

Hong Kong in Reenchantment
A Case Study of the New Religious
Discourse

Cheris Shun-ching Chan

香港亞太研究所

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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Abbreviations

Intro	<i>An Introduction to Lingsu Society International</i>
NL	<i>Newsletter of Lingsu</i>
BL	<i>Book of Lingsu</i>
LW	<i>Lingsu Window</i>
MNC	<i>Booklet for Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting</i>

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A Case Study of the New Religious Discourse

Abstract

The proliferation of new religious cults in Hong Kong in the recent two decades displays a paradoxical picture. On the one hand, it signifies the emergence of a societal tide of reenchantment. On the other hand, it appears to embody vast disenchanted dispositions. This study explores the empirical sacred constitution of one of the new religious cults in Hong Kong, so as to arrive at a substantive understanding of the elusive phenomenon of the new religious discourse and its implications for the social reality. In the course of this study, it is intriguing to find that the new sacred order of the case chosen, the Lingsu Exo-Esoterics, manifests itself as above all a “model of” the secular realities of the Hong Kong society.

Introduction:

Hong Kong as a Paradoxical Society

In socio-cultural terms, the various forms of the modernist projects that took place ever since the 16th century in America and Europe shared one generic goal, that is, to emancipate humanity from natural and religious bondages (Holland 1988:43).¹ The projects of modernity seemed to have successfully refuted the ways of life under religious enchantment. The development of rational forms of social institutions and rational modes of thought promised liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion and superstition (Harvey 1989:12). An age “without God and prophets” came into existence (Schluchter 1989:273). However, towards the end of the 19th century, the perpetuation of the process of disenchantment in

turn made people recognize the limits of science and other modes of secular knowledge, awakened them to the undue exaggeration of the superiority of science (Habermas 1983; Berger 1983; Schluchter 1989; Malinowski 1979; Douglas 1982; Parsons 1979; Griffin 1989). Today, at the close of the 20th century, much of the negative potentials of scientific advancement and the dehumanizing consequences of the mechanical consciousness are more fully recognized by modern man. Realizing, at last, that even science cannot immunize him against suffering nor can it answer his puzzle about the meaning of life, the deeply shaken modern man once again excavates the god(s) from their graves. And, an era of reenchantment seems imminent. In the case of Hong Kong, how far does this same societal tide of reenchantment permeate into society?

With the rapid economic development during the 1970s and 1980s, Hong Kong has indisputably become a highly urbanized and technologically advanced society. Its dramatic economic growth has brought forth both material advancement and a general rise in living standards. The implementation of nine-year compulsory education and the fast expansion of tertiary education and professional training have resulted in the overall progress of the intellectual sphere. The much improved secular spheres of life, together with the much expanded pool of secular knowledge, are deemed to be indicative of tides of disenchantment in Hong Kong society.

Being dominated above all by the market-economy, the operation of Hong Kong society requires and, simultaneously, cultivates rationalized modes of life and thought. Lau and Kuan observe that the Hong Kong Chinese:

... have fully endorsed the capitalist system with its trappings of market superiority, individual competition, sacredness of private property.... (Lau and Kuan 1988:190)

The Hong Kong Chinese are well-known for their rational, realistic and pragmatic mode of living and life philosophy. Their

devout belief in the prevailing economic system, together with their daily devotion to economic activities, have largely steered them away from fatalistic worldviews of various sorts (Shively 1972; Lau 1982:52-53). And, Hong Kong is such a secular and worldly society that religion would lose its appeal for the people. The disenchanted horizons of Hong Kong society as a whole are evident, as for example, in Hui's findings that few people in Hong Kong describe themselves as religious devotees (Hui 1991:140-41). The disenchanted orientation of the Hong Kong Chinese has been inspiringly portrayed by King and Lau. While King depicts the attitude of Hong Kong Chinese as "rationalistic traditionalism," Lau characterizes it as "utilitarianistic familism" (King 1987; Lau 1982). Both of them reveal the instrumental rationalistic ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese. However, Chan and Lee, in locating Hong Kong families at the intersection of modernism and traditionalism, do conclude that the pragmatic and instrumental plane of reasoning in Chinese society is self-limiting (Chan and Lee 1995:85-86).

Indeed, the "rationalistic" and "utilitarianistic" orientations being accompanied by "traditional" and "familial" dispositions, respectively, deserve our attention. According to King, the Hong Kong Chinese do not utterly internalize the Occidental values without selection. They are likely to preserve some of the traditional values, which render them not as individualistic, formalistic and calculating as their Western counterparts (King 1987:4-5). Their traditionalist orientation allows them to receive more emotional support and normative guidance from their families and the tradition. Perceived from this position, there is still room for the disenchanted ethos to expand. Lau confirms this perception by asserting that "utilitarianistic familism" will be gradually replaced by "utilitarianistic individualism." With continuous modernization in the territory, social ties tend to be weakening, and individuals become "less amenable to social control" (Lau 1982:187). At this juncture, it appears that Hong

Kong society has not yet reached the limit of disenchantment, let alone entered into a reenchanting era.²

Against the above scenario, an explosion of new religious cults and spiritual practices in Hong Kong in the recent two decades seems to run counter to the hypothesis of a continuation of disenchantment. The arrival of the Church of Christ (Hong Kong) (香港基督教會) from Boston in 1987, for example, attracted a number of tertiary students as its members. Likewise, The Maha Sandhi Yoga Followers' Association (大圓滿心髓同學會), which was established in Hong Kong in June 1992, likewise attempted to recruit members from the university students of Hong Kong.

In fact, there are hundreds of new religious and spiritual associations in Hong Kong. Most of them originated in the United States, have started their preaching in Hong Kong since the 1970s and have been popular since the last decade. There have been the Jehovah Witnesses (耶和華見證會), Christian Science (基督教科學會), Unification Church (統一教), Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (摩門教), Hare Krishna (國際 Krishna 知覺協會), Ananda Marga (亞南達瑪迦), Shumei Church of Divine Guidance (神慈秀明會), Mahikari (真光), The International Supreme Master Ching Hai Meditation Association (青海無上師國際禪定學會), Rosicrucian Order (玫瑰十字), Hong Kong Brain Club (香港大腦潛能中心), Universal Energy (人電學), Sokagakkai (日連正宗), Karma Kagyu (噶瑪迦珠), Sahaja Yoga (自然靜坐法) and Transcendental Meditation (超覺靜坐), just to name a few. These cults recruit members typically through personal networks as well as through advertisements in newspapers.³

The proliferation of the new religious and spiritual cults seems to have diluted the disenchanted outlook of Hong Kong society. It creates a paradoxical image that, on the one hand, the society remains dominated by rational worldview and practices, while, on the other hand, mystical and "reenchanting" organizations have permeated society in significant measure. How can this

paradox be accounted for? Is the multiplication of new religious practices simply signifying the same continuation of disenchantment or, indeed, indicating the advent of reenchantment? To define and conceptualize reenchantment regardless of the justification of empirical evidence would run the risk of empty speculation. Empirically speaking, the emergence of the new religious discourse can be plausibly taken as the key manifestation of reenchantment. An in-depth case study of the constitution of the new religious order is indispensable for grasping the crux of the new value sphere of the contemporary epoch. It may provide us with a more substantive picture of reenchantment and contribute to its further theoretical conceptualization. The case of the Lingsu Exo-Esoterics (靈修顯密宗, *ling-seo-hin-med-zung*)⁴ aptly demonstrates the intricate interplay between the disenchanted and the enchanted spheres of reality. It epitomizes how the new sacred order makes sense of the secular, disenchanted order of life. And, most important of all, it sheds light on the nature of the elusive tide of reenchantment and its relation to social reality.

The New Sacred Order in Hong Kong: The Exemplary Case of the Lingsu Exo-Esoterics⁵

The Lingsu Exo-Esoterics, founded by a Hong Kong Chinese who was locally born and raised, originated in the 1970s but was not formally established as a religious group until 1988. Despite its modest size, its followers are mostly well-educated and demonstrate significantly a distinctive way of reconciling the tension between this-worldly and other-worldly realities. Its ordering of the sacred realm embodies vast and rich messages about the contemporary culture.

Emergence and Development

The Lingsu Exo-Esoterics was previously a charity organization, the Lingsu Society (靈修會, *ling-seo-wui*). The Lingsu Society

was firstly established in Adelaide, Australia, in 1978. Hong Kong had its branch, the Lingsu Society (Hong Kong) International, in 1984. Other branches were also set up in Sydney, Japan and Singapore. To account for the emergence of the Lingsu, the legendary story about the founder will provide the prologue.

Sacred Journey of the Founder and Formation of the Lingsu

The *Grandmaster Know-All* (圖通師尊, *yun-tung-xi-jun*),⁶ the founder of the Lingsu, began his supernatural journey at the age of nine:

The story begins at the age of nine, when he found a strange book of ancient occult practice, at a street stall. He immediately bought it, despite being unable to understand the strange language in which it was written. From that time, night after night, he had a vivid dream of an old lady (saint) who would sit and explain to him the book, page by page. In this manner he was given teachings on Esoteric Practice by a Saint, every night until he knew each page. Mysteriously, the book disappeared when he finished mastering all its contents.... (*Book of Lingsu* (BL):33)⁷

The story continues,

Once he fasted for more than forty-nine days and nights in seclusion for spiritual purification, and underwent severe spiritual practice. At the age of forty, while meditating, he attained Enlightenment. He saw his past lives and future through his Third Eye. His wisdom returned; he immersed in ecstasy, in peace and bliss. At the same time he knew his mission on Earth. (BL:34)

He called his path to "Enlightenment" (正覺, *jing-gog*) "Lingsu" (靈修, *ling-seo*) and his followers have gathered around him to listen to his teaching every weekend since then. The Lingsu Society was subsequently established. However, the followers experienced confusing identity since the Society was a charity institution in name but a religious group in actuality. They were eager to preach the Lingsu theology and practices but felt unjustified to do so. The Grandmaster then came up with the idea

of transforming the Society to a religious organization and named it Lingsu Exo-Esoterics.

First Transformation: Systematization and Ritualization

Immediately after its turning into a religious organization, the Lingsu became more structured, systematic and ritualistic. The Lingsu Centre was opened and a hierarchical master-disciple system was established. The Grandmaster is the Supreme Head (師尊, *xi-jun*) of the Lingsu. Next to him are three Superiors (上師, *seng-xi*), who head the branches in Hong Kong, Australia and Japan, respectively. They are followed by Senior Masters (大師, *dai-xi*), Elder Master (老師, *lou-xi*), Masters (師父, *xi-fu*), and lastly, Disciples (徒弟, *tou-dei*). Those who acquire Esoteric Method (密法, *med-fad*) directly from the Grandmaster are given a religious last name *Intelligence* (慧, *Wei*) or *Method* (法, *Fad*). And, those who learn from the Superiors have their last name *Wisdom* (智, *Ji*) or *Right* (正, *Jing*).⁸ *Intelligence* and *Wisdom* are bestowed on the female followers while *Method* and *Right* are on the male. At the beginning, anyone who wanted to learn the Esoteric Method had to become a disciple first and pay for lessons directly to the Superiors or the Masters, to the ones who directly edified them with the Lingsu Method. In 1993, the Master Council, which is composed of *Superior W.D.* and a few Masters, was formed to deliver systematic instructions to the Disciples. Since then, the Disciples do not need to pay for learning the Esoteric Method. Instead, they have, prior to the conversion rite, to collect a lump-sum monetary offering from their friends and relatives as entrance fee. The process of gathering monetary offerings, according to the disciples' interpretation, signifies one's sincerity to become a Lingsu disciple.

Membership and Finance

The Lingsu claims it has five thousand disciples in the world (*An Introduction to Lingsu Society International* (Intro):1). But, as far

as I know, there are only about thirty in Hong Kong, of whom ten to fifteen are active members. The numbers in Australia and Japan, according to *Superior F.L.*, are more or less the same as that in Hong Kong. Of the ten or more active disciples, more than half are at their middle age and have attained tertiary education. They are the senior followers in the rank of Masters or above. The lower ranked followers, that is the new comers, interestingly, mostly engage in the work of life insurance.

The finance of the Lingsu mainly comes from the disciples' offerings. Without any rule to regulate the amount and the frequency of the monetary offering, the disciples contribute according to their own will. But, the budgetary state of the Lingsu is becoming stringent. The only full-time staff was dismissed in February 1994 because of the shortfall in money. Consequently, the opening hours of the Lingsu Centre have been shortened.

