fu-luan can still be observed in Taiwan and Hong Kong. It is performed by a "writing rod" made of a crotch of willow tree. A hall where Fu-luan is performed is called Chi-t'an (乩壇) or Luan-t'ang (鸞堂), which also denotes the Fu-luan society itself. It is usually found in the Chinese temple.

Taiwanese Fu-luan is performed by four men; cheng-luan (正鸞) or Senior mediator, fu-luan (附鸞) or Assistant mediator, chuan-luan (唱鸞) or Interpretator and lu-luan (錄鸞) or Recorder. The divine table is provided just in front of the altar. A writing rod is placed on the table. The senior mediator holds the left handle of writing rod, while the assistant mediator right handle. The members of the society then pray deities to come down to the table. Shortly after the deity enters into the senior mediator, the

writing rod starts to move. He allows hand to move. Whenever one character is written, the interpretator reads it and transmits to the recorder, thus making up a full revelation eventually. A variety of deities are called upon.

Today, Fu-luan is performed to cure minor illness; to deal such things as marriage talk, transaction, building and house-moving; and to know the right time and direction for the people to act. However, many Fu-luan societies still pay much attention on public moral education as Fu-luan did in feudal China. Society members are expected to get together at Luan-t'ang about ten times a month to take part in Fu-luan performance. Revelations are compiled and published. The book is of course to reflect on member's conducts of daily life so that they could have a rebirth in Paradise after death. The book is also free of charge for non-member people, and is distributed to them in order to call for grave reflection of their daily deeds.

The Relation of the Chinese Puppet Theaters to Popular Taoism

Hiroaki KANI

The puppet theaters in South China fall into four categories: stick-puppet theater, glove-puppet theater (Chinese guignol), shadow-play theater (Silhouette), and string-puppet (Marionette) theater. Of the four theaters, the stick-puppet theater can still be observed in Hong Kong, whereas the rest may be found in Taiwan. Each of these puppet theaters has long been a part of mass entertainment. However, the specific characteristic of the Chinese puppet theater is that it has been somehow connected with popular Taoism there. These connections are summarized as follows.

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- a. The puppet theater is invariably a great offering that men can make in order to please and placate the gods on their birthday. This is why the image of god must have a clear view of the stage from the altar or temple.