

LOCATING THE SPIRIT BODY IN HAKKA WORLDS OF HEALTH:
SPIRITUAL COLLISION AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR HEALING THROUGH A
FEMALE SPIRIT MEDIUM TRADITION IN SOUTHERN CHINA

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Abstract

The intensities and rapid speed of cultural change within a highly competitive and developing new China has produced various states of certain crisis for individuals and society. Strained familial, work and social relations, as well as deficiencies in health and welfare resources amidst increasing sicknesses and mental health issues, are major contributors. There is a great need to explore modalities and practices that might relieve such problems. Popular religious practices are one such practice. These practices are today being relocated and reoriented into daily life across various Chinese localities. This is the case for certain Hakka Chinese populations - a people who categorize themselves as a sub-ethnic group of Han Chinese. I look at the idea of a spirit body that can be found in popular religious practice and how people in one southern Hakka region are locating it in their worlds of health. I focus on contemporary experiences of spiritual collision – an occasion where an offence between the world of the living and the netherworld is said to be committed - where local female spirit mediums called *shenpo* (神婆) are sought out for mediation. The application of a shenpo's talismanic therapy partly constitutes the healing process for spiritual collision. This is explored here. I argue that these therapies not only offer a way for revitalizing a divine moral sensibility in society, but also for revitalizing an individual person's *jingshen* (精神) – a traditional bodily knowledge referring to the essential animating spirit of life within physicality. *Jingshen* is often overlooked in studies of health care, Chinese medicine and religion in China, yet it is connected to an array of symptomatic expressions. Experiences involving *jingshen* inform a hybrid negotiation between sacred and secular bodily knowledge, particularly that of soul loss and depression. These complex experiences point to an intimate relationship between traditional and sacred Chinese medicine and mental illness that is often overlooked. This is the crux where spirit medium practices may be explored as health assets in modern China.

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Glossary of Terms

fu 符 – talisman

Guanyin 观音 – Chinese goddess of salvation and compassion, became Guanyin or Kwan-yin in China from the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara from Indian Buddhism

gui 鬼 – ghost

Hakka 客家人 – name of a sub-ethnic Hank group meaning “Guest People”

Heyuan 河源 – name of a large city and its region in northeastern Guangdong province

jingshen 精神 – the human bodies’ animating essential spirit in matter

Longwo 龙窝 – a township in the Heyuan area, means “Dragons Nest”

mianzi 面子 – a person’s (social) face and reputation

shen 神 – spirit

shenpo 神婆 – casual term for female spirit medium

shenti 身体 – the human body inclusive of its experience as a body-spirit

weiwu 围屋 – a massive enclosed compound-house that houses a kin group

wu 巫 – ancient term for certain specialists of otherworldly and divine affairs

xianshen 仙神 – divinities or gods

xinli 心里 – psychology, literally translated as “inner heart or inside the heart”

yisheng 医生 – doctor

Yinjian 阴间 – the Chinese netherworld of ghosts and ancestors

Yangjian 阳间 – the human world of the living

Zijin 紫金 – name of a county in the Heyuan area, close to Longwo

Name Specific:

Er Dagu – Second Elder Aunt

Er Gufu – Second Elder Aunt’s husband

Ge – elder brother

Dage – big elder brother

Souzi – elder brother’s wife or sister-in-law

Nainai – grandmother on the fathers side

1. INTRODUCTION

When I first told people in the Hakka community I was researching local female spirit mediums or *shenpo* (神婆 “spirit women”) in association with experiences of health and medicine, I was met with fascination and some confusion. Most people conceptually place the medical clinics and spirit mediums worlds apart; one belonging more to science and medicine, and the other to religion or superstition (*mixin* 迷信), which was until recently labelled an unproductive feudal remnant and “leech” on society, either all lies or a dangerous “opiate of the masses” (Paper 1995; Duara 1997; Scheid 2007; Taylor 2005). But the more people reflected on possible connections and on their own personal experiences and understandings of their bodies, their histories, and their health, the more it began to make sense that there was indeed something medical about spirit medium traditions and their place in local worlds of health.

Spirit medium practices have a long history in China. They have different names in different regions and have been connected to systems of medicine and health-seeking experiences for millennia. Speaking of spirituality in Chinese medicine, and specifically of sacred ritual practices, Lin Shi and Chenguang Zhang write that “Zhu You (祝由), a technique using words and rituals to cure diseases, began in ancient times and has continued to be used up to the present” (Shi and Zhang 2012, 967). *Zhu* (祝) refers to a spell/blessing/curse or spoken word with a magical power, where *You* (由) means a vehicle of something or a method of carrying something out. “Magical” in anthropological literature refers to the ways a person or people compel the supernatural to behave (Stein and Stein 2017, 468). The diseases that were cured with *zhu you* methods varied through time and space. It can be said that *zhu you* is essentially a traditional medical method using language and symbols to treat the human body-spirit. It is an integral part of what spirit mediums still do today in popular practice.

From the outset, I would like to state that this is not a research on Chinese religion. The concept of religion itself is debated in its application to the Chinese context (Yang 1961; Wolf 1974; Kubuya 2018). I will be using the term popular religion, however, to describe the ways of sacred life practiced at local levels (Chau 2006; Lin 2015). Popular religion is where the practices of spirit mediums may be placed today as they exist in the Heyuan Hakka region. At

the heart of Chinese sacred life are complex worldviews that many scholars suggest is a blended and sometimes hybrid form of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in addition to various other local beliefs depending on the region (Yang 1961; Wang 2006; Chau 2006; Wong 2015; Lin 2015; Kubuya 2018). These worldviews alongside their deities and ritual practices mesh together in different ways in different regions. The concept of the spirit body, then, as I use it in my research, is meant to refer to a sacred world that interacts with human life and existence in meaningful ways, that is made to re-negotiate its place in today's modernity.

The spirit body as a concept in my research extends to popular religion. It (the spirit body) encompasses a world where gods and ghosts co-exist with local human life in intimate and practical ways. In Heyuan, there is a general understanding that ghosts are the souls (*hun* 魂 or ethereal soul) of dead or deceased (ancestors) that are not all necessarily malevolent, whose abode is in the netherworld or *yin jian* 阴间 or yin world. Whereas the gods are deified souls of the deceased or spirits of natural phenomenon like mountains, trees and rivers; the long established deities of Taoism and Buddhism are also included in classifications of deity whose abode is heaven or *tian tang* 天堂.¹ The human world of the living is the yang world, or *yang jian* 阳间. These spaces consistently interact with each other. Here, “(t)he relation and active interaction of the living and the dead confirm that the divide between the “here present” of the living and the “there” of the dead is neither as thick nor as far away as it appears in the Western depiction of the doublet heaven/earth, and as one might think of the distance between heaven and earth” (Kubuya 2018, 196). These intimate sacred spatial interactions contextualize the reality where ritual healing methods are produced and reproduced, and where the spirit body connects with worlds of health.

Some scholars say that the “Zhu You technique is considered to be the origin of Chinese psychotherapy” as it specifically targets emotional and behavioral dimensions affecting the person (Shi and Zhang 2012, 967; He 1990, 125). Others suggest “that spirit mediums usually

¹ The classifications of what “gods” and “ghosts” are for Hakka people, let alone for Chinese popular religion as a whole - if such a term can be used to describe the intensely rich regional character of popular religion - will not be explicated here. For purposes of this research it is important to know that gods and ghosts are both connected to the human being and are correlated with moral aspects of the person once living and how these are translated in the netherworld after death. Gods and ghosts have strong connections to ancestor worship. Any specific deities will be addressed accordingly as they come up in the following chapters.

treat mental disturbance in a culturally appropriate way...as a form of magical practice with powerful psychological dimensions” (DeBernardi 2006, 100). But using biomedical labels such as “psychotherapy” and a generalized concept such as “mental disturbance” obscures meaning in both its healing practice and bodily knowledge. This can critically impact its understanding as a health resource. *Zhu you* is a ritual medical method based on what some call “gods and ghosts theory”, and what others call a theory of “mind and emotion” (Shi and Zhang 2012; Cho 2007, 2013). Chinese medicine adopted a more “mind and emotion-viscera (united through *qi* (气))” theory in which to explain the efficacy of *zhu you*. But “gods and ghosts” were not dismissed outright. They remained correlated and connected with the bodily complex of correspondences in Chinese medicine and popular knowledge. Despite a critical and traumatic history that would ensue surrounding “gods and ghosts” in China and in medical practice, both remain a part of peoples’ health experiences in many regions and localities that warrants continued investigation.

Many spirit medium traditions today are popular remnants of the historical *zhu you* medical practice that reflect and retain knowledge of the traditional Chinese body-spirit that sees no boundaries between immaterial forces and materiality (Kwan 2018). The term “body-spirit” as put forth by Simon Shui-Man Kwan can be understood as a traditional (Chinese) non-dualistic being where spirituality is not opposed to materiality; in this body there is no “formal body” without “spiritual activity” and vice versa (Kwan 2019, 24). Central to human being as a non-dualistic body-spirit is understanding that spirit and matter are ontologically one; within this ontological landscape is a vision of human being as dynamic and unbound, and subjected only to the principle of change. In this regard the body-spirit is a continuum of matter and spirit; this continuum spans dense substance and subtle immaterial forces that includes bodily organs, fluids and bones, essence, *qi*, emotional and will powers, earthly and heavenly souls that exist simultaneously and in relation to each other and to an external cosmos. The body-spirit, then, is a spiritualized body where what is sacred and invisible is felt in bodily ways. This concept and its history could easily span pages if not volumes. The intent in using the term throughout this research is to remind (the reader) that the traditional Chinese body is a fluid entity. Spirit and matter mutually reinforce each other in the being of a spirit-body. Spirit and matter are

ultimately experienced as a unified *jingshen* – *jing* being the material producing aspect, *shen* being the spiritual nourishing aspect; *jing* and *shen* mutually reinforce each other to produce life itself, “life” becomes something one experiences as a sense of vitality of being (Kwan 2018, 23-25). In the coming pages, the experience of *jingshen* becomes a key factor in health experiences of Hakka people, and is demonstrative of how spirit medium practices are also health practices.

This research, then, asks what meaning shenpo medium traditions have in today’s Hakka Chinese communities, and questions what significance a spirit body might hold as a health asset and therapeutic resource toward well-being. My main research question asks if, and if so, in what way, ritual healing systems inherent in spirit medium traditions can be considered health assets in mainland China at a time when materialist science is predominant and spirit mediumship suspect, and when modernization and social change is producing significant conditions of distress and uncertainty. My question probes the ways these conditions might be embodied and alleviated in relation to a spiritualized reality that is remnant of traditional medical script, asking how spirit mediums today might influence these experiences. This research is inspired by living in mainland China within a Hakka Chinese family for over a decade, and witnessing a great deal of stress over current health and social conditions that were often met with talk of “asking the spirits” or *wen shen* (问神). It is inspired through the witnessing of a general distress and concern over a diminishing sacred life that is an avenue toward certain healing for many.

The term “spirit body” in this research is not to be confused with the term “body-spirit” as discussed above. I use the term spirit body first to refer to an entire immaterial world or spiritualized reality that some might call metaphysical, that interacts with the material human world in certain ways, that extends into and beyond individual body-spirits. The term can also relate to the theoretical three-body approach by Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995), who advocate for understanding the individual human body as an active and not just passive culturally constructed entity, as a site for (conscious or subconscious) expression of the effects of power and sociality on and through the body. So, locating the spirit body here is two-fold – it is a grassroots endeavor by Hakka people themselves, and it is an attempt to locate its

meaning as a perspective in which to envision the individual body as a cultural construct and site for dissatisfaction and disagreement of a current sociality.

I look at how ritual healing within a localized Hakka shenpo tradition works to reorient people to a spirit body to become a way toward certain health and well-being relevant to the needs of a contemporary population facing numerous uncertainties. Social and individual crises are prevalent and embodied in complex ways and contextualized in experiences of what may be called “spiritual collision” (DeBernardi 2006). Healing specialists that hold power to connect material and spiritual worlds attempt to reconcile spiritual collisions. These healers connect sociality and behavior to episodes of sickness and suffering within the framework of a spirit body. The Heyuan area is home to many spirit mediums who claim to do this; a popular branch are women called *shenpo* (神婆). Shenpo assist in (re)connecting people and communities with a divine moral system – a world of gods and ghosts.

I look specifically at spiritual collisions that require shenpo healers, and explore talismanic ritual healing used to reconcile them. Shenpo practices are revealed as a resource for healing and health care in that they provide both comfort and cure during certain crises characterized by the tensions and strains of a rapidly changing world. I assert that Hakka peoples’ re-orientation to a greater spirit body through shenpo ritual healing grounds the social body in a shared reality of a divine moral system that is operationalized with a significant potential toward revitalizing the essential animating spirits – or *jingshen* (精神) – of suffering individuals. *Jingshen* connects to an array of symptomatic expressions and bodily-spiritual conditions in the experience of spiritual collision. Its revitalization can be understood as a catalyst for improvement in the quality of lives and bodies to various degrees. In this capacity, shenpo practices may be designated as therapeutic assets in Hakka worlds of health.

“Health” as used in this thesis is used in reference to being or existing (in) an “ideal state” (Kleinman 1980) according to the interpretations of those experiencing the state. This reference is largely informed by Naomi Adelson’s assertion opposing any universal definition of the word, saying, “that health is interpreted, idealized, and enacted in various ways...(thus) experiences and understandings of health and well-being are always historically and culturally mediated” (Adelson 2000, 3). “Medicine” is used in this thesis as a term much akin to the term “health”

in that it is defined, experienced and understood differently across cultures and subject to historical processes (Waldram 2000). Health (as well as medicine) is inter-relational and has as much to do with social and political relations, land, culture, spirituality and identity as it does individual bodily dispositions (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1995; Adelson 2000; Abranches 2014; Izquierdo 2005; Pagano 2014). Certain health and medical practices are essential to the broader experience of well-being as they not only impact individual human bodies but also carry the means of impacting social bodies toward maintaining cultural continuities that serve an entire ecology as a stabilizing force contributing to a more gratifying life.

The overarching objective of this research is to further expand upon the collective human search for well-being. Engaging human agency in (re)negotiating and (re)situating experiences and conceptions of bodies and personhood can get closer to understanding what ideal states of being or “health” might be for different people as humanity moves through various stages of development and cultural change. This thesis stimulates future dialogue between medical sectors, practitioners and healers toward a more holistic framework of healthcare in China in regard to contextualizing the spirit body in traditional Chinese medicine and local worlds of health, and especially toward including potential connections and relevance the sacred still has toward mental and emotional health and well-being.

This introduction is divided into sub-sections. First, I will introduce the Hakka people and identity, and provide a glimpse into the ethnographic context where my research takes place followed by a short introduction to spirit mediums and their relationship to Chinese medicine. This is followed with a discussion of the theoretical concept of the Healthworld as it intends to make room for spiritual bodies in healthcare discourse and the study of medical practice. I will then present a methodology section followed by an outline of the chapters of this thesis. These sections are organized so to gradually take the reader into a world where Chinese medicine and religiosity exist with blurred boundaries and connect through a greater spirit body in the worlds of Hakka peoples today.

7.1 The Hakka in Southern China

Southern China is one geographical area where spirit mediums persist and maintain an element of sacred life. The area is home to both Han and non-Han ethnicities. Han as a majority

population in China have different sub-groups. The majority group of Han in Guangdong are Cantonese, which is also their language. Hakka populations are a sub-ethnic Han population who also live in the province (and beyond). Hakka means “the Guest People” (客家人) or *ke* (客 guest) *jia* (家 family or kin group) *ren* (人 people). This is a relatively late designation for a group previously not associated with an ethnic title of their own yet were different than people in the lands they migrated too. The term was originally used by non-Hakka local populations as a derogatory label, but the Hakka themselves later adopted the term to identify as an autonomous group distinct from contemporary Han and other ethnicities (Lutz and Lutz 1998). Hakka is also the name of their primary language which has numerous dialects across different Hakka regions. Heyuan Hakka have their own distinct dialect that can be understood by other Hakka groups and not understood by others. Today, Hakka in general identify as a sub-ethnic branch of Han Chinese having migrated and settled in countries around the world. They have a long history of migration and settlement into unwanted and difficult to farm lands in southern China. Southern China, particularly northeast Guangdong province, northwest Fujian province, and southern Jiangxi province, are somewhat of the Hakka heartland. This research is based on Heyuan Hakka populations in northeast Guangdong who may or may not share certain characteristics with other Hakka regions.

Hakka people are generally well-known for holding fast to traditionality while also integrating with other local populations who demonstrate receptivity. They are also well-known for forging ahead into modernity. The Hakka people are a Sinicized culture and population who moved in complex historical waves of migration throughout the mainland (mostly north to south) and abroad over centuries, at least since the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) (Constable 1996; Kiang 1992; Wong 2015). They are largely an agricultural people who include spirit mediums and popular Chinese religious practices, in addition to other indigenous practices blended through assimilations. They were generally and historically very poor, having been a large work force for feudalistic and wealthy classes who owned and managed the lands Hakka sojourned and hoped to inhabit along their way (Constable 1996; Wong 2015). They also historically engaged in violent and aggressive wars with local Cantonese populations (*bendi*) in a bid for Hakka settlement on their lands.



Figure 1.1 Map of Guangdong province. Heyuan is in the Northeast above Guangzhou. It is marked as a city but its boundaries encompass a very large surrounding area that includes the township of Longwo, Longchuan, and Zijin. Nearby Meizhou is what many call the “Hakka capital” of the world (Source: Chinamaps.org).

Major differences in local spiritual practices between Hakka populations and other populations in Guangdong in the greater Huizhou area of eastern Guangdong in the early 20th and late 19th centuries, the larger area of where this research is situated, are documented by missionaries. One missionary (Ernst Johannes Eitel 1838-1908) notes that in Hakka regions, peoples’ bad behaviors, disasters and diseases are largely understood as caused by “evil” ghosts and/or demons that require exorcism specialists. Ernst says these specialists were all non-orthodox female specialists, no doubt belonging to the shenpo tradition. Meanwhile, neighboring Cantonese and Fujian populations understood similar cause, but their specialists were mainly (male) Daoist priests and occasionally Buddhist monks from temples and organized or orthodox traditions. Today, when certain Hakka communities in Guangdong

consult a male ritual practitioner, he must dress as female or else his *ling* (灵) will not be considered efficacious (Wong 2015; Jian 2018). The female unorthodox spirit medium tradition is deeply rooted in the Guangdong Hakka identity and history. Unfortunately, this gendered aspect of Hakka spirit medium practice is beyond the scope of this research.

In the early twentieth century, as a poor working-class population in search of a sense of liberation from their feudal chains, in the throes of historical process and an urgency to modernize, the Hakka became a primary population who took up arms in support of a new Communist Party before 1949. They are also a key population who started and supported the American backed Nationalist Party in the Republican era after 1911 who were eventually defeated by the Communists (Constable 1996). Southern Jiangxi province, just north of northeastern Guangdong, and a major Hakka area, was the center of the Peoples Liberation Army in war times (1927-1949) and the Red Army of Mao Zhuxi and Zhu De. This same army



Figure 1.2 Eroding Hakka Weiwu, north of Heyuan. Still home to an elderly woman whose family have left for more developed urban areas.

created the social conditions enabling Hakka to leave their walled enclosures and their marginalized lives, but also later decimated and threatened traditional ways of life they held close. Hakka military leaders initiated the rejected “February Adverse Current” that hoped to reverse the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that was the catalyst in diminishing sacred dimensions of life and the folk medical sector amongst other things (Constable 1996, 224-225). This history and characteristic are why Hakka regions today are fertile sites for vital (re)negotiation of sacred and secular traditions and worldviews.

Because of many local, and at times violent, hostilities in the south during imperial times that would not allow safe passage, inhabitation or sharing of a land or territory, Hakka barricaded themselves in massive enclosed compound houses called *tulou*, or *weiwu*, which housed whole kinship groups or multiple kin groups from the same family name (of patrilineal decent). From these massive enclosures they took up defensive arms against hostile regional populations. Within these walled villages, Hakka kin groups preserved their languages, their (patri)lineages and ways of life inherited from a supposedly northern and ancient “Han” culture pushed out in times of foreign invasion and rule by Mongols and later Manchus (Wong 2015; Kiang 1992). It was within these spaces that many Hakka kin groups held fast to their identity and traditions that included ancestor veneration and spirit mediumship, although many Hakka communities were also heavily missionized by Protestantism (Yang 1961; Constable 1996; Wong 2015). Maintaining traditional social and spiritual order, language, health, and patrilineage was key to their survival and solidarity as a mountainous migrant population in new, often hostile, lands. The spirit medium and the religious healer functioned in the necessity of maintaining these orders. These structures are now mostly empty or abandoned and are designated UNESCO heritage sites.

During my fieldwork, we walked through an abandoned and very large, eroding *weiwu*, assuming it empty. As the dusk crept in and we neared the exit, we turned a corner and found a lit corridor. Inside was a very elderly woman still living there. She washed her hair in a basin, in a small obscure room lit with a single light bulb hanging from the roof. She came to greet us. As we greeted each other, she complained of her son who left for the city, leaving her behind because she did not share his dream or desire – a story too often told in China today. She is the

last living person in this enormous compound building the size of half a city block, waiting for her son to hopefully return each new year for a visit.

Heyuan Hakka mostly live in modern houses across the countryside in various counties and townships and are no longer faced with aggressive regional hostilities. Many leave their elders and extended families to go to urban areas and work as migrant workers or sometimes overseas to study as international students. This is especially for young adults, who speak Mandarin or Cantonese as their primary tongue instead of Hakka. Occasionally they return home. They return for spring festival during the new year, sometimes for *Qingming* or tomb sweeping festival to perform ancestral veneration, and sometimes for the long national holiday in autumn. Their elders often stay behind for lack of interest and ability to prosper in the cities. Now and again family members return to see a local shenpo. Family elders, especially women, usually direct family members to seek out shenpo, as shenpo are not readily visible these days. This context situates the inter-generational worlds of today's Hakka and speaks to the potential for shifting conceptions of the meaning of spiritual bodies in worlds on health; it is here where different generations negotiate a spirit body in their healthworlds.



Figure 1.3 Elderly woman washing her hair, still living in a near abandoned Hakka Weiwei communal village house, north of Heyuan.

7.1 Spirit Mediums and Medicine

Of all the various kinds of popular religious healers in China and parts of the East Asian world, the spirit medium is one of the most widespread and utilized at local grassroots levels. The Hakka shenpo tradition belongs to a broad class of spirit mediumship spanning all of China, reaching Tibet and Taiwan, and spreading through Japan, Korea, and much of Southeast Asia, whose historical origins are ancient and relatively unclear. Spirit mediums are argued as mostly associated with horticultural and agricultural societies as opposed to hunting cultures from where the Siberian “shamanism” is associated and differentiated (Paper 1995, 88-89). This is a distinction of terms that is beyond the scope of this research, but that must be mentioned as some research in medical anthropology dealing with healers that largely resemble the spirit mediums discussed here, are translated from *dang-ki* as “Chinese shamans” (Kleinman 1980; Boon-Ooi, Kirmayer and Groleau 2010). Nevertheless, Jordan Paper says of spirit mediums that they are “social functionar(ies)... (who by way of participating with the gods and spirit world) serve as a means for spirits to assist and/or communicate with members of the medium’s group in a positive manner” (Paper 1995, 87). They are approached for a wide range of afflictions and disorders that affect the well-being of a person or community in terms of luck, fortune, safety or protection, often in relation to various sicknesses including soul loss, spirit possession, and various biomedical disease classifications (DeBernardi 2006; Kleinman 1980; Peng 2015; Fan 2003). Since the society, or social body, is not separate in traditional conceptions and experiences of the body-spirit, and since both are understood as connected to a greater spirit body, spirit mediums are approached to help both sick and suffering civic society and individuals.

Spirit mediums once enjoyed very high social status in China. In antiquity they were associated with elite ruling classes and royalty as diviners, advisors and mediators of seen and unseen worlds and bodies (Paper 1995; Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Falkenhausen 1995). Their status, position and involvement with public and private bodies shifted as governing systems and elite worldviews changed and re-oriented toward seemingly more naturalistic cosmologies and a stronger dependency on text and systematization. Paper argues that “(i)n contemporary China for at least the last thousand years, mediums have arisen from among the poor and

socially disadvantaged...(as) rationalistic interpretations became normative for the educated elite” (Paper 1995, 110-111). “Rationalistic” in this passage refers to a growing attitude by the state and professionally educated persons of distance from certain metaphysical concepts or “gods and ghosts theories”. This occurred in relation to a reliance on literacy and education within a new state examination system, the development of a new printing technology, and a new systematization (and interpretive framework) of fragmented past knowledge (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013). This shift situated *zhu you* in a “theory of mind and emotions” and somewhat paved the way for a biomedical scientization of traditional medicine as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Much negotiation and blending between religious and medical knowledge and practice occurred over this history within the imperial medical system and in local and popular practices. Blending of religious systems occurred with a developing Neo-Confucianism and an orthodox Daoism and Buddhism, with growing foreign religious influences from Christianity. Such blending resulted in altered or changed spirit medium practices the practice of Chinese medicine (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Unschult 2002; Cho 2007, 2013). This history played a role in making *zhu you* into an official department in elite medicine which was later dismantled, not for concerns of efficacy but for political motivations (Cho 2007). Local and regional traditions within the peasantry and the common population largely maintained spirit mediumship that continued to mesh with the needs of a locality at a given time.

Spirit medium practices persist and are different within China’s many diverse regions and localities. Hakka shenpo may even be different in another province or region depending on their unique position and integration with local populations. Not all shenpo practices are alike, and some may even be associated with practices that harm instead of help, depending on who is practicing. I was warned of this by the shenpo mediums I engaged with in the field who reiterated that “purity” and intent of heart of the person determines the quality of their practice. Some are what they call “evil”. Some shenpo are not considered “real” in that they issue fake medicines, prevent people from seeking biomedicine, exploit fears, and are profit oriented. Many shenpo are regulated to ensure they are not committing illegal acts determined by the state, particularly for fraud. Some shenpo purposely hide from the government and public view;

this may be for different reasons. One shenpo told me she still felt a lot of fear to openly practice. Spirit mediums are historically associated with rebellion and instigations of political uprising by the government and broader population (Wong 2015). Nevertheless, these factors should not deter researchers from investigating the possibility for certain practices to make positive impacts on health and well-being in times of uncertainty. It is easy to convolute spirit mediums in potentially negative or heavily politicized categories, but careful inquiry can also reveal categories that are meaningful for the study of health for local populations. Needless to say, there were ethical concerns that arose for me in the field that led to my decision not to work with one of the shenpo directly. I will say more about this in the methods section.

7.1 The Healthworld

This thesis is inspired by the theoretical concept of the healthworld (Cochrane 2007) developed with a purpose to see what people utilize in terms of health assets or resources toward a greater well-being. The healthworld is a sub-branch of the lifeworld (Husserl 1970) addressing specifically the broader concept of well-being. The lifeworld is essentially “the unquestioned, practical, historically conditioned, pre-theoretical, and familiar world of our everyday lives” (Dejarlais and Throop 2011, 91). The experience of well-being involves an inter-relationality between bodies that shapes and is shaped by these worlds, that form and inform notions and experiences of health. This largely involves subjective or inter-subjective interpretation in relation to historical processes.

Healthworlds are essentially the socially shared and collectively instituted familiar worlds of conception, behavior, and conditions promoting (or hindering) well-being in a locality or population. They account for imagined, real, and symbolic worlds that make space for conceptions of spirit in bodily experiences by encompassing religious and spiritual dimensions once (and still often) devalued, removed or limited from medical discourse, that situate efficacious and valuable health producing experiences (Germonde and Cochrane 2010). The approach is non-linear and non-hierarchical and helps better reveal core individual experience in relation to other bodies. The healthworld relates with the “three body” approach put forth by Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995) that explains how social, political, and individual bodies inter-relate to form and inform bodily-self experiences and dispositions. Lock

and Scheper-Hughes suggest the individual human body can be perceived as a phenomenological body-self, a symbol of social relationships, and as an artifact of social and political controls; that using these perspectives can help uncover how social contestations and truths are revealed through and by the human body as a culturally constructed entity, that this may better demonstrate the social origins of disease and distress. This thesis places the concept of multiple bodies in a central position, moving beyond the body as a singular separate individual. It specifically addresses and suggests the notion of a spirit body that participates with the three body perspective to produce and re-produce experiences of health and well-being. This research intends to follow the spirit body in dynamic relation to multiple other bodies, especially in terms of how it is being (re)incorporated and (re)negotiated into Hakka Chinese healthworlds in an age that greatly emphasizes the biological standard and material sciences.

The healthworld draws heavily from phenomenology and medical anthropology to include pluralism and inter-relational dimensions of health and well-being that connect to human identity. James R. Cochrane, who initially put forth the concept, understands the human body and human identity as more “hybrid” than singular, and subject to dynamics of change over time (Cochrane 2007, 13-14). People shape their identities with various knowledges and do not necessarily embody fixed views of religion, or science, or other forms of knowledge, despite what might appear as certain rigidity. Knowledges are simultaneously embedded in social systems and institutions from where health assets are created, maintained and made instrumental in bodily experience. This is where the idea of hybrid health practices emerges in the healthworld, suggesting the human body to be more of an agent rather than an object (Germonde and Cochrane 2010; Csordas 1994). Healthworlds can also be colonized by the state and economic rationalities to produce a more critical hybridity. This has often been the case where biomedicine and biopolitics are highly influential and less adaptive and/or accepting of other knowledges and practices, where ideologies and economic strategies are coerced and sometimes forcefully imposed upon a population or group (McElhinny 2005; Razafimandimby 2014; Baer, Singer and Susser 2013). A critical focus on inter-subjective agency is recommended by Germonde and Cochrane when approaching healthworlds.

Using this approach allows for a vision of relationality and inclusion of human agency within certain critical constraints. It opens a broadened understanding of pluralism and syncretism in the construction of and living within the dynamics of a healthworld. In terms of health specifically, looking through this lens can help better explicate the health needs of people. These needs are revealed by better understanding the experiences of a sickness episode or event of suffering from various worldviews and local positioning. Using a concept such as the healthworld aids in better understanding well-being by acknowledging what is medicine and what is health for peoples across cultures in a dynamic and non-linear way.

7.1 Methodology

From late May until August 2017 I engaged in ethnographic field work for this research. For the duration I mainly resided in the Heyuan prefecture-level city area (河源市) of northeastern Guangdong province, frequenting three specific but close districts of Zijin (紫金 Purple Gold), Longwo (龙窝 Dragons Nest), and Longchuan (龙川 Dragon River). These locations are home to primarily Hakka populations, and have been so for centuries (the majority population is Hakka mixed with a smaller number of non-Hakka Han and other groups). This area is located in the eastern part of the Southern Ridges Mountains (九连山 *Jiu Lian Shan*) that spans and extends past northern and central Guangdong province. These mountains are the place of centuries of Hakka migrations with the eastern area claimed as one of the earliest settlement sites (Luo 2017). The Heyuan area today is a rural-urbanizing area connected by a major highway that reaches all the way south to Hong Kong. Zijin and Longchuan are neighboring counties, developing into larger urban centers but still connected to the countryside. Longwo is the most rural agricultural township and is about forty kilometers deeper into the mountains from Zijin.