Second Transformation: Declining Religiosity

The shortened opening hours of the Centre, which directly lead to fewer religious practices, is only one of the changes of the Lingsu in recent years. Other changes can be dated back to the year 1992. Firstly, the publication of the *Newsletter of Lingsu* (NL),⁹ which was once per month in 1991, was reduced to once every two months in 1992, to once every two or three months in 1993 and to once every four or five months in 1994. Secondly, the frequency of holding the *Lingsu Dharma Talk* (靈修經講, *ling-seo-ging-gong*) used to be twice a month in 1991 but has been cut to once a month since mid-1992. Thirdly, the number of the *Body-Mind Unity Training Camp* (身心合一訓練營, *sen-sem-heb-yed-fen-lin-ying*) was reduced from three in 1991 to two in 1992 and to one in 1993. And, the number of participants for every training also dwindled from over fifty in 1991 to less than thirty in 1993. Fourthly, the *Lingsu Family Gathering and Sharing* (靈修家庭聚會及分享, *ling-seo-ga-ting-zeu-wui-keb-fen-heng*), which was held every Wednesday night to discuss the Lingsu philosophy and share the

Lingsu experiences among the disciples, has been cancelled since 1993.

All the above changes indicate a decline in religious activities from 1992 onwards. This declining religiosity is however concurrently accompanied by a rise in secular activities. The emergence of a profit-making business, the *Wans Multi-level Distribution* (溫氏全銷), in 1993 has brought forth an obvious — both objective and subjective — internal secularization of the Lingsu. The seed of the secularization, I would argue, however, is embedded in the sacred worldview of the Lingsu. Whereas the *Wans* business is only an accelerator.

Sacred Worldview

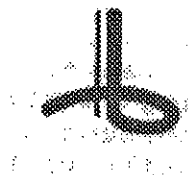
If man did not die, if he lived forever, if thus there was no death, there would be no religion either.

Ludwig Feuerbach

It is true that almost all religious orders have to firstly answer the perennial puzzle of mankind — birth and death. The Lingsu Exo-Esoterics is no exception. It came into existence when its founder opened his “Third Eye” from which the meaning of his life was sanctified. Having known his past and future, he got a definite answer to the problem of birth and death. The sign of the Lingsu logo, for that reason, stands for “breaking the cycle (of birth and death) and transcending towards Enlightenment” (BL:6).

To transcend life and mortality as the ultimate end of salvation is generic to all religions. What distinguishes them from one another is the content of salvation, which is derived from the distinctive conceptions of divinity, man's relation to the divinity, the state of being emancipated and the path to it (Weber 1963). The sacred worldview of the Lingsu is an eclectic mixture of various Asian religions, such as Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. Yet, by a reconstruction of the sacred reality with some newly invented elements, it manifests itself an

idiosyncratic order that is markedly different from the religious traditions above.



Sign of the Lingsu logo



Birth and death; a natural inevitable process. An endless cycle (BL:6).



With Lingsu practice one breaks the cycle and transcends towards Enlightenment (BL:6).



The vertical strokes represent the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings. The fine stroke represents the supreme teachings of Lingsu Esoterics (BL:6).

Divinity, Man and the Universe

God is without beginning or end. God created the Universe, and His Emanation, Light or Essence (Ling) form the infinite Void. This Essence (Ling) emanates everywhere. Outside our bodies is the Saint Ling; inside our bodies is the Jin Ling (our inner self). God created the Universe and He created man last. (BL:15, Grandmaster)¹⁰

Like Christianity, Lingsu theology holds that the whole universe, including all lives, human and nonhuman, was created by an omnipotent God. But, unlike Christianity while similar to Sikhism, this God cannot be described or specified by words. The only

certainty about God is that there is only one supra-mundane God. Nonetheless, gods of lower levels do exist next to the supra-mundane God in the "Spiritual World" (靈界, *ling-gai*). Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad and Krishna are some examples. In Lingsu's words, they are "Saints" (聖人, *xing-yen*) as they have got the "Truth" (真理, *zen-lei*). They were inherently the same as the mundane men but then differed from the latter through "Practice" (修練, *seo-lin*). Lingsu believes that all men could become saints or gods as Buddha and Jesus did through "Practice." Man's potential for elevating himself to god is rooted in the sacred dispositions, the "Saint Spirit" (聖靈, *xing-ling*) and the "Inner Spirit" (內靈, *noi-ling*), of the Universe and of human beings.

The God-spirit, God-essence Saint Ling, is pure Light and Radiance, that permeates and illuminates the whole Universe. The whole Universe is enveloped by Space — Emptiness. This infinite fathomless Space is the Void woven by invisible threads of light from God's emanation (Saint Spirit). All Creation is contained in this Void which is governed by impartial laws.... From the Saint Ling sprang innumerable intelligent spiritual seeds, to come down as Jin Ling to claim a body of man. The Jin Ling — as indestructible and eternal as the Saint Ling — was initially to do the work of Creation. Over aeons of time, the Jin Ling evolved the body, for it to be perfect. (BL:9-10, Grandmaster)

Upon this ground, man is endowed with the gift and the talent for reaching the treasure of the Universe. God enables man to reach his sacredness by providing man with a "Universal Mind" (宇宙覺, *yu-zeo-gog*). In answering a disciple's question about the "Universal Mind," the Grandmaster says:

All creation, from the smallest particle like the electron, to the galaxies and beyond — all intricate mysterious works of the Universe, is contained in the Void which is governed by the impartial laws. We call these magnificent laws and its intricacies the Universal Mind.... The Void and the Universal Mind govern the three planes of existence — physical, mental and spiritual — which is the Law of the Universe. (BL:10, Grandmaster)

Hence, when man understands the three planes of existence, he apprehends the “Law of the Universe” (宇宙定律, *yu-zeo-ding-lêd*) as well. Simultaneously, he is capable of governing the three planes of existence and communicating with the “Universal Mind.” By tapping the sacredness of the “Universal Mind,” man comes to know the Creator. And ultimately, he acquires the “Truth” and becomes a “Saint.”

Relation between God and Man

The supra-mundane God, unlike that of the traditional religions, does not predetermine the lives of human beings. Human beings have evolved themselves from God and are part of God. *Master Z.H.* has the following idea about the relation between man and God:

Many religions are talking about God, saying “God do this and do that.” We Lingsu don’t say “God do what and what,” God is already with us! When we do Practice wholeheartedly, God Spirit, that is the Inner Spirit inside us, is awakened. By that time, we are in God and, simultaneously, God is in us.

Lingsu theology is a sort of emanationism. Nonetheless, the God of the Lingsu is more active and personified than the one of emanationism is supposed to be. The disciples always emphasize that the supra-mundane God is “intelligent, kind, benevolent, and taking care of human needs.” Although He does not always directly respond to human needs and desires, He has gods of lower rank and saints to assist Him in entertaining the worldly desires. *Senior Master F.H.* explains:

Lingsu says God and gods, as well as saints. God is the only Creator and all other spirits come from God. Other spirits include gods and saints, who have attained different levels of achievement. Most gods do not respond to man’s prayer because they don’t think human beings need such desires. Saints, who manifest themselves as human beings, empathize with man and are more willing to help man realize his wish.

As man comes from “God-Essence,” he is innately sacred. However, he needs external spirits, the lower-level gods and saints, to do good for him before he has grasped the sacredness inside.

Human Being and Human Life

Notwithstanding the sacred nature of the human being, human life is regarded as “unreal”:

Human life is ephemeral and ever-changing. People always say that “human life is like a dream”, the correct saying should be “human life is a dream”. Since life is only a passer-by of the Universe, it is dreamlike and unreal. (NL1:3, *Superior W.D.*)

The contrast between human being and human life is rooted in the conceptions of “being” versus “body,” “spirit” versus “material.” The “being” is believed to be governed by the “Law of Universe,” which is in contrast to the “body” that is governed by the “Law of Material” (物質定律, *med-zed-ding-lêd*):

Our “body” is made of soil, wind, water and fire but our “being” is of Inner Spirit. So we have to distinguish “material” from “spirit”, as “body of human being” from “human being”. When the materials (soil, wind, water and fire) gather, body emerges. When they dissipate, body disappears. The existence of life vanishes in a flash. (NL3:1, *Superior W.D.*)

Apart from the human body, the human mind, which comes from the body, is also wearing out with time. Both human body and mind, according to the Grandmaster, are machines and replaceable. Human life is nothing more than body and mind and so is replaceable through reincarnation. Reincarnation makes life and death an endless cycle. This cycle comes to an end only when man has accomplished his mission on earth. What is the mission of man then? It is not predetermined but has to be discovered by man himself.

The Secular World

The secular world is also governed by the “Law of Material.” It is thus unreal and rejected:

Secular world is also called material world.... The most distinctive character of the material world is fluctuation — everchanging and nonlasting.... Secular countries, secular societies, secular families and all kinds of secular organizations are built upon the material world. They are insignificant as compared to the whole natural world matter. (NL8:1-2, *Superior W.D.*)

Because of the “unrealness” of the secular world, it is strongly denounced as “all empty”:

Many people do not understand the Law of Universe. If they do, they will come to know that the secular world is “all empty” (四大皆空, *se-dai-gai-hung*) and cease holding firm to any secular matter. (NL3:1, *Superior W.D.*)

Therefore, Lingsu considers the advancement of the material world as an “illusion”:

Let’s see the living of the Hongkong people in the 21st century — money, social status, luxurious food and materially rich living. People are being overwhelmed and dominated by the Law of Material. Their lives are superficial, empty, short, painful and illusory. (NL20:5, *Disciple J.Y.*)

Goal of Salvation

Owing to the “unrealness” of the secular world, the goal of salvation is to transcend this world, that is, to break the endless cycle of birth and death so as to reach Enlightenment. The state of Enlightenment is spelt out in a Lingsu Dharma:

Toil all day, To what avail?
Bondage due to ignorance;
Inner Spirit appears, Bondage disappears.
No thought, mind still;
Heart attaches naught, Desire drops, Ling transcends;
True Self prevails.

The “Truth,” which resides in man’s “Inner-Spirit,” is engulfed by “Ignorance.” The “Ignorance” is, in turn, caused by man’s possession of secular desires:

At the beginning of time immemorial, Man with Jin Ling carried out many of God’s works.... Yet as creation became more complex, desire crept in, and importance and selfishness were attached to the things created or done. When the intellectual mind marvelled at its works, and the body took over, the Jin Ling within was suppressed.... In fact, as the Jin Ling is laden with desires and habitual energies, it has to assume a form (take a body) to carry out these desires — countless, innumerable rebirths resulted. (BL:16-17, Grandmaster)

Besides causing rebirth, man’s “Ignorance” leads to all kinds of worldly sufferings. *Superior W.D.* explains:

All kinds of conflicts among men, like fights and wars, are rooted in the Three Detriments (三害, *sam-hoi*) — Greed (貪, *tam*), Hatred (瞋, *cen*) and Delusion (癡, *qi*). These Detriments, when appearing in our Heartfield (識田, *xig-tin*), misinterpret the input message and consequently send out a wrong output message to our brain.

When “Greed,” “Hatred” and “Delusion” are scattered in the “Heartfield,” *Superior W.D.* continues:

We have emotions ups and downs such as joy and sorrow, happiness and anger, love and hatred. When we are in union with God, nothing is important to us and nothing can provoke our emotions. By that time, we are really ready to emancipate ourselves.

In a word, the state of salvation in Lingsu’s worldview is a state when man’s desires and ignorance are utterly shattered so that the “True Self,” that is the “Inner Spirit,” comes out. By that moment, man acquires the “Truth,” regains “God-Essence” and “be back with God.” He serenely experiences the initial Void — without birth and death, boundless, eternal and full of God’s emanation.

Path to Salvation

To break the cycle of birth and death is to end reincarnating. The rule governing reincarnation is grounded in Karma (業, *yib*). Master Z.J. expounds the logic of reincarnation and Karma in a *Lingsu Dharma Talk*:

When the Inner Spirit is loaded with many secular desires, it becomes so weighty and urgently needs to be reincarnated. This over-loaded Spirit becomes so impatient that it jumps into any womb it first comes across. On the other hand, when one's Inner Spirit is slightly laden with desires, it can wait till it meets a good womb for it to be reborn. That is why some people are born in Africa while we are born here.

Like that of Hinduism and Buddhism, the Karma of the Lingsu signifies the "effect" of the previous life, or the sum total of the "effect" of past lives. But such "effect," unlike that in the Hindu or Buddhist belief, is not determined by the "good" or the "evil" one did before this life. Instead, it is regulated by the weight of one's desires of the past many lives. To improve the next life, one has to strive to reduce his accumulated desires so as to lessen the weight of the "Inner Spirit." And, the way to salvation is to annihilate all the desires so that the "Inner Spirit" comes out.

