

**CIVILIZED DEMONS:  
MING THUNDER GODS FROM RITUAL TO LITERATURE**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary analysis of the shared background of Daoist exorcist ritual and vernacular “novels” of the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644). In it, I show that a vast number of the protagonists in late Ming “novels” have extensive antecedents in a popular type of Daoist exorcist liturgies, called “Thunder Ritual.” The Thunder Gods that were utilized for these rituals in turn have antecedents in the demonic cults of local communities. I argue that both ritual and “novels” were based upon operative principles intending to change demons into powerful gods through a process called sublimation (*liandu*).

The thesis is structured around three main themes. First I explore the demonic undercurrents of Chinese religion. Asking questions about the poetics by which demons were created, I show that they served as the ontological basis for heavenly gods. Secondly, I reconstruct the emergence of Thunder Ritual since the medieval period, and show that Daoist exorcists were formative in the shaping of the Chinese divine realm. Active at the Ming court, in cities, and the countryside, their rituals bridged the gap between the local demonic cult and the realm of the canonical divine. Finally, by comparing the specific teleology of thunder liturgies, as well as their main ritual agents and language, with a standard set of recurring features of the late Ming “vernacular novel,” I situate the emergence of vernacular stories in the theatrical and ritual environment of the popular religious festival.

To my “Three Teachers”

Sue, Rik, and Wilt

(In reverse order of appearance)

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**Figure 1.1 – Nineteenth century British engraving of Sire Thunder, “Jupiter of the Chinese.”**

From: George Alexander Cooke, *A Modern and Authentic System of Universal Geography, Containing an Accurate and Entertaining Description of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America being a Complete and Universal History of the Whole World ...Including interesting Narratives from all the Navigators that have made New Discoveries ... Forming a Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels.* London: Richard Evans, 1817

“There is scarcely any other matter, [...], upon which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as our relation to death.”

~ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*

## ☯ 1 ☯

### **Rituals of Sublimation:**

An introduction into the creation of gods

#### **1.1. The progress from demon to god**

Where do the gods come from? The colorful abundance of popular divinities in Chinese vernacular fiction from the sixteenth century formed the original point of departure for this central question of my thesis. In the search for answers it became clear that these gods had followed an identifiable process of change before “arriving” in literature, and that this process – their career trajectory – had a lot to reveal about the various environments in which they had figured. Before the great stories of vernacular fiction from the late Ming (1368 – 1644) became known predominantly as printed books, the majority of gods they contained had been active as divine agents in Daoist exorcist ritual. Without these rituals, the stories would have looked entirely different – and the gods themselves, too.

This thesis therefore seeks to answer its initial question by analyzing the ritual environment through which the divine protagonists of late Ming vernacular “literature” had come into being. The particular liturgies that featured these gods were known as Thunder Ritual 雷法, because they utilized the deified forces of thunder (the ritually embodied presences of Thunder Gods 雷神) to arrest and imprison demonic entities that caused misfortune. If Thunder Ritual may at first sight seem to constitute somewhat of an obscure field, we will see throughout subsequent chapters that Thunder Ritual and Thunder Gods



had been widely in demand at least as early as the twelfth century. Most Ming dynasty emperors had sponsored Daoists who practiced Thunder Ritual, but the gods of thunder made even more frequent appearances in rural and urban communities.

The control exerted by the Thunder Gods aimed at compelling demons to undergo a process of change, to embark on a career trajectory from demon to god. Intriguingly, it was the same process to which the Thunder Gods had themselves been subjected before reaching their high ranks in the Thunder Division 雷部. I will show that they had once been merely known as local cult, and that it was a part of the same trajectory from demon to god that had taken them into the narrative environment of late Ming vernacular stories. It was also this trajectory that characterized the powers contributing to the production of these stories as ritual.

The ritual battles between thunder god and demonic spirit made for small but spectacular narratives in themselves, as can be witnessed in vernacular stories. Yet the subjugation of a spirit, such as carried out ubiquitously by Sun Wukong 孫悟空 in *Journey to the West* 西遊記 or Li Nuoza 李哪吒 in *Canonization of the Gods* 封神演義, was no more than a necessary prelude to the ensuing ritual of “sublimation” 鍊度. This technique which literally meant “refinement and absolution,” was a standard component of Thunder Ritual. But more than simply “refining” or “absolving” a demonic object, rituals of sublimation intended to bring about the transformation of the demon into a god. In terms of Daoist metallurgical discourse, rituals of “sublimation” forged divinities out of demonic ore.

This transformative power was, I believe, crucial for the success of Thunder Ritual during the late imperial era, and it constitutes somewhat of a missing link in our perception of the relationship between so-called “popular religion” and “institutional religion.” I believe

that this relationship was mutually constitutive, that local cults provided the stuff out of which the greater gods of China had been cast. As I will explore the development of some baleful spirits into gods through these rituals of sublimation, my choice of the word “sublimation” thus merits some elaboration.

## 1.2. Sublimation

I use the term “sublimation” fully in keeping with the sublime ambiguity of the word. In modern English it has come to be associated with the Freudian notion of repression, meaning “to divert the expression of an instinctual desire or impulse from its unacceptable form to one that is considered more socially or culturally acceptable.” (Merriam-Webster) This is a quite precise description of what the Daoist rituals of “sublimation” do with allegedly evil spirits: they disguising the demonic nature of spirits by bestowing imperial regalia on them and promoting them as great gods. Yet this sense of the word sublimation does not fully cover the Chinese term *liandu*.

In the more archaic use of the term, “sublimation” does not divert or disguise. Originating in medieval alchemy, the word referred to processes for improving or refining substances, such as by distillation or evaporation. The verb “to sublimate” has its root meaning in the Middle English “to sublime,” which meant “to cause to pass directly from the solid to the vapor state and condense back to solid form.” (Merriam-Webster) As we will see in later chapters, this could be taken almost verbatim from any Daoist manual on rituals of *liandu*. Both alchemical sublimation and *liandu* were processes that transformed ethereal substances, or essences. In the parlance of our Chinese context such essences were expressed by the word *qi* (氣 or 炁), here perhaps most accurately translated as “energy matter.” Daoist “inner alchemy” 內丹 was to some extent articulated in a metallurgical

discourse: *lian* (鍊 or 煉) originally meant “to temper,” to make a metal object stronger.

Thus, when I use the term “sublimation” I think of (1) a spirit whose lowly background is disguised, and (2) a spirit who is made stronger.

The religious usage of the concept by the Catholic Church justifies considering a third layer of meaning. The Latin verb *sublimare* was applied in two ways: “A: (I) to elevate or exalt especially in dignity or honor; (II) to render finer (as in purity or excellence); B: to convert (something inferior) into something of higher worth” (Merriam-Webster). This sense is equally valid in the context of a spirit’s career trajectory from demon to god that. Thus in addition to the spirit’s (1) disguise and (2) strengthening, I understand *liandu* to further mean (3) his elevation into a more dignified status. I will elaborate this third layer of meaning in my discussion of divine canonization below.

The creation of a sublime object through sublimation may perhaps invoke additional layers of meaning, due mainly to the writings of Edmund Burke (1757) and Immanuel Kant (1764).<sup>1</sup> In many ways their ideas are less pertinent to my interpretation of Daoist ritual sublimation. However, their notions of the “Sublime” do convey a sense of an overpowering mystery, of forces that can create as well as destruct – a sense that I find typical of the sublimated gods under consideration. Furthermore, in the study of religion, the famous notion of a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* that was later applied by Rudolph Otto (1924) to his

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<sup>1</sup> Eighteenth century European philosophers theorized on Aristotle’s and Longinus’s treatment of the “sublime.” See Longinus, *On the sublime*. Translated with commentary by James A. Arieti and John M. Crossett. New York: E. Mellen Press, 1985. In 1757 Edmund Burke wrote a treatise on aesthetics entitled “A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.” Oxford: Blackwell, 1987. In it, Burke juxtaposes the pleasant and shapely appearance of the Beautiful with the divine enigma (my words) of the Sublime, which he thought powerful enough both to compel and destroy. In 1764 a further treatment of the topic was conducted by Immanuel Kant in his “Of the Distinct Objects of the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime [Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen].” Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1991. Kant, too, viewed the Sublime as something that produced an admixture of enjoyment and horror. He coined three subcategories: the terrifying sublime, the noble sublime, and the splendid sublime.

idea of the Holy as the “wholly other” constituted the theological pinnacle of the Sublime.<sup>2</sup> I find that this is a helpful concept for the definition of demonic gods: they were characterized by a whimsical nature that distinguished them from their more abstract counterparts high up in the pantheons of Buddhism, Daoism, and the like. One trembled before them as much as one felt attracted to and fascinated by them, a fearful admixture that seems untypical in worship of, say, the Buddha. In a sense, sublimated demons never truly could distance themselves from the profane world.

More recently the Lacanian school of psychoanalysis has deconstructed the human mind in the ambiguous terms of the sublime. Julia Kristeva approaches the horrific side of the sublime – the “abject” – as something that the psyche meets with repression, yet “one joys in it [*on en jouit*]. Violently and painfully. A passion.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Kristeva’s fearful fascination is not so far removed from the trepidations of Otto’s mystery, when she says that the “abject is edged with the sublime.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Slavoj Žižek finds an “obscene abhorrent monstrosity” to the “sublime majesty” of the good law (of a holy book, of a legal code – of all taboos) at the moment that it comes within tangible proximity.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, when I translate the term *liandu* with sublimation I intend to preserve not only the three meanings of disguise, empowerment, and elevation, which are more directly relevant for the ritual process per se. I also view the sublimated demon in light of the later philosophical attribution of a demonic side to splendid beauty, as well as the psychoanalytical reading of a repressed underside to the allegedly noble. It is with the latter in mind that I hope to formulate my arguments against the late imperial Chinese elite practice of rejecting

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<sup>2</sup> Rudolph Otto, *The Idea Of The Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950

<sup>3</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 9. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982

<sup>4</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 11

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, p. 219. New York: Verso, 1997

the demonic, and their highbrow claims to stand at the sophisticated outcome of a process of civilization. To some extent I would like to use the term sublimation in order to show that the cultural phenomenon of demons does not deserve to be treated with moralist assumptions that dichotomize good and evil, or high and low – only a rather puritan minority of the late imperial Chinese would have agreed with such a morality. I hope to show that, since the demonization of certain cultural phenomena in the writings of the “intellectual elite” went accompanied by the claim to stand outside of them, such claims were misleading in many cases.

### 1.3. Demonic spirits and ancestral sacrifice

To speak of a god’s career implies a process of change. The particular change addressed throughout this thesis is the transformation of spiritual entities from low and local to high and heavenly. In what might be termed the Chinese indigenous “poetics of divinity,” gods were for the most part molded out of the substance of demons. By the Ming dynasty, as I will explain in the final chapters of this thesis, most gods were in many ways nothing but domesticated demons. I will often use the term “demonic gods” for such divinities, a term to be clarified below.

In late imperial China, death was the stepping stone for the human soul into differentiated trajectories of spiritual existence. A regular death of old age was thought to prepare the soul for a quiet and eventually anonymous place among the ancestors. As one scholar put it, “purged of identity, [they] become nodal ciphers in the hierarchical structure of lineage relations.”<sup>6</sup> This preferred way of dying required elaborate mourning ceremonies, but the procedures were comfortingly familiar. The body was buried so that the seven heavy

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<sup>6</sup> P. Steven Sangren, *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community*, p. 138. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987

“bone-souls” 魄 could disperse into the earth. Accounts differ with respect to the three light “cloud-souls” 魂; they were either lodged in the ancestral tablet or perhaps simply evaporated.<sup>7</sup>

An irregular death 橫死, however, had the unfortunate consequence that the spiritual aggregate of the deceased could not dissolve, and so it maintained its powers, releasing “fatal energies” 煞氣.<sup>8</sup> In the Daoist conception of life and death, the enduring form of these spiritual essences were termed “residual energies” 故氣 (a term I will return to below), or the “residual energies of dormant corpses” 伏屍故氣.<sup>9</sup> These residual energies were the spiritual essences of humans who had died with a violated body, and could not be pacified by means of funerary ritual. In more common parlance, spiritual essences of victims of violent death were known as “orphan souls” 孤魂, souls without kin that roamed about the realm of darkness in search of a place to belong to. The spirit’s body physically or socially violated (that is, either literally wounded, or severed from their ancestral “bones and flesh” 骨肉 – their family), their condition was characterized by the fact that they would not receive ancestral sacrifices within the family shrine.<sup>10</sup> Thus they became outsiders to their

<sup>7</sup> For a relevant discussion on conceptions of dying in imperial China, see Robert F. Campany, *To live as Long as Heaven and Earth: a Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents*, pp. 47-52. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002

<sup>8</sup> James L. Watson translates *shaqi* with “killing airs” that “emanate from the corpse at the moment of death.” However, in order to express the impersonal aspect of this *sha*, as well as the general existence of these energies (not exclusively at the time of death) I prefer “fatal.” See James L. Watson, “Death Pollution in Cantonese Society,” p. 158. In Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (eds.), *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982

<sup>9</sup> Stein translates *guqi* as “stale emanations.” See Rolf Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” pp. 53-81. In Anna Seidel & Holmes Welch (eds.), *Facets of Taoism*. Yale: New Haven, 1983. Peter Nickerson translates with “stale vapors.” See his “Taoism, Bureaucracy, and Popular Religion in Early Medieval China.” Unpublished manuscript (2003). I choose “residual energies” in order to better express the dynamic character of lingering *qi* that has coagulated into spirits. “Ancient breaths,” perhaps, would be a more literal alternative with some suggestive power. For the addition of “dormant corpses,” see DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元 159.19a; DZ 1166 *Fabai yizhu* 法海遺珠, 8.8b.

<sup>10</sup> These orphan souls corresponded well to the Buddhist notion of *preta*, “hungry ghosts” (in Chinese rendered as 餓鬼), whose appetite (desire for sex included) was to remain unfulfilled.

own family. Stories from late imperial China abound with the doleful apparitions of spirits that were not properly buried or that dwelled in “old tombs” 古冢 that had been forsaken – tombs that no longer received sacrificial offerings.

In all of these cases the spiritual essence that remained lingering after death kept searching for something – a substitute body, a substitute family, a full stomach, or all of the above. It was thus likely to interfere with the lives of mortals by imposing its presence upon them, possessing them, frightening them, and coercing them to provide food. The common term for sacrificial gifts offered to these baleful spirits was “bloody sacrifices” 血食, meaning offerings for which animals (or humans) had to be butchered. Their interferences together with their demand for sacrifices made them baleful and defined them as demonic.

The Chinese classics did not formulate a clear demonology, but the abundance of characters that have been used to describe the realm of spirits suggest that, long ago, the Chinese distinguished with great nuance between various kinds of ghosts. Much of the specific referents of what may have been nature spirits – such as the *ba* 魃 that caused droughts, the *wangliang* 魍魎 one could encounter in the mountains or near rivers, or the *chimei* 魑魅 that were so apt at metamorphosis – have become obscure. In one way or another these spirits have come to be seen as “anomalous powers” 怪力 and “improper spirits” 亂神. Historiographers representing the Confucian tradition have generally preferred not to speak of these matters.

One thing, however, seems to stand beyond doubt: when people in late imperial China used the word I translate as “demon,” *gui* 鬼, they predominantly referred to human-born entities. In contrast to the more obscure spirits I discussed above, and even to the more familiar “essences” 精, a *gui* could have only grown out of a deceased human being.

Originally the term *gui* may have generally referred to things should for lack of a better word be described as “ghosts.” Their apparitions may have constituted anomalies, yet they were not necessarily demonic. The *Chunqiu* 春秋 illustrates this by stating: “As long as a ghost has somewhere to return to, it will not be baleful” 鬼有所歸，乃不爲厲. The implication of this sentence seems to be that the normal state of a ghost is to be able to “return” somewhere, or to “belong” somewhere – probably to the ancestral cult. If part of an ancestral lineage, “it will not be baleful.” In cases that would exclude the ghost from ancestral worship, such as suicide or mere lack of descendants, it could become baleful. According to this view baleful spirits – “demons” – were thus only a small subset of the ghosts of ancestors.

The oldest extant text that extensively theorized these phenomena was written by Wang Chong 王充 (27 – ca. 100) in his *Lunheng* 論衡 during the first century of our era. His writings on *gui* critically targeted beliefs that presumably were widely held during the Western Han. Although the ideas of Wang Chong were quite radical and have never incited the production of a large body of commentaries, his diatribes are useful in that he defined the objects of his critique in relatively good detail. Wang Chong fulminated against a great range of notions that were associated with ghosts. First and foremost he critiqued the apparently predominant notion that *gui* were conceptualized as “the spiritual essences of deceased people” 人死精神.<sup>11</sup> From his further elaborations it is obvious that these spiritual essences were not merely seen as the neutral ancestral “ghosts” that pre-Buddhist theology is thought to have validated. The majority of beliefs that Wang Chong attacks is of a quite explicitly demonic kind: throughout his enumerations *gui* are associated with “disorder” or

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<sup>11</sup> Wang Chong 王充 (27 – 97?), *Lunheng* 論衡, p. 931. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996



“impropriety” 亂, with things that are “fiendish” 妖, and most conspicuously with disease 病.<sup>12</sup> Wang Chong goes great lengths to argue that sightings of “ghosts” by sick people should not be attributed to anything other than the weakened senses of a human tormented by disease. The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 by Xu Shen 許慎, also compiled in the first century, reinforces the idea that *gui* have a fundamentally human quality. Xu Shen’s exegesis – vague though it may be – concludes that humans “end up” as ghosts, or “return as ghosts,” or even “belong to” the same category as ghosts 人所歸為鬼.

The notion that *gui* “originally came forth from humans” 本生於人 has remained the predominant notion since the Han.<sup>13</sup> Here we are more justified in translating *gui* as “demon” because the quality of death started to play a role. Irregular, inauspicious deaths that were brought about by the vicissitudes of war or other disasters determined whether a deceased soul would become a *gui*. A Daoist book from the fifth century suggests that popular cults of worship were often based upon just such demonic souls who would “burden the people with [demands for] temple-dwellings, demand from the people to be entertained in shrines” 責人廟舍，求人饗祠。<sup>14</sup> The author expressed concern about the many baleful spirits caused by the violence of war that were venerated as gods and “assumed the highest official titles” 稱官上號; he warned that they were “the dead generals of defeated armies, dead soldiers of dispersed armies, the men calling themselves ‘General,’ and the women calling themselves ‘Lady,’ leading demonic soldiers” 敗軍死將、亂軍死兵、男

<sup>12</sup> Even in those rare cases where “ghosts” apparently were not primarily defined as the spiritual essences of deceased people, such as “the essences of old things” 老物精 (p. 936) or the “spirits of Jia and Yi” 甲乙之神 (p. 935) they still were said to manifest themselves in human form.

<sup>13</sup> Wang Chong, *Lun Heng*, p. 935.

<sup>14</sup> DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen keliu* 陸先生道門科略, 1a.

稱將軍，女稱夫人，導從鬼兵。<sup>15</sup> In the early attempts by Daoists to replace the bloody sacrifices that these gods demanded, they were referred to as “vulgar spirits” 俗神。<sup>16</sup>

A record by the Tang bureaucrat Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779 – 848) shows that this situation had endured into the Tang dynasty (618 – 907). He describes a local cult devoted to a certain General Wu 烏將軍 (or the “Black General”) whom the local populace thought to “be able to bestow disaster and blessing upon the people” 能禍福人. This ambivalent power to provide prosperity as well as calamity was typical of demonic spirits. They extorted sacrifices in exchange for the application of their superhuman powers to the benefit of a community, but only for as long as the munificence of their devotees endured. In the case of General Wu, the sacrifices demanded were not just any kind of bloody sacrifices, they were human sacrifices in the form of a beautiful maiden. The story is especially interesting because of the interference of an imperial official, Guo Yuanzhen 郭元振 (656 – 713), who chases away the General by injuring him and so saves the girl’s life. When the villagers find out that the maiden is still alive, they are angry with Guo Yuanzhen and fearful that the spirit who has been their regional “protective spirit” 鎮神 will now retaliate with wind, rain, thunder and hail. Guo Yuanzhen, however, convinces them that their cult is based upon a “licentious and fiendish beast” 淫妖之獸 that has no relationship to Heaven. He finds the abandoned tomb where the General has been hiding and unmask him as the spirit of a boar. This episode gives him the reputation of one “who, in the end, could not be harmed by demonic spirits” 鬼神終不能害.

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Rolf Stein, “Religious Taoism,” pp. 53-81; for a general assessment from the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty (420 – 78) of the theory of the “residual energies” of the Sixfold Heaven and Zhang Daoling’s task to fight these, see DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經, 1.4b-6a.

Vulgar spirits such as General Wu who claimed grand titles and bloody sacrifices for themselves populated the Chinese religious landscape. In many (if not most) cases, the famous gods of late imperial China were based upon baleful spirits who had been excluded from ancestral sacrifices and who were given an autonomous cult. While the term “vulgar spirits” appears to have gradually become obsolete by the Ming dynasty, the notion that popular gods are fundamentally demonic had taken root long since. When referring to the popular gods of the people during the late imperial age, another label was used that had become dissociated from concepts of vulgarity. It referred in a more straightforward way to the demonic aspects of these gods, correlating “demons and spirits” (or “demonic spirits”) in the standard phrase of *guishen* 鬼神 or *shengui* 神鬼.

Translation of this phrase is more complicated than appears at first sight. On the basis of the sacrificial conditions outlined above, *guishen* might be translated as “demonic gods.” I argue that the common occurrence of the phrase suggests the terms *gui* and *shen* became cognate categories. Demons and gods were commonly coupled together and talked about side by side. However, given the fact that the specific type of god treated throughout this thesis is by definition demonic, the translation of *guishen* as “demonic god” becomes somewhat of a semantic pleonasm. The category of *shen* as the spiritual object of a sacrificial cult (i.e. not as the spiritual component of any human body) was in itself generally demonic.

In fact, the copious sacrificial gifts used in popular religion appeared to have been relevant only for demonic *shen* who demanded such offerings. For demonic cults, reciprocity between spirit and community was based upon sacrifices. Those cults that were emphatically not demonic, such as the Buddhas or *arbats*, as well as Daoist deities such as the Three Pure Ones, or even the cult to Confucius, had a significantly less pronounced tradition of sacrificial reciprocity with their devotees, if any at all. One might generalize that in late

imperial China popular cults that were somehow demonic formed an overwhelming majority.<sup>17</sup>

Among them, the most widespread cult was dedicated to Guan Yu 關羽. Local gazetteers of most Ming dynasty administrative regions mention at least one temple devoted to this deity, and often several “Temples of King Guan” 關王廟. Guan Yu’s demonic nature is obvious; his violent death as well as the return of his vengeful spirit is well described in several hagiographies. Yet even the late imperial narrative lore surrounding a nominally Buddhist deity such as Guanyin 觀音 was written with a repeated emphasis on the demonic premises of her cult. She was portrayed as a “returning spirit” 還魂 who had emerged out of a violated body (both physically and socially violated), and who had found a local sanctuary on Xiangshan 香山 in Henan. The Chinese hagiographies of Guanyin quite simply present her as a spirit excluded from ancestral sacrifices. Both Guan Yu and Guanyin were thought to be subaltern to the Jade Emperor, and the histories of both cults had connections to Daoism.<sup>18</sup>

As I will argue, the concept of *shen* is merely an elevated outgrowth of the concept of *gui*. In all likelihood, the longer a baleful spirit remained without sacrifices, the greater the chances were that it would extort sacrificial offerings from human beings. As long as it

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<sup>17</sup> For the standard analysis of divine cults based upon baleful spirits, see Barend ter Haar, “The Genesis and Spread of Temple Cults in Fukien,” pp. 349-396. In Edward B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 1990. Ter Haar’s analysis is in part based upon Kristofer Schipper’s earlier formulation: “Démonologie Chinoise” In Dimitri Meeks (*et al.*), *Génies, anges et démons*, pp. 405-426. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971. For a recent case study, see Anne Gerritsen, “From Demon to Deity: Kang Wang in Thirteenth-Century Jizhou and Beyond.” *T’oung Pao* 90.1-3 (2004), pp. 4-35.

<sup>18</sup> For the formative Daoist influence on the cult of Guan Yu, see chapter 3. Concerning Guanyin’s Daoist connotations, the 26 chapter novel *Nanhai Guanshiyin quanzhuan* 南海觀世音全傳 is the most explicit in this respect. Upon execution “her bit of gloomy spirit does not disperse” 他一點幽魂不散 (ch. 14) and she wants to “study the Way” 學道 (ch. 15), which results in her “hundredfold refined cinnabar [reaching] completion” 百煉丹成 (ch. 16). If these hints seem to general to some readers, it may be more convincing to mention that she receives the quintessentially Daoist title of “disciple of the Threefold Heaven” 三天門下 in chapter 21.

remained autonomous, a “noxious demon” 厲鬼 in the guise of a protective spirit, the more powers it could gather. Once it had established itself with a sacrificial cult, as a “General” or a “King,” etc., its survival would be ensured for some time, and people would refer to it as a *shen* (“spirit” or “god”) rather than as an “orphan soul.” Though demonic in origin, worshipers would turn to a *shen* with the hope to receive some form of blessing.

However, the independence of the cult from higher authorities also made it unreliable. It was this kind of cult, among other things, that Daoist priests would find in need of a process of “sublimation;” the Daoist crusade against “vulgar spirits” may have been less destructive than assumed. Daoists claimed that Thunder Ritual allowed initiates to marshal local spirits into their own ranks of martial divinities, and ultimately transform baleful spirits into *shen* with a more civilized status. Given the popularity of Thunder Ritual, many people in late imperial China seemed to have agreed.

#### 1.4. The Daoist trajectory

Employment of sinister spiritual forces may very well have been a given in ancient Chinese religion. In his *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (1926) Marcel Granet has provided several suggestive examples of procedures by which rulers in Chinese antiquity transformed their assassinated adversaries into tutelary saints.<sup>19</sup> A similar argument has been forwarded by Ursula-Angelika Cedzich for the formative period of organized Daoism during the second and third centuries CE. According to her, the divine proxies that were deployed

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<sup>19</sup> Marcel Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, pp. 144-49. Paris: Alcan, 1926. For similar remarks on the impersonation of (evil) spirits during the Great Exorcism of the Han dynasty, see Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*, pp. 104-05. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

in Daoist ritual may very well have started out as vengeful spirits.<sup>20</sup> The procedures that engineered such transformations of demonic entities have long become a common part of Daoist ritual.<sup>21</sup> There, in Daoist ritual, the stereotypical enemies are the Archdemon Kings of the Sixfold Heavens 六天魔王 – the personifications of the dangerous “residual energies of the Sixfold Heavens” 六天故氣 – who lead the demonic hordes that threaten to destabilize the human world. Rolf Stein, who called the residual energies of the Sixfold Heavens “stale emanations,” was among the first to notice that demons are at the center of Daoist ideology.<sup>22</sup> In Daoist liturgies of late imperial China and after, the conquest of the Archdemon Kings of the Sixfold Heavens has become a standard feature of the Daoist civilizing mission.<sup>23</sup>

John Lagerwey has called this standard segment of Daoist ritual a re-enactment of “the foundational struggle of [Zhang Daoling] with the forces of evil”; as a matter of fact, he

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<sup>20</sup> Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung des liturgischen Materials im dritten *chüan* des *Teng-chen yin-chüeh*,” pp. 56-60. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Würzburg (Germany), 1987. Elsewhere, she has recently observed that the appellations of the divine functionaries within early Daoism “seem just as diverse as those of the demonic crowds and popular cults whose worship Daoists hoped to extirpate,” and they “fulfilled the functions of precisely those whose influence they were to break – the ordinary gods.” See her “The Organon of the Twelve Hundred Officials and its Gods.” Paper prepared for the Symposium in Celebration of *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, University of Chicago, October 6-8, 2005, p. 5

<sup>21</sup> Kristofer Schipper has applied Granet’s insights to a ritual performed by Daoist priests from southern Taiwan. This ritual, called “consecrating the altar” 勅壇, “sealing off the altar” 禁壇, or “empowering the demon” 命魔, intends to capture the “altar-demon” 壇鬼 and transform it into a protective deity. See Kristofer Schipper, “Comment on crée un lieu-saint local: à propos de *Danses et Légendes de la Chine ancienne* de Marcel Granet.” *Études chinoises* 4.2 (1986), pp. 41-61. During my own fieldwork in northern Taiwan and Hunan (2003-05), I have encountered this type of ritual as “sealing the Demon’s pass” 封鬼關 and “sealing the evil Demon’s confinement” 封邪魔禁 respectively.

<sup>22</sup> Rolf Stein, “Religious Taoism,” p. 65. An interesting article, using Stein’s insights, has been written by Terry Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China.” *Asia Major* Third Series, Volume VII: 1 (1994), pp. 185-211. Stein’s observations have recently been driven home by Christine Mollier in her article “La méthode de l’empereur du nord du Mont Fengdu : une tradition exorciste du Taoïsme médiéval,” *T’oung Pao* 83 (1997), p. 332-7. The most extensive treatment to date has been by Peter Nickerson, *Taoism, Bureaucracy, and Popular Religion*.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. DZ 1166, 17.7b; 23.14a; 24.7a; 29.4a; 31.5b; 36.8b; 38.12b; DZ 1220, 80.14a; 86.9b; 113.20a; 116.27a; 129.4a; 138.22a; 141.14b, 17b; 154 & 155 *passim*; 157.4b, 19a; 158.20a; 159.14b; 166.38a; 168.3ab; 169.12b; 171.16a, 24b; 176.4a; 182.10b; 184.2b; 185.18a; 188.5b; (210.17a); 217.5b; 229.16a; 244.27a; 245.19ab; 259.15b; 262.12a; 264.9a; 267.1a *ff*.

states that Zhang Daoling “is thus in the first place an exorcist.”<sup>24</sup> According to hagiographic traditions that were current in late imperial China, Zhang Daoling, the legendary founder of the Celestial Master movement, separated the demonic realm of darkness from the human realm of light by subduing the Archdemon Kings of the Sixfold Heavens.<sup>25</sup> Zhang Daoling kept them from further intrusions by making them vow an oath to remain in their proper realm – a vow, as we will see, that was reiterated in late imperial Daoist ritual. The re-enactment, moreover, represented a standardization of the “sublimation” procedures that are treated in this thesis: the battle against the local demon constituted the beginning of its career as a minion of the Daoist priest.

Rituals of “sublimation” were based on the premise that spiritual entities were temporary coagulations of energy matter or 氣 *qi* (written as 炁 in Daoist texts). The Daoist theology that identified “residual energies” with the Archdemon Kings of the Sixfold Heavens was formulated at least as early as the fifth century.<sup>26</sup> The passage from DZ 1127 *Lü xiansheng daomen kelüe* quoted above about demonic spirits of soldiers killed in battle who manifest themselves in popular cults refers precisely to those residual energies. It was believed that they belonged to the Sixfold Heavens underneath Mt. Fengdu 酆都 / 豐都 (“Capital Feng”), also known as Northern Feng 北酆 or Luo Feng 羅酆. The city, Feng, had indeed been designated as a capital city by King Wen of the Zhou dynasty 周文王.<sup>27</sup> In light of Granet’s remarks about inimical forces being installed as tutelary saints, it is perhaps not

<sup>24</sup> John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, p. 28. New York: Macmillan, 1987

<sup>25</sup> DZ 1463 *Han Tianshi Shijia* 漢天師世家, 2.3b. Also cf. Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-90), *Huitu Liexian quanzhuan* 繪圖列仙全傳, 3.16a-18b. Taipei: Tailian/Zhongwen, 1974. Furthermore, cf. DZ 1220, 116.27a; 129.4a. Sometimes, as in DZ 1220, 265.6b, the struggle was said to have been against the “Great Archdemons of the Six Grottoes” 六洞大魔.

<sup>26</sup> DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經. This was a text from the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty (420 – 78). Also see DZ 528 *Taishang dongxuan Lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀, 6b.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi Ji* 史記, p. 118. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959.

coincidental that in the first of the Sixfold Heavens Fengdu is associated with the Zhou dynastic conquest over its predecessor. Defined as the “Darkness of [King] Zhou’s Demise” 紂絕陰 (a reference to the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, King Zhou 紂王), Fengdu is identified as a repository of the spirits from the time of King Zhou’s demise.

Before turning to early Daoist sublimation liturgies, I will provide one short hagiographical account to show that the notion of deploying demonic entities was early on known to Daoists. From a biography written by Ge Hong around 317 we can tell that at least in some cases the spirit assisting the Daoist practitioner originally had itself been the object of an exorcism. Furious at the spirit for possessing a sick man he encountered, Ge Xuan 葛玄 is reported to have said:

“Who do you think you are, you wicked demon! I hereby order the Five Counts to take you away, spirit, and have you bound to a pillar for a whipping of your back!” Thereupon it looked as if some men were pulling the spirit out into the court, tying him to a pillar. After his clothes were taken off and thrown on the ground, the only sound to be heard was that of the whip. Once blood came gushing out, the spirit started speaking in a demonical tongue, begging for his life. Ge Xuan said: “I could spare your life – are you capable of curing the diseases of living men?” The spirit said: “Absolutely!” Ge Xuan then said: “I will give you three days. If the patient has not recovered by then, I will deal with you.” Thereupon the spirit was released.<sup>28</sup>

「奸鬼敢爾！勅五伯拽精人，縛柱鞭脊。即見如有人牽精人出者，至庭抱柱。解衣投地，但聞鞭聲。血出流漓，精人故作鬼語乞命。玄曰「赦汝死

<sup>28</sup> Ge Hong 葛洪, *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, *juan 7*. Taipei: Yiwen, 1966; also in *Taiping guangji* 71.442.



罪。汝能令生人病愈否？」精人曰「能！」玄曰「與汝三日期。病者不愈，當治汝。」精人乃見放。

Apparently, Ge Xuan was thought to have subjugated spirits and deployed them in his therapeutic practice. Such a coercion of spirits was the first step in a long process. As it was understood that these subjugated spirits could be revived as new entities, sublimation rituals included the making of a new lodging for the spirit. This could be a new body in anthropomorphic form (a statue or a spirit medium), but it could also be an object, such as a wooden tablet 木主, or even a mirror (see chapter 3). In either case the sublimation was performed ultimately to effectuate a new form of life, and in some cases to create a god.

Early forms of “sublimation” rituals were utilized by Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406 – 77). In a small ritual segment addressed to the Black Emperor of the North 北方黑帝, who presided over Fengdu, the liturgist targeted all the “grotto spirits receiving refinement” 受鍊洞靈, and invited them to arrive at the Purple Court 紫庭 for a feast, whereupon they could “return to the womb and restore their shape” 反胎更形, and “register their names in the Southern Palace; from the Yellow Registers and White Slips, purge death and live above” 南宮記名；黃籙白簡，削死上生.<sup>29</sup> Instead of on the black registers of death, it is on these Yellow Registers and White Slips lists that unpolluted spirits were registered.

It may be noted that the above procedure was perhaps not meant to sublimate demonic spirits; that it targeted the souls of the naturally deceased, and that this ritual was a part of regular Daoist funerary procedures. However, elsewhere in the same book the Black

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<sup>29</sup> DZ 528, 31b; the Southern Palace was the location both of the Purple Court (or Purple Mansion 紫府) as well as for the Fiery Mansion 火府. The former functioned as the registry for spirits, the latter as a purgatory.

Emperor marshals his “divine troops” 神兵 against demonic forces. Some texts found in the Dunhuang 敦煌 caves use similar phrasing but refer to the Northern Emperor’s troops more specifically as “Archdemon troops” 魔兵, correlated to the Sixfold Heavens.<sup>30</sup> The troops are deployed “to quickly fill the registers of the Northern Emperor, collecting and grasping the names of the Archdemon-hordes” 促校北帝錄，收執群魔名。<sup>31</sup> Here too the Daoist practitioner “returns the spirits so that they may receive new splendor” 反魂更受榮。<sup>32</sup> The subaltern position of the Archdemon Kings stands beyond doubt, as they “respectfully receive their task” 魔王敬受事。<sup>33</sup>

More commonly performed shorter rituals for specific occasions usually contained a component of sublimation. A compilation of practices that may have roots in the late fourth and early fifth century, *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac* 赤松子章曆, provides a collection of ritual petitions that may have been circulating among the members of the early Celestial Master movement.<sup>34</sup> These petitions, each composed for the occasion of a specific ritual, were official documents that the Daoist offered while appearing before the Gate of Heaven 天門, in a ritual known as the “audience before Heaven” 朝天. One of the petitions speaks of a process in which one has “to refine the corpse so that it may receive absolution, to be

<sup>30</sup> P. 2474 *Taishang dongxuan Lingbao shengxuan neijiaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶升玄內教經, p. 2187. In Li Defan 李德范, *Dunhuang Daozang* 敦煌道藏. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan, 1999. Also see S. 3722 (same title), p. 2199.

<sup>31</sup> DZ 528, 9b.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*; in coherence with practices described in chapter 3, the Jade Capital 玉京 plays a role in the rebirth of spirits, and the ritual is embedded in an “audience in the Jade Emperor’s Court” 朝我玉皇庭 (10a).

<sup>33</sup> DZ 528.39b.

<sup>34</sup> Dating of the text, however, has proven to be difficult. Ursula-Angelika Cedzich is inclined to consider the compilation to have gone through an editing process during the second half of the Tang dynasty; see her “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung des liturgischen Materials im dritten *chüan* des *Teng-chen yin-chüeh*,” p. 15. Franciscus Verellen more or less avoids questions of dating, calling it a “product of centuries of accretion, [providing] firsthand evidence of the methods and objectives of Heavenly Master liturgical practice as it evolved between the Eastern Han (AD 25-220) and the Tang (618-907) periods.” See his “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong Zi’s Petition Almanac.” *Cahiers d’Extreme-Asie* 14 (2004), pp. 292. Finally, Schipper & Verellen, *Companion*, p. 135, suggest that it may contain later materials.

reborn in accordance with its ambition” 鍊尸受度，適意更生。<sup>35</sup> Since this was a document submitted to the celestial authorities, and not a ritual manual, nothing is said about the ritual proceedings that accompanied it. Yet the aims of the request are clear enough:

We, your humble servant [name], beg that after your imperial reading of our petition, this person [name] will receive life again. His/her sublimated corpse can be restored to its former shape, and fill above the office of a Perfected Transcendent.<sup>36</sup>

乞 臣 章御之後，某 復受生。鍊尸還復故形，上補真仙。

Apparently, from medieval times onward, rituals of sublimation were designed to enhance the status of spirits, and, in the Daoist case, to build the ranks of divine beings out of them. That explains why in the petitions of the early Celestial Masters that dealt with demonic adversaries, practitioners requested that the higher divine powers to “collect and arrest” 收捕 these spirits.<sup>37</sup> Conceptualized explicitly as “residual energies” they are “collected and expelled” 收除.<sup>38</sup> Another grand exorcism asks to “collect and arrest the Demon Bandits, and hand them over to the Celestial Workers and the Strong Men” 收捕鬼賊，付與天丁、力士。<sup>39</sup> Noxious spirits were thus not necessarily destroyed, but arrested; if necessary they could thereupon be sublimated into new celestial residents. Throughout the petitions of *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac*, the assistance of several deities is invoked, most of them referred to with their rank of General 將軍, which suggests that these generals had

<sup>35</sup> DZ 615 *Chisong Zi zhangli* 赤松子章曆, 6.14b

<sup>36</sup> DZ 615, 6.16b

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.*, 3.27a; 31a

<sup>38</sup> *Op. cit.*, 3.28b; 2.21a

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, 4.2a

previously been just those demonic souls of slain soldiers that Daoists so arduously claimed to fight. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, they assisted the practitioner with his ritual performances and were actualized inside his body.

Techniques specifically aiming to “sublimate” demonic spirits were well established in the thunder rituals that were written by the twelfth century and after; they can be found almost as a standard segment within most thunder rituals of the period. By the early Ming sublimation techniques occupy a significant portion of Daoist ritual.<sup>40</sup> The scope of sublimation rituals differed. The most generic and abstract among such rituals was the “General Absolution” 普度 performed during the Ghost Month around 7/15. The aim of this ritual was to improve the situation of the ancestors in the underworld, the exact details of which were unknown to the living. On their way to a different spiritual existence, for deceased spirits purgatory was “that uncertain interstice where the spirit of the deceased awaited assignment to a new spoke” in the wheel of karmic retribution.<sup>41</sup> The scope of General Absolution rituals was so universal and abstract that no specific souls were targeted; the procedures were rather like a general pardon of ancestors and ghosts. Rituals performed during the ghost month were not exclusively Daoist. In his analysis of the *Yulanpen* 盂蘭盆 – the Buddhist absolution rituals performed during the same month – Stephen F. Teiser has argued that the performance of these rituals equally aimed to achieve an improved status for spirits, who “were moved from the threatening category of ghost to the honored position of ancestor.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 1, 4, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 32, 33, 35; these scriptures, belonging to the Pure Tenuity 清微 tradition, all have substantial portions devoted to “sublimation.” Also see the extensive discussion in *Shangqing Lingbao jidu dacheng jinshu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書, 24.29a-30a. In *Zangwai Daoshu* 藏外道書. Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1992-1994. On this compendium, see chapter 5 of my thesis.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, p. 5. Honolulu: Kuroda, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, p. 220. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Systematic explanations of the sublimation practices are provided in texts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Similarities with earlier rituals of sublimation are clear, as sublimation also targeted the restoration of a deceased spirit's body. As the procedure was aimed at spirits of deceased people, a new dwelling had to be sought for the sublimated soul:

Extend an order to the relevant officials of sublimation in the two Bureaus of Water and Fire, to have the Celestial Medic, the Supervisor of Life, the Arrestors, and other such deities descend all together. Dividing [the deceased spirit's] potency and dispersing [its] shape, gathering [its] breaths and bringing forth its soul – they secretly help this ritual, carry out the transformations together, complete [the spirit's] body and restore [its] appearance. Refine it with the froth of Flowing Fire (gold), casting bone-souls and molding cloud-souls; purify it with the water of Yellow Splendor (lead), eradicating the pollution of the dark; absolve millions of *kalpa* of retribution, returning it to the womb to be born again. Then it must visit the Southern Palace to receive transformation.<sup>43</sup>

申命水火兩司鍊度官屬，天醫、監生、追攝等神，一合下降，分靈散景，攝炁生神。密助行持，同施造化，完形復相。鍊之以流火之膏，鑄魄陶魂；蕩之以黃華之水，消除陰穢；解億劫之報償，返胎更生。詣南宮而受化。

Sublimation – here expressed with the metallurgical discourse of inner alchemy – was conceptualized as a way of disempowering an undispersed spiritual entity and subsequently reassembling it and having it reborn into a new body.

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<sup>43</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 15.2b-3a.

While the importance of pacifying the dead may seem self-evident, there were compelling reasons for subjecting them to rituals of sublimation. One ritual manual explains the problematic disposition of spirits that were left roaming: “Some sink into the demonic realm, where they want to gang up with tree ghosts and spring malice; others follow the path of the Archdemons, where they hope to flock together with temple fiends and altar anomalies” 或墮鬼區，甘與木客、泉邪而作黨；或從魔道，願隨廟妖、壇怪以爲群。<sup>44</sup> In other words, spirits that had not found a proper dwelling threatened to associate themselves with all sorts of evildoers, sometimes apparently even attaching themselves to altars or temples that were possessed by wicked demons. These spirits needed to be “returned to the correct” 歸正 by sublimating them.<sup>45</sup>

In this process it was crucial for practitioners to cleanse themselves of impurities and become “pure and unadulterated *yang*” 純陽無雜 before they could “absolve gloomy cloud-spirits and deliver stagnant bone-spirits” 度幽魂、超滯魄.<sup>46</sup> “If one wants to sublimate the dead, one must first sublimate oneself; if one wants to absolve the dead, one must first absolve oneself” 鍊亡者，先須自鍊；度亡者，先須自度.<sup>47</sup> In a preface written in 1356 it is stated in a most straightforward way that “if one does not sublimate oneself, then the demons and spirits cannot ascend” 苟不鍊自己，則鬼神不能昇度.<sup>48</sup> This text furthermore makes it is made clear that the self-sublimation is performed by the production of an inner fire. From the blazing heat 炎炎 subsequently emerges a purified manifestation

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<sup>44</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 205.7a.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 245.29a.

<sup>47</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 1.6b.

<sup>48</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 210.1a.

of the practitioner's self – in the form of an infant. This aspect will be treated extensively in chapter 3.

Once the self is sublimated it can sublimate others: “Refine the Other's *yin* with my *yang*; create the Other's soul with my soul; restore the Other's *qi* with my *qi*; transform the Other's ignorance with my sagehood” 以我之陽，鍊彼之陰；以我之神，生彼之神；以我之炁，返彼之炁；以我之賢，化彼之愚.<sup>49</sup> In these four statements sublimation is characterized as a practice of transformation that targets the realm of the dark (*yin*), as a practice that aims to bring forth a soul, as a practice that seeks to return energy matter; and as a practice that intends to “civilize” ignorance with sagehood. In subsequent chapters we will see that this civilizing transformation 化 had much to do with fire.

### 1.5. Demons empowered, authorized, and civilized: a Daoist “mandate”

The final act of a “sublimation” ritual was the registration of the transformed spirit. By reporting it to the celestial administration located in the Southern Palace 南宮, a spirit would receive a new lease on life, authorized by the celestial authorities.<sup>50</sup> This authorization was commonly expressed with a term that had several levels of meaning – the word *ming* 命. On the most elementary level, *ming* stands for “command,” referring to the subaltern relationship of the newly transformed spirit to the highest gods. The Thunder Gods of the Ming dynasty, for example, were reminded of this formal relationship by the officiating priest: “Thunder Gods, Thunder Gods! You have a position in Heaven, receiving orders from the [Jade] Emperor” 雷神雷神！爾職于天，受命于帝.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 1.7a; similar phrasing in *Daofa huiyuan* 4.9ab.

<sup>50</sup> See above. Also see *Daofa huiyuan* 203.4b; 265.18ab.

<sup>51</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 8.1b; for a similar statement, see *Daofa huiyuan* 137.6b.

Implicit is the meritorious character of this official relationship, one that transcended easy distinctions between good and evil: just like Chinese emperors often bestowed aristocratic titles on the leaders of peoples that had been forced into a subaltern relationship, a new *ming* was conferred to spirits as a reward for (martial) services and not for virtuous behavior. The chief deity of the Thunder Division, Deng Bowen 鄧伯溫, originally was a demonic spirit, as we will see in chapter 3. However, his hagiography states that he had helped the Yellow Emperor overcome a baleful adversary, the mythical warrior Chi You 蚩尤. To reward Deng Bowen for his services, “the Jade Emperor issued a *ming*, ordering [Deng Bowen] to preside over Thunderclap” 玉帝敕命，主雷霆.<sup>52</sup> In other words, *ming* also denoted a “commission” or an “authorization.”

To use legal terminology, a *ming* denoted a “mandate” that commanded and authorized spirits to act on behalf of the Heavenly administration. In that sense it was similar to the imperial Heavenly Mandate 天命 that not only connoted a “command” by Heaven to a newly established dynasty but also implied that the “Son of Heaven” 天子 acted on behalf of Heaven. Thus the word *ming* constituted an empowerment no less than a subjugation. The fact that Daoist rituals of sublimation acknowledged the authority of the Jade Emperor (thought to be the personification of Heaven) suggests that the *ming* bestowed upon a sublimated spirit was similar to the Heavenly Mandate.

The standard Daoist ritual procedure of conferring such “mandates” was oftentimes called “mandating the Archdemons” 命魔, which referred to the Archdemon Kings of the Sixfold Heavens. To mandate these demonic beings meant to give them an official task, and a right to live. As I mentioned above, the *locus classicus* for a Daoist mandate is the pledge of

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<sup>52</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 80.14b.



obedience enforced upon the Archdemons of the Sixfold Heavens by Zhang Daoling. This appears to have already been a paradigm current during the Tang dynasty (618 – 907).<sup>53</sup> However, a seminal twelfth century book from one thunder tradition attributed the power to confer such mandates to the authority of the Celestial Venerable of Primeval Beginnings 元始天尊.<sup>54</sup> It seems that this attribution was common practice into the Ming dynasty, adhered to even in vernacular narratives.<sup>55</sup>

In an “Explanation of Mandating the Archdemon” 明命魔, included in a ritual compendium from the early fifteenth century, the author posited the technique of mandating demons as an inevitable component of Daoist ritual – a statement that was endorsed in other Daoist books.<sup>56</sup> The Daoist dignitary, representing the Heavenly authorities on earth, could “spread the Dao” only when he initiated the mandating of demons.

Before the time that the Heavenly Worthies had pronounced their scriptures, the Five Archdemon Kings, Emperors of the Three Realms, were the leaders of the Ten-thousand Spirits and were in command of the demon armies. After the Heavenly Worthies had pronounced their scriptures, the One Hundred Archdemons surrendered and received a mandate for divine merit. Once the multitude of Archdemons had submitted to the saintly transformation of the Celestial Worthy, they would charge ahead in front of the carriages of the Supreme Saints of All Heavens and the Perfected Beings of Wondrous Acts, sweeping the dust away and opening the road for them. This is why, when you practice the Way three times a day, you must mandate the Archdemons. The group [of Daoists] on

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<sup>53</sup> *Quan Tang Wen* 全唐文, 932.15b. Beijing: Zhonghua, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 56.1b.

<sup>55</sup> *Fengshen yanyi* chapter 99.

<sup>56</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 245.18b-19b; also see section 1.4. above.

the altar each has to actualize their thoughts [i.e. by visualization], lest the inner Archdemons emerge, and so that the outer Archdemons may perish of themselves. That is why the scriptures say: “If the Archdemons respectfully receive their task, then you can visit all the Heavens.”<sup>57</sup> The *yang* energies of the Threefold Heaven are illuminated and the Archdemons of Darkness from the Sixfold Heavens perish of themselves.<sup>58</sup>

夫天尊未說經之前，三界五帝魔王皆為萬神之宗，總領鬼兵。天尊說經之後，百魔伏化而神功受命。眾魔既伏天尊聖化，為諸天上聖妙行真人策駕前驅，掃塵啓路。所以三時行道，皆須命魔。壇眾咸各存思，內魔不生，外魔自滅。故經云：「魔王敬受事，故能朝諸天」是也。三天陽炁既明，六天陰魔自滅。

This explanation reminds its audience of the battle that Zhang Daoling, after having received a revelation from the Most High Lord Lao, fought with the Archdemons of the Sixfold Heavens. In legend as well as in actual ritual, the demons literally get a new lease on life; they receive a new mandate to act – now in the service of the Daoist Threefold Heaven on their way to become spiritual officials there.

It should be emphasized that these mandates were awarded for meritorious services provided rather than for moral standards. As one text explains in an address to a local rain-dragon: “On the day you make merit, your name will be registered in [the realm of] Upper Purity” 有功之日，名錄上清。<sup>59</sup> These services were taken very literally, and did not remain

<sup>57</sup> This is a quote from DZ 528.39b.

<sup>58</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao jidu dacheng jinsbu*, 24.23a.

<sup>59</sup> This phrase comes from a text addressed to a local rain-dragon (*Daofa bniyuan* 110.23b).

limited to the formulaic “mandate” awarded to the Archdemon Kings. As the example of General Wu in section 1.3. above shows, demonic spirits worshiped in popular cults were capable of bestowing “disaster and blessing upon the people.” This moral ambiguity did not prevent spirits from receiving an official registration within the spiritual bureaucracy, as is made clear in a poignant example of Daoist regulations for the promotion of local cults. While the impure character of the local spirit is taken for granted, rewards are given for blessings that they provide. The following passage is taken from a section about “evil essences” 邪精 in a text that treats the “Black Registers of Mt. Fengdu” 酆都黑律.<sup>60</sup>

As for wild beasts, snakes and dragons, fish and clams; when they are old and of high age they can also change into human shapes, causing monstrosities and practicing improprieties. Temples are erected for them if they have become very big. Of these spirits without an original name, if they have established merit and cultivate virtue, if they protect the people with blessings, and if the people’s hearts turn towards them, then the City God and the Earth God may recommend them to the Mansion of the [Eastern] Peak. Upon admission, they can supplement the existing incense fires [i.e. sacrificial cults] and prosperous spirits of an entire region. As for those of them whose merit and virtue are serious, they can be reported to the [Jade] Emperor’s Palace, and they may be augmented with canonical titles.