Within this greater area there are three public hospitals. One of them is a two-tiered Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and standard biomedical hospital. These two-tiered hospitals are common in China today, which supports a two-tiered health care system inclusive of biomedicine and TCM. There are no family doctors or general practitioner clinics per se, instead the public go to hospitals structured according to specialized departments such as “gynecology”, “general internal medicine”, “gastrointestinal disorders”, etc., where patients

register according to their complaints and concerns. According to local people, including a few nurses, there are no psychological departments. The nurses I spoke with had a very limited understanding of psychological care and associate it mainly with severe mental illness. This is common in China, where mental illness is largely stigmatized and care resources underdeveloped and limited (Phillips 1998, 2013; Yip 2007; Ding 2014; Zhou and Xiao 2015; Xiong and Phillips 2016). There are multiple private TCM and biomedical clinics within different neighborhoods that local people can easily access. Many private TCM clinics offer specialized or eclectic forms of Chinese medicine according to the experience and specialization of the practitioner. Most neighborhoods have pharmacies that offer various herbals and pharmaceuticals. Every so often there are family owned herbal shops that sell local herbs collected from the mountains. Some of these herb sellers also sell and make talismans. One man I met sold a hard to find locally collected herb in bulk. He also made what local people call painted (画 *hua*) talismans with chicken eggs and red string. In the span of the hour I sat with him, five people came to buy these “egg talismans” (画春 *huachun*), most of them complaining of headaches, persistent colds or coughs, insomnia and/or unexplainable lethargy for themselves or their children – similar complaints to those I would later hear while observing the shenpo in her clinical temple space.

My time was divided between these various locations according to availability of living space and reception of host families. I mainly resided with a local family in Zijin who invited me the year before fieldwork began. A member of this extended family is a well-known local medium in Longwo called Er Dagu (*Dagu* meaning “Big Aunt”) who gave me permission to frequent her home/clinic. Another medium in Longchuan was welcoming but too nervous to have me frequent her very busy space. Asking questions and watching her practice, especially as a foreigner, could be seen as suspicious and incite great anxiety. Spirit medium traditions here are not severed from their traumatic pasts where they were targets of social and political prosecution. I decided not to impose due to this circumstance, which limited the comparative possibilities between the two medium traditions. Her safety and stability of practice were more important. I was instead able to meet and interview more local people outside of clinical space

who had used or were using the services of these mediums, and who were very happy and enthusiastic to participate and talk.

Traditional qualitative methods of participant observation and interviewing were employed to get closer to illuminating “meaning” in relation to healthworlds. Victor Turner says that “(m)eaning arises when we try to put what culture and language have crystallized from the past together with what we feel, wish, and think about our present point in life” (Turner and Bruner 1986, 33). Revealing meaning requires an attempt at understanding subjective and intersubjective experience and interpretation of life processes and events in relation to cultural context and historical process. Healthworlds also involve a meaning-centered approach that incorporates subjective experience and intersubjective expression of experience in relation to cultural context. Turner differentiates between the concept of experience and expression of experience, saying, “(e)xpressions are the peoples’ (own) articulations, formulations, and representations of their own experience”. Revealing these aspects as such requires “leav(ing) the definition of the unit of investigation up to the people, rather than imposing categories derived from our own ever-shifting theoretical frames” (Turner and Bruner 1986, 9). Douglas Hollan further argues that the broad concept of well-being is a subjective state, that it can and should be studied using traditional methods but it “does demand that our investigations take a person-centered perspective” (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). Person-centered interviewing was the aim in this research because it centers on individuals, subjectivity, and how “community members are constituted by their context” (Bernard 2011). Person-centered interviewing and observation of folk healers, their patients/clients and their families was the primary goal, but was not possible in every case due to issues of rapport and cultural characteristics that value privacy.

According to Robert I. Levy and Douglas W. Hollan, person-centered interviewing and observation requires a strong degree of linguistic competence and understanding of culture and requires the interviewer to approach the interviewee(s) as a friend would, with an aim of attempting to understand the others’ position (Bernard 2011). While I am not Hakka, I believe my ten years living in China, within a Chinese family who are members of an extended Hakka community, and years of studying, interest and practice in Chinese medicine and philosophy,

helped me at better understanding “culture” and enabled me to better understand what acting as a friend means and involves for local people. It also helped build a degree of linguistic competence (though not yet fluent) in the Mandarin language as a language that most people speak nationwide. Further issues regarding linguistic competence will be discussed shortly.

Twenty-eight interviews were conducted in total within Heyuan. Interviewees were selected in such a way to represent a range in age, profession, and gender identification (which in this case are female and male) in order to avoid bias and attempt fair representation. Age, however, became significantly important as the inter-generational positions and experiences in relation to changing social and ideological worlds emerged as significant. The names of persons presented in this research are altered and/or shortened as per request. Some people preferred I not use their full names. Not all cases and transcripts are directly referenced in my research, yet all of them are involved in the analysis and conclusions made and especially toward revealing terminology and conceptual associations local Hakka people make in their healthworlds. The cases and transcript material referenced in this thesis are selected due to the interviews being the most person-centered and narrative in scope, and because they appear to best reflect the antagonistic character of the experience of spiritual collision presented in this research. The constraints on referencing cases are also due to constraints on length and size requirements of this thesis.

Most interviews are unstructured or semi-structured. Unstructured interviewing is mostly utilized as it gets closer to lived experience and affords a degree of control by the person being interviewed (Bernard 2011). Each interview began with the intention of asking people to talk about their reasons for using, and their experiences participating with, shenpo and their ritual therapies. Interviews involved a rough guide but involved little structure. This is because of the nature of the formal interview and the discomfort it invokes for many people who have lived and still live through an invasive bureaucratic system that regulates and monitors lives as it does in (especially rural) China. This discomfort takes the form of feeling interrogated. Allowing others to teach and lead the conversation is also good cultural etiquette, especially where younger generations and foreigners are often seen as being impolite or uncouth if interrupting or attempting to know better than elders or locals.

There are certain limitations related to language. Although I was able to communicate with certain people in Mandarin, and in English on occasion, much interviewing, and especially with elder generations and the shenpo, are conducted in the local Hakka dialect. For this I had several translators who are fluent in local Hakka dialects and Mandarin, and who are locals in the area themselves. Another aid in the field was an accomplished Hakka scholar affiliated with a prominent university in the south of China – Sun Yat-sen University – who is fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka and English languages. Together they all helped me with transcription and translation of interviews. This does not mean there were no linguistic discrepancies and hurdles, but caution, clarification and care were taken in all communications and consultations with local people and knowledge holders, as well throughout translation processes.

Shenpo interviews were aimed at how they became a shenpo and who their deity is, and how and for what reasons they generally treat people, while their client interviews were aimed at understanding if, when and why they went to see a shenpo and what kind of treatment and outcome did they experience as a result or, if they were a healer, focused on spirituality in relation to health and medicine. Semi-structured interviews were approached using a rough schematic as follows:

- The general age and employment or student status of the person.
- If they had ever been to a shenpo, and what for.
- To describe the circumstances surrounding their problem, and what brought them to include the shenpo in its treatment.
- What do they think caused the problem.
- What kind of treatment they received.
- How they felt before and after the treatment, and if it helped long term.
- If they tried other treatments and had other diagnoses for their problem from others.

Semi-structured interviews for the shenpo engaged in this research included a schematic as follows:

- How they became a shenpo and what it was like.
- How many people come see them for problem on a weekly or daily basis.
- What kind of problems are presented by patients.

- What is the most significant complaint or problem presented by patients.
- What causes these problems.
- If their treatments are like medicine, and what makes them similar or different.
- How do they treat people and how does the treatment work.
- To talk about the deity who inhabits and is embodied within them.

Most interviews are a minimum of half to one full hour, with most of them being one and the longest two hours. Participant interviews are all conducted in peoples' private residences, while interviews with shenpo are conducted in the front areas of their homes which serve as clinical-temple spaces. A significant amount of time went into translating and transcribing as there were two and at times three languages with which to work. Data analysis involved the creation of broad themes based on responses from interview questions as well as a thorough review of transcripts. Themes were broken down into various sub-themes relating to an overall theme, including acknowledgment of repetitive words and terminology checked against the original Chinese language term used. Themes include: "treatment and outcome"; "deciding factors: when to ask (the shenpo)"; "interpretation of sickness cause"; "embodiment"; "shenpo medium knowledge: sacred and medicinal"; "symptoms"; and "Hakka".

My research is conducted with full approval from the University of Saskatchewan's Research Ethics Board which was consistently renewed. The approval certificate is in the appendix. Ethics approvals within anthropology are in early stages of development within China, thus there is little need or request for ethics approvals by Chinese organizations or agencies for conducting research such as mine. In addition to this, official written informed consent forms are met with great suspicion and apprehension due to their association with governmental enforcements and observation (both Chinese and non-Chinese) that may have a negative impact on people participating. This is especially true for their association with methods used during the Cultural Revolution that resulted in a great loss of life and liberties for many, which lingers in the memories of people today. Verbal consent was nonetheless attained and given by all participants who were thoroughly informed of the use and intent of my research. In all cases with spirit mediums and for some participants, my intentions and presence were also divined with positive feedback, which further reinforced their permissions and consent.

7.1 Outline of Thesis

A spirit body inherent in spirit medium traditions has shared roots in both Chinese medicine and religiosity. Finding out if and how these roots might now (again) be converging and finding relation within grassroots spaces is a primary aim of this research. Considering this aim in relation to the data collected for this research, while also considering the introduction of terms and cultural concepts that may not be familiar to the reader, the thesis is divided into six chapters. As a first inquiry, chapter two looks closer at the critical history of religiosity and medicine in China. It focuses on contemporary inclusions of the spirit body across both medical and popular religious practices according to three different Hakka healers in the Heyuan area to reveal where seeming boundaries might converge and/or diverge. By comparing their discourses, this chapter points toward the negotiation of an overarching spiritual body across medical and popular religious knowledge – especially in terms of including “gods and ghosts” – asking how and if it is still a shared current across traditional medicine and popular religious practice. This chapter paves the way toward understanding how mediumistic traditions might also be medical and relevant for a population that does not fully disregard spiritual bodies in worlds of health in an age of biological standardization.

Chapter three explores local experiences of sickness and suffering in the Heyuan area and discusses how people involve the spirit body in these experiences. These are significant and distressful events in the lives of Hakka people characterized by a term borrowed from Jean DeBernardi in her research with Chinese spirit mediumship in Malaysia called “spiritual collisions” (DeBernardi 2006). This is not a designated name for any known condition but is instead a theoretical means of classifying what might be happening. This approach reveals how visible and invisible worlds form and inform each other in relation to conceptions of what are “bad” and “good” in terms of morality. DeBernardi illuminates the dynamic between social and sacred bodies yet could afford to better include individual bodies in this dynamic. Referencing Arthur Kleinman (1980), DeBernardi suggests the medical aspects of spirit mediumship should be “(investigated)...as a form of magical practice with powerful psychological dimensions” (DeBernardi 2006, 100). She sets the stage for understanding bodily-spiritual dispositions in relation to spiritual collision but does not approach the experience in relation to conceptions of

health or medicine per se, and presents few narrative accounts from clients or persons experiencing a spiritual collision in relation to an event of sickness or suffering. Instead the focus is more on the spirit medium within the fabric of social organization and processes. The inclusion of narrative accounts in relation to spiritual collision as a health experience is where this thesis departs from DeBernardi's work. Its emphasis on hybridizing local body knowledge and spiritual collision in relation to traditional Chinese medical concepts and practices, is where it departs from Kleinman's.

A spiritual collision is experienced in relation to local conceptions of bodies and space represented by inter-relational Yin and Yang worlds (阴间 *yinjian* and 阳间 *yangjian*). These worlds contain and produce various forces that influence the lives and characterize the healthworlds of many people. The unified theory of yin and yang as a conceptual framework for life and the universe remains rooted in Chinese language(s) and general worldview as a schematic guide for living, and as an anchor to tradition as an imagined past with power to meaningfully impact the present. Spiritual collisions emerge as essentially complex and often pluralistic events where secular and spiritual concerns and circumstances entangle in a single experience, and where modernity and tradition find relation. Bodily dispositions here are reflected upon in relation to moral and social breakdowns as embodied antagonism emerging from and between Yang and Yin world relations. Local shenpo healers are understood to be capable of repairing spiritual collisions.

Shenpo healers specialize in mediating Yin and Yang world relations by becoming bridges between heaven and earth. They enforce and reinforce an inherent divine moral system that comprises the spirit body. Chapter four reveals how the spirit body is localized surrounding the embodiment of a familiar deity within a local woman who becomes a shenpo healer through a painful and personal transformative process. This chapter relates the localization of a spirit body with the forming of a shared cultural reality necessary for efficacious symbolic healing of spiritual collision. Shenpo heal largely through (re)orienting or (re)attaching the client with a divine moral power or authority aimed at restoring the balance between heaven and humanity (and earth) – and ultimately between the forces of yin and yang (DeBernardi 2006, 82-83). This balance is influenced by socio-spiritual relationships and the actions and intentions of humans

– dead or alive – as being human is understood to extend to a spirit world after this world (Strickmann 2002). Re-orienting bodies in such a way is an expression of power utilizing a divine moral system to promote and achieve an experience of health and as sense of well-being. The power of the healer emerges from and is sustained through an embodied divinity and the ensuing localization of sacred space and bodies.

The power of the spirit medium is called *ling* (灵) or *ling gan* (灵感). *Ling* is integral to Chinese religiosity and is understood as divine or spiritual power that effects human life in various ways. It materializes in objects such as statues, amulets, and magical charms, and through the bodies of spirit mediums themselves (Lin 2015). Chapter four reveals how the shenpo's *ling* manifests through embodied performance and especially through radical empathy within the ritual healing process. Radical empathy refers to the ability of the healer to feel the feelings and experiences of another person suffering as if they were their own, and is often seen where the healer themselves is wounded or has greatly suffered in their becoming a healer (Koss-Chioino 2007). The shenpo embodies and transmits the feelings and intentions of gods and ghosts and human beings in the world of the living. She communicates between bodies in often deeply personal ways toward the goal of reconciling a spiritual offence and toward healing. Any resultant efficacy is attributed to the power of *ling* of a spirit medium and their deity.

Balancing Yin and Yang worlds by invoking a divine moral system involves maintaining a certain moral order between a greater sociality and one's personhood. In historical Daoist thought – a philosophy and way of life that greatly influences spirit medium traditions and Chinese medicine – “the presence of disease was thought to indicate some moral failing... (and p)hysical health was consequently a function of moral or spiritual health” (Unschuld 1986, 2-3). Bodily experience within this worldview is placed directly in the realm of human behaviors that are subject to the consequences and dictates of divine laws. Mari Womak writes that “(h)health and illness (within a traditional Chinese worldview) are seen as resulting from the relationship of the individual to the family, the local group, the environment, and the universe, which includes the social, physical, and spiritual universe” (Womak 2010, 195). This inter-relationality is an integral part of the divine moralistic worldview engendering shenpo practices and traditional body knowledge. Chapter five delves deeper into the ritual use and making of

talismans as materializations of *ling* (灵), exploring how talismans used in ritual healing behave as medicines that operationalize the divine moral world embodied, symbolized and transmitted through the shenpo tradition and spiritual collisions.

Local people associate and experience treatment outcomes of talismanic ritual healing in various ways. It is important to re-iterate that not everybody experiences a positive outcome when utilizing shenpo talismanic healing for their bodily-spiritual dispositions. Yet, a significant number of people do. It is a shenpo who maintains substantial and on-going positive responses for treatment outcomes whose practice persists and whose *ling* is attributed greater efficacy over time. The final chapter of this thesis looks at how the effects of shenpo talismanic ritual healing outcomes are conceptualized by individuals having experienced or experiencing spiritual collision. This chapter focuses primarily upon positive outcomes as they best reflect how shenpo traditions are an asset in local experiences and practices of health. A tendency toward hybridization is revealed in peoples' discourse that is demonstrative of a pattern of interpretation seeking relation between biomedical and non-sacred dimensions of bodily experience with dimensions of the spirit body. Hybridity as a concept in this research is used in reference to ideas in medical anthropology that suggest different knowledge systems mix in intimate ways to produce an integration, in this case the mixing of traditional and modern medical ideas (Ernst 2002; Singer and Erickson 2011). This chapter reveals the formation of hybrid bodies in the healthworlds of Heyuan Hakka peoples and looks closer at negotiations within ritual healing outcomes with shenpo talismanic therapies. It explores the permeability of seeming boundaries between what is popular religious practice and what is medicine.

THE SPIRIT BODY INTO MODERNITY

As I spoke with local people, including practitioners of Chinese medicine and popular religious practices across Heyuan, it became evident that certain practices and conceptions of medicine and local body knowledge are inclusive of a spirit body. This is despite the persistence and push of modernity to remove and obscure the spirit body from medical discourse. Chinese modernity values a materialist scientific theory of knowledge that exists in a binary relationship with spirituality placing a greater value on materiality. This creates an environment where spiritual practices are antagonized and devalued as medical resources – at least publicly and in policy. This is the case across many cultures where the adoption of modernity and elevation of the western scientific method occurs, modernity referring to the valuing of knowledge of western science that places value on its own idea of reason versus its idea of culture which is essentially seen as irrational (Cochrane 2007; Germonde and Cochrane 2010; Leslie and Young 1985). This obstructs the potential for the practical inclusivity of spiritual bodies and culture within medical research and practice. Revealing how spirit bodies are still incorporated into worlds of health can, then, aid in presenting a more comprehensive vision of health care needs and healing resources in a given context.

The division of spirit and matter is echoed today by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.). The W.H.O. understands “the spiritual dimension to imply a phenomenon that is not material in nature but belongs to the realm of ideas, beliefs, values and ethics that have arisen in the minds and conscience of human beings, particularly ennobling ideas” (World Health Organization 1984). But for a great many Chinese people, and for most Hakka people I engaged with in the summer of 2017, the material world, the human body-spirit, nor what is medicinal, do not exist in separation from the spirit body.

A worldview of non-separation started to change after modernization in China where attacks on popular religion and traditional culture in general were common and continuous (Unschuld 1985; Hinrichs and Barnes 2013). Since the 1990’s the destructive aspects of modernization and political policies against popular religion and the spirit body were recognized as a certain detriment to (at least) civil society (Paper 1995, 17; Mueggler 2001; He

2004). People began to publicly and privately re-negotiate a place for the spirit body in their lives as a result. The process brings to surface old wounds, but also creates a space where the spirit body can again be explored and experienced in connection to other bodies and to materiality.

This chapter looks at how the spirit body is being conceptually (re)connected to knowledge of the human body-spirit and health according to three different healers, and how Chinese medicine and popular religion at a grassroots level inter-connect sacred currents of body knowledge with certain medical discourse. It paves the way to better understand the extent to which a spirit body might be incorporated into the lives of people sick and suffering in new China and designated as a health resource. In order to better contextualize the spirit body in relation to medical and bodily knowledge, this chapter begins with a historical analysis. One must first try to understand how a spirit body in China – in both religion and medicine – came to require such a critical re-evaluation.

2.1 A Spirit Body Bridging Medicine and Religiosity

Before certain western knowledge influenced China, the popular religious-medical practices of “the (common) people” were already somewhat stigmatized. They were seen as belonging to an uneducated under-class compared to a growing literati and elite class that maintained the imperial state through high ritual and custom. It was the same literati who eventually formed a great medical tradition as the first professional medical system, the pre-modern root of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) of today (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Unschuld 1985). This elite class largely viewed popular spirit mediums as a rather shallow syncretism of strange ways and ideas (Paper 1995, 12-13). Nevertheless, they still understood these ways as somewhat essential to the health and well-being of the uneducated masses who could not correctly interpret the “higher” knowledge of the ancients (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Cho 2013). Many ideas remained ingrained within the collective Chinese psyche and society in terms of body knowledge, ideas that crossed classes and travelled through dynasties within both religious and medical practice. While there were certain contestations with the spirit body, the spirit body itself was never really (officially) in question.

The Chinese spirit body enlivens and suggests the world as a unified materiality-spirituality. Ideas and practices formed and informed by the spirit body are unique across regions and localities and were historically fluid between medicine and religiosity. Phillip Cho writes that “religious healing and rational classical medicine were not based on incommensurable world-views but were part of a broad spectrum of therapies in pre-modern China” (Cho 2013, 6). What he calls “rational classical medicine” is also referred to as the great tradition or elite medicine. Cho asserts, however, that concepts of qi (气 chi- energy, pneuma, life force or breath) and gods and ghosts in sickness and health were once inseparable within both great and small (local non-elite) traditions, that these concepts were synthesized by local and elite healers in various ways. This, he argues, is something very often overlooked in studies of (traditional) Chinese medicine and studies of Chinese religion.

The incorporation of a spirit body in medical theory and methods was not totally dismissed by the medical elite. Cho brings to mind the historical creation of an imperial medical *zhu you* department that specifically dealt with ritual exorcism and talismanic medicines aimed at curing certain emotional-spiritual-qi based disorders (Cho 2005, 2013). *Zhu* (祝) refers to a spell/blessing/curse or spoken word with a magical power, where *you* (由) means a vehicle of something or a method of carrying something out. The *zhu you* department specialized in the ritual (usually exorcistic) expulsion of the cause of illness by moving and transforming qi blocked or weakened by “emotional disorders” or “moral undiscipline” (Cho 2005, 138-139). It became an official imperial medical department in the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) but its methods long pre-date this era (Strickmann 2002). This department utilized ritual healing specialists not so different than spirit mediums and religious practitioners in village settings. The spirit body existed at the most fundamental levels of both great and small Chinese medical traditions because spirit was not seen as separate from the physical body.

Individual bodies in China are traditionally understood as subject to dynamic forces of nature, humors, elements, the cosmos, governance, harmonious or disharmonious social relations, moral conduct, and to spirits and the spirit-world. All of these forces are generally understood to cause sickness and disorder in the individual, either by and of themselves or in relation to each other. Specialists are required to repair these (multiple) bodies. This usually

involves altering human behaviors as much as it does providing medicines and ritual therapies (DeBernardi 2006; Shi and Zhang 2012; Hinrichs and Barnes 2013; Schipper 1993; Unschuld 1985). How this dynamic historically produced and continues to produce sickness and suffering, and the extent of involvement of practitioners to reconcile disorders, is subject to the social conditions and governing systems of specific time periods. The inter-relationality of bodies changed in various ways through time and space.

Medicine essentially evolved in China in relation to a spirit body. Spirit mediums and physicians are an integral aspect of this evolution. Jue Guo writes in his dissertation looking at ancient Chinese culture and medicine in the Warring States period (476-221 BCE) that scholars “try to point out that a distinction between what (were) called *wu*-shamans² (巫) and *yi*-physicians (医) was not made until the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE)...(Where the earliest recorded knowledge of medicine and the body-spirit in China during the Shang Dynasty 1600-1046 BCE) is based on the...belief that there was a spirit realm outside the human world that included ancestral spirits that could bestow blessings on or cause trouble for people” (Guo 2008, 254, 256). *Wu* (巫) refers to practitioners and specialists of otherworldly affairs who were predominantly female in ancient China. *Yi* (医) is the simplified character used today in the word “doctor” (医生 *yisheng*), “hospital” (医院 *yi yuan*) and “Chinese medicine” (中医 *zhongyi*). The traditional character still used outside of the Chinese mainland (as opposed to the mainland’s simplified character system) for *yi* includes a lower stem for *wu* (醫). The upper stems are constructed with characters for weaponry such as arrows and spears, suggesting medicine was originally a form of exorcistic or spiritual warfare against illness.

Wu danced and performed in ritual dress and gesture, mediating this and the other world as expert exorcists. They are argued to be “ancient pre-cursors of the spirit mediums and Daoist priests” in China and Southeast Asia today (DeBernardi 2006, 9). Popular spirit medium practices are argued to have Daoist roots with Buddhist and Confucian, as well as other

² It should be noted that the term “shaman” was originally coined with respect to certain Siberian Indigenous practices but now is used cross-culturally. The *wu* are understood to be connected to both shamanism and spirit mediumship, where spirit mediumship is usually differentiated from the shaman by way of how they travel in and out of their physical bodies to engage the otherworld, while their role in their communities may differ also. This debate is far beyond the scope of this research, but it should be reiterated that the concept “spirit medium” is most commonly referenced in Chinese settings throughout dynastic history. Nonetheless, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably in translations of “*wu*”.

indigenous and/or local knowledges, blended and incorporated into them over time. Many *yi*-physicians were also Daoists in later periods when Daoism was an organized practice (Yang 1961; DeBernardi 2006; Cho 2013; Unschuld 1985). *Wu* nevertheless belong to the same root shared by religious practitioners and physicians in China. A spirit body thus has deep roots in China that unite social, political and individual bodies (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1995), greatly influencing the health and well-being of people.

It should be reiterated that being human in a traditional Chinese sense includes the now living and those who have passed on (Paper 1995). Therefore, “ghosts” are usually in reference to, but not limited to, ancestors and people who have passed on. A long persisting Buddhist-Taoist conception of the body-spirit sees its relationship with multiple souls. Some souls can invite either demons or divinities inside the local body-spirit under certain circumstances, who have the potential to cause illness. For example, the earthly *po* (魄) soul located in the lungs is said to harbor what are called “the three corpses” inside the body-spirit as the potential future ghost of the deceased person. It beckons external demons and ghosts passing by during sleep to enter and wreak havoc, all while the heavenly *hun* (魂) soul located in the liver temporarily leaves the body-spirit to interact with other *hun* souls outside (Unschuld 1985, 76-77). The individual body-spirit is a catalyst for the behavior of both internal and external spirits and souls. The material body in the traditional Chinese worldview cannot readily be distinguished from the spiritual one; the two (body and spirit) are one.

Gods, ghosts, spirits, souls, *qi* and humoral elements are all interconnected across a spectrum of systematic knowledge that filters throughout both religiosity and medicine. Pre-modern official Chinese medical and religious knowledge understands the human body-spirit as housing multiple souls also understood as types of *qi* that become the future venerated ancestor or ghost of a person (Cho 2005, 2013). Kristofer Schipper, a professor of Chinese history and ordained Taoist priest, explains that “the multiple souls and spirits represent the essences and the energies (*chi – qi* 气) of the (individual) body... (which essentially) depends on ontological and cosmological theories related to the systems of correspondence that subtend medical theory and the ritual of the (imperial) state” (Schipper 1993, 103-104). Other less systematic visions of the body-spirit include the “Inner Vision” of a mythic geography where

gods and goddesses, cosmic entities and forces live inside the body proper and can be accessed through discipline and ritual practice (Schipper 1993). The visions of the body-spirit described above provide a glimpse of the relationship of the individual to a broad spirit body in the Chinese historical worldview and reflect the interconnectedness of the traditional Chinese body-spirit with multiple bodies, across disciplines and across time.

Chinese medicine and religion are thus not so distinctive of categories. Spirit mediums see the human body-spirit as intimately and directly connected to a greater spiritualized world. They focus primarily on mending and repairing relationships between the living and the dead, and between humans and heaven (Unschuld 1985; Schipper 1993; DeBernardi 2006). Reparations have bodily-spiritual as well as social consequences. Because a body-spirit harbors souls in correlation with elemental, physiological, and emotional dispositions in relation to certain sociality, the external super-natural forces can and do engage with the internal body-spirit on a regular basis to produce symptoms and illness experiences across a broad spectrum that require specific therapeutic procedures that target human behavior.

2.2 A War on the Spirit Body

Great changes began in China when a dualistic westernized worldview entered the cultural landscape. These changes became significant in the 1800s with certain Protestant missionary endeavors and western physicians arriving through the British East India company that were instrumental in initiating a series of public health campaigns (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013, 189-207; Unschuld 2013). While not to implicate any religious group specifically, many missionaries were active participants in promoting these campaigns. Public health campaigns maintained (either directly or indirectly) the “superiority” of western medicine. What is important to note here is that within the western scientific worldview embedded in these public health initiatives, there is a binary hegemonic relationship between religion (as belief) and science (as knowledge), placing biomedicine and material science as representative of what is real, what is nature and what is the human body, while segregating sacred and religious domains into territory of mind, imagination and the “unknowable” (Good 1994; Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1995; Lock and Nguyen 2013). This materialist scientific worldview paired with

political, economic and military might, enabled an attack on traditional knowledge and culture in China and its inherent non-distinctions between sacred and material worlds and bodies.

Prior to the 1911 fall of its last imperial dynasty, China was already facing pressure to build a public health system and adopt western ways. This happened over the course of a series of conflicts with foreign powers in what are called the Opium Wars which sparked the creation of new policies and a significant change and cultural reform through the New Life Movement (1930s). Alongside the movements of large financial and political groups such as the League of Nations Health Organization, after 1928 it was the Rockefeller Foundation and prominent early republican Chinese politicians and intellectuals alongside the new Peking Union Medical College, that called to outlaw Chinese medicine in an official decree (Taylor 2005; Dreyer 2008). Historian Kim Taylor (2005) argues that if it were not for a massive uprising of Chinese medical physicians in the (largely American financed) Nationalist Republic period (1912-1949), a new organization and recording of Chinese medicine in texts and volumes would not have happened. It can be said that the future state institutionalization of traditional Chinese medicine as a standardized practice and knowledge, enabled its survival into the twentieth century. A modernized Traditional Chinese Medicine (what is also known as TCM) was created to serve a new state society and a new global order. TCM also catered to a need to resist the negation of (or at least to re-invent) a Chinese identity in the face of foreign powers and controls.

The same cannot be said for popular religious practices. Some early western religious influences happened through missionary endeavors that largely saw Chinese religion and medicine as “heathen”, ineffective for medicine and backwards. Many of these missionary groups made efforts to open public health clinics (that were helpful in their own capacity) (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013). It is not any revelation that missionaries and biomedical institutions worked closely together under colonialism and neo-imperialism. In China, although Chinese medicine was endangered, it at least had a better chance of survival (compared to popular religion) after undergoing intense revisions using biomedical science while “dumbing down” its connection to sacred life and popular religious practices.

When Mao Zedong successfully unified China under a new Communist Republic in 1949, he continued the systematization of Chinese medicine as a form of state resistance to foreign

and bourgeois influence in the country. It was also a practical effort to treat a desperate population in the coming decades of turmoil and change in a society that did not yet have an adequate biomedical program (Taylor 2005). Mao Zedong and the new Party's policies to do away with what they call "the four olds" (old ideas, culture, habits and custom) intended to quickly usher in a new materialist science and industry on par with the colonial west. The four olds together essentially constituted tradition. In this long and arduous political process, Chinese medicine, traditional culture, and ways of knowing the human body-spirit, were indefinitely altered.

The infamous Cultural Revolution stemmed from this political process and wreaked havoc across most local worlds. During this time all things religious and traditional under a derogatory label of "superstition" or *mixin* (*mi* – meaning lost, *xin* – meaning belief or faith) were prosecuted (Paper 1995; Dreyer 2008; Taylor 2005). What came out of this modernization was essentially an attempted cultural genocide and economic revolution that hoped to propel China as a significant power onto a new – global – stage, where it could re-gain lost face after being humiliated by foreign powers. In this process, tens of millions of Chinese people died. Body-spirits were forced to reckon with the apparent futility of their traditional ways of life. In fact, during this time, old practices went into hiding. This is a memory echoed by many participants in this research.