In Lingsu's belief system, there is more than one method to eliminate desires, and so there is more than one path to "Enlightenment." The Lingsu Method (靈修法, *ling-seo-fad*), anyhow, is considered to be the most effective one. The Method embodies both Exoteric and Esoteric Methods (顯法及密法, *hin-fad* and *med-fad*). It is a spiritual way of cleansing desires and "impurities." But, peculiar to Lingsu's worldview, there is a secular way of achieving the same goal. It is by satisfying the desires in real terms. In contrast to Buddhism and Hinduism, Lingsu strongly objects to any repression or suppression of desires:

Merely depriving oneself does not annihilate desires. Rather, it creates an extreme pressure and stress within the person, always on the verge of exploding. (BL:17, Grandmaster)

Therefore,

Lingsu has never asked us to abandon desires. If we have desires, we satisfy them as soon as possible. When our desires have been fulfilled, we no longer have such desires. (NL20:6, *Disciple Z.L.*)

The only guiding principle Lingsu imposes on the disciples is "Practice," that is practising the Lingsu Method without talking or thinking. To play down thoughts and intellectual activities, the most effective way is "living moment to moment" (每秒生存, *mou-miu-seng-qun*). To live at this moment is imperative because, Master Z.H. explains:

Thinking about the past is unproductive but eliciting comparison and tension. Thinking about the future is useless but inducing anxiety and worry.

The path to salvation, Lingsu reiterates, is not confined to the Lingsu Method, and the state of salvation is not exclusive for the Lingsu disciples. The Grandmaster explains to the disciples that they do not need to push people to become Lingsu disciples:

Fingers pointing to the moon from different directions are pointing at the same, the one and only one moon. Other religions are also teaching the Truth. The Truth can be manifested in diverse forms. Even those preaching the "false" are also heading towards the Truth because things are in circle, not linear. The only difference is that their roads to Enlightenment are longer and rugged. But they will get there anyway. Regardless of which road one takes to reach salvation, all the roads exist in this world!

Lingsu condemns other-worldly religious practices which require the followers to withdraw from the secular world. Its sacred method, the Lingsu Method, is also called "worldly method" (世間法, *sei-gan-fad*). It believes that the more one engages in the mundane affairs, the more one is capable of seeing through the "falsehood" of such affairs. The notion of "learning by doing" is the central principle of the way to salvation in Lingsu's worldview.

Sacred Symbols

Sacred Person

A sacred person, in Lingsu's theology, is one who has reached "Enlightenment." He is in union with God and has once become a spirit. A spirit is not subject to the law of reincarnation. Nonetheless, this spirit takes a human body to become a saint in this world on its own terms. A saint differs from an ordinary person in that he has already grasped the "Truth" and will never be engulfed by "Ignorance" again. He is immune against the "Three Detriments" and devoid of all kinds of secular desires. His only desire is a sacred one, that is, to preach the "Truth" and to lead mundane people to arrive at "Enlightenment." The Grandmaster is believed to be a saint of this kind. He is full of "God-Essence" and, in this sense, he is sacred. He had once possessed supernatural power such as curing incurable illness, foretelling one's future and even changing one's life. However, he abandoned such power as he did not want to manipulate others' life.

The Grandmaster's ability to arrive at "Enlightenment" is ascribed to his own endeavours and practices in his past lives, not to God's predestination. His sacredness is, therefore, self-induced but not ordained by an external force.

Sacred Place and Sacred Objects

This place (the Lingsu Centre) is a place of worship. On its opening ceremony, Grandmaster invited a number of Saints to descend to protect it. When we are practising the Lingsu Method, we are talking to the Saints. The Saints are listening to our wishes and calls.

So does *Superior W.D.* explain to the disciples why practising the Exoteric and Esoteric Methods at the Lingsu Centre (顯密精舍, *hin-med-jing-se*) is more effective than doing it elsewhere.

Situated in a residential building at the heart of a bustling city, Causeway Bay, the Lingsu Centre measures about 700 square feet.

It is partitioned into four areas: a reception room, a practice room, an office and an acupuncture room. A cabinet, which displays the books about the Lingsu and the "sacred objects" (聖物, *xing-med*) for sale, is found in the reception room. The "sacred objects" are sacred because they have been "initiated" (開光, *hoi-guong*) by the Grandmaster. They include a picture of the Grandmaster, a gong (磬, *hing*) and "gold medals" (金牌, *gem-pai*) of different forms. Their prices range from HK\$80 to several thousands.

The carpeted practice room is a very neat room with an outer glass wall and with wooden sliding doors in front of the wall. An altar and a piano are located at opposite ends of the room. Above the altar is a large Lingsu logo fixed on the wall. On the altar, an incense burner is placed at the centre with three color-lightened bottles of water behind it. Beside the water is a picture of the Grandmaster (the same as the one for sale) who wears a purple Lingsu long coat and a white robe sitting in a meditation posture. In addition, a pack of incense sticks, a box of pills, a long stick, a gong, a lot-bowl with different coloured lot-balls inside, a heap of "blessing-paper" (加持紙, *ga-qi-ji*) and a pile of "offering-envelopes" (奉獻袋, *fung-hin-doi*) are found on the altar. *Disciple J.Y.* explained to me one by one the meanings and the functions of these "sacred objects":

The picture of Grandmaster can protect this Centre as our Grandmaster is a Saint whom the demons and goblins are afraid of. These three bottles of "saint water" (聖水, *xing-seu*) are useful for bettering our emotions.... This water is originally distilled water but becomes "saint water" after it has absorbed our vibrations. These "mantra-pills" (咒藥, *zeo-zou*) are made and blessed by Grandmaster. They are for improving health.... This "blessing-paper" has also been initiated. We human beings usually have a lot of wishes and this paper can help us. What we need to do is writing down our wishes on it and have it been blessed by our chanting. The long stick here, well, is used by our Superiors in an Esoteric Practice.... These lot-balls are used for sortilege. The oracles are endowed with the "sacred words" (聖言, *xing-yin*) from the Saints, and so they can give us a guide when we have doubt on any matter in our daily life. This gong is also our "sacred

object.” When it is hit, it transmits the sound “om”.... This “om” is the only sound that can vibrate our brains. The vibration is so powerful that it can awaken our Inner Spirit and the Saint Spirit surrounding us. This “om,” simultaneously, means praising God. As we don’t know the name of God, we address Him as “OM.”

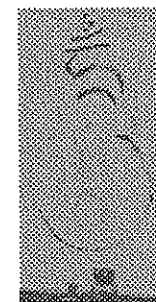
Next to the altar, two offering boxes are found. One has the Chinese words of “Offering” (奉獻金, *fung-hin-gem*) on it while the other has, also in Chinese, “Sowing the Fortune-field” (廣種福田, *guong-zung-fug-tin*). Money should be put into the initiated “offering-envelopes” before being placed into either box. The money in the “Offering” box is an offering to the Grandmaster whereas the one in the box of “Sowing the Fortune-field” is donation to the Lingsu.

Several gold medals are hung on the wall opposite the altar. Names are engraved on the medals. According to *Disciple J.Y.*, there are three types of medals, each of which serves a particular purpose. The first type is “Ancestor Blessing Medal” (祖先加持牌, *zou-xin-ga-qi-pai*) which serves to give blessings to the disciples’ ancestors. The second one is called “Individual and Relative Blessing Medal” (個人或親友加持牌, *go-yen-wag-cen-yeo-ga-qi-pai*) which functions as means to solve the daily problems of the disciples and their relatives. The last type is “Business Success Blessing Medal” (生意成就加持牌, *seng-yi-xing-zeo-ga-qi-pai*) which assists the disciples in running their business smoothly and successfully. All of these medals have been initiated by the Grandmaster and, therefore, are laden with sacredness. Their sacredness is, in addition, strengthened by the everyday “om” practice of the disciples. Of course, those who ask for such medals need to pay.

Most of the female disciples are wearing the Lingsu “gold-medal” which is marked with the Lingsu logo and the Lingsu amulet on either side, respectively. *Master Z.H.* explains the function of this “gold-medal”:

It is initiated by our Grandmaster and so it can give us protection. Its function and power are striking when we are facing danger. My

elder sister had once suffered from depression but recovered her composure immediately after wearing this medal.



Sign of the Lingsu amulet.
(According to the Grandmaster, it signifies
“a unity of Buddhism and Taoism.”)

Another sacred object, which is used to measure one’s “vibration,” is called “pendulum” (振子, *zen-ji*). *Elder Master J.S.* explained its power to me:

We Lingsu disciples have received *Lingsu Initiation*, and our vibrations are so strong that we can change the materials in the world. For instance, now I want to check if this orange is suitable for me, I put this pendulum on the top of the orange. (He does do it and the pendulum turns clockwise). You see, it turns clockwise, which means that this orange is good for me. If it turns anti-clockwise, it’s not suitable for me. But even so, we Lingsu disciples can change it to clockwise by singing the mantra “om.” This “om” is a “vibration” to turn the material, the orange in this case, to become suitable for me. Those who are not Lingsu disciples cannot make such change. If the pendulum tells them that the orange is not good for them, they had better not eat it....

Sacred Rites and Sacred Words

The Exoteric and Esoteric Methods include a number of “Practices” and “Blessings” (加持, *ga-qi*). While the Exoteric

Method is open to all, the Esoteric one is exclusive to the Lingsu disciples. Both Methods, in *Superior W.D.*'s words,

are aimed at purifying our "inner condition" (內境, *noi-ging*) and heightening our "sensations" (覺, *gog*). When our five senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin) are sensitized, we are able to distinguish true from false. When our "inner condition" is pure, we do not have any erroneous thoughts and desires. We are, by that time, approaching Enlightenment.

A. Exoteric Method

i. *Meditation I of Zen Ding* (禪定靜坐 (一), *xim-ding-jing-zo I*)

The participants sit in lotus posture and form a circle. Everyone has his/her hands laid in the laps, one on the other, palms up, and thumbs extended to touch each other. All close their eyes and begin the practice of *Zen Ding*. The whole practice is divided into five stages and all accompanied by music.

Stage One (five minutes):

The practice-in-charge says,

Magnificent Macrocosm; Radiant with Thy Light
(宇宙浩瀚; 神光普照, *yu-zeo-hou-hon; sen-guon-pou-jiu*)

The participants imagine the greatness, the splendour of the universe and feel the warmth of God's light. This stage is the preliminary stage of quietening, leading to the readiness for meditation.

Stage Two (five minutes):

The practice-in-charge says,

Splendour Microcosm; Pulsating with Thy Might
(娑婆動盪; 靈氣遍野, *so-po-dung-dong; ling-hei-pin-ye*)

The participants firstly think of the fluctuations and the dynamics of the world, then feel the bathing in peaceful, warm and boundless God light.

Stage Three (ten minutes):

The practice-in-charge says,

O, Thou Jewel in the Lotus; May Thy Love be bestowed on all of us
(靈禪精修; 數息定念, *ling-xim-jing-seo; sou-xig-ding-nim*)

This stage is a breathing meditation in which the participants breathe in deeply and breathe out slowly. They should put all their concentration on their own breathing and not to have any thought.

Stage Four (ten minutes):

The practice-in-charge says,

Be Sentient or Insentient; Glorify Thy grace and peace
(梵音諸天; 密行普濟, *fan-yem-ju-tin; med-hang-pou-zei*)

The participants altogether resound the mantra "om" loudly. Each of them concentrates on his/her own sound.

Stage Five (two minutes):

The practice-in-charge prays,

O, Lord, the Almighty, we thank you for Your Blessing.

Today, we all brothers and sisters gather together, to share your love and wisdom, to open our eyes to find our True Self.

We also thank the Saints of the past, the present and the future. Thank them for their guidance, enlightening us from our delusion, and showing us the way, helping us fulfill our mission — to help ourselves and others.

During this congregation, we are praying for Your Blessing to us, our families, friends and the whole world, to enable all of us to live in peace, happiness and good health.

Finally, the practice-in-charge hits the gong, the participants clasp their hands (合十, *heb-seb*) and do the "Lingsu four-clap salutation" (靈修四拍掌, *ling-seo-se-pag-zeng*) by clapping hands in rhythm 1,1,1-2 to end the meditation.