諸禽獸、蛇龍、魚蟹；年久歲深，亦能變化人形，興妖作怪者。至大者立廟。無元姓之神，有立功修德、福佑生民、人心歸向者，則城隍、社令舉保嶽府。進補充一方本祭香火福神。至於功德重者，可為奏聞帝闕，或加敕封之號。

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<sup>60</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.12b-13b.

In this example too, spirits that lack ancestral sacrifices (in this case local animal essences) are evaluated not so much on the basis of their ontological quality but on the basis of the contribution they have made to the local populace. As a reward they are recommended for promotion into celestial spheres, whence they receive “canonical titles” 敕封之號 or simply an “investiture” 封.<sup>61</sup>

To bestow an investiture (or a mandate) upon a spirit that does not receive ancestral sacrifice meant primarily two things. First it merely encompassed a reward in the form of a fief, a feudal estate. To enfeoff someone as the King of such-and-such territory thus unequivocally seemed like an elevation in stature and prestige. However, there was a more repressive aspect to the investiture; it tied the recipient to a place – an aspect of “investiture” that remains in keeping with the other possible translation of *feng* as “closure” or “containment.” It had been common practice in Chinese dealings with “barbarian chieftains” to grant them noble titles and yet make them pay tributes to the Chinese ruler. Similarly, the investiture of a spirit with a name and a rank bound him to a proper place, both in terms of his allegiance as well as to a precisely circumscribed function, and thus a delimited sphere of influence. *Feng*, therefore, was another way of containing a spirit, and I will sometimes translate *feng* more holistically with “containment and canonization.”

Technically speaking, to receive a mandate or an “investiture” thus entailed the bestowal of an official function and title upon the spirit as if he were a feudal lord or a civil servant working for the (celestial) bureaucracy. It was the way through which a lowly spirit could thus rise to more power. Canonization was the first step, but the English term is misleading in that, contrary to the apparent meaning of the word, it was not necessarily a singular event. Spirits (gods) could be canonized infinitely to higher ranks, events that were

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<sup>61</sup> For a similar example, see *Daofa buiyuan* 250.9a.

in Chinese always referred to with the word *feng*. While the first occasion of a *feng* might be best translated with “canonization,” the subsequent occasions were rather like promotions to a higher echelon of godhood with more impressive titles.<sup>62</sup> Of course, the spirit (or god) of a local cult that had received an investiture remained under constant supervision. After all, even though a cult might have “received a mandate” 受命 from the Jade Emperor and thus would be held legally responsible for eventual transgressions, still, “its nature was hard to placate” 其性難定也.<sup>63</sup> If the spirit decided to go astray and harm the people, Daoist priests might still decide to send their martial agents in order to punish the culprit.<sup>64</sup>

### 1.6. A “Coming Down to Earth:” (our) Monstrous Bodies vs. Culture

Sublimation was only a partial metamorphosis. It forced baleful spirits to change their ways, rather than their character or their voracious appearance. They were impelled to return to the correct ways that Daoism promoted: “Evil Archdemons return to the correct [way]” 邪魔歸正.<sup>65</sup> Most often, these sublimated spirits would betray their demonic nature by manifesting themselves with frightening and monstrous bodies. As we will see in chapter 3, for instance, Chief-Marshal Deng Bowen of the Thunder Division essentially looked like a giant bat. General Song Wuji 宋無忌 could be seen with a horse-head on a human body, whereas others might appear in “the shape of evil demons” 惡鬼狀, or with a hog’s head on a human body.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Another term commonly used, “canonization title” 封號, gives more leeway to the possible repetitive nature of the event.

<sup>63</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.15a.

<sup>64</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.13b-14a.

<sup>65</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 4.5a; 80.12b. In a preface by Zhao Yizhen 趙宜真 to a text devoted to “sublimation,” similar rhetoric is applied (*Daofa huiyuan* 17.4a). Also cf. 157.4b.

<sup>66</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 121.1b-2a.

Rather than signifying moral impeccability, apparitions of sublimated spirits almost inevitably would convey a sense of awful strength. Stories about such visual encounters play upon this effect of an immediate potency, always fraught with terror. They fascinate and attract – in a sublime way there was a dangerous side to all splendid beauty that has seemed “fiendish” 妖 to Chinese; it could be “bewitchingly attractive” 妖媚. There is an esthetics of the abject, of death and decay, a fascination for the uncanny, a curiosity in the demonic. The mere prospect of witnessing such manifestations sometimes elicits overwhelming desires.<sup>67</sup>

To see is to reveal. In Daoist ritual it is through visualization that the priest actualizes the efficacy of his gods; he sees them so that they may be there. He pronounces their names to call them into being, and he announces their ranks so that their powers be known. In a sense the priest might be the first to recognize these demonic gods as something of their own, something proper – instead of resisting the very existence of the demonic, the priest provided it with a life (coincidentally another meaning of *ming*).

The physical brutality of the demonic god’s iconography serves as an eternal reminder of his special status: veins, artery, muscles, claws, threateningly openmouthed, wearing a skull as an ornament, or a string of skulls. Instead of assuming a static and stately posture, he often wields a sword or brandishes an axe. His arms do not rest dignified at the sides of his body, they are in movement, as are his legs, wings, or whatever appendages he may have. His mere silhouette oozes power. The demonic god’s body demonstrates his lawlessness, and the subversion of rules he may achieve “at the behest of death.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In the opening chapter of the Ming novel *Shuibu Zhuan* 水滸傳, an imperial official urges his Daoist hosts to let him see the demon kings: 快快與我打開，我看魔王如何。In a hagiography of Guan Yu, emperor Huizong asks to see the frightening apparition of this demonic god: 帝曰「可見乎？」 (*Daofa huiyuan* 259.17b).

<sup>68</sup> “The abject is related to perversion. The sense of abjection that I experience is anchored in the superego. The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them

There is a true *jouissance* in this abject, an effervescence of indecency. The diabolic body is fearless. It is a daring body, not afraid of facing the demonic other, nor the demonic self. The demonic body knows that death is not final; it mocks death, laughs at it (and with it). In a sense, death is always celebrated in the colorful representations of the satanic, as it displays itself in wicked forms that are revered. Not the calm of the good god, but offensive exhibitionism of monstrous decay, a rotting that never stops, forever to remain lingering.

Many Chinese gods would have looked different without the power of unfulfilled desires that lay buried in an old tomb. There is a hope behind the lingering, a motivation in the bodily remainders of the work that death has not yet been able to complete – an exceptional drive that has slowly coalesced into an energy. The threatening “ancient breaths” or “residual energies” of individuals that lack sacrifices have come to symbolize just this complex of powers. The demonic gods of China reveal themselves as the paragons of that vibrant power of unfinished business, a lingering that has made them a “potency” 靈 *ling*.

Their presences embrace even the deeply repressed side of ugly deformation. The continued existence of the things that death was supposed to annihilate shows that death forms perhaps a transition, and often rather a transformation, but hardly ever a definite ending. This phantom of the occult that roams on after its alleged death, then, often relishes its unexpected manifestations in the face of those who assumed its death. This causes embarrassment, fear, and for orthodox voices facing the demonic it commonly leads to rejection. History, as well as the human mind, has a tendency to demonize the things it does not like about itself – or others.

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aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them. It kills in the name of life—a progressive despot, it lives at the behest of death.” Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.15.

The violence done in the attempt to conceal the raw and demonic reality beneath the narrative patterning of our histories causes the unease and the uncanny feeling that comes with confronting such undercurrents. The scandalous realities that live on under the regime of repression may or may not be good or evil in themselves, but they become deviant by definition as soon as they surface into the more orthodox institutions of culture – the bearers of which almost inevitably feel driven to react with repression. It seems that, ultimately, exclusivist claims to high culture cannot avoid such an “encounter with the real.”<sup>69</sup> If the encounter reveals not the “very face” of the real, then “at least the screen that shows us that it is still there behind.”<sup>70</sup> And thus the demonic is forced to “return” and haunt the present viciously.



**Figure 1.2. – The great demonifuge Zhong Kui carried on a sedan-chair by servile demons (fragment).**

<sup>69</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 52-3. New York: Norton, 1998.

<sup>70</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 55; elsewhere Lacan speaks of “the screen that conceals something quite primary.” (p. 60)



Not afraid of failing to meet social standards of propriety, the minions of the dark realm mirror a fundamental human duality: the constructed distinction between “culture” and “barbarism.” In the face of evil (which is ultimately a human characteristic), man is forced to see his own darker sides that cause embarrassment, and he has to admit that certain uncivilized aspects of themselves will always resist refinement. The embarrassment that can be caused by one’s own physical urges (“uncivilized” instincts) is aggravated when observing identical instincts in animals (less than “uncivilized,” less than “barbarian:” non-human). Demons reveal the horrible truth that all men are animals, too; that every man is a beast. In the biblical as well as in the biological sense, the Beast is therefore not a complete “other.” The devil is not elsewhere, it is within. If civilization purports to be good, it can only do so by claiming that it is successful at exorcising its demons, and by dividing the universe in good and evil. That is a self-perpetuating battle if the Beast within is not recognized.

Mikhail Bakhtin has often been invoked as a spokesman for marginal groups in society, for counter-culture, or “folk culture” – in short for alternatives to or resistance against the “monolithically serious” character of official culture. His work has often been used in order to present somewhat simplistic modes of a carnivalesque “upside down” world, the temporary suspension of all social rules. Yet Bakhtin’s thinking went in far more complex directions, with a special interest in the grotesque body.<sup>71</sup> One of his greatest contributions must be his analysis of a change of episteme regarding the body: how the Romantic age witnessed the emergence of a new ideal body, which was hermetically closed and unique, motivating a disdain for the pre-Romantic exaggerated body, with its emphasis

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<sup>71</sup> Some scholars, of course, have paid attention to this aspect of Bakhtin’s work. See for example Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, esp. ch. 2. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

on “the apertures or convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose.” This is a body of growth, of abundance, and of energy – of life. It is an unfinished body, because it refuses to give up its vibrant transformations, and an open body, because “it discloses its essence as a principle of growth [...] in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation.”<sup>72</sup> It is a body that admits to the whims of nature, without any false claims to elite sophistication.



**Figure 1.3 – Tomb guardian holding his tongue in one hand, and a snake in his other. Found near Chengdu in Sichuan. Eastern Han dynasty.**

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<sup>72</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 26. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984

Bodily representations such as described by Bakhtin are not unrelated to the demonic body, and share at least the possible effect of a “coming down to earth.” They do away with pretentious claims to high culture, and unmask them as lopsided. Bakhtin’s body degrades romantic ideals of pure beauty, but in degrading this esthetics of purity it “digs a bodily grave for a new birth” – this body is tomb and womb at the same time.<sup>73</sup> Its sprouts and buds are not smoothed out, its apertures are kept open. Elementary forms remain exposed. This body, just like the demonic body, is not made to seem distinct from its environment; it does not posit a claim of total uniqueness, nor of being an entity that is set off from nature’s universals. While the grotesque body of the demon appears different from our own, at the same time it is completely human. It has grown out of man, and it reveals him more honestly, albeit only partially.

In the same vein, demons and the possession they can take of other bodies also illustrate the inseparable unity between the human body and the outside world of objects and (their) powers. The cultured hermetic body purports to be shut off from outside intrusions (and from inner eruptions), but it is this attitude that makes it defenseless and vulnerable.<sup>74</sup> True power lies in the acknowledgment that an adorned, decorated, and groomed body is merely an attempt to conceal the peculiarities of nature.

### 1.7. Daoist ritual: the Civil and the Martial

In Daoist ritual many such insights have been used. During martial rituals, the Daoist master strips himself of decorum and “degrades” himself. He takes off his high-soled “cloud”-shoes and literally comes down to earth. With “disheveled hair and bare feet” 披髮

<sup>73</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> In *Xiyouji*, it is the highly lettered body of the Buddhist monk Sanzang that trembles most and suffers most.

跣足 (the standard phrase that is applied to the exorcist),<sup>75</sup> and often with his “sword drawn” 仗劍, he establishes a connection with the demonic earth – the location of the dead as well as the soil for the living, the tomb and the womb.

The proceedings betray ambivalence: an unadorned martial ritual (sometimes even a ritual nudity) and a garbed literary ritual. The distinction has been described by Kristofer Schipper as one between “vernacular” and “classical” ritual.<sup>76</sup> Daoists past and present referred to vernacular ritual as “lesser rites” 小法 as opposed to the exalted “great rites” 大法. It is true that many other distinctions can be mentioned, yet the question seems more complex. Thinking with Pierre Bourdieu, the label “lesser rites” reeks of a distinction that tries to cover up a similarity.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, the demonic rituals studied in this thesis have made a great impact on the liturgies of classical Daoism. Although the distinction between “vernacular” and “classical” is not challenged in itself, I will argue that classical or “official” ritual is equally packed into a crust of demonic presences, just as much as classical elements have found their way into vernacular ritual. The distinction, however, was crucial to uphold: these ritual differences signaled different “narrative modes” as much as they revealed the capacity of the Daoist to shift between them, to accomplish a metamorphosis.

These two opposites of vernacular crudeness and classical civilization were markers of the dual nature of Thunder Rituals and of the ambiguous provenance of the power of the Daoists who performed them. On the one hand their ritual procedures included the exalted official ceremony of presenting highly refined petitions to the Emperor of Heaven, on the other they included punitive actions that aimed at controlling evil spirits.

<sup>75</sup> For examples of this practice during the performance of Thunder Ritual, see *Daofa huiyuan* 101.6a; 123.27a.

<sup>76</sup> Kristofer Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism.” *JAS* 45:1 (Nov. 1985), pp. 21 - 57

<sup>77</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984

These two major types of Daoist ritual were used to express the “official” and the “martial” aspects of the practitioner. As an official of the heavenly bureaucracy, the Daoist would personally submit himself to the highest cosmic powers and appear before the Gate of Heaven; as a commander of martial spirits he was able to subjugate the earthly realm of the demonic. This duality was expressed through the Daoist’s relative position on the altar. In Figure 1.4 on the outline of a Daoist altar below, one can see that the practitioner would face the Northwest corner for the submission of his petition to Heaven 奏帝, where the trigram *qian* 乾 represented the Gate of Heaven. He would have to turn around to the trigram *xun* 巽 in the Southeast, which represented the Door of Earth 地戶, to “summon thunder” 召雷, “backed up,” as it were, by Heaven.



Figure 1.4. – Outline of Daoist altar shaped after Nine Palaces; summoning thunder facing 巽; court ritual facing 乾

The Daoist's change of position in the altar space manifested spatially his change of status: from a low-ranking official within the celestial bureaucracy who humbly submits to the highest manifestations of godhood, to a divine commander who exerts power over demonic spirits.

On the surface, such a dual role seems to be merely one of a mediator between Heaven and Earth, presenting a petition to Heaven in order to intercede on behalf of the Earth, as well as spreading the transformations on Earth at the behest of Heaven. Indeed, the Daoist seems to be connecting the two separate realms for the duration of the ritual. However, the lay-out of the altar as an enclosed space (part circle, part square) organized by a sequence of various symbolic elements (trigrams, constellations) seems to allow for a complementary interpretation. In addition to the trigrams and constellations that are not visually present on the physical altar, the Daoist stands at the center of another square-circle of symbolical presences, namely gods' statues or other representations of godhood (see chapter 7 for a more detailed account). It is the circular arrangement of these things that makes the hierarchical aspect less pertinent, and the relative distance to its center more meaningful: the Gate of Heaven is no further from the Daoist than the Door of Earth, or any of the other places of spatial significance, such as the Gate of Demons 鬼門 in the Northeast or the Gate of Men 人門 in the Southwest; the celestial gods are not further away than the demonic gods.

As a consequence, the Daoist in the center of the circle, symbolizing the union of *yin* and *yang*, is never outside of any of these symbolic categories, nor does he exclusively belong to any single one of them. From the vantage point of either Heaven and Earth – the two most basic elements in the spatial organization of the altar – the priest's central position

means that he only represents one of them while facing its opposite. In addressing Heaven, he represents Earth, and belongs to Earth as much as Earth is part of him. In ordering Earth, he represents Heaven and belongs Heaven. These two aspects of Daoist ritual might, more stereotypically, be thought of as passive, feminine Earth submitting to Heaven as well as active, masculine Heaven subjugating the Earth. Similar dualities could be mapped out for the other relative positions within the circle of the Eight Trigrams. Suffice to note here that the Gate of Demons is facing the Gate of Men, suggesting two more alternating hierarchies to be enacted by the transforming priest.

The demonic gods dispatched in Daoist ritual equally expressed this duality: they were civilized demons. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, they had come to function within the civilized bureaucracy of the Daoist Thunder Division, elevated with military insignia and decorations, reporting to higher and more sophisticated deities, yet they ultimately remained demons. The divine subject of chapter 2, Sire Thunder, was sublimated into a Daoist ritual agent and an assistant to the Daoist project of “Spreading the Way on Heaven’s behalf” 替天行道, or “Spreading transformations on Heaven’s behalf” 代天行化 (chapter 3). The transformations he spread were identical to those that he himself had gone through, and they expressed the same duality. We will see that on the one hand Sire Thunder had long been a punitive proxy of Heaven before the Tang dynasty, the agent of Heaven’s anger, chasing snakes and dragons; yet in a more domesticated way he had also supported the (Daoist) mystic on his spiritual itinerary through the cosmos. His aggressive exploits were performed at the juncture of civilization and crudeness. He permutated between those two poles and symbolized their alternating powers, sometimes manifesting himself in a subdued and cultured manner, but more often acting with violence – or at least a symbolic form of violence.

This potentiality of a demonic side to the Chinese divine, as well as to the human mind more broadly speaking, are nowhere better documented than in the invocation of thunder gods into the body (of the priest, of the possessed). Time and time again these deities illustrated Freud's observation that "the boundaries of the ego are not constant," that there existed a shared property between body, mind, and outside world.<sup>78</sup> The presence of Heaven as well as Earth inside spiritual beings (such as humans), was expressive both of the anything but absolute dominance of one single aspect of "culture" or "civilization," as well as the responsiveness and receptivity of the human substance to categories more intricate than "culture" alone.

In the same vein, Daoist (as well as esoteric Buddhist) rituals of changing into a deity constantly played upon these commonalities. Thunder gods (invoked or embodied) succeeded in opening up the human body to itself, breaking this "crust" that not only functioned as a "protective shield" against the confusing stimuli of the outside world, but at the same time concealed "the excitations in the deeper layers [that] extend into the system directly and in undiminished amount."<sup>79</sup> Perhaps it was because of this literal depth achieved by the metamorphosis into gods that rituals of bodily change became such a dominant feature of Daoist ritual.<sup>80</sup>

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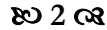
<sup>78</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 14. New York: Norton, 1962.

<sup>79</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 29-32. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989. As Freud clarifies, "[t]he most abundant sources of this internal excitation are what are described as the organism's 'instincts'—the representatives of all the forces originating in the interior of the body and transmitted to the mental apparatus." (p. 40)

<sup>80</sup> For the standard treatment of the hermeneutics of the ritual of body-transformation, see Poul Andersen, "The Transformation of the Body in Taoist Ritual," pp. 186-208. In Jane Marie Law (ed.), *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. For historical references, see *Daofa huizuan* 57.14ab; 62.35a; 80.3a, 10b; 101.10a; 124.12b; 196.20a; 219.1b; 222.4a; 229.10a, 26a-27b; 254.20ab-21a; *Fabai yizhu* 5.3a; 8.27a; 11.1a; 15.5a; 18.2a; 21.; 24.2ab, 4a-7b; 26.11a; 27.1a; 28.11ab; 29.10ab; 30.1a; 32.2ab; 33.10a; 34.2a, 7b, 8ab; 37.1a; 39.13b, 21b; 40.9a, 13a; 43.6b; DZ 566 *Shangqing Tianxin zhengfa* 上清天心正法 5.1a (cited in Andersen 1995, p.195); DZ 1227 *Taishang zhuguo jiumin zongzhen bijiao* 太上助國救民總真祕要 3.7b-8a.



To understand the impact of thunder's therapies on the human mind and its well-being, we must let him out of the cage of his textual confinement.



### A Strange Bird:

Daoist Thunder Ritual and the Metamorphosis of Garuḍa<sup>1</sup>



Figure 2.1. – Thunder God from *Records of the Cursing Jujube* (detail)

## 2.1. The Sublime Demon of Thunder

The abject creature that repeatedly dropped down from the sky onto the muddy surface of the earth during the Tang dynasty (618 – 907), was recognized by local observers as Sire Thunder 雷公.<sup>2</sup> For no apparent reason this archaic deity that had led a relatively peaceful and perhaps somewhat obscure existence until the Tang, suddenly found himself robbed of his clothes, with his naked limbs prone to attacks by mortal weapons and available for graphic representation in the form of paintings and statues. Most intriguingly, starting with the Tang dynasty Sire Thunder no longer appeared entirely human, as he had mostly been described until then: he had grown wings, a beak, and bird’s claws. As we will see below, he had changed into a demonic and uncivilized creature, thus providing an occasion for Daoists to domesticate Sire Thunder and deploy him in their rituals. Already by the year

<sup>1</sup> Garuḍa (Sanskrit for “bird”), is alternatively spelled with a retroflex “d”: *garuḍa*. I would like to thank Patrice Fava for providing the esoteric solution to the riddle posed by Sire Thunder’s transformation. Without him, and without our fieldtrip to Hunan undertaken in September 2004 with Cathy Shi and Ned Davis, this chapter would have looked entirely different.

<sup>2</sup> I translate *gong* 公 with “Sire” instead of the more common “Duke” for several reasons. Firstly, there was nothing aristocratic about Sire Thunder at all – neither before nor during the Tang. Secondly, as is still evident from colloquial Chinese, the word *gong* often denotes a more familiar status, such as “grandpa” 阿公 or in the case of the local Earthgod 土地公, “Father,” or “Sire.” In short, the word *gong* should not be exclusively understood as a noble rank. Elsewhere, I will apply the same principle to “Uncle Wind” 風伯.

1003 these rituals had progressed into Daoist liturgies: the important school of the “Daoist masters of the Supreme Obscurity of the Northern Emperor” 北帝太玄道士 had included a text entitled “the Northern Emperor’s Method of Sire Thunder” 北帝雷公法 in the books to be received upon ordination.<sup>3</sup>

The current chapter is an attempt to place the conspicuous metamorphosis of Sire Thunder within the formative antecedents of what Michel Strickmann has termed the “Taoist Renaissance of the Twelfth Century:” a period of intense growth of Daoism, as well as of a prolonged ritual production.<sup>4</sup> These post-Tang developments have recently been increasingly well studied.<sup>5</sup> However, the Tang dynasty prelude that prepared the way for what was later to become a “Renaissance” has been poorly understood. This lack of research is partly due to the social environment where the roots of historical change have to be sought. Previous scholarship on Tang dynasty religion has placed almost exclusive emphasis on the political and institutional history. Stanley Weinstein’s influential monograph of Buddhism during the Tang exemplifies this tendency.<sup>6</sup> Scholars of Daoism seem to have followed suit: Timothy Barrett, for one, has remarked that as a consequence of the “ever increasing number of scholars who have chosen to comment on the relationship between

<sup>3</sup> DZ 1237 *Sandong xindao yi* 三洞修道儀 8b-9a. For a treatment of this scripture within the context of the exorcist tradition of the Emperor of the North, see Christine Mollier, “La méthode de l’empereur du nord du Mont Fengdu : une tradition exorciste du Taoïsme médiéval,” *T’oung Pao* 83 (1997), p. 329-86.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Strickmann, “The Taoist Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.” Paper prepared for the Third International Conference of Taoist Studies, Unterägeri, September 30, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001; Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; Judith Boltz, “Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural,” pp. 241-305. In P. Ebrey and P. Gregory (eds.), *Religion and Society in Tang and Sung China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993; Matsumoto Kōichi 松本浩一, “Sōdai no raihō 宋代の雷法.” In *Shakai bunka shigaku* 社會文化史學 17 (1979), pp. 45-65, as well as the same author’s “Tenshinhō no kigen to seikaku: tokuni raihō tonō hikaku o tsūjite 天心法の起源と性格：特に雷法との比較を通じて” In *Toshokan jobō kenkyū hokoku* 図書館情報大学研究報告 20:2 (2002); Maruyama Hiroshi 丸山宏, “Jin Yunzhong no Dōkyō girei gaku 金允中の道教儀礼学,” pp. 50-79. In *Dōkyō bunka e no tenbō* 道教文化への展望. Tōkyō: Hirakawa Shuppansha, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the Tang*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Taoism and the T'ang ruling house [...] we must perforce concentrate on that relationship.”<sup>7</sup>  
 Clerical institutions are the main point of reference for Barrett’s study of Tang Daoism.

However, Daoism did not develop primarily as a monastic tradition, or a “church.” Whereas certain defining moments in the history of Daoism took place in the seclusion of monasteries or other institutions that were located outside of the direct reach of laymen or other commoners, such as the Maoshan 茅山 revelations of the fourth century,<sup>8</sup> or Lu Xiuqing’s 陸修靜 (406 – 77) fifth century liturgical compilations,<sup>9</sup> other factors played a role in the formation and spread of Daoism. Ritual, as an area where ideologies of spiritual cultivation were inseparable from performative praxis, was one of them: it was no less than the area in which the Daoist revealed who he was. Ritual was an important cultural practice that was not limited to monasteries, temples, and the like, but that could be performed anywhere – as long as the ritual practitioner could consecrate a temporary sacred space. Far from being an activity that was carried out in seclusion, Daoist ritual was one of the points of convergence for the developing “religious system” that Daoism purported to be, with the autonomous cults that existed in each locality; a point of interaction between religious traditions that transcended specific regions, with local traditions.

Michel Strickmann has noticed the “considerable unity of Taoist ritual practice by the sixth and seventh centuries” over a large portion of China, between Maoshan in the Southeast and Dunhuang 敦煌 in the Northwest.<sup>10</sup> While I would here like to avoid discussions about the implications for the claim to “authenticity” or “unity” of ritual that

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy H. Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion and Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History*. London: Wellsweep, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan: Chronique d'une révélation*. Paris: Collège de France, 1981.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures.” In Michel Strickmann (ed.) *Tantric and Taoist Studies 2* (1983), pp. 434-86.

<sup>10</sup> Strickmann, “The Taoist Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” p. 9.

both reproduction of archaic models as well as invocation of traditions might have, I would like to proceed more directly to the producers of ritual.<sup>11</sup> Given the fact that there was no central authority that governed Daoist structures, we may well assume that this unity in Daoist ritual points us precisely in the direction of whence the spread emerged: ritual practitioners, possibly on grass-root level, instead of ideologues or patriarchs. Although ritual had to be learnt through apprenticeship under a particular master (not necessarily just one, it is obvious from Daoist histories that it was not uncommon to learn from several subsequent masters), an initiated priest could freely hold his ritual office wherever he preferred. He did not have to report to some organization that watched over his moral correctness or adherence to “orthodoxy.” He could choose to remain in his native region and practice there, he could go wandering on pilgrimages to sacred mountains, he could opt for a stay of some time in a monastery, or he could combine those options.

Once certified through ordination by his master, a Daoist was in no need of institutional endorsement by a monastic community. Although monasteries had slowly gained some following among Daoists after the stimulus was provided by Buddhist examples, they simply were not as representative of Daoism as they had been of Buddhism. It was not until the patronage of emperor Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684 – 90 and 710 – 12) that China witnessed an “increased foundation of Taoist monastic establishments.”<sup>12</sup> And even then, there is no evidence that the monastic institution suddenly assumed predominance over Daoists who lived without monastic affiliation. It is, unfortunately, on the basis of this institutional bias that quick conclusions are drawn by non-specialists.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of related issues, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, p. 193-96.

<sup>12</sup> Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang*, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> When Peter Bol remarks in passing that the Buddhist church “was double the size of the Taoist church in the eighth century,” his assumptions are based upon Barrett’s. See Peter K. Bol, *“This Culture of Ours:” Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China*, p. 18. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Then how should the ritual practice of Daoism during the Tang be studied? What can we say about the whereabouts of Daoist practitioners? If the records on Daoist ritualists in the sections on “Techniques of the Dao” 道術 and “Deceitful Techniques” 幻術 of the *Extensive Records from the Taiping Era* 太平廣記 (hereafter simply *Extensive Records*) by Li Fang 李昉 (925 – 996) are any indication, only a small portion of Tang dynasty Daoist ritual practitioners lived in monasteries.<sup>14</sup> Most stories do not mention monastic ties anywhere; the respective Daoists simply seem to have lived in the town or region mentioned at the beginning of the story. If a label was attached to them at all, it would be that of “learned man in residence” 居士 – meaning in residence at a worldly home, probably as the head of a family.<sup>15</sup> As representatives of a tiny minority of highly literate professionals, Daoists of this time appropriately deserved the label “learned man,” or “scholar.” It is moreover on the basis of these practitioners that the label of “hearth-dwelling Daoist scholars” 火居道士 later became the stereotypical way of referring to this Daoist clergy that lived among the people, the hearth being a metonymy for “home.” Another appellation could be “scholar of [ritual] techniques” 術士, referring to their most prominent occupation of ritualists.

Daoist monasteries 觀 could indeed be places for scholarly exchange, additional ritual training, or lodging during pilgrimages. In such cases it would be said that Daoists “often [or: extensively] spent the night” 常寢 at such and such monastery.<sup>16</sup> Others “often

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<sup>14</sup> I suspect that the number of monastic Daoists was even smaller than the stories of *Taiping guangji* suggest. It may rather have been the case that stories of encounters with learned men from prestigious Daoist institutions lent some extra weight to the charisma of the local master. For the majority of practitioners it would probably provide a huge increase of prestige if they could claim an encounter with an “extraordinary person” 異人, either from the mountains, or from a faraway monastery. The relative monotony of a daily life of ritual performances was predictable enough to benefit from the spice of legendary figures.

<sup>15</sup> Li Fang 李昉, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, 75.468: “Yang Jushi” 楊居士; 75.471: “Wang Xiansheng” 王先生.

<sup>16</sup> *Taiping guangji* 71.440: “Zhao Gao” 趙高.

wandered” 常遊 in the mountains.<sup>17</sup> And there were those who lived “deep in the mountains” 深山;<sup>18</sup> or “[wandering] somewhere between the rivers and lakes” 江湖之間.<sup>19</sup> But although monastic affiliations did exist, they represented a minority.

Temples 廟 that were devoted to divine cults seem to have been a possible residence for shamans 巫 (or Buddhist monks?), rather than Daoists – a situation that markedly differed during the Song dynasty and after, when Daoists residing in “popular” temples were a more common phenomenon. The scarce evidence for Daoists residing in temples did not mean that they could not in some way be related to a temple, or perform rituals in the space of a temple. Yet the more common resident of a temple would be a “temple shamaness” 廟巫, serving 事 the temple’s main god, who would possess her body and speak through it.<sup>20</sup> I say shamaness, because many cases describe women, often practicing divination by the lute 琵琶 卜. Surveys of monasteries or temples thus are not an accurate reflection of the actual proportions of the Daoist clergy.<sup>21</sup>

It is in the milieu around the local community with its local (as well as transregional) cults that I situate the dawn of the Daoist Renaissance, exemplified by the metamorphosis of Sire Thunder. It is in this environment that the lion’s share of ritual battles against demons must have been fought. I hope to show that the Daoist practitioners literally marshaled the powers of demonic beings to deploy them in their own rituals as fierce, exorcist gods. The liturgies that were constructed during the Song dynasty on the basis of Tang local cults revolved most notably around the avatars of Sire Thunder. This ritual corpus, known as

<sup>17</sup> *Taiping guangji* 72.447: “Wang Yu” 王昱; 73.455: “Wang Chang” 王常.

<sup>18</sup> *Taiping guangji* 73.454: “Zhou Xianzhe” 周賢者; 73.459 “Luo Xuansu” 駱玄素.

<sup>19</sup> *Taiping guangji* 74.465: “Shi Yu” 石昱.

<sup>20</sup> *Taiping guangji* 283.2253-4: “Shi Shuli” 師舒禮; 283.2254: “Nüwu Qinshi” 女巫秦氏; 283.2254: “Yang Lin” 楊林; 291.2316-7 “Mei Gu” 梅姑.

<sup>21</sup> Therefore I apply the word clergy with some hesitation, as it seems to imply a certain institutional affiliation.

Thunder Ritual 雷法, was designed to conquer demons without necessarily destroying them, to subjugate them and have them prove their mettle at fighting other demons. My thesis will be concerned with this important yet underestimated development.

As I will describe in detail throughout the following pages, Sire Thunder's Daoist career began during the Tang with his ascent from local cult to much more exalted godhood – his story offers profound insights into the dynamics as well as the popularity of ritual sublimation. The new, avian and simian manifestations of the old Sire Thunder were at first referred to with degrading appellations such as “thunder demon” 雷鬼.<sup>22</sup> By the early tenth century his status was already enhanced to “General Sire Thunder” 雷公將軍, working within a Thunder Agency 雷司.<sup>23</sup> And by the end of the Northern Song (960 – 1126) his avatars had been promoted to the rank of Marshal 元帥, commanding the divine armada of the Thunder Division 雷部.<sup>24</sup> During the Yuan (1279 – 1368) these gods were superseded by sublime divinities such as the “Celestial Worthy of the Ninefold Heavens, Responding to the Primordial, and Universally Transforming with the Sound of Thunder” 九天應元雷聲普化天尊.<sup>25</sup> Liturgies of the Ming (1368 – 1644) feature thunder gods throughout virtually any major liturgy, as protectors of the ritual space as well as in the central role of the ritual.<sup>26</sup>

In short, the ritual production that accrued on the body of Sire Thunder and his offspring occupied a major portion within the evolution of Daoism. The chapter before you

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<sup>22</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3146: “Chen Luanfeng” 陳鸞鳳; 394.3147 “Xiao Shizi” 蕭氏子; 395.3155: “Yang Xunmei cong zi” 楊詢美從子.

<sup>23</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 73.2b.

<sup>24</sup> See chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> See Poul Andersen, “Wielding the Breath of the Nine Heavens: The Iconography of Leisheng puhua tianzun.” Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 31-April 3, 2005

<sup>26</sup> See chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis.



explores the inaugural phase of this development, when Sire Thunder's demonic nature is first graphically displayed in order to pave the way for his sublimation into new identities.

## 2.2. Sire Thunder before the Tang

Sire Thunder's history is complex, the beginnings of his cult older than the textual references we have about him. Some scholars have argued that around the time when Chinese characters developed into more complex varieties, the deified thunder was directly related to ways in which general notions of divinity developed.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, only few authors did more than mention thunder in passing, but it is clear from pre-Han sources such as the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭 that, unsurprisingly, thunder was thought to be a divine power.<sup>28</sup>

The longest description of early thunder-lore known to me, in Wang Chong's *Lunheng*, was designated to refute the divine charisma that apparently was widely associated with thunder.<sup>29</sup> Just as with Wang Chong's diatribes against belief in demons that we have seen in the introductory chapter, the detailed observations recorded in *Lunheng* provide extensive clues as to the role that thunder played during this early imperial period. According to Wang Chong, the common people at his time held the view that thunder targeted people whose past crimes had gone unavenged. At the same time, thunder dealt with dragons that refused to produce rain.

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<sup>27</sup> Xu Shan 徐山 describes a linear relationship between the characters 申 神 電 雷 靈. He furthermore points out a semantic similarity between 龍 for “dragon” and 神 for “god” 申 and “lightning”/“thunder” 電/雷. Xu Shan, *Leishen chongbai: Zhongguo wenhua yuanshi tansuo* 雷神崇拜：中國文化原實探索, p. 1-8. Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> See below. Also see chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> In his “treatise on the emptiness of thunder” 雷虛篇, Wang Chong provides a rather extensive critical survey of cultic customs and other lore associated with thunder.

Commoners think that when [thunder] shatters a tree, or destroys a house, it is Heaven arresting a dragon; and if thunder kills a man, then it is because he had a hidden crime.<sup>30</sup>

世俗以爲擊折樹木，壞敗室屋者，天取龍。其犯殺人也，謂之有陰過。

As we will see in more detail below, the association of Sire Thunder with dragons went further than one of executioner and delinquent. The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經 describes the “god of thunder” 雷神 as himself having “a dragon’s body with a human head, drumming on his belly” 龍身而人頭，鼓其腹。<sup>31</sup> In his commentary, Guo Pu 郭璞 (276 – 324) suggested a connection to the mythological emperor Fu Xi 伏羲, who was equally depicted with a serpentine lower body.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 2.2. – Thunder God from late imperial edition of *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. Note that the artist has disregarded the textual ascription of a “human head.” Instead, he has followed later iconographic conventions.



Figure 2.3. – Fu Xi (left) as depicted in the Wuliang Shrines 武梁祠 from the first century of our era.

<sup>30</sup> *Lumbeng*, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup> *Shanhai jing* 山海經, p. 329. Taipei: Liren, 1982.

<sup>32</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 330.

Wang Chong's account does nowhere mention the serpentine features of Sire Thunder. Instead of resembling certain mythical gods of ancient China, in *Lunheng* Sire Thunder is clearly a human figure. However, he does confirm the sound of drums that thunder represented.

Those artisans who make paintings, whenever they depict the shapes of thunder they will do so in the form of drums strung together. There are also those who paint a man with the appearance of a muscleman, and they call him Sire Thunder. They make him haul his string of drums with his left hand, and pound them with his right hand, in a posture as if he is attacking them.<sup>33</sup>

圖畫之工，圖雷之狀，纍纍如連鼓之形。又圖一人，若力士之容，謂之「雷公」。使之左手引連鼓，右手椎之，若擊之狀。

Wang Chong adds that this sound was thought to be a manifestation of Heaven's anger 天怒.<sup>34</sup> In many of the representations of Sire Thunder that were produced after the first and second centuries, painters included a semi-circle of a varying number of drums, mostly five, but the number could vary (see Figures 1.1, 2.1, 2.3, and *passim*). These drums sometimes even represented thunder without his physical image represented. In a rare depiction of Sire Thunder from the Eastern Han, the drums were placed around his body (see below) – in this case, too, a human body. The thunder gods from the late imperial era oftentimes preserved this circular string of drums. Some stories suggest that “strings of drums” were still a part of the cult to Sire Thunder as actually practiced during the Tang dynasty.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Lunheng*, p. 303.

<sup>34</sup> *Lunheng*, p. 294-5; this coheres with a story in Gan Bao 干寶, *Soushenji* 搜神記, p. 99. Taipei: Muduo, 1985.

<sup>35</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3149: “Lei Gong miao” 雷公廟.



**Figure 2.4. – Sire Thunder pounding drums. Rubbing of a tomb-wall from the Eastern Han (25 – 220)**

Sire Thunder's cult was a part of imperial sacrifices from the beginning of the Eastern Han dynasty (25 – 220) onwards, when he received offerings alongside the Twenty Eight Constellations, the gods of agriculture, rain, wind, as well as the mountains and waters.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately we have no indications as to the way in which his statue was fashioned (if statues were indeed used). Wang Chong denied thunder a divine quality, yet with his description he at least confirmed that the early imperial Sire Thunder did not yet have wings. The multifaceted argument in *Lunheng* focused on the absence of wings in Sire Thunder's iconography, an aspect that appeared strange to Wang Chong.

<sup>36</sup> *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, pp. 3159-60.

All things that fly have wings, and flying things without wings are called Immortals.

If one paints the shapes of an Immortal, one will give him wings. If Sire Thunder were similar to an Immortal, then he should have wings.<sup>37</sup>

飛者皆有翼，物無翼而飛，謂仙人。畫仙人之形爲之作翼。如雷公與仙人同，宜復者翼。

At that time, immortals were commonly representations with wings, as can also be seen in the decorations on the walls of the Wu family shrine.<sup>38</sup> According to Wang Chong, then, their iconography thus differed sharply from Sire Thunder's, and Sire Thunder was not an immortal.

Another pre-Tang characteristic of thunder was his habit to scorch the human skin, a habit that was interpreted as the inscription of the heavenly verdict on the surface of the sinner's body. This phenomenon highly resembled the habit of tattooing or branding crimes committed onto the skins of criminals. These fiery patterns, "the writing on [the bodies of] those killed by thunder" 雷死之書, apparently were already known during Wang Chong's time as "thunder writing" 雷書.<sup>39</sup> Approximately around the Tang dynasty, writing with this name attained an increasingly important impact within Daoism as revelation texts. Usually translated as "thunder writes," they were understood to reveal the structure of the cosmos.<sup>40</sup>

Sire Thunder did more than merely scratch the surface of things; he entered beneath the living skin. Already during the Han dynasty, he unmistakably was a language-producing

<sup>37</sup> *Lunheng*, p. 305.

<sup>38</sup> The stone reliefs that were carved on the walls of the Wu family shrines were part of a cemetery complex in Jiexiang county, in the eastern Chinese province of Shandong. Traditionally they have been dated to the mid-second century.

<sup>39</sup> *Lunheng*, p. 308-9.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Despeux, "Talismans and Diagrams," pp. 498-540. In Livia Kohn (ed.), *Daoism Handbook*. Leiden: Brill, 2000

entity, not simply aiming at the human body by attaching discourse to it, but also speaking from within it. Sire Thunder's language was not only "encrusted upon the living," covering with his uncanny discourse of heavenly law the outer layers of physical being, he made use of the mortal physique to embody his presence.<sup>41</sup> This latter aspect is illustrated in two of his earliest occurrences, showing that he was already a constituent part of early Daoist bodily transformation practices. The oldest and murkiest reference is contained in a work that dates back to a time shortly before the Western Han: the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭. In this case he was a part of the spiritual (or meditative) journey, "roaming afar" 遠遊, that proto-Daoist practitioners made to the Celestial Palace.<sup>42</sup> As such, Sire Thunder functioned inside the body, and as a constituent element of the body. We will treat this important aspect of Sire Thunder in chapter 3, where it will fit better into the context of the interior ritual.

In one of his many commentaries, the Han dynasty scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127 – 200) remarks that "people today refer to thunder as Sire Thunder" 今人謂雷曰雷公, suggesting that Wang Chong's observations were still valid during the second century AD.<sup>43</sup> Baopu Zi 抱朴子 (283 – 363) mentions the concept of "pounding the drums of thunderclap" 伐雷霆之鼓 by the imperial ruler as a metaphor for a loud event that should not distract the practitioner from his concentration, but he adds little more.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject*, p. 12. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> See the next chapter for a discussion of the Daoist practice involving "roaming afar" as described in the *Chu Ci* and later texts.

<sup>43</sup> Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, *Wujing Yiyi* 五經異義. In *Lunheng jiaoyi* 論衡校釋, p. 303. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990.

<sup>44</sup> Ge Hong 葛洪, *Baopu Zi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, p. 17. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1996; One record referring to events only shortly after Wang Chong's death stands out: according to the *Hou Hanshu*, the name of Sire Thunder was one among many other autonyms used for popular uprisings after the Yellow Turbans, but the details of this movement appear to have eluded official historiography (*Hou Hanshu*, p. 2310).

The more archaic manifestation of Sire Thunder as an expert in medical lore who counseled the Yellow Emperor was still current during the Tang.<sup>45</sup> In a section on medical treatises of the *Old History of the Tang* 舊唐書, he features as the subject in a scripture comprising two *juan* called *Sire Thunder's Herbal Answers* 雷公藥對.<sup>46</sup> In the *New History of the Tang* 新唐書, too, one medical treatise refers to *Collected Writings of Sire Thunder* 雷公集撰.<sup>47</sup> In herbal medicine as well as ritual therapy Sire Thunder had become an active presence; it is on his ritual manifestations that the focus of the following pages will be.



Figure 2.5. – To the left-hand side of the central divinity: Thunder God surrounded by drums on the ceiling of Dunhuang cave 249 (Western Wei dynasty, 535 – 56)

### 2.3. Sire Thunder's Fall: A Tang Dynasty Morphology of the Uncivilized

When Sire Thunder found himself caught in the webs of mortal discourse during the Tang, he manifested himself in an unprecedented way. In addition to the avian features I

<sup>45</sup> *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 23.1a ff. Taipei, 1971.

<sup>46</sup> *Jin Tangshu* 舊唐書, p. 2047. 945 reprint edition. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975.

<sup>47</sup> *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, p. 1566. 1060 reprint edition. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975.

mentioned in the opening lines, he had come to possess a martial character due to his weapons: an awl, or chisel, a hammer, sometimes a sword or a spear. He no longer appeared to be like the old, familiar Sire Thunder, that muscular male body; his features were now strange, uncanny, obscene, aggressive, and uncivilized – truly a “thunder demon.” In the pages to come I will present a survey of these new features, and show that they were expressive of the fruitful encounter between Daoism, on the one hand, and Buddhism as well as the local cult on the other. I will show that a corpus of ritual had started to develop around the new manifestations of Sire Thunder, emerging out of the morphology of diabolical powers that were present in (rural) localities.

### **2.3.1. Rituals of Sire Thunder**

The metamorphosis of Sire Thunder from anthropomorphic to theriomorphic divinity (and back again) was staged as an encounter, as meetings between the stable eyes of the mortal world with the unpredictable manifestations of the divine realm. The stories of interactions between men and gods offered an occasion to present an unprecedented occurrence not as something “new” but rather as an anomaly that was “newly discovered.” Yet despite the implicit claim that this anomaly already existed, we shall be able to observe that Sire Thunder’s repeated manifestations during the Tang were neither a discovery, nor a coincidence – they constituted a real metamorphosis. In turn, this metamorphosis revealed the uncivilized underside of Heaven, and those who worshiped Heaven.

It appears that many of the narrative details about Sire Thunder in *Extensive Records* were somehow directly related to rituals and cultic forms as they actually existed at the time. Consistent with the “phenomenon of cultural borrowing” and “iconographical appropriation” that Franciscus Verellen has shown to be a serious issue in Daoist records of



late Tang dynasty, I will show that the new Sire Thunder assimilated indigenous cults to local Thunder gods, while taking into account the gods of esoteric Buddhism.<sup>48</sup>

Sire Thunder's first known encounter with representatives of a bureaucratic system proclaiming orthodoxy is described in a short story bearing the name of its main protagonist Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (607 – 700), a Tang dynasty official reputed for his active prosecution of cults that were considered heterodox by him – or at least thought to be so by his patron, Empress Wu. In the story, which is set in Daizhou 代州 in Di Renjie's region of birth in present day Shanxi 山西, a large tree is struck by a thunderclap and split in two.<sup>49</sup> As it turns out upon inquiry by Di Renjie, Sire Thunder has gotten stuck in between the two halves of the tree, roaring his thunderous voice, unable to get out. He explains to Di Renjie that he had been “ordered” 令 to expel an evil dragon living in the tree, but the impact of his descent was so great that he now could no longer move, and promises great rewards if the bureaucrat will free him. Di Renjie, interestingly, agrees to release him instead of destroying him. As nothing indicates that this so-called “Sire Thunder” is not a wicked monster, it is surprising that Di Renjie indeed decides to let him escape, especially given the fact that the empress Wu Zetian promoted Buddhism at the expense of Chinese local religions – both Daoism and local heresies. Could it be possible that in the eyes of Di Renjie, this Sire Thunder was in some way related to Buddhist gods, or to the canonical divine?

Aside from showing a certain official tolerance with which this Sire Thunder that dropped down from the sky was treated, the story thus states one of the specific aims

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<sup>48</sup> Franciscus Verellen, “Evidential Miracles in Support of Taoism?: The Inversion of a Buddhist Apologetic Tradition in Late Tang China.” *T'oung Pao* 78 (1992), pp. 245-57.

<sup>49</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3138-9.

associated with Sire Thunder: he attacked vipers with his thunder powers.<sup>50</sup> He did so because he was “ordered” – an element that clearly implies a subaltern position, but it is unclear to what or to whom. Had Sire Thunder been sent by a Daoist ritual practitioner? It is impossible to say. Moreover, rather than forming a coherent image of a supernatural entity possessing a unique punitive or exorcizing quality, this and other early stories from the Tang dynasty presented a muddled picture of an impulsive and still somewhat autonomous power that was as raw as it was unpredictable, with his aversion of snakes (or is it a predilection for them?) not always more than a freakish twist of his character. But what image did Sire Thunder project, what are the shapes that contained his powers?

The exploration of the forms and features of Sire Thunder finds a divine body that bespeaks certain coherence in some ways, but difference in others. Although a clear tendency emerged to depict Sire Thunder as a bird-like or bat-like creature, his early manifestations vary. The following story from *Extensive Records*, entitled “Xu Li 徐訥,” contains a great number of important features that recur in other texts: his demonical appearance, his pointed beak-like snout, flesh wings, and metallic claws. The story is included in the *Records of Registered Marvels* 錄異記.<sup>51</sup> This collection of marvels is considered to be the literary masterwork of the famous Daoist Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850 – 933).<sup>52</sup>

In Yanling County in Runzhou, bordering on Maoshan, during the Yuanhe period of the Tang [806 – 820], there was once a great occurrence of wind and rain. A demon dropped down, more than two *zhang* long, black and with a hog-like face, horns of five to six *chi*

<sup>50</sup> The first reference to the existence of these attributions is made in *Lunheng*, p. 381-3. Details are mentioned in *Taiping guangji* 425.3457: “Guoyanlang” 郭彥郎.

<sup>51</sup> DZ 591 *Luyi ji* 錄異記.

<sup>52</sup> Franciscus Verellen, *Du Guangting (850-933): Taoïste de cour a la fin de la Chine médiévale*, p. 171. Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1989

long, and flesh wings of over one *zhang*. It had a leopard tail. Moreover, it wore a red apron that covered only half of its body, and a leopard skin wound around its waist. Its hands and feet had two claws that were of a metallic [golden] color, and it held a red snake on which it trampled with its feet. Fixating its eyes it wanted to eat the snake and its voice sounded like thunder. There was a farmer named Xu Li who happened to see this, and he ran away in fright, reporting it to the official of the district. Immediately the local authorities sent someone over to go and see it personally. Thereupon an order was issued to make a drawing. Soon afterwards there was again thunder and rain. It clapped its wings and disappeared.<sup>53</sup>

唐潤州延陵縣茅山界。元和春。大風雨。墮一鬼。身二丈餘。黑色。面如豬首。角五六尺。肉翅丈餘。豹尾。又有半服絳禪。豹皮纏腰。手足兩爪皆金色。執赤虵。足踏之。瞪目欲食。其聲如雷。田人徐誦。忽見驚走。聞縣。尋邑令親往觀焉。因令圖寫。尋復雷雨。翼之而去。

The details of the story not only situate this apparition within the context of other divine manifestations of thunder, as we will see below. They also suggest strongly that certain of the ritual features associated with the later liturgies of thunder already existed during the Tang dynasty.<sup>54</sup> The leopard skin around his waist, moreover, associates the provenance of his power with a specific type martial ritual and with a number of famous gods.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3144. This story was classified in the first of three sections on thunder in *Extensive Records*, although it does not explicitly identify this creature as Sire Thunder. Its relation to thunder and rain are nonetheless more than just coincidental, as is the demon's special interest in vipers. Indeed, one later source identifies this creature with hindsight as a "thunder god" 雷神 (Qian Xiyan 錢希言, *Kuaiyuan* 獮園. 1613 preface; 1774 edition. In *Xuxin Siku quanshu* (v. 1267). Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995). Two more stories in *Taiping guangji* relate of thunder's exploits in the region of Maoshan: 395.3159-60: "Li Cheng" 李誠 and 395.3160 "Maoshan niu" 茅山牛.

