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Elana Chipman

Visiting Scholar
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Education

B.A., East Asian Studies and International Relations,
Hebrew University (1993)
M.A., Anthropology, Cornell University (2002)
Ph.D., Anthropology, Cornell University (2007)

Research Interests

Popular religion and ritual in Chinese cultures, the impact of environmental protection on Chinese ritual practices, Taiwanese popular religion

Mershon Project

Chipman's research project investigates the effects of global political-economic and ideological forces on contemporary Chinese rituals. Specifically, she studies the influences of global environmental protection on the Chinese ritual practices of burning spirit-money as an offering to gods, ghosts and deceased relatives.

Chipman plans to examine both producers and consumers of spirit-money, following the trail of this currency as it is made, shipped, purchased, and burned across Asia. She has found that the Taiwanese annually import and burn millions of dollars worth of paper spirit-money manufactured in mainland China and Southeast Asia. Such practices have significant environmental consequences, including deforestation and water pollution in producer countries and air pollution in consumer societies.

Although the practice of burning spirit-money has been formally discouraged and even outlawed in Taiwan for at least



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a decade, only recently has environmental awareness begun to influence local practitioners and religious institutions.

By investigating modern practices of burning spirit-money, Chipman is discovering the ways practitioners are minimizing the ritual's ecological costs. She has found that some temples are experimenting with virtual sacrifices via the internet and closing their paper-burning furnaces.

Chipman's research is sponsored by the East Asian Studies Center.

Selected Publications

"The Paradox of de-territorialized territorial ritual spheres" (in progress)

"The local production of *culture* in Beigang" (in progress)

"Whose Goddess? Competing visions of pilgrimage site in Fujian, China," in *Religious Tourism*, ed. by Monisha Chattapadyay (ICFAI University Press, 2006)

Selected Honors, Awards and Service

Taiwan Studies Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University (2007-08)

Gertrude Spencer Prize, John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, Cornell University (2005)

Hu Shih Research Travel Grant, Cornell University (2005)

Lam Family Award for South China Research, Cornell University (2003)

Fulbright IIE Fellowship (2002-03)

FLAS Fellowship-Chinese and Taiwanese language study (2001-02)

Sage Fellowship, Cornell University (1999-2000 and 2004-05)

Possis Foundation Award for Excellence, Tel Aviv University (1998)

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