The significance and the functions of the *Zen Ding* are explained by the Grandmaster:

With (Meditation I) practice, the following can be achieved:

- (1) Ability to sit, poised with equal ability to concentrate.
- (2) Inner peace and happiness in the heart. Quiescence and a lift in one's vibration (mentally and spiritually) help to achieve a clear mind and purposeful living — to solve one's daily events, difficulties in life and deluded thinking. Saint Ling's light bestows on the participant the (to) help to disperse darkness and delusion.
- (3) One finds fewer disturbing thoughts and emotions such as fear, obsession and anger. One can achieve concentration of thoughts, and inner peace. (BL:106)

The meaning of the "Lingsu four-clap salutation" is explained by *Superior F.L.*:

The first clap — homage to God, the Creator; the second clap — thanks to the Saints of past, present and future; the third and the fourth claps — thanks to you and thanks to me, for if there is no "me," there is no "you"!

- ii. *Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* (靈修早晚誦課, *ling-seo-zou-man-zung-fo*) and *Lingsu Simulcast Blessing* (靈修祈求世界和平, *ling-seo-kei-keo-sei-gai-wo-ping*)

Before carrying out *Zen Ding*, the disciples spend fifteen minutes practising *Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* and *Lingsu Simulcast Blessing*. The *Chanting* is done by reciting the "sutra-mantra" (經咒, *ging-zeo*) like "Lingsu Pledge" (靈修誓詞, *ling-seo-sei-qi*), "Going Back Mantra" (歸依咒, *guei-yi-zeo*), "Enlightenment Mantra" (正覺咒, *jing-gog-zeo*), "Eliminating Pain Mantra" (脫苦咒, *tud-fu-zeo*), "Lingsu Sutra-Mantra" (靈修經咒, *ling-seo-ging-zeo*), "Spirit Light Sutra" (靈光經, *ling-guon-ging*), "Wisdom Mantra" (智慧咒, *ji-wei-zeo*), "Fulfilling Wishes Mantra" (如願咒, *yu-yun-zeo*) and "King-of-Drug Mantra" (藥王咒, *yeg-wong-zeo*)¹¹ in sequence. The *Simulcast Blessing* is done by singing a song named "Bless Our Souls" (主禱歌, *ju-tou-go*).¹² The whole practice is ended by the "Lingsu four-clap salutation."

The *Simulcast Blessing* is, according to the Grandmaster,

blessing through Saint Ling, emanates unhindered to all for spiritual growth, mental and physical health. It fosters, firstly, world peace for people to live in harmony; secondly, harmony to one's inner self; thirdly, harmony to one's family members; and finally, good health to all. (BL:112)

- iii. *Initiation Blessing* (祈願求福頌經, *kei-yun-keo-fug-zung-ging*)

Anyone can have his/her wishes written on the "blessing-paper" and placed in front of the gong. When the practice-in-charge announces that it is time for chanting, the participants recite the "Eliminating Pain Mantra" and the "Enlightenment Mantra," for each of which 108 times. The practice lasts for over half-an-hour.

This blessing, which is done only on Saturdays and Sundays, is aimed at

solving the problems and releasing the worries of the self and of other people. (NL20:9)

- iv. *Ling Healing* (靈療, *ling-liu*)

The recipient sits in front of and facing the altar, closes his/her eyes and has his/her wish in mind. The healer stands about three feet behind the recipient and closes his/her eyes for a few seconds. He/She then moves close to the back of the recipient and places his/her right hand on the top of the recipient's head. The healer sings the mantra "om" loudly and the recipient follows doing so before the healer's sound weakens. Thus, there is a time when both the healer and the recipient chant the mantra together and produce a sound reverberation. The reverberation gradually weakens and finally comes to a halt. The recipient gets up, turns to the healer, clasps his/her hands to show salutation. The healer also clasps his/her hands to salute in return.

The Grandmaster explains the import of the *Ling Healing*:

Ling Healing is a Spiritual Healing through Saint Spirit, that is, through God's Light. Saint Spirit penetrates the recipient's body to arouse his Inner Spirit in the process of the Healing. The Inner

Spirit resonates, receives the Blessing and wakes up from its dormancy. The awakened Inner Spirit can dispel delusion, resolve life difficulties and promote health.

v. *Lingsu Dharma Talk* (靈修經講, *ling-seo-ging-gong*)

The Lingsu Dharmas are said to be the “Truth” coming out spontaneously from the Grandmaster’s mouth. The *Lingsu Dharma Talk* is held regularly and open to the public. Any Disciple who is interested in delivering the talk can become the principal talker while a Master acts as the secondary talker. The chief aim of the talk is to provide

a virtuous opportunity for the disciples and the audience to listen to and understand the Dharma (偈, *gei*). It is a kind of training to the principal talker. It is also a teaching session which can enrich one’s life, pave the way for a clear mind and inner peace and arouse one’s wisdom from within. (BL:89, *Superior F.L.*)

vi. *Body-Mind Unity Training Camp* (身心合一訓練營, *sen-sem-heb-yed-fen-lin-ying*)

We were asked to count beans. We transferred little red beans, five at a time, scoop by scoop from one bowl to another. It needed incredible concentration that I never knew I possessed. Then we were taught to walk and in the process became totally aware of our body and mind. We were told to eat in absolute silence — to savour every bite and taste. We had relaxation exercise with which our physical body was relaxed and our mind was empty. It was such a great experience. (NL8:4, *Disciple Z.T.*)

A disciple so described her experience in the *Body-Mind Unity Training Camp*.

The training is said to be a kind of “action learning” in which learning is done by doing, not by theory. Its purposes are:

To raise sensitivity... to reduce worries and anxieties so as to clear one’s mind, strengthen one’s memory and increase one’s efficiency in work... to know the True Self and to abandon the false one so that one’s interpersonal relationship can be improved. (NL17:12)

B. Esoteric Method

Since the practice of the Esoteric Method is not open to non-disciples, the processes of most of the Esoteric Practices are unknown. But, the aims and the import of various practices are stated in Lingsu’s publications.

i. *Lingsu Initiation* (靈修灌頂, *ling-seo-gun-ding*)

It is the conversion ritual of the Lingsu. *Superior F.L.* expounds its sacred meaning:

In (Lingsu) Initiation, one receives the Saint Spirit, which arouses one’s Inner Spirit. It directs one’s awareness to head towards self-realization and Enlightenment. With it, one’s body is covered by the Light of Saint Spirit, that forms a “protective shell” (保護罩). This “protective shell” is expressed in our upgraded “vibration” which empowers us to resist unwholesome auric influences. (BL:65)

The *Initiation* can only be carried out by the Grandmaster or the Superiors. The whole process involves three stages. Firstly, the recipient, who kneels in front of and facing the altar, has to make the pledge:

I serve the Creator, the True God, and I serve the Grandmaster of Lingsu to great merits. I respect obedience to my teacher and Lingsu Elders. I treat my fellow Lingsu disciples as brother-sister; no prejudice, no ill-will. I salute all... HUM. (BL:66)

Secondly, the initiator stands in front of the recipient, places his/her right hand on the recipient’s head and chants the mantra “om.” The recipient, as the recipient of the *Ling Healing*, follows chanting the mantra. Lastly, the initiator puts a robe on the neck of the recipient to signify that the latter has become a Lingsu disciple.¹³

ii. *Meditation II of Zen Ding* (禪定靜坐 (二), *xim-ding-jing-zo II*)

Meditation II, named as “Right Method” (正法, *jing-fad*), replaces *Meditation I* when no outsider joins the *Zen Ding* practice:

It is an advanced meditation enabling the disciples to achieve Quiescence and Concentration of one-momentness, atonement, and the stages lead the participant to reach the highest level of purification to immerse in the Light and Radiance in samadhi with the Saint Spirit. It is a body-speech-mind esoteric practice. (BL:107, *Superior F.L.*)

iii. *Five-Sense Training* (五感法, *ng-gem-fad*)

This training is highly emphasized by the Lingsu disciples. As *Master Z.J.* puts it:

With our five senses being sensitized, we can distinguish true from false and clear our heartfield.

And *Master Z.H.* adds:

Five-Sense Training trains us to possess a “hand” to tap the richness and the abundance of the universe so that our secular desires can be satisfied in a faster way.

The process of training to possess a “hand” is described by *Disciple J.Z.*:

Once I had a very strong desire for a Benz. Then in the meditation, I thought of a Benz — its size, its shape, its style and its color, etceteras. Of course, we had employed a special technique, which was very effective but I can’t tell you what it is. Then I really experienced owning the Benz. My desire for having it dwindled in intensity.

iv. *Lingsu Healing* (靈修治療, *ling-seo-ji-liu*)

This healing is different from the *Ling Healing* in that it is

a metaphysical healing employed by one who has mastered the Lingsu Method and understands the Universal Laws. It helps the disciples to be free from erroneous thoughts and conditioned habitual notions. Once free from such erroneous thoughts, one sees Truth and feels the effects of Truth. (BL:78-79, *Superior F.L.*)

v. *Lingsu Ventilation* (解脫法, *gai-tud-fad*)

This practice can only be carried out by the Superior rank or above:

[It] involves striking the recipient at a crucial moment. On some occasions, the striking on the recipient may invoke the attached ignorant spirit to rebound and attack the administrator who has lain the striking. That is why a higher Spiritual attainment and Blessing is necessary to protect the administrator. (BL:86-87, *Superior F.L.*)

The chief purpose of the *Lingsu Ventilation* is:

to help release the miseries and sufferings of the person, pertaining to inner peace. (NL15:12, *Superior F.L.*)

vi. *Vigilance Training*

Master Z.J. recalls her experience of the *Vigilance Training*:

It was 7:00AM and we gathered to wait for instruction from Superior F.L. He explained how to maintain constant vigilance of all senses in order to stay with this moment and to bring the mind back to focus when it wandered.... The training was carried out in complete silence. Most of the time was spent sitting and maintaining vigilance. (NL23:9)

And *Disciple J.X.* describes the effect of the *Training* on him:

During the training many memories, feelings and emotions in different forms came and went. I am relaxed and peaceful at the end. (NL22:9)

vii. *Other Esoteric Practices*

Other Esoteric Practices include *Lingsu Practice of Awareness and Senses*, *Neutral Mind Training*, *Sensational Training*, *Body-Mouth-Mind Training* and singing *Esoteric Songs*. They are all aimed at raising the disciples’ sensations and awareness. In addition, there are rituals that can only be carried out by the Grandmaster or the Superiors. *Fortune Weed Initiation*, *Saint Spirit Blessing*,¹⁴ *Blessing of Residence*,¹⁵ *Blessing of the Deceased*¹⁶ and *Weddings and Ling Baptism*¹⁷ are some examples.

The Sacred and Secular Orders of Life

To capture the ethos of the Lingsu, a detailed portrayal of both its religious and non-religious arenas of life is imperative. The interplay between the sacred and the secular orders of life of the Lingsu can be best understood by the dynamic interactions among the disciples. Hence, I will write up this section in diary format.

Sacred Rites: *Zen Ding* and Some Other Exoteric Practices

2nd PO¹⁸ 16/7/93 (Fri.)

I arrive at the Lingsu Centre at 6:00PM and find *Disciple Z.Y.* sitting at the reception counter. Knowing that it is my first visit to the Centre, she leads me to the practice room and begins teaching me how to do *Zen Ding (Meditation I)*. In the meantime, some other disciples arrive and chat in the reception room. *Disciple J.Y.* greets me as he has known me before. Other disciples do not bother to know me or introduce themselves to me.

At 6:45PM, *Disciple Z.C.*, who is in charge of today's religious practices, puts on her long white Lingsu coat and green robe. Without any announcement, other disciples sit cross-legged in lotus posture and form a circle. There are six of them. *Disciple Z.C.* burns an incense stick, puts it in the incense burner, clasps her hands, closes her eyes and slightly bows her head to show respect. She then picks up the gong from the altar and sits in front of the altar to join up with the circle. All the participants practise *Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* and *Lingsu Simulcast Blessing, Ling Healing* and *Meditation I of Zen Ding* in sequence.

Immediately after the *Zen Ding*, the disciples remain silent for a while. *Disciple J.Y.* introduces me to the other disciples. I ask *Elder Master J.S.* the difference between the Lingsu and other religions. He responds:

It's not important. All religions are secular organizations aiming at catching the Truth. All guide people towards Enlightenment by adopting different means. I personally find Lingsu especially

effective and real. I experience real changes myself. Lingsu emphasizes practice, not words.

