



*I nostri Dei non li vogliamo più. — Statuette di terra.
(fol. P. D. Guareschi)*

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How researching about a taboo? Decay of Chinese material religion



報名連結

2025 年 1 月 15 日 (三) 14:00~16:00

中研院民族所「第三會議室」(新館 3 樓 2319 室)

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This presentation shows how the deconsecration of material religion in museum context is a processual dynamic of decay (DeSilvey 2017): material religion's past sacredness still impacts its present usages, partly revealing stories otherwise silenced in the museum archive, partly demanding respectful treatment of the sacred residue (Beekers 2016) left. Ethnography of contemporary practices of deconsecration in ritual settings is, therefore, a crucial element in understanding present usages and affordances of the past, as well as guiding the future treatment of material religion in museums. This ongoing research ethnographically analyses deconsecration practices observed in Taipei and Keelung areas. It puts them into dialogue with the Xaverian missionary collection of Chinese gods in the Museum of Chinese Art and Ethnography in Parma.

However, delving into an analysis of deconsecration practices according to a diachronic perspective implies several challenges, let alone ethical concerns. The bond between worshippers and gods reflects an intimate logic of exchange and moral obligations that deconsecration rituals put into doubt, generating discomfort and a sense of loss. How researching about a taboo? This presentation thus reflects on appropriate methods that anthropologists should embrace for understanding and respectfully listening to what Hannah Gould (2018) has termed "affective labour".