<sup>54</sup> The similarities with the divinity that was to become the chief-commander of the thunder-armies after the Tang dynasty, Marshal Deng 鄧元帥, are striking (*Daofa huiyuan* 80.1ab). Marshal Deng equally has a "black [or:



Figure 2.6. – Ming dynasty print of a thunder god, with wings, apron, leopard skin, hammer and awl. Note the partially visible drums in the upper left corner.

Another thing to keep in mind here is that in Du Guangting’s record Sire Thunder was not merely enforcing some heavenly verdict on the snake, disciplining it according to the law – he actually wanted to eat the venomous creature. Sire Thunder had started to appropriate the power of his victims by internalizing them.

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dark blue-green] face” 青面, “flesh wings” 肉翅, “claws” 爪, a “red, reatreating apron with straps” 紅吊褪裙. While the god above stands on a “red [or: naked] snake,” Marshal Deng rides a “red [or: naked] dragon” 赤龍. The details of Marshal Deng’s description exceed those of his Tang dynasty predecessor, such as the hammer and awl he holds, but other Tang manifestations of thunder do hold these tools.

<sup>55</sup> The gods I am thinking of are Li Nuozha 李哪吒 and Sun Wukong 孫悟空, whose hagiographic feat of power was equally based upon their conquests of dragons, while wearing leopard skins; just like the vernacular master.

Du Guangting's descriptions differed from earlier ones. Sire Thunder's appearance was not like the strong man that Wang Chong had described, but a more demonic, frightful entity that had the traits of a bird. Although this new appearance was so fraught with foreignness, authorities still recognized him as thunder. Their response went beyond mere recognition: they observed and fixated him by having him put into iconic form. To some degree the construction of the story itself brought to realization what the local authorities wanted (a textual mastery over the seemingly uncontrollable), and it seems in accord with what Robert Campany has defined as the goal behind collecting anomalies as "the domestication of that which is dangerously wild, the fixing of anomaly in a stable format" on the one hand, while on the other aiming to "display its foreignness."<sup>56</sup>

Yet there may have been a more significant aspect of these textual and iconographic records. The new Sire Thunder was not necessarily represented by drawings for the mere purpose of collecting anomalies. Du Guangting's story of such a graphic representation roughly coincides in time with the earliest historical references to the practice of "drawing of a Sire Thunder Talisman" 畫雷公符, dating back to 945.<sup>57</sup> This practice can be considered a hallmark of Thunder Ritual. The textual and iconographic control over thunder was required for his ritual subjugation.

A further suggestion of a ritual dimension to Sire Thunder is present in another narrative from *Extensive Records*. The story entitled "Chen Luanfeng 陳鸞鳳" describes an unexpected encounter with Sire Thunder; just as Du Guangting's story it claimed to recount

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*, p. 12. Albany: SUNY, 1996; According to Campany, furthermore, the act of recording these strange phenomena (during the time that previous generations of scholars have hailed as the "birth of fiction") constitutes a "flight from the center, [...] beyond the bounds of service to the imperial center." This discursive shift is not quite unlike the Tang dynasty "departure from the norm of historical discourse." See Sheldon Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality*, p. 128. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

<sup>57</sup> *Jiu Tangshu*, p. 4220.

events from the Yuanhe reign.<sup>58</sup> The person from whom the story derives its title burned down a temple dedicated to Sire Thunder in Haikang 海康 in southern China, because of the deity's irresponsiveness to rain-prayers during a drought.<sup>59</sup> We should thus note, first of all, that temples to Sire Thunder apparently were already perceived as religious sites for the production of rain. This adds a different dimension to narrative aspects of thunder lore that portray Sire Thunder as a controller of dragons: people imagined him to act upon other supernatural beings in order to end droughts.

Chen Luanfeng is said to have gone out into an open field. There he intentionally transgressed certain taboos associated with the cult to Sire Thunder (not eating fish in combination with pork) in order to provoke the deity to manifest himself, and fight him.<sup>60</sup> After a while, the story goes:

strange clouds rose, an evil wind grew, swift thunder and sudden rain struck him. Chen Luanfeng thereupon took his blade and brandished it up into the air. He actually did hit the left buttock of [Sire] Thunder and chopped it off. When [Sire] Thunder fell down on the earth, he was shaped like a boar, had hairy horns and wings of flesh, all colored blue. In his hands he held a short handled hard stone axe. Blood gushed forth and wind and rain were completely extinguished.

果怪雲生。惡風起。迅雷急雨震之。鸞鳳乃以刃上揮。果中雷左股而斷。雷墮地。狀類熊豬。毛角。肉翼青色。手執短柄剛石斧。流血注然。雲雨盡滅。

<sup>58</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3145-6.

<sup>59</sup> This was the “Land of Thunder” 雷州, close to the Song dynasty center of the thunder rituals promoted by Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾, see below.

<sup>60</sup> That respect for taboos regarding the thunder cult was no small matter is illustrated by the massacre described in *Taiping guangji* 393.3137: “Shilei” 石勒.

The story continues by relating that Chen Luanfeng wanted to devour Sire Thunder (again this uncanny detail of physical appropriation), and goes on to describe how the people of the region feared they would be punished for Chen Luanfeng's bravery. Only after a second feat of strength, repeatedly proving Chen Luanfeng's invulnerability to attacks from thunder, did they acknowledge his great powers and gave him the interesting ritual title of "Rain Master." By the Yuanhe period this title designated a ritual function that had only recently been elevated from the minor to the medium rank in the state ritual observances.<sup>61</sup>

Intriguingly, this story also seems to provide a glimpse of a nascent tradition of Thunder Ritual. One post-Tang source suggests that a divinized Chen Luanfeng was present in later Daoist thunder ritual: he was referred to as "Chen Luanfeng, General Supervising Envoy of the Five Thunders" 五雷總管使者陳鸞鳳.<sup>62</sup> This scripture was associated with a thunder lineage precisely from that region. Is it possible that the story from *Extensive Records* is somehow related to the actual ritual sublimation of Chen Luanfeng? Was there perhaps a cult bearing his name that later transcended its Southern Chinese bedrock and was absorbed into less "local" Daoist liturgies? It certainly appears that way.

Generally, although in the stories considered thus far Sire Thunder was presented as a strange and otherworldly creature, an animal-like demon with foreign powers, he was clearly not invulnerable to human attacks; getting stuck in a tree hardly suggests a sophisticated or almighty god. Moreover, in the picture drawn by the story of Chen Luanfeng, Sire Thunder appeared as a possible object for mortal resistance: his actions are questioned, his sovereignty is challenged, and the integrity of his body violated. Even if Sire Thunder was immensely powerful, he could be made to stray from his safe otherworldly

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<sup>61</sup> Victor Xiong, "Ritual Innovations and Taoism under Tang Xuanzong." *T'oung Pao* 82 (1996), p. 261; more generally it may have been used for village mediums generally speaking – perhaps those wearing leopard skins.

<sup>62</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 122.5a, 19a.

position into the net of mortal discourse. Such stories of encounters with Sire Thunder, I surmise, constitute the first stage in his ritual subjugation. Through them he was prepared for his new role as a ritually manipulable subject of thunder ritual.

Already during the early eighth century some persuasive instances were recorded in which Sire Thunder's fierce powers apparently could be ritually manipulated by mortals.<sup>63</sup> I have already mentioned above the drawing of "Sire Thunder Talismans," and it would be hard to imagine how these could have existed external to the workings of a ritualized Sire Thunder. From the tenth century collection *Trivia from the Northern Dreamer* 北夢瑣言 by Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (ca. 900 – 68) comes the record of a "villager" 村民 from Xinfan 新繁 in Sichuan who claims: "I have received the Registers of Sire Thunder and I have the same position as thunder" 我受雷公籙，與雷同職。<sup>64</sup> The transmission of registers was a key component in Daoist ordination practice, and to have received them indicates allegiance with a more elaborate body of ritual. The interesting thing about this record (set during the first half of the eighth century) is that it may have referred to remnants of an older thunder tradition. Although we know virtually nothing about the possible existence of earlier Thunder Ritual, this example from Sichuan clearly contains evidence that suggests ritualized and transmitted practices revolving around a representation of thunder that was "bureaucratized." Because the shapes painted in these registers depicted a "strong man" 壯夫, and a "scholar" 士, among others, and there is no mention of creatures with a beak or with wings, one is tempted to think that this is an older form of Thunder Ritual, referring

<sup>63</sup> T.H. Barret has suggested that "the techniques of Thunder Magic remained unknown" to writers of the ninth century, "even when they were aware of the importance of thunder to new forms of Taoism." See Timothy H. Barrett, "Towards a Date for the 'Chin-so liu-chu yin' 金鎖流珠引" *BSOAS* Vol. 53, No. 2 (1990), pp. 292, n. 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Tai ping guang ji* 395.3157: "Tiangong tan" 天公壇.



itself to the Sire Thunder as he was known before the Tang. The “strong man,” moreover, performed an action that may be seen to correspond closely with later Daoist ritual: he was seen to “pound a hole in the ground with his fists to make a well” 以拳擊地爲井.<sup>65</sup>

The above story furthermore mentioned that a Daoist scholar from Dongcun 東村 in Jiangling 江陵 (present-day Hubei) also possessed these registers. They were said to belong to the “one hundred and two methods not included in the ritual registers of the Three Grottoes [i.e. the official Daoist Canon]” 三洞法籙外，有一百二法. In this instance the registers apparently existed in the form of pictures on scrolls, representing humanly shaped figures executing certain powerful actions (digging a well, carrying wood, holding a mountain).<sup>66</sup> It will be useful to point out that this sums up the situation of Thunder Ritual until the fifteenth century: even though it was widely popular, it was long left out of canonical Daoism.

In the first paragraph of this chapter I have mentioned “the Northern Emperor’s Method of Sire Thunder” that the Daoists of the Northern Emperor tradition included among the texts received upon ordination. The interesting thing about this reference is not just that it shows the advancement of Thunder Ritual into Daoist traditions by 1003. An invaluable comment as to the function of these texts is added, saying that they can “control the demons and spirits of the Sixfold Heavens, expulse evil and avert disaster” 制六天鬼

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<sup>65</sup> Daoist exorcist manuals of later ages often featured the symbolic drawing of a well in the ritual space where demons could be confined. See ch. 3 for a detailed description of the ritual creation of wells.

<sup>66</sup> *Taiping guangji* 395.3157: “Tiangong tan” 天公壇.

神、辟邪禳禍。<sup>67</sup> Christine Mollier remarks that the dagger and the seal of Fengdu these Daoists carry “leaves no doubt about their function as demon-chasers.”<sup>68</sup>

There are hints that these forms of exorcism were utilized for more than strictly “religious” purposes only, namely for military expeditions.<sup>69</sup> A record from the *Miscellany of the Youyang Mountains* 酉陽雜俎 by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (ca. 803 – 63) relates of a Daoist *jiao* ritual during which “the sound of thunder can be ordered to appear” 令致雷聲. When emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712 – 745) hears this, called Bao Chao 包超, he orders the practitioner to accompany the famous general Geshuhan 哥舒翰 (? – 757) on his Western expeditions.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, it is possible that even military men such as the great Tang general Gao Pian 高駢 (d. 887) may have been initiated in this kind of lore when he received the dagger of the Northern Emperor from the Daoist “quack” Lü Yongzhi 呂用之.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.3.2. Multiplication of Sire Thunder

Other records of Daoist involvement with thunder also seem to evince the existence of a ritual corpus that revolved around thunder. Foreboding the Song dynasty dissection of Sire Thunder’s body into many Thunder Gods, it appears that Sire Thunder had come to exist in multiple personalities. Du Guangting, in his *Biographies of Encounters with Spirits and Immortals*, recorded an encounter that parallels the earlier story of Di Renjie.<sup>72</sup> The story is

<sup>67</sup> DZ 1237 *Sandong xiudao yi*, 9a

<sup>68</sup> Christine Mollier, “La méthode de l’empereur du nord du Mont Fengdu : une tradition exorciste du Taoïsme médiéval,” *T’oung Pao* 83 (1997), p. 352.

<sup>69</sup> For more explicit examples of such practices during the Ming dynasty, see chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>70</sup> *Tai ping guang ji* 393.3140: “Bao Chao” 包超.

<sup>71</sup> The particular story that relates the bestowal upon Gao Pian of the Northern Emperor’s dagger is included in *Tai ping guang ji* 290.2309. Franciscus Verellen has shown that Gao Pian was quite commonly associated with Daoist lore. See Verellen, *Du Guangting (850-933): Taoïste de cour a la fin de la Chine médiévale*. (Paris : Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1989), pp. 53-55.

<sup>72</sup> DZ 592 *Shenxian ganyu zhuan* 神仙感遇傳.

interesting not only because it again describes Sire Thunder as a flying god, albeit a clumsy one, but because he is one of five brothers. This suggests an early existence of the Daoist tradition of the Five Thunders – one that Du Guangting was aware of.

Ye Qianshao of the Tang dynasty was a man from Xinzhou (present day Shangrao 上饒 in Jiangxi). Once, as a youth, when he was gathering wood and herding sheep, he sought shelter from the rain beneath a tree. The tree was struck by thunder, and during one short moment it split and closed again. Sire Thunder was stuck in the tree, frantic flapping could not get him move out. Ye Qianshao took a stone wedge to open the trunk, and then Sire Thunder got out. Still feeling embarrassed, he thanked Ye Qianshao and made an appointment: “Come back here tomorrow, if you can.”

Ye Qianshao went back there as agreed. Sire Thunder also came and gave him a book with writings in ink, saying: “If you practice this here, then you will be able to make thunder and rain, relieve the suffering of illness, and establish your merit by saving people. We are five brothers. If you want to hear the sound of thunder, only call Thunder the Old, and Thunder Two; then you will have an immediate response. But Thunder Five is tough and hot-tempered; if there is no urgent business, you must not call him.”

From that time onwards Ye Qianshao practiced talismans to make rain, and each time he had various successes.<sup>73</sup>

唐葉遷韶，信州人也。幼歲樵牧，避雨於大樹下。樹爲雷霹，俄而却合。雷公爲樹所夾，奮飛不得遷。韶取石楔開枝，然後得去。仍媿謝之，約

<sup>73</sup> DZ 592, 1.3b-4b: “Ye Qianshao” 葉遷韶; version used here is from *Taiping Guangji* 394.3151.

曰：「來日復至此可也。」如其言至彼。雷公亦來。以墨篆一卷與之，  
 曰：「依此行之，可以致雷雨，祛疾苦，立功救人。我兄弟五人。要聞雷  
 聲，但喚雷大雷二，即相應。然雷五性剛躁；無危急之事，不可喚之。」  
 自是行符致雨，咸有殊効。

Elsewhere in the story Ye Qianshao is asked by the governor of Xinzhou to perform a rainmaking ritual, whereupon he summons “Thunder Five” with an overwhelming response. The story strongly suggests that there had developed a liturgy revolving around the Five Thunders.<sup>74</sup> While the tradition of “Five Thunder” had become dominant by the Southern Song, some scriptures contain references to the “Thunder Five.”<sup>75</sup> In one instance the Thunder Five are identified as Xuan Yuan 軒轅 (Thunder One and Five), Son of King Zhou 紂子 (Thunder Two – this could be Yin Jiao 殷郊), King Yu 禹王 (Thunder Three), and Chi You 蚩尤 (Thunder Four).<sup>76</sup> Most of those later texts refer to “Thunder One” instead of “Thunder the Old,” yet two of them retain the latter.<sup>77</sup> Other details of the story cohere with Daoist ritual, too. Of the paraphernalia used by Ye Qianshao after his encounter with Sire Thunder, the talismanic writing of the “iron tablet” 鐵札 is a most common feature in later ritual. The above mentioned scripture that identified the Thunder Five with certain archaic gods of China mentions the use of an “iron plaquette” 鐵牌.<sup>78</sup>

All this is not to say that documents containing the Thunder Five all belong to the early stage of ritual production that Ye Qianshao’s encounter seems to hint at, although

<sup>74</sup> The later tradition was known as “Five Thunder” 五雷 whereas the Tang story speaks of “Thunder Five” 雷五. This may be a helpful determinant for dating texts in the various thunder traditions.

<sup>75</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 61, 67 (both associated with Wang Wenqing), 83, 92, 116; *Fabai yizhu* 9.

<sup>76</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 9.11ab.

<sup>77</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 7, 34.

<sup>78</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 9.6b.

*Daofa huiyuan* 61 and 67 may be among the oldest of the thunder tradition. Yet these correspondences suggest rather convincingly that the Five Thunder tradition existed in ritualized form during the latter half of the Tang. Texts containing references to the Thunder Five, moreover, most likely stand closer to the earlier tradition.



Figure 2.7. – The Five Thunders as depicted on a scroll used during present-day Daoist rituals in Northern Taiwan. Picture by author.

The art of talismanic writing as well, already hinted at by Wang Chong, was used increasingly by Sire Thunder to manifest himself. In several instances there appear to be evidence of a specific genre of texts (赤文 “red texts,” 朱書 “vermilion writing,” or 赤書 “red writing” – a color that most resembles the purplish intensity of fresh scars on the human skin, as well as blood or fire), dealing with the powers of thunder, and mostly revealed after the impact of thunder.<sup>79</sup> Sire Thunder regularly left his signature writings behind on the surface of the objects that he scorched, and in doing so evinced the fact that he had emerged as a subject of liturgy. In Leizhou 雷洲 – the cradle of thunder (and very close to the homeland of Bai

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Taiping guangji* 393.3139-40: “Zhang Quan jie” 張泉界 (mentions twenty four writs in old seal 古篆 style); *Taiping guangji* 395.2154-5: “Yang Xunmei cong zi” 楊詢美從子 (about “red texts” written by a “thunder-demon” 雷鬼); *Taiping guangji* 395.3156: “Shi Wuwei” 史無畏 (“vermilion writing” on the belly of a man changed into an ox by thunder).

Yuchan, the eminent Song dynasty ritualist of thunder) – we find references to temples devoted to the cult of thunder.<sup>80</sup>

The above sources portray Sire Thunder as a creature most easily sighted in rural areas. A farmer called Yang Daohe 楊道和 from Fufeng 扶風 (Shanxi 陝西) also found Sire Thunder stuck in a tree. Just like Chen Luanfeng he pierced the body of the creature with his rake – this one looking like an ape 獼猴 “with eyes like mirrors.”<sup>81</sup> Another sighting of “something like an ape with his two eyes flashing” 如獼，兩目睒睒.<sup>82</sup> Sire Thunder’s hunger for snakes was not limited to his bird-like manifestations. During the Zhenyuan reign (785-805) a creature with a hog’s head dropped onto the ground while holding a red snake and chewing on it.<sup>83</sup> In this case as well, “people all painted pictures and transmitted them” 皆圖而傳之.

“Folk” 民 from Haikang in Southern China found out that thunder’s capacity to fly was not limited to his avian kin either. They saw that “there was a thing in the air, with a swine’s head and a scaly body” 空中有物，which they attacked so that it fell on the ground. After the thing had been bleeding badly, “that night it soared off into the air and left” 其夕凌空而去. It was said that “the people of Leizhou painted thunder so that they could worship him, all with a swine’s head and a scaly body” 雷民圖雷以祀者，皆豕首鱗身.<sup>84</sup>

Apparently Sire Thunder’s transformation was related to his manifestations among local communities. Yet he did not remain tied to these individual groups. Chen Luanfeng

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<sup>80</sup> Both of the temples to Sire Thunder, one in the story “Lei Gong miao” 雷公廟 (*Taiping guangji* 394.3149) and one in “Chen Luanfeng” are located in Haikang, that is the part of present day Guangdong that faces the island of Hainan.

<sup>81</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3136: “Yang daohe” 楊道和.

<sup>82</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3147: “Zhou Hong” 周洪.

<sup>83</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3142: “Xuanzhou” 宣州.

<sup>84</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3150: “Chen Yi” 陳義.

ended up as a “General Supervising Envoy” for the Thunder Division in later Daoist liturgies; so did the rustic brothers of the Thunder Five, and so did the winged thunder demon described by Du Guangting. There he would only have few occasions to become canonized in Daoist ritual, other than through the rituals of Daoists who were residents of the same localities.

All of these stories, and others to come, show thunder as a phenomenon that may not have been entirely new, but one that was newly developing – really a nascent tradition. Sire Thunder’s power was not yet stabilized, had not yet been brought under the standard auspices of the priest; the colonization of the divine realm of thunder was an ongoing process, glimpses of which are preserved for posterity in the tales from *Extensive Records*.

In Du Guangting’s own rituals it is possible to find the same dynamics that must have been at work in the domestication of Sire Thunder. Even though thunder barely played a role, the rhetoric of demonic reformation that would later characterize the Thunder Rituals of the Song dynasty was already present: “the hundred evils return to the one correct” 百邪歸一正.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the Archdemon Kings that Zhang Daoling had subdued already started to perform their exorcist labor in the service of the Daoist priest.<sup>86</sup>

Before concluding this section, a final point must be made about the direction the development of thunder ritual took. From the occurrence of Thunder Five we have had an early glimpse of the multiplication of Sire Thunder’s body. Rather than simply transforming into one new deity, the way was paved for various new identities of Sire Thunder. Subsequent dynasties indeed witnessed the proliferation of a multitude of thunder gods. And again this was a phenomenon that had occurred before the end of the Tang dynasty. Aside

<sup>85</sup> DZ 525 *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai chanxie yi* 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋懺謝儀, 6b.

<sup>86</sup> DZ 525: 2b, 10a, 13a; also cf. DZ 527 *Taishang dongyuan sanmei shenzhou zhai shifang chanyi* 太上洞淵三昧神咒齋十方懺儀, 1b.

from the Thunder Five, one story describes a battle between a giant fish and “several dozens of Sire Thunder” 雷公數十.<sup>87</sup> Another record recounts the sighting of “several dozens of persons” in the radiant glow of lightning 每電起光中，見有人頭數十.<sup>88</sup> It thus seems that the predicate “Sire Thunder” is rendered into a label that denotes a type of beings rather than one specific god. The division of Sire Thunder into multiple personalities had begun.

#### 2.4. More Encounters: From Daoist Demon to Buddhist Bird

Notwithstanding the fact that Daoist ritual constituted a visible presence at various levels of Chinese society, Daoists were by no means the only ritual practitioners active during the Tang dynasty. To the contrary, as early as the reign of Xuanzong, practitioners of “esoteric Buddhist” (often referred to as Tantric) rituals enjoyed an increasing popularity. Rainmaking rituals formed a part of esoteric liturgies as well, and just like their Chinese counterparts, dragons (Skt. *nāga*) were their chief target of manipulation. A comparison of Sire Thunder to one of the gods popular in esoteric rainmaking rituals will reveal a certain Buddhist impact on the formation of Sire Thunder. One important question will be addressed in this section: why was it Sire Thunder in particular, and not any other deity, who became the main agent of a tradition that was to instigate an enormous ritual production after his transformation? And what was the reason that his newly “discovered” avian manifestation became privileged over other manifestations, such as apes and swines? These latter two did not become obsolete after all. An answer to this question may be formulated by examining the esoteric practitioners of ritual who took their rainmaking rituals to court, where they were performed in the proximity of the emerging thunder tradition.

<sup>87</sup> Sire Thunder as more than one god: *Taiping guangji* 393.3139: “Lei dou” 雷鬥.

<sup>88</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3152: “Duan Chengshi bo” 段成式伯.



In order to end one great drought during the early reign of Xuanzong, the emperor summoned the famous monk Subhakarasiṃha 善無畏 (637 – 735) to court for a rainmaking ritual.<sup>89</sup> In that episode Subhakarasiṃha “summons a dragon” 召龍. Subhakarasiṃha’s disciple Yi Xing 一行 was called upon for the same task during the Kaiyuan era (712 – 742), and this priest practiced rituals involving dragons, too.<sup>90</sup> The great esoteric master Amoghavajra 不空 (705 – 774) was invited by Xuanzong to compete in the art of rainmaking with Luo Gongyuan 羅公遠, a ritual scholar 術 at the imperial court.<sup>91</sup> Dragons again formed the object of ritual manipulation.

It was at the court of Xuanzong that confrontations between Buddhist and Daoist ritualists may have yielded fruitful results. Franciscus Verellen has shown that Daoist polemics attempted to assert the efficacy of Daoist rituals over Buddhist ones.<sup>92</sup> In actual practice too, rivalry must have been intense. Agonistic interactions occurred not only among different denominations, but also within religious traditions. Each vied for the emperor’s favors. In a biographical treatise on Amoghavajra, some early Buddhist practices were rejected as being “evil methods and the meanest of techniques” 邪術下劣之技, said to be “just like the Daoist ‘Rituals of Sire Thunder’” 猶道家雷公法之類.<sup>93</sup>

It is unclear whether such techniques were indeed deployed at the court of Xuanzong, and if so, we do not know what they entailed. However, on the basis of the materials surveyed in the previous two sections, it seems likely that the ‘rituals of Sire Thunder’ existed by that time. If they were indeed, as their contents suggest, the

<sup>89</sup> *Taiping guangji* 396.3165: “Wuwei Sanzang” 無畏三藏.

<sup>90</sup> *Taiping guangji* 396.3164.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Franciscus Verellen, “Evidential Miracles in Support of Taoism?: The Inversion of a Buddhist Apologetic Tradition in Late Tang China.” *T’oung Pao* 78 (1992), pp. 243-45.

<sup>93</sup> *Longxing Fojiao biannian tonglun* 隆興佛教編年通論, Zu Xiu 祖琇 (Song dynasty),

predecessors of the Song dynasty rituals that we can study in manuscript form, then they were constructed around the principle of deities that can be ritually manipulated because they had previously been demonic spirits. Even though the defenders of the Buddhist tradition might denounce Daoist ritual as inferior or “evil,” this does not seem to be the point of the passage. What is condemned as “evil methods” is not Daoist ritual per se, but specifically those methods associated with Sire Thunder.

We will see in subsequent chapters that techniques for summoning the deities of thunder later became a common part of Daoist ritual. Whereas the custom of extending summonses to deities had been quite widespread within early Daoism, there is no evidence for ties to thunder.<sup>94</sup> Bao Pu Zi mentions that “in the *Collection of Divine Immortals* there are rituals for summoning gods and impeding demons, and there also are methods to make people manifest [or: see] demons” 《神仙集》中有召神劾鬼之法，又有使人見鬼之術。<sup>95</sup>

Several of such gods were made into divine presences at the Tang court during the Kaiyuan period (713 – 42), when Deng Ziyang 鄧紫陽 (703 – 739) was invited to court in 735. He was, among others, capable of having “divine troops descend onto his altar” 神兵降于壇上。<sup>96</sup> In later biographies his rituals are associated with the Tianpeng tradition,<sup>97</sup> and he is even thought to be the inventor of the inverted Tianpeng spell.<sup>98</sup> Yet, although Li Yuanguo believes him to be a founding father of the Shenxiao tradition, there is evidence for

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, Zürcher, “Buddhist Influences,” p. 89.

<sup>95</sup> Ge Hong, *Baopu Zi neipian*, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> *Tang Dongjing Futangguan Deng Tianshi jie* 唐東京福唐觀鄧天師碣, in Chen Yuan 陳垣, *Daojia jinshi lie* 道家金石略, p. 125. Beijing: Wenwu, 1988; for other references to the ritual embodiment of divine troops, see *Taiping guangji* 285.2271: “Li Cide” 李慈德; 287.2284: “Hou Yuan” 侯元.

<sup>97</sup> DZ 1248 *Sandong Qunxianlu* 三洞群仙錄, 4:10ab; also DZ 296 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑, 32.7ab.

<sup>98</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 171.14b-15b

neither of these positions.<sup>99</sup> In the same vein the Wuzong 武宗 emperor (841 – 47) could boast a Daoist at court who was good at “summoning demons and gods” by writing talismans.<sup>100</sup>

The gods that were available for summoning were not exclusively obscure, lower gods, nor were they summoned only by spirit-mediums or other practitioners of lower social status. One source describes how a Daoist scholar Li Bo 李播 from Mt. Hua 華山 was consulted by emperor Gao Zong 高宗 (*r.* 650 – 83) to resolve an inauspicious drought that occurred while the emperor was preparing for his Feng and Shan sacrifices 封禪 in 666. Li Bo, who was the father of the Daoist court-historiographer Li Chunfeng 李淳風 (602 – 70), summoned none other than the “Lord of Mt. Tai” 泰山府君.<sup>101</sup> Even the Queen Mother of the West could be summoned.<sup>102</sup>

As I have pointed out briefly above, Daoist and Buddhist esoteric rainmaking rituals were both directed at a mobilization of the raindragons. In the Daoist case, it was through the actions of Sire Thunder that unruly dragons were corrected. In the Buddhist case, such a thunder deity does not seem to have existed, yet as Subhakarasiṃha allegedly remarked to Xuanzong when he was about to perform his rites: “When dragons are summoned, it will cause fierce winds, thunder, and rain” 召龍必興烈風雷雨.<sup>103</sup> Not surprisingly, for this esoteric master from Ceylon as well, rainmaking rituals entailed the occurrence of thunder, even if in this case thunder is only a by-product, and not the aim in itself.

<sup>99</sup> Li Yuanguo 李遠國, *Shenxiao lejia: Daojiao Shenxiaopai yange yu sixiang* 神霄雷法：道教神霄派沿革與思想. (Chengdu: Sichuan Remnmin chuban, 2003), p. 10-11.

<sup>100</sup> *Taiping guangji* 74.466; also see 285.2273-74.

<sup>101</sup> *Taiping guangji* 298.2371.

<sup>102</sup> *Taiping guangji* 287.2287: “Qingcheng daoshi” 青城道士.

<sup>103</sup> *Taiping guangji* 396.3165: “Wuwei Sanzang” 無畏三藏.

But it is only upon examining the liturgical writings by Tantric masters of that period, that the impetus for Sire Thunder's metamorphosis is fully revealed. As we have seen in previous paragraphs, the Sire Thunder of the Tang dynasty, dropped from the sky, as it were, suddenly equipped with wings, claws, and a beak. It is my assumption that, rather than seeking a simple discursive explanation for this change, there was instead a concrete new development that had taken place within Chinese therapeutic rituals.

Indeed, curing of illness by way of expelling demons had a long history in China and was practiced both by Daoist priests as well as by spirit mediums. These two indigenous traditions naturally contributed greatly to the new rituals of thunder. Yet, it is not until the introduction in China of esoteric Buddhism that an important transition in Daoist exorcist lore can be described.

The matter is complicated, with the exception of one certain deity introduced by Buddhists. Esoteric Buddhists provided not only new ritual techniques, but also invoked their own deities, without which those rituals would be unthinkable. Ultimately eclipsed by the Daoist tradition, and even pushed into relative obscurity within Buddhism's own rituals, the great golden winged bird known as Garuḍa (*Jialouluo* 伽樓羅 or *Jialiuluo* 伽留羅) once was a powerful tool in the hands of esoteric practitioners. As he was famed for his great persistence in chasing rain-dragons, his role was particularly prominent in rainmaking rituals. But as the production of rain seems to have been closely connected to therapeutic capacities in India as well as China, the great bird Garuḍa "was known as a source of healing spells to the entire Tantric world."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Michel Strickmann, *Magical Medicine*, p. 232; mentioned also in *Dushipin jing* 度世品經, Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Western Jin, 265-316), T no. 292, 10:637c (623c, 624c, 634b, 644b, 651a,c; 652b); *Foshuo pumenpin jing* 佛說普門品經, Zhu Fahu, T no. 315b, 11:778c (as 迦留羅, without mentioning him as a bird).



Figure 2.8. – A snake-eating bird god from the Dongba 東巴 minority in Yunnan, PRC

In contrast to Sire Thunder’s life, the history of the Garuda bird is well-known. In the Buddhist “encyclopedia” *Fayuan zhubin* 法苑珠林 by the Tang monk Shi Daoshi 釋道世, numerous references are made to a certain golden winged bird on a tireless quest for dragon-eggs and other dragon-related things.<sup>105</sup> The author then has the Buddha speak of Garuda, while defining the bird’s “mission statement.”

The Buddha said: In Jambudvīpa and the other four continents there is a golden winged bird by the name of King Garuda. Among all birds he is the one to swiftly

<sup>105</sup> *Fayuan zhubin* 法苑珠林, Daoshi 道世 (d. 683), T no. 2122. On this text, see Stephen F. Teiser, “T” and Buddhist Encyclopedias: A Bibliographical Introduction to *Fa-yüan chu-lin* and *Chu-ching yao-chi*.” *T’ang Studies* 3 (1985), pp. 109-28.

obtain autonomous existence. This bird's karmic retribution is it to eat dragons. In Jambudvīpa he eats one *nāga* and five-hundred small dragons a day.<sup>106</sup>

佛言。閻浮提中及四天下。有金翅鳥名伽樓羅王。於諸鳥中快得自在。此鳥業報應食諸龍。於閻浮提日食一龍王。及五百小龍。

This is but a fragmentary account of a large body of hagiographic writing attached to Garuḍa, chosen simply in order to emphasize what was unambiguously considered his prime task: catching and devouring dragons. This activity, so reminiscent of the Sire Thunder recorded in Tang dynasty stories such as Xu Li, was played out clearly in the religious lore of India. In Hindu mythology, the Garuḍa bird was said to be hatched from an egg laid by his mother Vinata.<sup>107</sup> Upon birth his body grew rapidly and rose as high as the sky. His eyes flashing like lightning, Garuḍa shone so brilliantly that he was at first thought to be an incarnation of the god of fire Agni and mistakenly worshipped as such. Just like his mother, Garuḍa felt a great aversion to *nāga* and directed his anger towards them. According to one myth, this preoccupation started with his mother Vinata being held hostage by many-headed serpentine creatures, the sons of the snake mother Kadru. These *nāga* demanded a ransom of *amṛta*, the longevity food of the gods known to Westerners as *ambrosia*. In order to obtain this heavenly delicacy, Garuḍa had to conquer two fiery snakes, cutting them to pieces with his beak.

As the object of cult-worship in India, Garuḍa was regarded to be the celestial executioner, punishing or correcting earthly evildoers and sinners. Paradoxically, as is the

<sup>106</sup> T no. 2122, 53:831a.

<sup>107</sup> The following “biography” of Garuḍa is pieced together from the following sources: Ci Yi 慈怡 (et. al.), *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典. Gaoxiong: Foguang chuban, 1988-1989; Dowson, John, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History, and Literature*. London: Trübner, 1879 [Reprint, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1953].

case with many Chinese gods as well, Garuḍa possessed a rather unruly streak. Once upon a time, it happened that he concealed the moon under his wings, angering all the other gods, who wanted to battle him. In the ensuing war, it was only Vishnu who proved to be indefatigable for Garuḍa, and he finally submitted to him. Subsequently he became known as the mount of Vishnu. On another occasion, Garuḍa fought with Indra. Although the latter ultimately was victorious, during the fight his thunderbolt was destroyed by the aggressive bird.

Even today, Garuḍa has not disappeared from the religious scene altogether. In India, as before, he is credited with the capability to cure victims of snakebites. Mostly known as the swift carrier of Vishnu, he is worshipped alongside this major deity. In China his image was sometimes attached to certain Buddhist statues, as is the case with the great snake-eating golden birds on top of the Buddhas in Yonghe Gong 雍和宮 in Peking.

The similarities with the winged Sire Thunder of the Tang dynasty are of course striking, and provide more than one suggestive explanation for the synthesis between the Buddhist Garuḍa and the Chinese Sire Thunder. First of all, probably the principal connection between the two deities is their constant vigilance for *nāga*. These creatures were viewed as producers of rain (and thunder) both in India and China, and both Garuḍa and Sire Thunder were bent on catching them. Furthermore, both deities were regarded as heavenly executioners, with Garuḍa, moreover, able to “attend to all the requests that humans make of him.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, Garuḍa seemed as much in direct proximity to mortals as the Daoist Sire Thunder. Finally, whereas Sire Thunder was thought to inscribe his verdicts onto the skin of his victims, we will see that Garuḍa brought rituals for which writing on the skin of sufferers (or mediums) was equally necessary—an ambiguous and

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<sup>108</sup> Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 229.

highly interesting connection that both divinities had forged between the raw forces of uncivilized nature (thunder/animal) and the refined art of religious writing. It is thus not hard to understand why a fusion between those deities was, perhaps, almost inevitable.

The richest fund for enlightenment regarding Garuḍa is constituted by two relatively short esoteric texts that present his powerful characteristics to the practitioner. One of them, a method for trance possession (*āveśā*), was translated by none other than one of the “Three Great Masters” of Tang dynasty esoteric Buddhism, namely Amoghavajra 不空 (705 – 74).<sup>109</sup> The other, much longer text contains very detailed instructions for iconography, spells, and ritual procedures.<sup>110</sup> This scripture was written by a monk named Boreli 般若力.

Although at first sight he appears less well-known, according to the *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks*, however, he was no less a stranger to the Tang court than his illustrious predecessor Amoghavajra: he was received by emperor Suzong 肅宗 in 758 and even appointed to a position at court.<sup>111</sup> In Boreli’s scripture we find a precise description of Garuḍa’s appearance, here in the form of prescriptions for those who want to paint the bird: “Method of Painting Garuḍa” 迦樓羅畫像法:

If one draws a picture of Garuḍa, then one must clean [the surface] with the lower arm. The artisan has to be cleanly washed, and he cannot use ‘leather pigment’ for the colors. When [the artisan] is about to make [Garuda’s] venerable image, then paint his body in the shape of a heavenly king from the waist upwards, only with his nose as an eagle’s beak, green in color. Below the waist, he also resembles the eagle

<sup>109</sup> *Shuji liyan Moxishouluotian shuo aveishefa* 速疾立驗魔醯首羅天說阿尾奢法, Amoghavajra 不空 (705 – 74), T no. 1277. The *Moxishouluotian* refers to Maheśvara, an epithet of Vishnu (**Viṣṭu**).

<sup>110</sup> *Jialouluo ji zhubian miyan jing* 迦樓羅及諸天密言經, Boreli般若力 (fl. 758), T no. 1278.

<sup>111</sup> *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, Zanning 贊寧 (919-1001), T no. 2061, 50:720c.



and [meaning unclear]. His crown and his down are disheveled. On his shoulders, arms, and wrists he has crowns, bracelets, divine garments, and necklaces. His whole body is golden, and he has wings like a bird stretched outwards, with his tail unfolding downwards. Of his four arms, the two main ones form a great mudra, the index fingers of his two hands intertwined, with the left one pressing the right one. In a gesture of salute, they are held before the chest. The other two hands are hanging down.<sup>112</sup>

畫迦樓羅像者。應肘量渫善圖畫之。其匠清淨沐浴。色不用皮膠。當作尊儀。其身分自臍已上如天王形。唯鼻若鷹嘴而作綠色。自臍已下亦如於鷹蠡駱。寶冠髮鬘披。肩、臂、腕皆有寶冠、環釧、天衣、瓔珞。通身金色。翅如鳥而兩向舒。其尾向下散。四臂二正手結大印，兩手指頭相交左押右。虛心合掌以印當心。餘二手垂下。

Clearly, Garuḍa shared his most important iconographic feature with Sire Thunder, namely the fact that his upper body is anthropomorphic, “in the shape of a heavenly king,” yet he has wings and a bird’s beak. The so-called heavenly kings are otherwise mostly known in a configuration of four gods, the Four Great Heavenly Kings 四大天王 (*catur-mahārājas*, or Lokapālas). These fierce warriors became the guardians of the entrance of monasteries.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to these correspondences there are clear differences between Garuḍa and Sire Thunder, and they should be noted. Most conspicuous was of course Garuḍa’s typically Indic set of multiple arms, in the above case forming hand gestures. This was something that

<sup>112</sup> T no. 1278, 21:334a.

<sup>113</sup> According to Soothill, the Four Kings were introduced to China by Amoghavajra. Soothill, W. and L. Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist terms: with Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index*. Taipei: Ch’eng wen, 1970.

the new Sire Thunder lacked, yet one later description of the main thunder deity of the Song mentions multiple heads.<sup>114</sup> Less conspicuous at first sight, yet perhaps more important is the fact that as far as I know, all iconographic representations of Garuḍa show him with feathers. Sire Thunder's wings have been repeatedly described as "flesh wings," making them more like a bat – which was indeed the form he took in his hagiography from the Northern Song dynasty.<sup>115</sup> Aside from that, the above representation of Garuḍa featured a tail (most likely a bird's tail, although this is not stated), something that Sire Thunder did not commonly have. From the picture below, Vishnu riding Garuḍa, we may understand that the bird could be depicted without his set of multiple arms, and with a snake wrapped around his neck.

**Picture 2.9. – Garuḍa, Vishnu's mount (from Cleveland Museum of Art Bengal, early Pala period, 7th Century)**



<sup>114</sup> *Daofa huizuan* 80.1a.

<sup>115</sup> *Daofa huizuan* 57.15b; see my discussion in the next chapter.

As was demonstrated by Michel Strickmann, esoteric practitioners during the early half of the Tang dynasty (618 – 907), made extensive use of this great bird with its effective spells, and a number of those spells are included in the texts by Amoghavajra and Boreli. In the Garuḍa scripture by Boreli these healing methods are materialized in *mudrās* (hand-gestures), *mantras* and *tantras* (secret spells and writings). For example, the longest of the *mudrās*, the “Heart *mudrā* of Garuḍa” 迦樓羅心印 describes the procedure of correctly positioning the fingers in order to heal a patient’s disease.<sup>116</sup> In this case the ring-finger, middle-finger, and index-finger of the left hand envelop the little finger of the right hand, and vice versa. Upon completing the *mudrā* its effect is explained: “When you apply force, it will be on the bodies of the plague-demons exactly as it is on your little fingers. If at this point you want to subdue them, then those demons are thus caught.” The method here is one of analogy—a force is applied on something that *stands for* the demons.

Externality also characterizes the writing of Sanskrit writs on the patient’s skin. Sometimes this writing is done by visualizing the sufferer’s bodily shapes,<sup>117</sup> at other times the words are visualized in the mouth of dragon kings,<sup>118</sup> and, significantly, they are necessarily painted onto certain parts of Garuḍa’s body (face, forehead, ears, nipples, belly, knees) whenever painting his representation – *unless* the practitioner does not understand Sanskrit.<sup>119</sup>

Some of these practices, such as writing of demonifugic characters on the patient’s body, were known from Chinese exorcisms as well, not least among priests practicing the talismanic tradition. Other ritual techniques for curing diseases were shared by the esoteric as

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<sup>116</sup> T no. 1278, 21:331bc.

<sup>117</sup> *op. cit.*, 332b.

<sup>118</sup> *op. cit.*, 332c.

<sup>119</sup> *op. cit.*, 334a.

well as the Daoist traditions, namely the summoning of deities. This custom is represented in the Garuḍa scripture by the “*Mantra* for Summoning Dragon Kings” 召龍王密言, which must be recited in order to “make all dragons and their kindred manifest themselves.”<sup>120</sup>

The *Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* include an account of a rainmaking ritual performed by Vajrabodhi 金剛智 (662 – 732) shortly after his arrival in China in 719, he is said to have used rituals from Amoghavajra. How did he succeed in producing rain? Vajrabodhi was said to have “caught a dragon” 獲一龍.<sup>121</sup> It is thus not completely unthinkable that he used the services of Garuḍa in this case too.

The above techniques need to be considered with one important *caveat*. Most of the esoteric manuals were translated or produced between 716 and 735, according to Michel Strickmann.<sup>122</sup> That was relatively long after Daoist practitioners had already developed similar techniques of their own. We have seen how the summoning of gods or dragons was in fact quite common in China, among Daoists as well as other practitioners. There is thus nothing to safeguard the assumption that esoteric practitioners brought a completely new ritual product to the Tang court.

In my next chapter I will show how, for example, the ritual of body transformation was among the oldest techniques practiced by Daoists, and incorporated into Buddhist liturgies long before the Tang. In this present chapter, however, due to practical concerns, I will merely focus on the one aspect of esoteric Buddhism that may have most pervasively influenced the procedures of thunder ritual: the transformation of the practitioner into one single god. Compared to the indigenous Daoist body transformation into several gods, this is the area where Buddhism may have brought a truly new focus. It was moreover the singular

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<sup>120</sup> *op. cit.*, 339a.

<sup>121</sup> *T* no. 2061, 50:711c.

<sup>122</sup> Michel Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins*, p. 215.

metamorphosis that may have provided the reason why it was the bird-like version of Sire Thunder that prevailed after the Tang, and not his hog-like or simian manifestation.

Let us take a look at some examples provided in the *Garuḍa* scripture in order to understand the procedure:

Whenever you want to overcome a poisoning, you must first of all bring great perfection upon your own body. Thereupon you can imagine your own appearance to be that of King *Garuḍa*.<sup>123</sup>

凡欲伏毒。先在己身廣大圓滿。便存己形如迦樓羅王。

Or, in slightly different wording:

If you want to cure poisons of whatever kind, first imagine your own body to be completely like that of King *Garuḍa*, greatly perfected.<sup>124</sup>

若欲療一切毒者。先想己身一如迦樓羅王。廣大圓滿。

This powerful technique was also practiced in other *Garuḍa* rituals.<sup>125</sup> Generally it could be found in esoteric ritual from the Tang.<sup>126</sup> The transformation here is an immediate one. It apparently required no disposal of the mortal body, nor a change of substance by some

<sup>123</sup> *T* no. 1278, 21:331c.

<sup>124</sup> *op. cit.*, 332b.

<sup>125</sup> *T* no. 1277, 21:330a.

<sup>126</sup> *Biluzhena wuzi zhenyan xiuxi yigui* 毘盧遮那五字真言修習儀軌, Amoghavajra, *T* no. 861, 18:188b ff. and *Dale jingangshuo xiuxing chengjin yigui* 大樂金剛薩埵修行成就儀軌, Amoghavajra, *T* no. 1119, 20:513a ff.; *Foshuo chimingzang Yujia dajiao Zunna pusa daming chengjin yigui jing* 佛說持明藏瑜伽大教尊那菩薩大明成就儀軌經, Fa Xian 法賢, *T* no. 1169, 20:689c ff.

secondary ritual method. The metamorphosis was like a direct transition into an alternate identity.

Body transformation in Daoist ritual, such as described in *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac* (see chapter 1), entailed a metamorphosis into several gods. Each god was supposed to constitute a separate part of the body, together forming one integral structure. It thus was essentially different from the limited transformation into one god that Garuḍa's rituals had to offer. Perhaps this multiple metamorphosis was a way of distinguishing Daoist practitioners from the “impersonator” 尸 or 尸祝, who would ritually change into the deceased and enact him; or from the shamans and their trance possession. It may even be possible that Daoists did apply singular metamorphosis before their encounter with esoteric Buddhists, yet I have not found any evidence for this.

It is certain, however, that shortly after the end of the Tang, the “esoteric” transformation appears in Daoist liturgies. In a compendium of inner alchemical procedures, the *Records of the Masses of Transendents from the Western Mountain, United in Perfection*, we do find a singular body transformation. The work was attributed to the Tang scholar Shi Jianwu 施肩吾 (*js.* 815), but it probably dates from the late tenth century.<sup>127</sup> In the segment of chapter 5 that is entitled “Sublimation of the Spirit to Join the Dao” 鍊神合道, a treatise discusses procedures for “abandoning the body” 棄殼.<sup>128</sup> These procedures entailed a “far journey” 遠遊 and would bring the practitioner to the Gate of Heaven 天門 – very similar to the procedures in *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac*. The author cites various examples, of successful and unsuccessful cultivation techniques. In one technique practiced by Sire Lü 呂公 (an

<sup>127</sup> Schipper and Verellen, *Companion*, p. 804.

<sup>128</sup> DZ 246 *Xishan qunxian huizhen ji* 西山群仙會真記, 5.8b-10a.

early appellation for Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓), the abandoning of the body was difficult because the spirit became so attached to the heavenly splendor that he did not want to leave the Celestial Palace 天宮 anymore. Therefore:

[Sire Lü] ignited a perfected fire and in the shimmering smoke he was transformed into a fiery dragon, jumping out of the benighted passage. Now this is the most miraculous of the methods for abandoning the body!<sup>129</sup>

故起真火，而於煙焰中化一火龍，躍出昏衢。乃棄殼之法最妙者也。

While the “far journey” and the visit to the Heavenly Gate are unmistakably Daoist, the singular metamorphosis seems to have been a novelty in Daoism. There is no Garuda or Sire Thunder, but the dragon at least keeps us in their proximity. The technique of transformation by fire may remind one of the Vedic practice of *homa*, oblation by fire, that Michel Strickmann has described in such detail. Yet as we will see in the next chapter, this technique was indigenous to China and can be traced back at least as far as the third century BCE.

It thus seems that the impact of Garuda was twofold. As a divine bird with so many external as well as qualitative similarities to Sire Thunder, he could easily pass as an equal in terms of iconography as well as his ritual applications. It may have been for that reason that representations of later Daoist Thunder Gods gravitated towards the same bird-like appearance as Garuda. Moreover, even though techniques for body transformation

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<sup>129</sup> DZ 246, 5.9ab.

previously existed in China, it seems to have been the practice of changing into one single god, such as Garuḍa, that esoteric Buddhism contributed to Daoist ritual.

## 2.5. Classification: A cultured outside vs. a crude inside?

The transformation we have so far witnessed occurred on two levels. First, with the printing of such stories as included in the *Extensive Records*, Sire Thunder was subjected to systems of classification. Stories about him were brought together, so that the reader might witness not only how he quite unexpectedly dropped from the shapeless heights of mythical omnipresence into the terrified reports of local observers, but also how he was made to serve mortal masters. Secondly, esoteric rituals involving Garuḍa may have partly determined the course of Sire Thunder's development. These two could be said to form rather self-contained religious phenomena, unconnected to other developments. Yet I will argue that there is a third aspect of this transformation: a clash of civilizations that was related to China's urbanization during the Tang.

As it appears, the new Sire Thunder signaled a ritual phenomenon that could only have come to full bloom in an urbanizing culture that sought to distinguish itself from its rural origins: the opposition between civilization and crudeness, or in terms that applied to the religious phenomena of the Tang, culture 文 *wen* vs. martial 武 *wu* (or 巫 *wu*, the shaman). While some new gods of the Tang symbolized the predominance of an emerging urbanizing culture, other gods reminded their urban subjects that their new society could have been built only after a process that “civilized” what had previously been crude. Sire Thunder is one of the latter category of gods.

We have seen that Sire Thunder, at first, was glared at, sometimes poked at to probe his reactions, but most importantly, he was written about extensively. Tang dynasty stories



about Sire Thunder seem to explore the darkness surrounding his multifarious manifestations, attempting to drive him out of hiding and force him to live a new “discursive existence.”<sup>130</sup> His actions became loaded with stable motivations and standard attributes known to everyone. Gradually it appeared feasible to grasp Sire Thunder’s whereabouts, as well as his actions. Yet thunder was not tamed, and he was not to become really civilized, ever.

As mentioned by Wang Chong before, one of Sire Thunder’s most conspicuous aspects was the peculiar relationship he fostered with snakes and dragons, a relationship that became emphasized more strongly in the period leading up to, and during, the Tang.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, if the capacity to slay dragons was a feature quite typical of post-Tang Chinese deities in general, then Sire Thunder was in an important sense their prototype: chasing dragons, punishing them, and even killing them. The new god of thunder fiendishly devoted much of his attention to these activities. As we have observed in the records of his manifestations, it seems that from the Tang onwards Sire Thunder started devouring them, appropriating and internalizing their bodies. Although the Sire was famous for being an effective slayer of viperous creatures, he could be depicted with certain snake-like features: sometimes he appeared with a scaly body or even a dragon-like appearance as a whole.<sup>132</sup> We will see below a clear relationship with the mythical fog exhaling “Wormy Rebel” Chi You 蚩尤, one of those very serpentine monsters he occasionally resembled (see below).

