

Chinese Australian Herald. “Miaotang lingying” 廟堂靈應 [Divination at Temple]. May 10, 1902. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/15343164>.

Divination at Temple

Four years ago in Sydney, a group of people from the Siyi¹ counties demonstrated their sincere dedication to the divinity, by collectively purchasing a land with existing homes in Glebe Point near Sydney, and subsequently building a temple there, within which Guan Yu and Li Guizu were enshrined. Three years have elapsed since they moved in, and the person who is currently taking care of the temple's burning incense is Mei Dayao, who joined the temple in October last year. In recent times, the temple has become exceptionally distinguished compared to its earlier days, as apart from the frequent discussion on this among the Chinese community, many non-Chinese people have also started to talk about the temple. They heard that the forecasts on the timing of rain there would indeed turn out to be true. The temple has been traditionally relying on a combination of fortune sticks and strips of paper as further explanations as the method of divination practices. However, a new method called Fuji² was introduced recently. This requires the surface of a board to be first lined with white sand, and the diviner would use two fingers to lift the handles of Ji which is shaped like the Chinese character 丁. The divination procedure is also the same as that in China: the diviner places the hook of Ji above the board's white sand, and uses their index fingers of both hands to lift the handles on each side. If the diviner is to the god's liking, Ji will automatically move across the sand; otherwise, it will remain still. When Ji moves, the hook circles around the surface and pushes the sand aside, revealing the black board underneath. The revealed areas will form characters, with the remaining white sand serving as the background.

Despite the various questions people have asked, all the answers are believed to come from the gods. There are several individuals who are to gods' liking and thus currently hold the responsibility of operating Ji and conveying the divine guidance, including Li Dongshan, Liang Tingfang (whose pet name is Yaquan), Mei Jingchun (whose English name is Arthur), and Yu Guangming. It was also found that the people in charge of managing the donations were mostly fellows from the Siyi counties who were store owners. Although the received donations initially could not fully cover the costs of purchasing the land and building the temple, people caring about the divinity with a sincere heart would often voluntarily make a donation and even lend out an additional amount of money which could be returned upon the successful establishment of the temple with the assistance from the donations one day. As the proverb says, “People rely on divine power.” Fortunately, we now have our fellows from the

¹ Siyi, also known as See Yip in Cantonese, referred to “the four counties.” These original four counties, which are now within the jurisdiction of Jiangmen City, included Taishan (formerly called Xinning until 1914), Kaiping, Enping, and Xinhui Counties (Christiansen 2005, 216).

² Fuji 扶乩 or 扶箕 (lit. hold-Ji) is a divination method in China involving the use of a tool (Ji) to obtain the answer to the question asked, by counting the number of times Ji has moved. Traditionally, if Ji remains still, it indicates “no”; if Ji moves, the answer will be a “yes”; one movement means “auspicious”; three movements mean “ominous” (Xu 1994, 152).

Yuning Wang, 1425588

Jia Jia, 1442816

Siyi Ye, 1446089

Siyi counties who have managed to create the splendor of the temple for us, despite the difficulties they have had in seeking a living in a foreign land. This must be a good omen for joy of both people and gods as well as everlasting luck.

References

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