Chinese medicine came to fuse with biomedical epistemology during this historical period. It became a more universal, anatomically based standardized knowledge that is exported globally today. Margaret Lock writes about how the implementation of a "biological standard", the one inherent in biomedicine, is the catalyst for modernization in the world without which countries "simply could not modernize" (Lock and Nguyen 2013, 129). After Mao died (1976) and a new leadership emerged, despite a talk of revival of tradition, the Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) adopted a new policy adhering closer to the biological standard than ever, continuing modernization at a great speed. Through the rhetoric of a cybernetics group of scientists regarding human populations as a "biological phenomenon", and affiliated with the powerful Club of Romeⁱ, the C.C.P. followed their "endorsement of biology as the standard for addressing the population 'problem' (which came at the behest of this group's)...forceful

argument...for the application of science to (continue to) eliminate ignorance and superstitious beliefs” (Lock and Nguyen 2013, 128-129)³. The attack on and forgetting of tradition remains a cause for much sickness and suffering as the spirits and souls of both the living and the dead were disturbed and abandoned in this era of change. The destruction of traditional ways of life in and of itself is understood by many to be a cause for suffering and sickness largely by way of attack from hungry and offended ghosts and spirits whose graves and temples have been abandoned and/or abolished (Meugglar 2001). The shenpo in Heyuan echo this.

Chinese medicine and popular religious culture are mostly distinguished from each other today in the general worldview and within official discourse. Not only in the great medical tradition, but also in localized forms of its small traditions, the spirit body has become remote and distinctively altered in its associations with medicine. But Chinese medicine and popular religious practices share a fundamental commonality – they both inherit the concept and root of tradition. This tradition reflects an integral inter-relationship between immaterial and material bodies that still holds meaning for a large portion of Chinese people, which invokes the spirit body.

2.3 A Spirit Body at the Grassroots

A greater spirit body that connects with individual, social and political bodies is still a meaningful part of health and social organization for Hakka communities. The following discussion is a glimpse of the larger fabric of Chinese medicine woven with threads of a spirit body that demonstrates a continuing relationality of bodies and spirits. Interviews with three different local Hakka Chinese healers in Heyuan’s Zijin county are presented in this section. Their words and sentiments help unravel where sacred connections are made in Hakka healing practices today, and where the seeming boundaries of Chinese medicine and popular religious practice are blurred and enmesh fragments of modernity and tradition.

Despite the division of popular religion from medical discourse, various healers in Hakka communities today imagine bodies in a relational way, weaving together currents of the old with the new. “Real” Chinese medicine is imagined here as a vastly holistic knowledge system

³ This was where the “one child policy” and the subsequent “two-child policy” and very recent possibility of a “three-child policy” emerged, and where a new Chinese capitalism and reliance on high technology began and continues.

that holds space for and merges with the spirit body. Jue Guo states that “(t)he long intellectual dominance of Yin-Yang micro-cosmological perceptions of bodies and illness [that is the foundation of TCM today] has created a situation in which other concepts of illness that existed in parallel with it have been overlooked” (Guo 2008, 251). I spoke with three different healers who span the worlds of TCM and popular religion. A shared knowledge of the spirit body in relation to other bodies is revealed in our conversations that further points to a pressing and critical problem today that, according to them, suggests an urgency and need for its (spirit body) reconstitution.

Dr. Zhong is a well-known and nationally recognized healer. He has been on state television as a representative of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Dr. Zhong operates a clinical practice and runs a private school for TCM in Zijin county. He attributes his practice to an intergenerational family knowledge and legitimizes it with state approvals and western scientific evidence of efficacy determined by biomedical standards and laboratory tests. He specializes in gastro-intestinal disorders, a serious concern in Chinese public health today. We spoke at length in a small seminar he put on for me and my helpers, his students, and colleagues. At one point, Dr. Zhong reflects on what it means to be a “real” traditional Chinese medical doctor. He says:

Of course, now if you want to be a qualified traditional Chinese doctor, you must pass the national exam held by the Ministry of Health and get the certificate. But I think that you can only be a “qualified” traditional Chinese doctor rather than a real traditional Chinese doctor. Nowadays, there are many doctors who got a certificate of traditional Chinese medicine and treat and cure their patients with the Western thinking and theories...They have no confidence in Chinese medicine. So, to be brief, my understanding on being a traditional Chinese doctor is that one would take the factors like pathology, physiology, climate, diet and emotions into consideration when he is facing a patient, and he will find a safe and effective way to solve the problem. This is my personal understanding...In Zijin county, there is just one traditional Chinese hospital, and although its name is traditional Chinese medicine, the doctors there seldom use Chinese medicine and most of them are not traditional Chinese doctors. They are not treating their patients in a Chinese way.

Dr. Zhong points to a clear distinction in being “qualified” by the state and being a “real” doctor in the “Chinese way”. There is something “real” missing in the integrative state health care system and training programs that produces Chinese medicine and doctors. There are social

and environmental factors, and other relational aspects not considered which Dr. Zhong attributes to not being Chinese. He equates “real” Chinese medicine with an identity, something with deep personal meaning and connotations and an inherent holistic worldview that is not “western”. He implies an obvious distance between the state created and “real” Chinese tradition, implying it is lacking something substantial – that it is depleted of an authenticity and a “real” Chinese-ness.

During this seminar he lectured on what Chinese medicine “really” is. Much time was spent discussing ancient holistic theories of the five elements and yin and yang related to anatomy and physiology in TCM and in connection with the biomedical sciences. He showed me x-ray scans and ultrasound reports on biomedical diseases he cured using his Chinese medicine formed throughout a long profession. His practice blends biomedical knowledge with Chinese medical theory and methods and seems to produce beneficial results in the curing of diseases while employing biomedical disease classifications (Kleinman 1980, 1986, 1988).

As we talked, I noticed a small talismanic *bagua* high on a wall typically used to repel evil. The *bagua* symbolically depicts the eight trigrams of Daoism which connects to the earliest forms of divination in China. When I asked about it, Dr. Zhong, to everyone’s surprise, brought out a photocopied book of talismans and spells he assured was only a hobby and “not for use in his school or for the public”. I was intrigued to see a practitioner who is state sanctioned and widely recognized for TCM practice also include elements of a spirit body in his clinical and educational environment. Certain boundaries started to blur at this point, and I imagined he must have something to say about the spirit body in relation to Chinese medicine.

We started to discuss divinity, and I asked him about the soul in TCM. It is known in TCM textbooks and classics of Chinese medicine revamped for the modern age, that the five major organs (heart, lungs, spleen, liver, kidneys) of the body-spirit correlate to the five elements (fire, metal, earth, wood, water) and different souls (*shen* –mind, *po* – corporeal soul, *yi* – intellect, *hun* – ethereal soul, *zhi* – will power) with the heart being the home of what some call the ultimate soul or the monarch – the spirit or *shen* (神) as mind – the same *shen* in the word shenpo (Schipper 1993; Farquhar 1994; Unsult 2002; Rossi 2007). But the souls are rarely, if ever, treated in hospitals or in private TCM practices like Dr. Zhong’s, even although people

may have symptoms and experiences of sickness they feel are related to sacred correspondences of the body-spirit.

Most TCM doctors in hospitals or clinics do not talk of the gods in relation to the body-spirit anymore. Despite again stating he does not incorporate religious elements into his own medical practice, Dr. Zhong pulled out a book of talismanic cures for illness – for information purposes. He proceeded to tell us:

There are several different explanations on different gods in traditional Chinese medicine. It is a summarization of people's consciousness; with *hun* (魂 heavenly soul), *po* (魄 earthly soul) and *yizhi* (the will) etc. ... included. And in our five internal organs (heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys), the five consciousnesses are divided in this way: liver is our *hun*; lung is our *po*; the heart is our *shen* (spirit)... The definition of "death" in traditional Chinese medicine is to lose one's *shen*... This sounds like superstition, I know...you don't have to take it for real...But you can't be a person without *shen*, alright?

Dr. Zhong uses terms like consciousness in relation to souls and is quick to suggest that we do not have to take it as "real", indicating there is a stigma attached to this association. His references to "superstition" and hesitation to associate such elements with his practice reflects a fear of prosecution for lack of material scientific legitimation, a stigmatization that could thwart the reputation of his practice. Yet he remains adamant that a connection between "the gods", the organs, different levels of consciousness or souls, are all correlated in "real" Chinese medicine. Here is an opening, a space where currents flow between sacred and scientific discourse and knowing. "Gods" in his view are aspects of consciousness that live within the anatomical as well as elemental organs. To him, they represent power and influence over life and death, and make sense when perhaps associated with less theological renderings, even though the theological renderings cannot really be extracted.

In this re-imagined knowledge of systematic Chinese medicine the five consciousness that Dr. Zhong mentions are also called the "psychic souls", and reflect an idea that *qi* and the *shen* (神) ultimately work together to produce and influence human emotions (Rossi 2007). Dr. Zhong says you "cannot be a person without *shen*" – one cannot be conscious or living as fully human. He is referring to the animating aspect of life and consciousness of an individual,

literally the heart (emperor and center) that decides one's vibrancy or vitality of being alive. Its emotional correlation is that of joy. In disorder it indicates a depletion of spirit through what is called non-joy or loss of liveliness and vibrancy that can lead to death. This emotional state can similarly cause physiological symptoms as it "penetrates into the bones" – where *jing* (精) or physiological life essence is stored – if left untreated (Unschult 2002). (This critical connection between *jing* and *shen* resurfaces in the final chapter of this thesis). The color of the *shen* is vibrant red, it is the fire element with a hue of life-giving blood, and it shines on the face as a glow and clear brightness in the eyes. In disorder its color on the face is an ash grey. A dullness or hazy gloss over the eyes indicates a lack of *shen*. It is the same ashy dark color of a shade or a ghost. This may sound metaphoric, but there is a culturally bound basis to this knowledge and understanding that connects internal with external worlds in a meaningful way lost in TCM but maintained in currents of popular religious practices.

According to numerous Chinese language dictionaries (Liu 2008; Wang 2014; Wang 2016; Dictionary of Classical Chinese 2014), *shen* can refer to either an internal (a person's heart) or external divinity (a deity either heavenly or previously a human). But after taking a deeper look, these two *shen* are not really as disconnected as appears. In China, traditionally, the *shen* of a superior person (who commits great acts of nobility of superior moral character) may transcend after death to become a venerable spirit or ancestor or – if they were particularly great – a deity or immortal (Schipper 1993; Cho 2007, 2013; Wong 2015). There are numerous examples of this in China; one relevant one is the legend of the goddess Guanyin who is discussed in later chapters, who inhabits the body-spirit of one shenpo healer.

The opposite of this kind of *shen* is *gui* (鬼) meaning ghost. A ghost is essentially a distorted *shen* spirit. A *gui* may be an unhappy or hungry ghost of an ancestor or person who lost their purity of *shen* in life through either bad or immoral behavior, an untimely or violent death, or due to a lack of honorable veneration or disruption of its peace by the living (Schipper 1993). DeBernardi writes that "gods and ghosts represent complementary aspects of the self that are dissolved only in death" (DeBernardi 2006, 83). There is a degree of continuity between traditional Chinese cosmology and personhood. There is an innate connection between being human through the *shen* (internal and animating spirit) and becoming a *shen* from being human

(external spirit that transcends the body-spirit). This thread connects Chinese medicine and popular religion and is usually overlooked today. It connects both living and deceased persons with social conditions where humans derive (and change) certain (moral) behaviors that alter the *shen* (and *jing*) to cause sickness and suffering. These associations made in regard to *shen* reflect the inter-relationality of sociality and individual bodies with a spirit body that has practical application for their healing and for the maintenance of well-being.

Despite the large pictures of Mao Zedong, the highly visible state certificates and approvals, and the computers and filing cabinets that fill his clinical space, Dr. Zhong was candid about his experience seeking out, at certain points in his life, assistance from the gods and spirit mediums. He said:

Now people have negative impressions on shenpo because there are so many pseudo shenpo...shenpo was originally not a bad word, and I myself...used to see them to get cured. We cannot find a proper way to define its existence by modern thought patterns and theories...Because the things shenpo describe are not visible and touchable, right? If we cannot see it and feel it, how can we define it?... And we cannot explain this kind of non-equivalence with modern language and science.

Dr. Zhong points to a problem in the language of modernity to reflect the place and practice of the shenpo in medical practice and suggests a larger struggle by many Hakka people today – a struggle in determining what is “real”. His opinion is that people require this kind of healer, but also require science to explain and give the shenpo and other religious healers’ practices legitimacy and value. The word shenpo being either “good” or “bad” also suggests tension in their valuation within today’s world compared to the past. He continued:

We human beings are at the lower parts. And I have strong belief in gods; I believe its existence, its super-powers, its dark matter... I believe the gods can ease my pain and cure my body (shenti or 身体), but how can I find the gods? Where can I find the gods?.....I know there is a type of people, the shenpo or the *xiangong* (male medium), they can connect the gods with human beings.....In my eyes, the shenpo is effective, but it has to be the real shenpo....you can take it as a good way to do mental treatment and vibration therapy too.... Why should these shenpo exist?...Because people need them.

Dr. Zhong relates *shen* with understandings of the gods, of anatomical organs, of souls and consciousness, and even as vibrations and dark matter. He suggests the spirit body is located in the realm of the “mental” or “vibrational” and sees a need for its continued inclusion in Chinese

society and healing practices. Instead of valuing science over any other knowledge system, he connects multiple knowledge systems in relational ways. By looking this way, one no longer sees a struggle but a process of meaningful negotiation and potential for making sense of juxtaposing worldviews that have caused and continue to cause much strife.

Dr. Zhong's words speak to a critical process of locating the spirit body in medical knowledge and practice today. Dr. Zhong is a seasoned Chinese medical doctor and healer with over thirty years experience who sees a need for people to engage the sacred, a need for "real" spirit mediums, and a need for an inclusion of discourse related to the spirit body in Chinese medicine. This can bring healing by way of gods and spirits into twenty first century Chinese medicine and culture. It is important to Dr. Zhong as he sees people in need of meaningful ways to ease their pain and cure their bodies. If this practice is dismissed or again made illegal, what of those people who truly need healing and curing through a spirit body and have nowhere else to turn?

Dr. Wen runs a successful private clinic, offering acupuncture, moxibustion (a therapy using the mugwort plant) and massage (*tuina*), with his wife out of their home in Zijin county, only a few blocks away from Dr. Zhong. Unlike Dr. Zhong, he has no computer or laboratory results stored in files in his clinic, only a wooden table and chairs, a tea set for guests, and a couple of rooms for massage, meridian therapies and moxibustion treatment. His walls are covered with several meridian and acupoint charts as well as Chinese poetry. We spoke privately one evening after a group dinner. While we talked, I noticed a dusty certificate of TCM hanging on his wall from a national university. It was beside an equally as dusty old clock that had stopped ticking. Dr. Wen's clinical space appeared in stark contrast to Dr. Zhong, who prided his practice on state recognition and clinical efficacy derived from biomedical tests, whose certificates hung polished and highly visible on the walls. Dr. Wen's certificate seemed to be there as a token, while the old clock appeared as symbolic of the same modern world from where the certificate came.

Dr. Wen invited for a massage treatment, and I was taken aback to have my pulse read, (a common diagnostic technique in Chinese medicine not normally used for massage therapy). This was followed by an insight into my personality, my past and my current emotional state. I

soon came to know, through numerous encounters with people close to Dr. Wen and his wife, and people who come to him for healing, that his community reveres him for a practice rooted in what he claims to be “an old family tradition”. I realized Dr. Wen’s TCM practice intermingles with a now peripheral but sacred metaphysical realm. He has a certificate and certain standard equipment, but he travels the boundaries of a world not taught in the schools or sanctioned by the state.

With great conviction, Dr. Wen told me of his experience being a Chinese medical practitioner and healer today. He says:

...(this) Chinese culture of traditional Chinese medicine... It is not easy to step into this culture...Once you put one foot into it, you will face great pressure. Even if no one understands you, there is a lot of pressure... If there is someone who understands...there is also a lot of pressure, because this is thankless...Because in this society, everyone pursues nothing but luxury cars. Driving Benz, driving BMW, driving Rolls-Royce...you...study hard and hard and experience innumerable trials and hardships. You do the research of this, the most ancient and the most primitive (原始) thing of our China, which is called spirit (*jingshen* 精神)...to us...because in this society, people who pursue spirit...there are how many billions of people, there is at least one billion...what do one billion people pursue? They pursue material. Those people who pursue spirit are called foolish.....it is not Daoism...but you can call it gods, immortals, or ghosts...believing it or not is completely up to you...but when we talk about humans, lacking *jingshen* (精神) means your *shen* (神) and *po* (魄) souls are separated and gone.

Dr. Wen expresses not only concern for the value and condition of the spirit (*jingshen* 精神) in China in relation to material pursuits, but also echoes ancient tenets that prioritize treating the spirit as one’s lifeblood or vital animating spirit for life (*jingshen*) by harmonizing the souls of the human body-spirit⁴ (Unschuld 2003). The concept of *jingshen* is complex. *Jingshen* is central to my research and is the focus of chapter six. For now, it is important to recognize that its loss occurs with the disconnection of the *shen* and the multiple souls from their harmonic places in the body-spirit, and that this equates to a loss of life and vitality. This, in Dr. Wen’s experience, is essential for “real” Chinese medicine.

⁴ We can recall there are five souls (*yi*, *zhi*, *hun*, *po* and *shen*) that correlate with the five organs of the human body in Chinese medical theories that inherit the five elements or *wu xing* as their core. There is also a common expression that the human has three *hun* souls and seven *po* souls, this is something I heard echoed throughout my fieldwork. A key point is that harmonization is at the core of treatment, that this has an effect on the *jingshen*.

Treating the spirit or *shen* is of critical importance for human beings in the traditional Chinese worldview, as it is essential for not only healing the body-spirit but also for healing society and the maintenance of general well-being (Schipper 1993; Rossi 2007). It is no wonder that *shen* – the heart – is called the monarch. Dr. Wen hints at the potential for devastation this devaluation en masse of the spirit has for not only individual bodies but for social bodies in China, and for Chinese identity. He also uses the term “primitive” (*yuan shi* 原始) to place the idea of spirit (and the spirit body) in relation to modernity. This reflects a linear and hierarchical pattern of thought that categorizes modernity and material scientific thought compared to a traditional worldview as related to a value-added linear evolution that is now largely dismissed in anthropology and medical anthropology (Good 1994; Baer, Singer and Susser 2013). Dr. Wen appears to suggest it is something to be cherished, however his words echo a wider worldview that devalues knowledge and understanding of spirit.

The critical position of the heart (the location of *shen*) is echoed by Er Gufu, the husband of Er Dagu (a shenpo in Zijin county who I will introduce in coming chapters). Er Gufu has belonged to a secret sect of the sacred art and science of fengshui since he was young, prior to the Cultural Revolution and long before a new capitalism took hold of modern China. He has a small practice of his own, outside of Er Dagu’s medium practice. He especially deals with talismans and spells, although he takes a back seat to his wife’s practice. Er Gufu dedicates his life and skills to a “way of the heart” (DeBernardi 2006), and weaves threads of Chinese medicine into a popular religious practice. Er Gufu makes no hesitation to include gods in the rhetoric of Chinese medicine. He provides greater insight into how sacred and medical threads weave together and is very frank about the concept of health in his practice.

We drank tea together one morning in his family home that is also a healing space and a site of worship. He showed me a book of talismans hand-written and copied from other sources he keeps secret, talismans that his wife as a shenpo also uses in her practice. Er Gufu says:

(now) if you want to learn this well, you should have a good heart...if you are not just and kind, I won’t teach you...it will hurt others...having a very kind heart (*hao xin* 好心)⁵ is of utmost importance...the aim of learning this skill is to help people...having

⁵ Kindness is translated from the words *hao xin* (好心), which literally translate as “good heart”. In this reference it refers to the intentions of a person as being helpful and selfless, as opposed to harmful and selfish; there are moral undertones

a good heart is the main point. Being kind or not decides whether you cure people or hurt them..... the aim...is to help people.....because of the severe transformation of the society...because of the social development...there are so many changes and there are fewer kind hearts...if someone is a high-ranking official, why does he still need to be corrupt?...Does it help to be corrupt?...people's hearts matter...

Er Gufu states that development processes in China have made fewer “kind hearts”. Because of this there is may be greater need for talismanic therapy but fewer people who can learn to use talismans for this helpful purpose. Er Gufu makes it very clear that the state of the heart is the most important aspect of achieving social and individual harmony – or health, and also of being able to effectively treat people and help set the course for well-being. Otherwise, the same knowledge causes harm and sickness. He tells me this in reference to a specific talisman that has power to either make one's hair permanently knotted or smooth, depending on the intention and condition of the *shen*-heart of the one creating it. A person with an impure heart who holds sacred knowledge is a dark magician he says.

All three of these practitioners incorporate the spirit body into their knowledge and practices, perhaps in different ways and with slightly different interpretations. But they all know the spirit, the *shen*, the heart, as a critical force for health and well-being of society and individuals. It is also the driving force behind the healer's power to heal in Chinese medicine and popular religious practice – the boundaries of both become permeable. To take this path may be thankless, it may or may not be lucrative or afford a degree of recognition and approval that comes with legitimization from biomedicine or the state. But it is a path towards life and vibrancy with power to restore bodies and ultimately guard against death –of body-spirits and society.

Conclusion

Dr. Zhong, Dr. Wen, and Er Gufu all agree that the transformations in society associated with modernity are affecting the hearts and the spirits of people and society in critical ways. They may all represent different forms of practice in different worlds of either (popular) religion or medicine. But these healers all connect by way of the spirit body. This current, whether highly visible or obscure, unites these medical and religious practices and speaks to a larger

here. There are different schools and teachings of “the heart” in Chinese religion and philosophy that could be explored further beyond this research.

need in Chinese society for healing practices that involve sacred ways of knowing the body-spirit and the world.

An informant and well-known visual and medical anthropologist, professor Deng Qiyao of Sun Yat-sen University, said that in the past hundred years, because of the push and force of industry and modernization, the soul of Chinese medicine – and culture – has itself really been lost. An ancient and deep cultural relationship between divinity and the material world grows ever more confounding and obscure in China for Chinese people. Only recently have state attempts been made to initiate policies for a revitalization of culture and tradition (Yang 2013). Revitalization also comes on the heels of continued and highly valued biological standardization and increasingly rapid modernization. Priorities have changed in fundamental ways and are moving farther away from the divinities of old – or so it is assumed. Yet, people still include and express a need for the traditional spirit body in their worlds of health and medicine.

It is not a question of rejecting or attacking modernity. Biomedicine was never rejected outright in China from its early import. Only the initial political power and force of culture change that accompanied it was. Today's TCM equates to what some scholars call a "secular medical system" in that it is (supposedly) separated from religiosity and is essentially a correlative naturalistic system as opposed to a personalistic one (Unschult 1985, 2018). Biomedicine is a good example of a naturalistic system. Naturalistic and personalistic are two parts of one disease theory system put forth by George Foster (1976). Personalistic theory views disease as caused by sentient agents like gods, spirits and ancestors, while naturalistic theory views it as caused by an imbalance of insentient elements in the body (Baer, Singer and Susser 2013, 10). But, according to the thoughts and discourse of the healers in this chapter, "real" Chinese medicine does not readily distinguish these theoretical views. TCM is a largely re-invented and naturalistic traditional knowledge system that falls short of certain currents of tradition that allow for illness experiences and episodes of suffering to relate to a greater spirit body. Nevertheless, it is evident that relational knowledge between what is medicine and what is religion, or between naturalistic and personalistic systems, is still found and relevant for health at grassroots levels.

Within China today, people are faced with the daunting task of forming new – possibly hybrid – bodies of medical knowledge that are inclusive of a spirit body. These formations are aimed toward a potential for experiencing health and well-being within a limiting political economy. People must make sense of seemingly fragmented and contested sacred elements once, and still, vital to modern Chinese ways of life and being. Religion is highly regulated with only five orthodox ones (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and Judaism), and the spiritual traditions of ethnic nationalities (minority groups) of China, sanctioned and monitored by the state. Popular religion of the Han Chinese in their many linguistic groups and sub-groups, including Hakka, is not on this list (Paper 1995). In addition to this, TCM is integrating biomedical knowledge at light speed and blending it to better adapt to its scientific worldview.

The future of tradition in Chinese modern life is in the midst of an intensive negotiation. What it means to be Chinese and be well in a modern world is prevalent in these negotiations. There are enormous challenges to healing practices and bodily knowledge, from the identification of what is real and efficacious, to the re-location of peoples' bearings in a spiritual body of knowledge and practice. Exploring how an inherent unified material-spiritual knowledge that values spiritualized bodies engages a modernity which separates materiality and spirituality, and lends to new experiences and conceptions of health, can help in the re-evaluation and prioritization of healing and health assets today.

The spirit body embodies gods and ghosts in relation to a traditional worldview. There is confusion today, bordering on crisis, as to how to locate and place this spirit body in Chinese medical practice and general healthcare. This is due to a sea-change of bodily knowledge and discourse brought by the elevation of a biological standard as well as a persecution of traditional culture and sacred ways of life and living in favor of a more modern, scientific, life. Yet, when looking at grassroots healing practices and bodily knowledge in this Hakka community, local healers are re-imagining the spirit body as a vital component to health and the well-being of a population. There is a fluidity of bodily knowledge across healing practices connected to the gods and ghosts of a pre-modern era. The next chapter opens a door into local experiences of affliction implicating gods and ghosts, demonstrating how such afflictions are explained to include a spirit body while requiring assistance from the local shenpo healer.

THE CONTEMPORARY DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL COLLISION

Zhong Dage is a prominent member of the local Hakka community in Zijin county. I asked him when he might consider contacting the gods through a local shenpo medium. He said, “it is fine if there is nothing going on...but when it is different, when there is something that happens, you go to ask [the gods and spirits] when you are *bu shufu* [不舒服 meaning uncomfortable]”. The goal of this chapter is to unpack the experience of “something that happens”, when being uncomfortable implies there is contention between the visible human world and the world of spirits.

Experiences of being uncomfortable as such can be contextualized within the event of a spiritual collision, a term coined by anthropologist Jean DeBernardi (2006). We can recall from the introduction that spiritual collision is where an offence has been committed by an agent or agents between worlds (this and the nether world) that essentially results in an affliction. The spirit medium identifies and evaluates contentions in attempt to reconcile the human (as living or dead) behaviors that are responsible. Afflictions may vary in intensity and severity for each individual. The dynamics of spiritual collision as explained by those afflicted is the focus of this chapter. A careful review of these dynamics reveals not only offence within the spirit body, but its connection with distresses and tensions produced by contemporary social change. The way spiritual collisions are cognitively and experientially linked to the harsher conditions of modernization and the uncertainty it brings are explored in this chapter. Spiritual collisions are revealed as an entanglement of circumstances and happenings that are brought together in a single experience.

Uncomfortable bodies are not uncommon in a society characterized by its intensity of social and cultural change where certain value systems have been disrupted and put into question. This environment has fostered much moral conflict and particularly distressful conditions for people seeking greater success and mobility in a new age of capitalistic socialism. These factors are evident in spiritual collisions as antagonisms that intersect with a retaliating and hostile netherworld, also called *Yinjian* or the Yin world where ancestors and humans go after they pass away. Where an event allocated to spiritual collision is typically discussed in light of how

a person has offended or antagonized agents in the netherworld or the gods themselves, this chapter suggests there is a complexity to spiritual collisions that involves entangled currents of antagonisms. This complexity is characterized through the connection of contemporary uncertainties to an imagined past medical script that has power to relate happenings within spirit and social bodies to individual experiences of suffering and sickness.

To explain the complexity of spiritual collisions, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses dimensions of space in relation to experiences of the human body-spirit. These dimensions of space are called the Yin world and Yang world, which are essentially the Yin netherworld and the Yang world of the living. This section looks especially at the critical Yin world inter-relationship with individual and social bodies in the past and present. An elaboration on the complexities of today's Yang world, a world characterized by rapid development as it moves between agricultural rural life and industrial (towards post-industrial) urban life, is included here. Development is understood by many as necessary for the modernization of Chinese society – its entry and solidarity on a powerful global stage. Changes are felt at local levels where various tensions and strains are produced that impact the lives of local people, where bodies and selves are also rendered vulnerable to agents and antagonisms of an aggravated Yin world.

The second section explores how people characterize and embody antagonistic Yin and Yang world relations within the event of a spiritual collision. It focuses on how Hakka people across generations are experiencing being in the world today in relation to their bodily experiences. A disruption of being is felt in the culturally defined body-spirit that is a part of and interacts with the spirit body, and especially with disruptive or oppressive Yin agents and forces. Occasions of spiritual collision or spiritual offence often occur in relation to strained and stressful Yang world conditions and/or behavioral transgressions that provoke or correspond with antagonistic behaviors from the Yin world. Spiritual collisions, then, present as complex events that implicate distresses felt from changes and uncertainties in the Yang world produced by modern development. This chapter provides a view of life that engages the liminality of change to produce the event and experience of a spiritual collision.

3.1 *Yinjian, Yangjian and Modernity*

The traditional Chinese body-spirit embodies and engages a dynamic spiritualized world system. Chinese sacred life generally understands “(e)xistence...(as) suspended between two interpenetrating realms: a visible one, wherein our existence unfolds, and an invisible one, which penetrates and attracts the visible” (Kubuya 2018 196). This world system of visible and invisible realms is mediated, shaped and influenced by human actions, intentions and behaviors that have potential to impact bodily dispositions. Hakka, and other Chinese populations, refer to two explicit dimensions of space that comprise this world system as *Yinjian* (阴间) and *Yangjian* (阳间), or the Yin world and the Yang world. The Yin world is the Chinese netherworld and is where the ancestors reside. The Yang world is the world of the living where humanity has a moral obligation to maintain stable relations with the Yin world. Both worlds are distinctive but exist in a continuity with each other that impacts the vitality of bodies across both worlds.

I met Ah Hong during field work. He has travelled to many regions across the south, visiting temples and making short videos on traditional spiritual life. When I asked about sickness and the spirits in his Hakka community he replied:

It is about the combination of yin and yang. For example, I ask you whether you have been affected by some “dirty things” like the ghosts...Then they (the medium or exorcist) will exorcise the ghosts, and not let the ghosts haunt you anymore...if they plague you, your whole body (身体) will get sick, this is the yin part. In yang part, we also take the herb-medicines and decoct things to drink or eat...but the medium drives the ghosts away...from the yin part, if the ghosts always plague you, there will never be a smooth day...

Ah Hong’s rationale demonstrates how many local Hakka people approach healing their bodies within a schematic philosophy of yin and yang in relation to multiple medical systems. This schematic demonstrates plurality in the Hakka approach to health resources. It also alludes to particular dimensions of Yin and Yang space that comprise the healthworlds and informs the body-spirits many people live in. *Yinjian* (阴间 – *jian* 间 means “a space” or even “a room”) is a dimension of space where human souls (and other-worldly beings) live after death. It is where the dead live as ancestors, and where ghosts or evil spirits may reside. It intertwines with *Yangjian* (阳间) or “this world”, where material form and bodies manifest on a visible plane.

The Yin world is essentially the immaterial “death world” while the Yang world is the material world of “vitality and life” (Chuang 2011, 93-94). They may be conceptualized as existing in perpetual continuity with each other. Their interactions and relations are understood to greatly influence individual and social bodily-spiritual dispositions and states.

