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Abstracts

Remains of the Religion of Light in Xiapu County of Fujian Province

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Based on the recent discoveries in Xiapu County, Fujian province, in Dr. Chen Jinguo's lecture and other materials, we can now outline the development and survival of the Religion of Light in this area. During the Tang Dynasty Mani gong (Mani Hall) was built on Taimu Mountain. The building was mentioned in an 879 essay about Taimu Mountain by Lin Song. In 966, Master Sun Mian built Longshou si (Dragon Head Temple), a monastery of the Religion of Light in Shangwan Village. One of Sun's disciples was Lin Deng (born. 1003) who later married Ms. Chen. Lin Deng converted to the Religion of Light in 1027, adopted self-discipline for 22 years and died in 1059. Lin's eldest daughter became a nun of the Religion of Light. If our story ends here, this sect may disappear as did many other sects of the Religion of Light. But a legend about Lin Deng survived and won popularity among the locals. It is said that Lin Deng's spirit put down a big fire in Fuzhou. His merits were recorded in many local gazettes. Lin Deng was conferred the title of "Chief Thunder Apostle" by the officials with the approval of the imperial throne. Since then this cult has gained legal protection, tremendous influence among local people, and has survived for nearly millennium. Descendants of Lin Deng built Gupo gong (Female Electae Temple) for his daughters, and local people still can identify its ruin. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) Longshou si was renamed as Yaoshan tang (Loving Mountains Hall) and survived until 2006 when it was destroyed by a typhoon. Its remains, including column foundations, the base of a shrine, tiles, among other things, are still there. Most importantly, quite a few manuscripts of this cult survive and are now in the possession of priests in Baiyang Township. In these texts, we can find some Manichaeic deities, including Mani the Buddha of Light, Jesus Tathāgatagarbha, and Vairocana (the Column of Glory). In addition, we are able to identify many Daoist deities, as well as the deified Sun Mian, Lin Deng, and his daughters--Longfeng Gupo (Dragon and Phoenix Female Electae). The worship of Thunderbolt Queen Buddha (Manichaeic deity Maiden of Light), the Great Upright and Brilliant Saint of the Nine Heavens (the highest deity of the exorcistic Thunder Rites of Daosim) and the Thunder Apostle Lin Deng reflects the mixture of Manichaeism and the Thunder Rites. These texts provide us with excellent sources for studying the relationship between Manichaeism and Chinese religions, especially folk Daoism. Furthermore the ruin of Feilu ta (Flying Road Pagoda) has been discovered in Yantian Township, and among the remains, a 1374 inscription: "Purity, Light, Power and Wisdom".