Other disciples remain seated and keep silent. It is about 8:00PM and *Elder Master J.S.* suggests that it is time for dinner. On their way to the Imperial Restaurant, *Elder Master J.S.*, *Master Z.H.*, *Disciple Z.D.* and *Disciple Z.C.* are chatting about their shopping the day before. They are delighted to have been offered a thirty-percent discount for buying the Mega Star clothes. *Disciple Z.D.* says that Mega Star is a very famous brand of colourful fashion and its products are expensive. They are all very excited about having brought the clothes at a lower price and *Elder Master J.S.* suggests:

We should find an occasion to wear the clothes together. What do you think, *Master Z.H.*?

Master Z.H. responds:

Oh! It would be great.

24th PO 22/11/93 (Mon.)

After the practice of *Zen Ding*, as usual, the disciples remain sitting in a circle, keep silent for a while and chat with one another. When *Senior Master W.Z.* starts talking about her husband's business in China, *Senior Master F.H.* says that he is going to start a business in China together with *Superior F.L.* and *Elder Master F.S.* He says:

China is a good place for us to start new business. Its market potential is so great. Hong Kong market seems to have been fully developed, and now it's not a real good place for making money.

Disciple J.Z.:

I don't think so. Hong Kong is still a city full of opportunities. I can find nowhere that provides as many opportunities for making money as Hong Kong does. That's the reason why I haven't emigrated for the time being. Actually, I'd like to live in Australia but I can't let go my current business.

Senior Master F.H. wrinkles his forehead and says:

Oh! You like living in Australia? That's why I've found some differences between practising Lingsu Method in Hong Kong and in Australia. It seems that there are too many temptations in Hong Kong. It requires one to have a very strong will to resist the temptations; otherwise, the temptations can become obstacles (to Enlightenment).

But Senior Master W.Z. disagrees with him:

But more temptations urge one to satisfy his desires. The faster he has satisfied his desires, the quicker he has eliminated such desires. After all, when his desires have been satisfied, he is "again a good fellow" (又一條好漢, *yeo-yed-tiu-hou-hon*).

She then turns to the Disciples:

Don't be afraid of temptations and desires, understand them and fulfill them. Once they are fulfilled, one can pay all the attention to Lingsu Practices.

Disciple Z.D. and Disciple J.Y. nod their heads. Without any new subject for chatting about, Elder Master J.S. suggests to go for dinner and all the others agree.

During the dinner, the disciples' conversation is focused upon the *Wans Multi-level Distribution*. Master Z.H. and Elder Master J.S. enthusiastically invite Disciple J.Y. to join the business by accounting for the benefits of partaking in it. Elder Master J.S. says:

When you know more about the products, you become an "amateur-doctor." You can help other people and, at the same time, earn money. The Distribution is good for my clients and for myself. Why don't you join it? What's worrying you?

He then turns to me and persuades me to try the products.

Sacred Person: The Grandmaster

9th PO 7/10/93 (Thu.)

Disciple Z.Y. confirms that the Grandmaster has arrived in Hong Kong from Australia but is not sure if he will come for the *Zen*

Ding practice. At 6:20PM, the Grandmaster shows up. Wearing a white-striped shirt and a pair of Texwood trousers, the Grandmaster looks healthy and younger than his age. The *Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* and *Lingsu Simulcast Blessing*, which used to start at 6:45PM, starts at 6:30PM today. The Grandmaster joins the practice. As usual, the *Chanting* and the *Blessing* are followed by *Ling Healing* and *Zen Ding*.

Habitually, silence lasts for a while. I ask the Grandmaster the religious difference between prayer and meditation. He says:

Prayer is begging for something from God while Meditation is talking to God, communicating with God. It (the latter) can be done only when we are utterly quietened. Actually, we don't need to ask for anything from God. God has already given us all we need. So Lingsu doesn't stress prayer.

I dine with the disciples and the Grandmaster at the Imperial Restaurant. Superior W.D., after consulting the Grandmaster's favour, orders wine chicken, braised pork, beancurd sauteed Szechuan style, mushrooms with vegetables and diced melon assorted meat soup. When the first dish of food is available, no one takes any of the food before the Superior has presented some to the Grandmaster. For every dish, the disciples wait until the Grandmaster has taken some. There is not much conversation during the dining. The Grandmaster recalls his having fun at a casino in Australia. Having heard this, Disciple Z.K. happily tells them that she has won a mini hi-fi from the MTR Lucky Draw. The Superior and the Grandmaster congratulate her. They then turn to talk about the Mileage Points (飛行優惠計劃) of various credit cards and compare their relative benefits for customers. While they are talking about the prices of various air tickets and travelling expenses, I ask the Grandmaster if choosing a lucky day for special activities such as travelling, getting married or moving is important. He says:

It depends. It's not important for Lingsu disciples because they don't need it. But it's important for some people who believe in it. It gives them psychological comfort and certainty.... But

psychological needs turn to become "real" needs when they are felt strongly. To Lingsu disciples, everyday is lucky day because they are protected by Saint Spirit.

When I ask if being a vegetarian is good for the disciples, he replies:

There is no need to become a vegetarian. Buddha had lived for a time abstinently but finally discovered that ascetic way of life did not necessarily lead to Enlightenment. He gave up the self-denying way of life and got the Truth. This is true. When one is deprived of food and malnourished, he is physically weak. How can he be spiritually enlightened when his physical needs have not yet been fulfilled.... We Lingsu promote to take in all kinds of food so as to keep a balanced diet. Some people say we have killed animals but in fact we have not. Eating meat is not equivalent to killing animals. We just eat the dead animals. For instance, we eat seafood but we choose the dead fish and dead shrimps, not the live ones. They are already dead, not killed by us.

Again, other disciples remain silent during our conversation. When they finish the meal, all of them, except the Grandmaster, pay the bill.

11th PO 15/10/93 (Fri.)

I have never seen so many disciples practising *Zen Ding* together. There are ten of them. Most of them, especially those that are seldomly present, come in order to meet the Grandmaster. To their disappointment, the Grandmaster does not turn up when it is time for the Exoteric Practices. Soon after the practice of *Zen Ding* has finished, the Grandmaster arrives. All the disciples express a joyous look and greet the Grandmaster by clasping their hands. The Grandmaster explains that he is late because he received a phone-call from his Japanese students. He tells the Superior about his having met a businessman of real estate this afternoon:

He is introduced to me by (Master) Z.H. He is very smart. I like him. He is a wise man, knows how to invest and when to invest.

The Superior talks with the Grandmaster about this businessman for a while. She then reminds the disciples of attending the meeting on the *Wans Multi-level Distribution* that is going to be held next day. After discussing with the disciples, the Superior chooses East Lake Seafood Restaurant for dinner.

Superior W.D. and *Elder Master J.S.* order food. As usual, they present all the newly arrived dishes to the Grandmaster first. During the dining, they talk about food in Australia and in Hong Kong, about entertainment magazines and the current movies. The Grandmaster says that he would like to watch *The Fugitive* or *Sliver*. *Elder Master J.S.* immediately goes out to buy a newspaper from which the showing places of the movies are displayed. They finally decide to watch *The Fugitive* after dinner.

They almost finish the meal and wonder if free desert will be given. When the waiter tells them that free desert is not available, they pay the bill disappointedly and leave for the movie.

14th PO 22/10/93 (Fri.)

I am invited by the Grandmaster to join their yacht tour. There are altogether nineteen participants of which seven are the family members of the disciples.

Having arrived at the Lamma Island, they settle down at a seafood restaurant. Contrary to the Grandmaster's claiming that the Lingsu disciples eat only dead animals, *Elder Master F.S.* and *Elder Master J.S.* order live shrimps, lobsters, crabs and fish. No one rejects the food.

Elder Master J.S. brings in a pack of Japanese wine which is a souvenir from the Grandmaster's Japanese students, and asks others to taste it. The disciples then compare the quality of the Australian and Japanese wines. This reminds *Elder Master J.S.* of his drunk experience in Australia:

The last drink I had was in Australia. Oh! Yes. I had a drink with you, (Master) Z.H., do you remember? We were almost drunk on that night. We had fun but I felt sick afterwards. It was a good lesson.... Lingsu is right. It emphasizes experiences, both good and

bad. Only through experiences will we know what is good and what is bad. It is much more effective than imposing external rules on our behaviours.

19th PO 5/11/93 (Fri.)

The Centre becomes quiet again after the Grandmaster has gone to Japan. *Elder Master J.S.* shows me the photos in which the disciples are having dinner with the Grandmaster's Japanese students in a seafood restaurant. He proudly tells me that they have enjoyed a very delicious cheap supper:

I'd told you before that originally we had to pay HK\$250 for the dinner, but actually, we paid only HK\$150 on that night. You know why? We Lingsu disciples were sitting round a table while the Japanese were at another. Our Grandmaster was so clever. He knew that HK\$250 was too expensive for us and so he told the captain to offer us a discount and add the cost to the Japanese. So they (the Japanese) had to pay HK\$350. The Japanese did not know about that. All of us were happy.

I am surprised by the Grandmaster's cheating behaviour. So, after the *Zen Ding* practice, I ask *Elder Master J.S.* if lying is allowed in Lingsu. He replies:

We Lingsu do not have any external rules or regulations to bind disciples' behaviour. We behave according to our will. When our Inner Spirit is pure, we won't do any harm to others. Lying is not necessarily bad, and sometimes it is even good. As you know, not all people are always ready to accept "real" things. They may feel hurt when you tell them the truth. So we can't say that lying is absolutely good or bad.

Secular Activity: Christmas Eve Party

30th PO 24/12/93 (Fri.)

After the practice of *Zen Ding* at the Lingsu Centre, the disciples walk to *Senior Master W.Z.*'s home for a Christmas Eve Party.

The Senior Master's house is situated in Happy Valley. It measures about 1,500 square feet and is luxuriously furnished.

Senior Master W.Z. and her husband have prepared food for a firepot. There are lobster, crab, oysters, salmon, shrimps, scallops, squid and beef. The disciples start the firepot soon after they have arrived. They drink, chat, make joke and watch television during the firepot. There is no concern about God, no mentioning of anything about the Christmas story. After the firepot, they gather together to play karaoke until 11:30PM. Some disciples leave for home while others go to have another party.

Secular Business: Wans Multi-level Distribution

12th PO 16/10/93 (Sat.)

I arrive at the Grandmaster's clinic to attend the meeting on the *Wans Multi-level Distribution* at 3:00PM. There are altogether twelve Lingsu disciples and nine non-disciples attending the meeting. After *Superior W.D.*'s opening remarks, the Grandmaster distributes notes to the salespersons and starts introducing the Wans products:

These four kinds of pills — PD. G. L. Placenta (氣血寶, *hei-hud-bou*), Ginseng Essence (參參精, *cam-cam-jing*), Bai Dan (藥王丹, *yeg-wong-dan*), and Yin Tonic Pills (養陰丸, *yeng-yem-yun*) — form a health system. All kinds of illnesses can be cured by different combinations of these pills. The PD. G. L. Placenta is mainly for curing a blood-deficiency syndrome and insufficiency of kidney-essence.... The Ginseng Essence is for supplementing vital energy and calming the mind. It keeps the clients always in good and energetic spirit.... The Bai Dan fosters blood circulation, removes blood stasis, improves digestion and cleans away toxic materials.... The Yin Tonic Pills nourish the Yin organs, cure sore throat, dry cough or disorder of internal organs.... The Plaju Creme (養顏膏, *yeng-ngan-gou*) is a night creme. Its moisturizing effect ensures suppleness and softness so that a radiant-youthful look is promised.... The Proju Creme (護膚膏, *wu-fu-gou*) is a day creme for all types of skin....

Disciple Z.Y., who sits next to me, tells me in a quiet voice that the price of the products have been raised by at least 20 per cent:

For instance, the price of the PD. G. L. Placenta is raised from HK\$375 to HK\$450, the Plaju Creme from HK\$500 to HK\$600 and the Ginseng Essence from HK\$300 to HK\$360. How can people afford them? I can't.

The high price is explained by the Superior:

The price is really low as you know that our products are different from others. These pills are superior to other herbal pills because they are added with our Grandmaster's vibration. His vibration is unique and no one can model after him. Hence, no one can produce the same products.

The meeting ends with *Superior W.D.*'s closing remarks. All the participants, together with the Superior and the Grandmaster, leave for dinner and continue their conversation about the Wans products.

27th PO 5/12/93 (Sun.)

Again the meeting starts at 3:00PM at the clinic. The number of participants is a bit greater than the last. *Disciple J.Y.*, who was initially not interested in this business, also takes part in it.