This view of the world has ancient roots and is connected to a medical script. It dates to at least 3500 years ago, although people then likely did not label the two worlds Yin and Yang. From this time, the individual and social body were considered one and the same. People “did not consider individual human lives separate from their families, polities, or natural and supernatural environments...one’s body or self was a substance shared with and subject to the welfare of the clan” (Hinrichs and Barnes 2013, 12-15). According to this logic a bodily problem was a direct reflection of an individual, social, spiritual or political problem. All of these “bodies” were (and still are) understood as connected by an overarching spirit body. Within this view, healthy individual bodies require a healthy society and polity whose job it is to maintain peaceful Yang and Yin world relations. Human behavior is a major catalyst for peaceful inter-world relations with the human body-spirit a target when relations become antagonistic.

This view of the world and medical script has explanatory power to bridge multiple bodies in a single bodily experience still today. Peng Mu (2015) writes how the Yin world today is engaged and mediated through local practices of ritual propitiation, through the organization of households and social relationships, and local forms of spirit mediumship, spirit mediums through whose voices and words make tangible and known the mysterious unknown. Through these “embodied representations of the local view of the Yin world”, material and social life in the Yang world is shaped and reciprocally shapes the Yin in perpetuity (Mu 2015, 358). Discontinuities erupt as points of tension often complicit in the pathology of sicknesses and distresses. Tensions and antagonisms are usually revealed or (re)affirmed through the words of spirit mediums and spiritual healers (Mu 2015; DeBernardi 2006). But they may also be revealed through the words and actions of the people experiencing bodily-spiritual discomfort and crises.

An antagonistic Yin world most always entangles with an antagonistic Yang world. Antagonisms in today's Yang world are immense. The rapid shift from an agricultural and primarily collectivist civilization, to an industrial more individualistic global cash economy alongside the intensity of development and social re-organization, is the cause of much distress, health and identity crises, and expressions of loss and anomie that lead to various destructive behaviors, illnesses and diseases (Hwang 1987; Li et al 2014; Deng and Corilla 1999; Gransow 1995; Meugglar 2001; Ng 2009; Kleiman et al 2011, Kleinman 2010). There are few data available on the prevalence of cultural idioms of distress or spiritual crisis in this climate, despite the re-incorporation of popular religion in daily life in both rural and urban environments, and the legalization of certain organized religions (Fan 2003).

With the advent of socialism and then state-run capitalism, China's once highly organized social control mechanisms inherent in both pre-modern and Maoist socialist society have been severely damaged if not broken, without much replacement. Within today's re-formed Chinese society and economy, the pursuit of getting rich and gaining title at the expense of moral regulation and conduct, and physical health, is prevalent (Deng and Cordila 1999; Gransow 1995; Hwang 1987). Some sociological research finds that despite a rise in economic success, the rate of experiences of happiness is falling. Not being able to be rich enough appears to trump feelings of anomie and loss of traditional culture, although feelings of anomie and loss are still nonetheless a significant factor (Brockman et al 2009). This climate encourages the prevalence of widespread corruption, abuse of privilege, and violations of safety standards across all levels of society. Upon reading the news or turning the television on, one can see these issues are major themes today. It stimulates an environment where making money and earning title are a central theme in daily life above other endeavors and values. This climate is a significant factor in the experiences of spiritual collision.

Chinese society has long been concerned with "face" (*mianzi* 面子) as a moral pursuit which motivates people to obtain a certain standard of wealth, title and talent that also maintains a certain social order (Hwang 1987; DeBernardi 2006). The shifts and contestations in modes of production, knowledge and ideology over the past century has confused this order. In a rising capitalist-socialist economy that vies for being the most powerful in the world, alongside a

general breakdown of value systems and social order, it is no puzzle that distress over careers, education, social mobility, religious beliefs and maintaining face, all emerge as major points of tension within peoples' bodily experiences. Reform changes have produced an increasing spiral of demands, pressures, and rising disappointments which are also seen as expressions of anomie caused by sudden change and a rapid rise of prosperity in relation to a global economy and market (Gransow 1995). These factors and extant crises contextualize today's Yang world of the living which reflects into and out of an equally unsteady Yin world. This makes more complex the bodily experiences of many Hakka people who align themselves with both modernity and traditional life. I now look closer at how the uncomfortable body-spirit is a site for representing and mediating the Yin world in relation to an antagonistic Yang world.

3.2 Embodiment and the Disturbed Spirit Body

Embodiment generally refers to how people interpret and reflect social, political and/or historical conditions and processes through bodily dispositions (Desjarlais 1992; Csordas 1994; Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1995; Mascias-Lees 2011; Johannessen and Lazar 1996). It may involve what Jared Zigon (2007, 2014) and Pamela J. Stewart (in Mascias-Lees 2011) call "breakdown" and "rupture" in the psycho-social world or life of the individual or group that is felt or expressed through the body. Such instances force reflection on one's circumstances and spark a quest for resources and sense-making that allows for a return to an otherwise smooth flow of living and being in the body (Mascias-Lees 2011; Zigon 2007, 2014). Zigon (2007, 2014) provides a theoretical model for the concept of moral breakdown referring to these instances as existential occasions where the being of "being-in-the-world" is compromised, where "being-in-the-world" refers to the degree of a person's comfortable existence within a shared social world that reciprocates an environment that provides existential comfort and a sense of well-being. Being-in-the-world "becomes manifest in the bodily dispositions of individual persons", reflecting what it is to be moral (Zigon 2007, 134-135). Thus, a moral breakdown is an existential experience of embodied social suffering.

On some occasions of moral breakdown, people are inclined to allocate agency of bodily-self experiences of sickness and suffering to an external source as an adaptive response. People often "seek agency in the causes of events" that impact the human body, with agency often

attributed to spiritual beings (Mascias-Lees 2015, 396-397). Allocating agency to spiritual beings in the event of sickness and suffering is said to be a common human response that makes tangible otherwise intangible experiences and makes sense of it in culturally meaningful ways (Mascias-Lees 2011; Dow 1980; Kleinman 1980). An episode of sickness or suffering can then be manipulated through symbols and mythic or cultural systems as a means of healing and making sense of chaos and confusion, sometimes referred to as symbolic healing (Dow 1986, 1986; Moerman 2012). Allocating agency within a spiritualized world allows for its reparation by re-connecting, or as Zigon says, re-attuning, the person with familiar sacred and moral scripts that explain them. Divination is one example of application in this type of healing as a culturally meaningful way of healing human suffering.

The concept of embodiment begs questions concerning the boundaries of corporeality itself, and the role of relationality in and between worlds. It argues that “(t)he body is not only an object that is available for scrutiny...(i)t is also a locus from which our experience of the world is arrayed...(it) is not only a corpse – or text – like entity that can be measured, inspected, interpreted, and evaluated in moral, epistemological, or aesthetic terms...; but is a living entity by which, and through which, we actively experience the world” (Desjarlais and Throop 2011, 89). Andrew J. Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart maintain that the use of the term “body” “does not mean that the body is made the object of analysis, replacing ‘mind’ (but)...rather (implies), a new holistic approach, in which body, mind, and experience, are brought together”, that “experience is always lived in bodily ways” (Mascias-Lees 2011, 388, 396). Dynamic and changing (internal and external) worlds interact with, form, and inform this inclusive concept of the body.

Margaret Lock and Nancy-Scheper Hughes argue that individual, social, and political bodies move in an inter-relational dynamic that produces and re-produces bodily-self experiences, social organization, and disciplinary tactics that regulate bodies through a polity. They write that this view is “a useful heuristic concept for understanding cultures and societies, ...(and) for increasing knowledge of the cultural sources and meanings of health and illness” (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1995, 46). Within this holistic approach, the individual human body is constantly moving and expressing itself in relation to other bodies. It inscribes

and is inscribed by social and political bodies that also carry power to limit and/or control its expression and experience. The human body is then a reflection of the active experience of living and being in the world, and of the world living and being in the body; we live the world through our bodies and our bodies are lived through the world.

The lives of many Hakka people are lived through intensities of social and personal distress and suffering that align with transgressions that provoke Yin world agents and forces to cause harm. Jean DeBernardi (2006) refers to Yang world entanglements with Yin space for Chinese Malaysians as spiritual collisions. She describes them as distressful experiences where people encounter and engage ghosts, spiritual beings and Yin forces of death, where they “(get) into trouble with” or “offend” spirits and attribute various symptoms to them. She maintains that this occurs alongside “well-known symptoms of anxiety and depression” and occasions where “illness does not follow a normal course, (where) many Penang Chinese...often seek spirit mediums while at the same time also seeking medical advice” (DeBernardi 2006, 100).

Spiritual collision in terms of bodily symptoms is referenced in DeBernardi’s work in relation to Arthur Kleinman’s extensive research with Chinese Taiwanese populations who consult *dang-ki* healers (who function much like spirit mediums), presenting what he calls “psycho-somatic” symptoms associated with distress, particularly social distresses that emerge as psychological-physiological symptomatic expressions (Kleinman 1980, 1986). While Asian populations are often discussed in connection with the somatization of emotional problems and social distress, caution should be taken to not convolute experiences with psychological-biomedical language that may potentially blindside what is happening according to local voices. Byron Good (Good 1994, 169) reminds us that reductionist theories of culture and medicine, that often occur when biomedical language is given authorship over illness experience, “(undermine) our best efforts to produce a coherent account of medical knowledge and ethically sensitive reflections on human suffering”.

Many Hakka people local to Heyuan consult gods and spirits to understand how one’s personal and social circumstances might be a factor in the provocation of Yin agents and forces causing sickness. Seeking agency in the religious or spiritual domain is a relational undertaking that transcends the human body proper and connects with an age-old medical script that invokes

a spirit body and requires a body-spirit. A local shenpo called Er Dagū or Second Elder Aunt (*Er* meaning “second”, *Dagū* meaning “elder aunt”)ⁱⁱ spoke of a young boy with a temper whose mother came seeking help. She divined that:

...an inharmonious family relationship...is why he is uncomfortable...if relationships are inharmonious, then ghosts and evil will invade people...doctors have no cure for this.... ...also, if the graves and houses are destroyed...ghosts and ancestors will be disturbed, people will be cursed...there will be no blessings.....it is also caused by overdevelopment...too many careless changes...inharmonious relationships relate to everything, they relate to everything!

Er Dagū highlights the importance of maintaining good relationships. A break in good relations – between family, between people and land, etc. – will cause sickness and suffering in the individual body-spirit. She indicates how over-development, a major concern in China today, is also a root cause as it disrupts the order between multiple bodies. She later told me that temples built deep in nature without human habitation nearby are more spiritually powerful and attract the spirits, but they are fewer and fewer today. Within this script, the pattern of consistent disruption of relationships between bodies causes great suffering and greatly disturbs the spirit body.

3.3 The Complexity of Spiritual Collision

Experiences of sicknesses and suffering attributed to spiritual collisions are situated within a moral causal ontology, or a way of knowing and explaining the causes of suffering as part of a larger moral system. Causal ontology is used by Shweder et al. (1997) in reference to a person’s or group’s ideas about the orders of reality responsible for suffering. Shweder et al. explain that a moral causal ontology entails “the idea that suffering is the result of one’s own actions or intentions, that a loss of moral fiber is a prelude to misfortune, that outcomes – good or bad – are proportionate to actions” (Shweder et al 1997, 423). Shweder et al. add that moral causation is often connected to divinity, such as ideas about “sin”, “karma”, and “taboo”.

China has a long history of conceptualizing pathogenic sins in connection to an otherworld. Pathogenic sins are conceived as “received ancestral burden” and “karma” (Strickmann 2002). In local Hakka worldviews the actions and intentions of people are central in instigating antagonism from a spirit body. A common theme in bodily experiences is the possibility of

having offended a being or beings in Yin space through one's own or an others' actions that requires a degree of taking personal responsibility.

Jin Huang is a 52-year-old woman living in the county of Longchuan. Her case is typical for many people in rural areas who fall into holes while working in the fields, or who disturb spirits in the ground or trees while farming. She recalls an event that brought her to ask the spirits when she was younger and farming in the countryside:

What happened was that I was uncomfortable in my body (身体), but even the skillful doctor couldn't cure my sickness. So I went to find the person who was good at drawing talismans (a shenpo medium)...they said I might have offended some power or spirit in the doorway in my hometown, where I might have dug with a hoe...adding I should scatter some lime over the doorway...I recovered shortly after following these instructions...but I really do not know the workings of the spirits and gods.

A household doorway is auspicious for many reasons. It is a threshold where the Yin world maintains a connection with Yang world family members and friends. Spirits and ancestors must be free to come and go (Mu 2015). Not following this tenet puts ancestors at risk for becoming angry, hostile and vengeful. Jin Huang disturbed an unseen force when she decided to hack at the earth beside this sacred boundary, not immediately realizing the offence. She does not elaborate on her sickness, but her first response was to see a biomedical doctor who could not cure her symptoms. To many, this indicates the possibility of an offence in the spirit body which requires a spiritual or religious specialist. Jin Huang recovered soon after which re-affirmed her decision to be mindful of her future behavior to prevent future sickness while re-affirming Yin/Yang world relations. These kinds of spiritual collisions are common in agricultural areas where daily contact with the land and earth is frequent.

Spiritual collision can be more complex, as the following case demonstrates. It was recorded with permission as it occurred in the front living space of the spirit medium, Er Daguo or Second Elder Aunt's house in Longwo. A retiree named Chang Ge, or Elder brother Chang, is a successful owner of a wholesale tea company who recently moved back to Longwo from the mega-city Shenzhen, seeking a less stressful life in his old hometown. Unfortunately, he could not give a private interview outside of Er Daguo's home, but his case provides a glimpse into the complexity of spiritual collision and its connection to a globalizing, changing world.

He came in looking very uncomfortable and despondent. After some tea and a cigarette, he told

Er Dagū:

Cheng Ge: Sometimes, I feel very uncomfortable both mentally and physically. Sometimes I feel I have a headache, and feel very dizzy; I cannot think clearly as well...I am upset in my *xinli* (heart/mind or psyche) and I am tired, my *jingshen* is very low...

Er Dagū: It seems that spirits have hurt you.

Cheng Ge: I'm feeling very dizzy now.

Er Dagū: It's the spirits that have hurt you...the spirits have hurt you.

Cheng Ge: What do you mean?

Er Dagū: ...I mean...the spirits are toying with you.

Cheng Ge seemed confused as to how this could happen. Er Dagū said:

Er Dagū: Yes, that's what gods and spirits do. You should try to comfort them by buying things and giving them back, and put it back.....

Cheng Ge: As a matter of fact, I cannot think very clearly now...when I bought that censer, I felt my headache began...

Er Dagū: ...the reason is that it has been stolen; therefore, the gods harass you and hurt you so to know who stole it and how to get it back.

Cheng Ge: It seems the only solution I have is to buy a new one...

Er Dagū: Please be quick. It's of great importance!

Cheng Ge: How can I get it back?

Er Dagū: Only you have the ability to take it back...All the antiques are stolen these days. So are the divine and sacred statues. In the old times, things like censers would never be stolen, but people now steal antiques everywhere...Over by (your) house...two ancient censers...over there were stolen as well...including divine statues were stolen too. All ancient antiques have been stolen.

The inadvertent effects of today's global black market are complicit in Cheng Ge's bodily disposition. The political economy of today's world of the living has fostered the formation of secret societies and large gang networks who deal in outlawed business of smuggling and trafficking drugs, antiques, women and children, in addition to money laundering and prostitution rings amongst other criminal activities (Chen 2005). The high demand of antiques

in today's world alongside a dismissive attitude toward sacred objects and life, fosters antagonism from the Yin world, especially where Yin beings inhabit material objects that are no longer venerated but stolen for profit. Cheng Ge is tasked with restoring a sense of sacred social order by returning the stolen censer, in doing so the social injustice may be rectified, the spirit body calmed, and his individual health restored.

Yin world antagonism linked with criminal activity came up in other cases. A woman asked the spirits to separate her brother, a government officer, from the “*yao mo gui guai*” (妖魔鬼怪) or “demons” attached to him, causing him to be taken in for questioning for suspected corruption of government funds, a common occurrence in China today (Yuen 2014). The *shenpo* saw him being tortured and suffering for three days. She performed a ritual of soul return and gave talismans to the family members to help remove their attachments too. He was released from suspicion and returned home three days later, where he confirmed his painful experience of interrogation. The family were and still are comforted knowing the demonic spiritual collision was successfully reconciled.

Spiritual collision also involves human behaviours that break Yin world law but not necessarily Yang ones. This next case looks at how a multi-generational family unit embodies hostile Yin antagonisms where changing values are imminent. Zhong Nainai, or Grandmother Zhong, lives in Zijin county. She is 91 and the eldest in a house that holds three generations headed by her son, Zhong Dage (Elder brother Zhong). Grandmother Zhong's family are highly mobile. The younger members move between Zijin county, the neighboring city of Huizhou and the international hub mega city Guangzhou.

Zhong Dage is a government official in the county and a hardworking father of three. He built a new five story house in Zijin county about ten years ago. I was told everyone was very happy during the transition from the smaller nearby township, everyone except for a statue left behind. Zhong Dage and his wife Zhong Saozi (Elder sister Zhong) forgot a shrine statue of the goddess Guanyin that his mother worshipped to keep the family safe. This is an important traditional practice in Chinese households, and meaningful for Hakka people who are historically a migratory people who work hard to maintain strong values amidst new environments and assimilative forces (Wong 2012; Kiang 1993; Constable 1996; Luo 2018).

The household shrine is a binding force for harmony that maintains good Yin and Yang world relations.

Not long after they settled in, Zhong Nainai started to display odd behavior. She made erratic gestures, self-inflicted injury to herself, and cursed Zhong Dage and Zhong Saozi, yet cannot recall doing it. This is a trait common in trance-possession across cultures where it is often acted out, primarily by women, in the context of a significant social stressor as an embodiment of a transgression and/or a reminder of certain social values and moral codes. According to Erika Bourguignon (2007) trance possession, compared to non-trance possession, involves a change in identity through an altered state of consciousness where the person is replaced by a spirit, and where the “behavior and speech of the possession trancer have an impact on the participants” involved in its occurrence. “Negative possession-trance” requires exorcism or propitiation of the spirit who may be “demonic”, “evil” or an offended local spirit (Casey and Edgerton 2007, 376, 380-384). The spirit acting through Zhong Nainai claimed it was that of the statue, angry for being abandoned – an act of moral transgression.

This incident reflects misplaced values. Zhong Dage argued that he simply forgot the statue, while his mother argued it was because he forgot the importance of it. Zhong Dage admitted he had “not really considered the importance of the statue” as a factor in the family’s well-being. Zhong Nainai’s possession and gestures of violence towards herself occur on a threshold between her world of tradition and Zhong Dage’s own changing world that makes providing wealth for his family a greater moral obligation and priority. Embodied here, is a dynamic of blame and behavioral transgression situated within a shifting importance of traditional roles and obligations, and a waning importance of spiritual life. Harm done to Zhong Nainai’s body-spirit and harm to the emotional well-being of the family as a collective, is an expression of the destructive power of an antagonistic spirit body. It is a reminder of the seriousness of forgetting the household gods as a stabilizing part of the family unit.

A shenpo divined that the spirit possessing Zhong Nainai would remove itself from her body-spirit if the statue was retrieved and put in a high place in the new house. Zhong Dage successfully retrieved the statue and gave it a place within a shrine on the rooftop overlooking the city and the mountains. I was told by the family, that as grandmother lay in her bed that

night, she saw a large spider crawling inside of her mosquito net, trying to get out. Zhong Nainai let it go without killing it. She is convinced it was the possessing spirit leaving. She then regained control of her body-spirit and the family's distress was put at ease.

Not respecting tradition is evident in cases of spiritual collision experienced by young adults too. Hao is 18 and just finished his *gaokao* or high school examination. He was in a state of great relief and celebration when we met, anxiously waiting, as he said, to finally “enjoy his youth”. He recently experienced a spiritual collision during high school that caused what he calls *59hih un* (失魂) or soul loss, half depression, and *jingshen* weakness – which brought his parents to consult the spirits. He discusses this event with me and a student of similar age named Yu:

Hao: I...had an experience like maybe soul loss (*59hih un*)...a few years ago I couldn't sleep well and always woke up at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m....It may be half depression in the eyes of western doctors...*jingshen* weakness maybe...now I still have symptoms of *jingshen* weakness.....doctor Zhong at the clinic thinks so, too.....maybe I didn't get enough rest with so much study...Many children have a similar situation...in my junior middle school, there was a period when I often woke up suddenly at midnight. And my hands and feet were cold with cold sweat, usually called night sweats, you know. What's more, I always had palpitations at that time. I would be very scared if I was walking in the dark, always feeling creepy. When taking a bath, I often thought there was something in the mirror, something inside the hole of toilet, or something outside the window...

Yu: I feel so now (while studying in college). I do too, sometimes when I'm bathing.....

Hao: I felt like I was suffering from delusions of persecution.....I couldn't stand it after a long time, so I told my mother... then one day, my mom called the shenpo (Er Dagou) and later she dropped in.....she asked me whether I happened to see a crystal coffin some time ago. Hearing her question, we were shocked at once...She can figure out whether and where you have seen something unclean...

Crystal coffins are ice coffins that preserve the body for the funeral procession. DeBernardi writes of southern Chinese traditions, that great misfortune can be brought on by “viewing a corpse immediately before the coffin is put on” (DeBernardi 2006, 107). This is also understood as a moral transgression. Funeral processions often take place in the public streets near Hao's home. He is convinced that his symptoms were triggered by exposure to the wandering –

offended – not yet settled soul. This is a traditional taboo that Hao was not aware of or taught by his elders and teachers who prefer to educate him in modern subjects. The shenpo revealed the offense as complicit in a bodily-spiritual disposition Hao also associates with intense study pressure.

Hao's experience is an entanglement of Yin and Yang world antagonisms, where study pressure's mimic the intensity of his heart palpitations, a loss of vital energy and essential spirit (*jingshen*), paranoia, fear, and inability to sleep. Study pressure on today's Chinese youth is immense. This is especially the case for high school students whose post-secondary education determines the potential of their future social mobility and personal value. *Gaokao* (高考) exam pressure has been researched in relation to the "toxic levels of stress" it places on families and students alike and has been referred to as a "magic ticket to success" – social and global mobility – for the family and student who scores high (Zhao, Selman and Haste 2015; Gu and Magaziner 2016). Only top scoring students can study in prestigious and globally connected Chinese institutions like Beijing or Tianjin University, unless the student can study abroad where selection is more "open" and determined largely by ability to pay (high) tuition fees. This is a hotbed of stress and anxiety for students, and a major trigger for rupture in the worlds of Chinese youth today. Hao's experience demonstrates a (mistakenly) broken taboo (with Yin space) in connection with multiple (Yang) social conditions, entangled within the spiritual collision informing his bodily disposition.

Another case from a young adult demonstrates similar complexity involving social and personal pressures brought on by modernity. Wen is 23 years old. She graduated young from a trade college where she was placed after her *gaokao* and trained as a nurse. She is employed at a women's and children's hospital in the nearby city of Huizhou. Wen is not allowed to talk about Yin matters at work, which, according to her, is a hotbed for Yin world antagonism. She recently experienced a spiritual collision:

I had an especially unfortunate event...last year...it was in the New Year holiday...one that I vividly recall...Something bad happened... but later my luck was a little better, not as bad as before...I went with my girlfriends to Thailand for a holiday and came back...our whole group...experienced a ghost press... collectively...a group of people were ghost pressed [like sleep paralysis]...I said the hotel was not good...unclean...then in Thailand, I maybe bought something... a little bit evil...and

then, my family members asked me...she [the *shenpo* Er Dagu] said, it is a kind of ghost, a devilkin [the ghost of an aborted fetus – or dead infant] that followed me back.

As Wen talked about her experience, she revealed significant and on-going stress at work related to this initial Yin world antagonism. The women's and children's hospital deals largely with maternity and abortion. Due to the single child policy (now extended to dual child policy) as a political attempt at population control (Lock and Nguyen 2013), abortions are frequent. It is traditionally understood that untimely or violent deaths, especially of children, produce lost and harmful spirits in Yin space that must be pacified through specific religious and spiritual rituals that are no longer a significant part of public life and society on the mainland (Schipper 1993). In a biomedical hospital, public involvement of ritual specialists and spiritual protections are not allowed. Wen explains that staff still secretly find ways to deal with this tension:

We have many doctors, nurses looking at their phone screens...they take a photo of a talisman, put on their phone screens...cellphone screens...these things.... How to say...give people a psychological (*xinli*) comfort...they help pray for safety to work smoothly, without any mistakes, so they are not harmed...I see many doctors like that...they take amulets and things like that. Some of them, just put it in the shell of their mobile phone.

Wen reflected on a period of personal misfortune that started after her trip:

During an (abortion) operation, a chief doctor took my count of the string, but did not tell me, but it turned out to be my fault...Because of this, I am very aggrieved...Because this kind of thing is a very strange happening...As a result, my leadership said it was all my fault...

Anna: but it was the doctor's fault too right?

Wen: Yes, it's not going to happen by me...All our nurses thought it was the doctor's fault. But you know that's true in China, they only blame the small nurses.

Hierarchical social order and face-saving play a significant role in privileged persons getting away with blaming their subordinates for often critical mistakes. A doctor must save face, and by nature of their rank and knowledge (and often male – gender) it is easy to pass the buck to a young (female) nurse like Wen. The doctors outrank her and get away with blaming her and others for medical mistakes. She cannot easily speak out or retaliate, so the false blame builds up in a loss of confidence and distress, which is felt in her body-spirit. Wen continued:

Wen: I felt wronged because the doctors say it is my fault, I didn't want to work anymore. I wanted to quit. I knew my father would not approve of my resignation, so I didn't say...

Anna: How long did it take before you felt better? Or do you still want to quit the job?

Wen: I still want to quit. This job makes me feel very tired...very tired...Very, very tired.

Anna: So, you will plan a new career soon?

Wen: My father would not agree unless I can find a stable job before I quit, then he will agree.....I don't know what to do, I'm just by myself, and I try to be more careful...That's the only way...Because I think the things in daily life, I feel fine, but the main thing is, I really feel the most stress in my job...Because what we're faced with is not just a little bit of something maybe.. It could be a life, right? This thing makes me feel very stressful.....I'm very upset.....

The initial spiritual collision is allocated to evil from a foreign country as the start of on-going distress that becomes increasingly more involved. It involves hierarchical and patriarchal traditional values in a modern setting where Wen is conflicted about her personal power and comfortable being-in-the-world. Her father and the *gaokao* placed her in a trade school immediately after graduation. Her father's actions are normal in traditional Chinese society that values hierarchy and collectivity as a sign of care from elders. It becomes Wen's obligation through filial piety to obey and later reciprocate wealth for her parents (and grandparents) when they are old. Yet Wen personally feels this is also an infringement on her individuality. This is a conflict felt by many young people in China who vie between "old" collectivism and a more "modern" individualism (Kleinman et al. 2011). Her friends and elder sister who live in a nearby mega-city as aspiring artists consoled her while we spoke, praising her for being obedient and well behaved, and gently re-assuring her that in time she may find something "of her own". The tensions between tradition and modernity are palpable in Wen's experience. Layers of uncertainty brought on by a changing and challenging world are embodied as stress and exhaustion and allocated to an angry Yin world that spans across borders.

Zhong Saozi is Zhong Dage's wife. Her case of spiritual collision happened after her third child was born – around 17 years ago when they left their hometown to find work in a new city. Regionality has long been a marker of social stability and identification of personhood in

Chinese culture. A hometown region is a place where familiar social networks are established and support systems fostered (Oakes 2000). They are also the place of one's ancestors, lineage and familial roots. Zhong Dage and Zhong Saozi were for the first time without the immediate support of their extended families, a major stressor especially for a new mother of three young children. They rented an apartment and soon discovered it was "unclean". Zhong Saozi recalls:

Zhong Saozi: When we moved to the new city, he (her son) cried so madly...maybe it was, renting the apartment...it was unclean...living was not so good, maybe too...This was also, a reason, maybe...Also, also, also, he didn't cry like that at the beginning.

Anna: He just suddenly started to cry a lot?

Zhong Saozi: Yes, he...he cried every night...if he had no fever there was no medicine to give him...He cried earlier with each passing day. I must hold him, hold him...a lot...It was so fun though, to look after the little kids...But the work is also so very hard...(my husband) worked a lot then too...it was so stressful, at that time...At that time we also didn't have enough money....I couldn't work, and so many people must eat something!

Zhong Saozi's value as a traditional Hakka woman is strongly placed in her role as mother, wife and caretaker of the family, just as Zhong Dage's is on providing the bulk of wealth. Hakka women are traditionally valued as extremely hard working. They were the only (sub)group of Han that did not bind their feet or breasts, which was perhaps seen as a deterrent from the agricultural labor and caretaking vital to the survival of their people in harsh new conditions after migration (Constable 1996). Men farmed too, but also pursued scholarship and politics. Hakka women have been called "iron women" for this characteristic, which puts them at risk for being devalued as "lazy" and "invaluable" if they do not meet these expectations (Wong 2015). This pattern continues today as Hakka women enter a new labor market in the world of business and industry, some striving to be "independent" but who are still expected to marry early and soon have children.

Zhong Saozi spoke more of her spiritual collision:

I had weak *jingshen* then...when you lose *jingshen*, when it is weak, you will see that, an old man.... His beard is very long. Then it's, like, like, just, like this (she gestures pinching of her lips shut with her fingers)...like this, like someone covering and pinching your mouth, you can't, say anything, can say nothing...You would really, really like to speak, but it takes a lot of effort, you can't throw it off...You see, when

you have weak *jingshen*, you will meet those kind of spirits...I saw him go into my infant son's room too, to tease him, and then he would cry...

The old man spirit rendered Zhong Saozi mute and made her son cry. She was unable to speak and unable to move. She does not name her bodily experience save for weak *jingshen*, but the explanation resembles a spirit possession. She embodies multiple Yang world pressures, while not feeling (or perhaps being) able to express them or complain. Zhong Dage called a *shenpo* who repaired the collision by exorcising the spirit from the home while providing talismanic ritual intervention. It comforted them both greatly and after some time their son's crying calmed down. Zhong Saozi recovered her *jingshen* and her senses. She said "later on we came back, came back to Zijin.... After coming back Zijin, we met these cases less and less". The experience initiated a re-affirmation to move back to their hometown and work to buy their own house. Zhong Saozi admitted that she still struggles as sole caretaker of her husband's mother, her three children and five story new house with frequently visiting guests and relatives. This, in addition to working a full-time job. The traditional value of Hakka femininity, and the modern socialist value of hard work, silence her frustrations, just as the Yin being pinched her mouth shut.

Zhong Dage is a generous and outgoing father of three in his 50's. He engages daily in practices of *guanxi* with little time for himself. *Guanxi* is intensive networking and is an intrinsic aspect of Chinese social organization. It refers to the power of a bond within a relationship that allows a person to persuade or motivate another person to do things for them or others. It is the cornerstone of social order and the primary mechanism of social mobility. *Guanxi* exists in different degrees between family members, friends, colleagues and acquaintances as it forms a range of expressive and instrumental ties (Hwang 1987). Building *guanxi* is related to "face-making", which has strong emotional and psychological implications for most Chinese. It is an endless pursuit that can also be exploited, especially when it comes to pressures to become rich and successful.

