This intimate 80-minute portrait film explores the life of eighth-generation household Daoist Li Manshan (b.1946), leader of a group of ritual specialists in the poor countryside of Yanggao county in north Shanxi, China. Steve will briefly introduce the film, and respond to any comments afterwards. He has known the group since 1991, and since 2005 has also taken them on several tours of Europe and the USA.

Using footage mainly from the period since 2011 but also from as far back as 1987, the film shows both Li Manshan’s funerary practice as leader of his ritual group and his solo activities — determining the date for the burial, decorating coffins, and even his work in the fields. We are led into the vocal liturgy, percussion, and melodic instrumental music of their magnificent funeral rituals, learning how ritual practice has changed since the 1930s — and even since the 1990s, under challenges such as migration, the modern education system, and the competition at funerals from pop music.

This moving portrait of the diverse activities of Li Manshan and his group serving their local community in a rapidly changing rural China will fascinate anthropologists, scholars of Daoism and folk religion, world-music aficionados, and all those interested in Chinese society.

**Further references on the Li family Daoists, and Chinese ritual and rural life on film**

The DVD with my 2007 book *Ritual and music of north China: shawm bands in Shanxi* (Aldershot: Ashgate) provides general background; in two sections, funerals and temple fairs, it shows the diverse performance activities at these events, with the Li family making cameo appearances. The present film complements my article for the ANR Shifu project (Paris Nanterre) and my major forthcoming book *The Hall of Auspicious Virtue: lives and times of a family of Chinese village priests*, as well as a DVD of their recent visits to the concert platform in Venice and Beijing, *Folk Daoist ritual music of north China* (Fondazione Cini/Nota, 2014). For the Yanggao Daoists in the context of ritual in north China, see my 2010 book *In search of the folk
Daoists of north China (Ashgate). In Chinese, see also Wu Fan, Yinyang, gujiang (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2007); Chen Yu, Jinbei Daojiao keyi yinyue yanjiu (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2015).

Two excellent films on Daoist ritual in south China are Kenneth Dean, Bored in heaven (http://www.boredinheaven.com) and Patrice Fava, Han Xin’s revenge (http://www.daoiststudies.org/content/han-xin’s-revenge-daoist-mystery). Note also the videos of Michael Saso, http://www.michaelsaso.org/?page_id=1202, and a comprehensive new series on Shanghai Daoist ritual.

My 2009 book Ritual and music of north China, volume 2: Shaanbei (Ashgate) also contains a DVD. For a fine film on shadow puppetry in Gansu, see Chinese Shadows by Frank Kouwenhoven and Antoinet Schimmelpenninck (Pan Records 9607). For Carma Hinton’s films about rural life elsewhere in Shanxi, see http://www.morningsun.org/film/filmmakers.html.

For memories of rural tribulations under Maoism, note Wu Wenguang’s Memory Project, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/memoryproject.