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<sup>130</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 33. New York: Vintage, 1990

<sup>131</sup> For thunder, snakes, and nudity: *Taiping guangji* 393.3138: “Seng Daoxuan” 僧道宣; *Taiping guangji* 393.3141: “Ouyang hulei” 歐陽忽雷; *Taiping guangji* 393.3142: “Xuanzhou”; *Taiping guangji* 393.3142-3: “Huating Yan Dian” 華亭堰典; *Taiping guangji* 394.3148: “Seng Wen Jing” 僧文淨; *Taiping guangji* 394.3152-3: “Zhi Kong” 智空; *Taiping guangji* 395.3155: “Gaoyou ren” 高郵人; *Taiping guangji* 395.3155: “Wang Zhongzheng” 王忠政; *Taiping guangji* 395.3157: “Shen Wenwei” 申文緯; *Taiping guangji* 395.3158: “Chen Xun: 陳綯; *Taiping guangji* 395.3161: “Ganlu Si” 甘露寺; *Taiping guangji* 456.3729: “Zhang Gou” 章苟.

<sup>132</sup> *Taiping guangji* 394.3150: “Chen Yi” 陳義.

Figure 2.9.1 – Chi You as depicted on the door of a Han tomb (Shandong), second to third century CE.



In Sire Thunder’s history as a whole, we find him associated with intrusions of the outside world into the human interior. He was seen to be relevant for many aspects of human phobia and anxieties related to bodily hygiene, taboos on food, and health in general.<sup>133</sup> It is indeed a play upon human fears that the god of thunder understood best. This perverse snake-killer with his animal traits became one of China’s prime therapists, capable of fulfilling human desires for sanity (curing madness) and health (curing anything else). Chinese therapists after the Tang owed a great deal to this raw and uncivilized force that possessed both healers and patients with his abject presence, thereby revealing man as “an

<sup>133</sup> *Lunbeng*, p. 294; *Taiping guangji* 394.3150: “Chen Yi.”

animal extorted by an insatiable parasite (reason, *logos*, language).<sup>134</sup> It is precisely this extortion that Sire Thunder attempted to oust; his possession temporarily relieved man of his rational consciousness, reacquainting him with “the remains of [his] original personality, which is still untamed by civilization.”<sup>135</sup> In religious terms his therapies might best be termed ‘exorcisms,’ for that was how he achieved his success; even his many performances as heavenly executioner, bringing divine justice to the mortal world, fall into that category. But in Lacanian terms, Sire Thunder opened up the abyss of the “original splitting” of man that had been sealed with social conformisms during his “cultural subordination.”<sup>136</sup> Sire Thunder broke into that ineffable condition, before language, beyond the symbolic and the imaginary: the ‘real,’ whence “the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him.”<sup>137</sup> It was in that space where he found his *jouissance*, where he reveled, thrived, where he ruled. It was from there that the parasite could be expelled.

Within the framework of his aggression towards vipers Sire Thunder remained a champion of that most ancient of human technique to manipulate nature’s whims: the art of rainmaking rituals. Dragons, oftentimes conflated with snakes, were perceived as the main producers of clouds and rain. As the *Zuo Zhuan* 左傳 says: “When the dragon appears, it will rain” 龍見而雩. This manifestation of the dragon was interpretable on several levels: captured snakes or lizards that were exposed to the sun, the stellar constellations (角亢 forming a dragon and appearing at the firmament), the molding of dragons of clay, etc. The ruler of the empire, symbolizing a dragon, could also obtain rain. Edward H. Schafer cites examples of emperors exposing themselves to the sun in order to produce rain during the

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<sup>134</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 4-5. New York: Verso, 1989

<sup>135</sup> Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 47.

<sup>136</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 24, 28. New York: Norton, 1977

<sup>137</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, “The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience,” p. 2.

Sui and Tang dynasties.<sup>138</sup> In fact, the ancient Chinese believed rain-production as well as rain-cessation to be the dragon's holy task. Unfortunately, as is attested by numerous records in *Extensive Records*, dragons were thought to have a lazy disposition and often neglected their duty. They would escape and hide below stones, in big, old trees, or in the woodwork of tall buildings, but sometimes they entered human bodies, possessing them and harming them.

This strand of thinking, still relevant during the Tang, makes a distinction in the kinds of power that can be achieved by ritual nudity. The garments worn by Sire Thunder – a red apron and a leopard skin around the waist – signified a state of unsocialized behavior (the red apron was probably worn by young children; the leopard skin seems to indicate a rather martial function of hunter, soldier, or spirit-medium) as opposed to the common attire of everyday life.

A famous story set in the Yifeng 儀鳳 reign (676 – 78), entitled “Liu Yi” 柳毅, shows this concept very clearly. It relates the visit to the dragon palace of Dongting 洞庭 by a young man named Liu Yi. In the story a constant difference is made between the courteous and reasonable dragons who wear clothes, and the ferocious and wild dragons who are naked 赤. Upon arriving in the palace he has to wait for the Dragon King's lesson with a Daoist scholar to end before the King receives him. After some polite conversation a frightening monster appears in the palace:

[the King] had not yet finished his sentence when a loud noise suddenly issued forth: Heaven crumbled and Earth cracked, the palace shook and trembled, clouds and brumes arose. All of a sudden there was a red [or: naked] *dragon* of more than one thousand *chi* long, with flashing eyes and a blood-red tongue, vermilion scales and fiery fangs. A golden chain

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<sup>138</sup> Edward H. Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China.” *HJAS* Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (Jun., 1951), p. 136.

was tied around his neck, and with the chain he hauled a jade pillar. A thousand thunderclaps encircled his body, and sleet, snow, rain, and hail all fell simultaneously. Splitting the azure sky he flew off. Liu Yi had prostrated himself onto the ground for fear!<sup>139</sup>

語未畢，而大聲忽發：天坼地裂，宮殿擺簸，雲烟沸湧。俄有赤龍長千餘尺，電目血舌，朱鱗火鬣。項掣金鎖，鎖牽玉柱。千雷萬霆，激繞其身，霰雪雨雹，一時皆下。乃擘青天而飛去。毅恐蹶仆地。

The above mayhem was caused by the Dragon Lord of Qiantang 錢塘 (Hangzhou region) when he set out to bring rain to the land below. However, upon his return Lord Qiantang appears completely different:

There was another *person*, clad in purple, holding a black jade. He stood next to the King [of Dongting], tall and impressive. The King told Liu Yi: “This is Qiantang.” Liu Yi rose and hastened to bow. Qiantang also completed the ceremony and received him. [italics added]

又有一人，披紫裳，執青玉，貌聳神溢，立於君左。君謂毅曰：「此錢塘也。」毅起，趨拜之。錢塘亦盡禮相接。

Showing himself with the imperial or bureaucratic regalia of purple attire and black jade, he calmly answers questions about how many people he has killed, and how much crops he has damaged in his rage.

<sup>139</sup> *Taiping guangji* 419.3410-7: “Liu Yi” 柳毅.

This story has been categorized as fiction, and it would lie beyond the scope of this thesis to contest such claims.<sup>140</sup> Yet with the adventure of Liu Yi in the dragon palace, the same ritual discourse on “civilization” vs. “crudeness” appears to have made its way into literate circles. It is not necessary to see this discourse as a novelty; it may have been much older. As was the case with the “discovery” of a demonic Sire Thunder, it may have been the case that these stories bespoke the acceptance and ritual application of the discourse within circles that previously did not want to be associated with it. In other words, by assigning to dragons the alternative appearance of a civil official, the status of “crude” gods was enhanced. Such an enhanced status may have also applied to ritual practitioners whose use of martial powers made them assume demonic identities in addition to their civilized appearance. Perhaps this civilized side of dragons even allowed officials to communicate with dragons as if they were fellow administrators, as was the case with an “Orison for Dragons” 祭龍文 from the year 823 – coincidentally also from Hangzhou.<sup>141</sup> However, the official liturgy did not seem to deploy Sire Thunder.

Sire Thunder’s star was not only rising in the liturgies of local Daoists. He was awarded an important promotion during the eighth century, which seems to corroborate the increasingly important position he had come to occupy in records such as the *Extensive Records*. In 746 the cult to the “Thunder Master” 雷師 – a terminology that seems to have been used interchangeably with Sire Thunder – was imperially promoted into the suburban rites of medium rank.<sup>142</sup> In this context it will be useful to reconsider the record about

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<sup>140</sup> On the issue of “compartmentalization” between the study of literature and religion, see Stephen Bokenkamp, “The Peach Flower Font and the Grotto Passage.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106.1 (Winter 1986), pp. 65-77.

<sup>141</sup> The orison was written and offered by the poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772 – 846) in his function of imperial official. See Zhu Jincheng 朱金城 (ed.), *Bai Juyi jianjiao* 白居易集箋校, p. 2673. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1988.

<sup>142</sup> For an overview of related ritual changes during the mid-Tang, see Victor Xiong, “Ritual Innovations and Taoism under Tang Xuanzong.” *T’oung Pao* 82 (1996), pp. 258-316. We may assume that the “thunder master”

Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712 – 745) ordering a Daoist recluse to summon a manifestation of thunder. The Daoist performed a *jiao* rite and succeeded in fulfilling the emperor's request.<sup>143</sup> Apparently, liturgists had begun discovering in the new Ninefold Heavens 九天 a divine realm of thunder that was waiting to be explored and colonized. Moreover, as one Daoist scripture from Dunhuang dated 753 shows, "Sire Thunder" was no longer the only label that could be attached to the gods of thunder: the term "thunder god" 雷神, possibly more general, was used by that time for some of the gods listening to the priest's words.<sup>144</sup> At this point, however, thunder had not yet reached the peak of his power.

Parallel developments corroborate the possibility of a religious transformation that started to gain momentum during the Tang. David Johnson has described the construction of a new concept of divinity with the urbanization of the Tang. According to him, the cult to the god of Walls and Moats 城隍, or City God, emerged as a consequence of the "special category of place" constituted by the city.<sup>145</sup> This cult, according to Johnson, replaced the older communities of the Earth God 社, which did no longer fit into the new culture of urbanizing China.

Sire Thunder's development was part of the same development of urbanization, yet he seems to have been transferred into the cities rather than allowing himself to be replaced. The stories in *Extensive Records* perfectly illustrate how rural cults were absorbed by lettered men from the cities. In a sense, Sire Thunder succeeded in breaching the barriers that were constructed by the civilizing processes of high-culture. With his ritual discourse on the powers of crudeness, he resisted attempts to limit the original all-inclusiveness of the human

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is a ritualized designation for Sire Thunder, as is suggested by references to him in *Taiping guangji* 393.3141 and 395.3161.

<sup>143</sup> *Taiping guangji* 393.3140: "Bao Chao."

<sup>144</sup> P. 2257 *Taishang Dadao Yuqing jing* 太上大道玉清經

<sup>145</sup> David Johnson, "The City-God Cults of Tang and Sung China." *HJAS* 45:2 (Dec., 1985), pp. 363-457.

ego (that is: including crudeness, or perhaps completely consisting of it). The cult of thunder addressed precisely the sources of cosmic energy immanent in this crudeness, rather than adumbrating it.

Such phenomena that may have related to the images of the human unconscious were absorbed by Daoist liturgists who acknowledged their existence and ultimately deployed them. The ritual procedures contained in these liturgies ought not be viewed as external to the needs of their patrons. If nobody bought their services, Daoist ritual would have assumed different guises, less geared towards relating the human demonic unconscious to the martial divine perhaps. Indeed, through the ritualized resuscitation of forces that belonged to the most pristine characteristics of the human condition, “the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilization” was temporarily bridged in a society that removed itself from the alleged crudity of rural communities.<sup>146</sup> It seems to have been on the exact basis of the rural demon, however, that important parts of Chinese religion were built.

The old Sire Thunder did not become obsolete. After the Tang he lived on in popular memory, as well as in the corridors of temples devoted to the Medicine King 藥王. But in sheer numbers he was superseded by his Daoist successors. As Maspéro put it: “The Taoists have split him up into a whole collection of deities that form the department of the Thunder.”<sup>147</sup> In the next chapters we will follow his transformed heirs.

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<sup>146</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1961), James Strachey’s introduction, p. 6

<sup>147</sup> Maspéro, *Asiatic Mythology* (1932), p. 274



Figure 2.9.2 – Two Thunders during the Northern Song (Maspéro, p. 274)



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**Creating the Gods:**  
 Transformation by the Fire of the Heart



Figure 3.1. Thunder Marshals Deng, Xin, and Zhang  
 (from right to left; *Daofa huiyuan* 89.4b, 4a; 92.6ab)

### 3.1. Ritual gods

Sire Thunder's career would take him to the highest spheres of the celestial realm during the Song dynasty (960 – 1279). Canonized as “Chief Marshal of the Thunder Division” 雷部主帥, and with a personal name, Deng Bowen 鄧伯溫, his role was new, too: he had become a deity whose fame was based more on appearances in Daoist Thunder Ritual than on his popularity in cult worship – he largely became a “ritual god.” We will see how the trajectory from local demonic cult to a more elevated god had been traversed by Deng Bowen as well as other deities, and how the thunder liturgies of the Song contain more than a few traces of such newly created gods. This chapter explores the absorption of several local cults by Daoists during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The examples provided will

show that a “Daoist canonization” 道封 effectively limited the freedom of demonic spirits: while promoting them as gods, they were made subaltern to their Daoist masters.<sup>1</sup>

Intriguingly, the great ritual compendia of the early thirteenth century, such as the two *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法 (DZ 1221 and 1223) do not contain any significant presence of thunder gods or Thunder Ritual. They seem to have been written with the intention to present a “classical” form of Daoist ritual that was, so to speak, unpolluted by local traditions. Moreover, the Song and Yuan dynasty ritual manuals from which I have drawn most of the data in this chapter were not printed until much later: both the *Daoist Rituals, United in Principle* 道法會元 (DZ 1220), as well as the *Forgotten Pearls from the Sea of Ritual* 法海遺珠 (DZ 1166), were published in the Daoist Canon of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

This absence of Thunder Ritual from pre-Ming compendia may at first sight seem to contradict the idea that it was one of the most prestigious rituals from the Song dynasty onwards, as I will argue. However, the case was more complicated. The author, for example, of the second of the *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* (DZ 1223), Jin Yunzhong 金允中, wrote two colophons for manuals in *Daofa huiyuan* that identify him as a practitioner of Heavenly Reed

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<sup>1</sup> The approach in this chapter is partly based on Kristofer Schipper, “Sources of Modern Popular Worship in the Taoist Canon: A Critical Appraisal,” *Minjian xinyang yu zhongguo wenhua guoji yantaobui lunwenji* 民間信仰與中國文化國際研討會論文集. Taipei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1994, especially pp. 9-10, where the issue of a “Daoist canonization” is treated.

<sup>2</sup> The first fifty-five texts of *Daofa huiyuan* were products of the early Ming, as I will show in the next chapter. Starting with *Daofa huiyuan* 56, however, many documents were included that were much older. The texts of *Daofa huiyuan* represent the regional variety out of which Chinese religions have evolved. It is obvious from the names of patriarchs and gods in *Daofa huiyuan*, from the procedures and formulas, that there was not one single movement or “church” behind their production and proliferation. All the same, the persistence with which these mostly undated and anonymous rituals have been made to conform to common models and referents, shows that they were based upon something of an older, mainstream Daoism that spoke a relatively unified ritual language. Even though these rituals were reformative in many ways, their authors self-consciously tried to adhere to existing practices. Also see Judith M. Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature: Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries*. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1987.

天蓬 rituals, a type of ritual that largely corresponded to Thunder Ritual in its applications.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, just like Du Guangting during the Tang, Jin Yunzhong and his Song dynasty contemporaries seem to have wanted to dissociate “classical” Daoism from the affinities it had with local religion.<sup>4</sup>

The transformation of Sire Thunder into “Chief Marshal of the Thunder Division” Deng Bowen during the Song dynasty, in fact, fitted into much larger phenomena than the limited outlook on Daoist ritual that the two *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* allow us to see. First of all, the “Taoist Renaissance” of the Song that Michel Strickmann posited was taking place in just those fields where Thunder Ritual evolved: between ordained Daoists and village mediums.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the imperial promotions of local cults into more impressive deities with a wider sphere of influence were also a part of the interaction between the various economic, political, or religious “centers” and their local “peripheries.”

I will argue that Deng Bowen’s own career was intimately related to the task he was given within the martial bureaucracy of the Thunder Division: his powers were applied during the martial exploits of Daoist exorcisms in order to recruit new personnel for the divine armies of thunder. Similar to his personal transformation from local demonic cult to Daoist divinity, Deng Bowen did not usually destroy his demonic adversaries. Rather, he contained them in spaces created by the Daoist master. He was sent out to arrest baleful spirits, whereupon his masters could put them behind bars in their “earth prisons” 地獄.

<sup>3</sup> See *Daofa huiyuan* 173.13b-14a and *Daofa huiyuan* 178.3a-6a.

<sup>4</sup> Maruyama Hiroshi more generally places Jin Yunzhong’s rituals in the broader context of classical Daoism. See Maruyama Hiroshi 丸山宏, “Jin Yunzhong no Dōkyō girei gaku 金允中の道教儀礼学,” pp. 50-79. In *Dōkyō bunka e no tenbō 道教文化への展望*. Tōkyō: Hirakawa Shuppansha, 1994. Furthermore, see Matsumoto Kōichi 松本浩一, “Jōsei reihō daihō no bunkengaku teki kenkyū: reihōha no shugyōho o megutte 上清靈宝大法の文献学的研究：靈宝派の修行法をめぐって” In *Toshokan jōhō kenkyū hōkokū* 図書館情報大学研究報告 17:2 (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Strickmann, Michel, “The Taoist Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.” Paper prepared for the Third International Conference of Taoist Studies, Unterägeri, September 30, 1979.

These prisons could be drawn onto the ground of the ritual arena, but spirits could also be locked up in earthenware jars, bottles, bronze mirrors, or copper coins – cognate objects, as I will show below. The priest would take the spirits from there, either executing them, or refining them with his rituals of “sublimation” 鍊度, and forging new divinities out of them.

Rituals of sublimation were closely intertwined with the Daoist ritual of body transformation by fire, termed *huashen* 化身 / 化神 or *bianshen* 變身 / 變神. I will analyze this practice, thought to be one of the major Buddhist influences upon Daoist ritual, and show that it really was one of the most archaic practices preserved in Daoist ritual. Deng Bowen’s own transformed body became expressive of the transformation of the priest’s mortal body into a golden glow 金光. This ritual oblation was necessary for the Daoist priest on his inner journey to the Gate of Heaven 天門, where he could present his ritual petition to the Heavenly authorities only after having destroyed his mortal shape and replaced it with a body of light.

To show that Deng Bowen’s case was far from unique, I will treat two other divinities from the Thunder Division: Marshal Guan 關元帥 (Guan Yu 關羽) and Marshal Wen 溫元帥 (Wen Qiong 溫瓊). These gods shared with Deng Bowen their ambiguous status of, on the one hand, “popular god,” and on the other their Daoist rank. While their Daoist status did not necessarily obliterate the practice of popular worship, in some cases the former came to predominate. In ritual they further lost their individuality: Marshals Guan and Wen were matched with each other, and with increasingly expanded platoons of Marshals. These configurations of thunder gods were the hallmark of Thunder Ritual, and a signifier of the local demons that were absorbed into the Daoist registers. By the early thirteenth century such registers could include more than 3,500 “sublimated” divinities from

various regions, thus giving some indication as to how broadly the Daoist Rituals of Thunder were performed in most parts of Han China.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2. The paradox of Song dynasty religious change

The vigor with which local cults were promoted into spheres where they could receive patronage on a wider scale during the Song dynasty has been described by Valerie Hansen. In her *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*, she addresses the dramatic increase in imperial promotions of local cults during the Southern Song. While she explains the imperial investiture of these gods as a function of their efficacy – the miracles they performed for their devotees – she mainly depicts the social context of these changing gods rather than the gods themselves, with economic stimuli playing an important role.

Such a social history unfortunately leaves much religious terrain uncovered. The subject of “gods” as more than just a vaguely circumscribed category is not seriously studied. Moreover, a study of changing gods during the Song dynasty might benefit from an inquiry into the ritual procedures for transforming spirits: were the gods promoted without any ritual practitioners involved? Hansen ignores the canonical texts of Buddhism and Daoism, reasoning that her study is one of “lay religion” and assuming that clerics operated in a separate sphere. Yet, as we shall see, the metamorphosis of the new Sire Thunder into a multiplicity of other thunder gods during the Song dynasty was just as much a part of this “popular religious change,” and there is no reason to assume that ritual practitioners were absent from the social environment that instigated these changes, and patronized them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> DZ 508 *Wushang huanglu daxhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀, 51.1a-56.28b; the pantheon addressed in this book is, however, not exclusively based upon local cults. Some of its members, such as the many “transcendent officials” 仙官, were most likely canonized Daoists.

<sup>7</sup> Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*, pp. 24-27. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

As a matter of fact, one might view the Song dynasty canonizations as part of a rather long tradition of interaction between Daoism and the local cult, the mutually constitutive nature of which was first brought to our attention by Rolf Stein.<sup>8</sup> The earliest traces of this dynamic have recently been described in detail by Peter Nickerson.<sup>9</sup> However, we still know next to nothing about the actual practices on the ground, whether popular, clerical, or official, that were involved in the process of canonization and promotion. Although the rituals of Thunder were intended to deal directly with demonic spirits of local communities, these procedures have mainly been studied from the vantage point of their inner logics, such as “interior alchemy.”<sup>10</sup>

What I will show below is that such canonizations had become a key component of Daoist liturgies; the rituals of the Song period placed the promotion of demons at their core. Some scholars concerned with the history of Chinese religions have treated the various new ritual traditions of the late Song, with Thunder Ritual as their main representative, from the perspective of competing forces in the ritual economy.<sup>11</sup> While ritual production and canonization certainly reached a peak during the Song, Sire Thunder’s transformation seems to suggest that this process had started long before the twelfth century.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Rolf Stein, “Religious Taoism,” pp. 53-81; for a “sequel” to this article, see Terry Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China,” *Asia Major* Third Series, Volume VII: 1 (1994), pp. 185-211.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Nickerson, “Taoism, Bureaucracy, and Popular Religion.”

<sup>10</sup> For some theoretical aspects of Thunder Ritual, see Suzuki Takeo 鈴木健郎, “Bai Yuchan no raihō setsu 白玉蟾の雷法説.” In *Tōhō Shūkyō* 東方宗教 103 (2003); also cf. Yokote Yutaka 横手裕, “白玉蟾と南宋江南道教” In *Tōhō Gakuhō* 東方学報 68 (1996); for the investigative (judicial) aspect of Thunder Ritual, see Matsumoto Kōichi 松本浩一, “Tensinhō no kigen to seikaku: tokuni raihō tonon hikaku o tsūjite 天心法の起源と性格：特に雷法との比較を通じて。” In *Tōshokan jōbō kenkyū hokokushū* 図書館情報大学研究報告 20:2 (2002); for Bai Yuchan’s attempts to systematize Thunder lore, see Lowell Skar, “Administering Thunder: A Thirteenth-century Memorial Deliberating the Thunder Rites.” *CEA* 9 (1996-97), pp. 159-202.

<sup>11</sup> A point recently driven home in Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*, p. 197-8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*, for an insightful analysis of the rich social factors in ritual production.

In the work by students of Daoism, such as in Judith Boltz's description of thunder rites during the Song dynasty, much is made of the battle against the "perverse" cults of the "vengeful ghost or village sorcerer."<sup>13</sup> According to Boltz, "the rise of a new breed of officeholder cum exorcist" marked the practical objective of Thunder Ritual as aiming for the eradication of deviating local spiritual entities by representatives of the imperial bureaucracy.<sup>14</sup> Robert Hymes, too, views the Song dynasty production of Daoist ritual as intended to form a strategic tool in the ritual practitioner's "control and discipline" of local gods and saints, who "hold no privileged place" in (Hymes' perception of) Daoism.<sup>15</sup> The vantage point shared by these scholars is that of Michel Strickmann, who saw an incommensurable divide between Daoism on the one hand, and "the despised and neglected 'nameless religion' of the people, the scores of local deities and the hundreds of practitioners who invoked and embodied them."<sup>16</sup>

Such an approach to Daoism is faithful to the public slogans that Daoists themselves pronounced, yet it does not seem to entertain the possibility that their self-proclaimed war on the bloody cults of "vulgar spirits" 俗神 was an attempt to conceal their profound codependence upon these cults. After all, where did the spirits on Daoist registers come from? Peter Nickerson argues that the genuinely effective power of the Daoist priest "had to emanate 'from below' – from the demon, the medium, or other manifestation of immediate contact with the supernatural."<sup>17</sup> Yet at the same time he states that early Daoists did not yet possess the mechanisms "of demonization and subsequent promotion through service" that

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<sup>13</sup> Judith Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural," p. 273. In Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter Gregory (eds.), *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993. Also a dominant theme in Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone," p. 256

<sup>15</sup> Hymes, *Way and Byway*, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Nickerson, "Taoism, Bureaucracy, and Popular Religion," p. 337.



were “present and available for more general use when Taoism began incorporating popular deities into its pantheon in more obvious ways in Sung and later times.” Given the fact that the Marshals, Generals and other divine proxies that Daoists deployed during the Song were all derived from demonic gods, could it not be possible that the Generals and Divine Agents featured in the early Celestial Master rituals were equally derived from local “vulgar gods”?

It is this possibility of Daoist recruitment of demonic soldiers that has recently become unearthed in studies of early Daoism by Ursula-Angelika Cedzich.<sup>18</sup> Whereas in her work the focus is on the “demonic soldiers” 鬼卒 and “demon clerks” 鬼吏 as having emerged from the “former meritorious members of the living Taoist community,” I would like to suggest that there was another dimension to this practice of including demonic spirits, namely those of the local community.<sup>19</sup> The local connection, in fact, very much looks like a fundamental trait of Daoism. One thirteenth century Daoist, Lu Ye 盧埜, saw no problem in admitting that the “generals and troops” 將兵 of the celestial bureaucracy were “evildoing and wicked demons” 乃操惡兇狂之鬼.<sup>20</sup> Another states that “the Thunder Gods are violent and savage, one needs bloody sacrifices when offering to them” 雷神猛烈，須用血食祭之.<sup>21</sup> The common stock of sacrificial offering to Thunder Gods, indeed, consisted of chicken, goat, dog, and other kinds of meat.

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<sup>18</sup> Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen: Übersetzung und Untersuchung des liturgischen Materials im dritten *chüan* des *Teng-chen yin-chüeh*.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Würzburg (Germany), 1987, pp. 56-60. Also see her “Ghosts and Demons, Law and Order: Grave Quelling Texts and Early Taoist Liturgy.” *Taoist Resources* 4:2 (1993), esp. pp. 32-33; and finally her “The Organon of the Twelve Hundred Officials and its Gods.” Paper prepared for the Symposium in Celebration of *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, University of Chicago, October 6-8, 2005, p. 5

<sup>19</sup> Cedzich, “Ghosts and Demons,” p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.1a; also cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 250.9a; for the scarce details we know about Lu Ye, see Schipper & Verellen, *Companion*, p. 1111 and 1113.

<sup>21</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 101.5b.

Daoists during the Song dynasty continued to denounce popular cults, and their liturgies commonly include the threat of destruction: “Those who come along with me shall live, those who go against me will perish” 順我者生，逆我者亡. But the cults that received imperial investitures during this period also belonged to this category of the local popular cult with bloody sacrifices of meat. They were not the exalted cults in the more or less codified forms we have come to know now; they were peculiarly local, and by any definition of course not canonical.

Simultaneous with the imperial canonizations of local cults that were well underway by the early twelfth century, Daoist practitioners of exorcist rituals were employed at the Song court, and occupied influential positions in the emperor’s proximity. With Daoist figures occupying key positions at court, and Thunder Ritual proliferating widely, how to account for the sharp increase in imperial investitures of popular gods? How could the lowly cults of “uncanonical” 不經 (and thus “deviant” 邪) spirits enter the official realm of imperial investitures if there was Daoist exorcist ritual to prevent them from entering the circuit in the first place? If one might counter that these rituals were not enough widespread, Edward L. Davis has recently shown that the practitioners of these rituals were active on virtually all levels of Song society, exorcizing all kinds of possessions and spiritual malfeasances, and cross-fertilizing Daoist ritual with village ritual.<sup>22</sup>

The dynamics behind the imperial investitures of the Song dynasty must have been intimately related to the gods that started figuring in Thunder Ritual. The pantheons addressed in those liturgies consisted of martial divinities that were canonized with names and positions in “Ranks of Generals” 將班. The gods in these Daoist pantheons increased as sharply as the imperial investitures for their counterparts from “lay religion.” In fact, as

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<sup>22</sup> Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, esp. chapters 5, 6, and 7.

we will see below, these spheres were less separate than one might think. Analysis of the Daoist ritual mechanisms enabling local gods to extend their sphere of influence into regional or even national cults will thus shed considerable light on the broader religious development that took place during the Song dynasty.

It is certain that Daoist ritual played a formative role in the imperial canonizations of the Song. While that is not to say that all imperial investitures of the Song dynasty were ritually executed by Daoists, there cannot be any doubt that these canonizations were embedded in ritual – and the production of Daoist rituals that aimed at elevating demonic entities reached a dramatic peak during the same period that the local cults of the Song dynasty received their investitures. Moreover, it was during the reign of the last emperor of the Northern Song, Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100-26), that canonizations were started on a large scale, and coincidentally this emperor was the most devoted patron of Daoist thunder liturgists with rituals that transformed demons into gods.

### 3.3 From outer demon to inner god: Deng Bowen's journey into the body

As Sire Thunder gradually changed into the “Chief Marshal of the Thunder Division” called Deng Bowen, the story of his life was rewritten. The most complete and probably oldest extant hagiography of Deng Bowen is to be found in the second of two texts entitled *True Writs of Five Thunder, [belonging to] the Jade Pivot of the Highest Purity* 上清玉樞五雷真文 (*Daofa huiyuan* 57), written probably around the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>23</sup> It

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<sup>23</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 57. I suspect it is the oldest because 1) this is the only source that makes reference to an earlier (now lost) source, the “Five Thunder Scripture” 五雷經, and the other short biographies (to be mentioned below) seem to be abstracts of this one; 2) the divine titles of Deng Bowen are not assembled yet, as in later versions: the biography equates different titles to each other; 3) iconographically speaking, Deng's representation in this version seems to have removed itself least from Tang representations (including the drawing of a picture as an act involved in his cult); 4) its actions are directed among others against “mountain specters” and the

contains a hagiographical text entitled “God of Scorching Fire” 燄火神, which seems to describe just the very manifestation of Sire Thunder as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>24</sup> Features of Deng Bowen identical to the Sire Thunder of the Tang are many, yet there were several interesting additions made. The very first lines of this biography, here translated in its entirety, show that the process of Sire Thunder’s transformation was still ongoing:

The God of Scorching Fire. According to the *Five Thunder Scripture*, the Great Immortal of Thunderclap is just this deity. He also bears the name of Great God of the Statutes and Ordinances. His surname is Deng, and his given name Bowen. During the time of the Yellow Emperor he was in supreme command of the armies, and was dispatched to capture Chi You. He followed Feng Hou as leading minister and was victorious in battle. The Emperor promoted Deng Bowen to the rank of “General of Henan.”

When the Emperor ascended into the heavens, Deng Bowen withdrew from the world and entered Mt. Wudang, where he practiced cultivation for a hundred years. But because in the past he had eaten human flesh, he could not ascend into heaven. The Lord on High reminisced about him and granted him a fief on Mt. Wudang. Thereupon, [Deng Bowen] observed how mortals did not practice loyalty and filial piety. Murderous aggressions grew more serious and offensive deceit increased; the strong oppressed the weak, and the superior abused the humble. Subsequently [Deng Bowen] pronounced an oath, day and night, that he desired to become a divine thunder, in order to punish these

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“Five Manifestations” 山魃五通, an ancient class of dark beings of which the former becomes virtually obsolete in later versions of the biography (and most ritual texts anyway). For a detailed study, see Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “The Cult of the Wu-t’ung / Wu-hsien in History and Fiction: The Religious Roots of the *Journey to the South*,” p. 192. In David Johnson, ed., *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. For the most extensive study, see Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. All in all, I would like to tentatively date this biography to the Northern Song (960 – 1127). For the moment I would not like to extend that claim to the entire scripture in which the biography is embedded.

<sup>24</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 57.15a-16a.

people with their evil ways – on Heaven’s behalf. He relentlessly recited [his oath] and the breath of his anger burst forth into Heaven.

Suddenly, one day, his body changed into the stuff of a demon, his form into the likeness of a bat: he had a phoenix beak and silver teeth, with red hair on a blue body. In his left hand he held a thunder awl, and in his right hand a thunder hammer. His body was a hundred zhang long! From beneath his armpits came two large wings that caused darkness for several hundred *li* when he unfolded them for departure; from his eyes, two rays of light cracked forth and shone brightly for a thousand *li*. They smelted stone and liquefied metal; they dried out the vast oceans. On his hands and feet he had dragon-claws, and he could travel the Great Void in his flights. He devoured deviant spirits, and decapitated malevolent dragons. The Lord on High promoted him to the rank of God of Statutes and Ordinances serving under the aegis of divine thunder. On the *wu* hour of the fifth day of the fifth month he ascended into the residence of the Fire Command of the Southern Palace.<sup>25</sup>

His mighty powers are extreme. At times of banditry and destruction, with his two wings he stirs up the waters of the Four Seas, turning the peaks of Mt. Kunlun upside down and dipping them into the water, toppling and turning mountains and rivers and the great earth. Each master who practices Thunder Ritual should sacrifice to him on the fifth day of the fifth month. Then he will be able to exorcise severe possessions, and to shake the peaks of mountains; to respond to plague-causing demons and phantoms, and venomous mountain specters. As soon as they hear the name of this god, they are terrified. This deity delights in drinking goose blood. One has to draw his appearance and pray to him while making offerings. His evidential miracles will follow upon one’s wish; it is unfathomable. If one has no goose blood, then replace it with goat blood. Moreover, there exists a talisman of the God of Scorching Fire. It can terminate

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<sup>25</sup> This refers to the purgatory in the Southern Dipper 南斗. For an extensive treatment of this subject see *Nangong huofu Wuyang Leishi biju* 南宮火府烏陽雷師祕法, *Daofa huiyuan* 121. Also cf. *Xiyouji* ch. 51, 南斗六司.

demonic possessions, cure the hundred diseases, and remove the plague. Hang it at the entrance of the main hall: it shall pacify one's home and dissolve calamities; it shall protect against the hundred evils.<sup>26</sup>

歟火大神者。按《五雷經》云：霹靂大仙者，是此神也。又名律令大神。姓鄧，名伯溫。黃帝時為統軍領兵，使收蚩尤。從風后為帥臣，戰勝。帝封伯溫為河南將軍。帝昇天，伯溫棄世，入武當山，修行百載。為嘗食人肉，不得昇天。上帝念之。封於武當。因見世人不行忠孝。殺害愈甚，侵欺愈增；以強凌弱，以貴虐賤。遂日夜發願，欲為神雷，代天誅伐此等惡道之人。念念不絕，怒氣衝天。一日，忽變形如鬼質，狀若蝙蝠，鳳觜銀牙，朱髮藍身。左手持雷鑽，右手持雷錘；身長百丈，兩腋出兩大翅，展去則數百里皆暗；兩目迸光二道，照耀千里，鑠石流金，乾枯滄海。手足皆龍爪，飛遊太空。吞啗精怪，斬伐妖龍。上帝封為律令神，隸屬神雷。五月五日午時昇入南宮火令之宅，威力最大。劫壞之時，以兩翼鼓動四溟之水，翻浸崑崙之丘，崩倒山河大地。凡行雷法之士，宜於五月五日祭之，能驅大祟，搖動山嶽。應瘟疫鬼魅、蠱毒山魃，聞此神名皆恐懼。此神喜飲鵝血。當圖其形，供養禱之。隨意靈驗，莫可測度；無鵝血，以羊血代之。又有歟火神符，能斷鬼祟，治救百病，祛剪瘟疫。懸於廳堂門戶，鎮宅消災，辟除百惡。

The *persona* of Deng Bowen as “God of Scorching Fire” seems to have had no precedent in historical records, and even later Daoist genealogists such as Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194? – 1229) could not place him within a historical context.<sup>27</sup> Whether or not any actual historical

<sup>26</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 57.15a-16a.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 82.24a-27a.

person stood at the basis of this cult, there can barely be any doubt that Deng Bowen once was a demonic deity, called “General of Henan” 河南將軍. In this hagiography there is an ominous reference to his previous transgression of eating human flesh, and it is for that reason that he appears to have a history as a local divinity demanding human sacrifices. According to the story, he achieved this military position by aiding the Yellow Emperor in his battle against the serpentine rogue Chi You 蚩尤 – a detail echoed in texts such as the first of the *True Writs* (*Daofa huiyuan* 56), as well as others.<sup>28</sup> The old region called Deng 鄧 (in present day Henan) was less than a hundred kilometers from his eventual place of cultivation, Mt. Wudang. Keeping his surname, the celestial emperor canonized him as “Great God of Statutes and Ordinances” 律令大神.

In many ways Deng Bowen is similar to the Tang dynasty Sire Thunder. Both held a divine position as heavenly executioner, directing their profound anger at the sinful, as well as targeting recalcitrant dragons. Deng Bowen moreover resembled so precisely the earlier descriptions of Sire Thunder in all their abject detail – his bird-like appearance, his hammer and an awl, flesh wings, metallic claws, and his association with dragons – that it seems possible to find in Deng Bowen the direct inheritor (or usurper) of Sire Thunder.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, much is new. In his new life-course, Deng Bowen’s relationship to the hierarchized heavenly empire is made explicit. Although his later military insignia, such as “prime marshal” 元帥, have not yet been provided, he was employed as a “divine thunder”

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<sup>28</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 56.14b-15b; 80.14a; 82.25b 199.1b (poem by Lin Lingsu, who refers to Deng only as Scorching Fire); and DZ 962 *Wudang fudi zongzhen ji* 3.18a.

<sup>29</sup> Only his hog-like face has changed into another – equally cone-headed – form with a bird’s beak. I will return briefly to this point below in my discussion of Sun Wukong, as I think I can show that the real iconographic issue at stake is not necessarily the difference embedded in the representation of either a boar’s snout or a bird’s beak, but rather the similarity between the pointed shape of the snout/beak of either animal (and where the boar later on loses significance, the monkey emerges victoriously).

神雷. Promoted to high ranks, he had become part of a hierarchy – priests could now exert power over him.

The *terminus ante quem* for this text is 1114 AD, but I think it was probably written still earlier.<sup>30</sup> The two biographies in *Daofa huiyuan* portrayed Deng Bowen as a local deity, which suggests that – in accordance with the absence of codified, supreme titles – this version of Sire Thunder had only recently started to spread beyond its original boundaries. During the twelfth century he Deng Bowen had moreover acquired the rank of General. In Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1123 – 1202) *Records of the Listener* 夷堅志 we find a description of a woman possessed by what seems to be a demon. Her husband, a literatus, repeatedly tries to find a cure for her affliction, but all in vain. People then tell him about a man named Zhao Shandao 趙善蹈 who was initiated in the “Great Rites of Lingbao” 靈寶大法. This man arranges a ritual for the sick woman, and amidst a most spectacular display of otherworldly phenomena Deng Bowen manifests himself, saying: “I am General Deng, interrogator of the Heavenly Origin” 吾天元考召鄧將軍也.<sup>31</sup>

Whereas General Deng presents himself as a terrifying presence and ultimately cures the disease (caused by an improperly buried dog that had turned into a polluting spirit), he

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<sup>30</sup> That is the year of death of the official and poet Zhang Lei 張耒 (1054 – 1114), who wrote a reference to Deng Bowen in a local gazetteer of Changshu 常熟 district (near present day Shanghai) mentioning his military rank of prime marshal 元帥. The great geographical distance between Mt. Wudang (Northern Hubei) and Changshu (East of Nanjing) might strongly suggest that these two biographies in fact are much older than the 1114 AD of Zhang Lei, which is after all also his death date. It would probably still be a conservative estimate to date the biographies to sometime in the first half of the eleventh century. Quoted in a local gazetteer of Changshu district 常熟私志 (near present day Shanghai); see *Zhongguo minjian xinyang fengsu cidian* 中國民間信仰風俗辭典 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian, 1992), pp. 161-2. The exact designation was Lüling dashen Deng yuanshuai 律令大神鄧元帥, “Marshal Deng, Great Spirit of Statutory Commandment.” As the above hagiography was certainly intended to be both comprehensive and a contribution to the divine prestige of Deng Bowen, it is extremely unlikely that the compiler of the text should have omitted such an important military rank—*ergo*, Zhang Lei's reference must have been later. Moreover, in contrast with all later references to Deng Bowen, the hagiography neither elevates him to the highest ranks of a thunder department, nor relates him to the deities with whom he has later become closely associated: he is still operating on his own, just as Sire Thunder once was.

<sup>31</sup> Hong Mai 洪邁, *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, pp. 1759-61. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981.



apparently was not yet famous enough to be recognized directly: a young trance medium has to ask him for his name and rank. Moreover, he presents himself without his wings. The word used for the spirit's malfeasance, "pollution" 穢 is elsewhere specified as "polluted energy" 穢氣, just as Zhao Shandao's ritual practice is described as "dissolving the pollution" 解穢 or "destroying the pollution" 破穢. This, as we will see below, is an important clue as to the kind of exorcism that was done by Deng Bowen.

The presence of a twelfth century cult to Deng Bowen on Mt. Wudang is corroborated by sources from that mountain: he is mentioned in the Yuan dynasty *Comprehensive Collection of the Blissful Site of Wudang* 武當福地總真集 (DZ 962), a text compiled by Liu Daoming 劉道明 at the turn of the thirteenth century and first printed in 1301.<sup>32</sup> On Wudangshan the several different ranks and titles of Deng Bowen had been fixed into one Daoist title, with some additions: "Fire Scorcher of the Middle Heavens, Great God of Statutes and Ordinances, Chief Marshal and Celestial Lord of Thunderclap" 中天歟火律令大神雷霆主帥天君.<sup>33</sup> From this enhanced rank we can tell that by the twelfth century Deng Bowen had risen to the realm of the Middle Heavens, which means that he had become "without beginning (or end)" 無極, effectively realizing his elevation into the center of the Daoist spiritual realm. He was moreover called "Chief Marshal," placing him at the

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<sup>32</sup> Liu Daoming's records place the arrival of the Taoist Sun Jiran 孫寂然 on Mt. Wudang in 1141. By this time, Thunder Ritual had been flourishing already for some time, and especially after Wang Wenqing's active promotion of Thunder Rituals, the biography of Deng Bowen must have been well known to the initiated. Sun Jiran's own relatively short biographical sketch informs the reader of his transmission of the Shangqing Five Thunder methods, from his Qingzhen Temple 清真觀 on Mt. Mao 茅山 to Mt. Wudang. Rather than taking this as just another dry historical record, it seems wise to keep in mind that the main deity on this mountain, the Dark Emperor 玄帝, later received assistants belonging to the tradition of the Five Thunders. Sun Jiran's Five Thunder lineage may have been more of an influence on Mt. Wudang than is known. As John Lagerwey points out, Sun Jiran "found the halls and temples on the mountain empty because of the war with the Chin [...]." See Lagerwey, "The Pilgrimage to Wu-tang Shan." In Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, p. 296-7. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

<sup>33</sup> DZ 962 *Wudang fudi zongzhen ji*, 3.18a.

head of the thunder bureaucracy, as well as “Celestial Lord,” decorating him with a nomenclature that equaled the charisma of the highest gods.

Figure 3.2.  
Deng Bowen in talismanic representation, his body forming the law 急急如律令; his arms drawn with the character 勅 (holding hammer and awl).

Enforcing the law:  
“Talisman of the Flying Sword that Captures Dragons” 飛劍捉龍符.

Front-side of a Thunder Commanding Block 五雷號令 from the early Ming.



Liu Daoming also mentioned that Deng Bowen had claimed for himself a specific mountain range on Mt. Wudang where he left his traces in various places. Among his signature locations were the Double Writ Peaks 疊字峰, located to the South of the Five Dragon Tops and enclosing a large valley with lush vegetation. In their western cliff:

There is a stone cavity called “Thunder Cave,” no less that two *zhang* deep. If you descend by a rope, you will see that the rocks below are all shaped like a raging fire. There is the shape of a seat, and there are still footprints to be found. A divine wind

coldly frightens the heart and stomach. As tradition has it, this is the place where Celestial Lord Deng, Statutory Commander of Scorching Fire, the Thunder Marshal, perfected his cultivation. Wind and thunder often come forth from this place.<sup>34</sup>

有一石穴，名曰：「雷巖」。深可二丈。自上貫繩而下，石皆作火燄之狀。有坐形足跡存。神風凜凜，心膽震慄。傳云：「雷師歛火律令鄧天君鍊真之處。風雷多從此起。」

Although Marshal Deng had thus found another locality close to his region of origin, Mt. Wudang instead of Henan, no mention is made of a temple, a statue, or a cult. His presence on the mountain seems to have been marked by a hollow absence, symbolized by traces and wind. Just like his fellow gods from the Thunder Division, the importance of a fixed site for worship was played down. On Mt. Wudang his mythical origins were slightly altered, yet the provenance of his cult from Henan was not forgotten:

[Marshal Deng] was the Yellow Emperor's minister General Feng Hou. When he destroyed Chi You, he was bestowed with the title of General of Henan, and subsequently canonized with the surname Deng. Later he took refuge on the Double Writ Peak of Mt. Wudang, where his divine traces are still extant.<sup>35</sup>

[鄧元帥]即黃帝相風后將軍。破蚩尤封河南將軍，因以所封鄧為姓。後隱武當壘子峰，有神跡尚存。

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<sup>34</sup> DZ 962, 1.7a.

<sup>35</sup> DZ 962, 3.18a.

Deng Bowen had here thus been reinvented as an avatar of Feng Hou, a figure of great mythical magnitude whose cult had been honored with imperial sacrifices to the “Historical Emperors and Kings” 歷代帝王 during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Notwithstanding Deng Bowen’s increasingly high ranks, his decorations were deceptive. These accretions of awe-inspiring might betrayed, in the end, his complete subjugation. Within the course of about two centuries Sire Thunder had grown from an impulsive archaic deity into a loyal subject of Daoist martial law. Daoist ritual manuals corroborate this development. The longest extant ritual manual devoted to Deng Bowen was written in the first half of the thirteenth century by a Daoist from Yanping 延平 in Fujian called Yang Gengchang 楊耕常 (zi Piyun 披雲; fl. 1208 – 1227).<sup>36</sup> In the present context Yang Gengchang’s text is valuable because it describes the process by which the priest realized his ritual metamorphosis into Deng Bowen – here called “Chief Marshal” 主帥 as well as “Celestial Lord” 天君. For the priest it was a full realization of the martial potential that was latent in demonic gods.

First, the practitioner had to start the circulation of “ancestral energies” through his body, while facing the direction of *xun* 巽 (Southeast – the “Door of Earth” 地戶), and forming a ball of golden rays. The priest should then slice the ball with his fingers using the Dipper *mudrā* 斗訣, so that Marshal Deng could manifest himself. Thereupon an incantation had to be recited:

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<sup>36</sup> A fragmentary biography of this liturgist is included in *Daofa huiyuan* 188.2b-4a; The unfamiliarity of his name should not conceal the fact that he was a figure of considerable stature, as is evinced by the occurrence of his name in other texts: *Daofa huiyuan* 188, 189, 190, 193. More impressively, he is associated with a sacred site in Zhong Du 中都 (Anhui), and said to have lived in the Long Life Monastery 萬壽宮 (*Zhongdu zhi* 中都志, p. 345).

After the incantation is finished, close your eyes and actualize a fire of ten-thousand *zhang* in the direction of *xun*. Pull the fire of the heart and the fire of *xun* together, so that they fill Heaven and Earth. Circulate the fire of the heart and coagulate it into a mark, with the Golden Rays radiating. Hit forth the mark with your hands in a thunder-gesture, so that it will burst forth towards the direction of *xun*. Watch the Great God emerge from the fiery glow; while you recite the Summoning Spell, he will ride on the mark down onto the altar, and “my” body merges with the Marshal inside the fiery glow. With your left hand forming a Thunder-gesture, absorb him into the Palace of the Heart, and become the marshal.<sup>37</sup>

咒畢，瞑目存巽方火光萬丈，引心火與巽火混合，充塞天地。運心火結成號頭，金光燦燦。以雷局打發號頭，衝至巽方。見大神從火光中出；誦召咒乘號降壇，我身與帥俱在火光中。左手雷局，引入心宮，結成元帥。

The practitioner could not achieve this metamorphosis without knowing the appearance of Deng Bowen. His actualization of the Marshal’s power involved a transference of the demonic appearance – a total transformation, including the scorching fire. The appearance to be actualized by the priest looked like this:

Red hair and a golden crown, three eyes and a black face, phoenix-beak and flesh wings; in his left hand he carries an awl, in his right hand he holds a hammer. His body is naked, with pearls wound around his arms and legs on each of which he has five claws and on each of which he wears golden rings. [...] He wears a red, retreating apron with straps, from under his wings there are two heads: the left head

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<sup>37</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 80.2b-3a.

controls the wind, and the right head controls the rain. His entire body is covered by a blazing fire, and he rides a vermilion [naked] dragon.<sup>38</sup>

赤髮金冠，三目青面，鳳嘴肉翅；左手執鑽，右手執槌；赤體朱纏絡，手足皆五爪，上帶金環。〔略〕紅吊褪裙，兩翼下二頭：左主風，右主雨。偏體烈火，乘赤龍。

This description from the early thirteenth century is almost identical to the descriptions in Deng Bowen's two biographies from the eleventh century, mentioned above. These, in turn, perpetuated the most important characteristics of the Tang dynasty transformation of Sire Thunder. The history of thunder's absorption into celestial ranks is thus a vivid illustration of how Daoist "exorcist" ritual incorporated local cults into their liturgies, and used them outside the context of mere devotional worship.

#### 3.4. Efficacy without a statue: Thunder Marshals

Deng Bowen was only one of many local cults that were canonized with more impressive titles. In addition to this archetypal thunder god, many other demonic cults were co-opted by Daoist ritual practitioners. Some seem to have been used predominantly (although not exclusively) to act as powerful agents within Daoist liturgies. Examples of such thunder gods are the two most common associates of Deng Bowen, namely Xin Hanchen 辛漢臣, and Zhang Yuanbo 張元伯.<sup>39</sup> Together these three came to represent the interior

<sup>38</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 80.1ab.

<sup>39</sup> The most important scriptures dedicated to these two individually, are *Daofa huiyuan* 81 and 82 respectively. For Xin Hanchen, also cf. *Fabai yizhu* 38, as well as an additional text within *Fabai yizhu* 6, namely *Mengshi panguan Xin tianjun dafa* 猛吏判官辛天君大法. For Zhang Yuanbo, see *Fabai yizhu* 40; also see an additional scripture within *Fabai yizhu* 39, namely *Zhankan feijie huolei shizhe dafa* 斬勘飛捷火雷使者大法.

fire, fixed in talismanic form as three characters for “fire.”<sup>40</sup> It seems that their earliest configuration as a triad might be attributed to the influential Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾 (1194 – 1227?), who wrote the earliest known genealogy of these three gods, saying that the “Marshals of Thunderclap originally were of one and the same family” 雷霆三帥本一家人也.<sup>41</sup> Not much later, in a scripture attributed to Lei Shizhong 雷時中 (1211 – 95), the three do indeed appear atop of one “list of generals” 將班.<sup>42</sup>

The above three thunder marshals were grouped together as a triad that became virtually inseparable during the Ming. A text dated 1296 by Xue Shichun 薛師淳 (fl. 1265 – 1296) shows that by this time Deng, Xin, and Zhang were seen to cooperate in complex rituals.<sup>43</sup> It was also during the Ming that their triad was supplemented with one member to become a quartet. This obscure fourth marshal, Tao Gongji 陶公濟 had made only very few appearances until then.<sup>44</sup>

The quartet of Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao was only one of many groups of Thunder Marshals that became standardized in Daoist pantheons during the Ming. For reasons of space, an extensive treatment of the individual origins of the gods within the Thunder falls outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>45</sup> Other cults did not remain uniquely Daoist. In the following sections I will provide two short case studies of gods with Daoist as well as more popular affinities: Guan Yu 關羽 and Wen Qiong 溫瓊.