The Superior, who is now the Supreme Manager of the *Distribution*, states:

Welcome to this meeting. Now we have over 20 members and I hope the number can reach 100 next year. This target is not difficult to achieve. If each of you recruit five downline members, the target is reached.... I'm happy to tell you that our computer system has been set up to keep the selling records and calculate the bonus. A bonus is available when one has sold an amount of \$1,800. The amount of bonus you earn depends on the amount you have sold and the rank you are in. We have three ranks of membership, which are subdivided into thirteen levels. Each level can earn a certain percent of profits from its downline members. So the more downline members you have recruited, the more you earn.... And we have a very attractive reward system in which free travelling, extra bonus, housing allowances and car allowance are available.... In order to keep up your knowledge of the products and your spirit in marketing them, we are going to hold regular meetings.

After the Superior's talk, the participants start ordering the products and go for dinner afterwards.

The Sacred Basis of Secular Ethos: Making Sense of the Secular Mode of Life

The above scenario reveals a marked incongruity between Lingsu's sacred worldview and ethos. The sacred worldview is innately other-worldly, with a total denial of the secular and material world and a forceful debasement of the mundane values. On the other hand, the believers' mode of living, ranging from their work to their entertainment, is indisputably this-worldly. Intriguingly, a deeper look at the whole sacred order of the Lingsu unveils that its this-worldly ethos is in fact built upon its other-worldly sacred worldview.

Any successful religious order should be able to offer a meaning system to the mundane world. And, sanctifying the world with sacred disposition is almost universal in all religious discourses. When man and the universe are believed to be divine creations, they are endowed with sacredness. Nonetheless, different religions do manifest different orientations towards the secular world despite their similar belief. The difference is based on the fact that a religious system is definitely constituted by more than a "belief." Any meaning system that is capable of manipulating the believers' secular life should be able to direct the believers' goals to living and suggest means to the goals. If two religious groups adopt similar world-rejecting beliefs but relate themselves to the world differently, as Buddhism and Lingsu do, I would infer that the difference is grounded in their divergent goals and means. Hence, I derive a hypothetical construct that a religious system should consist of three essential interacting elements — belief, goal and means. To analyse the intricate interplay between the sacred and the secular constituents of the Lingsu sacred order, I draw a matrix of six hypothetical combinations by cross-tabulating

its three interacting elements with its sacred and secular spheres of reality. As the major concern is how Lingsu's secular sphere of life is rooted in its sacred worldview, the "belief" constituent is confined to the sacred sphere. Hence, three relevant combinations of the sacred-secular interplay are identified: applying sacred beliefs and sacred means to achieve secular goals (cf. Scheme I); hiring secular means to fulfill sacred beliefs and sacred goals (cf. Scheme II); legitimizing secular goals and secular means by sacred beliefs (cf. Scheme III).

	belief	goal	means
sacred	√		√
secular		√	

Scheme I

	belief	goal	means
sacred	√	√	
secular			√

Scheme II

	belief	goal	means
sacred	√		
secular		√	√

Scheme III

Scheme I: Applying Sacred Beliefs and Sacred Means to Achieve Secular Goals

Employing sacred beliefs and practices to attain secular goals is common to many religious groups, ranging from primitive cults' dancing for rain to Protestants' praying for world peace. The Lingsu is not an exception. Its religious practices, both Exoteric and Esoteric, are vested with sacred beliefs but directed to secular aims.

The practice of *Zen Ding*, for instance, is conceived as a process through which the participants can communicate with the divine:

When we are quiet enough, when our body is at rest and when our thought is in an empty shell, just as what we do in *Zen Ding*, God speaks to us. (the Grandmaster)

Singing the mantra "om" in the fourth stage of the meditation is endowed with sacred significance as it is "a praise to God" and can "awaken our Inner Spirit and the Saint Spirit surrounding us" (*Disciple J.Y.*). The ultimate aim of the *Zen Ding*, however, is rather secular. Whenever the *Zen Ding* is mentioned, the disciples focus upon its pragmatic functions:

I have practised *Zen Ding* for more than a year. I find myself improving in work efficiency and interpersonal relationships. (*Disciple J.Y.*)

The practice of *Zen Ding* boosts my ability to concentrate to the extent that I had never thought of. It contributes much to my work. (*Disciple J.M.*)

Likewise, the *Five-Sense Training*, which is strongly emphasized by the disciples, is infused with sacred beliefs. The practice itself is so sacred that it excludes unordained persons from partaking in it. Being an effective method for communicating with the "Law of the Universe" through the "Universal Mind," the *Five-Sense Training* is sacred in nature. Nevertheless, the functions of

the “Universal Mind” and the *Training*, again, lean towards this-worldly goals:

The Universal Mind is an echo system... when we know the way to activate our five senses, our wishes can reach the Universal Mind. On reaching it, the wishes rebound from it and become “real” to us. With this Universal Mind and our activated five senses, our secular desires can be satisfied at a faster pace. (*Master Z.J.*)

That is why the Lingsu disciples especially favour the *Five-Sense Training*. While some disciples employ it to satisfy their desire for a Mercedes Benz car (*Disciple J.Z.*), a huge house (*Master Z.J.*) or a beautiful lady (*Elder Master J.S.*); some others apply it to good health (*Master Z.J.*), efficient working ability (*Disciple J.Y.*) or harmonious interpersonal relationships (*Disciple Z.K.*).

Besides, a large portion of the Lingsu Practices, both Exoteric and Esoteric, zero in on relieving secular sufferings and improving worldly adjustments. The “sutra-mantra” recitations in the *Initiation Blessing* and the *Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* are mostly concerned with secular matters such as eliminating pain, fulfilling secular wishes, alleviating illnesses and enhancing intelligence (*Booklet for Lingsu Morning-Night Chanting* (MNC):9-16). The *Ling Healing* is directed at “resolving life difficulties and promoting health,” while the *Lingsu Ventilation* is at “releasing the miseries and sufferings.” The *Body-Mind Unity Training* strives to “reducing worries and anxieties, increasing efficiency in work and improving interpersonal relationships.” It is obvious that the above practices are some sort of psychotherapeutic exercises. But, they differ from psychotherapy in that they are grounded in a set of sacred beliefs and involve supernatural forces in the process, namely the “Saint Spirit” and the “Inner Spirit.”

By the same token, the sacred objects of the Lingsu are used for serving secular ends. The “saint water” is for lessening tension and reactivating energy, the “mantra-pills” for improving health,

the “gold-medal” for curing depression and the lot-balls for hinting at ways to solving the secular problems.

Although Lingsu sees the secular world as “unreal” and “dreamlike,” its religious practices point to strengthening the followers’ competence at living in this secular world. Even the conversion ritual, the *Lingsu Initiation*, which is believed to be the most sacred rite, is serving secular purposes. The ritual is supposed to change the ordained person’s “vibration” and empower that person’s ability to manipulate the material world. It bestows on the person a “protective shell” with which he “can engage in all kinds of secular activities without going wayward” (*Elder Master J.S.*). In a word, Lingsu considers its religious practices as sacred paths to a world beyond this world, but the goals they immediately serve are rather secular and this-worldly.

Scheme II: Hiring Secular Means to Fulfill Sacred Beliefs and Sacred Goals

While applying sacred rites to acquire secular gains and fulfill secular wishes is rather universal to all religious cults, hiring secular means to attain sacred goals is unique to Lingsu. This uniqueness is rooted in its notion of reincarnation. Lingsu believes that the cycle of birth and death is sustained by desires and, thus, “whenever there is desire, there is rebirth”:

We were born to satisfy our desires which have not yet been attained in our previous lives. For example, some people were very poor in their past lives and are born to make more money in this life; some people didn’t have girlfriends in the past lives and come to this world to know more girls. If the desires accumulated in the past lives cannot be satisfied in this life, they’ll be passed to the next one. So, suppressing one’s desires is useless. A more effective way of removing desires is through fulfilling them. (*Disciple J.Z.*)

With the idea that eliminating desires can be done by satisfying the desires, the secular path to “Enlightenment” is confirmed side by

side with the spiritual one in Lingsu's sacred system. Instead of forbidding the disciples from engaging in secular activities, Lingsu encourages them to do so. For that reason, the disciples enjoy all kinds of secular games without any guilt feeling.

Beside the notion of reincarnation, Lingsu's conception of "Truth" further sanctifies the disciples' worldly pursuits:

Truth is not told or taught to you, nor is it found outside you. Truth is located in you, and experiences facilitate you to discover it.... It appears to us when we know the falsehood of this-worldly matters. Such falsehood can be realized through our worldly experiences. (*Superior W.D.*)

For this reason, withdrawing from the mundane world or living a monastic life is conceived as a partial experience and, therefore, not conducive to tapping the "Truth." To get at the "Truth," different orders of secular experiences are considered essential:

Only when we have experienced the worldly desires will we know the inferiority of them. And only when we have gone through the worldly games will we realize the falsehood of them. (*Disciple J.Y.*)

According to Lingsu's worldview, the secular way to salvation, that is satisfying worldly desires and experiencing worldly games, is best when accompanied by a spiritual way. But, merely adopting secular means to salvation is possible, albeit it is a "longer and rugged road." The Grandmaster reiterates time and again that the whole mankind will, sooner or later, go back to God no matter whether they are Lingsu disciples or not. With such belief, all worldly enterprises are justified on a sacred basis.

Scheme III: Legitimizing Secular Goals and Secular Means by Sacred Beliefs

In addition to validating secular means to accomplish sacred goals, another peculiar character of Lingsu is its sacralization of secular goals and practices. The disciples' involvements in secular

activities in pursuit of secular ends are not contradictory to their sacred beliefs. On the contrary, they are legitimized by them.

The "Law of the Universe" is believed to be governed by the "three planes of existence (three levels of law): physical, mental and spiritual" (NL3:7). These "three planes of existence," in Lingsu's worldview, can only be pursued in sequence. The spiritual plane, which is the salvational state of existence, can never be achieved before the former two planes have been fulfilled. So, the physical plane, which is the lowest order, is the foundation for the two higher orders of existence. The Lingsu disciples always cite Buddha's quitting radical asceticism and the "three levels of law" to justify their commitment to making money and their enjoyment of luxurious living. Making money for the sake of a comfortable secular life is congenial to the physical level of law and so is never considered sinful:

Grandmaster recommended me to earn as much money as I liked. He was right.... At this moment, money is essential to me and so I live for it. I know that I'm still far away from Enlightenment, but I've already taken the first step. (*Disciple J.Z.*)

The "first step" *Disciple J.Z.* refers to is satisfying his physical needs, without which his mental and spiritual planes of existence can never be realized.

The *Wans Multi-level Distribution* is the salient example illustrating how Lingsu sanctifies its secular business. *Superior W.D.*, the Supreme Manager of the business, does not deny the profit-making purpose of the *Distribution*. The high prices of the products, nevertheless, are supported by two sacred beliefs. Firstly, the products are considered to have surpassed other worldly drugs. They are made by the sacred person, the Grandmaster, who is believed to possess superior "vibration" and wisdom. The superior nature of the products leads to a second belief that they can cure all kinds of diseases and enhance mundane people's physical well-being. While a good physical body is the basis for mental and spiritual advancements, the current high prices of the products are

justified. But, simultaneously, the disciples have never denied their intention of making money.

In addition, the aforementioned notion of "getting the Truth from experiences" further affirms the sacred meaning of the *Distribution*. Even those who do not take part in the *Distribution* endow a sacred value to it:

Yes, I observe that some disciples begin to divert their energy from practising Lingsu Method to promoting the Wans products. But, I'll not say that they're going wrong. There's nothing wrong in Lingsu. When they have satisfied the desires for making money, they come to realize the falsehood of money and will come back to the Lingsu Method. (*Disciple Z.Y.*)

The money-oriented enterprise, the *Wans Multi-level Distribution*, is thus sanctioned by the "Law of the Universe," the sacred power of the Grandmaster, as well as the belief in the secular path to salvation.

Reconstitution of the Sacred Order and the Hong Kong Social Reality

The internal dynamics of the sacred and the secular spheres of the Lingsu depicted above demystify the sacred basis of the secular inclination of the new sacred system.¹⁹ The next question comes to how this new sacred order interacts externally with its secular reality. In other words, what is its relation to our contemporary society? To apprehend the dialectical interaction between the sacred order and its social reality, I find Geertz's "model of" paradigm remarkably applicable.²⁰

Conceptualizing the sacred order as a "model of" the social order presupposes that the sacred process of thought begins with the facts of human experience in the secular world. The sacred entity, then, is not merely a projection, but an ultimate vindication of the social realities. It is shaped by its immediate secular realities in its formation, specifically the societal value system. Hence, the

essence of the Lingsu sacred order informs us of the conventional constituents of the social reality of Hong Kong.