Zhong Dage is always busy between work and face-making. I admired his enthusiasm for generosity, but secretly wondered if he ever had time for himself. I noticed his tiredness one day and urged him not to host me that night as was planned. But, he instead smiled at me and

insisted “it’s no matter, we Hakka are very *renqing* (人情)”. Sociologist at National Taiwan University, Kwang-kuo Hwang, writes that in Chinese culture “*renqing* is much more highly elaborated and more tightly bound up with ideas of reciprocity (*bao*) than it is in many other cultures. *Renqing* basically translates to “human feeling” and emphasizes the value of maintaining personal harmony and social order among persons, often situated in hierarchical relationships”, as “traditional Chinese cherish hierarchical status in social relationships” (Hwang 1987, 946, 948). Zhong Dage would sacrifice his personal time to build *guanxi* with me.

Zhong Dage’s spiritual collision is more involved with his internal Yin being rather than an external one as in the previous case examples. He calls it *65hih un* (失魂- *shi* 失 meaning to depart). The *hun* (魂) in traditional Chinese bodily knowledge is an extension of the eternal Heavenly spirit (神 *shen*) manifest as one of the five animating souls of the human body-spirit. It dwells in the liver and is a conscious soul that departs from the body upon death and in other circumstances. It is also the soul that becomes an ancestor, or a ghost in the Yin world, or even a deity, after physical death (Schipper 1993; Unschuld 2003). *Shi hun* may be referred to as soul loss, which has been largely researched for its culturally embedded emotional and moral associations and distresses (Wikan 1989; Desjarlais 1992). But the English translation risks obscuring its cultural specificities and experiences. Zhong Dage describes what it feels like:

For *65hih un*, the obvious thing is having no *jingshen*, and no energy to perform daily life, you want to eat and sleep, but you can’t...you will feel your *hun* soul has been lost, so you need...a talisman for washing...(we local people) go to do that, (then) one will recover soon.....It is normally said that according to our Hakka ways, we should know ourselves what’s going on, have a clear feeling by ourselves...we will know if we have other mental problems or something else.....but a lot of people do not use this word these days...*65hih un*...they just think there is a ghost or something, it seems to probably have such a meaning now.....if someone feels uncomfortable in this way...it is not disease (*bing*) or stress (*yali*)...I will just feel that my *jingshen* is no good.

Shi hun is something significant in Zhong Dage’s personal life:

Zhong Dage: Sometimes I just feel I lost all my *jing* (精 as essential spirit).... Sometimes, I eat... something bitter, but I can’t feel that when I swallow it. I cannot taste any flavors.

Anna: So, you also get *66hih un*?

Zhong Dage: yes...I don't know the flavor of food.....I go to see the doctor first...if it cannot be diagnosed or treated by the doctor, I flip over and over...I should go to ask the shenpo. And then I need to use talismans to wash with. So that...that is the feeling. You aren't recognizably sick (*bing* 病)...you just feel an uncomfortable feeling...I felt I wasn't really sick (*bing*), but I didn't have any *jing*, a total loss of *jingshen*...then...I, we (Hakka) just ask the *shenpo* to get talismans to take showers with.

We sat for a second interview and he asked that I not record it. He said he was exhausted, but not able to express that openly for fear of losing face. Being a hard worker and provider is a valuable characteristic in Hakka traditional masculinity and the socialist political economy. In addition to this, Zhong Dage is conflicted about his spirituality. He told me, "I really believe in this", referring to the spirit body. "We all do actually", he says about Hakka in his area, "but we cannot express it to each other...I cannot say anything or admit to this still...I work in government, you know?". Zhong Dage's spiritual collision is an internal affair with a harsh external world, manifest in a loss of senses, taste, energy, appetite and awareness, and through the weakening of his *jingshen*. The (future) Yin being of a person still in the world of the living is the *hun* soul, which is disturbed by tensions and strain surfacing from social as well as physical distresses. The loss of a soul while still living in the body-spirit of Yang space is an indication of pending death of the body or loss of life. This is why many Hakka refer to people with soul loss as "walking ghosts" or "walking dead". Zhong Dage's own bodily-spiritual Yin being dislocates as he continues to experience breakdown in relation to surmounting Yang world tensions. His spiritual collision is a product of his own disturbed ghost.

3.4 Biomedical Disease and Spiritual Collision

So far, an emphasis has been placed on cultural idioms of distress and culturally specific symptoms, as well as seemingly psycho-somatic symptom expressions. But there is another dimension to bodily experience of spiritual collisions that correlates with biomedical disease classifications. This is especially where doctors cannot cure or where the patient is dealing with terminal or chronic illness. The allocation of evil to biomedical sickness is often used to criticize spirit mediums as deviants who convince people to stop seeing doctors and stop using much needed biomedicines. But I did not witness the shenpo tell their clients to stop going to the

hospital. When asked, shenpo Er Dagu, tried to explain the logic behind biomedical diseases and spiritual collision:

Lots of people went to (the local) Guangzhou Nanfang Hospital and the doctor couldn't cure their sickness... while I could cure them. Guangzhou Nanfang Hospital already let one man's family go to the crematorium. His breath was weak, but he was not dead yet...almost.....The hospital couldn't find out what it was for a long time... What was that disease_called?... It is called liver ascites...something wrong with the liver.....but actually, it was because of evil that he was sick like that.....I will tell you, the thing is like this...The hospital will tell you what illness you have, and they can treat it. But the reason why they can't cure the illness many times is that there is evil inside...this is what we know and they do not...If there is evil, it won't be fully cured by having their medicine. So, the hospital can't really do anything anymore...you should still go...but you can't get rid of that evil by taking their medicine.

Her logic implies there may be a disease in the biological aspect of the body-spirit that may be treatable with biomedicines, but the cause may be of a spiritual nature that is not known to biomedical doctors. This is not something new in medical anthropology (Foster 1978). Hakka people turn to popular religious specialists in hopes that any spiritual cause can be treated, in addition to seeking biomedical treatment and advice. Zhong Dage talked about this with his old classmates Mei, Tang and Zhou:

Zhong Dage: You said you had a headache, and the doctor would give you painkillers. Just they didn't know what caused it...

Mei: The son of my second sister...then asked the shenpo, she said that he had hydronephrosis or some other kidney disease. And he was later cured by her... she detached the evil causing it. My father, when I was young, he was the same, his body was all swollen....

Biomedical knowledge is understood by Hakka to have a strong grasp and knowledge of physicality according to its using a language of biology. Biological physicality is able to connect with spiritualized physicality here because of the fluid character of the human body-spirit. Shenpo Er Dagu, and her husband Er Gufu (a title meaning "second elder aunt's husband"), who was previously introduced in chapter two, is a fengshui master and talisman maker. They talk about a local man, now passed, who battled liver ascites. They say of his case:

Er Dagu: He was sick. There was evil and ghosts haunting him...

Er Gufu: The hospital couldn't find out what it was for a long time... The hospital just said it was his liver's problem. But actually it is because of the evil so he was sick like that...he was almost at the crematorium...his family prepared his funeral...they called Er Dagou...she saw the evil, and what he did to attract it...she helped him, and he lived another ten years...

The man in question acted in the Yang world so to antagonize the Yin. His immoral actions opened a space for evil to wreak havoc to his body-spirit. His life was hard, I was told. He worked all the time, and did not eat very well, he seemed desperate to make money. Even after he came out of the hospital, his friends and family say he compulsively continued his motorbike transportation business – a job that pays very little and demands a lot. His story is told through his family, his close friends and the spirit medium who assisted him. His biomedical condition is understood and was treated through the logic of Yin and Yang in that it is both spiritual collision and biomedical at the same time. His brother-in-law, Zhou Ge, elaborated on the event of his spiritual collision:

Zhou Ge: ...It was said that he picked up a (random) necklace...a gold necklace...It was sure that he picked it up after others left.....And then that (*shenpo*)...told me that, at that time...she said he, he did take it.....And there was another object, it was used for measuring rice in the countryside in the past, called a *misheng*, it was broken. He took it anyway.....And then he threw it away, abandoned it...*Shenpo* said he took that necklace. But, he denied it. He said he didn't...so how about later. His wife said he did. Then he could not deny it anymore...that *misheng* was from an older generation...it was broken. And she (*shenpo*) knew it.....I couldn't believe it, as I returned later, I went to his home. Then he took it out and had a look. And then looked at it. It was true. It belonged to the older generation. He admitted it was from the last generation. He stole it from his parents' house...He denied it first though... I went back and looked at it. It was right there. So...he also stole that necklace, and he said he didn't, he said he didn't...

Doctors can see the disease but not the moral transgression that ruptured continuity between Yin and Yang worlds, bringing in the evil that impaired his body-spirit. His immoral action of stealing and lying, of disrespect for elder generations and family heirlooms antagonized invoked Yin antagonism that attacked and caused disease. The Yin world is understood to be always watching, and the ancestors and spirits can see (and punish) the misdeeds of family and people who act in the Yang world. This man put back the stolen items, his family says. The

shenpo reminded him (and his friends and family) that moral character must still be tended despite the hardships of today's world, that state of the body-spirit is at stake by way of one's own actions. This man maintained hospital treatment in addition to talismanic ritual treatments for ten years after he returned to life, after which he departed from the Yang world.

Conclusion

When Hakka people seek divine intervention in the event of sickness and suffering, their bodily dispositions are being allocated within a spirit body where unseen beings and forces are provoked or aroused as a result of certain human action or in-action in the visible world. These cases are contextualized as spiritual collisions and involve a mutually reinforcing dynamic of spatial interaction between the Yang world of the living and the Yin world of spirits. Human actions may be deliberate or unintentional, while attacks may be intensified by an already weakened human body-spirit that cannot protect or defend itself. Whatever the mechanism of offence, a conflict between seen and unseen worlds is at the core.

Spiritual collisions involve complexities that become more involved as people move through a rapidly modernizing world that challenges their quality of lives and sense of "being-in-the-world" (Zigon 2007, 2014). The Heyuan area has been agricultural for centuries and is fast industrializing and connecting to an urban and global landscape that brings new challenges and ways of looking at and being in the world. Yang world tensions arise from new social distresses and chronic illnesses that make being unbearable and painful. These currents of painful experience enmesh and entwine with a disturbed spirit body and a hostile Yin world, and are expressed in bodily-spiritual ways.

While a shenpo may allocate a point of conflict to a single instance of transgression, there are entanglements within spiritual collisions that are revealed especially in the narrative telling of their experience. Threads of association provided by experiencers and their families intertwine with the telling of transgression from the shenpo. Bodily conditions of discomfort, some Zhong Dage describes as not "recognizably sick" and others that are recognizable illnesses, are associated with stresses, uncertainties, pressures and obligations of everyday life – where being-in-the-world is compromised. It may be *gaokao* exam pressure upon youth to achieve the best, the pressures of an unfair job one was placed in not of their choosing, raising

a new family in poverty away from one's social network, constant pressure to perform *guanxi* for the betterment of wealth and prestige, the silencing of one's spirituality due to bureaucratic stigmatization, the dismissal of traditional family values and neglect of the cries of one's elders, a social body struggling with immense competition that corruption and lawlessness have become commonplace, or the emergence of a chronic or debilitating disease that leaves one or one's family desperate, all while not feeling able to complain or speak out. The spiritual collision provides an opening or a platform where people decompartmentalize emotions and opinions that have been repressed or remained unexpressed, or that are not allowed to be expressed for the greater good of family, community or national harmony.

These antagonistic Yang world circumstances are etched in the embodied experiences of spiritual collision and cognitively linked to disturbances in a greater (moralized) spirit body. Yin world antagonism is made primarily complicit in the disorder and distress, and linked to the transgressions of individual, social, and political bodies. Taking certain personal responsibility and initiative and self-reflection, then, becomes the mechanism through which these ruptures in states of being-in-the-world may be repaired, where bodies may be restored or transformed. This is done by relating circumstances and reflections to a script where a spirit body directly engages the social, political and individual worlds of existence. This is where the shenpo medium serves as the pivot directing a series of circumstances and events within the complexity of a spiritual collision, to find relation with a single point of transgression, where morality and divinity are made central.

Strained and disturbed sociality emerging from a changing and challenging globalizing politics, manifest as strained and disturbed individual body-spirits. Spiritual collisions represent and manifest the Yin world in relation to not only changing local life but also to global processes. They reveal how a disturbed social body is complicit in a disturbed spirit body. Spiritual collision invokes a reality where a dynamic spirit body allows life to be lived as a body-spirit, where space and the world itself are organized to the effect that spiritualized bodies are not separate from material existence. It is a world where morality and sociality are implicated in health and well-being. This becomes meaningful and critical where the biological standard is pervasive, where moral and social crises are rampant in a changing world, where mental health

is not adequately understood or allocated enough care facilities and resources, and where there is a shortage and strain on health care resources in general. The next chapter delves into the world of the shenpo where a divine moral system is invoked to reconcile spiritual collisions.

LOCALIZING A SPIRIT BODY

Spiritual collisions require a form of healing that engages and makes operational a greater spirit body. Shenpo spirit mediums potentially provide this kind of healing. They are not only mediums between the gods and spirits with humanity but are also conduits and transmitters for a spirit body so it may engage with other bodies. In their practices, bodies connect with the gods who represent a divine moral system capable of locating and reconciling behavioral transgressions and ruptures between and within seen and unseen worlds. This divine moral system is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and worldviews as a part of traditions that pre-date its written history.

Healing through shenpo traditions requires engaging in the shared cultural reality of which it is a part. It is a process that involves dynamic participation with a spirit body as it emerges and exists within a locality. In many Chinese settings, and within the Heyuan area, the spirit body is localized and expressed through the human being and body-spirit of the shenpo medium in on-going communication with sacred objects, sacred places, and community members (Wang 2012, 2014; Lin 2015). Localization of the spirit body brings heaven to earth; it gives the spirit body place and creates a space where gods and ghosts become tangible, relatable, and accessible to human worlds. It also creates and re-creates its own dynamic reality.

Sharing in this cultural reality is largely a moral enterprise. The explanatory framework that ultimately determines a person's affliction to be a spiritual collision integrates interpersonal causal ontologies that are largely found in witchcraft with moral causal ontologies largely found in religion associated with concepts of sin and karma (Shweder et al 1997). Thus, shenpo are religious specialists who transmit divine law into their communities, and who also specialize in interpersonal human relationships. This chapter demonstrates how a divine moral system is localized in relation to the transformed body-self of a woman into a shenpo medium. The shenpo further serves as a catalyst for operationalizing the healing power of the spirit body. In this environment the shenpo draws spiritual power or what is known as *ling* (灵) as a force of spiritual efficacy. The strength of her practice's *ling* determines the potency and popularity of her practice and deity in local space, and establishes her reputation as a healer.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First is a brief discussion on theoretical literature regarding symbolic and ritual healing. Symbolic healing requires subjective engagement with a reality that is shared. A shared sense of a spirit body in the worlds of patients and healers is required for efficacious ritual healing. People share in this reality in various and personal ways in a process of making meaningful connections to symbols, objects and concepts that potentially impact on the human body-spirit as well as social organization. In many Chinese localities this involves the grounding of, and continual negotiation of, a cultural reality in space and place, which is essentially a process of localizing a spirit body and its deity (Lin 2015).

The next section explores the process of becoming a healer and bringing heavenly bodies to earth. The transformation of a human woman into a shenpo is a pivotal first point in situating the divine moral system of the gods on earth. It is a point of departure for localizing a sacred cultural reality where symbolic healing can occur. This section explores the transformative becoming of a shenpo medium in the life of Er Dagu (introduced in the previous chapter), who becomes what she calls the child (tongzi 童子) of the goddess Guanyin (观音 Kwanyin) a now deified Buddhist bodhisattva people call the goddess of mercy, compassion and salvation (also called *Guanshiyin* from the Sanskrit *Avalokiteśvara*⁶). Guanyin is seen as one of the great goddesses of China; Guanyin's figure is well known and worshipped across Asia in various forms and manifestations (Irwin 1990; Yu 2001). Her transformative becoming grounds the goddess in physicality. The shenpo Er Dagu is a living embodiment of Guanyin who, from her high position in the Heaven realm (*tian tang* 天堂), possesses Er Dagu so that her divine work in both Yin and Yang worlds can be done to liberate all from suffering. This chapter makes no attempt to speak for all spirit mediums in the Heyuan region where my fieldwork took place, in other Hakka societies in China, or in the pan-Chinese cultural sphere. Each practice is unique because it is localized, but there are also elements shared and in common between shenpo traditions and Chinese spirit mediumship in general. While this chapter may touch upon these

⁶ "Avalokiteśvara is Sanskrit for the figure Guanyin and was first represented in male form upon Buddhism's entry into China. Avalokiteśvara is a Bodhisattva. In the Buddhist context a Bodhisattva is a person who has attained Enlightenment but who chooses to postpone Nirvana, or full transcendence into Enlightenment, in order to remain and help others attain Enlightenment. A Bodhisattva is not necessarily a deity, but Guanyin was deified and transformed into a female persona in China; there are various representations of this figure throughout Asia. Guanyin in the context of this research is the female goddess of mercy as depicted by the spirit medium Er Dagu in her popular religious practice (Yu 2001).

commonalities and differences, it is not able to conduct any such cross examination, nor is it an attempt to do so.

Finally, the third section looks at the broader formation of a community that incorporates the spirit body into their daily life and reality. This section traces the reality Er Dagu makes and re-makes with her local community in relation to her being a shenpo. According to Joan D. Koss-Chioino, what is often missing in discussions of ritual healing “is a focus on spirituality, defined as ‘a search for the sacred,’ a universal human experience” (Koss-Chioino 2007, 653). Local residents and people returning to their hometown from urban areas to see a shenpo, do so in search of this sacredness. Spirituality is engaged as people seek out ritual healing through the shenpo tradition which puts them in contact with a reality not readily accessible in most urban centers. This section looks closer at the formation of sacred community whose members can share in the cultural reality of a world connected with a greater spirit body that spans modernity and traditionality.

4.1 Symbolic Healing: A Theoretical Perspective

The spirit body in shenpo traditions manifests and is formed through a process of entwinement between heavenly and human bodies in a local space and place where divinity integrates with the body-spirit of the shenpo and then through them with others. Yin and Yang worlds (discussed in the previous chapter) are subject to heaven’s authority and laws; thus, heaven must manifest on earth to mediate the dynamics of their inter-world relations. Heaven is brought to earth through the bodily experience of the human shenpo, and then shared with her community, who already have a sense of the spirit body expressing itself through her. According to the theory of symbolic healing, it is through this dynamic of sharing in a spiritualized cultural reality that a shenpo may come to heal.

A shared cultural reality or schema is said to be essential for efficacious symbolic and ritual healing. It usually “involves extensive communication between patient and healer and, commonly, some form of education or instruction” (Waldram 2013, 194). Symbolic and ritual healing processes invoke a mythological imagination that makes associations through the transaction of symbols and stimulation of emotions towards producing a desired outcome. Symbolic healing is a transformative therapeutic process based in a language of connectivity.

Its therapeutic efficacy is attributed primarily to a reparation of social relationships that impact the body and personhood through the manipulation of culturally meaningful myth, story and symbols (Dow 1986, 1986; Moerman 2012; Waldram 2000, 2013). Symbolic healing refers to “a holistic and symbolic means of repairing ruptures in the psychosocial order through the re-attachment of individuals to their mythic worlds and social realities...(T)he key is that the goal of healing is change...(where) the patient (in some traditions) emerges from (a) liminal process of transformation to embrace a new status, often as a follower or adherent to a new mode of living” (Waldram 2015, 293). This “liminal process” involves the differential participation of both healers and patients in a shared cultural reality that becomes important for efficacy. Furthermore, symbolic healing is an explanatory framework that accounts for cultural context and content connected to ritual healing that should be accompanied by also looking at more “basic processes” of ritual healing so to present a more culturally specific analysis (Koss-Chioino 2007, 653).

“Re-attachment” as mentioned above is a psychic and emotive process of connecting and re-connecting in meaningful ways between the inner and outer worlds of individuals and groups. This occurs largely through ritual as a process where the individual temporarily disengages with the established social body and enters a liminal place where consciousness becomes more pliable and self-orientation highly negotiable, which often results in a re-orientation with a new or revitalized communal and individual body (Turner 1969). Individuals and social bodies are (re)constituted through this process which also often produces experiences of healing. Recent research demonstrates how shared cultural realities are dynamic and negotiated through a process of intersubjective relating of experiences and interpretations that occurs when ritual healing is negotiated (Lee, Kirmayer and Groleau 2010). Symbolic healing initiates a fluidity of negotiation among participants where intersubjective experience and associations may converge and connect to various degrees depending on the subjects. This negotiation process is full of healing potential. When negotiating in shenpo tradition, people must first engage the cultural reality of heaven.

4.2 Embodying Heaven

All shenpo healers must acquire the authority to heal within their local community. The acquisition of healing authority parallels deeply ingrained cultural scripts that form and inform the social and psychological fabric of the said community where healing outcomes are produced (Good 1994). Ritual healing processes invoke these scripts and involve a common “search for the sacred” (Koss-Chioino 2006, 653). Spiritual transformation is often integral to ritual healing processes for both healers and patients and, at times, other members of a community or family. For Hakka shenpo in Heyuan, the authority to heal is acquired through a spiritual transformation that brings heaven to humanity.

Shenpo are an embodiment of what is sacred to local Hakka (and many other Chinese and Asian) peoples. The source of the sacred is heaven. They become the medium for heaven on earth through the radical embodiment of, and some say possession by, a deity from the broader Han Chinese pantheon of gods and goddesses and/or local indigenous deities and spirits or ancestors (Lee 1986; DeBernardi 2006; Fan 2003). These divinities and spirits are always locally known and recognizable by local populations. The bodies and selves of the shenpo become divine and enabled as bridges between the tripartite realms of Heaven, Humanity, and Earth that form the whole World in a traditional Chinese cultural script. Local participation with this sacred embodiment forms a community where a shared reality is created and re-created, where heaven is directly engaged.

The specific process of becoming a shenpo is called by local people “coming out” or *chu lai* (出来) – meaning that the deity literally “comes out” or “came out” from inside the body-spirit of the chosen woman, in that the spirit or deity has taken residence within the body proper and wishes itself to be made known to others via the consciousness of the human woman. It means the deity is given expression or voice in the human world through a human body-spirit; that deity is made manifest on earth (Lin 2015). Most scholars associate “coming out” with (at times violent) possession (Murphy 2011; Hsieh 2016). After a period of suffering, as the deity attempts to enter and merge with the human woman’s body-spirit, the spirit medium transforms into a vessel for the divine authority that has come into her. This can be understood as an act of becoming the wounded healer, which is common across cultures in relation to healers who

operate through a spiritual body. Koss-Chioino explains how the process of becoming “the wounded healer” occurs by first undergoing a life changing and/or threatening event where the person encounters “extraordinary being(s)” who are “literally incorporated into both...(their) psyche and soma”. They eventually “normalize”, albeit with a new social role and personhood that situates their acquired identity and role as a healer. “Healing (then) comes not from the healer him/herself but from the realm of spirits, God or gods or other extraordinary beings... (It is t)he spirit guides (who) make healing work...possible” (Koss-Chioino 2007, 656, 657). For the Longwo shenpo Er Dagu, she engages local patrons and patients as an embodiment and personification of the savior goddess of heavenly compassion called Guanyin (观音).

Er Dagu and her husband talked about when Guanyin “came out” through her:

Er Dagu: I experienced a series of fainting from 28 years old to 39 years old and when I woke up I knew where I [Guanyin] had descended to earth.....I [Er Dagu] built a temple at the place where she descended to earth...

Er Gufu: We can’t see it because it is foggy today...We built that temple by hand...a long time ago. We built it ourselves [with a community of people in the area].

Anna: What did you think was happening to you at that time?

Er Dagu: I don’t know. I started to get sick when I was 28.....I always fainted when I was sick.... I could not wake up...[not] even if you poked at me.

Er Gufu: It took her long time to wake up, even if you pinched her nerve areas...

Er Dagu: Even if you pinched me, I would still stay unconscious, but then I would wake up by myself later...When I was 39, I fainted on the ground suddenly. People all suggested I go to the hospital. Then the goddess Guanyin of the South China sea descended to the earth...and came to me...she tried to “come out” in me...some said that I had a mental illness.

Er Gufu: Yes, they all thought it was mental illness.

Anna: What do you remember doing during these times?

Er Dagu: Oh...singing and dancing...originally it was like that...I could openly sing and dance after I regained consciousness...

Er Gufu: And she was an introvert before...

Er Dagu: I didn’t go to school...I sang and danced when the goddess was awakening in me, it was strange to people...so everybody said I had mental illness...I didn’t know when I was sleeping, it felt like dreaming (all the time) Even when I was

awake...I was in a dream. When I woke up I knew everything. Yeah, after that I was *zhua tongzi* [抓童子 – taken as the child of the goddess] and woke up, I can think of whatever you said...I knew everything that people said and thought...

Er Dagu felt herself “sick” and “mentally ill” over a near ten-year course of “coming out”. It was bewildering and distressing to her as well as those close to her. Its resolution resulted in the total incorporation of Guanyin “into both the psyche and soma” (Koss-Chioino 2006, 656) which re-affirmed/(s) her authority as a shenpo in the locality where she lives, where she was previously “introverted”. From a period of uncertainty, and what many people call “mental illness”, Er Dagu acquired a radically new social position and personhood with a sacred power to heal.

“Coming out” is a common experiential process for spirit mediums in the pan-Chinese culture circle that is expressed in different ways in different localities. The body-spirit chosen by the deity undergoes great trials and suffering, trials that are seen and observed by a greater community or family and understood as “divine selection” (Lee 1986, 202). Becoming “the wounded healer” involves “(c)ontact with the sacred (that) is achieved when living and spirit realms interpenetrate” (Koss-Chioino 2007, 657-657). The human being is a medium for interpenetration. The several shenpo I spoke with during fieldwork all had a unique and personal story of suffering during “coming out”, and an acquired resolve to eventually submit in an ultimate moral act resembling filial piety to a sacred “parent”. For Er Dagu, this submission marks the point of being “out” and a successful transformation where she becomes the “child” (童子 *tongzi*) of the (parent) deity Guanyin. She could then somewhat control her power.

Spirit mediums across the pan-Chinese cultural sphere are personifications of a divine moral script. Philip Clart (Clart 2001, 313) writes that “gods (and goddesses) are moral forces, so the medium possessed by them must be a person whose moral cultivation renders him or her akin to (them)...(so m)orality becomes the precondition and basis of transcendence, and the union of deity and medium is thus seen as occurring between two entities that are essentially alike”. Clart argues there are popular theories that locally construct mediumship across the Chinese culture sphere that share in common their working “through the co-operation of deities and pure and sincere humans” (Clart 2001, 156, 172-173). He is speaking of a “high” literary

tradition of spirit-writing in Taiwan where the individual cultivates themselves to become as “pure” as the deity and thus volunteers their self-cultivated body-spirit, as opposed to the passive process of submission by non-literate mediums as Er Dagū. This does not mean that the shenpo are not also “pure” or “sincere”; these traits are merely acquired in a different way.

Chinese traditional culture is inherently hierarchical; passive submission in relation to a higher authority is an act of moral propriety in and of itself. As an “uncultivated” or un-educated person, and particularly a female (who traditionally were not educated and considered “lesser” than males), the “coming out” of a “higher authority” through her body-spirit may also be seen as a (painful) assimilation between two entities building a shared moral ground. A woman’s submission to a higher (often male) authority, an un-educated person’s submission to an educated one, and humanity’s submission to heaven, are all culturally embedded moral acts within a traditional Chinese worldview. Er Dagū asserts and re-asserts that she did not go to school, that she did not understand what was happening to her. She instead eventually submitted to the instruction of the deity, which allowed the deity to emerge. The qualities of Er Dagū as a person suffering and then submitting to Heaven makes her person more sincere and pure in a culturally relevant way, leading to the acquisition of a compatible moralized ground or self.

The mythic telling of the Indian Avalokiteśvara becoming the deity Guanyin in China is about self-wounding as an ultimate act of (filial) piety to deity and patrilineage. It is attributed to a twelfth century legend that progressed and expanded over time. A girl child named Miaoshan suffers because of her obedience to Buddhist teachings that contradict traditional (Confucian) filial piety teachings. In an act of compassion, she sacrifices her eyes and flesh to heal her father despite his ongoing cruelty and punishment to her being unfilial. Because of this act, she transforms into a great light and appears as the goddess Guanyin, who is a feminine representation of a gender fluid Bodhisattva called Avalokiteśvara. Some argue Guanyin is a subversive figure who substantiates a future moral order, who also becomes a symbol and figure of universal compassion (Hedges 2012). This universality also speaks to her accessibility for local populations in China. Nevertheless, across both popular and orthodox religious practice, Guanyin’s symbolic essence is compassion and wisdom, and her deity is the ultimate “personification of compassion” (Tay 1976). Her compassion represents moral authority and

soteriological power. As a goddess of the higher reaches of heaven, she regulates and defines a set of boundaries between what is good and evil across all Worlds in accordance with divine law. This is part of her *ling* spiritual power (灵) that is now embodied and materialized in Er Dagu.

Er Dagu inherited Guanyin's characteristics and now represents her presence on earth. Her new identification with Guanyin is essentially an acquisition of power similar to what Susan Greenwood (2005) calls the "healed" or "balanced" magician who has successfully integrated the sacred and mundane world. Er Dagu says, "I experienced a series of fainting from 28 years old to 39 years old and when I woke up I could tell where I (Guanyin) had descend to earth....where I descend to earth...". She has acquired a dualistic and reflexive self-identification, which is demonstrated by referring to herself as "I" and to the embodied divine self as also "I". She is two beings at once, one who sits on the liminal "seat" of Guanyin as her child (*tongzi*), and one who is Guanyin. Greenwood writes that "(f)or magicians the otherworld is the locus of power; but one of the paradoxes of magic is that the otherworld is, at one and the same time, both external and internal to the magician, and a clear contrast is made between internal ethics – which are said to have a connection with otherworldly powers and therefore have spiritual authority – and the social ethics created by ordinary people in the every-day world" (Greenwood 2005, 179). Er Dagu as shenpo acquired personal as well as social authority as a powerful narrator of a moral and ethical script that represents also a medical knowledge, that becomes visible when the goddess comes out through her in speech or action. Dr. Zhong (see chapter two) says "the real shenpo is like this...in her trance [or possessed] state she has no self-consciousness. She might be illiterate, blind, lame or deaf or disabled in other aspects. Her consciousness and abilities do not match her judgments and performances when she is in that state". The contrast between the illiterate or "inferior" character of the human woman and the "superior" ethical character of the heavenly goddess in the same body-spirit reinforce the possibility of heaven on earth.

Er Dagu's process of becoming the wounded healer involves an altered state where the past and the present come together in meaningful ways. This state is a pliable form of consciousness or "magical consciousness" where a dialogue of inter-connection is readily present (Greenwood

2009). Guanyin, normally dressed in long flowing white robes of dynastic quality, appeared to Er Dagu as a young Chinese woman wearing a mini-skirt and high heels, carrying a parasol while gazing upon Er Dagu with what she describes “ancient eyes”. She materialized in a statue buried under an obscure rock on a prominent mountain face in Longwo township amidst the dragon paw mountains. She said the statue had been there for centuries, that now was the correct time (to retrieve it). The goddess led Er Dagu to the mountain rock through visions.