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<sup>40</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 234-5.

<sup>41</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 82.27b.

<sup>42</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 154.1ab.

<sup>43</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 147.

<sup>44</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 75, 94, 98, 195, 197; possibly 156, 192.17b, 248.

<sup>45</sup> A more extensive and systematic survey of the Thunder Marshals, Generals, and other officers of the Thunder Division is currently in progress.

### 3.4.1 Guan Yu

The first example situates these gods that could be manipulated ritually within the context of the imperial canonizations of the Song period. The cult to Guan Yu (Lord Guan 關公, King Guan 關王, General Guan 關將, or Marshal Guan 關元帥) came to nationwide fame precisely during the Song dynasty.<sup>46</sup> His cult was the ideal example of a powerful human being killed in a war and venerated as a god. As a military man during the period of the Three Kingdoms (220 – 80), his divine manifestation perfectly fit into the demonic landscape of popular religion. After the formation of cults based upon such figures as Guan Yu, Daoist liturgists during the mid-fifth century lamented the false gods of popular religion: “The dead generals of defeated armies, dead soldiers of dispersed armies, the men calling themselves ‘General,’ and the women calling themselves ‘Lady,’ leading demonic soldiers” 敗軍死將、亂軍死兵、男稱將軍，女稱夫人，導從鬼兵。<sup>47</sup> Guan Yu’s cult had indeed existed, at least in Hubei, around the time when Lu Xiuqing wrote these comments.<sup>48</sup> By the Tang dynasty his stature had increased, as he was included in the imperial Martial Temple 武廟 in 782.<sup>49</sup> Yet at that time he was merely one of no less than sixty-four martial divinities who received an imperial promotion. And as if to emphasize his relative insignificance, the founder of the Song dynasty, Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927 – 76), demoted Guan Yu in 963 alongside twenty-two other martial heroes, and removed his cult from the Martial Temple.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> For a treatment of the topic that diverges from the trodden paths, see Barend ter Haar, “The Rise of the Guan Yu Cult: The Daoist Connection,” pp. 183-204. In Jan A.M. DeMeyer en Peter M. Engelfriet (eds.), *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelie* 陸先生道門科略, 1a

<sup>48</sup> Zhu Dawei 朱大渭, “Wujiang qunzhong du yiren: Guan Yu renshen bianxi 武將群中獨一人：關羽人神辨析.” In Lu Xiaoheng 盧曉衡 (ed.), *Guan Yu, Guan Gong he Guan Sheng* 關羽、關公和關聖, p. 17. Beijing: Shekeyuan, 2001.

<sup>49</sup> *Xin Tangshu*, pp. 377-8.

<sup>50</sup> Wang Xuetai 王學泰, “Guan Yu chongbai de xingcheng 關羽崇拜的形成,” p. 77. In Lu Xiaoheng, *Guan Yu*.



When his cult received a new impetus by the late eleventh century, Guan Yu could no longer be termed a local cult. Yet because he received worship in different localities, his re-emergence into historical actuality was locally sponsored. An inscription by the Song dynasty statesman Zhang Shangying 張商英 (1043 – 1122) from 1081 shows that his reputation had started to grow anew on Mt. Tiantai 天臺 in Zhejiang.<sup>51</sup> Commonly associated as protective deity of Buddhist monasteries, he had unmistakably Daoist features such as the command over “soldiers of darkness” 陰兵.<sup>52</sup>

It was around the same time that the cult came to the attention of the emperor as well as the Celestial Master whose services he requested. In this case it was for a monstrous apparition in the salt-pond of Jiezhou 解州, in the southernmost tip of Shanxi, that Guan Yu’s services were needed. Guan Yu’s cult would thus constitute a parallel case to Sire Thunder’s cult, suddenly receiving a boost from local support that took him into a sphere where canonizations were more exalted. The possibility that the local cult was indeed much older, and indeed from Jiezhou, is reinforced by a late Ming reference that situated Guan Yu’s victory in the salt-pond (also using “soldiers of darkness”) in 1014.<sup>53</sup> The monster was here specified as Chi You.

A short account by Chen Xiwei 陳希微 (*fl.* 1086 – *ca.* 1120) relates how in 1102, at the very tender age of thirteen *sui*, Celestial Master Zhang Xujing 張虛靖 (*zi* Jixian 繼先)

<sup>51</sup> Lu Xiaoheng, *Guan Yu*, pp. 257-8; for an extensive treatment of Zhang Shangying, see Robert M. Gimello, “Chang Shang-yin on Wu-t’ai Shan,” pp. 89-149. In Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Buddhist monasteries seem often to have adopted a local Earth God 土地 as protective deity. Guan Yu may very well have been such a god, too. Zhang Shangying, moreover, was involved in the compilation of the long lost canon of the Xuanmiao Temple 玄妙觀 of Suzhou from the first two decades of the twelfth century (See a discussion by Piet van der Loon in his *Taoist Books in the Libraries of the Sung Period: A critical study and index*. (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1984), p. 39-40. He wrote a commemorative piece for this occasion, entitled “Record of the Daoist Canon of Luling” 廬陵道藏記 (DZ 1277 *Daofa zongzhi tu yanyi* 道法宗旨圖衍義, 1.2b).

<sup>53</sup> See Shen Defu, *Wanli yebuo bian* 萬歷野獲編, p. 365. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997.

was summoned to court for the performance of an exorcism. In order to slay the demon living in the salt-pond, he invoked Guan Yu. From the narration it is obvious that neither the Celestial Master himself, nor the emperor recognized Guan Yu at first sight; moreover, the employment of this divinity in the ritual performed by the Celestial Master seems to be a complete improvisation:

Thereupon the Master drew talismans and presented incense, paying a visit to the [temple of the] Eastern Peak. In one side-hall he saw the statue of Guan Yu and asked his followers: “Which deity is this?” One of the disciples answered: “It is the Han general Guan Yu – he is the god of loyalty and virtue.” The Master said: “Why don’t we just employ him?” He then inserted the Six Ding into the character ‘Guan,’ writing an iron talisman that he threw into the pond.<sup>54</sup> Immediately wind and clouds rose from all directions, thunder and lightning groaned, while he decapitated the dragon above the lake. The master reported: “The quelling of the dragon is completed.” The emperor asked: “Which god was it?” The master said: “It was the Han general Guan Yu.” The emperor asked: “May I see the god?” The Master said” “I just fear that your majesty will be frightened.” But the emperor ordered him to summon the general. The master then called three times, making him manifest to his majesty. Dragging a long sword, and keeping the dragon’s head in front of him, [Guan Yu] did not withdraw. The emperor threw a Chongning coin at the general, investing him with the title of “True Lord of Chongning.” The master charged him [with a divine responsibility], saying: “If you do not show reverence, I will sentence you to five-hundred years down in Fengdu.” Therefore he has become General of Fengdu. This method was the

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<sup>54</sup> “Iron Talismans,” at least sometimes, were objects made out of actual iron and inscribed with talismanic writing. For an example, see *Daofa huiyuan* 152.10ab, 23b-24a.

beginning of the ancestral method of decapitating dragons and cutting off the heads of demons.<sup>55</sup>

於是真君即篆符文行香。至東嶽廊下，見關羽像。問左右「此是何神？」有弟子答曰「是漢將關羽，此神忠義之神。」師曰「何不就用之？」於是就作用【關】字內，加六丁，書鐵符，投之池內。即時風雲四起，雷電交轟。斬蛟首於池上。師復奏曰「斬蛟已竟。」帝曰「何神？」師曰「漢將關羽。」帝曰「可見乎？」師曰「唯恐上驚！」帝命召之。師隨叩令三下，將乃現形於殿下。拽大刀，執蛟首於前。不退。帝擲崇寧錢，就封之爲「崇寧真君」。師責之「要君非禮，罰下酆都五百年。」故爲酆都將。此法乃斬蛟龍馘魔祖法始也。

What this example shows is that an existing cult to Guan Yu, possibly from Jiezhou in Shanxi, served as the basis for a Daoist adoption/adaptation of the cult; and that the imperial investiture followed shortly after. The fact that the emperor threw a coin at Guan Yu as an act of investiture is reiterated in another version of the same event.<sup>56</sup> We will see below that the usage of a metal coin was expressive of a more systematic ideology of ritual sublimation that had become current at the time. The imperial title originally bestowed upon him was the Daoist epithet of “Perfected Lord” 真君 – the same title used for Zhang Xujing.

The decades after this event witnessed an increasing liturgical apparatus that accrued to Guan Yu. In the first manuals devoted to him, such as the “Secret Method of Marshal Guan, Earth Spirit and Demon Conqueror” 地祇馘魔關元帥祕法 (*Daofa huiyuan* 259), or

<sup>55</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 259.17b-18a.

<sup>56</sup> DZ 1463 *Han Tianshi Shijia* 漢天師世家, 3.2b.

the “Secret Method of Marshal Guan, Bright Spirit of Fengdu” 豐都朗靈關元帥秘法 (*Daofa huiyuan* 260) his services were requested individually, and his prestige comes alongside the name of Celestial Master Zhang Jixian (who was thought to be the first to deploy Guan Yu in ritual). But as we will see below, he was matched with other martial gods of the Thunder Division with whom he often formed a quartet.

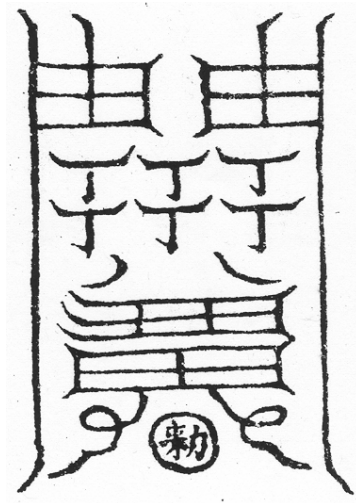


Figure 3.3. - Talisman with Six Ding inside the character for “Guan”

The above passage also shows that while a statue of Guan Yu was located in a temple dedicated to the God of the Eastern Peak 東嶽神 (the ruler over the Netherworld), the ritual absorption carried out by the Celestial Master made possible the actualization of his presence elsewhere. This mobility of gods was a crucial feature of the type of Daoist ritual that flourished during the Song: it featured gods that could be summoned onto altars, independent of their original attachment to temple statues. The original temple cults, however, did not cease to exist, but in many cases the Daoist cult became predominant – although not necessarily in the case of Guan Yu. Some of the temples dedicated to his cult in

“lay religion” used the Daoist title of “Perfected Lord,” but not all. It was, however, perpetuated by a late Ming popular hagiography.<sup>57</sup>

We have one other valuable record about Zhang Xujing’s exorcist practice, showing that he captured devious spirits instead of killing them. In another story from the *Records of the Listener* by Hong Mai we are told about an exorcism of an ape-spirit performed by Zhang Xujing in 1121. Although the ape was “born at the moment after Primordial Chaos had first divided” 生於混沌初分之際 and therefore thought to be extremely powerful, Zhang Xujing had his ways of subduing it. Not able to withstand the ritual attack by the Celestial Master, the monkey-spirit “recoiled and shrank, shaking and shuddering, so that Zhang Xujing could take it into his sleeve” 縮粟震懼，張[虛靖]納諸袖中。<sup>58</sup> Although Hong Mai did not provide further details about what Zhang Xujing did after taking it into his sleeve, at least we are told that the prodigy was not to be killed, because it fostered some connection with Heaven; a detail that may remind some readers of a more famous monkey-spirit: Sun Wukong. In fact, Zhang Xujing claimed he would banish the ape to a faraway island “abroad” 海外 – a place perhaps not so different from the island “abroad” where Sun Wukong was equally born at the moment when Primordial Chaos had first divided, as is described at great length in the first chapter of the Ming novel *Journey to the West* 西遊記。<sup>59</sup>

### 3.4.2. Wen Qiong

The second case from the Song dynasty concerns what may or may not have been a much older cult, but it was most certainly equally rooted in local support. It shows, moreover, that the mobility Daoist gods had gained outside of the local temple was not

<sup>57</sup> Luo Maodeng 羅懋登, *Sanjiao yuanliu souchen daquan* 三教源流搜神大, p. 111. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1990.

<sup>58</sup> Hong Mai, *Yijian zhi*, pp. 1120-21.

<sup>59</sup> See chapters 6 and 7 for a more detailed discussion of *Xiyouji* and other Ming novels.

limited to the cases of Deng Bowen or Guan Yu. It was made into the explicit prerequisite of the gods invoked onto the Daoist altar. This cult, of Wen Qiong 溫瓊 (Marshal Wen 溫元帥 or Grand Protector Wen 溫太保), moreover, gives us a glimpse into the practice of the rituals of “sublimation,” as I have outlined in the introductory chapter. In Wen Qiong’s case too it resulted in the containment of a spirit within an object. But before treating the rituals of “sublimation” as they were applied to Wen Qiong, let us take a look at the hagiography of Wen Qiong.

The oldest version of his hagiography is contained in the Daoist Canon as the “Biography of Great Protector Wen, High General of Earth Spirits.”<sup>60</sup> It was compiled by a Daoist called Huang Gongjin 黃公瑾 in 1274, but it was based on earlier materials.<sup>61</sup> As Paul Katz stated in his discussion of Marshal Wen, the provenance of the cult remains a mystery.<sup>62</sup> Yet given the fact that the main temple of this cult was situated in Wenzhou 溫州 (Zhejiang), Marshal Wen may have had firm roots in this region.<sup>63</sup> Just as in Deng Bowen’s case, it was not uncommon for local gods to derive their names from their regions of origin (or give their name?): a choronym.<sup>64</sup>

Throughout Wen Qiong’s biography he refuses to have a temple dedicated to himself. He says: “If you erect a temple, I will burn it down.” 汝等若立廟，我焚之。<sup>65</sup> Or when someone wants to enshrine him he speaks through a spirit medium, saying that he does “not consider a temple cult or a state canonization very important” 不以廟祀國封爲

<sup>60</sup> DZ 780 *Diqi shangjiang Wen taibao zhuan* 地祇上將溫太保傳.

<sup>61</sup> This biography written after a shorter version of his biography, by a Chen Xinyi 陳信一 (dates unknown).

<sup>62</sup> Paul R. Katz, *Demon Hordes and Burning Boats: the Cult of Marshal Wen in Late Imperial Chekiang*, p. 81. Albany: SUNY, 1995.

<sup>63</sup> *Wenzhou fuzhi* 溫州府志, p. 737.

<sup>64</sup> Apparently this regional character of Wen Qiong was associated furthermore with an “Orthodox School of Wenzhou” 溫州正派 (*Daofa huizuan* 253.6a).

<sup>65</sup> DZ 780, p. 382c (in *Zhonghua Daozang* version; Hanfenlou copy missing).

重.<sup>66</sup> Celestial Master Zhang Xujing said about Wen Qiong that “he does not ask for bloody sacrifices” 不求血食 and he “does not find glory in a state canonization” 不以國封爲榮.

Wen Qiong also asks of a Daoist “not to leave my statue in the world” 君即瓊之像毋留於世. Thus, the oldest extant hagiography presents Wen Qiong’s cult as one that rejected temple worship. Moreover, while acknowledged as a gravitational force that absorbed local cults, even the prestige of state canonization was rejected.

The process of Wen’s sublimation is described in relatively good detail. The episode is set against the background of a local cult to the Golden Chrysalis 金繭, bestowed with the name of King Qieluo 伽羅王. This “self-proclaimed” Buddhist deity attacked a Daoist called Wu Daoxian 吳道顯, once he arrived in Quanzhou 泉州 (Fujian). Wu Daoxian took the spirit on via a special procedure. He prepared one of the traditional weapons of the demonifuge, a mirror.<sup>67</sup> Exorcist mirrors were shaped in the octagon shape of the Eight Trigrams, as described in a medieval story, and as used on walls and doors in the greater Chinese realm today.<sup>68</sup> Here the mirror was the object that lent itself to contain the spirit of Marshal Wen:<sup>69</sup>

Daoxian took a mirror, recited the Spell of Bingding, emanated his breath into the mirror, and continued the sublimation for nine years.<sup>70</sup> When the mirror was penetrated by the spirit, Wen Qiong could manifest himself in and out of the mirror, and [Wu Daoxian] continued the sublimation ceaselessly. Wu Daoxian added the

<sup>66</sup> DZ 780, p. 383a.

<sup>67</sup> In *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 a demonifuge mirror is used by Yin Hong 殷洪 (cf. ch. 59); in *Beiyouji* 北游記 a demonifuge mirror is used in chapter 21.

<sup>68</sup> *Taiping guangji* 230.1761-7: “Wang Du” 王度; this story was later referred to as *Record of the Old Mirror* 古鏡記.

<sup>69</sup> For other ritual uses of the mirror, see *Daofa huiyuan* 123.26; 167.11a; 185.1b-2a.

<sup>70</sup> Bingding symbolizes the fire of the South and refers to Yan Di 炎帝 (cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 224; 255). *Daofa huiyuan* 256 contains a 丙丁符.

Spell of Tianpeng on top of it. Wu Daoxian said: “I recite this spell in order to assist the mighty spirit; by sublimating this mirror I wish to receive the power of this spell.” He went on like this for three years, and the mirror became increasingly permeated by the spirit. On the spot where he had placed it, white vapors spontaneously erupted. Then, one day, Great Protector Wen burst forth from the mirror.

道顯以鏡一面，誦〈丙丁之咒〉，布炁鏡中，持鍊九年。其鏡通神，瓊現身出入鏡中，而持鍊不輟。又加之〈天蓬咒〉。道顯曰：「誦此咒以助威靈；鍊此鏡願承此咒力。」如此又三年，其鏡逾通神。置之之所，自有白炁沖沖。一日，太保以鏡中奔出。

The excruciatingly long effort of emanating Wen Qiong’s spiritual energy into the mirror by the Daoist, and his refining it through repeated incantation thus provides the spirit with a lodging. A concise outline for such a ritual in *Daofa huiyuan*, “Instructions for sublimating mirrors” 鍊鏡訣, is couched in exactly the same language of recitation of spells, emanating spiritual substance into the mirror, and ultimately a god “dwelling inside” 居其中.<sup>71</sup>

After the Daoist’s sublimation has endowed him with a new and powerful body, Wen Qiong is enabled to earn his first credits on his way to becoming an even more powerful deity: he rids Quanzhou of the Golden Chrysalis. Wen Qiong personally thanks Wu Daoxian for his effort, and promises to do good on behalf of his master:

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<sup>71</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 199.9ab.



I owe you, lineage master, the merit of your sublimation practice. I have obtained the power of the Great Spell of Tianpeng, and by receiving your sublimation my six accomplishments are all complete. Not having paid back, master, for the merit of your sublimation by incantation, I swear to make a great vow: From now on I will perform great good everywhere, and universally help the mortals of this world, forever in the service of you, lineage master.

荷宗師修鍊之功。得〈天蓬大咒〉之力，瓊受鍊六通具足。無報宗師咒鍊之功，誓立大願：自今日始，永為嗣法之師，廣施大利，普濟世人。

Wen Qiong feels obliged to repay his new life by pledging loyal service to his master. His services ultimately lead him to accumulate merit. As a reward, then, he is given “an official position” as one among five hundred other “spiritual agents” 五百靈官中任職位. By the end of the thirteenth century, Marshal Wen had become one of the prime agents of Daoist ritual. By the Yuan dynasty he was often invoked alongside Marshal Guan.

The relationship thus forged between the spirit and his ritual master was not one occasioned by Daoist missionary work, it was a working relationship based upon a vow. Paul Katz stresses Wen Qiong’s alleged concern with preserving “orthodox” ritual traditions. But it is left unclear what this orthodoxy entailed other than the eradication of so-called



Figure 3.4. – Marshal Wen in a late fourteenth or early fifteenth century representation

“licentious cults.” These divine marshals used in Song liturgies were themselves certainly not “orthodox,” even though they claimed to represent orthodoxy. Generally, even those gods that Daoists considered to be “Daoist” did not necessarily include a conversion to Daoism in their biography. Conversion to the Daoist religion or “orthodoxy” was not a prerequisite to figure as a Daoist deity.

On the contrary, instead of scorning local “perverse” cults, for practitioners of Song dynasty Daoist ritual the gods or demons that were the object of these cults constituted the *sine qua non* of their own ritual. At the same time, this ritual was indispensable for the investiture of the gods. The gods of Daoist pantheons, as well as those of the “popular” or “national” pantheons, were overwhelmingly molded out of deviant spirits. The forms of Daoism that became current with the emergence of the Celestial Masters have been constituted in codependency upon the local community. Without the local community, Daoism would look entirely different. Given the long history of this communal attachment, one might suspect that even the local community would have looked entirely different if Daoism had not attached itself to it, of course particularly at those occasions when Daoists were hired to perform their services. If there was one area that lent itself to a Daoist structural impact, it would have been the liturgical.

The important thing to understand about Daoist exorcistic rituals such as Thunder Ritual, one way or the other, is their non-destructive intention: Thunder Ritual expressly aims at containing the spirits it battles, not blowing them to pieces. The relevance of this observation is clear in the first place from Thunder Ritual itself. The “discovery” of the divine realm of thunder by the end of the Tang dynasty had resulted in the formation of a Thunder Division 雷部 and Thunder Authorities 雷司. This expansion of the celestial thunder administration naturally was only feasible with an increase in divine personnel:

officers were needed, an infantry, as well as scribes and other administrators. Song dynasty Thunder Ritual evinces an immense mobilization of demonical forces that could be drafted for the armies of thunder. As we will see later, the previously individually worshiped local cults were matched with other Marshals and Generals for their work in the Thunder Division.

Here, the multiple layers of meaning of “investiture” 封 *feng* (or “containment,” or “confinement”), as described in the introductory chapter, are crucial to consider. The defining feature of Thunder Ritual was its mechanism for “containment” of the demonical, and not its destruction. Destruction may have been announced publicly as the appropriate threat against local bloody cults, but the teleology of sublimation rituals was geared towards “confinement” within a Daoist official hierarchy, through a Daoist “canonization” 道封. Such a canonization did not necessarily give a god *more* power, but could oblige it into an allegiance with the Daoist clergy in their promotion of Transformations of the Dao 道化, thus subjugating it. A canonization limited the spirit’s freedom and effectively weakened its power. Thus, while a wanton spirit had his bloody cult turned into a cult of greater importance, and might see his sphere of influence significantly enlarged, his titles bore the stamp of official approval only as long as he submitted faithfully to his Daoist masters.

This brings us back to the question asked in the introductory chapter: How were local cults absorbed into Daoist liturgies? While techniques for the creation of gods had existed already in the early Celestial Master movement, after the Tang these techniques were made to revolve around the heirs of Sire Thunder. Significantly, these new thunder gods of the Song dynasty were coined as ritual gods. By this I mean that the aspect of cult veneration in temples was consciously downplayed, just as in the examples above, and that their most common appearance was in ritual performances – performances that aimed at the

subjugation of other demonic entities. This entailed a “civilizing project” of transformation, involving a conflicting rhetoric of orthodoxy and morality, denouncing the “licentious cult” while absorbing it.

The following section will illustrate my argument that the Thunder Rituals of the Song dynasty revolved around the principle of “containment and canonization” by which local spirits were first captured before they could be transformed into a higher entity.

### 3.5. Arrest and Torture: Locking up Demons

A curious story recorded in Hong Mai’s *Records of the Listener* narrates a case of demonic possession in the imperial palace during the reign of Xuanhe 宣和 (1119 – 25). After several years of failed attempts to drive the demon out of the mortal body he possessed, a Daoist named Cheng 程 made a grand entrance into the palace, followed by several hundreds of dragons each carrying weapons. After feeding talismans to the victim, the priest consecrated a space to imprison the spirit:

With his sword the Daoist master drew a prison on the ground, the character for “fire” in the four corners. Scolding the possessed he said: “By what demon are you possessed? Tell me exhaustively, otherwise I will ignite a rolling fire to incinerate you!” Because the demon was not willing to speak, the master took his fire and extended it to the four corners. Only then the demon yelled: “Have some mercy! I will tell the truth!” Thereupon the Daoist master extinguished the fire in two corners. Then the demon spoke: “I am also a Daoist master from Mt. Longhu. After I died I became a demon. All the cinnabar, spells, rituals, and registers, they are what I have practiced formerly. That is why I could undo them. I did not realize that you,

Immortal Master, would have a perfected talisman! Now I do not dare to dwell here, if you give me some days I will leave.”<sup>72</sup>

道士以刀劃地爲獄，四角書火字。叱之曰：「汝爲何鬼所憑？盡以告我，不然，舉輪火焚汝矣！」不肯言。取火就四角延燒。始大叫曰：「幸少寬！我將吐實！」道士爲滅去兩角火。乃言曰：「吾亦龍虎山道士。死而爲鬼。凡丹咒法籙，皆素所習。故能解之。不意仙師有真符！今不敢留，願假數日而去。」

Because otherwise “he would certainly take his bale elsewhere” 必貽禍他處, this priest decides to kill the spirit. However, his ritual construction of an earth prison, accompanied by the demon’s torture by fire, could otherwise be the first step towards mastery over a demon. In this section I will show that the imprisonment described by Hong Mai was a common part of the Song dynasty Thunder Rituals.

Consistent with Hong Mai’s story about Master Cheng, Daoist texts from the Song dynasty show that spirits were often imprisoned.<sup>73</sup> The Earth Prison was actualized by drawing the character for “well” 井 on the ground, either by using a sword, or by using the “sword *mudra*” 劍訣. This character was a miniature representation of the cosmos, dividing a portion of the ritual space into nine fields otherwise known as the Nine Palaces 九宮. The Nine Palaces served as the structure of the Daoist altar in its entirety, as has been described by John Lagerwey.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Hong Mai, *Yijian zhi*, pp. 102-03.

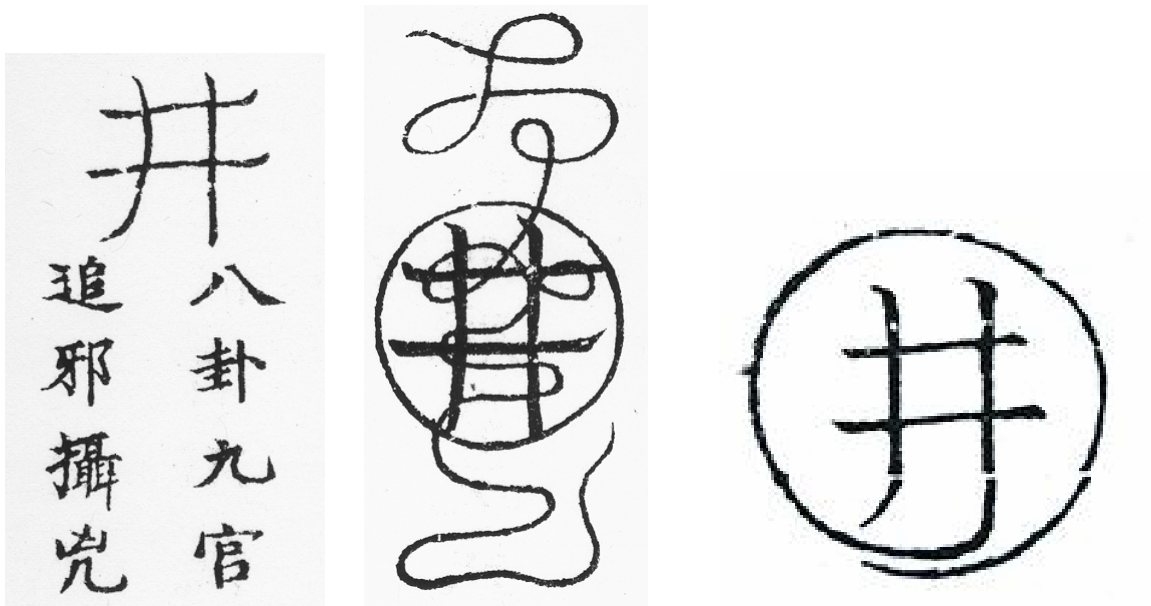
<sup>73</sup> Also see Qiu Kunliang 邱坤良, *Xiandai shehui de minsu quyi* 現代社會的民俗曲藝, pp. 265-87. Taipei: 1983.

<sup>74</sup> John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, p. 16 ff; the explanation of the well as a representation of the Eight Trigrams/Nine Palaces is also found in *Daofa huiyuan* 259.

Figure 3.5.

Character for “well” explicated as Eight Trigrams and Nine Palaces (below left); the same character as it was supposed to be drawn in complete talismanic form (below middle)

Most basic representation of the character for “well” as drawn in ritual space, with the same circle as usually drawn around ritual characters.



Just like the character of “well,” the Nine Palaces similarly constituted the octagon shape of the Eight Trigrams. When referring to the Daoist altar oftentimes the phrase “Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams” 九宮八卦 was used.<sup>75</sup> I will describe in chapter 6 how this structure actualized a series of gates, and how these gates were relevant for the practices described in that chapter. The important practice of appearing before the Gate of Heaven 天門 is treated at the end of this chapter.

The writing of the character for “well” was expressive of more than a cosmic structure. According to *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, “eight houses/families form a *jing*” 八家爲一井. As a determining factor for a community of settlers to choose a stable residential site,

<sup>75</sup> John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual*, p. 31; also see my introduction, section 1.7.

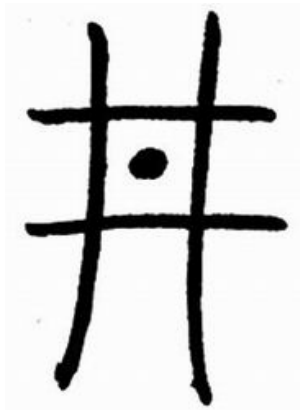
the well signified the most basic unit of the local community. The character *jing* in *Shuowen jiesi* is written with a dot in the central segment 井, as if it symbolizes the well in a courtyard.

In late imperial as well as in modern Chinese connotation of the well with the basic social unit is preserved in reference to a “neighborhood” 市井 (or “marketplace”), as even in urban communities the availability of water of the well was a first condition of life.

As we will see below, such makeshift well-prisons could be realized with other objects, too. Structures that reflected the pattern of the Nine Palaces included not only the well, but mirrors, and also metal coins were used at the time. Just like in the example of Guan Yu’s canonization, the throwing of the coin functioned as the main element in the imperial promotion. As we will see below, coins were utilized in Daoist ritual of that time.

Figure 3.6.

Character for “well” in *zhuanwen* 篆文



Coin from the Jianyan reign (1127 – 1130)



A Daoist act of imprisonment usually aimed at containing the demon, not primarily at destroying it. While the threat of violence or death always loomed large, the primary goal was to withdraw a noxious power from its (social) environment by locking it up in a well. Either way the priest was not supposed to show his most friendly side when arresting a spirit:



With the left hand place the Thunder *mudrā* on the waist, with the “sword *mudrā*” in the right hand write a “well.” Speak out loudly: “Swiftly hide, hide swiftly! If you do not hide, my sword will slice you up!”<sup>76</sup>

左手握雷局叉腰，右手劍訣書井。念喝云：「速隱速隱！汝若不隱，吾劍斬汝！」

This process involved a martial side of Daoism which was informed by the assumption that one could not catch a devilish creature by sweet-talking it into submission. More drastic measures were required before the beleaguered local community could go to sleep peacefully. It was with the help of Thunder Gods such as Marshal Deng Bowen, Marshal Guan Yu, or Marshal Wen Qiong that the priest tried to win these demonic battles.

In the Song dynasty liturgies of the Five Thunders the teleology of containment is manifest in the title: “Talisman of the Five Locks” 五鎖符. The spell below had to be recited while drawing the character for “well” enclosed within a circle. Demons were threatened with an extreme amount of violence, such as “severing their heads and chopping their legs.” The ultimate goal, however, was the coercion of the spirits by the priest into a confined place where “they can no longer move” – a first stabilization of the demons:

The spell says: “Thunder gods of Heavenly Fire! Thunder Gods of Earthly Fire! Five Thunders subdue these spirits! Lock the demons and bar the specters!” After the above spell is done and the writing of the character for ‘well’ is finished, then turn the brush seven times. Recite the spell: “On the first turn: Six Spirits hide; second turn: Four Killers perish; third turn: move the guideline of the Dipper;

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<sup>76</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 83.14a.

fourth turn: thunder fire erupts; fifth turn: thunderclap goes forth; sixth turn: mountain demons die; seventh turn: collect insubordinate and reckless [demons], sever their heads and chop their legs; may the fifteen kinds of deviant and calamitous gods and demons come here under my Five Thunders, so that they can no longer move. Quickly, quickly, as with the statutes and ordinances!<sup>77</sup>

咒曰：天火雷神、地火雷神；五雷降靈，鎖鬼關精。右咒書「井」字畢，就轉筆塗七次。念咒：一轉六神藏；二轉四煞沒；三轉動魁罡；四轉雷火騰；五轉霹靂發；六轉山鬼死；七轉收攝逆天無道，斷頭落腳；一十五種不正為禍神鬼，並赴吾五雷之下，不得動作。急急如律令！

On the surface of things, the descent of a demon into the well constituted the ultimate victory over its rebellion. It was removed from its environment and could “no longer move” back to it, unless, of course, the Daoist would let him. There were manifold layers of meaning that had accrued onto this ritual: the well was not only a site for stasis, for immobility; it was also a source, a point of origin as much as an ending. The demon truly was made “to return.” Yet, just like the souls who returned to the Yellow Sources in Chinese mythology, they returned to a point at the center. Instead of being allowed to choose their own imbalanced and multiple returns, causing chaos and further imbalance, the Daoist priest placed them in the middle, he literally “centered” them. Moreover, the well was the space for water – the substance of the Black North where the Dark Emperor wielded his powers. Was the end of the demonic presence also his beginning?

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<sup>77</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 56.18b-19a.

The well was sometimes said to be an “iron well ten-thousand *zhang* deep” 金井萬丈 and thus in accordance with the prison drawn by Master Cheng in the record by Hong Mai (see above).<sup>78</sup> It had to be protected by troops and sentinels:

Imagine the travel-altar to be the Fiery City and visualize the arrival of the generals. Build their camps and outposts. If you want to enclose demons, then draw the character “well” on the altar in order to enclose evil ancestors up to the seventh generation.<sup>79</sup>

想行壇爲火城，存將至，建立營砦。如罩鬼，壇上畫一井字，罩下邪家七祖。

The ritual method of the well-prison makes it clear that Daoist martial ritual operated on three basic levels of hierarchy: (1) the Daoist master, who commanded (2) the Thunder gods, who captured (3) demons – demons that could be marshalled.

An account from 1271 suggests that the well was an actualization of the Sixfold Heaven beneath Mt. Fengdu. Written by the Pure Tenuity patriarch Huang Shunshen 黃舜申, it attributed the practice of imprisoning demons in a well to a certain Liu Haoran 劉浩然. This Daoist of the late twelfth century was said to have caught a demonic manifestation of the Sixfold Heaven and “locked it up in the Octagon Well” 鎖之於八角井 of the Zhangren Monastery 丈人觀 on Mt. Qingcheng 青城山 in Sichuan.<sup>80</sup> The liturgy in which

<sup>78</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 7.9b; *Daofa huiyuan* 101.9ab.

<sup>79</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 121.12b.

<sup>80</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 188.2a; 5ab.

this attribution was embedded was devoted to a purification of the “residual energies” by the Dipper Mother 斗姆, also associated with the Fire Office of the Southern Dipper. The conceptualization of the well as the embodiment of Mt. Fengdu is corroborated by another story from *Records of the Listener*.<sup>81</sup>

The well was also referred to as “Black Prison” in a scripture devoted to Marshal Zhu 朱帥 of the Thunder Office.<sup>82</sup> Here, too, the *Talisman of the Five Locks* is recited, and a stylized version of the character for “well” is drawn. Yet the explanation also mentions the instruments of torture inside:

For the previous: use the Sword *mudrā* to draw the character for “well” on the ground. Transform it into a black prison, ten-thousand *zhang* deep, and ten-thousand *li* wide. Black vapors burst out of it. Inside the prison, visualize how cangues and locks, as well as tools and machinery are laid out. Then recite the *Spell for Fast Arrest*.<sup>83</sup>

右用劍訣，就地劃一井字。化爲黑獄，深萬丈，闊萬里。黑炁衝騰。存獄中枷鎖、器械備列；就念「促捉咒」。

Just as in the ritual of Master Cheng in Hong Mai’s account, it looks as if the poor demons were tortured by the proxies of the Daoist priest. Note the black vapors that burst forth from the well – the demonic presences were tangible even without actually seeing demons.

<sup>81</sup> See “Jiusheng qigui” 九聖奇鬼. Hong Mai, *Yijianzhi*, p. 364-69.

<sup>82</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228: *Great Method for Interrogating Evil of Marshal Zhu from the Thunder Department* 雷府朱帥考邪大法.

<sup>83</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228.6ab.

Generally the setting up of prisons in the receptacle provided by the well was common practice. The above text also mentions the usage of other objects for containing spirits: “Use clay pots or copper coins to gather the living spirits” 用瓦罐、銅錢收生魂.<sup>84</sup> Another text from the same period describes in minute detail the installation of a Fiery Prison 火獄 using oil lamps that had to be arranged within a ritual space outlined with ashes, the “ash altar” 灰壇.<sup>85</sup> In this case the torture (or execution) of demons was referred to as “frying demons” 煎鬼. A story from *Records of the Listener* describes a similar application of this practice in 1152, where demonic insects were fried in an “oil cauldron” 油鼎 placed in a ritual space outlined with ashes.<sup>86</sup>

The story goes on to tell how the officiating priest “performs a Great Sacrifice of the Ninefold Darkness in order to save and absolve [the abominable spirits]” 作九幽大醮救度之. In other words, he performed a ritual that seems to have marked the moment when the evil demon was “transformed.” In Daoist ritual manuals this catharsis of demons was described similarly as a process of transformation by fire. In one instance the procedure was performed in connection with the patron saint of the Daoist altar: Marshal Zhao Gongming 趙公明. One scripture devoted to Zhao Gongming presented him as an avatar of one of the Demon Kings of Mt. Fengdu.<sup>87</sup> The assistance of this god was fittingly required to put the spirits into the well (here called “well-prison,” 井獄), drawn around a bottle filled with water,

<sup>84</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228.8a; it should be noted that copper coins were round objects with a square circle in the middle, similar to the outline of the prison-well. Containment rituals using the same objects are still performed in the PRC today (observation from Lengshuijiang 冷水江, Hunan, September 2004).

<sup>85</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 166.1a-4b; 22b-23a; also see *Daofa huiyuan* 157.

<sup>86</sup> Hong Mai, *Yijian zhi*, p. 429-30.

<sup>87</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 240.3b. This mythology is quite widespread, with Zhao Gongming usually identified as one of the Eight Plague Demons (see Zhao Daoyi's 趙道一 biography of Zhang Daoling: DZ 296 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑, 18.8b).

wine and vinegar.<sup>88</sup> Once the spirits were trapped inside, they were offered a feast (one may imagine large amounts of offerings on the altar). This merrymaking supposedly inebriated them, so that they might lose their sense of direction and could be abducted:

After the spell, imagine that the demons enter the prison, in gloomy darkness. In the prison they endure suffering. When all cooperate nicely then visualize that the horde of demons is lured into the Forest of Hundred Flowers. With a festive banquet they become thoroughly drunk and do not know where to return [sic] to. Seal [the bottle] again with paper, and visualize the Snare of the Ninefold Heaven. With your left hand, tie them with a cord. With both hands folded together on the opening of the bottle, visualize them as a golden brick, and place the bottle below the seat of the marshal.<sup>89</sup> Use one incense burner and send generals to guard it. Use the golden brick to cover the upper side, and add the *Taishan mudrā* to press it down.<sup>90</sup>

咒後，想鬼入獄，黑暗無光，地獄受苦。若和合，則存為誘引鬼眾入於百花林中，飲宴沈醉，不知歸處。再以紙封，存為九天羅網，以左繩縛之，雙手交合。瓶口存為金磚，於元帥座下安頓。用香爐一箇，差將守衛。上用磚石蓋之，加太山訣壓下。

The actual process of “refinement” can then take place so that, finally, the demons may be deployed. Their enslavement is described in a ritual entitled *Method for the Drafting of Evil Demons* 役邪鬼法 from the same manual.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 240.10b.

<sup>89</sup> This golden brick is an object associated with Li Nuozha 李哪吒 in *Canonization of the Gods* 封神演義.

<sup>90</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 240.11ab.

<sup>91</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 240.12b-14a.

In the ritual involving Marshal Zhu above, the process of “sublimation” could be applied to the spirits once they had been chased into an earthenware jar by the marshal, sealed off by the priest moving the weight of Mt. Tai to press the demons in. The latter act of sealing demon-containing objects with mountains was frequently used – the name of the mountain was not always specified, but it may well have been understood to represent Mt. Fengdu.<sup>92</sup> Finally, after sealing the jar’s opening with mud, the spirits were thrown into the incense burner so that they could be “refined in fierce fire” 以烈火燒鍊.<sup>93</sup> In this case the drawing of the well is described as the actualization of the Northern Prison of the Heavenly One 天一北獄.<sup>94</sup> It seems that in most ritual traditions that were active during the Song, the process of containing demons in prisons or other objects resembling the outlines of the “Eight Trigrams and Nine Palaces” was applied.<sup>95</sup>

We have seen that in a great number of cases, in *Records of the Listener* as well as in Daoist ritual manuals, fire was used to torture the spirits, or to sublimate them and transform them into an elevated being. This transformation by fire brings us back to the gods and their rituals that form the subject of this thesis: the thunder gods. We have seen

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<sup>92</sup> The spirits captured within the grid of the Nine Palaces were kept inside their prison by symbolically pressing them down underneath a mountain (*Daofa huiyuan* 158). The symbolism here lies in the fact that the mountain was represented by a posture of the hand forming the character for mountain (“Mountain *Mudra*” 山字訣 with the thumb, index-finger, and little finger all pointing upward (*Daofa huiyuan* 157.22ab). Oftentimes the specific “*mudra* of Mt. Tai” 泰山訣, was used, representing the heaviest of all mountains (*Daofa huiyuan* 228; 240; 242; *Fabai yizhu* 31; 46.10b). Moreover, many present-day exorcist talismans contain a character composed of a “demon” 鬼 underneath a “mountain” 山, namely the character *wei* 嵬.

<sup>93</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228.8ab.

<sup>94</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228.8ab, 9b.

<sup>95</sup> Guan Yu, in his function of Marshal at Mt. Fengdu, was equally active in the rituals of containing demons in the well-prison (*Daofa huiyuan* 259.12a-15b). The tradition of the Five Thunders was equally firmly rooted in application of the Sixfold Heaven underneath Mt. Fengdu. In this context, the priest expressed his allegiance to the Dark Emperor for his ritual of drawing a prison on the ground (*Daofa huiyuan* 59.1b). In the Divine Empyrean tradition the construction of prisons is intricately described. Here, instead of drawing a well on the ground, a wooden case was prepared. On the four sides of the box the usual Eight Trigrams were carved, making it correspond to the same cosmological structure as the well (*Daofa huiyuan* 123.20b). Other manuals describe the same Nine Palaces for liturgy with bamboo tubes as prisons (*Daofa huiyuan* 151.6a-10b). In another case from the Tianpeng tradition a Fire-prison had to be set up underneath a sick person’s bed – again assisted by Zhao Gongming (*Daofa huiyuan* 157.21a-23b). Without Zhao Gongming in *Daofa huiyuan* 162.18ab, 22ab; 165.4b-5a. The Northern Prison of the Heavenly One plays a role in *Daofa huiyuan* 167.12ab.

towards the end of section 3.3. above that Marshal Deng had acquired the epithet of “Great God of Blazing Fire,” and that the priest could achieve a metamorphosis into Deng Bowen by uniting with him inside the “fire of the heart.” This kind of transformation by fire was not limited to Deng Bowen’s case alone. It had become common throughout the Thunder Rituals of the Song, and needed to be performed before other segments of the ritual. According to one author from the Heavenly Reed tradition, for example, one could not set up a “fire prison” without prior body-transformation.<sup>96</sup>

Fire was used to sublimate demons, and it was used for the metamorphosis of the Daoist practitioner’s body. It seems then that this auto-incineration was a prerequisite for the acquisition of efficacy in Daoist liturgies from the Song. While it has been assumed that this practice evinces earlier esoteric Buddhist influences, a closer look at the fire of the heart reveals that its origins go back to a time before the Han dynasty.

### **3.6. Inside Fire: immolation, transformation, and the infant**

Most of the dynamics within the development of post-medieval Daoist ritual have only been explored very recently. In his seminal study of the Song dynasty cross-fertilization between Daoist classic ritual, on the one hand, and vernacular ritual of the village spirit-mediums on the other, Edward L. Davis has shown that both sides borrowed freely from each other.<sup>97</sup> Thunder Ritual, however, constitutes an unusual case in the sense that it simultaneously was subject to great historical changes, while on the other hand it preserved certain conservative segments that apparently resisted transformation.

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<sup>96</sup> *Daofa buiyuan* 167.14b-16a.

<sup>97</sup> Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, especially ch. 5.



One of the hard-core elements of Daoist ritual was the “audience ritual” 朝禮. This practice represented the most exalted act in Daoism: the spiritual journey performed by the practitioner as he presented a petition before the Gate of Heaven. It was this ritual that distinguished the Daoist priest, in his self-perceived task of representing a highly literate and cultured form of ritual, from the spirit-medium whose procedures he incorporated. His charisma was at least partly based upon his performances of these civilized, “imperial” liturgies that featured the presentation this document composed in flowery language.

The image that practitioners of this classical Daoist ritual intended to project certainly was that they were qualitatively different from the vulgar mediums with their violent trance practices that culminated in some bodily damage (actual more often than symbolical) inflicted to their bodies. Being possessed by a certain divinity, the spirit-medium enacted that divinity – even became that divinity. The Daoist priest only had technologies of a lesser immediacy to boast. How could the civilized priest control the dark realm if he could not dispose of a similar martial prowess?

In his dealings with demons, actually, the Daoist priest manifested a more martial and even violent side of himself. Just like the spirit-medium he inflicted damage to his own body. As a matter of fact, he went much further: the Daoist destroyed his own body by fire. However, destruction was not the culmination of his road to efficacy, it was only the beginning. What the practitioner prepared for by burning his body was the metamorphosis into a different kind of being. Shedding his mortal husk, the Daoist was thought to be reborn as a Perfected One 真人 – a condition unattainable for even the most refined demons.

In the rituals of the Song dynasty that were constructed around Sire Thunder and his avatars, the *liandu* performed by the priest is often an “interior sublimation” 內鍊 *neilian*,

really a sublimation of the practitioner's own substances into a Perfected Being. The Daoist process “sublimating Perfection” 鍊真 equally referred to this practice, although it was often used more simply to label Daoist cultivation practices generally. In the concrete case of Thunder Ritual, however, one first had to transform one's own body before obtaining the capacity to transform other bodies. This practice of “body transformation” 變身 or “divine transformation” 變神 is one of the most archaic practices transmitted within Daoism. What follows below is an archaeology of its origins, beginning with a description of the rituals of the post-Tang era, and followed by an exploration of its earliest antecedents, traced back until pre-Han times.

The ubiquity of transformation practice in Daoist ritual from the Song suggests that it had been a common part of liturgies long before.<sup>98</sup> A frequently used alternative designation for metamorphosis in those texts was *hua shen* 化身, which can be translated as “transforming the body.” Metamorphosis was considered a common Daoist practice, as exemplified by the content of the *Scripture of Lao Zi's Transformations* 老子變化經.<sup>99</sup> In this text from around the second century, the many transformations through which Lao Zi had allegedly manifested himself throughout Chinese history were described.<sup>100</sup> The opening story of *Taiping guangji* is equally devoted to Lao Zi's transformations.

A less obvious translation would be “burning the body.” This very concrete meaning of incineration is still preserved in the cremation ovens of Buddhist monasteries, often

<sup>98</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 57.14ab; 62.35a; 80.3a, 10b; 101.10a; 124.12b; 196.20a; 219.1b; 222.4a; 229.10a, 26a-27b; 254.20ab-21a; *Fabai yizhu* 5.3a; 8.27a; 11.1a; 15.5a; 18.2a; 21.; 24.2ab, 4a-7b; 26.11a; 27.1a; 28.11ab; 29.10ab; 30.1a; 32.2ab; 33.10a; 34.2a, 7b, 8ab; 37.1a; 39.13b, 21b; 40.9a, 13a; 43.6b; DZ 566 *Shangqing Tianxin zhenfa* 上清天心正法, 5.1a (cited in Andersen 1995, p.195); DZ 1227 *Taishang zhubuguo jiumin zhenzhen biyao* 太上助國救民總真祕要, 3.7b-8a.

<sup>99</sup> S. 2295; printed in Li Defan 李德范, *Dunhuang Daozang* 敦煌道藏. Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan, 1999.

<sup>100</sup> Also see the commentary to chapter 10 from the *Lao Zi xianger* 老子想爾, equally from the second century.

referred to as “the *śarīra* of the cremated body” 化身舍利.<sup>101</sup> The same meaning of *hua* was (and still is) used for the burning of paper money and paper statues 變化錢馬 during religious occasions.<sup>102</sup> While the incineration of the body takes place within the symbolical realm of the Daoist priest, it may very well be that it represented a civilized and internalized version of rain-making rituals of the Zhou dynasty (1045 – 221 BCE). These required the generation of efficacy through the “burning of the shaman” 焚巫 as described by Edward H. Schafer.<sup>103</sup>

Any actual link with such efficacy that could be actualized by burning the shamanic body is hard to prove. Yet the Daoist ritual sublimation that proliferated during the Song dynasty proceeded on the concept of setting the body ablaze with a fire that essentially destroyed it. Staged as a meditative journey, the Daoist master imagined his own body to be like a withered tree (枯木 or 槁木) that could be easily lit by the interior fire of his heart. Like the phoenix that rose from the ashes, it is in the form of an infant that the priest actualized his rebirth through a ritualized meditation.

Before considering Song dynasty examples, the metaphor of the withered tree deserves a few more words. The reason this metaphor served as the conceptual vehicle for a bodily metamorphosis is not hard to fathom. Dry wood was the locus for new life, with withered trees budding into leaves and twigs every spring-time again; an idea that has been captured in the traditional phrase that “a withered tree will live again” 枯木復生. On a more typically Daoist level the deaden shape of the withered tree was epistemologically akin to the simplicity of the coarse and uncarved block of wood 朴 that served as the vehicle for a

<sup>101</sup> Observation from the Baoguo Si 報國寺 on Mt. Emei 峨嵋山 in Sichuan (2004).

<sup>102</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 123.9b; *Fabai yizhu* 19.8a; also *Daofa huiyuan* 101.6a.

<sup>103</sup> Edward H. Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China.” *HJAS* 14, 1/2 (Jun., 1951), pp. 130.

return to a state of primordial potential. In the same vein, withered trees being an important locus of spirit possession, the dry wood served well as a vessel for spiritual substances called “tree guests” 木客. It could thus be a vessel that was needed in the practice of sublimation. In its stasis, moreover, the withered tree matched the outwardly lifeless body of a meditation practitioner, whose spiritual journey took him to mystic spheres. The bronze trees found at numerous archaeological sites, such as Sanxingdui 三星堆 in Sichuan for example, are thought to represent the trees climbed by the shaman on his journey to Heaven. One author even remarks that the contents of some grave pits in Sanxingdui perhaps suggest that “real trees rather than bronze trees were burned and sacrificed.”<sup>104</sup>

In Song dynasty Thunder Ritual the interior sublimation needed to be performed so that the practitioner could either rise up to the Heavens and communicate with the highest authorities, or transform himself – temporarily – into a deity. In both cases the practitioner first had to ritually extinguish his physical presence and create a new self. The following example is from a Song dynasty document belonging to the Tianpeng 天蓬 tradition (considered to represent an older current of Daoism):<sup>105</sup>

Actualize your own body as a withered tree. Press the *mu* segment [tip of middle-finger] to bring forth the fire of your heart and burn the tree to ashes. Press the *si* segment [tip of index-finger] to incite the wind of *xun* and blow the ashes, dispersing them into extinction. Actualize the gradual growing of an infant in your heart.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Jay Xu, “Bronze at Sanxingdui,” p. 67. In Robert Bagley (ed.), *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2001.