A Model of Pluralism, Subjectivism and Relativism

Lingsu places the sacred spirit in the inner self rather than in a transcendent position outside the self since the latter can hardly be located in such a pluralistic society as Hong Kong. Modern plurality makes pretheoretical experience of objectivity difficult if not impossible. The modernist programmes, though opening up more possibilities for individual choice, weaken the reliability of any single plausibility structure (Berger 1969:61). The innumerable situations of everyday life and the diversified, even competing and contradictory, orientations of beliefs, values and worldviews force individual modern man to choose his own ultimacy of life. The "battle of the gods" eventually results in "subjectivization" of all meaning systems. Extreme "subjectivization," in turn, ends in the relativization of all beliefs and modes of behaviour.

The well-known saying of the Grandmaster that "fingers pointing to the moon from different directions are pointing at the same moon" is often quoted by the disciples. And *Master Z.J.* has the following view:

In fact, all religions existing today are teaching the Truth.... Whether one can reach Enlightenment depends on one's own effort. The Catholics and the Protestants can also arrive at Enlightenment.

Being a small new cult in this pluralistic society, the Lingsu has to find a niche to squeeze in. It never claims itself to hold the only "Truth," or it will induce constant and severe attacks. Lingsu asserts that even those who are going in the opposite direction from "Enlightenment" are, in fact, heading towards it since "Enlightenment" is symbolically situated on a circular line. It thus never challenges the orthodox sacred systems or condemns the

atheists. This pluralistic stance is, essentially, the most effective self-protecting device in a religiously heterogeneous society such as Hong Kong.

Although there are more than one path to salvation in Lingsu's sacred system, all paths are subjectivized and individualized. In this pluralistically structured and valued Hong Kong society, "good" and "evil" can hardly be singled out and objectively defined. Construing the world as a "dualistic world" in which "good and evil are two sides of the same coin" presents a picture in parallel to the increasingly normless society in which we are living. The weakening binding force of traditional norms, as well as the blurring boundary between moral and immoral standards, makes it impossible for Lingsu to set up a definite moral code:

This is a world full of sorrow and pain, ups and downs and kaleidoscopic changes.... Yesterday's closest allies may be today's impending threat. The strongest financial power of yesterday may evolve into a country laden with immense foreign debts today.... Society as a whole is the same. Its values and morals have evolved into shades and shapes that are beyond comprehension. What makes a good social standard? (NL14:2, *Superior W.D.*)

Since virtue and vice are no longer distinguishable in the pluralistic society, a set of codified moral ethics is no longer applicable.

In a society in lack of a well-defined normative order, its people become "lost goats." Demands and standards coming from different directions drag people down. However, reestablishing an objective ethical code-book in such society is impossible in face of the multi-faceted demands. Lingsu's "subjectivizing" the "truth" and allowing for divergent ethical standards seem to be the only expediency. Its relativistic stance and approving of all religious and non-religious manners of life are, beyond doubt, moulded by the pluralistic, subjectivistic and relativistic complexions of the secular milieu in Hong Kong.

A Model of Secularism and Materialism

"Subjectivizing" and relativizing all belief and behavioural systems imply that all secular matters can be loaded with sacred meaning by individuals. The internal secularization of the reenchanting religions is empirically validated by the secular disposition of the Lingsu. The seemingly contradictory idea of "the paths to salvation" — eliminating secular desires and satisfying secular desires at the same time — is in fact a model of the contradictory social realities. On the one hand, modern man is tired of endless pursuit of worldly gains, but, on the other hand, he cannot abandon such pursuit in this competitive epoch.

The pursuit of secular desires in a technologically advanced society like Hong Kong is, more or less, beyond difficulty. It is especially true for the educated elites like the senior Lingsu disciples. Unfortunately, the advancement simultaneously induces endless growth of desires. The ever-extending desires become so compelling that they have dominated almost the whole lifeworld of the upper and middle classes in particular. At the worst, they can suffocate people's enjoyment of the present moment and result in growing uncertainty and anxiety. This worst case is believed to be found most in the middle class population. They have the ability to strive for higher order needs compared to the lower class, yet the costs of satisfying their needs, in comparison with the upper class, are much higher. The problem of growing desires is most irritating to the well-educated persons who are more sensitive to the unnaturalness of the ever-expansion of desires:

... I remember a metaphor invented by *Senior Master W.Z.* describing the desire-pursuing world. It (the pursuit of desire) is like a large bunch of penguins lining up and heading towards a cliff. Those running at the front discover that there's no way to go when they're getting close to the cliff. But they can't go back because those behind them are rushing at them. Pitifully, they're forced to jump to their death. Those at the back mistakenly perceive that the group in front of them has found a joyous land.

Fearing lagging behind, they dash to the cliff and result in tragedy as well.... (NL21:4, *Elder Master J.S.*)

The reappearance of the "void" theory in the modern society is understandable. It suggests that man will no longer have any desire when he reaches "Enlightenment." Putting away desires and living for this moment seem to be the only rational means to curb the swelling uncertainty in this kaleidoscopic society.

Having an old sacred goal, that is, the elimination of all worldly desires as the Buddhists propose, the means to achieve such goal should be feasible and reasonable in the contemporary secular context. The Lingsu would not have survived if its doctrine had required the disciples to abandon their secular life and practice the Esoteric Method in an isolated and withdrawn environment. Likewise, the disciples may have preferred to devote their faith to Buddhism if Lingsu had demanded them to live up to a set of moral ethics, such as the Five Precepts (五戒, *ng-gai*) or Ten Virtues (十善, *seb-xin*).²¹ In such a prosperous society where temptations are found everywhere, the orthodox means of salvation lose their desirability, and even practicability. Unlike the Buddhists and the Christians, the Lingsu disciples do not need to live under the threat of violating the Five Precepts or The Ten Commandments. Nor do they have to worry about the meaning of pursuing secular wants.

Incorporating money-making, a materialistic way of life and other secular pursuits into the sacred system is the most distinctive hallmark of the Lingsu. The cult is especially attractive to those who are engaging in the most profane sector. Over one-third of the active disciples come from the insurance business while the rest are mostly involved in the commercial field. Undoubtedly, its new idea of salvation emerges from the materialistic, money-dominant milieu. Making money is the only way to keep alive in this day. Even those who conceive of money as evil cannot escape from pursuing it. To avoid contradiction in the sacred system, making money and a materialistic manner of life are no longer conceived

as sinful. Nor are desires for money and for worldly enjoyment perceived as evil thoughts. They are, instead, sacralized as one of the ways to spiritual emancipation. The Lingsu, in this way, provides the disciples with a coherent doctrine that dissolves the tension between the traditional religious values and the modern capitalist values. It offers logical and sensible justifications for secular activities and desires without abandoning the sacred goal of "Enlightenment."

The Role of Rationality and Intellect in the Sacred Model

Lingsu appears as an anti-rational cult and commands the disciples to sacrifice intellectual thinking and rational discourse.

Thinking is a blockage to the realization of the Truth. Thinking involves too many rigid worldly schemata which hinder our sensitivity to Truth. Truth can only be experienced, not be taught nor be thought of. (*Master Z.H.*)

Rationality is inherently debased in Lingsu's sacred system as it is such a mental activity that impedes one's experiential feeling.

The tension between religious and intellectual spheres has all along been existing throughout the history. Weber explains that such tension is irreconcilable because intellectual knowledge comes from rational, empirical knowledge whereas religious philosophy originally grew out of magical presupposition:

religious knowledge moves in a different sphere and that the nature and meaning of religious knowledge is entirely different from the accomplishments of the intellect. (Weber 1958:352)

And, therefore,

There is absolutely no "unbroken" religion working as a vital force which is not compelled at some point to demand the *credo non quod, sed quia absurdum* — the "sacrifice of the intellect." (Weber 1958:352)

Only with the "sacrifice of the intellect" can the religious devotees come to the ultimate reality "by virtue of a direct grasp of the

world's 'meaning'" (Weber 1958:352). In the case of Lingsu, rational knowledge and religious reality, nonetheless, intertwine to the extent that none of them can stand alone.

The secular reality today meets almost all of the disciples' material needs, and the secular knowledge meets most of their intellectual pursuits. Nonetheless, the significance of the life-death cycle can never be comprehended without the presence of God. It is indisputable that today man can control some forces that appeared uncontrollable in the past. Birth, for instance, can be controlled by advanced medical technology. However, death nowadays remains subject to inescapable contingencies. God's intelligence in providing meaning to life, as yet, cannot be supplanted by science and technology.

The rebirth of God implies that the Lingsu disciples are not intellectually satisfied with the Buddhist theory about human life. Their queries about life and death are not unreservedly answered by the notion that "all living things begin from emptiness and end in emptiness." In an intellectually as prosperous society as Hong Kong, no mystic belief can enjoy a taken-for-granted status. Only with the presence of God can the sacredness and the meaning of human life be vindicated. However, the ambivalent nature of God in Lingsu's sacred order protects God from being challenged by skeptical critics. Lingsu's conception of the divine fully realizes Durkheim's prophecy of the modern image of God, of which God is "from on high and at a distance," becomes "more general and indeterminate" and "leaves more place to the free play of human forces" (Durkheim 1964:169-70).

Against Lingsu's appearing as an anti-rational cult, its worldview and practices are rationally portrayed and performed. Rational conception of the world, as Swatos theorizes, begins with a "rational" divine (Swatos 1983:329):

God cannot entertain all of the secular demands, especially the trivial ones, so He created the Universal Mind to respond to our demands. At the same time, He sent the lower-level gods to assist the mundane men to fulfill their desires. (*Senior Master F.H.*)

Despite its emphasis on the non-describability of God, Lingsu portrays God in a rational manner and the "Universal Mind" in a para-scientific logic. The rational portrait of the sacred world is not merely confined to the image of the divine. The idea of the "three planes of existence" is rationally formulated that the spiritual level of existence is not possible unless the mental and the physical levels are fully developed. Lingsu, for that reason, never calls for deserting the present physical well-being. "Irrational" behaviours, such as starving the self or committing collective suicide, will never happen with the Lingsu disciples.

Lingsu's conception of salvation is evidently built upon a rational worldview. Like that of the Buddhist, the Lingsu Enlightenment is a state of being free from the bondage of material life and devoid of all desires. But, unlike the Buddhist philosophy, Lingsu does not stop at this "emptiness." It has to reach another shore — a shore on which man is in direct communion with the "Saint Spirit," that is the "God-Essence." To quote the Grandmaster's words, "Enlightenment" means "back to God" (NL5:3), "fused with God" (NL16:1) and "not distinguishable from God" (NL22:1). It is worthwhile to note that the disciples were not born middle class. They strove and are still striving for material and spiritual betterment. How ridiculous it would be if they were heading towards a "real" emptiness? Striving for "pure nothingness" is really an irrational pursuit, and so the Lingsu disciples do not aim for it. The state of salvation they refer to is "tapping the abundance of the Universe." This abundance is, in reality, the everyday pursuit of the secular well-being in this world.

With regard to the means of salvation, the economic concept of the Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility is applied to justify the secular means:

When a person is longing for beef, he'll always think of how delicious beef is and how joyful he is when he's eating it. But if the waiter gives him a third, a fourth... and a sixth one (beef), not only will he lose interest in them, he may also suffer from stomach

ache and come to hate beef. His desire for beef is then completely destroyed. (NL12:2, *Superior W.D.*)

So *Elder Master J.S.* says:

Suppression will only intensify desires. A man without a woman wants to have one or two, or even more. A man with three or four women loses interest in any woman....

Lingsu does not only apply rational reasoning to the explanation of the secular path to emancipation, it also employs para-scientific techniques with its religious practices. The supernatural element is not highlighted, and it is even condemned in the sacred practices of the Lingsu. On the contrary, cognitive psychotherapeutic techniques and para-scientific logic are extensively brought into play so as to establish the participants' confidence. Psychotherapeutic theories are widely applied in the *Body-Mind Unity Training* to improve the participants' interpersonal relationships, in the *Zen Ding* practice to better one's physical and mental health, in the *Lingsu Ventilation* to relieve the recipients' worry and stress and in the *Five-Sense Training* to fulfill one's desires. Para-scientific logic, on the other hand, is manifested in reasoning on the "vibration" of the sacred mantra "om," the function of the "pendulum," the sacredness of the "saint water" and the Wans products.