“Coming out” also involves a reversal of certain order and establishment of new power relations in the human world. Er Gufu admits to trying to stop Guanyin’s “coming out” using his own magical talents, not knowing what was happening. He said with great enthusiasm, “I tried to suppress it, here, with my own talismans...but when she came out, she forced me to kneel...she punished me for trying to stop the Goddess of Mercy from coming out into this world...I realized I was doing wrong...and never question her since...then we set to build the temple”. Forced kneeling is an ultimate symbolic gesture of human submitting to heaven, that was later interpreted by other members of the family and community as a profound inverse of the gender roles of Hakka marital union where the husband rarely kneels to his wife. The hierarchy between heaven and humanity was (re)established in this act and authorized through a visible gender role reversal in the eyes of others. It was a reorganization of power as male submitted to female resulting in the female rising within the established household hierarchy and professional hierarchy (Er Dagu’s household altar is bigger and more prominent than her husband’s altar, and her practice is more sought after than his). This established a new rank. It was a profound display of the embodied power of Guanyin in the human world, reflecting an acquisition of authority signifying Er Dagu’s new divine person.

It was immediately after the temple was set to be built that her suffering completely resolved itself. She fully submitted to Guanyin and took the seat as her child. As a child of a divine parent she asserts a power to enforce a divine moral system on earth. Acts of filial piety are prevalent in establishment of the shenpo in local life. It starts with the process of “coming out”. Filial piety is the lifeblood of the Chinese worldview, thus this re-establishment of power relations within the human woman’s body-spirit and then within her immediate family, is the original point of departure in the establishment of the healer in the greater society. It orients the

shenpo's practice with a sense of divine kinship that gives her power and roots within the community at large.

4.3 Bringing Heaven to Humanity

Localizing heaven on earth is a process; it is not enough to come out (*chu lai* 出来) in the shenpo alone. Witnessing the process of Guanyin coming out in Er Dagu was a catalyst for the integration of a spirit body in the locality to whom she “came out”. Witnessing helps form and inform a shared cultural reality of heaven in the worlds of local people. Zhong Saozi (see chapter three), recalls witnessing a significant event in Er Dagu's coming out:

She sat and sat, said something and she...she murmured to herself.... She was talking about that, that, Guanyin and something else...She just always talked like this, no one knew what she was talking about...Over two or three years, she was so burdened. That just, might have been, the Goddess who came to possess her...the Goddess, the Guanyin, from within the temple...her head was [usually] down on the ground... Her feet were in the air. She was always singing and dancing. She often did this, her head was on the ground, on the ground... her feet were in the air...she went... spinning and spinning.... Her hands seemed to gesture and do something else, and she sang...She was singing that she was the Goddess descending to earth...Then she sobered up. Everything was OK..... She, she was easy to do that.....I just felt, she was so awesome.....and of course, you, now you ask her to do this and she can't do it.... She did it so smoothly [back then]...really naturally...It seemed that, that Guanyin, the Goddess, was, was punishing her almost...I still can't believe it was true.

Zhong Saozi, and other witnesses “just felt, she was so awesome”. People around Er Dagu and people in her community participated in heaven coming to earth through the act of witnessing the spirit body surrounding Er Dagu as an authority of heaven and a healing figure. Being witness to magical acts and to rites of any tradition is a powerful act of establishing a (sacred) community through the power of association and generation of collective emotion that connects this world to an otherworld as an integral part of localizing or forming a sacred space (Greenwood 2005). Feeling and witnessing Er Dagu's awesomeness is an act of connection binding others in a shared reality with her (new) sacred body-spirit and with a larger spirit body.

Zhong Saozi is just one witness, in addition to many others who after witnessing in Er Dagu's coming out, helped build Guanyin's temple and protest the television station scheduled to be built on the very spot where Er Dagu performed – where the goddess descended to earth. A community heralded by Er Dagu and Er Gufu, and witness to her coming out, successfully

protested this construction. They then built a temple around the sacred rock on the mountain with their own hands, as well as their hearts. It now holds all the forgotten and abandoned Guanyin statues by local people who, according to Er Dagū, have also forgotten the importance and value of heaven on earth. Forgotten or mistreated statues (and sacred relics) are also known to be a cause for sickness and suffering (see chapter 2 case with Zhong Nainai and Cheng Ge). The temple also houses a Chinese national flag representing the (atheist) state with its red backdrop and five stars. It flaps on a flagpole on the opposite side of the altar of Guanyin. Not all shenpo have a temple, nor do they all incorporate state symbolism. But Er Dagū does, and perhaps this is why she is relatively fearless in exhibiting a public presence compared to other shenpo in the area. It is a connection with state power that adds to the legitimacy of her practice that is still threatened with a possibility of prosecution.

This dynamic creation of sacred space manifests and maintains an immaterial otherworld in material and everyday life that is made accessible for contemporary people who seek participation in its reality. Local people (and anyone who wishes) can now worship, offer patronage, and participate in festival celebrations throughout the lunar calendar year in this temple, to whom they regularly donate money. At the same time, they can participate with a sense of being loyal to the state – at least in Er Dagū's practice. The integration of heavenly and state symbols would be unheard of in decades past, where a shenpo was more representative of local kinship systems and lineage (Wang 2012; Wong 2015). Today it appears to create an ethos of certain legitimacy for those who might fear secular and/or sacred repercussions to their actions, making it easier to openly participate in the cultural reality of spirit mediumship in today's world of uncertainty. It also signifies the connection of regional space to a broader nationality.

Wei-Ping Lin describes the process of localization as crucial to the materialization of spiritual power or *ling* (灵) in Chinese religious spaces. She depicts such processes and materializations as an ongoing dialogue with the past and the present, between the tangible and intangible, constructed through the sharing of sacred beliefs and practices in a place where the spirit medium has developed a strong attachment to local people, and is often a part of a known kinship lineage (Lin 2015). Here, the spirit medium's divine body-spirit is a central symbol of

a moral universe and greater spiritual body that connects and forms local life (Wang 2012). The places people inhabit, how structures are built, where shrines are placed, the nature of human and social relationships, the way people speak and what they do for each other, the foods people consume, the places where temples are built, the funds with which they are built and maintained, are all a part of this localization process. Lin (2015) acknowledges that this process of sharing and localizing moves between both rural and urban spaces, and accounts for change as it engages history and connects to non-local participants through word of mouth as well as concepts that can be shared in a larger macro-script that crosses language groups and dialects. It also engages with factors of migration, as more local people move in and out of rural and urban areas. The spirit body is formed and re-formed in relation to these dynamics of change across space, place and time.

The spirit body is performed in the local community and integrates into social life and worldviews the more people engage and participate with it. This is crucial in producing what Jean DeBernardi describes as “Heaven on earth”, which is at the heart of Chinese spirit mediumship and its “social alchemy of performance” (DeBernardi 2006, 303). This performance aspect is based on re-constituting culturally meaningful moral scripts and symbols through embodied social performances of legendary heroes, gods and goddesses, ghosts, demons and other-worldly spirits. This “social alchemy of performance” (DeBernardi 2006) is crucial in the production of shared cultural realities or schemas. Er Dagu (and the two other shenpo I met in the field) does not regularly perform publicly in elaborate displays (particularly self-mortifying ones that represent super-human strength) and moral story-telling as do the spirit mediums documented in DeBernardi’s and Arthur Kleiman’s (1980) work within Chinese *dang-ki* and spirit medium traditions in Malaysia and Taiwan who may or may not hail from Hakka communities. This performance type emerges largely from the Min-Nan Hokkien-Taiwanese Chinese sub-group. By contrast, the “alchemy” (DeBernardi 2006) in these mainland Hakka shenpo traditions appears to be largely in the localized performance of the “coming out” of a deity within an un-educated local woman not previously affiliated with any religious group or lineage tradition; it is in the local performance of temple life, the daily performance of healing rituals and the moral and behavioral implications involved in the

diagnostics of spiritual collisions; and in the visible dialogue between heaven and humanity in general for those who are witnesses to and participants in it. These factors manifest and maintain the spirit body in the shared sacred reality where Er Dagu's practice is a part.

There is also a critical and culturally specific dialogue of power in this alchemical process that is essential to the healing process. The tripartite, hierarchical and interdependent worlds of heaven, humanity and earth, (*tian tang* 天堂, *yin jian* 阴间 and *yang jian* 阳间), situate a moral consciousness that forms and informs a social order and bodily knowledge in the traditional Chinese worldview (Paper 1993; Paracka 2012). Heaven (the realm of gods and immortals and divine law) is in the highest position, humanity (Yang world) is center, and earth (the Yin world of ghosts and less-godlike spirits) is below. Heaven is essentially the divine parent that sits at the top of this hierarchy, and as such maintains the authority to discipline the world of humanity and ghosts as misbehaving children. This follows a script of filial piety that runs deep in the Chinese worldview, the same one that characterizes the tale of Miaoshan – a not yet deified Guanyin who removed her eyes for her father. The shenpo harnesses and maintains a charismatic power which in Er Dagu's case is further harnessed by the power of the state through the use of national symbols and rhetoric that imparts a socialist morality and ontology with a divine one.

Local residents and clients understand the shenpo as having the power and authority of heaven. They are often met with some fear and trepidation. A local man named Ye says, “we can say that they (shenpo) go to the netherworld (阴曹地府) when their spirits go out of the body (灵魂出窍), can't we? The action that the spirit is out of the body happens when we ask the shenpo. When her spirit is out of her body, her own spirits will connect with the spirits in the otherworld. And she will say it out loud what the people in the otherworld said. She is like a bridge to communicate with the underworld...through her function as a bridge she can help.” Expressions of this authority differ across individual practices and are interpreted by people in different ways. But envisioning the shenpo as a bridge is crucial to how a shenpo heals. The elevation of the biological standard and atheism through the socialist state with its governmental power, however, threatens to undermine the power of the shenpo in her representation of a

narrative and world not seen as real. Interestingly, many government officials still go to see shenpo mediums. But many shenpo still fear the state.



Figure 4.1 View from Guanyin's temple on its mountain overlooking Longwo township in the Heyuan region a half hours' drive from Zijin county.



Figure 4.2 Community members from Longwo township look on from inside Guanyin's temple.



Figure 4.3 Local musicians play traditional folk music to worship at Guanyin's birthday festival at the Longwo temple.



Figure 4.4 Guanyin statues at the primary altar of Guanyin's temple in Longwo. The rock behind is the place where Guanyin is said to have descended to earth in the local area and came to Er Dagu to be of service. The temple was built surrounding this rock (special permission granted by Er Dagu to take photo of statues at the temple which is usually not allowed).



Figure 4.5 Er Dagū (far right) assists some of the temple's primary donors to make a large offering of incense for Guanyin on her birthday festival.

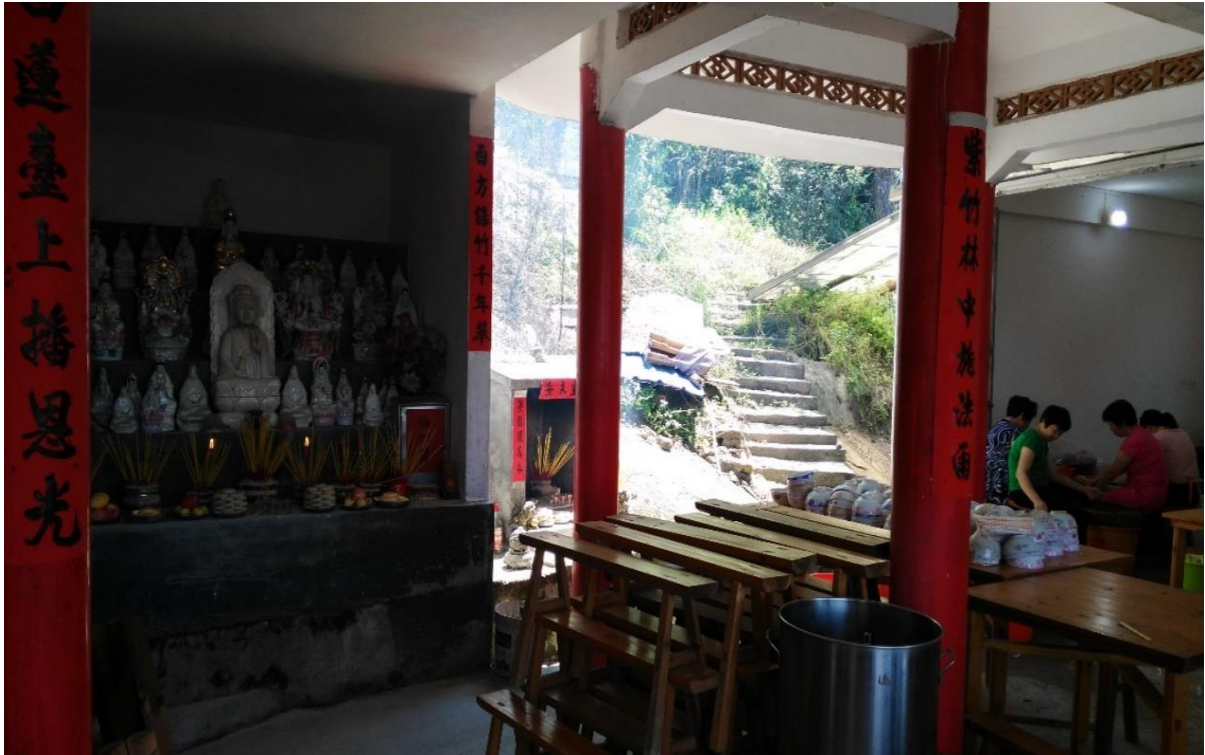


Figure 4.6 Picture of the secondary altars in the Longwo temple. On the left is an altar housing abandoned Guanyin statues from the area so they will not cause harm. On the right is a smaller altar to the earth deity (*tudigong* 土地公) who must be worshipped in all temples as the keeper of the land itself. Women in the background prepare for a vegetarian community feast on Guanyin's birthday festival.



Figure 4.7 Volunteer community members look on as they finish preparing a community feast on Guanyin's birthday festival at the Longwo temple.



Figure 4.8 The Chinese national flag waves at the back of the temple as people enjoy Guanyin's birthday feast.



Figure 4.9 Front view of Er Dagu's home in a Longwo county neighborhood that is also her clinical and private temple space. When she is practicing, the doors will be wide open for people to enter freely.

Er Dagu is a well-established shenpo in her community now. She operates a healing space in the front of the house she shares with her extended family. She has treated thousands of people over almost thirty years. Many come to her in search of healing by way of heaven. Er Dagu communicates with a language of radical empathy that reflects the character of the goddess Guanyin, which enables heaven to inter-connect or bridge bodies with humanity. This is explained in one of our conversations:

Anna: How does Guanyin communicate with you when treating people?

Er Gufu: This is difficult to understand...

Er Dagu: After coming to see Guanyin...if he has a headache then I will have one; if he is upset, then I will be upset; if he has a stomachache then I will have one too. It will be fine after speaking out..... if he has a headache and I will tell him. You have a stomachache, he has a stomachache, then I will have a stomachache as well...

Er Gufu: I will tell you what, this is the *ling* (靈 spiritual power) of Guanyin ...

Er Dagū: If he said it out loud and I said it out loud, I won't feel the pain...

Er Gufu: This *ling*...Her body will feel it if they have pain, or emotions, or anything...just like that.

The language through which shenpo healers communicate with patients varies across practices, but it often involves a language of radical empathy and the ability to speak and act for heaven on earth. Radical empathy is described as essentially “thinking and feeling into the minds and bodies of others in order to assist them to heal” and is often found in ritual healing (Koss-Chioino 2007, 664). All of the shenpo I met and observed in practice express and operate through a divine knowing, as their bodies function as channels and mediators between the wills of heaven and humanity.

Radical empathy as defined by Koss-Chioino is often “a core component of ritual healing with spirits...(as) a way of relating that goes beyond recognition or acceptance of a sufferer's distress..., (erasing) individual boundaries between healer and suppliant and...(transcending) all boundaries between one's own consciousness and that of another person...” (Koss-Chioino 2007, 661, 663). Radical empathy is a dialogue that befits the goddess of mercy and compassion Guanyin (*Guanshiyin*) who is the “One Who Perceives the Sounds (or Cries) of the World” (Levering 2006; Tay 1976). Radical empathy in its capacity to transcend boundaries of bodies and connect with the deepest part of the person is the sacred heart of Er Dagū's practice, deeply symbolic of Guanyin's character. It is the *ling* (靈 spiritual efficacy) of the goddess through Er Dagū that is a fundamental aspect of building and maintaining the efficaciousness of her practice, and is critical in reinforcing the sacred reality that understands the spirit body's place in social and personal life.

Radical empathy in Er Dagū's case reflects an embodied spirit body that carries a divine moral system. Radical empathy is born from the shenpo's transformation, as a power to make meaningful inter-connections between persons and deities, and between the living and the dead. It is common where the healer is also “wounded” and a mediator within a greater spiritual body (Koss-Chioino 2007). Greenwood writes that healers as specialists of otherworldly or supernatural affairs often “feel...(their) bodily boundaries dissolve to such an extent that

feelings of personal connectedness and empathy are intense.....In its more extreme forms, participation (with this healer) involves such a depth of emotional empathy that everyday physical bodily boundaries are dissolved...” (Greenwood 2009, 29, 47). For those who participate in Er Dagu’s empathy, it signifies a dissolution of seemingly static boundaries between Heaven, Humanity and Earth. Er Dagu literally becomes the suffering or sickness of another which immediately touches the emotional core of the person being embodied, whose human conditions are felt and analyzed by heaven. It is an ultimate act of participation and affirmation of understanding of the patient by the healer and of humanity by heaven.

Radical empathy has powerful healing consequence. This is a form of communication where a deep interpersonal (and inter-bodily) relationship is established between the healer and the patient (and/or their family). It is often found in symbolic forms of healing (Waldram 2013). In most cases, especially with children, Er Dagu will get extremely agitated in her body-spirit, she may sweat profusely and become red of face, while frantically pacing around. Through this, she experiences her clients’ bodily-spiritual dispositions as Guanyin, who then names an offence (as cause). Veida Skultans writes about the sharing of physical and emotional pain in a Western Spiritualist tradition as a form of alleviating its experience of isolation, and as such “enable(s) others to reinterpret private troubles in a language of shared symbols thus aiding the process of externalization” (Skultans 2007, 3). Externalizing seemingly isolated and private troubles into a shared collective and symbolic environment is what the shenpo does. The private troubles embedded in a spiritual collision can then be allocated to this instance of cause. This is a powerful part of the symbolic healing process where the embedding of affliction is allocated within a culturally meaningful moral script. This is especially potent when done so through the generation of a powerful and shared emotional ethos.

Hong, a local member of the community describes how being looked at by the shenpo, and by Heaven, feels. He says, “my original impression was that they (shenpo) are old...their eyes feel wiser, when they look, it is as if they can look into hearts”. This is a sentiment expressed by many people in relation to all shenpo in general, which makes the *ling* of radical empathy something shared amongst Hakka shenpo in the area. If Er Dagu sees a heart lacking in goodness, she often displays a seeming hostility towards the person, equivalent to that of a

divine parent. It appears to be an attempt of reiterating the severity of their condition to compel them to look deeper at themselves, their actions and their thoughts, like a parent trying to teach a child. She also often first points out if a person's heart is "good" and if their offence was a mistake or mishap.

This said, Er Dagu does not always transmit her diagnoses in warm and sympathetic overtures as is often assumed with the English rendering of empathy or expressed in other healing traditions that utilize it (Koss-Chioino 2007). Er Dagu is often indifferent. Sometimes she reacts with righteous anger in extreme cases. One afternoon, I watched a woman come into Er Dagu's home-clinical space. She seemed eager to get "medicine". She said her son was always sick. He often had colds and misbehaved. Er Dagu then scolded her and told her quite frankly that she herself had a "wrong heart" because she mistreated her elders. The woman did not deny it. The ancestors in the otherworld were punishing her son as a result. Er Dagu issued talismans to separate her son from the punishing spirits but told the woman, in front of everybody there, how these will have a temporary effect. Until the woman re-orientes her heart and changes her behavior, her son will remain ill. The woman lowered her head and left. In this sense, the shenpo is seen to work within a blended causal ontology between both interpersonal as well as (divine) moral explanations for suffering (Schweder et al 1997).

Er Dagu, and other shenpo, will know if a person's heart is "bad" or "good" and if this has consequence to a presenting condition. Rooting out the evil within as well as without is the essence of Guanyin's soteriological efficacy in the popular imagination. The power to look into the hearts of others streams through the heart of the shenpo, from the heart of the goddess who is the personification of an emotive force. This provokes emotion and self-reflection in the people being "looked at" as they are made vulnerable to the eyes of heaven.

The eyes of heaven possess the ability to assess a person's fate – which is connected to the radical empathic knowing of a person's deep inner life and motivations. Fate is a particularly potent concept in the traditional Chinese worldview. It is deeply integrated within the cultural dynamics of China throughout its history and is ingrained in the psychology and lifeworlds of the people as a filter through which the world, as well as bodies, are seen, experienced, and communicated daily (Chuang 2011). Er Dagu said that "Guanyin asked the King of Medicine

and found out that it was not (the client's) fate to die yet...so Guanyin gave (the client) the medicine". When a diagnosis is made, a shenpo mediates the fate of the individual. Fate is an omnipotent force that affects the experience of life and living for all beings. Paul Unschuld argues that in Chinese medical history "some parties continued to acknowledge the impact of the world of the dead on the life of the living, and sought to develop strategies for how the latter could mitigate the severity of...fate" (Unschuld 2010, 21). Michael Strickmann in his book *Magical Medicine* describes the explanatory power of fate in relation to illness as arising from "inherited burden" and later, upon Buddhist entry into China, "karma" (Strickmann 2002). Fate connects moral conduct to causes of illness, as in the case of the "wrong heart" the woman is producing an "inherited burden". It suggests the notion of a supreme moral authority watching all while issuing punishment and reward. Er Dagu's practice is essentially a continuation of this kind of medical knowledge, which serves to maintain the divine moral system in the worldviews of others.

The shenpo mediates in her locality and within the worlds of individuals by way of changing and intervening fate, which is the authority of heaven. Chinese medicine has long considered fate a part of its explanatory model, until this line of thought was seemingly separated when a naturalistic theory of Yin and Yang became more mainstream (Unschuld 2010). The concept of fate (*ming* 命) is nevertheless deeply ingrained in the Chinese consciousness (Chuang 2011). The character and concept are ancient, and basically suggest a person who follows ritual propriety which involves the way a person behaves to others, to themselves, and to the gods (Wang 2014, 2016). It has long been the place of heaven to determine fate as a reflection of the moral actions, karma or received burdens of an individual (Strickmann 2002). Participating in shenpo ritual healing engages these dimensions of being-in-the-world and invokes a personalistic explanation for health and well-being.

Conclusion

The shenpo brings not only heaven to earth but brings to humanity a divine moral script that forms and informs a localized sense of a spirit body. As people meaningfully engage and participate with the shenpo's transformed heavenly body-spirit, and with the sacred objects and symbols associated with her divine being, a community is formed and vitalized. A dynamic

cultural reality that people can share and negotiate in times of sickness and suffering emerges in the local area. Localization of a spirit body involves an embodied process of heaven “coming out” through the shenpo and then relating with her community. Through this, the shenpo gains a divine heavenly power and with it, acquires a power to heal broken bodies on earth.

The transformed body-spirit of a woman into a shenpo healer serves as a catalyst for localizing a spirit body and its inherent divine moral system. The suffering a shenpo endures in her becoming the healer, appears to be a transforming of a flawed or impure human being into a perfected divine one, or at least a making of her body-spirit into a “perfected” vessel so deity can enter and later connect with other body-spirits. This results in the human being able to perform super-human feats in association with gods and spirits; it results in the acquisition of knowledge, especially knowledge about other people and society in relation to the spirit body, which the previously uneducated woman is assumed not to have had; and it results in a complete change of personality and character. Er Dagu, for instance, became much more outgoing and charismatic in her community. She acquired the ability of radical empathy as an act of transcending bodily boundaries and boundaries between the worlds. Localizing a spirit body here, then, ultimately begins with the personal transformation of a woman into a representative embodiment of heaven.

The transformative becoming of and performing as a shenpo allows the gods to express themselves on earth. It enables the formation and continual re-formation of a community where individual and social (and political) bodies participate with a world of spirits, with a spirit body. The shenpo’s transformed body-spirit anchors heaven in the locality. This may happen in different ways for different shenpo. The deity literally “comes out” through Er Dagu’s body-spirit and descends to earth from heaven under a sacred rock on a mountain where a community and congregation is then formed. Yet, Er Dagu’s home is relatively far from the temple, which is where she treats people and performs as a healer. Heaven is anchored within local boundaries and relations but is mobile and dynamic as the shenpo moves from place to place, and as others move to engage her and the heaven she represents. A moral divine reality where gods, humans, and ghosts interact, emerges through the medium of the shenpo’s body-spirit, a transformed human body-spirit that has become a bridge between worlds.

Engaging the shenpo is a way for local people to intervene and interrogate the gods and ancestors as they might affect the quality and conditions of their lives and bodies. Engaging with a shenpo enables local people to negotiate with a culturally meaningful reality where the boundaries of Heaven, Humanity and Earth are pliable and critical to explaining their problems and suffering. This is a space where bodily-spiritual afflictions are anchored as spiritual collisions and allocated within a moralized spirit body; it is an environment required for symbolic healing. Witnessing and negotiating with this sacred reality weaves the spirit body deeper into local space and into the lives of people participating and incorporating it into their worlds of health. This cultural reality yields an understanding of morality – of what is evil juxtaposed with what is good – and relates it to experiences of the human body-spirit.

Er Dagu is a manifestation of the deeply emotive and moral force personified in the goddess Guanyin. This aspect of Chinese spirit mediumship in general appears commonplace, as mediums take on the characteristics of their gods and goddesses who are representative of culturally meaningful emotive and moral forces (Kleinman 1980; DeBernardi 2006). Where the scenario discussed in this chapter is specific to Er Dagu as a shenpo in her locality, others have their own ways of manifesting the spirit body in and through their practices and making negotiations on its behalf with their communities. Participating in radical empathy, which results in the divine authority to successfully mitigate fate, evokes deeply affective responses from participants and stimulates an awareness of personal responsibility and sociality in their bodily-spiritual experiences. This is a potent reinforcer of the power of the spirit body over and within other bodies, as it promotes continual inter-connection of bodies.

A localized spirit body connects with a broader world. The deity of Guanyin is a universally recognized deity, worshipped by many outside of Heyuan, and outside of China; the Chinese national flag is a state symbol intended for recognition on a global stage; the concept and intercession of fate are incorporated in a general Chinese worldview. Another local medium I spoke to embodies a god she calls the Heavenly Emperor – a broad and general title recognizable by a larger population. All shenpo mediums I met work to mitigate fate and bridge heaven with earth in their local area. The *ling* power of their practice is attributed to their efficacy to produce positive outcomes in mitigating fate, bringing recognition to their locality

and to their community as more (or less) *ling*. Thus, shenpo are often addressed using their locality as part of their title. Er Dagu is the “Longwo Guanyin shenpo”. Yet they are not exclusive and are being made more and more accessible to non-local populations. The dynamic between a shenpo’s divine body-spirit and her community is a medium for the on-going materialization of heaven’s divine power, or *ling*, on earth, which helps build a bigger community, and which is the driving force within the ritual healing of spiritual collisions.

OPERATIONALIZING THE SPIRIT BODY AS RITUAL PROCESS

Er Dagū: If you get a talisman, you burn it and take a shower to wash your body. It will separate you from evil, harmful ghosts, evil spirits and demons, then you will recover from the sickness. You will be full of vigor in this way, after this ritual.

Er Gufu: If the person's time is not yet up, She (Guanyin) will ask the King of Medicine, let him give her the *ling* (灵). Then she will put it into the talisman, ask the patient to burn it and wash his body with it. He will be fine again...

Er Dagū: Yes, he will be full of vigor again.

Talismans in general are usually associated with interpersonal causal ontologies and magical practices associated with witchcraft. The talismans in shenpo healing rituals can be understood, then, as magico-religious in function. They act as heavenly decrees that operationalize a divine moral system so to mediate interpersonal relations as well as relations between Yin and Yang worlds with heaven. Talismans operate to remove harmful or oppressive spirit attachments attracted by the misdeeds, ill-intent, or the harmful lifestyle of the person(s) afflicted. Shenpo talismans or *fu* (符) are materializations of heaven's *ling* (灵 spiritual efficacy or power) brought to earth for practical use. Shenpo talismans mean to harness the *ling* power of a deity or multiple deities so to enforce divine laws whose edicts may later be released and made operable in visible (and invisible) worlds. Divine laws are symbolized and invoked on most talismans. The talismans referred to by the shenpo Er Dagū and her husband Er Gufu above are intended for therapeutic use, in giving life or vigor back to the human being or body-spirit in times of affliction and dis-ease.

This chapter explores how talismans used in ritual healing are used as sacred medicines that operationalize a spirit body and its inherent divine moral system embodied by and transmitted through the shenpo healer. This is a major form of ritual healing prescribed by shenpo in Heyuan, in their attempts to reconcile spiritual collision. This chapter first looks at the function and *ling* (灵) of the talisman in the Chinese worldview and within Er Dagū's practice. It demonstrates how banishing evil, by way of the sacred writing on them in the form of heavenly decrees, is central to their function. In this chapter I look closer at ritual bathing

with talismanic ash water as a prescriptive treatment for spiritual collision, focusing on how divine decrees operate as part of the symbolic healing process.

5.1 The *Ling* of Heaven's Decree

The shenpo I engaged with in this research issue talismans for use in healing rituals. Many healing rituals are prescribed and then performed by patients themselves at later dates. Er Dagu uses the word “medicine” (药 *yao*) to describe her talismans. Talismans have been called “magical medicines” by others as well, as they have a very long and complex history in Chinese medicine and culture as part of a moral explanatory model for suffering and sickness (Strickmann 2002). Their healing efficacy is (and has been for millennia) attributed to the concept called *ling* (灵) that is translated by some scholars as spiritual efficacy (Lin 2015) or magical power (Strickmann 2002). *Ling* has a capacity to intervene with fate on behalf of heavenly deities and certain powers (planets, natural forces, immortals, etc.) through the form of writing. In most cases, such intervention is intended to harmonize relationships between worlds and bodies by removing various evil.

There is a relationship between the Chinese writing system and human engagement with disembodied beings. Around 3600 years ago, human induced cracks on oracle bones were divined and their shapes formed the basis of oracle script as the origin of Chinese characters. Some scholars contend that the “earliest forms of writing in China were not used to transcribe human speech but, rather, preceded it and were signs that reflected the hidden powers of the universe and were used to “communicate with the spirits” (Robson 2008, 136). From this history emerged a tradition of producing sacred seals and talismans that inspired a vast and continuous history of dialogue with gods and spirits in the treatment of sickness that continues in shenpo practices today.