<sup>105</sup> Christine Mollier, “La méthode de l’empereur du nord du Mont Fengdu: une tradition exorciste du Taoïsme médiéval,” *T’oung Pao* 83 (1997), p. 332-37.

<sup>106</sup> *Daofa huizuan* 167.14b-15b.

存自身爲枯木。招午文發心火，燒木成灰。招巳文起巽風，吹散灰滅。存  
心中一嬰兒漸大。

The above metamorphosis is an extremely abridged version, only showing the most basic elements of a practice that involved bodily exercises as well as mental concentration.

Conceptualized around the axis of the practitioner who first actualized himself as a withered tree, he subsequently incinerated himself, and could then finally be reborn as an infant (the famous inner embryo of Daoist cultivation).

Similar descriptions can be found throughout the Song, Yuan, and Ming rituals contained in *Daofa buiyuan* and *Fabai yizhu*, as I will summarize below. Most are much longer and involved a complicated journey of the practitioner within his heart, complemented by inhaling and expelling pneumas of different colors into different organs or directions. All resulted in the metamorphosis of the practitioner into an infant that subsequently is transformed into a divinity with the capacity to realize feats of superhuman magnitude.

The gods that the practitioner could realize through metamorphosis by fire were many. Sometimes it was the Perfected Warrior 真武 appearing before the Gate of Heaven.<sup>107</sup> Sometimes the Heavenly Emperor 天皇, manifesting himself with a serpentine body underneath a human head, commanding the Five Thunders.<sup>108</sup> Or the practitioner could transform into the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning 元始天尊 after he had incinerated his mortal physique.<sup>109</sup> The Thunder Worthy of the Ninefold Heaven would be

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<sup>107</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 15.5a-6a.

<sup>108</sup> *Daofa buiyuan* 76.11a-12b.

<sup>109</sup> *Fabai yizhu* 34.2a.

another possibility.<sup>110</sup> Or nameless and outlandish looking marshals with three heads and six arms, seated on a golden tray 金盤.<sup>111</sup> In all cases the practitioner actualized his body as a withered tree before setting it ablaze. Then, finally, his body would radiate with the same “golden glow” 金光 that emanated from the Gate of Heaven. Song manuals in overwhelming majority prescribed the recitation of the *Spell of the Golden Glow* 金光咒, which was the most concise version of metamorphosis by fire.<sup>112</sup>

An example from the early Ming dynasty should suffice to illustrate the consistency with which the procedure was reproduced in ritual:

All those who want to transform themselves into a god, you must first purify your heart and calm your thoughts, so that the myriad ideas will not emerge. Actualize your body as a withered tree, and hold up your two hands in a “Sword *mudrā*,” from top to bottom you imagine to be slicing your corpse-form in two. The fire of the heart erupts, incinerating [the body] in a blazing fire to extinction. With your nose inhale pure energies, with the wind of *xun* disperse the fire’s ashes. The “self” ceases to be. The perfected energies of the cinnabar fields are transformed into an infant, soon becoming a perfected being.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 98.4b-5a.

<sup>111</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 229.26a-27b.

<sup>112</sup> Typical examples include various thunder gods, such as the Thunder Ancestor 雷祖大帝 (*Daofa huiyuan* 94.3ab; 137.6b), and the Five Thunder Envoys 五雷使 (*Daofa huiyuan* 56.17b; 57.14a; 224.3ab). Marshal Tianpeng was one other option for the priest (*Daofa huiyuan* 158.5a), as well as the Envoy of the Board of Expelling Evil 驅邪院使 (a.k.a. Zhang Daoling; *Daofa huiyuan* 167.15b). Even the most exalted gods, such as the Primeval Lord of Great Unity 太乙元君 (*Daofa huiyuan* 190.10ab), or the Immortal of the White Crane 白鶴仙人 could be embodied (*Daofa huiyuan* 183.38). Predominantly Buddhist esoteric deities, such as Yue Bei 月孛, were also included (*Fabai yizhu* 25.10ab).

<sup>113</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinsbu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書, 23.4b. In *Zangwai Daoshu* 藏外道書. Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1991.

凡變神，先當澄心靜慮，萬念不生。存身為枯木，以雙手劍訣舉起，從頭至下想分開尸形。我心火大發，炎炎焚盡。鼻引清氣，巽風吹散火灰，止有我。丹元真炁化為嬰兒。須與以成真人。

This kind of ritual immolation may ring a familiar bell: the vedic ritual of *homa* (consecration by fire), described by Michel Strickmann. For Strickmann, the practices of interior *homa* by which the esoteric Buddhist priest transformed himself into a Buddha formed no less than “the basic premise that underlay the entire Tantric Revolution and that distinguished it from the Vedic and post-Vedic phases of Indian ritual.”<sup>114</sup> According to Strickmann, the practice of *homa* was never incorporated into Daoist ritual.<sup>115</sup> The esoteric ritual of body transformation seems, at first sight, to suggest the opposite. Yet, paradoxically, Strickmann was right in concluding that the vedic *homa* was not absorbed into Daoist ritual: Daoism already had its own inner oblation by fire, an oblation that preceded any possible Buddhist influence by centuries. As I will show below, if the esoteric body transformation existed prior to its emergence in China, the specific form it took was grounded in Daoist practice.

Edward L. Davis, following Strickmann, maintains that the “unity of practitioner and divinity is a defining feature of Esoteric Buddhism and a mark of the extent to which even Daoist therapeutic rituals had become ‘tantrified’ in the Song.”<sup>116</sup> Yet, if we assume that consecrating the body by an interior fire, by burning it from the inside, constituted a major ritual element that Daoism absorbed from esoteric Buddhist practices, we must also assume that this practice was foreign to China before the introduction of esoteric Buddhism in the medieval period. This, however, was not the case: there are several examples that illustrate

<sup>114</sup> Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 201-02.

<sup>115</sup> Strickmann, *Mantras et mandarins*, chapter 7.

<sup>116</sup> Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, p. 125.

the existence of similar techniques involving the incineration of the body actualized as a withered tree.

The writings of Zhuang Zi contain several references to a meditative practice involving an imagined physical transformation. This practice revolved around the outer appearance of the meditating person changing into the likeness of a withered tree, while the heart subsequently contained dead ashes. The fire was not mentioned in *Zhuang Zi*, except by implication. As it happens, the heart was thought to be the organ that contained fire at least as early as the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 23 CE), as can be observed throughout the *Inner Scripture of the Yellow Emperor* 黃帝內經.<sup>117</sup> Apparently the ashes of the heart were produced by the fire of the heart. A closer look will reveal much more.

*Zhuang Zi* contains several passages referring to a practice of metamorphosis that is associated with fire. References can be found in each of the three sections of the book, thus covering the oldest as well as the most recent writings. For clarity's sake, the first passage from the “Inner Chapters” 內篇 deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

Zi Qi of Nanguo reclined his elbow on armrest, looked up at the sky and exhaled, in a trance as though he had buried the counterpart of himself. Yancheng Zi You stood in waiting before him.

“What is this?” he said. “Can the body really be made to be like a withered tree, the heart like dead ashes? The reclining man here now is not the reclining man of yesterday.”

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<sup>117</sup> *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經. In Zhang Hongru 張宏儒 (ed.), *Zhonghua chuanshi qishu* 中華傳世奇書 (v. 30). Beijing: Tuanjie chuban, 1999.



“You do well to ask that, Zi You! This time I had buried my own self. Did you know it?”<sup>118</sup>

南郭子綦隱机而坐，仰天而噓，荅焉似喪其耦。顏成子游立侍乎前，曰：「何居乎？形固可使如槁木，而心固可使如死灰乎？今之隱机者，非昔之隱机者也？」子綦曰：「偃，不亦善乎，而問之也！今者吾喪我。汝知之乎？」

This passage from chapter 2 has generally been taken to express early Daoist meditation metaphorically, the body looking uninhabited, like dry wood, and being “burnt out” on the inside. The same process, however, is mentioned in *Huai Nan Zi* 淮南子 from the second century BCE, more specifically stated as an actual interior practice of forgetting the five viscera, abandoning the body, and thus attaining knowledge.<sup>119</sup>

That these cases constituted body transformation on a level more than just metaphorical is evinced by Zi You’s outside observation, when he exclaims that Zi Qi’s body was made to be “like a withered tree.” He states, moreover, that he does not recognize his friend. Zi Qi explains that he had “buried” his own self – the same death of the self that was achieved by burning the body. While the anecdote is not narrated as the description of a ritual act (although the “burial” may carry further implications), at least the details do not sound essentially different from the latter

<sup>118</sup> I followed the translation of A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters*, p. 48. Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981. The only exceptions are: the replacement of Graham’s “frame” for 形 *xing* by “body”; and “withered wood” with “withered tree.” Finally, I translated 喪 literally with “to bury,” and not with Graham’s “lost.” Moreover I have used pinyin instead of Wade-Giles.

<sup>119</sup> *Huai Nan Zi* 淮南子. In Zhang Chunyi 張純一 (ed.), *Zhu Zi jinghua lushi bazhong* 諸子菁華錄十八種. Taipei: Hong ye, 1970; chapter 7 “Jingshen xun” 精神訓 and chapter 12 “Daoying xun” 道應訓.

day's priest actualizing his own ritualized death. Here, I must caution that I am not suggesting that the metamorphosis of Zi Qi is entirely identical to the one of the Daoist priest; the point I want to make is the early existence of similar procedures that may have been forerunners of strictly ritual metamorphosis.

In a later passage from the “Outer Chapters” 外篇 (ch. 21) an encounter between Kong Zi and Lao Zi is narrated. Kong Zi asks why Lao Zi's “body looks hollow like a withered tree” 形體掘若槁木. Lao Zi answers that he was “roaming in his heart amongst the Beginning of Things” 吾游心於物之初. A description of what this “roaming in the Beginning of Things” might have entailed is provided by the chapter “Roaming Afar” 遠遊 of the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭, a text from the same region as *Zhuang Zi*, and dating back to the same period as the “Outer Chapters.” There, the preparation of a spiritual journey to the “Great Beginning” 泰初 is described.

My spirit now flicks forth in a flash, not to turn back again,  
 With a body of dry and withered wood remaining alone;  
 What is inward I examine, Oh, to start my discipline,  
 And pursue the origin of authentic energies.

神儻忽而不反兮。形枯槁而獨留。  
 內惟省以端操兮。求正氣之所由。

The last line of “Roaming Afar” brings the traveler to the same beginning where Lao Zi had been roaming in his heart:

Gone beyond Doing Nothing, and into utmost Purity –  
I become the neighbor of the Great Beginning.

超無爲以至清兮。與泰初而爲鄰。

The *Songs of Chu* make it clear that this roaming was indeed also considered a true metamorphosis, a transformation into a “cosmocrat” – a being as gigantic as the universe itself. In chapter 23 of Zhuang Zi, included in the “Miscellaneous Chapters” 雜篇, a famous passage from the *Dao De Jing* is invoked that speaks the same language of metamorphosis:

Can you be like a child? A child that moves without knowing what it does, advances without knowing where it goes? The body like branches of withered wood and the heart like dead ashes?

『能兒子乎？』兒子動不知所爲，行不知所之？身若槁木之枝，而心若死灰？

This passage provides an early reference to the procedure that was so crucial to Daoist ritual generally, and bodily transformation in particular: the transformation into an infant. This form of body transformation was common to the Daoist Court Ceremony in which the priest appears before the Gate of Heaven to offer his memorial. Zhuang Zi refers here to chapter 10 of the *Dao De Jing*, where the question is asked: “Can you be an infant?” 能嬰兒乎。 The lead becomes uncanny here, as the opening of the Gate of Heaven is mentioned in

just this chapter: “the Gate of Heaven Opens” 天門開闔 – just as in the ritual. Why did the Daoists of later ages, who compiled the “Miscellaneous Chapters,” place just this passage of the *Dao De Jing* in conjunction with withered wood and dead ashes?

The chapter on “Roaming Afar” from the *Songs of Chu* contains passages that look rather similar to all of the above. “Roaming afar” describes a spiritual journey, or, in one scholar’s words, a “mystical excursion.”<sup>120</sup> After a period of dietary regimen, nourishing on the “six breaths” 六氣, and “controlling the bone-souls” 載營魄 (a phrase that opens the above mentioned chapter of *Dao De Jing*, too), the spiritual traveler ascends into the celestial mists. He “summons the celestial guardian to open the pass” 命天闔其開關, asks where “great tenuity resides” 問大微之所居, whence he can enter the imperial palace 入帝宮, and “observe the Pure Capital” 觀清都. Then, finally, it becomes clear that all mortal physical limits are lifted. The practitioner’s body has assumed gigantic proportions: “I grasped a sweeper-star to use as my ensign; hefted the Dipper’s handle to use for my banner” 攬彗星以爲旂兮；舉斗柄以爲麾. In that capacity he is able to invoke the protection of divinities: he has Earl Wind 風伯 as his vanguard, places Wen Chang 文昌 at his rear, summons the Dark Warrior 玄武 to accompany him, has the Rain Master 雨師 at his left, and Sire Thunder 雷公 to his right. Other gods are given a place relative to his body, such as the Blazing God 炎神 in the South, as well as emperor Zhurong 祝融. The journey ends at the Great Beginning.

The cosmography of this journey is echoed in a ritual of body transformation from *Chisong Zi’s Petition Almanac*. While the difference in time with “Roaming Afar” is at least four

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<sup>120</sup> Paul Kroll, “An Early Poem of Mystical Excursion,” pp. 156-65. In D. Lopez (ed.), *Religions of China in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

centuries, and the descriptions are not entirely identical, still, the correspondences are too many to leave this material unmentioned. What follows is a description of the metamorphosis into a cosmocrat for the Daoist Court Ritual:

I respectfully summon the Perfected Agents of the Five Entities within my body; [I summon] the cloud-souls as the Heavenly Father, and the bone-souls as the Earthly Mother; my head as Sire Thunder, my hair as black clouds, and the top of my skull as the bright star, with the Cerebral Gate as Vermilion Bird; my eyebrows as a *Qilin*, my eyes sun and moon, my nose as the Tiger's Leap; my upper lip as Uncle Wind, and my lower lip as Master Rain.<sup>121</sup>

謹勅 臣 身中五體真官。魂爲天父，魄爲地母。頭爲雷公，髮爲黑雲，頂爲明星，腦門爲朱雀。眉爲麒麟，眼爲日月，鼻爲虎賁。上脣爲風伯，下脣爲雨師。

Clearly, the practice of body transformation was a well-developed aspect of the early Celestial Master liturgies. Moreover, the custom of actualizing important celestial entities in positions relative to the body is found in “Roaming Afar” as well as in the *Petition Almanac*. Transformations of this cosmic kind were still practiced during the Song.<sup>122</sup>

The analogy goes further. Just as with the appearance before the imperial palace in “Roaming Afar,” in *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac*, too, the court ritual performed at the Gate of Heaven served as the framework for the petitions described.<sup>123</sup> Petitions had to be taken before the Gate of Heaven which could only be reached after a long itinerary. The most

<sup>121</sup> DZ 615, 2.2a-3b.

<sup>122</sup> *Daofa huijuan* 157.15b-16a.

<sup>123</sup> DZ 615, 2.6a; 9b-10a.

detailed description of this ritual is given in a section called “actualize thoughts” 存思. Just as in “Roaming Afar” the practitioner makes a long meditative journey to the Gate of Heaven, protected by divine beings. In this case the setting is unambiguously ritualized, and the practitioner presents a petition:

When the “take over” is again completed, you must prostrate yourself on the ground in front of the [altar] table.<sup>124</sup> Then, actualize a vermilion-red breath coming forth from your heart, rising up into Heaven as expeditiously as if having traversed a road of a hundred *li* of vermilion-red breath, spacious and wide without clouds on either side – only ‘treasure-trees.’ Suddenly you see a yellow ray; this is the ray of the Sun and the Moon [i.e. the ecliptic]. If you directly cross the yellow ray for five or six *li*, then you will see purple clouds afar, in obscurity. If you go straight to the purple clouds you will see the Gate of Heaven. The gate measures one *zhang* and eight *chi*, several guardians all guarding it. Only with General Zhou, the envoys and emissaries, as well as the Jade Lad that transmits the petition, can you offer the petition document, and come beneath the Palace Gate.<sup>125</sup>

操復畢，便於案前伏地。便存赤紅炁從己心中出上昇天，俄頃如經歷百里。赤紅炁路，蕩蕩兩邊無瑕翳，惟多寶樹。忽見一黃道；即日月黃道也。直過黃道五六里，遙見紫雲隱隱。直到紫雲見天門。門度一丈八尺。諸侍衛悉住。唯周將軍及直使、功曹、傳章玉童，擎章表，至闕門之下。

<sup>124</sup> For a detailed treatment of the procedures of the petition ritual, and an explanation of terminologies such as “take over” in their contexts, see Cedzich, “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister,” pp. 82-102.

<sup>125</sup> DZ 615, 2.23b-24a.

To be fair, there is no explicit reference to a fire of the heart. On the other hand, it is on the “vermilion-red breath” coming forth from the heart that the journey is made. And in Lu Xiuqing’s 陸修靜 fifth century rituals, he states that in the process of refinement into “becoming a Transcendent” 成仙, “the body brings forth a golden glow” 身發金光.<sup>126</sup> It thus seems that the practices of metamorphosis in *Zhuang Zi* and *Chu Ci* existed in more or less ritualized forms from medieval times onwards.

Let us juxtapose these rituals with some early Buddhist practices. Curiously, the text said by Strickmann to first explicitly document esoteric Buddhist body transformation in China, the *Book of Consecration* 佛說灌頂經 from the mid-fifth century (i.e. contemporaneous to Lu Xiuqing’s work), does not seem to include any metamorphosis by fire. It is an explicitly mental exercise, stating that “one should first visualize his own body like my [the Buddha’s] image” 當先自存念汝身如我之像.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the text goes on to describe in great detail that the practitioner subsequently has to “visualize the great spirits of the five directions” 存念五方大神. These gods, as well as the cosmological scheme in which they fit, were certainly no Buddhist import, they were indigenous to China. Their appearance within the context of this metamorphosis is more than a little reminiscent of their early Daoist counterpart. Moreover, in the earliest reference of esoteric metamorphosis, there is not a hint of *homa*.

Some decades later, in the famous *Hongming ji* 弘明集 by Seng You 僧祐 from the Liang dynasty (502 – 557), the same meditative practice was described. Tellingly, it unambiguously put Daoist meditative practice at the core of the road to Buddhist

<sup>126</sup> DZ 528.30b.

<sup>127</sup> *Fo shuo guanding jing* 佛說灌頂經, T no. 1331, 21.515a; translation by Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, p. 133.

enlightenment. In the example, the Daoist procedure involving the withered tree and its ashes is ascribed to the cultivation of none other than the future Buddha: crown prince Siddhārta Gautama. The story relates in straightforward Daoist terminology how Siddhārta left his country in order to study the Way 學道. He wanted to keep his form intact 全形,<sup>128</sup> “close the gate of desire and movement” 塞欲動之門,<sup>129</sup> so that his eyes would be unaffected by beauty, and:

He forgot the sweet and bitter of his mouth,<sup>130</sup> and put aside the ease and sorrow of his mind, so that his heart could abandon exhaustion. He kept the One in his chest,<sup>131</sup> and peacefully controlled his bone-souls,<sup>132</sup> so that his interior thoughts would calm. The count of one, with two following, three will stop; four is to observe, five to return, and six is serenity. He traveled for three or four years in his strife, and frequented the twelve schools. It was in the silent salute of Zen’s concentration, and both the deep and the shallow of the mountain pavilion: his spirit became like cold ashes, his body as a withered tree. Meditating for six years, his Dao was complete and his name Buddha.<sup>133</sup>

口忘甘苦，意放休感，心去於累。胸中抱一，載平營魄，內思安般。一數二隨三止；四觀五還六淨。遊志三四，出入十二門。禪定拱默，山停淵淡；神若寒灰，形猶枯木。端坐六年，道成號佛。

<sup>128</sup> cf. *Zhuang Zi* 23: 夫全其形生之人

<sup>129</sup> cf. *Dao De Jing* 52: 塞其兌，閉其門〔略〕開其銳; *Dao De Jing* 56: 塞其兌，閉其門；挫其銳.

<sup>130</sup> cf. *Dao De Jing* 12.

<sup>131</sup> cf. *Dao De Jing* 10.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Hongming ji* 弘明集, T no. 2102, 52.17c.



The passage from *Hongmingji* is set up as more than a linguistic analogy containing the ashes of the withered tree – it applies Daoist cultivation techniques as the necessary preparation for the enlightenment attained by the Buddha. Elsewhere, *Hongmingji* repeats the technique of the withered tree in correlation with a discussion on the mortality of the body.<sup>134</sup> It thus looks like archaic Daoist techniques played a role in the rhetoric of what later came to be seen as the hallmark of esoteric Buddhism as well as of the Thunder Liturgies of the Song dynasty.

### 3.7. Crossing boundaries: between local peculiarity and celestial official

The practice for which this transformation of the body had been necessary, rituals of sublimation, had led to a large-scale absorption of local cults into Daoist liturgies during the Song period, canonizing local spirits as celestial agents. From a local oddity described in medieval records, Sire Thunder had become a paragon of Daoist ritual power. His punitive actions were requested in urbanized settings, as well as in rural areas. True to the dragon-hunting origins of Sire Thunder, many records by outside observers seem to have witnessed the application of Thunder Ritual in the sphere of rain-praying. Other frequent occasions to dispatch the gods of thunder appear to have been therapeutic, intending to cure diseases ranging from pestilences to madness. A few examples provided below will illustrate the fluid boundaries between city and hinterland, between spirit possession, organized religion and official bureaucracy.

Records by local officials show that the authorities frequently hired Daoists to obtain rain from the dragons, be they residing in temples, trees, or elsewhere. For one occasion of a prolonged drought a local official in Jiahe 嘉禾 commissioned a three day *jiao* in 1190, to be

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<sup>134</sup> T no. 2102, 52.55c.

held at the district hall in honor of the Dragon Lord 龍君, whereupon it was reported to have rained.<sup>135</sup> Two other cases where officials were ordered by the local prefect to participate in rural rain prayers are recorded for Linding 臨汀 during the reign of Shaoxing 紹興 (1131-63) and during the Jiatai 嘉泰 reign (1202-05).<sup>136</sup> In both cases the local authorities subsequently ordered the erection of a temple in honor of the local dragon king.

More detailed descriptions of the ritual proceedings show that it was often mandatory to send the thunder gods first to deal with a recalcitrant spirit before rain could be obtained. A local biography about a man from the city of Changsha 長沙 in Hunan named Zhang Yuanying 張元英 tells us that he had learnt Daoist ritual around the Jingding 景定 reign (1260 – 64). His profession took him and his divine subjects to rural areas.

At one time [Zhang Yuanying] went praying for rain in the countryside, but there was no response at the appointed time [for rain to fall]. Suddenly there was a god who took possession of someone, saying: “It is the prodigy of a camphor tree in Shuinan that hampers the rain.” When Zhang Yuanying faced the sky, shouting [his orders] at the thunder gods, in no time the tree gave a thunderclap, and a saturating rain fell abundantly. The next day there were some who came from Shuinan, saying: “Thunder’s fire burnt that camphor tree yesterday!”<sup>137</sup>

嘗禱雨於鄉。刻期不應。忽有神憑人語曰：「水南樟樹妖梗雨耳。」元英向空叱雷神，其樹須臾霹靂一聲，澍雨沾沛。明日或來自水南者，言：「雷火昨焚樟樹矣！」

<sup>135</sup> *Jiabe zhi* 嘉禾志, p. 701.

<sup>136</sup> *Linding zhi* 臨汀志, p. 1254.

<sup>137</sup> *Jiujing Guangxin fuzhi* 嘉靖廣信府志, 19.5a.

Reports of successful performances could have far-reaching consequences, as in the case of Liu Yongguang 劉用光, a native from Guixi 貴溪 in Jiangxi. His biography states that he had learnt the “Five Thunder Rituals of the Celestial Heart” 天心五雷法 from a mysterious Daoist in Linchuan 臨川]. Thereupon Liu Yongguang’s fame did not remain local. At first it was only the prefect who hired him, later it was the Song court.

During the reign of Qingyuan (1195 – 1201) there was a severe drought in Quzhou (Jiangxi). The prefect, Shen Zuoli, dreamt that he saw a black dragon curled-up at the gate of the City God temple. When he took a look in the morning, it was Liu Yongguang sleeping out his inebriation. He immediately commissioned him to pray for rain, and [the ritual] was successful. The prefect [or the region?] reported this event up to the throne. Later he prayed for rain again at court, and it was also successful.<sup>138</sup>

宋慶元間，衢州旱甚。郡守沈作礪夜夢黑龍蟠於城隍廟門。旦視之，乃用光醉臥也。即延禱雨而應。郡上其事。後復禱雨於朝，亦應。

It seems that Daoist rainmaking ritual really boomed in the greater Jiangnan region throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Before we turn to the apotheosis of Thunder Ritual during the Ming dynasty in the next chapters, I will summarize below the case of a newly formed “lineage” that practiced Thunder Ritual during the fourteenth century. The story, recorded in a local gazetteer from

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<sup>138</sup> *Jiajing Guangxin fuzhi*, 19.5b.

the late fifteenth century, reveals the extent to which Thunder Ritual was crucial for Daoists of the time – it seems their entire ritual praxis revolved around it. Most of the episodes related are concerned with rituals against spirit possession.

Three generations are covered: the Three Masters Li李氏三師, all from Anhui. The first of the practitioners in question, Li Yulin 李玉琳 (*ming* Yuande元德, 1254 – 1320), was said to have roamed about in the region of Jiangnan, visiting no less than eighty-three Daoist masters during the first thirty years of his life. But it is not until after he met an “extraordinary person” at the Lingshun Temple 靈順廟 (in Wuyuan 婺源, Anhui) and received transmission of Daoist writings,<sup>139</sup> that the accounts say he began his Daoist practice. It was also just around that time, in 1286, that his fame as an efficacious master spread. From then on he was known to regularly set up thunder altars from which he sent out thunder to rid his patients – mostly women – of the phantoms that tormented their souls. He employed thunder to unveil these “delusions” 迷惑 as snake-spirits, ape-spirits, unruly dragons, a mountain spectre 山魃, etc. According to Li Yulin’s local biographers, he ultimately even impressed the Celestial Master of Mt. Longhu with his rituals. Out of nothing, it seems, Li Yulin had become an accomplished demonifuge.

On his deathbed (or so the formula prescribes in much of Daoist hagiography) Li Yulin passed on his secret teachings to his eldest son Li Fudao 李福道 (*zhi* Daoxuan 道軒, 1280 – 1331). A cursory reading of Li Fudao’s ritual practice shows that Thunder Rituals were his most important asset, applied both for exorcisms and for numerous rainmaking rituals. Consistent with other practitioners I have described above, he used “iron talismans.” On several occasions he was requested by the local population to hold a Daoist *jiao* ritual.

<sup>139</sup> *Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志, 10.32b: 乃授以〈玉皇經〉，教真文符籙。

The biography of the Three Masters Li narrates how their ritual practice took them to Xiuning 休寧, Huangyuan 黃源, Huangsha 黃沙, Zhonglü 鍾呂, Gaosha 高沙, Dongkeng 東坑, Cikeng 慈坑, Fuxi 富溪, Huangchen 黃塵, Chizhou 池州, and Huizhou 徽州 (all in northwest Anhui), covering a radius of more than a hundred miles. It explains why they would need the horse that his biography mentions – and how they could afford it.

The family's ritual knowledge looked rather stable until Li Fudao's son Li Zhenyou 真祐 (1311 – 1371) was said to have had another chance meeting, in the rain, with a certain Guo Xiuyun 郭岫雲 who explained to him the ritual invocation of Marshal Wen of the Thunder Division – the same god whose 1274 hagiography we have seen above. Just like his father before him, Li Zhenyou applied thunder for numerous exorcisms and rainmaking rituals. In the latter case he was said to have used a “talisman for locking up dragons” 鎖龍符. In 1369 he responded to an official request by the prefect of Huizhou, and performed a Thunder Ritual in order to end a local drought.

Other victories over the forces of darkness were as arresting as ever. Li Zhenyou once hid in ambush to unmask a nocturnal ghost who was uncovered by him as a giant rat. During the first years of the Ming dynasty he performed his last feat. A certain Mme. Wang had been taken by some evil possession that made her belly swell to the size of a drum. Li Zhenyou made her drink the ashes of a burnt talisman whereupon she was able to relieve her strained intestines of an entire bucket full of some muddy substance. Whatever lay at the origin of such sufferings, Daoists verbalized it and in doing so domesticated it.

In the example of Liu Yongguang from Jiangxi, as well as the Three Masters Li from Anhui, a *jiao* could be ordered by anyone from the lowest populace all the way up to the

emperor.<sup>140</sup> Often local gentry sponsored the alleviation of regional crises, such as the gentleman from Ganzhou 贛州 (Jiangxi) who employed the help of Daoists for a *zhai* that was intended to expel a malefic energy 厲氣 during the great famine of 1344.<sup>141</sup>

As we will see in the next chapters, the gods invoked for exorcist rituals, rainmaking rituals, for *jiao*, etc., commonly included the gods of the Thunder Division in configurations that became more and more standardized. They became, in fact, the marker of the standardization of Daoist ritual, increasingly so during the Ming. With this standardization, moreover, Daoist liturgists finally admitted overtly to the importance they attributed to the frightening bodies of demonic gods. Once a local oddity, Sire Thunder had thus become the trademark of the fusion between Daoism and the demonic cult, and was presented in elevated heavenly positions – on a large scale, also outside the realm of Daoism.

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<sup>140</sup> Another locally organized *jiao* took place during the Jianyan 建炎 reign (1127-31). *Jiangzhou zhi* 江州志, p. 1593.

<sup>141</sup> Song Lian 宋濂, *Song Lian Quanji* 宋濂全集, p. 922-23. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1999.

卍 4 卐

**A Critical Mass of Demons:**  
 Daoist Solutions for Zhu Yuanzhang's Baleful Spirits



Picture 4.1. – The founder of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang, portrayed with the facial marks of an exorcist (Dated 1599)

#### 4.1. Early Ming stances towards spirits

If thunder ritual had become a much coveted asset for ambitious Daoists during the Song and Yuan dynasties, by the fourteenth century their reputation of mastery over the gods of thunder seems to have widely established Daoists as specialists in affairs involving demons. Although not commonly considered from a demonic perspective, the art of governing an empire was just such an affair. The advent of the Ming dynasty in 1368, after a long civil war during which many men and women had met a premature death, brought to

power an emperor who repeatedly took responsibility for appeasing the vengeful souls that roamed through his empire. This founder of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328 – 98), was a major patron of Daoists known to possess the demonic rituals of thunder. He turned to them for counseling and applied their advice in the obscure aspect of imperial rule that covered the “dark realm” 陰界 or 幽冥. Following Daoist practice, he tapped into the powers of those baleful spirits who had died in his war and brought them under the responsibility of a bureaucratic institution.

Daoist involvement in government affairs brought about increasing frictions with court officials, who, as we will see below, lost ground to Daoists in ceremonial matters. From the first years of Zhu Yuanzhang’s reign onwards, relationships between the various groups at court became strenuous. A large part of the rising tensions resulted from the respective positions that the players in this unfolding drama took in relation to the divine, especially those aspects of the divine that were tainted with demonic stains.

To the *Ru* and their official peers of the Ming dynasty, the one acceptable cult dedicated to deceased humans was the ancestral cult. The traditional duty of filial piety that children had to fulfill towards their parents, could be extended after death by regularly offering sacrifices to dead family members. Yet this cult was geared towards a normal death of old age; it did not fully provide for the souls of those who had met an unnatural death, such as by disease or the violence of war. The impossibility of including these “orphan souls” 孤魂 who were “baleful” 厲 within the sacrifices of the ancestral cult implied that their demonic status constituted an anomaly, and that other solutions had to be sought.

It was vis-à-vis such phenomena as sacrificial cults for baleful spirits that the decisive figures of the early Ming had to take a stance. The emperor, his officials, and the Daoists – each had their sense of propriety regarding the unseen world of spiritual entities. No



position went unchallenged, but ultimately the Daoist conception prevailed in imperial politics.

#### 4.2. Prelude: understanding the “circumstances of demonic gods,” 1360 – 70

The early Ming period has been regarded as a period of decisive changes. Edward Dreyer described how the many institutional reforms instigated by Zhu Yuanzhang, and later by his son Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360 – 1424), the Yongle 永樂 emperor, left their marks on the shape of political, legal, and social bodies.<sup>1</sup> In a more recent study, Edward Farmer argued that Zhu Yuanzhang’s ideological inclinations were fundamentally Confucian – defined as the “great tradition.” According to Farmer, “creating a new order that violated the logic of the great tradition, would have been next to impossible.”<sup>2</sup> Farmer invokes the tremendous influence of Song Lian 宋濂 (1310 – 81), an eminent *ru* from Jinhua 金華 (Zhejiang), who came to be appointed Grand Historian at Zhu Yuanzhang’s court, and tutor of some of the emperor’s sons. While it may be true that Song Lian represented the “Neo-Confucian elite” of Jinhua, scholars have attributed only secondary relevance to the fact that he was anything but a single-minded dogmatist. In fact, for Song Lian, just as for Zhu Yuanzhang, running the Chinese empire did not mean adhering to the legacy of Kong Zi uniquely. We will see how Song Lian was just as interested as was the emperor in the Daoists brought to court, and that Song Lian, moreover, became a Daoist master.

Years before Zhu Yuanzhang would be powerful enough to ascend the throne as Taizu 太祖, the first emperor of the Ming, he had sought the allegiance of Daoists. From his writings, and from his later ritual institutions such as the “Altar for Baleful Spirits” 厲壇, it

<sup>1</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355-1435*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Edward L. Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Chinese Society Following the Era of Mongol Rule*, p. 24. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

seems that to the Ming founder there simply was no question about it: to build an empire with the help of only bureaucrats effectively meant to leave unexploited an immense field of power that was located in religion. Not only could the existing religious forces be put to some use, Zhu Yuanzhang could also extend his role of conqueror from the world of light into the realm of darkness. Raw forces, such as the baleful spirits of the dead for which Zhu Yuanzhang's rebellion was responsible, could also be used as a source of power; they could be marshaled, and deployed as spiritual protectors of the empire. To that end, they needed to be brought under the celestial administration of the emperor's divine counterpart: the Dark Emperor 玄帝. Daoists were to play a central role in this enterprise, both as advisors and as ritual practitioners.

Traditional scholarship has shunned the role played by Daoists, and even discarded Daoism as a factor of any influence during the Ming. The entry on the Daoist patriarchs of Mt. Longhu in *Dictionary of Ming Biography* states that they had not achieved "anything of distinction," and that it is "with justice that the editors of the *Ming-shih* commented that, other than dispensing charms and praying for rain or snow, the successive patriarchs could boast of very little."<sup>3</sup> Such statements are not only dismissive of an entire religious tradition (as we have seen, writing of charms and praying for rain were at the core of what constituted Daoism; also see chapter 5), they moreover simply contradict the facts: Daoists were highly visible at all levels of society, and exerted major influence during most periods of the Ming dynasty.

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<sup>3</sup> L. Carrington Goodrich, and Zhaoying Fang (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, p. 44. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976 (Hereafter *DMB*).

Chan Hok-lam has described some of Zhu Yuanzhang's early encounters with Daoists, as well as a dream in which the emperor seemed to receive Daoist ordination.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, Chan has pointed out the relevance of the cult to the Dark Emperor for an understanding of the religious foundations of the Ming empire.<sup>5</sup> But for more structural insights into the imperial engagement with Daoism during the early Ming, a reevaluation of the extant sources is necessary.

Zhu Yuanzhang had already once contacted the forty-second Celestial Master Zhang Zhengchang 張正常 (? – 1377) in 1360, some time after the latter had conducted a Grand Sacrifice of the Three Primes 三元醮 in order to “sublimate” the roaming souls of war-struck Jiangnan.<sup>6</sup> During the same year the future emperor wrote a second missive to Zhang Zhengchang.<sup>7</sup> In that document he stated his belief in the ritual power transmitted within the lineage of the Celestial Masters, and he showed awareness of the specific command over the gods of thunder:

I have heard that the Han ancestor of the Celestial Masters was endowed with the Way and its Power. With his every move he could obtain the assistance of demons and gods. Within one breath, exhaling, inhaling, the Heavenly Way could be made to darken. Of the gods of thunderclap, none would not obey his commands. Thus he supported the dynasty and helped the people, eradicating fiendish evils among them, and aiding them in times of flood and drought.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖, “Ming Taizu ‘feilong’ guanshi ‘suxiang’ zhi fenxi 〈明太祖「飛龍」官吏「塑像」之分析〉” In Chan Hok-lam, *Mingdai renwu yu shiliao*, pp. 33-35 and 57 respectively. Hongkong: Chinese University Press, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Chan Hok-lam, “Zhenwu shen-Yongle xiang’ chuanshuo suyuan.” 「真武神·永樂像」傳說溯源, pp. 87-127. In Chan Hok-lam, *Mingdai renwu yu chuanshuo*. Hongkong: Chinese University Press, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> DZ 1463 *Han Tianshi Shijia* 漢天師世家, 3.24a.

<sup>7</sup> Zhu Yuanzhang's first letter, see DZ 1462 *Huang Ming enming shilu* 皇明恩命世錄, 2.1a-2a.

<sup>8</sup> DZ 1462 *Huang Ming enming shilu* 2.2ab.

吾聞漢祖天師道德在躬。動得鬼神之助。一噓一吸間，天道爲之晦冥。雷霆諸神莫不受命。以此輔國濟民，除其妖孽，援其水旱。

The fact that Zhu Yuanzhang singled out the thunder gods as the mightiest asset of the Celestial Master was expressive of his time. A *zaju* 雜劇 (“farce,” or “variety”) stage play from this period portrayed the Celestial Masters as being able to summon the gods of thunder.<sup>9</sup> In the story a thunder altar is set up to exorcize a flower spirit possessing a young student. The deity sent down by the thunder division is the “Talisman-serving Envoy” 直符使者, the common epithet used for Zhang Yuanbo.<sup>10</sup> He helps interrogate the various flower spirits suspected of this possession, and with the threat of other divine generals the culprit is sentenced to solitary confinement on the moon, where she will keep Zhang E 嫦娥 company and in the process “tear away sins by taking up merit” 將功折罪.<sup>11</sup>

In 1361 Zhang Zhengchang sent an envoy to Zhu Yuanzhang during his rebellion against the Mongols as King of Wu 吳王, expressing his allegiance to him because he “knew that the Course of Heaven had shifted” 知天運有歸.<sup>12</sup> After that time, Zhu Yuanzhang repeatedly invited Zhang Zhengchang for personal conversations.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, from 1366

<sup>9</sup> For the dating of this story, see Wilt Idema, *The Dramatic Oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun (1379-1439)*, pp. 41-3. Leiden: Brill, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> Zhang Yuanbo is a deity reporting to Deng Bowen, forming a triad with the latter and with Xin Hanchen. See chapter 3. These talismans 符 were used to summon down martial deities. Written talismans constituted a core-practice of Daoism, dismissively referred to above in the statement about Daoist “charms.”

<sup>11</sup> Zang Jinshu 臧晉叔, *Yuan qu xuan* 元曲選, pp. 175-92. Beijing: Wenxue guji, 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Zhang Zhengchang’s response, see Song Lian 宋濂, *Song Lian Quanjī* 宋濂全集, p. 1408. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> In the year 1365 twice for a banquet.

onwards he became publicly involved as a patron of the Celestial Master's ritual therapies, rewarding him for cases of great success.<sup>14</sup>

After Zhu Yuanzhang had become emperor Taizu in 1368, he increasingly expressed interest in the demonic realm, and he started formulating policies that took into account the presence of baleful spirits. The urgency with which he grappled with questions regarding the obscure realm of orphan souls, suggests that he felt responsible for appeasing the spirits of the wrongfully dead. Yet Taizu was clearly aware of his own underdeveloped knowledge on the topic, and during the early years he repeatedly invited prestigious men to his court in order to solicit their opinions. If the Ming founder was the superstitious peasant that some have thought him to be, then he certainly showed an open mind to be educated by the most learned men of his time in the dynamics of the supernatural.

As we will see below, Taizu had plans to formulate imperial policies regarding the realm of spirits. In 1370 he sent out an inquiry that was to provide him with answers. From that inquiry, entitled “Questions about Heaven and Earth, Demons and Gods” 問天地鬼神, we may learn in great detail what the questions were that vexed the emperor during the formative early period of his reign. In his new position of power the emperor makes no attempt at hiding his ignorance, and the excitement he must have felt of gaining access to learning about the world of the unknown is almost palpable:

Regarding the alternations between Heaven and Earth, the manifestations of demonic gods – is it possible to hear more about the principles of these? If it is indeed possible to expound their intricacies, then I would ask: “As for the alternations between Heaven and Earth, what are their conditions like? As for the

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<sup>14</sup> DZ 1462, 2.4ab; also *Song Lian quanji*, p. 1408.

manifestations of demonic gods, what are their circumstances like? And then, these alternations and manifestations – whence do they arise? Whither do they allay?”

Thus I inquire per decree.<sup>15</sup>

天地變異、鬼神顯寂，若此之機，可得而聞乎？果能陳其本末，則當言：

「天地變異，其態何如？鬼神顯寂，其狀何若？於斯變異、顯寂，由何而生？因何而靜？」故敕問之。

Such explicit questions that took seriously the existence of demons went beyond the scope of the classical canon that was acceptable to court officials. From this vantage point he had but little choice than to ask Buddhists and Daoists. Historical records corroborate the suspicion that the answers were indeed directed at practitioners of those two denominations. We have already seen that he had been actively seeking allegiance with the Celestial Masters of Mt. Longhu, and we will see below that Taizu indeed addressed his questions about demons and gods to Daoists – something he continued to do throughout his reign. Yet his interrogation of Buddhists seems to have remained limited to this one time. It is recorded that in the fall of 1370 he wanted to ask “Buddhist monks who understood the theories of the Tripitaka” 僧中通三藏之說者 about the “conditions of demons and gods” 鬼神情狀.

<sup>16</sup> In particular he expressed his interest in texts from the Buddhist canon that could shed light upon the matter. Zhu Yuanzhang appears to have been either dissatisfied with the answers, or disregarded much of what he learnt: in his subsequent dealings with demons there was little trace of Buddhist discourse.

<sup>15</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji* 明太祖御製文集, 10.3b-4a. Hongwu reprint edition. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1965

<sup>16</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 450.

Although Mano Senryū has noted that Taizu commissioned grand scale Buddhist masses for the dead in 1371 and 1372, there is evidence that this was either a political façade, or an early exception to his later convictions.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Timothy Brook has argued that Taizu implemented increasingly severe measures to suppress the Buddhist clergy, so that towards the end of his reign “Buddhism was ruled out of playing any role in the composition of public authority, ideological or otherwise.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, by 1391 Zhu Yuanzhang had come to believe that Buddhist knowledge was not of primary interest when the powerful spirits of the dark realm were concerned; in that year he pronounced a definition of Buddhism on the basis of the tenet that “its cultivation is best at getting rid of form and outer appearances, cutting off cravings and desires, and binding the body to good [deeds]” 其所修行則去色相、絕嗜欲、結身以爲善.<sup>19</sup> Daoism, on the other hand, was defined as being able “to prevent disasters and ward off calamities, summoning demonic gods with extraordinary techniques” 以異術役召鬼神，禦災捍患.<sup>20</sup> Thus, at least in the eyes of the emperor, Buddhists were not the primary specialists regarding the dark realm. It was obvious why the emperor felt he needed the involvement of Daoists in the construction and maintenance of his empire: their rituals were thought to have a direct impact on the cosmic stability of the empire, based on their command over the gods. The emperor’s definition is interesting also because it exactly paralleled claims made in many Daoist scriptures at the time, proclaiming themselves to be “protecting the empire” 護國.

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<sup>17</sup> Mano Senryū 間野潛龍, “Mindai no Bukkyō to Mincho 明代の佛教と明朝.” In *Mindai bunkashi kenkyū* 明代文化史研究, p. 246. Tōkyō: Dōhōsha, 1979.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Brook, “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” p. 146. In Timothy Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society*. London: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> *Taizu shilu* 太祖實錄 209.3109; for discussions of Taizu’s more favorable interactions with the Buddhist clergy, see Chen Gaohua 陳高華, “Zhu Yuanzhang de fojiao zhengce 朱元璋的佛教政策.” *Ming shi yanjiu* 明史研究 1 (1991), pp. 110–118

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

Taizu's court historiographer Song Lian recorded that in that same autumn of 1370 "the emperor wanted to ask Daoists about the circumstances of demonic gods" 上欲問鬼神情狀於道家者流.<sup>21</sup> He once more invited Zhang Zhengchang to court. Interestingly, while Daoist historiographers equally mention this visit of Zhang Zhengchang to the Ming emperor, they omitted the presence of another eminent Daoist, mentioned by Song Lian: Zhou Xuanzhen 周玄真 (1328 - ?), a specialist in the rituals of thunder.<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately nothing can be found about the content of their response. However, the answers these two Daoists provided apparently did enough to consolidate the emperor's esteem for both of them – although perhaps his reasons were political rather than personal. At any rate, Taizu maintained close ties to Mt. Longhu throughout his reign, and Zhou Xuanzhen was to become a major influence at Taizu's court shortly after; he was given a high position in the new Daoist institutions of the Ming capital.

The emperor's inquiries in the fall of 1370, however, were not issued merely in order to satisfy his personal curiosity. The emperor had a specific project in mind, and the answers apparently had taught him enough to undertake his first great ritual innovation: the "Altar for Baleful Spirits," implemented only some months later. In the next section we will see that Taizu instituted a sacrificial system that aimed at controlling the dark realm in ways fashioned after Daoist models.

#### 4.3. Altars for baleful spirits: the dual face of the City God

Taizu has been portrayed as a ruler who was eager to learn his lessons from history. However, some of Taizu's political measures seem to have had no precedent – especially in

<sup>21</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian Quanjì*, p. 613, 1408.

<sup>22</sup> Daoist sources only mention the imperial audience held for the Celestial Master. DZ 1462 *Huang Ming enming shilu* 2.8a ; DZ 1463 *Han Tianshi Shijia* 3.26a.



his reorganization of religious institutions. One phrase used in Taizu's earliest writings shows that he had a dual conception of his empire: aside from the orderly world of mortals, there was another realm, harder to fathom: "In [the realm of] light there is ritual and music; in [the realm of] darkness there are demons and gods" 明有禮樂，幽有鬼神.<sup>23</sup> While we have seen above that by his inquiries into the dark realm Taizu admitted that he did not understand the topic as well as he wanted to, it seems that his conversations with Daoists had convinced him that he could order the invisible realm of spirits with ritual and music just as effectively as the realm of light. Apparently the spirit-world could be made to adhere to certain regulations, too.

During the twelfth month of 1370, only three or four months after Taizu had consulted Daoists and Buddhists, he first promulgated his thoughts on the sacrifices for "demonic spirits without a cult" 無祀鬼神. These baleful, roaming spirits had belonged to humans who had died unnaturally and thus were disallowed to receive sacrificial offerings within their original ancestral lineage. For them, he ordered the creation of an institution called "Altar for Baleful Spirits." Zhu Yuanzhang distinguished between altars of various levels, such as the altar in the capital, called "Great Altar for Baleful Spirits" 泰厲壇, all the way down through various administrative levels to the "Rural Altar for Baleful Spirits" 鄉厲壇.<sup>24</sup> His idea was to provide roaming spirits with a place to which they could "belong" 歸, or "return" to, and receive regular offerings. In other words, if provided with a dwelling the orphan souls were thought to be at peace. The classic antecedent used by the emperor to legitimize this altar was taken from *Chunqiu* 春秋: "As long as a demon has somewhere to

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<sup>23</sup> *Taizu shilu* 38.755-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Taizu shilu* 59.1156.

return to, it will not cause harm” 鬼有所歸，乃不爲厲。<sup>25</sup> The compilers of the *Mingshi* later referred to that same statement in their explanation of the altar.

The Altar for Baleful Spirits was a remarkable innovation for many reasons. The most obvious change it brought about in the ritual canon of the state was that it allowed diabolic spirits to be brought onto the official stage. Unadorned with impressive military decorations or the regalia of high nobility, the sacrificial objects of the new institution were openly defined as demonic. The other unusual aspect of the altar for baleful spirits was its radical difference from other sacrifices that belonged to the purview of the Ministry of Rites 禮部, namely that it was not intended exclusively for official sacrifices, but also set up as a site of communal worship. Every hundred households were instructed to build an altar where they had to convene frequently and offer cooked rice. The number of days designated for these sacrifices was unusually high: the three days after the Qingming 清明 festival during the second month, again during the ghost month on 7/15 (中元 *zhongyuan* or 盂蘭盆 *yulanpen*), and finally on 10/3.<sup>26</sup> As most Ming local gazetteers make mention of these altars, it is clear that Taizu's concern went far beyond his own capital altar, and that it ranks high among those of his regulations that were actually carried out on a large scale. One gazetteer from the early Ming mentions that the six counties in Jiangnan that constituted Wuxing 吳興 together counted as many as 477 of these altars.<sup>27</sup>

Taizu's motivations may have been manifold. However, one reason to institute the altar was to fulfill (and publicize) his responsibility for the souls that had come to roam

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<sup>25</sup> I realize the term *gui* 鬼 did not necessarily mean 'demon' yet at the time that *Chunqiu* was written. More likely it was some kind of ancestral spirit, yet, clearly one that had to be included in a sacrificial cult in order to avoid harm. Similarly, the word *gui* 歸 does not only mean 'return,' but also 'to belong.' The choice is a difficult one, yet the intended idea hardly differs.

<sup>26</sup> *Wuxing xuzhi* 吳興續志, p. 844.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

through his empire since the dynastic war. The *Veritable Records* contain the following stipulation from the twelfth month of 1370:

The emperor ordered the recommendation to perform ceremonies for those who died during the military uproot [of the Yuan-Ming transition] and were left without posterity; their spirits did not have a place to dwell. [...] Now, if demons lack sacrifices and do not have a place to return to, then they will cause harm. [...] And if this kind of demons that has no dwelling will take possession of land or trees, it should not deserve wonder that they cause calamity and blessing for the people, so that they may enjoy sacrificial offerings. I want to hold rituals of sacrifice for them; it shall befit the capital, the kingdoms, the prefectures, provinces, districts, as well as the *li* and *she* to sacrifice to them. If we banish all the licentious cults of the world, yet ensure that those of the demons who have nowhere to attach themselves to will still not lack in sacrifices, then there will be no occurrences of calamity. That too is one way to rid the people from impairment.<sup>28</sup>

上以兵革之餘死無後者，其靈無所依，命議舉其禮。[...]然則鬼乏祭享而無所歸，則必爲害。[...]而此等無依之鬼，乃或依附土木，爲民禍福以邀享祀者蓋無足怪。今欲舉其祀，宜於京都、王國、各府、州、縣及里社，皆祭祀之。而天下之淫祀一切屏除，使鬼之無所歸附者不失祭享，則災厲不興。是亦除民害之一也。

Crucially, the sacrificial proceedings prescribed that “on the main altar, the throne of the City God shall be placed” 正壇設城隍位.<sup>29</sup> This effectively meant that the City God was the celestial authority under whose auspices the ritual would take place, and under whose

<sup>28</sup> *Taiḗu Shihü* 59.1155-56.