Thus, in contrast to its calling for a desertion of all mental activities, the entire sacred order of the Lingsu is an interwoven entity of rationality. Most disciples are attracted by the para-scientific exposition of the Esoteric Practices:

Esoteric Practices are nothing mysterious. They are real and effective. They are effective in changing our inner state with some special techniques. Such techniques are neither supernatural nor secretive. (*Disciple Z.C.*)

To avoid being accused of irrational and mystical rituals, the Lingsu Practices are para-scientifically elucidated and performed. Such rational discourse implies the still dominating position of

rationalism in this age, notwithstanding the fact that its taken-for-granted status is not as well-protected as before.

Conclusion: The Dialectics of Reenchantment

For more than ninety-nine percent of human history, the world was enchanted.... The only hope, or so it seems to me, lies in a reenchantment of the world.

Morris Berman

If the only hope for the continuation of human history rests on a reenchantment of the world, what is the essence of the reenchantment?

In the disenchanted era, dramatic demagicification takes place, and the rational mode of consciousness displaces a mythical one. But, the arrival of an era of reenchantment should not be mistakenly interpreted as a recourse to irrationalism. The Lingsu sacred order has offered its followers what science fails to offer, that is, the meaning of the everyday events. Yet, it is not an anti-science order. To establish a supreme position in the modern, rational man's consciousness and to cater for the intellectual pursuits of the educated social groups, the sacred worldview and the practices of the Lingsu are heavily laden with rationality and the intellect. Scientific explanations, instead of theological ones, tend to be preferred because of the general prestige of science in this age. The new meaning systems, which emerge in the already disenchanted world, strive to reconcile the contrasting elements of mysticism and rationalism rather than replacing the latter with the former. By the same token, the new sacred order does not effect revolt against modernity. The Lingsu disciples much enjoy the fruits of the modernist projects. And, the Lingsu sacred worldview and practices even further facilitate the modernization process. The hypothesis that the new religious discourse is running counter to modernity and science is refuted.

Construing the sacred order as a "model of" the secular reality, so to speak, theorizes about the dialectical relationship between religious system and social reality. The Lingsu has borrowed many religious terms from Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity but has redefined the meanings of the terms as well. The redefinition is done by modelling the contemporary culture. In this way, the inconsistency existing between the orthodox religious creed and the modern secular life disappears. The sacred order of the Lingsu is not born of nothing. From its institutional structure to its disciples' consciousness, it is a "model of" its immediate social facts. Instead of opposing the dominant culture, Lingsu is an expression of it. This explains why the Lingsu is attractive to the middle and lower-middle classes, to the ones who strongly abide by the dominant values, rather than to the underprivileged and dispossessed class.

Being the chief carrier of the cultural inheritance, a religion that expresses itself in a new form and embodies new constituents informs us of the trait of contemporary culture. Undeniably, the erosion of the traditional culture has been in process for a considerable time in our society. As capitalism is a rather culturally neutral agent, its *laissez-faire* economic principles naturally lead to *laissez-faire* morality. A radical liberalism in morality eventually results in fragmentary, disordered and ill-defined cultural patterns. Wilson views that modern society is held together merely by techniques and procedures but not by values (Wilson 1976). His view, however, is open to doubt. It is well understood that techniques and procedures are presupposed to be value-neutral and should not play any role in helping people decide "which is God" and "which is devil" for them. The decision making is definitely value-laden regardless of the nature of the god(s) selected. The particular nature of the god(s) further gives us a clue to the value orientation of the subjects. Despite the fact that the new religious cults manifest themselves in diverse forms, their emergence in the similarly temporal, spatial and historical

backgrounds connotes the generic propensity of their underlying values. The prevalent characters of their sacred orders help us to identify the boundary of the contemporary cultural consensus. In short, the Lingsu sacred order epitomizes our culture lying in a complex catalogue of enchanted and disenchanted properties. Unlike that of the premodern enchanted age, the current cultural consensus is not monopolized by religion. Neither is it utterly dominated by science as that of the disenchanted epoch. Rather, it is an eclectic and inextricable mixture of both religious and scientific value spheres. This new cultural pattern manifests the essence of the reenchantment.

At this juncture, I try to locate the theoretical position of the elusive process of reenchantment. I would argue that if disenchantment is at odds with enchantment, reenchantment is not running on the same path. It is, instead, a complex of inextricable interplays among enchanted, disenchanted and post-disenchanted properties. For reenchantment emerges not simply to counteract disenchantment but, in contrast, carries a certain portion of disenchanted properties, it has, more often than not, been misinterpreted as a continuation of disenchantment or as a pseudo-enchantment. I suggest that the concept of reenchantment should not be predefined but be delineated by ethnographic studies of the "reenchanted" phenomena. The case of the Lingsu Exo-Esoterics demonstrates that the reenchantment at the consciousness level refers not to counter-modernism but to a synthesis of both modern and postmodern cosmologies and values. Perhaps, the disenchanted and the reenchanted consciousness should not be posited in linear form. Reenchantment should be conceived as a dialectical transformation in which enchanted, disenchanted and post-disenchanted consciousness is not only mutually reinforcing but also mutually checking one another. Be that as it may, reenchantment hinders the revolutionary dethronement of disenchantment by deferring or even ceasing the fortification of the "iron-cage."

Notes

1. Holland identifies the Protestant Reformation and the rationalist Enlightenment as the cultural form of the modernist projects, the American and French liberal revolutions as the political form, and the Industrial Revolution and the rise of industrial capitalism as the economic form.
2. For the theoretical discourses on the elusive processes of disenchantment, please refer to my master thesis, *An Era of Reenchantment? A Case Study of the New Religion in Hong Kong*, Department of Sociology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1994, pp.2-15.
3. For a brief summary of the sociological discussions about the emergence of the New Religious Movements in the United States, see also my thesis, op. cit., pp.48-55.
4. To keep the originality of the cult's ethos, Cantonese romanization is adopted with reference to *Longman Chinese New Dictionary for Secondary Students*, 1993, Longman Press Asia Co. Ltd.
5. I gathered the empirical data through participant observation, face-to-face individual interviews and documentary reference. The fieldwork lasted for nine months from July 1993 to March 1994. The whole period could be briefly divided into two spans. From July to November 1993, I mainly carried out participant observation by participating in some of the cult's religious practices and joining the disciples' social gatherings. I altogether joined the cult's activities, both religious and non-religious, on 37 occasions. From December 1993 to March 1994, I carried on the observation but concentrated on conducting individual interviews with the Grandmaster and 13 of the disciples. In decoding the constitution of the new sacred order and the intricate interaction between the sacred and the secular orders of reality in this case, I apply the interpretive case method. For the methodological logic of the macro-micro link in this method, see Bourawoy et al. (1991:271-87). For the masterpieces of this method, see Geertz (1973:especially Chapters 6, 7 and 15; 1983:especially Chapter 6). And, for the macro implication of studying a micro case, please refer to Ragin and Becker (1992:121-38).
6. The Grandmaster is now aged over 60. He was born and brought up in a big middle-class family. His father was a businessman, and he had lived with his stepmother and stepsiblings since he was small. Being a musical genius, his father wanted him to become a musician, yet he was more interested in Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture. After he had graduated from the La Salle College, he went to a Chinese medical school and started his medical and occult practices. He then worked as a Chinese herbalist and acupuncturist and opened a clinic named "Wans naturopathic clinic" in North Point. He and his German wife gave birth to a son, who is now an Assistant Divisional Commander of the Ap Lei Chau Police Station. In 1991, the Grandmaster and his wife emigrated to Australia. He is used to coming back to Hong Kong twice a year in order to conduct Chinese medicine training courses for Japanese learners, and to gather together with his disciples as well.
7. The whole *Book of Lingsu* (BL), part of the *Newsletter of Lingsu* (NL), *A Dialogue between the Grandmaster and the Disciple* (DGD) and *Lingsu Window* (LW) are written in English. Although some of the writings are grammatically unacceptable, I quote them directly in order to keep their originality. In translating those written in Chinese into English, I endeavour to preserve the exact wordings of the text.
8. To protect the anonymity of the disciples, I use the initial letter of their romanized religious names instead of their full names throughout the text. In the case that the initials of two disciples

overlap, an alphabetical code is randomly assigned to one of them.

9. The *Newsletter of Lingsu* is published as a quarterly journal. Most of the writings come from the Superiors, the active Masters and Disciples. The content usually involves an introduction to and elaboration of Lingsu's religious philosophy, as well as the sharing of the Lingsu way of life and the Lingsu experiences among the believers.
10. Very often, the Lingsu uses different words to refer to one thing. It unavoidably confuses the readers. Hence, I would like to clarify some of the words that are written in different forms but are referring to the same things:
 - i. "Spiritual Light" (靈光, *ling-guong*), written as Light, Essence, or Ling;
 - ii. "Saint Spirit" (聖靈, *xing-ling*), written as Saint Spirit or Saint Ling;
 - iii. "Inner Spirit" (內靈, *noi-ling*), written as Inner Spirit, Jin Ling or Inner Ling;
 - iv. "Lingsu Method" (靈修法, *ling-seo-fad*), written as Lingsu Method, Lingsu Practice or Lingsu Way.
11. The content of the sutra is about Creation, the Law of the Universe, the Law of Reincarnation, the Way to Enlightenment, the "unrealness" of this world, the foolishness of worldly people, the greatness of the Grandmaster and the importance of health (MNC:9-16). The mantra is in Sanskrit:

Om Mola Mola, Sammola Sammola;
Yan Tar Lay Hoi May Tsu Lay Yeah May Tsu Lay Yeah;
Om Mola See Lay Aun Saw Por Haw.

12. The content of the song is:

O, The Almighty, the Only God, Universe Thy Blessings. Riches abundance, lucky me, All because of Thy Blessings. All the compassionate, samsai Saints, The Way, The Truth transmitted you. Lingsu Dharma Diamond Wisdom Day; All because of your teachings. Poisons: Greed, Hatred, Delusion; Ego drops, Tao

transcends. Ignorant, bewildered I, Need your guidance and Blessings. O, The Almighty, the Only God, Universe Thy Blessings. Same root, same breath, come thru Almighty Bless Our Souls with the Mercy.

13. The colour of the robe indicates the rank of the disciple. While the robe of the Grandmaster is white in colour, that of the Superior is dark yellow, the Senior Master light yellow, the Elder Master blue, the Master dark red, the Disciple (Ordained II) green and the Disciple (Ordained I) light red.
14. *Saint Spirit Blessing* functions to boost the disciple's spiritual progress, especially when he/she finds himself/herself at low tide (NL14:11).
15. *Blessing of Residence* is a rite performed to disperse darkness and evil souls from the residence. It provides spiritual guidance to the ignorant souls to realize their delusion and to proceed on their mission to "truth" (BL:88).
16. *Blessing of the Deceased* is a rite that "guides the deceased to realize peace and to proceed on to favourable rebirths." It is, therefore, meritorious for the descendants (BL:88).
17. *Weddings and Ling Baptism* is a virtue ceremony conducted by the Masters or above on a couple who is getting married. With it, the wedding is considered to be witnessed by "the Saints of the past, present, and future" (BL:89).
18. PO stands for "participant observation" while 2nd PO refers to the second participant observation of my fieldwork.
19. For an analytical discussion about the constitution of the new sacredness of the Lingsu and the location of such new sacred order in the hypothetical enchanted-disenchanted spectrum, see my thesis, op. cit., Chapter IV.
20. Geertz theorizes about the symbolic system as a "model of" and a "model for" the non-symbolic system so as to capture the intrinsic dynamic of cultural patterns and social reality. See Geertz (1973:especially Chapters 4 and 5). For the part on the

Lingsu sacred order as a "model for" the Hong Kong social reality, please refer to my thesis, op. cit., pp.167-88.

21. In Buddhist doctrine, Five Precepts refer to abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from sensuous misconduct, from false speech and from intoxicants. Ten Virtues include letting alive all animals, giving alms, abstaining from sexuality, telling the truth, abstaining from exaggerated speaking, reconciling disputes, abstaining from foul language, believing in *Yan Yuen*, being benevolent and being non-greedy.

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重進魅幻時代的香港

一個新興宗教的個案研究

陳純菁

(中文摘要)

自七十年代起，新興宗教活動相繼在香港出現，至八十年代，一股新興宗教熱潮日漸形成，似是象徵著社會再度踏進魅幻時代，但是，這些新興宗教卻又往往披上不少理性、解魅的色彩。究竟這股新宗教熱潮與香港社會現實發生著甚麼關係？本文採用了個案研究的方法，深入了解一個名為「靈修顯密宗」的新興宗教的神聖意味，探討其神聖與世俗成分的交織過程和形式，及其神聖色彩跟香港社會現實的互動關係。