In their many forms from various lineages, talismans have a therapeutic utility. Their function is to intervene between seen and unseen worlds, operationalizing the *ling* of divine laws in the material world. On them are written decrees and specific orders to remove or destroy offending spirits or certain evils. Their knowledge is usually passed on in secret sects and is often attributed to divine transmission. Instructions for making and using them are also passed through sacred texts and oral traditions in Buddhist, Taoist and popular practice (Strickmann

2002; Robson 2008). It is not known if all shenpo write their own talismans, unfortunately this knowledge was not shared with me. But I am aware that Er Dagu's husband writes talismans from a secret lineage, and that she often consecrates them in ritual healings.

Talismanic writing is often suggestive of decrees that are meant to mitigate fate. Fate is mitigated by invoking unseen forces which include the five elements (五行 *wuxing*) alongside various deity(ies) and planetary forces. The five elements are also at the theoretical heart of traditional Chinese medicine, yet rarely if ever mentioned officially in relation to deities of any kind. The five elements belong to a complex correspondence system that overlaps with divinatory systems such as the I-Ching or Yijing that are used in conjunction with some Chinese medical practices still today (Farquhar 1996). But it is not something one would find in most medical texts. Symbolic references to the five elements appear in the writing on shenpo talismans. Unfortunately, the relevance of the five elements was not expanded upon further in conversations with shenpo. But it did appear in connection to sickness in relation to divine beings and talismanic medicine. Er Dagu explained:

Five Thunder Generals (*Wu Lei Da Jiang*), The Queen of the Western Heaven (*Xiawangmu*), and Guanyin. I used their talismans to make a vow. Metal, wood, water, fire and earth. Five elements. I made different vows and cut the mark. Some people were very, very ill. I used this kind of talisman, burnt it then vowed to: metal, wood, water, fire and earth... And I drew the vows, burnt incense, took it over and said: kindly Guanyin please help people in distress.

Alongside Er Dagu's invocation of the five elements are petitions to Guanyin and other deities and heavenly powers. Er Dagu uses talismans of the Five Thunder Generals, The Queen of Heaven (*Xiwangmu*), and Guanyin. When her communication strengthened with Guanyin over time, Guanyin was able to bring in other deities from the Chinese pantheon in assistance and utilize their *ling*. The Queen of the Western Heaven, like Guanyin, is one of the great goddesses of China but is older (1500BCE). She gained a stronghold in Taoism and is associated, like Guanyin, with salvation and is a powerful (sometimes fierce and ferocious) negotiator of "good and evil" as a bringer as well as destroyer of disease (Irwin 1990). Thunder generals are a part of Taoist thunder magic largely associated with Heavenly Masters Taoism (*Zheng-yi Tao*) and explicitly associated with exorcism and early practices of *wu* 巫 practitioners centered on averting disasters (Reiter 2004). Combined, these three deities are a powerful personified force

for the soteriological authority of heaven to heal sick bodies. Talismans have various powers that stem from the symbols and semantics of the language written on them. Talismans issue an edict from and then back to an otherworld from this world and function with a potential for repairing antagonistic relations between bodies (seen and unseen).

5.2 Ritual Bathing to Release Heaven's Decree

One way to remove evil is to use talismanic ash water to clean the body-spirit. Er Dagu explained above, “(i)f you get a light, you burn it (the talisman(s)) and take a shower to wash yourself. It will separate you from the villains, evil gods and demons, then you



Figure 5.1 A package of talismans prescribed to a patient to be burned in a ritual bath. The person is pointing to the seal of power which is to be burned first so to open the boundaries between the worlds of heaven and earth. The seal is blotted out as it considered the most secretive of knowledge that cannot be shared with others.



Figure 5.2 One of the talismans in a treatment package. There are characters for heaven and the sky, clouds, spirit, and the actions to be taken in this heavenly decree.

Will recover from the sickness (病 *bing*). You will be full of vigor in this way, after this ritual”. The mechanism for removing evil is embedded in the spirit body and the same divine moral system that explains spiritual collision as cause of sickness and suffering. The making and consecrating of talismans for ritual healing purposes through shenpo practices invokes the spirit body and its divine law to bind abstract immaterial forces in materiality. It involves multiple mediums of communication and symbolic dimensions. One is the writing and the seal on the talisman itself. Another is the invocation of the deities’ *ling* through rituals that involve the burning of incense and the recitation or incantation of spells.

I was witness to how Er Dagu used (pre-written) talismans in the healing process. After uniting patient and healer as well as heavenly and human bodies through a language of radical empathy and mitigation of fate, Er Dagu invokes Guanyin’s divine judicial power. The patient prostrates or performs *bai* (拜 do obeisance) at the small alter in Er Dagu’s front room. This is

common in many shenpo practices. A censor is there with incense sticks already burnt up or burning still, and the ashes of incense burnt in past sessions. Both Er Dagu and the patient burn incense. The patient does so silently, while the shenpo petitions Guanyin verbally as they place the incense in the censor. Er Dagu then burns talismans on her own as she chants a petition to the deity and the ashes fall into the censor. Mikkel Bunkenborg writes in the book *Between Magic and Rationality*, that in Chinese culture and many spirit medium practices, “(t)he burning of incense...may...be interpreted as a dialogical meeting of matter and spirits where the disappearance of the incense as a material object is simultaneously seen as the appearance of immaterial agents consuming the incense” (Bunkenborg in Steffen, Johncke and Raahuage 2015, 181). The “dialogue meeting of matter and spirits” evoked here is a permeation of boundaries between realms of heaven, humanity and earth. The prayers depart, and the deity arrives. This occurs through burning incense as well as talismans. A creative and liminal space is formed where the intentions and emotions of the patient, the healer, and the goddess communicate to produce a quality of immaterial spiritual power (*ling*) that is given to the material object.

Very early accounts of medicine in China involved divination and something called “spell-binding” where incantations were used in ritual processes to remove and repel harmful spirits, ghosts, and demons from a person’s body-spirit or home that were understood to be the cause of sickness (Cho 2005; Unsult 2018). The techniques were many and vast. In Chinese medical history, the intervention of divine beings or the divine self with regard to healing and prevention of sickness and suffering is common. Within this medical script there is woven a “belief in the existence of a metaphysical moral agency



Figure 5.3 Inside Er Dagü’s home she burns talismans on her front altar after meeting with a patient, preparing the consecrated talismans for the patient to take home. The character on the walls means “great fortune”. She takes care of her grandson in the meantime.

Watching over the conduct of humans and sending appropriate reward or punishment” (Unschult 2010, 21). The concept of moral agency is essential to understanding the spell-like qualities of talismans as edicts and decrees from the gods punishing offending spirits in the otherworld and regulating human behavior.

The divine power of the talismanic writing is further enhanced with the words of the shenpo via an incantation spoken, often while she burns her own talismans. Spell-like prayers amplify the sacred quality of the talisman and personalize it for the patient. Er Dagü incants the following for an older patient named Cheng Ge (see previous chapter) who is suffering lethargy, headaches, body aches and insomnia as part of a spiritual collision. He claims to feel “soul loss” and maybe “depression”. The spell is repeated and spoken at increasing speed:

Er Dagü: May the great Guanyin who saves and helps suffering people give her hand to protect you and satisfy your wishes. Bodhisattvas in the east, west, south and north. Any evil men who do not surrender will be killed by the Queen Mother of the West. Holding a double-edged sword to kill any monsters and evil men without hesitation.

Celestial lord of supreme seniority (*Taishanglaojun*) will give talismans, with one changing to ten, ten to a hundred, and a hundred to a thousand. Every talisman is with *ling*. Avoiding evil men and bad men. Celestial medicine please give me some divine herbals in my pharmacy. This...man will recover soon, all diseases in the mouth, feet and inside the body will be cured eventually.

Incantation and chanting are a symbolic discourse that, in this context, aid in bringing heaven to earth. Here, they reflect a blended Daoism and Buddhism. Guanyin is a Buddhist deity, and the Celestial Lord Laozi is associated with Daoism, magic and talismans. Er Dagū is transmitting unseen spiritual power into the material talisman that is visible to the patient and people watching. This enhances an already sacred object with heavenly power – the *ling* of not only Guanyin, but other deities in the Chinese pantheon whom she has power to request assistance. Unlike burning incense to invoke the arrival of the deity, when she burns talismans for the patient during this consecration, the deity is ushering the heavenly decrees written on them to the unseen world of heaven. This ritual burning of sacred objects is the vehicle for the coming and going of seen and unseen forces, a way for matter and spirit, and for heaven and earth, to communicate and affect each other.

The words above are a spell (咒 *zhou*), a “language that can connect *zhu* (speech to invoke the gods) to (the) gods (directly) so...diseases can be cured” (Shi and Zhang 2012). Recalling the medical department of *zhu you* (introductory chapter) in professionalized Chinese medicine, this form of speech was considered a valid medical practice associated with the transformation and manipulation of emotions. Language is highly symbolic and participatory; it connects individuals in a shared cultural reality. It also stimulates emotions (Greenwood 2005, 2009). Er Dagū’s spell is heard and understood by the patient, and others in the room. The faster she incants, the higher the feeling of intensity grows in the room. In fact, Er Dagū was very excited to hear herself on the recording later on, something she has never done. She marveled at how fast she spoke when Guanyin speaks through her.

In this creative and participatory ritual language the swords of the gods have sliced the evil away. This is sometimes seen in the change of bodily-spiritual disposition of clients after participation. Upon hearing the words and performing with the shenpo, Cheng Ge appears different. His eyes are noticeably brighter; his speech sounds sharper; he lights a cigarette and

strikes up a conversation with us and says he feels “a little better already”. This is prior to going home to ritually bath with the talismans Er Dagu hands him in a small red envelope. The healing has already begun. This is a striking example, but not an isolated one. There were many occasions of increased vitality or a positive emotional shift or change in patients after participating.

Depending on the severity of the spiritual antagonism, different talismans are issued to a patient, with three being the smallest number issued at one time. Sometimes talismans are written directly on the body. But very often a ritual bath is prescribed, which, depending on the sickness, is to be performed once or over a succession of days. General instructions for ritual bathing are to burn each set (of talismans) all at once, a day at a time, collecting the ashes into a basin of water in which to immediately bath. The paper is sulfuric and burns very quickly. No amount of paper can go unburnt, and no amount of ashes can go astray from the water. If done correctly, the divine edict is conveyed to the offending spirits or ghosts who are compelled to obey the laws of heaven. The essence of its power (symbolically and magically) impacts the human body-spirit that comes in contact with the sacred water which now carries the potential to heal. Compatible with Mary Douglas’ classic work *Purity and Danger* (1966), the sacred water becomes a purifying agent that “cleans” the pollution initiated by the offence. In such a context it is “ritual (that) recognizes the potency of disorder” (Douglas 1966, 117). Some people bathe only once whereas others continue with successive baths over a longer course of time.

When talismans burn, their edicts transcend worlds. What is once magical power manifest in the world of the living, is reflected back to the otherworld where it, by virtue of the power of the (embodied) deity, is decreed across a spiritual hierarchy by heavenly command. What is left in the human world are ashes which carry the *ling* (灵) of this command that now transcends liminal space between the boundaries of the realms of heaven, humanity and earth. The ashes contact the human body-spirit through the now sacred healing water personalized through consultation with the shenpo who has blessed the talismans with healing incantations. The reinforced divine command is the medicinal agent that engages the body-spirit through contact via a purifying agent. Even though the material (ash) is eventually washed away, the essence

of it has already been transferred to the human body-spirit which is now full of healing possibility.

Talismans are symbolic and therapeutic. They are not only magically produced “objects that transcend materiality of the fetish, but (may) also (be magically destroyed) objects...that bring to mind the unmaterialized transcendence of things that have disappeared” (Steffen, Johncke and Raahauge 2015, 193). The patient undergoing the ritual healing bath brings to consciousness during the process all symbolic, mythic and meaning associations connected to the talisman as a sacred object in relation to their personal affliction. These connections are unique to the individual; it is a subjective experience. The effect is intended to “bring to heart-mind” the power of the spirit body to remove or repel the attached or offending spirit(s) that associate with the events leading up to and complicit in the cause and emergence of the affliction.

The evocation and manipulation of the language of a mythic and symbolic world is necessary for (symbolic) ritual healing and for efficacious sacred medicines. Shenpo-consecrated talismans evoke this language. The sacred world is known and imagined by all the people I spoke with during fieldwork. Even for those who claim to “not believe”, it is a part of their consciousness. They may not always know specifics or interpret this language in the same way, but they are all aware of the world of the gods, their names and their powers to mitigate fates. “(M)ost ritual healing is embedded in a pervasive sociocentric worldview that focuses on persons not as individuals per se but as integral parts of communities, including the community of all living beings, the combined community of living and spirit beings, with God (or the gods)” (Koss-Chioino 2007, 660). When patients approach the shenpo, take their talismans home and use them as prescribed, they partake in a mythic worldview while incorporating the spirit body into their greater community and into their worlds of health. They apply elements of this reality to the social world in which they are living, a social world that is complicit in their experiences of moral breakdown (Zigon 2007) and episodes of spiritual collision.

The ritual process of bathing in talismanic ash water described above is a simple rendition of what should or could be happening. Upon abiding the laws of heaven, the souls and spirits are returned and restored to their rightful place inside (and outside) the human body-spirit. This

causes a chain reaction that is intended to then restore any and all other imbalances that result from this core imbalance. A person emerges from the liminality of ritual process (Turner 1969) as a rejuvenated individual body-spirit part of a divine moral social body that is similarly rejuvenated as a result. The nature of this liminality for many people can be compared with the process of “re-attunement” where an individual is re-oriented to a moral world that provides certain tools needed to repair their moral breakdown or existential crisis that is, in this case, entangled within the initial spiritual collision (Zigon 2014; Macias-Lees 2011). A more comprehensive understanding of the therapeutic quality of these ritual talismanic baths may be revealed by looking at their outcome in the lives of clients and their families.

Conclusion

Ritual consecration and use of sacred medicine, such as the talismanic ritual therapies here, are attempts to invoke a healing potential. Symbolic connections are generated and made within the sacred consecration of already symbolically potent talismans. Emotions and thoughts are generated and evoked throughout the ritual process by clients and observers who come to connect the spirit body inherent in the shenpo tradition to their bodily-spiritual experiences and to their knowledge of the world. The afflicted person is now personally invested with the offences named in a dialogue with heaven. Even where there is no direct participation by a client or patron in the shenpo’s sacred clinical space, the talisman speaks for itself as a potent and culturally rich symbol of heaven’s judicial power to mitigate fate and separate the patient from evil. This is the talisman’s hidden *ling*; it carries an ultimate goal of reconciling human relationships that impact bodily-spiritual dispositions. This is why Er Dagu calls her talismans medicine.

The dynamic formation of and sharing in a sense of the spirit body associated with the shenpo tradition invokes a mythic and symbolic language that constitutes and re-constitutes an (imagined) past and a sacred medical script that is full of healing potential. Sharing in this reality stimulates a negotiation between the boundaries of good and evil, and attaches them to objects and symbols such as talismans, the words of power on the talismans, incantations and spells, incense and statues in temples and on altars in the healing spaces within shenpo private homes, and in the (embodied) shenpo herself. Sharing in this reality generates and regenerates

meaningful connections for people that potentially re-attune human body-spirits to a mode of being-in-the-world where a potential for healing and better living may manifest and produce very real effects, even though it may not produce the same effect in every case, or produce an effect in all people.

The divine decrees and seals written on talismans are words and symbols of power. These are much guarded in China and in shenpo traditions; their secrecy shrouds them in mystery. They are symbols evoking a heavenly power to maintain and intervene in a larger divine moral system embedded within the spirit body, that overlaps with social and individual bodies living in Yin and Yang space. Burning the talisman releases their decrees across worlds. Before the talisman is burned, it is bound and full of lingering *ling* potency. Releasing the heavenly decree into water by burning it, and then washing with its ashes, is an act of impressing its *ling* potential within the body-spirit of the person considered to be, or having contact with what is, unclean. Releasing the divine law is an enforcement of justice with the intent to harmonize bodies. By ritual bathing, a person may re-attune or re-attach themselves to a moralized spirit body. While this is the ideal intent of ritual healing in talismanic ash water, how people explain and experience such re-attunement is deeply personal and increasingly confusing in today's world.

NEGOTIATING A SPIRIT BODY BETWEEN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR

Er Dagū: Western medicine can't cure all illness. The patient who is held up by the ghost can't be cured (治 *zhi*) completely. Taking medicine is useless if they are held up by a ghost or spirits. But if we take a bath with the burnt ash of the talisman, we will be okay...hospital medicine may not be of service.....for example, with *jingshen bing* (精神病 as "mental illness"), the three *hun* (魂) and seven *po* (魄) souls are not harmonically harbored within the body...the medicine can't cure *jingshen bing* because the soul(s) are not harmonically harbored in the body-spirit...The soul(s) must come back. The soul will come back with the talisman...The person will be in (good) *jingshen* (精神) when the soul is back...The person will be *jingshen bing* when he loses his soul...will have lost their *jingshen*, will have no *jingshen*.

Er Dagū suggests that when medicine is felt to be inefficacious, the afflicted person may be under attack by a ghost. She is referring here to biomedicine as a secular materialist science that does not incorporate a spirit body in its knowledge. When a person cannot be "cured" (by this medicine) is an indication of spiritual attack (治 *zhi* is a medical term meaning "to treat" "to cure" and it also means to manage and can refer to governing or making as an alternative meaning). A spiritual attack must be addressed through a spirit body. It is aimed at the removal of ghosts and involves the ritual use of talismans. Spiritual attack is also correlated with soul loss. The return of souls or harmonization of souls in a human body-spirit back to physicality is the ultimate goal of talismanic therapy. The shenpo may or may not be dealing with a biomedical disease category as they employ ritual healing procedures, but they are dealing with suffering bodily-spiritual dispositions. The successful reconciling with spirits and souls informs the efficacy of a shenpo as healer.

The shenpo does not determine efficacy alone however. Efficacy is informed by multiple participants in the healing process. James B. Waldram asserts that determining efficacy of therapeutic practices is a negotiation process. He writes,

Determinations of efficacy...are made in different ways by different actors in the sickness episode. Each actor occupies a unique position, with unique and often very personal perceptions, experiences, and motives from which he or she draws as efficacy

is negotiated. Very different views of the anticipated and actual outcomes of treatment, or the state of the patient, will emerge from this complexity (Waldram 2000, 613).

Other scholars add to this point, referring to symbolic (ritual) healing, by asserting that participating in a shared cultural reality necessary for efficacious ritual healing is a dynamic engagement where multiple and various views, concepts, experiences and motivations are present and engaged in constant negotiation by all actors (Lee, Kirmayer and Groleau 2009). This has a significant impact on how a healing outcome is experienced and determined (if at all). For those who seek out the shenpo for healing, the *ling* (靈 spiritual efficacy) of their ritual healing therapy is determined through the same process of negotiation. Alongside negotiations of *ling*, people are also negotiating a place for the spirit body within their greater worlds of health.

This chapter explores how Heyuan Hakka people are negotiating a spirit body within their worlds of health by specifically looking at explanations and experiences of positive outcome related to talismanic ritual therapy. This focus is a deliberate decision based on the currently marginalized position of sacred traditions and the spirit body in Chinese culture and medical discourse that is overshadowed by biological explanatory models and atheistic rejections. Deciding to focus on positive outcomes is also a reflection of a data analysis that revealed a common thread in the experiences of positive outcomes in relation to changes in a person's *jingshen* (精神). In this chapter I suggest that a significant potential for positive outcomes of shenpo ritual therapy today is its ability to revitalize the *jingshen* of the human body-spirit, and that this experience reveals a hybrid blending of sacred and secular discourse toward a more meaningful inclusion of a spirit body in relation to health. Outcomes related to *jingshen* may or may not overlap with the removal of an underlying condition and almost always connect with other symptomatic expressions. What is found is that talismanic ritual baths are a therapeutic means for people to either cure and/or cope with an affliction whose agency is attributed to the complex experience of spiritual collision.

Within the various narratives and interpretations of outcome by the actors within a sickness episode or event of suffering where spiritual collisions are a key factor, and where talismanic ritual bathing is concerned, there emerged a prominent commonality; the symptomatic bodily-

spiritual experience of *jingshen* (精神). A discussion of *jingshen* could easily cover volumes due to the historicity and linguistic embeddedness of the concept in Chinese medicine and the Chinese worldview in general. *Jingshen* according to modern dictionaries translates as the following: “vitality”, “vigour”, “spirit” or “spirited/spiritedness”, “consciousness”, “mind”, “mental state”, “psyche” and “essence”, to name a few (Liu 2008; Wang 2014, 2016). It is a root term in the Chinese translation of “psychiatry” (精神病学 *jingshenbingxue* 精神科 *jingshenke*), “nervous breakdown” (精神崩溃 *jingshenbengkui*), “emotional disorder” (精神损失 *jingshen sunshi*), “spirituality”, “mental” (精神性 *jingshenxing*), “psychopathy” (精神变态 *jingshenbiantai* – *biantai* 变态 meaning “perversion” which contains within its form the character for heart or *xin* 心), and a plethora of terms that cross boundaries between sacred and secular knowledge systems and conceptions of health.

Jingshen inter-relates with both sacred and secular categories of the body-spirit in traditional as well as modern Chinese knowledge and language, and it is often used in textual reference to the potential for life within a body-spirit as the animating essential spirit (Unschuld 2018; Kwan 2018; Rossi 2007, xxii). Chinese medicine historian and medical anthropologist Elizabeth Hsu explains that “(t)here is a difference between theoretical knowledge and active knowing arising from lived experience”. She asserts that “even in scholarly medical traditions where the literature is preeminently important for knowing practice, the meaning of specific terms is best assessed by what people do with them and not merely in an analysis of texts” (Hsu 2000, 198). This chapter is an exploration of the concept of *jingshen* from the point of viewing how it is known and applied to sickness experience by those living through the illness themselves.

Er Dagou refers to *jingshen bing* (精神病) as “mental illness” in a modern biomedical sense. She refers to *jingshen bing* as a degree of *jingshen* disorder, perversion, or weakness of a person that has a specific medical orientation (as in it can be diagnosed as a psychiatric disorder). Symptomatic expressions involving *jingshen* disorder, however, may correlate with being “held up by a ghost”, with loss of soul, and with certain life processes such as being weakened by having given birth, in chronic illness, or in very old age, any of which may or may not be linked with *jingshen bing*. The following discussion looks closer at negotiations of outcome in relation

to human bodily-spiritual experiences of *jingshen* in the event of spiritual collisions. The discussion draws from and continues accounts mentioned in chapter three, where people use talismanic bathing as a therapeutic procedure issued by the shenpo.

6.1 *Jingshen* at the Intersections

Hao (19 years old): The concrete feature of soul loss (失魂 *shi hun*) is a low *jingshen*. You will be roused suddenly from sleep or get strong palpitations. And palpitations are the most obvious symptom of losing the *hun* (“conscious soul”)...If I suddenly have palpitations, I will wash my face with talisman water, and I will feel better.....It works so well, I sometimes wonder whether there is any medicine inside...once you feel flustered, just use things with supernatural power and you will be better...*jingshen* comes back...I can get along in my daily life better with this...

Mei (81 years old): I will go to ask (the shenpo) when I see children are in bad *jingshen*, after asking (the shenpo) and making some ritual baths, they will be better, and the medicine will have an effect which can be proven to be cured by going to shenpo.....when children are disobedient, when they can’t sleep at night, have no appetite, their *jingshen* is low, there is evil and there is soul loss.

The sixty-year age gap between Hao and Mei marks two points across a spectrum. This spectrum is filled with multiple medical scripts and a growing repository of terminology to describe bodily-spiritual and healthful experiences that begs a need for negotiation. Speaking of ritual bathing in talisman ash water, Hao says he “sometimes wonders whether there is any medicine inside”. A young man about to enter college, Hao uses the word “medicine” (药 *yao*) here to refer to material medicines such as herbal formulas or pharmaceuticals. He uses a language that suggests a separation of shenpo sacred methods and secular material medicines. Despite his confusion in associating talismans with medicine, the disappearance of his symptoms and the recovery of his *jingshen* through the sacred ritual healing process are questioned as having an explicitly medical effect. Furthermore, Hao associates this recovery with a capacity to get along better in daily life, both emotionally and physically, which is explained as a return of the soul. He not only experiences a feeling of cure, he also experiences an ability to cope with conditions that impede his life and being-in-the-world (Zigon 2007).

Mei makes a clear connection between medicine (*yao*) and talismans (*fu*) of the shenpo. Mei connects bodily-spiritual conditions with behavioral ones, as “disobedience” is filial yet associated with the position of the soul inside the body-spirit. Her grandchildren experience a

revival of *jingshen* which connects to their moral functioning as members of the greater family and community. For her, talismans are part of a more holistic category for medicine that makes room for soul(s) and sociality, that is remnant of a knowledge of the sacred that was not disconnected from medicine. Two things Hao and Mei have in common within their explanations of outcome, despite their differences and generational gap, is the revival of *jingshen*, which presents itself as being bodily, emotive, spiritual and social.

Hao suggests that a person loses their spirit for life when *jingshen* is depleted, which can happen through the loss of the soul marked by a loss of vitality that is accompanied by various (physical, emotional and/or behavioral) symptoms. Mei's understanding is not much different. She associates loss of *jingshen* with symptoms such as insomnia, lack of appetite and disobedience which is part of soul loss within a broader medical context. Hao hints at a disconnection between sacred and materialist scientific classifications but is confounded by the effect produced by the ritual therapy as being on par with medicine. One can start to see how sacred and secular classifications and concepts converge and blur with the symptomatic expression of *jingshen* loss. Both people understand this indication to be an occasion for sacred therapies as well as for negotiating their medical application.

Hao speaks of his sickness episode as a loss of soul signified by a loss of *jingshen* producing palpitations. It is important to note that the soul as *hun* (魂 heavenly or life-giving soul that resides in the liver) and a person's *jingshen* are different. The *hun* soul is the spiritual or conscious soul of the person that may be in or out of body-spirit proper, that may or may not become a ghost or a god after physical bodily death. *Jing* (精) is largely understood as the "vital function" of the human being, while *shen* (神) is known as the "divine function" (Kwan 2018, 24). Both *jing* and *shen* have narrow and broad, textual and experiential definitions and uses in the languages and histories of China. The compounded meaning of *jingshen* is no exception. It suggests a unified dynamic of both gross and subtle substance and force that produces and re-produces the body-spirit (where the soul(s) reside) and enable its function of be-ing alive (and healthy) in this world (Unschult 2018). Today, Chinese people use *jingshen* much the same way English speakers discuss the "spirit" (of a person, a school, a group of

people, a classroom, an animal, etc.). For many Hakka Chinese in Heyuan, it has specific and deep associations with the human as a holistic, cosmic, social and sacred entity.

The restoration of a person's *jingshen* is a common effect of talismanic ritual healing. Many people reveal the presence of *jingshen* loss as a common experience within spiritual collisions that associates with soul loss and other various disorders. Its explicit reference is almost always present in cases where there is also (social) stress, terminal sickness or weak and vulnerable bodily states. Chen Dage, a man in his early fifties explains, "if a kid always cries, a shenpo will directly...call the soul back, even though he is alive (his soul may be gone) ...we believe that children naturally possess low *jingshen* so they are easy to lose souls...this is also the case with elderly and with people who are already sick". This suggests that spiritual collisions can be exacerbated or caused by a depleted *jingshen* as part of the life cycle, "internal" conditions or from behavioral or "external" conditions (Young 1976). Nonetheless, spiritual collisions are explicitly felt and experienced, by many, in relation to this particular bodily-spiritual experience.

Zhong Saozi experienced a spiritual collision immediately following the birth of her youngest son during a particularly stressful period in her life:

Zhong Saozi: I had a low *jingshen* ... When you have a low *jingshen*, you will see that old man.... His beard is very long. Like, like, just, like this. Like this, like someone covered your mouth, you can't speak, can say nothing... You would really, really say, it took a lot of effort, but (I) couldn't struggle it off. You see, when you have low *jingshen*, you will meet those kinds of spirits.

We spoke further about talismanic bathing to treat this condition:

Anna: And every time after you use talismans to wash your body, do you feel better?

Zhong Saozi: Yes, my *jingshen* increases a bit.... Yes, it works!... That is normal...I felt better bit by bit...during those days... I always felt so tired. And I took a talisman to burn and wash with...doing this is very easy. Really natural, yes, just like this. I didn't feel anything worse...I still do this whenever I feel low *jingshen*...when things get hard...if I wash now, I often take one (talisman)...I usually burn one, sometimes. If, I feel really tired, weak or exhausted, I will burn one to wash with...then I feel better.

For Zhong Saozi, having a weak *jingshen* is a bodily-spiritual experience of a healthful state and a condition caused by social stressors as well as life processes (such as having just

given birth). It is often unclear as to what comes first, acquiring a low *jingshen* from tenuous circumstances surfacing in daily life or having it depleted so as to cause tenuous circumstances.

She continued talking about her infant son who cried a lot in that time:

Zhong Saozi: Then you burn the talismans (*fu*) and pour boiling water on the ash. It feels better after...

Anna: ...he felt better?

Zhong Saozi: Not so much crying, not so hard as before.....it worked..... Sometimes, when you have a cold, sometimes you will feel, if you are not cured after you take the medicine for some days. Then, you, you take the *fu* to wash, it will not do any harm anyway, right? That will not be a problem...It also has some good in it.

This complicates the ritual healing process as being effective only within the conditions of a shared cultural reality between participants. Children are not able to actively participate in the cognitive process required for it to be effective within the current theoretical model, especially newborns and infants. The talismanic ritual bath acts very much like a restorative medicinal cure in this case, where “(t)he patient is not so much transformed by the healing—although psychological, social, and emotional changes may be a by-product—but rather literally ‘restored’ (to varying degrees) to an earlier point in time that predates the problem” (Waldram 2013, 194). Very young children do not participate in a shared cultural schema like adults or even teenagers, nor do they communicate with the shenpo healer. Many parents say they use talismans in this way for their young children with great success. According to them, the shenpo talismanic ritual medicines are used to provide a cure that does not require a child’s active participation or even belief – although it does require that of their parents’ or family members. The only person the infant directly connects with is the parent or caretaker who consults the shenpo and administers the ritual bath.

Zhong Saozi’s husband Zhong Dage also experiences loss of *jingshen* which brings him to consult the shenpo. With him, it is in connection to soul loss (失魂 *shi hun*) in relation to an antagonistic social environment that exhausts him, and a work environment that denies him belief of his spirituality. He tells me soul loss (*120hih un*) is the proper term for this kind of problem:

It is normally said that according to our Hakka ways, they should know themselves what’s going on...they will know if they have other “mental problems” or something

else.....but a lot of people do not use this word these days.... Soul-loss (*121hih un*)...they think there is a ghost or something, it seems to probably have such a meaning now.....if someone feels to be uncomfortable in this way...maybe it is not disease (病 *bing*) or stress (压力 *yali*).....I will just feel that my *jingshen* is no good...I go to see the doctor first...if it cannot be diagnosed or treated by the doctor, I flip over and over...I should go to ask the *shenpo*. And then I need to use talismans to wash with. So...that is the feeling. You aren't recognizably sick (*bing*)...you just feel an uncomfortable feeling...I felt I wasn't really sick (*bing*), but I didn't have any *jingshen*, a total loss of *jingshen*...then...I, we (Hakka), just ask the *shenpo* to get talismans to take showers with.