<sup>29</sup> *Taiḗu Shihü* 59.1157.

hierarchical structure the baleful spirits were positioned. This was not a surprising structure, because the City God was a deity protecting the realm of his jurisdiction with his “dark soldiers” 陰兵. From a Daoist perspective there was little difference between the armies of the City God and the hordes of “demonic spirits without a cult,” except for one significant detail: the former were part of a hierarchy, and the latter were not. Indeed, one scholar has termed the City God a “controller of demons.”<sup>30</sup> It was through the Altar for Baleful Spirits that these demons and gods without a cult could be confined to a proper place – and ideally become drafted by the City God.

The City God constituted an apex of relationships between mortals and the other world, expressive of the hierarchical positions that each of the functionaries occupied vis-à-vis the other world as well as each other. Only several months into his reign Taizu expressed the close ties between him and the empire’s City Gods by stating that the advent of the new dynasty would “renew the authorization of all the City Gods” 城隍之神皆新其命.<sup>31</sup>

Although the cult was reconceived as a divine office, thus a more or less impersonal and rationalized concept rather than a local peculiarity, different regions worshiped City Gods with different names and different histories that belonged to local heroes.<sup>32</sup> They thus were based upon the very kind of baleful spirit that pervaded the popular bloody cult. During this early period Taizu perpetuated the general practice of earlier dynasties to invest City Gods throughout the empire occasionally with new titles, such as duke, marquis, or earl, equally consistent with popular practice.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Stephan Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: the Imperial Metaphor*, p. 74. Richmond: Curzon, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> *Huang Ming zhaoling* 皇明詔令, 1.16a. Taipei: Wenhai, 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Many local gazetteers from the Ming dynasty include short biographies of their local City God. This personal aspect of City Gods has been described for the Tang and Song dynasties by David Johnson, “The City-God Cults of T’ang and Sung China.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 45:2 (Dec., 1985), pp. 363-457.

<sup>33</sup> Romeyn Taylor, “Ming T ai-tsu and the Gods of the Walls and Moats.” *Ming Studies* 3 (1977), p. 40.

For local officials the City God was important, too. As I will describe below, before taking up office in their new localities, Ming dynasty magistrates had to pay reverence to the City God in a ceremony that brought them in a position subordinate to this god.<sup>34</sup> Here, the Daoist connection is relevant, as it constitutes a parallel structure on top of the earthly bureaucracy. According to Romeyn Taylor, “the appointment of spirits as city gods had to be affirmed by Taoist priests.”<sup>35</sup> Taylor concludes that this was an affirmation of divine powers higher than those of the state, and represented by Daoists, because “when a new civil magistrate paid his initial visit to the city god’s temple and took his oath there, he was acknowledging a spiritually higher authority that had been validated by a Taoist priest.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the fact that the temple to the City God was possibly the abode for the Daoist congregation, called the “Association of Lord Lao” 老君會, suggests that at least in religious matters the bureaucrat was perceived to rank below the Daoist.<sup>37</sup>

However that may be, this hierarchy was more directly expressed through ritual language. In Daoist liturgies the City God belonged to the lower echelon of divine functionaries that were invoked during most ritual occasions. Liturgies from the Song onwards usually invoked the presence of the City God in his usual function of ruler over the local spirits.<sup>38</sup> The City God in Daoist ritual was not referred to by any personal name, a

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<sup>34</sup> Stephan Feuchtwang, “School Temple and City God.” in G.W. Skinner (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial China*, p. 601. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977.

<sup>35</sup> Romeyn Taylor, “Official and Popular Religion and the Political Organization of Chinese Society in the Ming.” In Kwang-Ching Liu (ed.), *Orthodoxy in late Imperial China*, p. 152. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Romeyn Taylor, “Official and Popular Religion,” pp. 152-53.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Dean has shown that by the Ming dynasty, at least in Putian 莆田 (Fujian), “Daoist masters were based in the Chenghuang Miao,” p. 2. Dean, Kenneth, “Preparations for Immortality: the Yuxiu Rites of the *tanban* of the northern irrigated plain of Putian.” Paper prepared for the Conference on Contemporary Daoist Studies. Harvard University, June 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Given the ubiquity of the City God’s presence in Song Daoist ritual, he probably was part of Daoist ritual much earlier.

contrast to the personalized cults to the City God of particular cities.<sup>39</sup> Daoist manuals of the early Ming dynasty would instead refer to him rather with the name of his regional jurisdiction, “summoning the City God of such-and-such prefecture” 召某府城隍, or “mobilizing the City God of such-and-such place” 檄某處城隍.<sup>40</sup> Even outside observers described the relationship between the City God and the Daoist as one between a low-ranking and a high-ranking official respectively, the Daoist having the authority to dispatch the demon soldiers of the City God.<sup>41</sup>

With this in mind, a most peculiar change in Taizu’s religious policies towards the City God strongly suggests Daoist overtones. Romeyn Taylor has pointed out elsewhere that in the early months of his reign Taizu was treating the City Gods “much as he was treating his generals; he invested them with titles of nobility in recognition of their military prowess. [...] A year and a half later, in 1370, the emperor reformed the cult [...] He abolished all the titles of nobility that he had just bestowed upon them, and ordered that they were thenceforth simply to be titled as the [City Gods] of their respective cities.”<sup>42</sup> The original phrasing Taizu used for the sudden demotion of the City Gods looks remarkably similar to the Daoist designations: “The City God of each prefecture, department, and county, will everywhere be called the City God of such-and-such prefecture, such-and-such department, and such-and-such county” 各處府、州、縣城隍，稱某府、某州、某縣城隍之神。<sup>43</sup> I suggest that they were Taizu’s earliest policies intended to regulate the netherworld after

<sup>39</sup> For examples from the early Ming, see DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元, 45.2b, 6a, 7b, 11b, 13a; 47.11b, 17b; 48.4a.

<sup>40</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 45.16b; 48.16a; similar wording in *Daofa huiyuan* 44.25a.

<sup>41</sup> Records from the Song dynasty such as Hong Mai’s 洪邁 *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志 contain examples of how the City God was deployed. See an instance of “calling the City God” 呼城隍 and deploying his “dark soldiers” in *Yijianzhi* (Taibei: Mingwen, 1982; pp. 1119-20); another instance of “summoning the armies of the City God and the Five Peaks” 召會城隍五嶽兵 (p.364); and a final example of “dispatching the City God” 牒城隍 (p. 429).

<sup>42</sup> Romeyn Taylor, “Ming T ai-tsu and the Gods of the Walls and Moats,” p. 40

<sup>43</sup> *Taizu shilu* 53.1035.

Daoist models. If the change was not one from a popular form of the City God to a Daoist form, then at least it was an example of how Taizu imposed bureaucratic models on the spirit world.

In their relationship with the divine realm, local officials could not easily bypass the City God. As mentioned in passing, new magistrates had to go through certain rites of passage at City God temples whenever they assumed their post. Taizu issued regulations ensuring that officials would not be tempted to disregard the City God's authority. The procedure of reporting to the City God was designed for the new official to become acquainted with the local spirits.

To each of the authorities in the empire who have accepted their office and are about to assume their task: Before you arrive at a city, stay at some inn. First you will order a clerk from the chamber of rites to announce you. The local administrators and senior citizens will all come out of the city to welcome you. [this is done] so that the relevant shrines and temples of gods and spirits can be cleaned, and the offerings and ritual proceedings may be prepared awaiting [your] arrival. When [you] arrive, fast for three days outside of the city. On the morning of the fourth day the senior citizens will lead you into the city so that you may visit all the shrines, everywhere.<sup>44</sup>

天下凡有司受職赴任者。未至城一舍而止。先令禮房吏告示。官屬父老相率出城來會。俾灑掃應祀神祇祠宇，備牲醴祭儀以候謁告。比至齋宿城外三日。至四日清晨，父老導引入城徧謁諸祠。

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<sup>44</sup> *Taizu shilu* 170.2586.

At each temple the magistrate read a sacrificial address 祭文 to swear his earnest intentions before the gods, asking them to punish him for his future failings, and prostrating himself 俯伏.<sup>45</sup> Ming dynasty gazetteers suggest that the City God temple provided the venue for the main ceremony.<sup>46</sup> While Taizu's prescriptions date from 1385, it is not unlikely that they were issued simply because the emperor realized that the practice was not always adhered to. The regulation was certainly new, but given the oft-noted identification of the local official with the City God it would seem that the practice of forging a relationship between the two was not so new.<sup>47</sup> One way or the other, in the hierarchical scheme of the divine order of which the cult of the City God was expressive, the official representative of the imperial bureaucracy was ranked below the Daoist representative of the heavenly order.

The details of Taizu's regulations for the altar of baleful spirits show further Daoist influence. The location chosen for the construction of the altar indicates that those spirits without dwelling were associated with the pacifying powers of a god who had come to be as Daoist as possibly imaginable: the capital altar for baleful spirits was erected in the Lake of the Dark Warrior 玄武湖, a location in Nanking named after the patron god of the Ming dynasty. In other administrative units outside the capital the altar was constructed at the Northern side of cities, which equally was the direction presided over by the Dark Warrior.

The ontology of the spirits worshipped on the Litan was in coherence with the ancient notion of *guqi*, or "residual energies." While this notion was fundamental to Chinese religion generally speaking, we have already seen that of the major players at the court of Taizu only the Daoists had developed rituals to recycle these energies and apply them for

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<sup>45</sup> *Ningguo xianzhi* 寧國縣志, 2.12a.

<sup>46</sup> *Annan fuzhi* 安南府志 10.10b; *Nankang xianzhi* 南康縣志, 4.5a.

<sup>47</sup> Feuchtwang shows that this ceremony was still carried out in City God temples during the Qing: "School Temple and City God," p. 763, n. 14.



other ends. In Taizu's description of baleful spirits such energies are prominently mentioned. But the Ming founder was aware of more differentiated ways of dying, as his decree shows:

Among them are those who were wounded when meeting the soldier's sword, those who perished in water, fire, or at the hands of bandits, those who were driven to death because other men took their possessions, those who starved in hunger or cold, those who died after others had taken their wives or concubines by force, those who died poor upon meeting unjust punishment, who passed away under the rage of pestilence, who were harmed by wild beasts or venomous creatures, who were pressed to death when the walls of their homes collapsed, and those who left no offspring after their death. Some of these demonic souls met their end in previous ages, others in recent times, some, in the chaos caused by the clamor of arms, had moved to other lands, and yet others had been cut off from the inhabited world, deprived from sacrificial offerings since long. Their names are lost forever and the Canon of Sacrifices does not record what it has not heard of. These orphan Cloud-souls have died with nowhere to dwell; and as their spirit and Bone-souls have not yet dissolved, they coagulate into potencies of darkness.<sup>48</sup>

其間有遭兵刀而橫傷者、有死於水火盜賊者、有被人取財而逼死者、有爲飢餓凍死者、有被人強奪妻妾而死者、有遭刑禍而貧屈死者、有天災流行而疫、有爲猛獸毒蟲所害者、有因墻屋傾頽而壓死者、有死後無子孫者。此等鬼魂或終於前代、或歿於近世、或兵戈擾攘流移於他鄉、或人煙斷

<sup>48</sup> *Zhenyang xianzhi* 真陽縣志, 7.5b-6a; also in *Jianchang fuzhi* 建昌府志, 10.8b-9a; Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490-1566), *Taiquan xiangli* 泰泉鄉禮, 5.11b-12a. In Wang Yunwu (ed.), *Siku quanshu zhenben siji* (vol. 54). Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1972.

絕，久缺其祭祀，姓名泯歿於一時，祀典無聞而不載。此等孤魂，死無所依；精魄未散，結爲陰靈。

In this definition all spirits that had suffered an untimely death were thus bound to become demonic. Elsewhere Taizu explained that “because their human affairs had not yet been completed, they manifest themselves” 因人事未盡，故顯, and for that reason their undissolved residual energies could coagulate into baleful spirits.<sup>49</sup> By establishing the Altar for Baleful Spirits in order to provide them with a dwelling, and thus bringing them under bureaucratic control, the Ming founder presented himself as a conqueror of the dark realm as well as of the world of light. Indeed, one tradition in popular iconography later portrayed him with the signs of an exorcist: his face was said to be dotted with seventy-two “black spots” 黑子 that supposedly represented the Seventy-two Earthly Fatal Stars 七十二地煞星, and on his chin he had the mark of the Northern Bushel 北斗 – all clear indications that he possessed the (Daoist) power to subjugate spirits (see the picture at the beginning of this chapter).

#### 4.4. Taizu’s quest for thunder in the 1370’s: demonic rituals to court

Previous chapters of this dissertation have shown that Thunder Gods formed an area of tremendous cultural production before the Ming. The present chapter follows the practitioners of the Daoist rituals that summoned Thunder Gods to Taizu’s court. The imperial interest in thunder was related to the broader development of Thunder Ritual. We will see below that rituals involving Thunder Gods became so popular that entire

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<sup>49</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji*, 2.15b-16a.

“traditions” adjusted their basic tenets in order to incorporate the powerful demonic gods of thunder: the school of Pure Tenuity 清微, which was to become the dominant tradition of Ming Daoism, underwent a complete metamorphosis. With the advent of the Ming dynasty, Thunder Ritual of the Pure Tenuity school became representative of Daoism – and of the religious politics of the Ming.

After his general inquiries about demonic gods in 1370, directed at representatives of the Daoist as well as the Buddhist clergy, and the institution of the altar for baleful spirits during the same year, the emperor seems to have narrowed down the scope of his interest. From now on he was no longer simply interested in demonic gods generally, but specifically in the demonic gods of the Thunder Division. As was apparent from his earlier letter to Zhang Zhengchang, his interest in thunder went some time back. The Ming founder in all likelihood had been able to witness the rituals of thunder in his native region of Anhui since he was a child, as is suggested by the case of the Three Masters Li in the previous chapter. Other local records from the same region show that there were more Daoists active in the field of thunder during the early fourteenth century. One of them, a certain Hu Yuetan 胡月潭 (*zi* Shouzheng 守正), was said to have received the rites of Celestial Heart as well as those of the Five Thunders.<sup>50</sup> He was credited with the successful exorcism of a fox-spirit and of a white snake. Others continued to emerge during Taizu’s reign.<sup>51</sup>

One of the Daoists interrogated by Taizu about the circumstances of demons and gods, Zhou Xuanzhen, provides key insights into ritual practice and ideology of the early Ming imperial court as well as of Daoism during the same period. The writings of the court-historiographer Song Lian contain several important details that allow us the gain a vivid

<sup>50</sup> *Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志, 10.34b.

<sup>51</sup> *Quzhou fuzhi* 衢州府志, 12.6b.

impression of the ways in which the powers of the throne became intertwined with the rituals of Daoism.

Zhou Xuanzhen may have been a recent convert to Daoism, just like many of his time. Brought up as the son of a famous *yinyang* master, he only became a Daoist after being taken in as the disciple of an esteemed priest at the “Temple of Purple Vacuity” 紫虛觀 in Jiahe 嘉禾 (present-day Xiamen). This Daoist taught him the techniques to “impeach and summon the demonic gods” 劾召鬼神.<sup>52</sup> According to Song Lian he successfully applied these rituals to a Buddhist possessed by a fox-spirit, and later to exorcize a snake-demon.

An incident in Zhou Xuanzhen’s religious career most certainly must have appealed to Taizu’s concerns for baleful spirits: “When the regions of Wu [Jiangsu] and Yue [Zhejiang] were invaded by soldiers [during the dynastic wars], roaming spirits emerged to wreak havoc” 會吳越被兵，游魂出爲厲. The passage goes on to describe that, when Zhou Xuanzhen set up his altar, the problem was solved. Although no details are given concerning the procedures that Zhou Xuanzhen applied, the category of “roaming spirits” was addressed with a variety of specific rituals for specific occasions in Daoist manuals of the time.<sup>53</sup>

The exact traditions with which Zhou Xuanzhen was associated, however, are mentioned by Song Lian. Zhou Xuanzhen’s initiation into the classical Great Rites of Lingbao 靈寶大法 is mentioned merely in passing, as if it amounted to no more than stating the obvious. Much more attention is given to his initiation into Thunder Ritual, and it is here that we can find Zhou’s connections to existing ritual practice. The most eminent patriarch

<sup>52</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, pp. 612-3.

<sup>53</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.6a-9a. In these procedures, too, the “roaming spirits” that were the object of the ritual concerns had come into being after premature death.

within his ritual ancestry was Wang Wenqing 王文卿 (1093 – 1153), yet given the great fame of this Daoist from the Song we may have to take this claim with a grain of salt. A more credible claim – much closer in time – is the lineage affiliation to Mo Yueding 莫月鼎 (1226 – 93) and his disciple Zhang Shanyuan 張善淵 (fl. 1280 – 94). These two are mentioned together in another biography written by Song Lian, treating the life of Mo Yueding.<sup>54</sup> Texts from the hands of both these men are extant.<sup>55</sup>

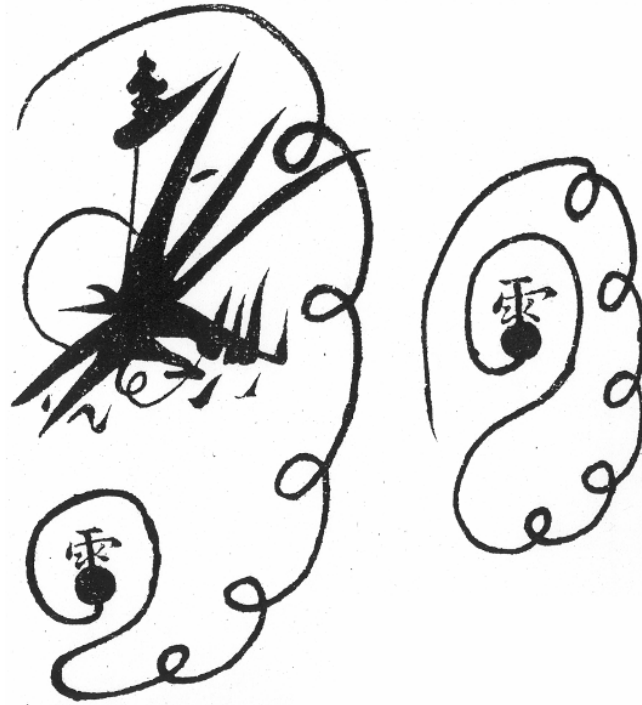
The methods transmitted to Zhou Xuanzhen must have been similar (or identical) to the content of two ritual manuals from the fourteenth century that mention Mo Yueding (and Wang Wenqing) as patriarch.<sup>56</sup> Both are devoted to the demonic Marshal Zhang Yuanbo 張元伯 and both are intended to make this Marshal Zhang manifest by writing talismans. Great attention is paid to the calligraphic skills of the ritual practitioner. According to the manuals, a successful ritual performance hinges upon the outcome of the calligraphic process – a nexus of cultivation practices, including meditation, incantation, ritual choreography, and the practical concerns of any artistic achievement. To sum it up: “If the power of your brush is weak, then the power of your ritual will be weak” 筆力弱，則法力弱。<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, pp. 565-67.

<sup>55</sup> For Zhang Shanyuan’s writings, see *Daofa huiyuan* 67. For Mo Yueding, see *Daofa huiyuan* 77. Also see *Daofa huiyuan* 90, 91 (which mentions Mo Yueding as patriarch 組師), and 95.

<sup>56</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 90 and 91.

<sup>57</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 91.1a.



Picture 4.2. – Mo Yueding’s talisman of Marshal Zhang.

Zhou Xuanzhen’s actual performances were introduced to the Ming emperor during the first year of the Ming dynasty in 1368, when a drought occurred in the capital, Nanking. Court officials summoned Zhou Xuanzhen to court, whereupon he set up his thunder altar on Yechengshan 冶城山 (some kilometers north of the capital) and immediately caused torrential rainfall. One year later he repeated this feat, “climbing his altar with his sword drawn, summoning Master Wind and Uncle Thunderclap, and binding them by oath” 握劍上壇，召風師霆伯誓之. A document used in the tradition of Mo Yueding’s rain rituals suggests that here, too, the demonic Marshal Zhang was invoked<sup>58</sup> – in fact, one biography points out that the talismans for invoking Marshal Zhang were precisely “the rituals [Mo

<sup>58</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 90.11a-12a.

Yueding] himself created” 自立法.<sup>59</sup> A longer description of these rain rituals shows that the familiar triad of Deng, Xin, and Zhang was involved.<sup>60</sup> There can be no misunderstanding about the fact that Daoists took their fierce spirits with them – even to the Ming court.

In 1372 the emperor showed that his quest for the awesome powers of thunder was not over and he once more summoned Zhou Xuanzhen to meet him in the Martial Tower 武樓 and inquire “as to the reasons for Thunderclap being divine” 雷霆所以神之故.<sup>61</sup> Zhou Xuanzhen was invited to court on his own, this time no longer accompanied by his patron Zhang Zhengchang, as had been the case in 1370 (see section 4.2. above). Zhou Xuanzhen’s answer situates the phenomenon of thunder simply within the transformative interaction of *yin* and *yang*.<sup>62</sup> In other words, it fitted perfectly within the general indigenous understanding of the cosmos.

From this time onwards the Daoist involvement in state ceremonial started becoming unusually intense, and surpassed the realm of strictly Daoist ritual. For example, in 1373 Daoists from the Chaotian Gong were given the task of performing the annual offerings to Heaven and Earth, Soil and Grain, as well as to the Mountains and Streams 天地社稷山川.<sup>63</sup> Decrees from Taizu show that this was not a unique phenomenon during his reign.<sup>64</sup> Zhou Xuanzhen, moreover, was appointed abbot of the Temple of Divine Music 神

<sup>59</sup> DZ 297 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian xubian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑續編, 5.14b-15a.

<sup>60</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 91.11b-12b. Elsewhere, a talisman attributed to Mo Yueding contains the taboo-characters for Deng, Xin, Zhang, supplemented with an anonymous “spiritual officer” 靈官, Zhao Gongming, Marshal Wen, and Marsgal Guan (*Daofa huiyuan* 95.8ab). See the previous chapter for more details regarding these gods.

<sup>61</sup> 「雷霆所以神之故」, Song Lian, *Song Lian Quanjì*, pp. 612-14.

<sup>62</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanjì*, pp. 614.

<sup>63</sup> *Taizu Shilu* 78.1423.

<sup>64</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji* 7.3b-4a; 8.9ab.

樂觀, the imperial Daoist temple instituted by Taizu some years later in 1379.<sup>65</sup> This institution would deserve a full study in itself, and more than some cursory remarks would go beyond the scope of this study. The musicians of the Shenyueguan were responsible for music and dance at the important “sacrifices of the Great Rites to Heaven and Earth, gods and spirits, ancestral temple and Soil and Grain” 以備大祀天地神祇，及宗廟、社稷 (all so-called grand sacrifices 大祀).<sup>66</sup> The institution of the Shenyueguan, moreover, was an indication of the degree to which the emperor had come to rely upon the ritual performances of Daoists – he allowed them to officiate during the most exalted imperial rites.

In the meantime it looked like Zhang Zhengchang was growing tired of the journeys he was repeatedly asked to make from his residence on Mt. Longhu to the court in Nanking, a journey of more than 500 km one way. In 1371 the emperor asked the Celestial Master to send a reputable disciple to court whom he could “interrogate about the matters of the demonic gods of Thunderclap” 問以雷霆鬼神之事.<sup>67</sup> The choice of Zhang Zhengchang fell upon a Daoist from Jiangxi: Deng Zhongxiu 鄧仲修. The Celestial Master must have known him very well, as this man had been associated with the Palace of Upper Purity 上清宮 on Mt. Longhu at least since 1364.<sup>68</sup> Taizu requested him to take up residence in the Chaotian Gong. From the Hongwu reign onwards this imperially sponsored temple was designated for the performance of Daoist rituals in the capital. As Song Lian specifically points out, Deng Zhongxiu was well-versed in those techniques that could “impeach and

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<sup>65</sup> *Taizu Shilu*, p. 2031.

<sup>66</sup> *MS*, p. 1817-8.

<sup>67</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 1518.

<sup>68</sup> *Longhu shanzhi* 龍虎山志, p.1826.



capture demonic gods” 劾掠鬼神 as well as “call and summon thunderstorms” 呼召雷雨.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, he was credited with earlier success of his rainmaking ritual, such as in 1356, “grinding his teeth to gather the gods” 叩齒集神 while climbing his “Eight Trigram altar with his sword clasped” 杖劍登八卦壇, or his victory over Chi You in 1369, ending a long drought with the help of his Five Thunder gods.<sup>70</sup> Notwithstanding his mastery of those rather spectacular techniques, resembling those of the vernacular master, Song Lian mentions in passing that Deng Zhongxiu too was initiated into the classical rites of Lingbao.<sup>71</sup> It is interesting to point out in this context that he seems to have impressed the emperor most when he expelled a drought in the capital in 1372.<sup>72</sup>

After Zhou Xuanzhen and Deng Zhongxiu there was the advent of Song Zongzhen 宋宗真 in 1372, who had “obtained the Methods of Lingbao and thus could understand the conditions of demons and gods” 得靈寶法，而能知鬼神之情況.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, these conditions of demons and gods were the thing that still captured Taizu’s mind. From the many invitations he extended to Daoists, as well as from the establishment of the Altar for Baleful spirits, and from the performances of Daoists at the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, it is rather evident that the emperor did not think of his empire only as a bureaucratic enterprise. There can be no misunderstanding about the fact the realm of the dark was a prime focus of his attention, and that Daoists who had mastered Thunder Ritual had an important role to play in the ritual procedures of Taizu’s empire. Their knowledge of the

<sup>69</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 1942.

<sup>70</sup> Yang Weizhen 楊維楨 (1296-1370), *Dong Weizi Ji* 東維子集, 10.19b-20a. In *Qinding Siku Quanshu*. Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*; the passage actually mentions the ‘Lingbao Methods for Fasting’ (靈寶齋法 *Lingbao zhaifa*), which may or may not be the same as the Lingbao Dafa mentioned in connection with Zhou Zhuanzhen.

<sup>72</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 774-5.

<sup>73</sup> *op. cit.*, pp. 1747: 得靈寶法，而能知鬼神之情況.

“circumstances of demonic gods” had apparently endowed them with powers that the emperor found useful.

#### 4.5. The Demon Scare of 1378: officials and demonic discourse

The virtual absence of official opposition to the Altar for Baleful Spirits may mean that the goals of the demonic altar were implicitly accepted by the court officials. If vocal resistance to Taizu’s policies would have been a risky affair anyway, from the abundance of Altars for Baleful Spirits mentioned in local gazetteers it seems there was as little opposition in the lower administrative units, farther removed from the emperor’s eyes. Much later, the compilers of the Ming Dynastic History were still remarkably neutral on the topic and applied the same rhetoric from classical sources such as the *Chunqiu* as had been used in Taizu’s time to legitimize this institution. One would be tempted to believe that the Daoist reforms of Taizu did not pose a problem to anyone. What were the common notions among those who did not primarily identify themselves with Daoist notions? Before considering a case from 1378, I will briefly address the discourse on demons that dominated officials’ responses to the dark realm.

Generally speaking, the ideological heirs of Kong Zi did not present themselves as the most likely people to answer questions about invisible entities that lay outside of the official canon. From their perspective these beings formed the basis for the “excessive cult” 淫祀 of local gods that demanded sacrifices of meat, which they considered to be “evil” 邪, “fiendish” 妖, “indecent” 妄, etc. As we will see later in this and other chapters, court officials as well as local bureaucrats mostly confined themselves to rejecting these phenomena – an attitude not fundamentally different from Daoist rhetoric. Yet the scope of

their respective rejections was different, as well as the epistemological freedom to go beyond rejection, and engage.

Officials largely followed the traditional example set in the *Analects* 論語 to remain silent on the topic: “The Master did not speak of anomalous powers and improper spirits” 子不語怪力亂神. Local bureaucrats involved in the compilation of gazetteers sometimes felt they had to explain the apparent contradiction between this phrase and their records of uncanonical things: “Kong Zi did not speak of anomalies, Meng Zi attacked heterodox theories; why make records of Immortals and Buddhists?” 孔氏不語怪，孟氏闢邪說；何志乎仙釋也。<sup>74</sup> The apology given was that even the classics contained certain records of anomalies, and that gazetteers could therefore record them, too, as long as they contained a message that cohered with the tenets of the classics. This shows that religious phenomena not recorded in the classical canon could not naturally be included in official documents.

As a consequence, officials could not freely develop a discourse on anomalous death. This lack of such a discourse did not mean that those men who followed the precepts of the classical canon were unaware of the problem of those deceased that had to be excluded from ancestral sacrifices, as I will illustrate in the pages to come. Nor did it mean that no official - believed in demonic gods. It did however mean that officials could not easily engage in methods to appease the restless souls of the prematurely deceased. Publicly at least, officials largely avoided association with such spirits.

However, some events provided occasions for opponents to make adverse opinions heard, occasions that were expressive of the classical discourse on ghostly anomalies – or rather the lack thereof. One example from the early years of Hongwu’s reign illustrates that

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<sup>74</sup> *Dinghai xianzhi* 定海縣志, 13.16b.

in classical discourse the problem of sacrificial exclusion was not truly addressed. In 1378, only months after Hongwu had sent an imperial envoy to bring offerings to the recently deceased Master Zhang Zhengchang, the emperor had to confront a frightening phenomenon without his first Daoist tutor.<sup>75</sup> He responded to a memorial presented to him by a group of one hundred households from the counties Andong 安東 and Shuyang 流楊, about 150 km to the north of the capital Nanking. The inhabitants of that region reported that they had been scared by the presence of several hundreds of torch-bearing phantoms 持炬者 at night, which they had tried to chase away to no avail, and who even “responded when attacked” 擊之有應. It was in this context that the emperor showed his continued concern with the appeasement of the roaming souls who lost their dwellings because of the dynastic war.

Now, because the Yuan dynasty had lost control of the government, many people of the Central Plains [i.e. China] have smeared themselves with ashes [as a standard way of mourning], they have counted more than one death! There are those whose ancestral line has ended, or whose heirs have fallen. There are those who had to part from their fathers, mothers, wives, and children, and who are now suspended between the realms of darkness and light.<sup>76</sup>

夫中原之地，因有元失政，生民塗炭者多，死者非一而已！故絕宗覆嗣者有之。生離父母妻子而懸於陰陽者有之。

<sup>75</sup> *Huang Ming enming shilu* DZ 1462, 2.11ab; in his imperial address for the occasion, Taizu praised the late Zhang Zhengchang for his demonifuge qualities: “The Thunder Gods obeyed your orders, so that fiendish specters would hide their shapes” 雷神聽令，妖魅潛形.

<sup>76</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji* 19.12a.

Taizu apparently felt still responsible for the fact that the “Yuan dynasty had lost control of the government,” as he referred to his own dynastic conquest rather innocently. Previous conversations with Daoists had led him to the establishment of the Altar for Baleful Spirits, yet the ghostly apparitions in Andong and Shuyang showed that he could not rest assured that the altar solved all problems. In the light of the above explanation it was his personal responsibility to release these souls from their suspension in between the realms of darkness and light. He had no choice but to address them personally, in order for his response to seem sincere. The emperor directed his words to them personally, addressing them as “You, demonic gods” 爾鬼神, and “You, torch-bearers” 爾持炬者. This personal involvement, as we will see, had far-reaching implications.

Taizu expressed his doubts as to the intentions of the demons of Andong and Shuyang: Why were they there? Did they belong to some kind of category that required a special treatment? What were their intentions? The opening lines of the emperor’s address suggest that his previous enquiries had taught him a certain propriety regarding the order of the spiritual realm; he reiterated the basic premise of Daoist demonology, stating that “the ways of yin and yang are separate” 陰陽之道殊, or, in other words, that demons are not supposed to dwell in the realm of light.<sup>77</sup> But, maybe because of a certain sense of guilt on the part of the emperor, he shows unusual sensitivity as to the possible reasons that had caused the spirits to manifest themselves.

You, torch-bearers! Could it be that you are all commoners’ orphan souls, without a principal [mourner], and thus in need of sacrificial offerings? Could it be that you

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<sup>77</sup> The first task of Zhang Daoling had been to “separate men and demons” 區分人鬼, a phrase often repeated in exorcist manuals of the *Daofa huiyuan* and *Fabai yizhu*.

have come to this state just because you have been suspended, away from father, mother, wife, and children? Is it that you have innocently met death, and that revenge is as yet unachieved, so that you are here? Have the responsible authorities neglected their sacrifices and you are angry?<sup>78</sup> I ask you, torch-bearers, which of these four cases apply to you? Have you thus truly come with business? Since occupying the throne I have offered ceremonies to those [spirits] recorded in the Canon of Sacrifices, each at their appointed time. Any other [spirits] I would not dare to flatter. And as for the ceremonies correctly serving demonic gods, I have never omitted them. Torch-bearers, disaster ought to be the response to disaster, but blessing ought to be the response to blessing! Do thus not wrongfully harm my people, or you will bring Heaven's measures upon yourselves! Therefore I inquire per decree; I think it befitting to know all of it.

爾持炬者，莫不五姓無主孤魂而欲祭若此歟？正爲懸隔父母妻子而有此歟？乃無罪而遭殺，冤未伸而致是歟？莫不有司怠恭而怒之忿？朕切問爾持炬者，四事果屬何耶？若實有爲而至？朕自即位以來，凡前王載在祀典者，各有時而奠。他不敢佞。於正直鬼神之禮，未嘗缺焉。爾持炬者！禍應禍，爾福應福！勿妄爲民害，自招天憲！故茲勅問，想宜知悉。

The seriousness with which Zhu Yuanzhang considered the memorial presented to him is striking, and the emperor apparently grappled with questions concerning the motivations underlying those frightening apparitions. There were far-reaching implications of his personal address. Early in his reign officials had chastised him for treating some of the gods from the State Canon as equals by signing his sacrificial address 祭文 with a collegial “I”

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<sup>78</sup> A reference, no doubt, to the Altar for Baleful Spirits.

余.<sup>79</sup> To address a band of lowly demons with such an unceremonial “you” 爾 was all the more serious.

This case was indeed one that later occasioned a rare instance of critique by a follower of Kong Zi. Apparently some of the court officials dared to confront the emperor with their doubts as to the existence of demons. Referring to the torch-bearing phantoms of 1378, the emperor wrote an undated “Treatise on the Existence of Demonic Gods” 神鬼有無論, in which he quoted the skeptical remarks of a Confucian court official. The anonymous official had argued that the energies of Heaven and Earth that made a “human form in this world” 人形於世 ought to dissipate upon the time of death, as “the Cloud-souls rise upwards to Heaven, and the Bone-souls descend to the earth.” The dissolution of a deceased person was complete when the energy-matter of these Cloud-souls is borne away by the winds and “dispersed into all directions” 四散, and his Bone-souls “transformed into earth and become mud” 化土而成泥. Thus, the official concludes: “How can there be such a thing as a demon?” 何鬼之有哉.<sup>80</sup>

While this may seem like a reasonable enough clarification of the general viewpoint of “educated men,” it does miss the point. Few Ming dynasty Chinese would have disputed that upon any normal death, the body dissolves and its souls disperse. But what would happen with the kind of deaths that Taizu envisaged with the institution of the Litan? What about the position expressed in *Chunqiu*: “As long as a demon has somewhere to return to, it will not cause harm”? Did the followers of Kong Zi really not believe that premature death might prevent the body and its souls from returning to dust? On the one hand it is possible to say that those who strictly adhered to the classical canon were skeptical of the phenomena

<sup>79</sup> *MS*, p. 1280.

<sup>80</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi wenji* 2.15b.

that preoccupied the emperor. Yet on the other hand it follows that they did not have a discourse that dealt with such phenomena. Whether they refused to believe or rather avoided the topic, the fact is that they were as silent as Kong Zi. The overwhelming silence of most of them looks like an acknowledgment.

In fact, during the Ming dynasty the existence of demons was barely disputed by people other than officials. Yet even the most vocal court officials, such as Song Lian, expressed surprise about the fact that “many scholars have doubts regarding demons and gods, to the point that they take an extreme position by denying they exist. Now how could that be?” 學者多疑於鬼神，遽絕謂無之。夫豈可哉。<sup>81</sup> Song Lian’s phrasing almost seems to imply that he thought these “scholars” simply shunned the topic by taking such an extreme position. It may seem anything but a surprising observation for the modern scholar of Chinese history to hear about the rationality that Song Lian referred to, because it is so perfectly in line with the refusal of the Master to speak of demonical topics, and with the general assumption that literati were the rational scions of a more exalted cultural practice.

Yet Song Lian, himself a prominent Hanlin member, came close to exposing this self-proclaimed atheism of *Ru* scholars as a sham, saying that even “literati” and “those who are called *Ru*” equally prayed to gods when they were sick, and believed in them notwithstanding the fact that at the same time they denounced these practices as delusional. Even the good Confucian is haunted by the existence of a demonical discourse:

I have studied a plentitude of canonical books. Whenever there were calamities, the dynasty would ask the demonic gods and offer them sacrifices; whenever lettered men were sick, they would perform prayers before the Five Cults. The ancient kings

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<sup>81</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 819.



must have deemed the gods to be reliable, that is why they established these regulations for shrines and incantations. Those who are called *Ru* often assign demonic gods to the obscure and shady, and rarely touch upon them with their words. Lest they become falsely accused, they denounce [the spirits] as delusional. Is that not on the verge of perverting the canonical books? <sup>82</sup>

濂稽諸經。國有凶荒，則索鬼神而祭之；士有疾病，則禱於五祀。先王必以神爲可依，故建是祠祝之制也。世之號爲儒者，多指鬼神於茫昧，稍與語及之。弗以爲誣，則斥以爲惑。不幾乎悖經矣乎？

The addition of “lest they become falsely accused” suggests that in order for these men to maintain an unblemished reputation they needed to publicly denounce demonic gods. Song Lian’s reference to a passage from the *Liji* suggests that, at least privately, they could find a normative apology for turning to such gods: “In case of illness, pray to baleful spirits” 疾病禱於厲。<sup>83</sup>

It might be argued that Song Lian’s position was rather the exception. Most of his writings show a remarkable diversity, and he writes openly about the revelation he received from a Daoist manifestation of the Great One 太乙.<sup>84</sup> The Ming founder, moreover, commemorated in his imperial writings how Song Lian once passed through Hangzhou on his way back to the capital and came across a strange animal, resembling a horse, a mule, a tiger, and still somewhat like a leopard. Taizu described how, all of a sudden, Song Lian exclaimed: “When I was browsing through books a while ago, I learnt that the appearance of

<sup>82</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 434.

<sup>83</sup> The *MS* cites this as a passage contained in the “Funerary Rites of the *Shi*” 士喪禮; however, I have been unable to locate the sentence in the original.

<sup>84</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 28.

mountain-demons is just like this!” He asked the creature: “Are you a mountain-demon?” And the demon replied affirmatively. This story suggests that Song Lian’s inquisitive nature led him to apply his bookish knowledge in a rather open-minded fashion, not too much bothered by the preconceived boundaries of elite learning. From other writings extant today we may scarcely catch any glimpse of Confucian repudiations of the demonic consequences of premature death during the early Ming dynasty. Demons may very well have constituted a valid category for those intellectual heirs of Kong Zi who held official posts in the imperial bureaucracy.

From early Ming records about local customs it seems that the objections that officials had to anomalous spirits was not about their existence per se, but rather about the practices that became popular with their cults. The compilers of local gazetteers would distance themselves from the practices they saw by talking about the people of a region as “commoners” 俗 *su*, which can also be translated as “unrefined,” or even “vulgar.” A standard phrase would be that “commoners revere demons and believe in shamans” 俗尚鬼信巫.<sup>85</sup> One local gazetteer says about a certain region that the people “revere shamans and worship demons, and the commoners even make their likenesses” 尚巫祭鬼，俗亦以似之.<sup>86</sup> It is not specified what these “likenesses” entailed; it could be that statues were meant, it could also be that this passage referred to impersonations of demons. The latter practice was common throughout large parts of China and was commonly regarded as a remnant of the Nuo exorcism of early imperial times. In a rather conservative and moralistic treatise on local rituals of the late Ming, one author condones the ancient practice of wearing the mask

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<sup>85</sup> *Linding zhi* 臨汀志, p. 1416.

<sup>86</sup> *Junxian zhi* 郡縣志, p. 16.

of a demon in order to expel plagues.<sup>87</sup> Many compilers of Ming gazetteers tolerated the practice as a remnant of the Nuo exorcism.

When denouncing certain popular practices such as the medical therapies of shamanic healers, the concern these compilers expressed most was that people trusted in shamanist cults instead of doctors. Local gazetteers that described popular practices from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries mention the choice for demonic therapy that the “humble people” 小民 made.<sup>88</sup> As the more or less standard complaint ran, “in cases of illness they [the people] only worship demonic gods and don’t use the doctor’s herbs” 病則惟祀鬼神，不用醫藥。<sup>89</sup> The category of demons itself is not questioned, only the choice that the people made. Perhaps the concern of lettered men was not so much an ideological one, but one related to religious practice: “When the people are ill, they barely swallow herbs, but exclusively engage in offerings and prayers” 病少服藥，專事祭禱。<sup>90</sup> Demons seem to be less of a concern per se. Indeed, any denouncement of demonic therapy would have been somewhat tricky, given the fact that even the classical canon states this as normative, as pointed out above by Song Lian.

Scholarly and official disgust thus seems to have not stemmed too much from the involvement of proscribed spirits per se. Their disapproval came from the engagement of the healers who practiced these ritual therapies. After all, praying to supernatural powers for a cure was not unusual for anyone. Worse than merely praying was the involvement of the spirit medium: “They don’t ask a doctor when they are sick but completely rely upon spirit

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<sup>87</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 5.10a.

<sup>88</sup> *Rongzhou zhi* 容州志, p. 3088

<sup>89</sup> *Guteng zhi* 古藤志, p. 2984; also see *Yulin zhi* 鬱林志, p. 3051; *Rongzhou zhi* 容州志, p. 3089.

<sup>90</sup> *Anxi xianzhi* 安溪縣志, 1.16b.

mediums” 有病不求醫，而專用巫覡者。<sup>91</sup> The uncontrolled and dangerous messages delivered through the tongue of the local medium could not be tolerated. Here, the official had to enforce his more destructive measures. Sometimes, as in the case of the official Wu Deji 吳德基 (an acquaintance of Song Lian’s), the road followed was one that led to a death sentence. Wu Deji ordered the leader of a group of ten spirit mediums 神巫 in Anhui to be thrown into a river due to their participation in a popular cult that had enshrined a snake as a celestial being.<sup>92</sup> But even in this case, officials dared not go too far in their persecutions. By killing only the leader of the group, the official message seems to have been to refrain from organizing and leading these mediums, or perhaps merely from encouraging mediumistic practices. But the silent message was that one could still be a spirit-medium, and remain unpunished.

In the observations of early Ming local practices, the official discourse on demons was thus not formulated more clearly than elsewhere, even though they engaged with the demonic cult. Sometimes local officials in Jiangnan explicitly stated that they were unwilling to speak of the things associated with diabolic cults, admitting that the landscape of popular religion contained more temples and shrines than commonly described in gazetteers:

The commoners of Yue worship demons: the potency of a stone, the god of a withered tree, they display them in a shrine and pray for blessings. Within the city walls and the rural villages these are a common phenomenon; they are what the ancients called the “licentious cults,” and what the sages of the Tang called the “wild temples.” I have no leisure to record them here. Only those that can prevent great catastrophes, avert big calamities, those that have made great contributions to the

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<sup>91</sup> *Jiangle xianzhi* 將樂縣志, 1.4ab.

<sup>92</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, pp. 1500-3.

people, whose impressive potencies have manifested themselves, who respond to prayers and are included in the sacrificial canon, those I will itemize one by one.<sup>93</sup>

越俗尚鬼。一塊石之靈，一枯木之神，即見祠而徼福。城郭鄉村往往有之。此古人所謂「淫祠」，唐賢所謂「野廟」是也。今不暇錄。惟取能禦大災、有功德於民、威靈顯著、祈禱感應、有載於祀典者，次第列之。

No clear theological lines separate these licentious cults from the cults recognized by the official. The difference seems to be a matter of scale and of status. The subsequent list of this gazetteer was most certainly not devoid of bloody cults, the most conspicuous among those being the Five Manifestations 五顯 – a cult that had a strong diabolic side.<sup>94</sup>

This absence of a well developed discourse on the demonic caused some pressure for officials, as they lacked a certain power in the face of the demonical. While the Daoist thunder gods were active in the production of rain, local officials had their official liturgies for rain prayers. Yet their rituals refrained from engaging anomalous gods, and their discourse drew upon the rhetoric of “sincerity” 誠 instead. In 1371, a bureaucrat called Li Jiben 李繼本 (*jr.* 1357) described a severe drought in Luzhou 潞州 (Shanxi) that was brought to an end after Liu Hou 劉侯 performed a ritual of the “utmost sincerity” 致誠 after the common folk’s offerings to the demonic “mass of shrines” 群祠 had failed. Li Jiben added that rain is something that “we, human beings, cannot obtain by force” 非吾人

<sup>93</sup> *Nanxiong luzhi* 南雄路志, p. 2480-81.

<sup>94</sup> See Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

所能力致者。<sup>95</sup> If a ritual performed with utmost sincerity was not considered a human force, then such a statement reads like a rejection of the Daoist claim of power over the demonic gods. Moreover, claims such as made by Li Jiben implied that any type of rain prayer other than the official one was not sincere. Needless to say that Daoists, in fact, had long stressed the same rhetoric of sincerity in their ritual documents.

Li Jiben was not the only one who attempted to resolve the epistemological gap that seemed to exist between the more or less secular dictates of the official's liturgical apparatus and the abstract celestial power that was its object. Other officials seem to have been conscious of the complicated position their moral rituals occupied in a religious world populated by very concrete and visible spiritual entities. Dai Liang 戴良 (1317 – 83), had already started emphasizing that the success of rainprayers should not be attributed to the gods, but to officials.<sup>96</sup> He argued that even the imperially sanctioned gods of Mountains and Streams are but proxies for Heaven, and that one should not incorrectly believe that rain can be caused by any of these lower gods. He tried to convince his contemporaries that all credit ought to be given to the “pure sincerity of the official” 公之精誠. Ritual power such as claimed by Daoists was easily met with irritation.

Because the ideological bonds of his office disallowed the official from acknowledging the legitimacy of the local gods and recognizing them as an object for bureaucratic communications, his common response was to ignore them. A more violent attitude that acknowledged bloody cults as valid objects of discourse was to destroy them. Up to the Ming dynasty it was not uncommon that the temple or altar dedicated to an excessive cult would be destroyed. Ironically, the remnants of the demonical were often used

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<sup>95</sup> Li Jiben, *Yishan wenji*, 3.3a.

<sup>96</sup> Dai Liang 戴良, *Jiuling Shanfang Ji* 九靈山房集, 6.7b-9b. In *Qinding Siku Quanshu*. Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

as the building blocks for the official; literally, the stones of shrines, as well as the wood of sacred trees, were recycled for the construction of temples to Confucius or other public places.<sup>97</sup> But in 1369, immediately after the founding of the Ming dynasty, a rule was decreed which prohibited officials from destroying the temple or altar in which the uncanonical cult was thriving – they should merely refrain from bringing sacrificial offerings.<sup>98</sup> As with all rules issued from a central authority in a large empire, it seems that such acts of destruction were still carried out sometimes. In 1371, only one year after the imperial order to stop investiture of gods with new titles, a cult to a certain General Zhu 朱將軍 in Wuxing 吳興 was canonized by imperial consent and subsequently included in the Canon, but the “divine statues of the licentious cult” 淫祀神像 that had been placed at the secondary shrines besides the cult’s main deity were done away with.<sup>99</sup> Another story recounts how an official from Jiangxi had a tree possessed by spirits chopped into pieces.<sup>100</sup> Note that neither during the Yuan, nor during the Ming, was the existence of the demon challenged. The dwelling of the spiritual entity was merely detached from the social setting that was involved in practices related to the cult.

In reality, literati after the reign of Hongwu would be confronted with the embarrassing fact that religion had not been brought under official control at all. Worse, they had to admit that even the bearers of the literati tradition were tainted with the marks of popular practices. A statement from the last decades of the fifteenth century that is similar to Song Lian’s remark about *Ru* turning to gods for medical therapy shows how deeply

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<sup>97</sup> For example, during last years of Yuan dynasty one official destroyed the shrine to a local deity and used the stones to build (or repair) a Confucius temple in Zhangzhou in Fujian (*Song Lian Quanji*, p. 300-4). In another case, Zhao Dane 趙大訥, official from Puyang 浦陽 in Zhejiang, threw the statue of a “licentious” god into a river, and used the stones of his altar to build (or repair) a Confucius temple (*Song Lian Quanji*, p.1835-6).

<sup>98</sup> *MS*, p. 1306.

<sup>99</sup> *Wuxing xuzhi* 吳興續志, p. 818.

<sup>100</sup> Lu Can 陸燾, *Gengsi Bian* 庚巳編, p. 131-3. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987.

mediumistic practices had reached into the heart of the civilized world. As a local official from Jiangnan complains about the ever-increasing popularity of spirit-mediums for therapeutic purposes, he bemoans the fact that even “highly insightful and broadly learned literati have also sunken into believing them” 高明宏博之士，乃亦溺而信之。<sup>101</sup>

#### 4.6. Thunder’s Encroachment upon the emperor after 1380

By the middle of Taizu’s reign the emperor was personally confronted with the wrath of the Thunder Division. From edicts issued by the emperor we may learn that in 1380 the court was shaken by an apparition of the Five Thunders to the emperor inside the Forbidden City. The emperor was the first to admit his fright, and issued a general pardon releasing prisoners throughout his empire. In the emperor’s own words, on the eve of the fifth day of the fifth month, “thunder struck at Prudence Hall. We, the emperor, were very frightened by it. Because of this, we will issue a general pardon for all criminals.”<sup>102</sup> A month later the magnitude of the event was confirmed when Zhu Yuanzhang released another decree, in which he openly assumed guilt. He assumed responsibility by saying that he lacked virtue, that he had turned his back on the divine protection of the Seas and Peaks, and even that he had been neglecting the sacrifices to his ancestors. In his thinking, this was why “the Five Thunders had followed the mandate to leave traces in that hall” 致五雷奉命，着跡於殿庭。<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, although he reiterates that he was extremely frightened, it was said to be on the special request of his court officials that he held a court meeting to address this ominous occurrence of thunder.

<sup>101</sup> Shi Jian 史鍵, *Xicunji* 西村集, 5.45a. In *Qinding Siku Quanshu* (vol. 1259). Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

<sup>102</sup> *Huang Ming zhaoling*, 1.27-28b.

<sup>103</sup> *Huang Ming zhaoling*, 1.33ab.



The memory of the event apparently was long lived, and even occasioned the publication of a lively short story about the matter. The late Ming author describes how, once, during a meditation session, thunder stroke unexpectedly right in front of the hall where the emperor was seated. The entranced eyes of the emperor saw a figure who was three *chi* tall standing at the corner of the hall. With Zhu Yuanzhang's gaze fixed upon its dark blue body with wings, the simian creature with flashing eyes bowed deep down before the emperor. Then it soared off into the sky and disappeared. That there was more to this apparition than meets the eye is evinced by the fact that to the emperor it was apparently not as outlandish as one might expect; he informed his subordinates that he had just witnessed an apparition of the Five Thunders.<sup>104</sup> Whatever one may think of such officious histories, at least this case suggests that while some of the contents were exaggerated, actual events provided the outline of the story.