Zhong Dage confirms what Er Dagu says about the medicine “not working”, especially in the case of a low *jingshen*. Yet he makes a clear distinction between “mental problems”, “stress” and sickness or disease (*bing*). These factors might come into play with other peoples’ experiences, but for him the traditional Hakka bodily-spiritual experience of diminished *jingshen* is intimately related to soul loss – today considered “a ghost or something”. Diminished *jingshen* is an indication of need for treatment of some kind which brings people to “flip over and over” between sacred and secular healing therapies.

Zhong Dage feels talismanic therapy brings him comfort. He says it enables him to cope throughout an ongoing existential crisis. Coping is a key aspect of transformative healing processes inherent in symbolic healing where “(d)isease’ may remain even as meaning changes and the patient’s psychosocial outlook improves, leading to a sense of efficacy, which would include enhanced ability to cope” (Waldram 2013, 194). Participating with a spirit body allows Zhong Dage to see his circumstances in a more positive light which helps re-attune his sense of being-in-the-world. In addition to providing a means to cope, the talismanic bath also provides a cure in that it results in a restoration of the body-spirit back to a previous pre-sickness state by returning his soul(s) to physicality, and by vitalizing his *jingshen*. Zhong Saozi as well as Hao experience this duality of process too, but in their own ways. Where there appears a muddying of conceptualizing soul loss amongst them, that may or may not involve associating it with “stress”, they all negotiate experiences of spiritual collision and talismanic ritual bathing in connection to symptomatic expressions of losing and restoring the *jingshen*, which provides both a means to cope and a way to cure.

Wen, a young nurse in her early twenties whose experience is presented in chapter three, adds to this entanglement of transformative and restorative experience with shenpo sacred medicine. She speaks about her continuous work stress and on-going bad luck:

Wen: It... continued for a period. I just called my parents and...they called the shenpo...and then they got the talisman. Then I burned it and took a shower with the ashes – a bath...I did as they told me. And then later on, just a little bit, after a while, was a little bit better, just a little bit of luck returned. Back then, I had no *jingshen* to work...So psychologically, there are some...(influences) that's what happens when you are unfortunate..... My father always thought I was tired because I was too young to bear hardships, but he didn't understand it was all about the work. He couldn't see, so he didn't know it (talismans) can relieve my stress...it gave me energy...it returned my *jingshen*.

Anna: So, the talismans can help you feel comfort in this hard time?

Wen: At least it can relieve my stress, it can bring back my *jingshen* and energy ...At least it is a little comfort...Yes

Anna: Was it immediate?

Wen: ...it seems to be less bad...everything is smoother, you may feel...(when) you don't feel so, so, unfortunate then you might be less stressed..... I can't say it works or not. But I think that, psychologically, it could be a psychological comfort, to just feel a peace of mind (安心 *anxin* or "peaceful heart"). Just like this...after that thing happened last year, I also carry a talisman with me..... At least, there will be, a little bit of comfort, having a talisman, taking a bath, like, feeling like you are going to be able again, to be safe, to give yourself this kind of psychological comfort.

Jingshen reflects Wen's spirit to work as well as a poor bodily-spiritual state. She feels unable to go on and the talismanic ritual therapy helps her feel able again. This is common in individual experiences of "moral breakdown" where a person's sense of being-in-the-world is compromised (Zigon 2006). Talismanic bathing re-attaches her to a divine moral system and a broad spirit body that makes her able to cope and carry on. Wen does not communicate directly with the shenpo healer however. Her parents get her the talismans in a similar way they might go to a pharmacy. This happens often in Hakka communities. Yet, Wen is aware, in her own way, of the larger symbolic schema, and hears through her parents of the words of the shenpo. She can associate the mechanism of its efficacy to her personal experience of spiritual collision.

Much like Hao, Wen negotiates the effects of the shenpo therapy across the boundaries of what is sacred and what is scientific. She is a nurse and lives in a larger urban center away from her parents. She is trained with biomedical knowledge which perhaps plays a role in negotiating her spiritual collision and its contribution to her association of *jingshen* revival as “psychological comfort”. The attribution of “psychological comfort” is becoming more prevalent in the dialogue of Hakka people today, especially for those who frequently cross rural and urban spaces. It very often connects to symptomatic expressions of *jingshen* loss which may or may not overlap with social or existential crises or diseases.

Chen Dage, a local high school teacher, refers to “psychological” effect in relation to *jingshen* when he talks about his mother’s struggle with esophageal cancer. He says:

It was the terminal kind of cancer at that time. She died of cancer 28 years ago...we all knew at that time, [it was] a kind of psychological comfort to make her feel she was making the best efforts to...prolong life... cancer, it can’t be cured, right? But there are very small parts that can be cured...it seems that some people suddenly seem to have a kind of psychological shadow...being afraid...or losing the soul and so on, or doubting... [the shenpo] can appease you through language.....it’s probably the method of mental conditioning.....[after using shenpo therapy] ... she felt a little better, her *jingshen* increased, she also felt a bit relieved...you always have the idea that some people need to be comforted by these things, and some only can cope by this way...some will have a double sense of depression, and families can’t help them handle it, then the condition worsens greatly. The spiritual pillar of humanity is very important, isn’t it? It is the same reason why some people make rapid progress after they are encouraged.

Chen Dage suggests that transforming the “psychological shadow” of a chronically ill person may also transform the body-spirit towards a healing effect. Using shenpo ritual treatments may produce a comfort or enhanced ability to cope where “very small parts...can be cured”. A heightened experience of comfort may even aid in curing. He perceives his mother’s enhanced coping with cancer as having to do with a return of *jingshen*. By incorporating talismanic ritual therapy with biomedical – and TCM herbal – treatment, there is an enhanced healing effect. He suggests that the effect permeates throughout the family, who can now “handle it” better alongside the terminally ill member whose disease (sometimes) remains. In this capacity, the individual as well as the group are more able to cope.

For Chen Dage, the “spiritual pillar of humanity” is vital toward healing and care in chronic illness (Kleinman 1988), even if it does not cure the disease outright. He went on to say, “(w)hat about our spiritual comfort? It is to give us confidence. The will power will come into being gradually and resist the sickness, resist the evil, and then we recover gradually”. The spiritual comfort provided by shenpo ritual therapies has potential to enhance a patients’ resistance and effect a change in the “depressive” spirit. This depressive spirit is essentially the diminished *jingshen* which he associates with a type of “psychological comfort” produced by talismanic therapies that carries potential to also restore bodily-spiritual states.

Linda Barnes writes that the development of “a language which, in China, originally derived from religious interpretations of experience has, in its new appropriation (in the west), been translated into the language of psychology” (Barnes 1998, 422, 430). Barnes speaks of an American cultural context that she claims inherently values psychological language and procedure in medical therapies, and hints at a medicalization of sorts of spiritual dimensions. It may appear that Chen Dage is medicalizing the effect of shenpo therapy to a degree, but it might not be the case. Asian medical systems are inherently pluralistic and tend toward hybridization, involving integrations and blending of both medical and religious knowledge (Leslie 1976; Leslie and Young 1985). Negotiations being made by Hakka people here suggest there are explicit attempts to bridge the spirit body with modern medical scripts such as psychology and with the biological standard. Chen Dage explains:

In our (local Hakka peoples’) hearts, talismans first have the role of expelling or removing evil. Actually, it is the same as calming the nerves. If there is a talisman there, we are not afraid of anything...it plays a significant role.....The purpose of avoiding the evil spirits is to calm the nerves, you will be smooth and steady if there is no evil influence in your body, that’s what it is...It’s all cultural heritage, it was worked out by them (our ancestors) no matter if people say it works or not...the evil influence can’t be solved by doctors, therefore, they need talismans...those things calm the nerves and remove external evil.

In this discourse, evil is understood to enter the body-spirit so to interrupt a person’s state of being “smooth and steady”. Chen Dage is not denying the existence of spirits and ghosts, he is demonstrating a hybrid conceptualization between biomedical knowledge and sacred body knowledge stemming from his (Hakka) cultural heritage in a modern world. The intended effect

of talismanic ritual therapy, he admits, is to both remove evil and to boost the will (志 *zhi*)—which in Chinese medical knowledge is a form of consciousness that resides inside the kidney system (which also stores the bodies *jing* in *jingshen* which also correlates to the nervous system), which calms the nerves. The shenpo ritual treatment is explained in a hybridized blend here. It takes on a joint internal/external function of both calming the (internal) nerves and removing (external) evil; it enhances one’s ability to “resist the sickness” as well as “resist the evil”.

Conclusion

The varied and multi-layered experiences of outcome related to reconciling spiritual collision through shenpo therapies, form and inform a rationalizing language that interrogates the boundaries of sacred and secular medical knowledge in Hakka worlds of health. Apart from the talisman itself, there are various other “things” that disappear when talismans are ritually burned and their ashes used to bathe the body-spirit. Emotional dispositions may transform as stress, fears, melancholy, sadness, worries, anxieties, anger, or temperaments change. Certain diseases, such as cancers, and other sicknesses and symptoms, such as colds and fevers, insomnia, palpitations, nightmares, headaches and other symptoms depending on what the patient is presenting, may or may not disappear. Ghosts and evil may also disappear, allowing for a return of soul(s) to and restoration of the human body-spirit.

A hybridizing trend is found in the discourse of certain negotiations, between secular and sacred concepts. Discourse surrounding outcomes reveal a practical language for bodily-spiritual experience that makes room for multiple medical and bodily knowledges. People mentioned in this chapter reveal a hybrid character of negotiation that attempts to make sense of different medical language to describe what is happening to them. Evil, ghosts, spirits, souls, nerves, psychology, sickness, spiritual comfort, psychological comfort, coping and curing, all converge – and sometimes diverge – in these negotiations, and are presented in different ways by different actors. The connections many people make between “psychological comfort” and “spiritual comfort” in particular, and between “repelling ghosts” and “medicinal cure”, marks a permeation of boundaries between sacred and secular medical scripts.

Within these negotiations emerges a significant commonality of experience and association – the conception and experience of *jingshen*. Hybrid possibilities in peoples’ negotiations are enabled through its conceptualization and felt experience, which reveals itself as a symptomatic expression on the intersection of sacred and secular bodily knowledge. Negotiating the lived bodily-spiritual experience of an impaired *jingshen* allows popular religious ritual healing to cross boundaries with bio-medicalized and TCM knowledge and systems. Impaired *jingshen* reflects an experience of suffering in the Yang world (阳间 *yangjian*) that (may) connect a person to an ancestral Yin world (阴间 *yinjian*). It connects a localized spirit body to a global body of medical knowledge in attempt to make sense of modernity and tradition in ways that are meaningful to Hakka people today. Negotiations of sacred and secular concepts forms the beginnings of a hybridization formed to meet the needs of local people (Lock and Nguyen 2013, 65; Baer, Singer and Susser 2013, 419). There are essentially no fixed views of religion or materialist science in the discourse of Hakka people in this research. The tendency toward hybridization is strong and reflects the hybrid nature of the healthworld (Germonde and Cochrane 2010) and body-spirit through which people live their day to day lives.

Symptomatic expressions of *jingshen* are being associated with soul loss, ghost attachment, chronic illness, depression, and with stress and general weakness in the body-spirit. Diminished *jingshen* reflects both social suffering and sickness. Many scholars of Chinese medicine reference *jingshen* as a “psychological” experience (Rossi 2007; Barnes 1998). In the context of local Hakka worlds of health, however, whose heritage and identity are bound with gods and ghosts just as much as biological standards, *jingshen* is referenced in relation to a fluid and pliable material-spiritual experience and bodily knowledge that makes room for psychologizing without negating the spirit body. Replacing the term *jingshen* with psychological language obscures its lived experience, and potentially obscures the cultural meaning and embeddedness from where methods operationalizing a spirit body are used toward its restoration.

CONCLUSION

Although this research is not a study in efficacy, it is intended to explore the meaning of therapeutic practices utilized by Hakka shenpo healers to treat bodily-spiritual afflictions. It is an attempt to locate the meaning of a broad spirit body in the healthworlds of Hakka people. Central to this research is the idea of an overarching spirit body that potentially interacts and overlaps with political, social and individual bodies (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996, 2013) to produce and re-produce experiences of health. The spirit body reveals a powerful script and current through which health experience may be articulated and allocated; it reveals a path through which healing occurs and where multiple bodily states may be negotiated toward a sense of well-being.

The spirit body embedded in Hakka shenpo traditions and local worlds of health carries a current of an imagined past before the unified material-spiritual worldview was altered and contested. It also carries a continuity of tradition and a medical script where a divine moral system explains the cause of illness and disorder as rooted in the behaviors and actions of people, both living and dead. Through this script an interactive world of spirits, ghosts and gods forms and informs the tapestry of local bodily knowledge which finds connection with other bodily knowledges and medical scripts. This medical script is a continuity of *zhu you* in Chinese history. *Zhu you* once served as a medical department that understood gods, ghosts and ritual therapies that operationalize a spirit body as efficacious for the recovery of various illnesses, and particularly ones that involve the emotions and the recovery of *jingshen*.

One way of revealing meaning of a therapeutic practice is by focusing on the intended goals of a therapy before treatment from the views of all persons involved and following this with experiences of outcome after a healing process, processes that may be intended as either restorative or transformative depending on the intended goals (Waldram 2013). In exploring the meaning of shenpo traditions in Hakka worlds of health, the experience of spiritual collision (DeBernardi 2006) emerged as a central theme. Spiritual collisions are events that occur in a person's life where ghosts and harmful Yin forces are allocated as the primary causal agents in negative bodily-spiritual dispositions. Spiritual collisions occur when a person has themselves

offended or come into contact with offended beings or unseen forces. Mistaken, inappropriate, or immoral actions of human beings are implicated as somehow causing offence to a spirit being, giving reason for its attack, attachment, or punishment toward the human involved. It is primarily the shenpo who explains the causal agency of spiritual collision, and who makes the goal of her therapy the reconciliation of the disturbance. This requires her to assess and address relationships amongst gods, ghosts and human beings within a script that implicates a spirit body within the workings of the world.

When looking at the narrative and personal accounts of those experiencing spiritual collision, they are revealed as complex episodes where the helplessness and hopelessness of uncertainty stemming from a rapidly changing world, is entwined with spiritual causal agency. Disturbances and distress in social circumstances and personal situations not readily identified by the shenpo are revealed and associated with many experiences of spirit collision. These distressful circumstances reflect tensions and negotiations people face and make in a world where strong forces of development and change touch their lives in deeply troubling ways. A spiritual collision can be compared to a moral breakdown (Zigon 2007), where a person's way of being-in-the-world is compromised and they are left seeking a meaningful way to make their experience of being-in-the-world smooth once again. Spiritual collisions are episodes where multiple antagonistic circumstances are brought together and may find relation. Even if certain personal and private circumstances of the individual are not revealed to the shenpo in detail or depth they may be associated with spiritual cause, projected and externalized within the workings of a greater spirit body.

Embedded within this spirit body is a divine moral system suggesting a moral agency in both the cause and treatment of spiritual collisions. The goal of treatment is to reconcile the spiritual offence by correcting certain human behaviors and confronting the offended spirits. The shenpo seeks to re-orient individual and social bodies to the laws of heaven and to a knowledge of a spirit body. She also seeks to restore these bodies to certain harmony as the primary therapeutic mechanism. This is done by naming the offence in relation to human behaviors complicit in its generation, then issuing ritual talismanic based therapies so to materialize heaven's laws on earth.

Becoming a shenpo is a painful process that involves the transformation of a local, usually under- or un-educated, woman into a representative of heaven who is charged with bringing heaven's standards to the world of the living as well as the netherworld (Yang and Yin worlds respectively). She brings a divine moral universe that she also embodies, to earth for people to engage – both materially and conceptually. As she establishes herself as a healer, the shenpo creates and maintains a community in local space. The community participates in the deities' worship and is able to bring the god's or goddess' *ling* power to their personal lives. People make donations and contributions to help maintain heaven on their local earth. In her capacity as healer, the shenpo makes an affliction on earth to be felt and experienced by a representative of a higher moral authority. This is part of her *ling* that manifests and is transferred from heavenly bodies into human bodies, material objects, and into local spaces so to continuously interact with people in the community and beyond. This is an example of how a spirit body interacts with, shapes and is shaped by social and individual bodies. The individual human body-spirit is made bridge for the spirit body which exists in an unseen liminal space; the spirit body is made seen as it is lived through the shenpo and then through the community who make it a part of their lives.

Localizing the spirit body as such helps set the stage for symbolic healing with talismanic ritual therapy (amongst other therapies that are not addressed in this research). Shenpo bodies and traditions stimulate and promote a shared reality where a spirit body integrates with other bodies through a sacred medical script that is not available in other medical scripts today. Nevertheless, shenpo do integrate other medical scripts and secular bodily knowledge that allows for hybrid-like connectivity. Biomedical terms are often used in conversations with patients, demonstrating heaven's awareness of modernity and its relationship with the spirit body. One does not have to abandon "other" scripts to experience positive results. One has only to make meaningful connections and associations between elements in their own life (and health) worlds in relation to the spirit body. The experience of and attempts at healing a spiritual collision through shenpo practice is where various dimensions of intersubjective experience and bodily knowledges are able to converge and find relation with a spirit body. It is in this

dynamic where meaning is made and where tradition or culture itself acquires powerful therapeutic possibility.

Engaging with the spirit body reminds people they are moral agents in a moral universe who must also take responsibility for their actions and relationship with the world around them. People are brought to negotiate a divine moral universe that explains their suffering in terms of sociality and behavior that is not readily available in biomedical or standardized TCM explanations. Through participating in the talismanic ritual process people may re-attune to a divine moral worldview to find a way to control seemingly uncontrollable circumstances. Speaking of post-socialist Russia and how magical practices offer hope for people struggling within conditions of intensive change, Galina Lindquist writes that “(m)agic practices thrive...where the uncertainty of life calls for methods of existential reassurance and control that rational and technical means cannot offer” (Lindquist 2006, 2). The same can be said for sacred practices that involve the invocation of deities. Spiritual collisions are rife with existential uncertainties associated with changing social conditions and circumstances where one is otherwise helpless, that may or may not involve chronic illness. When a person falls into what feels like an existential crisis, the shenpo provides a means of control and reminds people of an order where it may have been, or felt to have been, lost. With this control however, is a dynamic of power that is easily abused by shenpo if their hearts are not “good”. All healers in this research emphasize this point, reiterating that correct alignment of the heart of the healer with the heart of heaven is the mechanism that harmonizes all other bodies, that brings heaven to humanity. Manipulating and harm is not the station of a true shenpo, and incorrect moral alignment toward self-serving tendencies are reported as shenpo who have strayed from the “good” path. This is perhaps what is meant by spirit mediumship as the “way of the heart” (DeBernardi 2006). The “coming out” narratives of shenpo indicate that deity intends the human woman to learn it is “not about you”.

As people participate in shenpo ritual therapies, they are usually left reflecting upon the workings of a spirit body in their day to day lives, taking into account that their actions and thoughts, and the actions and thoughts of others, matter in the production and re-production of sickness and suffering. As people take this into account for their individual persons and bodies,

they also do so for the social body. China today is experiencing a sense of moral crises in the social body; the shenpo tradition works to recover a sense of a (divine) morality that may serve to heal the social body. This possibility for healing multiple bodies provides a potential way toward certain well-being for entire communities and beyond as more people travel and migrate to and from rural and urban spaces.

One way individual bodies experience healing is through the generation and manipulation of feeling - particularly the feeling of comfort. Comfort is experienced within the existential crisis and within the dying process. Feeling oriented outcomes people often report suggest a change in their being that they may not have realized or known before that help them cope with current circumstances. Feelings reported are those of protection, safety, certain fear or intimidation, which leads to self-reflection, enhanced contentment and changed outlook, and most commonly the ability to cope and continue on in life. Feeling protected and safe are particularly important dimensions to take into account considering how safety and coping amidst the intensities of contemporary change and a cultural climate that has limited resources and capacity for hospice care and psychological therapy are major concerns for health and well-being (Kleiman 1989; Kleinman 2011; Bunkenborg 2015; Zhou and Xiao 2015;).

The provision of comfort has a transformative effect on emotions and attitudes that enable people to cope, yet there are also experiences of cure expressed as part of outcome experiences. Symptoms such as the relief of colds, insomnia, palpitations, headaches, or the reduction of certain symptoms in relation to a disease or the prolonging of life in a terminal illness like cancer or heart disease, where curing is essentially experienced as a restoration to a previous state, are discussed by many. I did not witness the curing of cancer, but there were stories about family members' cancers going into remission or heart problems being resolved – many who also utilized other therapies at the same time. It is also worth noting that when talismanic therapy is used for small children and infants who cannot (consciously) share in the reality required for symbolic healing, they often experience a recovery of sickness, although their caretakers may experience a change of emotional state. In Chinese traditional medical practice as a restorative system, the emotions are a part of the physical body, so changing the emotions can theoretically also change the physical state. Furthermore, the body-spirit theoretically has

a general perfected state that one can and should return. Thus, the comfort and transformative effect provided by shenpo ritual therapies is also a means toward cure; it is a transformative as well as restorative healing modality (Waldram 2013). An effect of coping as well as curing are both possible in the outcome experience of symbolic healing using this modality.

Comfort is explained by many patients as both spiritual and psychological. The concepts of psychological comfort and spiritual comfort are often associated with each other. People exhibit a tendency to hybridize their knowledges of psychology and the spirit body. For some, nervous and emotional disorders are the result of evil in the body-spirit and soul loss and vice versa. Ghosts may cause physical sickness, mental disturbances, stress and anxiety, while stress, anxiety, mental disturbances and physical sickness may also attract ghosts or separate the soul(s) from the body-spirit to exacerbate a situation or condition. Margaret Trawick says of the greater pluralism of Asian medicine today, and the merging of religious and medical systems inherent in its history, that “it is primarily for the patient, and to a lesser extent for practicing healers, that different healing systems mesh on a fundamental level in meaningful ways” (cited in Leslie and Young 1985, 134-135). It is this meshing tendency, as an act of human agency, as people interrogate the boundaries of sacred and secular language and practice, that seeks to ground the shenpo tradition to a world not willing or wanting to abandon its modernity or its traditionality.

Within the negotiation of relations between what is scientific and what is sacred there emerges a significant factor – a commonality in the recovery or the return of *jingshen*. One of the most well-known Chinese medical texts is called the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon of Medicine (黄帝内经 *Huangdi Nei Jing*), upon which today’s TCM is largely informed. This text explains that treating the *jingshen* of the individual was the oldest effective form of medicine (Unschuld 2003). *Jingshen* is traditionally understood as a unified matter-spirit and the animating essential spirit that brings matter to life – a joint spirit and physicality that equates with being alive. Today, it is largely discussed as a psychological phenomenon that has lost much of its practical application in TCM as well as its correlation with religiosity. It is said that to better understand the therapeutic experience of a healing practice we must try to “understand the patient in their own context” in terms of how they know their bodies (Incayawar 2009, 145-147; Hsu 1999). There is much to be gained in understanding how people today know *jingshen*

in connection to therapeutic ritual processes. One thing is evident from the discourse of Hakka people here: ritual healing therapy with the shenpo has a strong potential to revive the animating spirit for human life and being in bodies –*jingshen* – which is expressed in relation to experiences of both comfort and cure in the uncertain times of today’s world.

The shenpo tradition holds meaning as a therapeutic practice today in that it provides a positive potential for healing multiple bodies. The dynamic of ritual participation with a spirit body embedded in shenpo traditions enables a culturally meaningful script into the lives of people that makes religiosity medicinal. Not only can the inclusion of a spirit body enhance a struggling contemporary social body with a sense of moral direction, it can also enhance the individual body-spirit with a sense of comfort and certain cure. Shenpo tradition engages modernity and modern medical scripts in hybrid and relational ways so that neither is abandoned. Local people are synthesizing concepts from different knowledge systems in ways that attempt to produce a coherence of understanding and application for their states of being-in-the-world in a time of intense questioning of place in the world. Participating with the spirit body ultimately provides many local Hakka people a way of reviving the animating essential spirit that makes them feel alive and well.

The spirit body, then, aligns with social, political and individual bodies as put forth in a critical interpretive theory from Lock and Scheper-Hughes that understands sickness and suffering as bodily dispositions in a “critically reflexive” relationship with a “given social and moral order” (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996, 42). Spiritual collisions are a complex entanglement of antagonisms that involves social distress and distress emerging from chronic illness and life processes. The individual bodily experiences of spiritual collision reveal a social dis-order and compromised moral order in contemporary Hakka Chinese communities. An extremely intense push for success – being “better”, “bigger”, “smarter”, “richer” - emerges out of modern policies for development that has created a certain antagonistic sociality. The political body inscribes on the social body these memes and the social body re-organizes itself toward these goals. Today’s social body is a negotiation – rife with contestation and compromise. Distress is experienced by body-spirits in various ways, which may or may not also correlate with chronic illness or soul loss that are often revealed with associations to harsh

social pressures and environmental stresses. Suffering often involves a culturally embedded diminishing of *jingshen* as a feeling of spirit or vitality being removed from the material body. This is a point of departure, a primary indication of possible dis-order in the social and/or political bodies. *Jingshen* itself is an aspect of the spirit body as it suggests the body-spirit is connected to a greater spiritualized existence. Lost *jingshen* is individual bodily-spiritual weakness that reflects weaknesses in today's socialist-capitalistic Chinese societal body.

The spirit body, then, enables intangible and internalized distresses to be articulated and externalized by associating them with a divine moral system that sees bodily experience as a reflection of antagonistic human (both living and dead) relationality. Multiple threads of antagonism may converge in a single episode of spiritual collision as the shenpo healer details the mechanism of pathology through the spirit body. She herself is the spirit body materialized, as are the talismans offered as medicine. While not attempting to suggest any new theories, I see the spirit body as an additional perspective in which to perceive the individual human body as a dynamic site of negotiation revealing how immaterial and metaphysical worlds are existing with material ones to produce bodily experiences – which can also help reveal expressions of social truths and constraints and possibilities of, as well as contestations with pluralism and hybridity with spiritualized realities that might be endangered or that might also endanger bodies depending on the context. For Hakka people here, incorporating a spirit body or spiritualized reality in their worlds of health provides a way for making them feel and be alive; it provides a platform where factors contributing to existential crisis or chronic illness can be allocated within a single event that can then be operationalized by ritual specialists such as the shenpo. Here, people who may not know how to express or articulate their suffering, who may be afraid to speak out within a society that reveres hierarchy and chastises critics, who may fear losing face in a social world for complaining or criticizing the effects of modernization and development, where obedience and participation in contemporary modernization are rewarded and praised – are able to do so within the context of a spiritual collision that becomes the object of shenpo ritual healing.

The spirit body forces a kind of self- reflection that attempts to re-organize a dis-ordered social body understood as primary cause of the dis-ordered individual body-spirit. The spirit

body, though, is also a means of great power for those who embody and bring it to humanity. In a distant past, *wu* (巫) , and later spirit mediums, had enormous control over social (and political) bodies of which individual bodies were seen as a direct extension. In the very distant past, this might mean human sacrifice for a toothache or an orchestrated uprising to overthrow a rotten governing body. Today, the spirit body is a metaphor for a moral order within a contemporary sociality and modern existence. It is an unseen metaphysical body that interacts with the human world on a daily basis, that carries a code for well-being. It interacts with the individual human body-spirit by suggesting sickness and suffering are a direct result of social and moral dis-order; what humans do is how the body-spirit is felt.

The spirit body is then a complex body that is both seen and unseen, that is both old and new, that interacts with multiple other bodies and carries a liminal potential for negotiating personal experience of being-in-the-world. The gods in this spirit body are external *shen* spirits that come out through the body-spirit of the shenpo so to influence humanity. They are representatives of a “higher”, heavenly morality that today, conflicts with an atheist governing body and society that elevates a biological standard which largely stands in opposition to it. The gods and heavenly deities are largely understood as the (internal) *shen* (residing in the heart when embodied) of previous living persons who had cultivated a “perfected” morality upon death, who are now positioned in the ranks of heaven. They return to humanity to transmit their perfect morality through the spirit medium whose own *shen* spirit is made to align with their heavenly one. Through this heavenly embodiment on earth, the social body is moralized and (re)organized with a divine moral system that also works to re-attune the individual body-spirit toward a “better” being-in-the world. This is the goal at least. Through the moralization of humanity through heaven, the *shen* souls of human bodies are attempted to be made less as ghosts and more as gods. This is understood to have healing potential.

The souls, physiology and emotionality of human body-spirits are moved in tandem with the divinely moralized social body, especially through the ritual healing process where heavenly decrees are made to effect worlds and bodies. The body-spirit is either transformed and/or restored to a desired state. People are comforted knowing heaven is helping them in a helpless situation; they better cope with their situation or reflect and receive inspiration to change it. The

spirit body acts as a connective tissue that moves bodies closer to a culturally meaningful idea of harmony that equates to good health and well-being. This is where religiosity is medicinal and medical. Operationalizing the spirit body, then, carries a potential to heal and to return to order dis-ordered social and individual bodies. The spirit body remains contested in contemporary China and subject to the authoritative gaze of the biomedical standard as the measure through which it acquires value. But if the local shenpo traditions, as they re-emerge and re-integrate at grassroots levels, can be recognized and evaluated in relation to a critical interpretive approach that views the human body as a point of departure, their value may be better understood toward the preservation and enhancement of health and well-being at a difficult time. Researching the spirit body in terms of the outcomes its therapeutic associations produce in the everyday lives of Chinese people, can help reignite a needed critical conversation about the therapeutic possibilities of gods and ghosts in China, and in Chinese medicine, once again.

APPENDIX

	UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN	Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 18-Jun-2019
		<i>Certificate of Re-Approval</i>
<hr/>		
Ethics Number: 17-76		
Principal Investigator: James Waldram		Department: Department of Archaeology and Anthropology
Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted: China, China		
Student(s): Anna Kelly		
Funder(s): Unfunded		
Sponsor:		
Title: Revived Rituals and Spaces of Well-Being in Contemporary China		
Approved On: 15/03/2019		
Expiry Date: 14/03/2020		
Acknowledgment Of: n/a		
Review Type: Delegated Review		
* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above		
CERTIFICATION		
<p>The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.</p>		
ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS		
<p>In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.</p>		
<hr/>		
<i>Digitally Approved by Vivian Ramsden, PhD</i> <i>Behavioural Research Ethics Board</i> <i>University of Saskatchewan</i>		

Copy of most recent ethic approval form for this research from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board.

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End Notes

ⁱ The Club of Rome is an organization of prominent people from various fields and disciplines who express great concern for the future of humanity and help influence policies that would see the best possible future. They hosted various conferences throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries attended by Chinese scientists and scholars who were influenced by their ideas of modernity, population concepts and currently by ideas of sustainable development. Anthropologist Susan Greenhalgh identifies the one-child policy as emerging from the 1978-80 period when China re-entered the global capitalist market and was influenced particularly by the Club of Rome's "world-in-crisis" work of the 1970's as much as it was influenced by a push for modernity put forth by the same organization in the early twentieth century (Greenhalgh 2003; Greenhalgh 2008).

ⁱⁱ The Hakka people I interviewed wanted me to use their pinyin Chinese name instead of the English translations (pinyin is the Romanized version of Chinese characters and speech).