In more concrete ways, it seems, Daoist ritual had started to encroach upon spheres the emperor regarded as his. Taizu's reign had been well underway by the 1380's, and his active knowledge regarding the content of his ritual practitioners apparently had increased greatly. This sometimes had negative consequences for the priests. In 1391 the emperor pronounced a redefinition of the Buddhist and Daoist clergies, as I have mentioned above. His decree contained a far-reaching abrogation of one aspect of Daoist ritual: the petition to Heaven. It stated that "when Daoist masters organize a Retreat, they are not allowed to offer petitions in Blue Verse" 道士設齋亦不許拜奏青詞. The Blue Verse was the central part of the grand retreats and sacrifices Daoists performed for Heaven. To prohibit this practice meant to deprive Daoist liturgies of their most exalted segment. Without the petition, Daoist liturgies were limited to exorcist practices. While the matter was not followed up, and while

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<sup>104</sup> Qian Xiyuan 錢希言, *Kuajiyuan* 獮園, in *Xuxiu Siku Quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Guji, 1995), p. 683

the Daoist liturgies of the early Ming stubbornly continued to include the practice of offering this memorial, it seems that by 1391 Zhu Yuanzhang had decided that too much Daoist power would detract from his own unique role within Chinese religion. Communication with Heaven was to remain an imperial prerogative.<sup>105</sup>

Still, apparently this conflict of interests did not mean Taizu's pursuit of thunder ritualists was abandoned. Only two years later, in 1393, it was the turn of one of the most famous Daoists of the early Ming dynasty to be summoned to court: Zhao Yizhen's former disciple Liu Yuanran. Unsurprisingly, Liu Yuanran, too, had a reputation for being "rather accomplished in calling and summoning wind and thunder" 頗能呼召風雷.<sup>106</sup> The emperor, upon hearing of the fame of this Daoist, invested him with the more respectable title of eminent Daoist 高道 and offered him residence at the imperial Chaotian Gong just like Deng Zhongxiu before him.<sup>107</sup> Liu Yuanran's arrival at court instigated the blossoming of the Pure Tenuity school, and he probably was indirectly responsible for the fact that the Pure Tenuity liturgies that were brought to Nanking became the mainstay of Daoist ritual in the Ming dynasty, and were preserved for posterity in the largest single collection of Daoist liturgies known to exist.

Outside in the world of commoners, thunder ritual was further proliferating. Aside from the above Daoists in Anhui, or the earlier practitioners at the Ming court, it seems to have become rather a trans-regional denominator of Daoist ritual skill if one could claim possession of the techniques necessary to summon thunder. Ranging from the highest Daoists in Zhu Yuanzhang's Daoist academy in Nanking, such as Jiang Leigu 蔣雷谷, who

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<sup>105</sup> This prohibition was renewed during the early Qing dynasty.

<sup>106</sup> *MS*, p. 7654.

<sup>107</sup> *Taizu shilu* 230.3364.

“controlled the rituals of Heart-Thunder Ritual,”<sup>108</sup> to less reputed Daoists such as Wang Yingqin 王應瑾 from the Hangzhou region who could “cause thunder and obtain rain,”<sup>109</sup> there were practitioners of thunder in Sichuan,<sup>110</sup> Guangxi,<sup>111</sup> Fujian,<sup>112</sup> Jiangsu,<sup>113</sup> and so on. None of these practitioners, mostly using the rituals of Pure Tenuity and of Five Thunder, were residents of monasteries or temples – at least not permanently so.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, at least throughout the greater Jiangnan region, possibly empowered by the dynastic founder, Daoist practitioners applied roughly the same techniques of thunder. The worldview these Daoists promoted was formative during Taizu’s many reorganizations of the Chinese empire: during the Ming, Daoists placed demonic forces under the emperor’s spiritual bureaucracy. The rituals these Daoists had come to prefer transformed baleful spirits into martial gods; they contained recurring sets of marshals, generals, and celestial lords that could be deployed for exorcist ventures. In the next chapter I will explore the imperial applications for the Thunder Division that reached their peak in the years following immediately after the end of Taizu’s reign.

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<sup>108</sup> *Longhu shanzhi* 龍虎山志, 7.21b.

<sup>109</sup> Hu Fuchen 胡孚琛 (ed.), *Zhonghua Daojiao Da Cidian* 中華道教大辭典, p. 185. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995.

<sup>110</sup> One early Ming Five Thunder practitioner was Zhang Yushi 張羽士 (*Zhonghua Daojiao Da Cidian*, p. 185).

<sup>111</sup> Deng Qing 鄧清 of the Zhengtong reign had learnt thunder rituals of Qingwei (*Zhonghua Daojiao Da Cidian*, p. 193).

<sup>112</sup> A Five Thunder ritualist called Yu Zhenzhai 俞震齋 during reign of Hongwu (*Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志, 60.16a).

<sup>113</sup> During the last year of Zhu Yuanzhang’s reign, in 1398, a long-lasting drought had struck the region around Suzhou. A Daoist master from named Hu Daoan 胡道安 used rituals from the Mo Yueding lineage to successfully summon thunder and rain (*Xuanmiaoguan Zhi* 玄妙觀志, 3.5b-6a).

<sup>114</sup> Aside from those practitioners mentioned throughout this chapter, there were others. For example the case of Wu Sheng 吳升, a Daoist from the late Yuan and early Ming who had obtained the rituals of the Five Thunder tradition. And there was Shen Songgao 沈嵩高 who had studied Five Thunder rituals that enabled him to produce rain during the reign of Chenghua (1465-87) (*Zhonghua Daojiao Da Cidian*, p. 194).

☯ 5 ☯  
**Useful Demons**  
 Peking Thunder Liturgists From Yongle to Jiajing



Figure 5.1. – Spiritual Agent Wang (center) sending thunder gods (left) to attack a viper. (dated 1542, fragment)

### 5.1. Standardizing the dark troops in the fifteenth century

With the death of the Ming dynasty's first emperor, Taizu, and the turmoil surrounding his succession, imperial interest in the realm of the demonic did not cease. To the contrary, the reign of Yongle 永樂 (*r.* 1402 – 24) was permeated with an even more concentrated presence of spectral powers. In the wake of what were to become two golden centuries for Daoism, the reign of Yongle witnessed an extraordinary production of Daoist ritual. Not only were the hordes of thunder gods increasingly brought into standard configurations of three or four marshals, these demonic divinities were used throughout

Daoist liturgies. The invocation of thunder gods was required not merely in martial Daoist ritual, even the most exalted forms of Daoist classical ritual would include the ritual presence of several thunder gods as protectors of the ritual space.

If this chapter purports to show anything outside the limited focus on Thunder Ritual, it would be that the imperial patronage given to Daoist institutions and individual Daoists was not incidental. While previous scholarly attention has focused on imperial support for Buddhism, especially during the Yongle and Chenghua reigns, the first 150 years of the Ming dynasty were characterized by enduring imperial support for Daoism. Such support was thus not a consequence of the superstitious whims of certain eccentric emperors or devout imperial consorts; it was a structural aspect of Ming imperial rule. In all this, the demonic rituals of thunder occupied a central position; in many cases they were deployed as martial support to the empire.

While Yongle expressed far stronger interest in Buddhism than Taizu, he believed that the Daoist power to harness demonic soldiers was crucial to his military successes against the Mongols. It was partly because of such military reasons, it seems, that Yongle continued Taizu's personal bonds with Daoists, an aspect of imperial rule we have already briefly encountered in chapter 3. Similarly, the transfer of the capital from Nanking to Peking (still at risk of Mongol attacks), and its subsequent construction, instigated a period of two and a half centuries of intense imperial patronage of religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> One site in fifteenth century Peking stands out, as a consequence of its long lasting imperial patronage into the Wanli reign. The temple complex in question was called "Palace for Manifestation of Efficacy" 顯靈宮, constructed under Daoist supervision. The ever increasing size of this

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400 – 1900*, esp. ch. 5. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

imperial sponsored complex attested to the continued support from various patrons for the forms of Daoism that Hongwu had brought into court circles. This temple was moreover the site on which an increasingly aggravated conflict over ritual propriety was concentrated, a conflict fought out between Daoist practitioners and court officials.

Finally, the temple created a center for the production and standardization of Daoist ritual. One of its fruits serves as the basis for a comparison between two large ritual compendia of the early Ming dynasty: the *Golden Book of Perfect Salvation belonging to the Lingbao of Highest Purity* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書 (hereafter simply *Golden Book*), compiled by Zhou Side 周思得 (zi Yangzhen 養真, 1359 – 1451). This largely ignored compendium is directly relevant for a contextual understanding of a more famous corollary that was included in the Daoist Canon: *Daoist Ritual, United in Principle* 道法會元 (DZ 1220), probably compiled by Liu Yuanran and his disciple Shao Yizheng 邵以正 (fl. ca. 1430 – 1462).

Edward L. Farmer has observed that the fifteenth century has been somewhat of a “black hole” in the study of imperial China.<sup>2</sup> The section below will first try to map out in more detail the Daoist participants, thus attempting to fill in that black hole. The complex history of the rituals practiced by such figures as Zhou Side, Liu Yuanran, and Shao Yizheng illustrates that for some, the fifteenth century was a bright age.

## 5.2. Yongle’s Daoists (1402 – 24): marshaling gods to protect the empire

Before Yongle’s reign, Taizu’s appointed successor had wanted to present himself as a proper Confucian ruler. In an apparent attempt to oblige the *Ru*, Taizu’s appointed successor Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆 (1377 – 1402) tried to downplay the martial aspect of

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<sup>2</sup> Edward L. Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Chinese Society Following the Era of Mongol Rule*, p. ix. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

imperial rule that had been so prominent during his predecessor's reign. Taking a stance against Taizu's reign title "Abundance of the Martial" 洪武, Zhu Yunwen chose to name his short-lived reign "Installment of the Literate" 建文 (1399 – 1402). If this was an attempt to dissociate the ruling house of the Ming from the martial emphases placed by Taizu, or to suggest that the ultimate realization of Taizu's war against the Mongols was completed with his "Installment of the Literate" (echoing the founding of the Zhou dynasty by the "Martial King" 武王 and the "Literate King" 文王 – and this time in a more likely order), his project was not long lived. Among the very first ceremonial acts ordered by Zhu Yunwen's successor was a sacrifice to the Dark Warrior by one of Taizu's court Daoists, Zhou Xuanzhen.<sup>3</sup>

The new emperor, Yongle, believed that his victory in the civil war that had killed Zhu Yunwen was achieved with the help of the Dark Emperor: "aided by manifestations of the god [Dark Warrior]" 以神有顯相功.<sup>4</sup> The belief that the Ming dynasty owed its success partly to the Dark Warrior may have been widespread.<sup>5</sup> A short statement in the Ming Histories reveals the extent to which the soldiers of darkness were thought to have played a decisive role for the very existence of the Ming dynasty. In a passage criticizing beliefs and attributions to the Daoist manifestation of the Dark Warrior, referred to as "Perfected Lord, Protecting Sage of the Northern Ultimate" 北極佑聖真君, the compilers of the Ming

<sup>3</sup> De Bruyn, Pierre-Henry, « Le Wudang Shan : histoire des récits fondateurs », p. 168-7. Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Université Paris VII, 1997. As a consequence, perhaps, of Yongle's martial preferences, he simultaneously used Confucian rhetoric to justify his actions. See Benjamin A. Elman, "The Formation of 'Dao Learning' as Imperial Ideology During the Early Ming Dynasty." In Theodore Huters (et al.), *Culture and State in Chinese History*, pp. 58-82. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Xiaozong shilu* 孝宗實錄, 13.310; also see De Bruyn, p. 168, n. 94 for examples from stele inscriptions.

<sup>5</sup> Tian Yiheng 田藝衡 (*fl.* 1570), *Liuqing riqi* 留青日札, 28.4a. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1985.

Histories recorded that “when Taizu stabilized the world, there was plenty of protection from the Dark Realm” 太祖平定天下，陰佑爲多。<sup>6</sup>

The Daoist groundwork laid by Taizu was extended by the Yongle emperor. With the move of the capital to Peking after 1403, the court Daoist who had been invited by Taizu in 1393 to move from Jiangxi to Nanking, Liu Yuanran, was now requested to follow the new emperor to Peking. His role in the Thunder Rituals that were given such a prominent position in the Daoist Canon of 1444 will be considered in another section. First we will explore the role played by the Daoist troops of darkness in Yongle’s realm of light.

As is well known, the Yongle emperor was an active patron of both Buddhism and Daoism.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the latter, this was apparent from his extensive donations to the construction of temples on Mt. Wudang, the centre of the cult to the Dark Emperor.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he ordered the compilation of a Daoist Canon in 1406.<sup>9</sup> Although the project was not finished until about forty years later, the Yongle emperor already wrote a preface for a first version of the Canon no later than 1419.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from the emperor’s writings that his conception of the powers in the universe was not limited to an allegiance to the impersonal Lord-on-High that was worshiped in the annual sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. For Yongle even more obviously so

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<sup>6</sup> *MS*, p. 1308; this was an abridged version of a critical memorial from 1488 (see section 5.7. below). For the original passage, see *Xiaozong shilu*, 13.293.

<sup>7</sup> For an example of how the category of religion has been mainly equated with Buddhism, see Ma Shutian 馬書田, “Ming Chengzu de zhengzhi yu zongjiao 明成祖的政治與宗教.” In *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 3 (1984); also cf. Zheng Kecheng 鄭克晟, “Mingdai de fojiao yu zhengzhi 明代的佛教與政治.” *Danjiang shixue* 淡江史學 6 (1994). One of the very few studies of Yongle’s ties to Daoists is Wang Chongwu’s 王崇武, “Ming Chengzu yu fangshi 明成祖與方士.” *Shehui jingjishi jikan* 社會經濟史集刊 8:1 (1949), pp. 12-19.

<sup>8</sup> Lagerwey (1992), p. 299-300; De Bruyn, p. 153-75; Yang Lizhi 楊立志, “Ming Chengzu yu Wudang daojiao 明成祖與武當道教.” *Jiangnan luntan* 江漢論壇 12 (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Almost forty years later this became the version that we now know as the Zhengtong Daozang. See Chen Guofu 陳國符, *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考, p. 174-6.

<sup>10</sup> *Da Ming Taizong Huangdi yuzhiji* 大明太宗皇帝御製集, 4.5a. In *Gugong zhenben congkan* (vol. 526). Haikou: Hainan, 2000.



than for Taizu, the cosmos was populated with the same gods that were venerated by most of his subjects: the demonic gods. In several of his edicts, the emperor mentioned the “demons and spirits of Heaven and Earth” 天地鬼神 as a force to be reckoned with in his maintenance of the empire (and the cosmos to which the empire belonged).<sup>11</sup> Later sources tell us that Yongle, just like his father before him, had been helped by the Dark Emperor in his military campaigns.<sup>12</sup> It was therefore only within the natural range of expectations that the emperor would deploy Daoists to direct his dynastic affairs together with him.

Although it has been claimed that the mysterious Buddho-Daoist figure Yao Guangxiao 姚廣孝 (1335 – 1418) must have played some role in Yongle’s religious policies, his exact influence still remains quite unclear.<sup>13</sup> Divination appears to have been his specialty. His difference in one important aspect from other Daoist practitioners is that, as far as I know, none of his biographies mention his affinity with the rituals of thunder, nor do they mention any other exorcist skills.<sup>14</sup> Given the prestige of thunder ritual and other sublimation techniques at the time, he would have no doubt wanted to associate himself with these charismatic traditions. The fact that his biographers have failed to record this association in all likelihood excludes him from the regular Daoist curricula of the time. Other figures seem much more suitable for the label “Daoist adviser” of Yongle.

Zhou Side 周思得 (zī Yangzhen 養真, 1359 – 1451) has hardly been a great name in the history of Ming Daoism as told until now. Like most other Daoists of this period, the story of his life must be reconstructed from fragmentary references scattered over many

<sup>11</sup> *Huang Ming zhaoling* 皇明詔令, 5.27 bis.ab, 6.4a, 6.9b-10a, 6.25ab, 6.29ab. *Jiajing* edition. Taipei: Wenhai, 1984

<sup>12</sup> Tian Yiheng, *Linqing rixia*, 28.4a.

<sup>13</sup> *DMB*, p. 1561 – 65; De Bruyn asserts that Yao Guangxiao’s influence was probably strong, but his exact contributions remain unclear (p. 164-66).

<sup>14</sup> Even Yao’s biography in a non-official history such as Huang Yu’s 黃瑜 (1426-97) does not mention anything of the kind: Huang Yu, *Shuanghuai suichao* 雙槐歲鈔, pp. 46-7. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1999.

sources. Although many writings from his own hand, such as the *Hongdao ji* 弘道集, have not been preserved, yet the fact that this title and Zhou Side's biography were included in a number of early Qing dynasty compilations of Ming literature suggests that he had long enjoyed a reputation as a man of letters.<sup>15</sup> A great compendium of ritual texts from his hands is still extant and will be considered below.

Zhou Side's presence as court-Daoist was decisive beyond the strict scope of the court. His activities show Daoists in extraordinary roles as "ritual warriors" alongside the actual (mortal) troops of the emperor. In actual practice this meant that Daoist demonic gods were deployed in order to help the regular armies of the emperor. As we will see, Zhou Side became famous for his command over one martial divinity in particular: Spiritual Agent Wang 王靈官, aka Marshal Wang 王元帥.

According to the *Gazetteer of the Unified Great Ming* 大明一統志 of 1461, Zhou Side had received (part of) his training from the forty-third Celestial Master Zhang Yuchu 張宇初 (1359 – 1410).<sup>16</sup> Did this include the Pure Tenuity thunder rituals that had been transmitted to Zhang Yuchu by Liu Yuanran? The fact that Zhou Side was reputed for his command over Marshal Wang is one indication, but the contents of the ritual compendium he edited leaves no doubt. In order to keep a clear focus, this history of transmission will be addressed below. First we will consider Zhou Side's role in Yongle's Peking.

The *Gazetteer of the Unified Great Ming* also mentions that Zhou Side "followed [the emperor] to protect him on his Northern Expeditions" 扈從北征.<sup>17</sup> But according to one of

<sup>15</sup> Huang Yuji 黃虞稷 (1629-1691), *Qianqing tangshu mu* 千頃堂書目. Taipei: Guangwen, 1967; Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709), *Ming shi zong* 明詩綜. Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962; *Yuxuan Song Jin Yuan Ming sichao shi* 御選宋金元明四朝詩, 8.1a. In *Qinding siku quanshu*, Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Li Xian 李賢 (1408-1466), *Da Ming yitongzhi* 大明一統志, 38.34a. Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1990.

<sup>17</sup> *Da Ming yitongzhi*, 38.34a.

Zhou Side's biographies in a compendium of Ming literature compiled during the Qing, the relationship between the emperor and Zhou Side had already existed when Yongle was only the Prince of Yan 燕. This source recorded that Zhou Side deployed his celestial troops to aid the Prince of Yan already during his campaign against his cousin, the Jianwen emperor:

When the Quelling of the Calamity began, [Zhou Side] protected [the Prince of Yan] with his rituals of Spiritual Agent Wang.<sup>18</sup>

靖難初以靈官法扈從。

It is possible that this historical detail of Yongle's controversial usurpation of Jianwen's throne had been successfully kept out of Ming sources by those who served the ruling house.

However that may be, other Ming sources do forward the claim that Zhou Side contributed to the success of Yongle's five campaigns into Mongolia between 1410 and 1424. Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (*js.* 1526) states that Zhou Side “followed [the emperor] to protect him on his Northern Expeditions. There are numerous records of the efforts he made” 扈從北征。累著勞績.<sup>19</sup> We may assume that if his efforts had been deemed a failure, they would not have been recorded – or he would not have repeatedly accompanied Yongle on his expeditions. During the Jiajing reign a Daoist belvedere in the county of Renhe 仁和 (present day Zhejiang) was dedicated to the memory of his “successes in protecting the emperor on his Northern Expeditions” 扈駕北征有功: the Baoji Guan 寶極觀.<sup>20</sup> Tian Rucheng incidentally records that Zhou Side had mastered “Five Thunder Rituals” 五雷法.

<sup>18</sup> *Yuxuan Song Jin Yuan Ming sichao shi*, 8.1a

<sup>19</sup> Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (*js.* 1526), *Xihu Youlanzhi* 西湖遊覽志, p. 45. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1958.

<sup>20</sup> *Zhejiang tongzhi* 浙江通志, 226.17b. In *Qinding siku quanshu*, Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

Zhou Side's impact on the religious landscape of Peking, however, reached much further than marshaling his spiritual troops in Yongle's conquests. The *Ming Histories* record that Zhou Side built a "Temple of the Celestial General" 天將廟 and a "Hall of the Patriarch" 祖師殿 to the West of the Forbidden City. These were the earliest parts of what was to become one of the most important Daoist compounds in Peking: the "Palace for Manifestation of Efficacy" 顯靈宮 (hereafter: Xianling Gong). The Hall of the Patriarch was dedicated to the cult of Sa Shoujian 薩守堅 (see Figure 5.2. below), and the Temple of the Celestial General to his legendary disciple: Spiritual Agent Wang.<sup>21</sup> While the former was considered to be the patriarch of one important strand of Thunder liturgies and was not likely to be deployed in Daoist ritual, Spiritual Agent Wang belonged to the most commonly invoked martial gods of the Ming.

Tian Rucheng, among others, suggests that it was on the emperor's request that Zhou Side built this temple, and was asked by the emperor to reside there.<sup>22</sup> During the short reign of Hongxi in 1426, the temple was invested with the title "Thunder Hall of the Ninefold Heaven" 九天雷殿,<sup>23</sup> whereas during the reign of Xuande (1426 – 36) the temple's name was changed yet again into "Temple of Great Virtue" 大德觀.<sup>24</sup> Finally, during the early years of the Chinghua period (1465 – 88) the designation "temple" (*guan* 觀) was changed into "palace" (*gong* 宮) and the epithet "Manifestation of Efficacy" 顯靈 was added,

<sup>21</sup> *MS*, p. 1309; for an extensive treatment of the history of the cult to Sa Shoujian, see Li Fengmao, *Xu Xun yu Sa Shoujian: Deng Zhimo Daojiao xiaoshuo yanjiu* 許遜與薩守堅：鄧志莫道教小說研究. Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Tian Rucheng, *Xibu Youlanzhi*, 21.10b. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1998; a similar record is contained in Ni Yue 倪岳, *Qingxi man'gao* 青谿漫稿, 11.42b.

<sup>23</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao jidu dacheng jinsbu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書, "epilogue" 後序, 2a. In *Zangwai Daoshu* 藏外道書, vols. 16 and 17. Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1992-1994. The epilogue was written by the Superintendent of the Temple of Divine Music, Yang Zhenzong 楊震宗.

<sup>24</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinsbu*, "preface" 序, 2a.

effectively changing its name into “Palace for Manifestation of Efficacy.” I shall use the name Xianling Gong in referring to this temple.



Figure 5.2. – Sa Shoujian summoning thunder. From *Records of the Cursing Jujube* 咒棗記 (1603) by Deng Zhimo 鄧志謨

### 5.3. The pre-history of the *Golden Book* and *Daofa huiyuan*

In order to appreciate the degree to which Thunder Ritual had come to be absorbed into mainstream Daoism, and the importance with which it was regarded, we need to examine the specific ritual content with which Zhou Side was acquainted. Analysis of the pantheons invoked throughout his liturgies will show that the demonic gods of thunder had intruded into the most exalted Daoist rituals. Moreover, those who directed the actors in the dramatic manifestations of thunder provide important clues about the prehistory of the

*Daoist Ritual, United in Principle* 道法會元 (DZ 1220, hereafter *Daofa huiyuan*). This ritual compendium that has Thunder Ritual as common denominator became the largest single collection of scriptures within the Daoist Canon; it became, in fact, the largest collection of Daoist liturgies that is still extant.

As I have pointed out in passing, Zhou Side had received (part of) his training from the forty-third Celestial Master, Zhang Yuchu. This is an important detail for our understanding of the rituals that were current at the time right before the Daoist Canon of 1444 was published: Zhang Yuchu had been trained by Liu Yuanran, who in turn had been a disciple of Zhao Yizhen. Below I will provide an account of this transmission history.

Liu Yuanran's most extensive biographical records are in the *Ming Histories*. According to this biography, his early years as a Daoist were spent in Palace of Auspicious Omen 祥符宮 in his district of Gan 贛 in Jiangxi. The compilers of the *Ming Histories* included the remark that he was “quite accomplished in calling wind and summoning thunder” 頗能呼召風雷. After Yongle's reign he was invested by Hongxi (r. 1425) with high titles and regalia of the “second rank” 二品. In the early years of emperor Xuanzong's 宣宗 reign, Xuande 宣德 (1426 – 35) he was yet again promoted; when he retired in 1432 the emperor dedicated an ode to him that is still extant.<sup>25</sup> As one late Ming author has it: “Xuanzong was fond of Liu Yuanran” 宣宗寵劉淵然.<sup>26</sup>

Other sources supplement the biography from the *Ming Histories* with additional details. According to the *Gazetteer of the Unified Great Ming* 大明一統志 of 1461, he had served the Pure Tenuity liturgist Zhao Yizhen 趙宜真 as his master, in the Temple of Purple

<sup>25</sup> *MS*, p. 7656.

<sup>26</sup> Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642), *Wanli yebuo bian* 萬曆野獲編, p. 695. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959.

Yang 紫陽觀 on Mt. Golden Spirit 金精山 (Jiangxi).<sup>27</sup> According to this source, it was from Zhao Yizhen that he had “received all the talismanic registers, as well as Spells of the Great Cinnabar of Golden Fire” 金火大丹之訣.<sup>28</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, Zhao Yizhen had been one of the formative actors in the Pure Tenuity tradition. To be able to claim that he was Zhao Yizhen’s disciple would surely have generated considerable prestige for Liu Yuanran. Therefore, if a local gazetteer from Jiangxi claims that “only Liu Yuanran became the sole inheritor of [Zhao Yizhen’s] Daoist tradition” 續承道脈者，劉淵然一人

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<sup>27</sup> One of the prominent Daoists active in the latter half of the fourteenth century was Zhao Yizhen 趙宜真 (*hao* Yuanyang 原陽; ? – 1382), who was regarded as the seventeenth patriarch of the famous ritual tradition of Pure Tenuity. While no records remain to suggest that he was invited to the Ming court, one of his disciples, Liu Yuanran 劉淵然 (1351 – 1432) did take up a position at Taizu’s court in 1393. A short survey of Zhao Yizhen’s liturgical writings reveals some aspects of Daoist ritual as it was emerging at the time.

A biographical sketch of Zhao Yizhen, who spent his life predominantly on various sacred sites in Jiangxi, has been pieced together by Kristofer Schipper (Schipper, Kristofer, (1987) “Master Chao I-chen and the Ch’ing-wei School of Taoism.” In Akizuki Kan’ei 秋月觀映 (ed.), *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, pp. 1-20). A colophon by Song Lian for a “Painting of the Immortal Likenesses of the Pure Tenuity School of Ritual” 清微法派仙像圖 reveals the interesting fact that Zhao Yizhen was recognized as patriarch of Pure Tenuity already during his lifetime (*Song Lian Quanji*, p. 867). Though designated as “patriarch” of a tradition, Zhao Yizhen’s Pure Tenuity school may have very well been a recent phenomenon. At first sight the accents placed by Zhao Yizhen in his own liturgies were no different from the general focal points of the thunder tradition: they marshaled the powers of demonic spirits by rituals of “sublimation.” In a post-face to a revelation of Pure Tenuity talismanic writs, Zhao Yizhen mentions the familiar methods of “sublimation, retreating, and petitioning” 鍊度、登齋、章法 as the core of his tradition (*Daofa huiyuan* 5.36b, 37b). Elsewhere he wrote a long treatise on the specific Pure Tenuity form that the rituals of sublimation had taken, namely “sublimation by water and fire” 水火鍊度 (*Daofa huiyuan* 17.1a-6b, 14ab). This practice came with its own ritual gods: Marshals Gou 苟 and Bi 畢, representing water and fire respectively; as well as Marshals Wu 烏 and Tu 塗, representing *yin* and *yang*.

It is an explanatory statement by Zhao Yizhen himself that suggests the relatively novel character of Pure Tenuity. In his “Explanation of Praying” 祈禱說 Zhao Yizhen first asks the question that he is about to address: “For Pure Tenuity praying, originally no altar needed to be ascended. What does that mean?” 清微祈禱，本無登壇。何也 (*Daofa huiyuan* 8.2a). From his subsequent explanation it appears that Pure Tenuity practices until recently had assumed the more antique notion of cosmic correlation: because the body was conceived as a small cosmos 小天地, therefore “if my heart is straight, then the heart of the cosmos will be straight” 我之心正，則天地之心正. Thus in the practice of Pure Tenuity “the transformations are within my body, and not on the altar” 造化在吾身中，而不在乎登壇 (*Daofa huiyuan* 8.2b). According to Zhao Yizhen’s explanation it was the single-minded performance of ritual on the altar that needed to be supplemented by inner cultivation.

<sup>28</sup> Li Xian 李賢 (1408 – 66), *Da Ming yitongzhi* 大明一統志, 58.13a.

而已, we need to consider this with some caution.<sup>29</sup> Yet it seems to stand beyond doubt that he had indeed learnt his mettle from Zhao Yizhen.

Liu Yuanran himself was less conservative in his training of apprentices, as he seemed to have had many.<sup>30</sup> His two most famous disciples, no doubt, were both recorded as such in the *Ming Histories*: the forty-third Celestial Master Zhang Yuchu 張宇初 (1359 – 1410);<sup>31</sup> and the later compiler of the Daoist Canon of 1444, Shao Yizheng 邵以正 (dates).<sup>32</sup> The *Ming Histories* mention that Zhang Yuchu “had received Daoist ritual” 嘗受道法 from Liu Yuanran.<sup>33</sup> If it seems strange that a Celestial Master would receive his ritual training from an apparent outsider, there may have been good reasons for it: Zhang Yuchu had come to inherit the position of presiding Celestial Master at the young age of 18, when his father Zhang Zhengchang died in 1377.

The kinds of rituals that Liu Yuanran taught his disciples are not known to have included anything like the “Spells of the Great Cinnabar of Golden Fire” as mentioned above, perhaps because they were as esoteric as they sounded.<sup>34</sup> Instead, one source mentions that a certain Daoist from Shandong, Wu Shouyi 吳守一, was initiated into the “secret arts of sublimation” 鍊度祕術 by Liu Yuanran.<sup>35</sup> This claim coheres quite well with the ritual content of the Pure Tenuity liturgies that Liu Yuanran’s other famous disciple,

<sup>29</sup> *Jiangxi tongzhi* 江西通志, 104.6b.

<sup>30</sup> In addition to those that will be mentioned below, also Shu Xianju 孰賢舉, see Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1365-1444), *Dongli ji* 東里集, 31.24a. In *Qinding siku quanshu*, Taipei: Shangwu, 1983; and Li Xizu 李希祖, see Wang Zhi 王直 (1379-1462), *Yian wen houji* 抑菴文後集, 5.46b. In *Qinding siku quanshu*, Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

<sup>31</sup> *MS*, p. 7654.

<sup>32</sup> *MS*, p. 7656.

<sup>33</sup> *MS*, p. 7654.

<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, a set of nine books in *Daofa huiyuan* (198-206) all contain the term “Golden Fire” 金火 in their title, and the post-face by Liu Yu 劉玉 (1257-1308) in *Daofa huiyuan* 198 seems to suggest that these rituals, perhaps, were current during the fourteenth century.

<sup>35</sup> *Yanzhou fuzhi* 兗州府志, p. 680.



Shao Yizheng, would include in the Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong 正統 reign (1436 – 1449). As we will see, the ritual heritage that had reached Shao Yizheng via Liu Yuanran from Zhao Yizhen was given a prominent position within the *Daofa huiyuan*; and in a smaller compendium, the *Forgotten Pearls from the Sea of Ritual* 法海遺珠 (hereafter *Forgotten Pearls*).

It is, in fact, possible that the compilation of *Daofa huiyuan* was considered so important that the whole project of the Daoist Canon was affected. As I have pointed out above, in 1419 the Yongle emperor had written a preface to the Daoist Canon. This probably indicates that at that point the compilation was thought to be virtually complete. If we look at the details provided in Yongle's preface, we find that Yongle's edition contained 5,134 *juan* in 464 boxes – only 16 boxes less than the 480 boxes of the Zhengtong Canon from 1444 now extant.<sup>36</sup> To state my implication directly: is it possible that the sixteen boxes still “missing” from the Canon mainly included the boxes of *Daofa huiyuan* and *Forgotten Pearls*?

The compilation of *Daofa huiyuan* was ambitious enough to make up for such a delay: in addition to the Pure Tenuity texts that were written during the decades leading up to 1444, the *Daofa huiyuan* ended up including many texts that were centuries older, all thought to be somehow relevant for the formation of Pure Tenuity ritual practice. In all likelihood, the compilers did not simply have a library they could consult to search the books they needed. Rather, given the great regional variety reflected in the scriptures of *Daofa huiyuan*, they depended on contributions from a broad variety of Daoists who each owned (copies of) old books. It is therefore understandable if they were still gathering books by the time Yongle wrote his preface, perhaps they were still negotiating with this or that reluctant Daoist to share a private copy. At any rate, the ongoing compilation of this gigantic ritual compendium was important enough to delay the final printing of the Canon.

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<sup>36</sup> *Da Ming Taizong Huangdi yuzhiji*, 4.5a.

However, several years before *Daofa huiyuan* was printed, and imperially distributed as a part of the Daoist Canon, Zhou Side had finished his own ritual compendium. In the next section we will first turn to this luxurious edition.

#### 5.4. The *Golden Book of Zhou Side* (1359 – 1451)

Zhou Side's importance for the study of Ming Daoism can barely be overstated. The present section will investigate his contributions in the field of ritual. It is thanks to his work that we are capable of understanding the degree to which Daoist ritual practice in Peking had become uniform, the degree to which Daoist ritual had become standardized – and the importance of Thunder throughout a majority of Ming liturgies.

It was during the first year of Xuande, 1426, that Zhou Side took office as the head of the Xianling Gong. As described elsewhere, the temple he presided over was among the most conspicuous ritual arenas of Beijing: both the forty-fifth and forty-sixth Celestial Masters started performing *jiao* rites at the temple,<sup>37</sup> whereas the emperor annually sent officials on several days to offer sacrifices.<sup>38</sup> By the time Zhou Side died in 1451, his temple and his ritual apparatus were widely renowned.

With the demand for services being high, the Xianling Gong became a mainstay in the liturgical networks of Peking. Moreover, the period from the 1420's to the 1440's brought about a tide of increased ritual production. Sponsors in Peking funded the printing of two big projects. The Daoist Canon was the biggest of those two, at least in terms of sheer volume. Yet the other big project, equally with imperial support of the Yongle and Xuande emperors, was no less prestigious, and printed in an even better edition. This

<sup>37</sup> HTSSJ 4.2ab; 4.7b.

<sup>38</sup> *MS*, pp. 1307-9; Ni Yue 倪岳, *Qingxi man'gao* 青谿漫稿, 11.35ab. In *Qinding Siku Quanshu*, Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

compendium was the *Golden Book of Perfect Salvation belonging to the Lingbao of Highest Purity* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書, hereafter simply *Golden Book*.<sup>39</sup> It takes us right back into the libraries of the Xianling Gong.

The contents of this rather large collection of ritual manuals differ in some respects from their counterparts in the Daoist Canon. While the *Daofa huiyuan* was made with the idea to include much older documents as well as more recent texts, the *Golden Book* was a completely new product that consisted of revised liturgies. All of the chapters are said to be originally written by the famous Song liturgist Ling Linzhen 林靈真 (1239 – 1302), and revised by Zhou Side. However, each chapter is signed by a different disciple of Zhou Side's Xianling Gong.<sup>40</sup> Some of those later became influential Daoists themselves, such as Chang Daoheng 昌道亨 and Shu Daoheng 戚道珩.<sup>41</sup>

A fine edition in good calligraphy, with some beautiful illustrations and handsome talismanic writing, this compendium bore the marks of a prosperous clientele. Indeed, the scripture was praised in a preface dated 1432 by the forty-fifth Celestial Master Zhang Maocheng 張懋丞 (1388 – 1445?), who found the *Golden Book* extraordinary in its clarity and comprehensiveness. Neither the Zhengtong edition of the Daoist Canon nor the Wanli Supplement have included Zhou Side's work – perhaps simply because it was already printed in an edition of such good quality, with a postface by the Superintendent of the imperial Temple of Divine Music, Yang Zhenzong 楊震宗. Rivalry might have been another reason, as we will see below.

<sup>39</sup> *Zangwai Daoshu* 藏外道書 (vols. 16 and 17). Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1992-1994.

<sup>40</sup> They all had the character Dao 道 as the first character of their Daoist name, suggesting that they belonged to the same Daoist lineage.

<sup>41</sup> Chang Daoheng was invested with the title of 沖虛淵然凝神守素翊化演教廣濟普應弘道真人 in 1478 (*Xianzong shilu* 憲宗實錄, 185.3322), and his name is attached to chapter 13 of the *Golden Book*. Shu Daoheng received the epithet 崇真悟法靜度高士 (*ibid.*), and his name is attached to chapter 16 of the *Golden Book*.

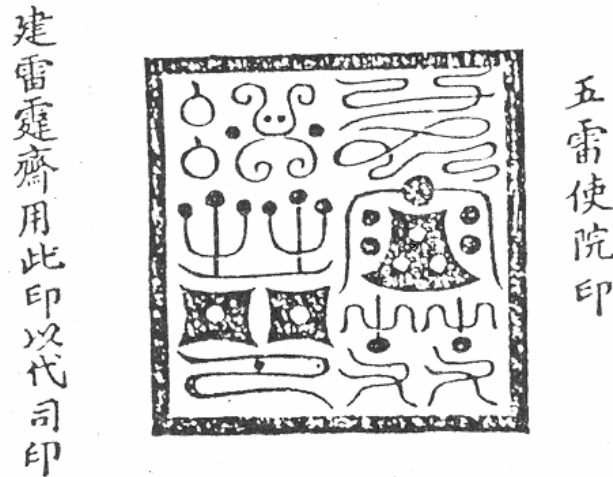


Figure 5.3. – Thunder Seal used in the liturgies of Zhou Side.

The *Golden Book* is interesting for comparison with materials from the Daoist Canon, especially because the work's self-proclaimed liturgical genealogy contradict the known ritual affiliations of Zhou Side. Historical sources tell us that he was indebted to the forty-third Celestial Master: before leaving Hangzhou to take up residence in the new capital, Peking, he had himself been a disciple of Zhang Yuchu. However, the records are ambiguous. Although Zhou Side is said to have “studied the writings of Daoists” 讀道家書 with Zhang Yuchu, it is not clear whether these included any ritual.<sup>42</sup> Intriguingly, in the post-face to Zhou Side's compendium, Zhang Yuchu is not mentioned in his lineage of ritual ancestors. The post-face states that his ideological leanings originated largely in a Yuan dynasty work with a similar title, the *The Golden Book of Lingbao Inquiries into Perfect Salvation* 靈寶領教濟度金書 (DZ 466) by Ling Linzhen. This work, in turn, draws heavily upon one major liturgy of the Song dynasty belonging to a completely different brand of Daoism, namely the version of *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法 written by Ning Quanzhen 寧全真 (1101 – 81).<sup>43</sup> As I have pointed out in the opening section of chapter 3, the *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* stood

<sup>42</sup> *Da Ming yitongzhi*, 38.34a.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed biography, cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 244.3a-8a.

ideologically apart from the vernacular ritual developments of the Southern Song, or perhaps even took a conscious stance against the impure and unorthodox influence of rituals such as those involving the demonic gods of thunder.

The fact that Zhou Side's post-face was at least to some degree an adumbration of his ritual ancestry is evident if one looks at the contents of his compendium: they included many Thunder Rituals and even more thunder gods. However, if it thus might seem obvious that Zhou Side was not on speaking terms with the compilers of the Daoist Canon for his denial of their common ritual ancestry – the case was not so simple. Zhou Side's supposed adversary would have been Liu Yuanran and probably Shao Yizheng too. But as the *Ming Histories* recorded, after Liu Yuanran had initiated Zhang Yuchu into his ritual practice, the two “disagreed and slandered each other” 不協，相詆訐.<sup>44</sup> One eighteenth century source adds the following piece to the puzzle, describing Zhang Yuchu: “As a human being he was not quite impeccable; however, his writings were brilliant” 其人品頗不純粹；然，其文章乃斐然。<sup>45</sup> Zhang Yuchu's place in Zhou Side's training may have been ignored, but if there was anyone who could understand this, it was Liu Yuanran.

The exact circumstances of the *Golden Book's* absence from the Daoist Canon may remain unsolved. The compendium itself, however, speaks a clearer language. As the title of the *Golden Book* indicates, the teleology of the rituals was to provide “salvation” 濟度. Even a cursory reading of the liturgies shows that their gist differs little from *Daofa huiyuan*; the concept of “sublimation” is at their core. Rituals of thunder form a constituent part of most larger rituals, from the immense Yellow Register Retreats 黃籙齋 and Great Retreats for

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<sup>44</sup> *MS*, p. 7654.

<sup>45</sup> Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724 – 1805), *Qinding Siku quanshu zongmu* 欽定四庫全書總目, 170.12a. Qing reprint ed., 1888, Shanghai: Shuliu shanzhuang.

Universal Salvation 普渡大齋 to ordination rituals 傳度. Sometimes through invocation of certain thunder marshals, sometimes through reporting to the Heavenly Worthy of Thunder 奏雷尊 (j. 37), thunder gods are a presence. Among the many ways in which thunder is involved are Thunder Worthy's Repentances 雷尊懺 and Thunder Worthy's Oaths 雷尊伏願 (j. 9; Ninefold Heaven's Thunder presentations 九天雷疏 (j. 35), as well as thunder talismans (j. 26; 29), thunder seals (j. 25), and so on.



Figure 5.4. – Deities involved in the ritual creation of new life.

A look at the pantheons invoked in the *Golden Book* offers a fascinating view into the world of powerful demonical deities serving the Daoist masters of the Ming. Much more consistently than before, the Thunder Division was configured with standard platoons of Marshals. In a *jiao* dedicated to the Dark Emperor, we find Marshal Deng at the head of the “Four Great Celestial Lords of Thunderclap: Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao” 雷霆鄧、辛、

張、陶四大天君。<sup>46</sup> Next are the “Four Great Celestial Lords of the Thunder Gate: Gou, Bi, Pang, and Liu” 雷門苟、畢、龐、劉四大天君。<sup>47</sup> Then there are the “Heavenly Attendants Cui, Lu, Deng, and Dou” 崔、盧、鄧、竇四天丁。<sup>48</sup>

Other pantheons of the *Golden Book* deploy similar configurations, although always with some variants. In a *jiao* dedicated to the Thunder Worthy of the Ninefold Heavens 九天雷尊, all of the above eight Celestial Lords are invoked. In addition we find some marshals that we have considered in chapter 3, Guan Yu and Wen Qiong, as well as Zhou Side’s famous Spiritual Agent Wang. The former are mentioned as part of the “Four Great Marshals of Upper Purity: Ma, Zhao, Wen, and Guan” 上清馬、趙、溫、關四大元帥。<sup>49</sup> The latter is positioned individually, as “Marshal Wang, Heavenly Inspector of the Court of Fiery Thunder, the Vermilion Hearted, the Good and Faithful” 都天火雷院赤心忠良王元帥。<sup>50</sup>

These two *jiao* are representative of the kind of gods that Zhou Side would invoke as his ritual agents. Sometimes these gods would act individually, sometimes as platoons of three or four gods, and sometimes their presence was part of a gigantic pantheon with hundreds of other divinities, immortals, and ancestors invoke for an Offering for All Heavens 普天醮。<sup>51</sup>

The gods of the Thunder Division were invoked even for the most basic rituals, such as ordinations. In the Texts for the Great Ordination Retreat 傳度大齋文字 there is

<sup>46</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 35.55a.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 35.54a.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> For one of the largest pantheons in *Golden Book* containing these thundergods, see j. 39: Thunder gods are on 39.13b-14a, ancestors on 39.11a-12a.

virtually no segment of the ritual that does not invoke the assistance of the Thunder Division broadly speaking, or of certain thunder gods in particular. In fact, the two great thunder marshals Deng and Xin are among the very few deities invoked individually, and the only ones to be invoked twice, at two different occasions.<sup>52</sup>

Even if their names were not always mentioned, the ordination texts of the *Golden Book* are one large request for divine assistance for the newly initiated, bringing the novice to the attention of the spirit marshals and reminding them of their responsibility thereafter to offer him support. This key concept of command over the divine realm is mostly formulated as follows:

If you ever encounter [name of novice], while he promulgates the transformations on Heaven's behalf, helping the Dao to root out evil, praying for rain or asking for clear skies, expelling locusts or producing snow, gathering the dead or calling down generals, curing diseases or warding off evil, help the living and absolve the dead, for himself or for others, you should serve fittingly, you must descend as soon as you hear his summons, and help him in his proceedings.<sup>53</sup>

如遇 某人 代天宣化，助道除兇，禱雨祈晴，驅蝗致雪，攝亡降將，治病  
芟邪，濟生度死，爲己爲人，應有事宜，一聞號召，應時下降，輔佐宣  
行。

This formulaic request is almost verbatim the same as in the requests for divine assistance in the Pure Tenuity texts of *Daofa huiyuan*. The particular deities would be specified for each ritual occasion. For example, one delegation of the Thunder Division is invoked in the

<sup>52</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 36.32b, 36b; Sa Shoujian is addressed as a patriarch on 33a alongside Marshal Wang.

<sup>53</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 36.32a.



pantheon executing the rain ritual.<sup>54</sup> Led by the thunder division's chief marshal Deng, as well as Xin and Zhang, a horde of thunder deities is requested to descend onto the thunder altar in order to “root out the Drought Demon” 剪除旱魃 and produce three days of bountiful rain.

Zhou Side's *Golden Book* deserves to be studied much more carefully than the limited focus this thesis allows for. Beyond the presence of Thunder Ritual, the range of his liturgical writings is extraordinary and covers virtually any known aspect of late imperial Daoist ritual. An added advantage of the *Golden Book* is that it was apparently designed to function as an outline of the ritual practice his disciples were expected to cover. In contrast to *Daofa huiyuan*, to be explored in a later section, Zhou Side's compendium almost always includes precise explanatory comments and instructions. The contribution his compendium could make to our understanding of Daoist ritual practice during the early Ming should be considerable. At the time, his many disciples certainly received initiation into a large body of liturgy. This was true not only for those in Peking. Other disciples, such as Lin Chun 林春 from Hangzhou, learnt their trade from him and promulgated Zhou Side's *jiao* pantheons in that region.<sup>55</sup>

### 5.5. Ritual competitors

Although Daoists such as Zhou Side and Liu Yuanran were assured of generous imperial support after Yongle's death, this did not preclude later confrontations. The reign of Yongle seems to have witnessed increasing ritual activity from court officials. The field of rain making ritual, in which Daoists had been able to gain important positions, became

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<sup>54</sup> *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 36.46b-47a.

<sup>55</sup> *Guizhou zhi* 貴州志, 10.7b.

exceedingly fraught with tensions between officials and Daoists. Differences in their methods reveal differences of ideology.

In 1425 the Hongxi 洪熙 emperor requested Liu Yuanran, who was already in his seventies, to perform a rainprayer to the Two Dragon Kings. In this case, a rare account of his ritual fallibility is given, with the ultimate success attributed to the prayers of the emperor himself.<sup>56</sup> It will not be a surprise to learn that traditional historians have evaluated the Hongxi emperor as an “enlightened Confucian monarch.”<sup>57</sup> Neither will it come as a surprise that court officials had promoted the cult to the Two Dragon Kings to such an extent that the court was involved in many other sacrifices to the dragon kings after that period,<sup>58</sup> with Buddhists being drawn into the arena of rainmaking rituals and thus partaking in the victory over Liu Yuanran’s Daoist methods.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed not only Daoists or officials were involved in the profitable activities of rain making, but probably also Buddhists.<sup>60</sup> Local shamans may have constituted a cheap and probably widespread alternative for ordinary people, but as is to be expected from the official bias of local gazetteers, data concerning them are even harder to find than about institutionally sanctioned religious practitioners.<sup>61</sup> Given their low social standing and their association with very local gods, shamans were less likely to perform at court.

<sup>56</sup> *Renzong Shilu* 仁宗實錄, p. 236. Nan’gang: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1964.

<sup>57</sup> Hok-lam Chan, “The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-hsi, and Hsüan-te reigns, 1399-1435,” p. 283. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

<sup>58</sup> *Xuanzong Shilu* 宣宗實錄, 41.1008, 42.1033, 53.1278, 88.2034; *Yingzong Shilu* 英宗實錄, 4.87, 43.839, 105.2313, 166.3215.

<sup>59</sup> Huang Yu, *Shuanghuai suichao*, p. 69-70.

<sup>60</sup> I have found only vague references to Buddhist rain rituals, but I would be surprised if nothing more concrete would exist.

<sup>61</sup> One late Ming gazetteer from Hunan mentions the local customs of shamans 巫 to make a hole in the ground and perform rainmaking rituals (*Cili xianzhi* 慈利縣志, 6.3b).

Court officials started to show a growing concern with the popularity of rituals that were not classical. The stance they took was a continuation of the attitude they had shown during the reign of Hongwu, but their target was increasingly specific: Daoist priests. Below we will focus on the circumstances surrounding the conflict that unfolded between Daoists and imperial officials.

Daoist rainmaking rituals often went hand in hand with exorcism, whether or not it had become enveloped in the format of a *jiao* or *zhai*. Even an observer who was not necessarily Daoist might characterize these *jiao* as occasions to expel “baleful energies” 厲氣.<sup>62</sup> Browsing through the relevant sections of *Daofa huiyuan*, the reason is easily revealed: for Daoist practitioners, the production of rain was a matter of expelling the drought-demon, Hanba 旱魃.<sup>63</sup> In that respect they related very well to popular conceptions about the dynamics underlying occurrences of drought that prevailed during the early Ming dynasty. Most textual sources (imperial records, local gazetteers, epigraphy, popular hagiography, Daoist documents) seem permeated with the common concern of battling the damaging effects of the drought demon – a concern that largely transcended regional as well as social boundaries.<sup>64</sup>

Both the local laymen’s responses to droughts as well as the preferred Daoist procedures were rather standard: the former consisted of rain prayers to the dragon kings, whereas in the latter case the priest would apply thunder ritual to exorcize the Hanba. While on the surface of things these methods differ, this did not mean that a huge divide existed between the two, since both were intricately linked to dragons and their kindred. In actual

<sup>62</sup> A local gentleman from Ganzhou 贛州 (Jiangxi) equally employs the help of Daoists for a *zhai* that is intended to expel a malefic energy during the great famine of 1344 (Song Lian, *Song Lian Quanji*, p. 922-3).

<sup>63</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 4; 47; 48; 56; 62; 77; 83; 86; 97; 100; 113; 128; 136; 144.

<sup>64</sup> *Wenzhou junzhi* 溫州郡志, pp. 666-7; *Qiongzhou futu jingzhi* 瓊州府圖經志, p. 2829.

practice, they often formed two sides of the same coin. The rainprayers of the *Ru*, on the other hand, were of a kind different from the Daoist and local type – they did not exorcize the Drought Demon.

By the Yongle reign there existed different kinds of sites for rain production. Aside from the rituals of the Daoists and the *Ru*, many rather local powers received sacrifices in cultic sites on a popular level. These sites could include shrines for pseudo-Buddhist figures such as Holy Sire Dingguang 定光聖公,<sup>65</sup> a stone Buddhist statue,<sup>66</sup> a bodhisattva called Tongtian 通天;<sup>67</sup> others might be Daoist, such as Immortal Master Yang 楊仙師,<sup>68</sup> Immortal Sage of the Solemn Heavens 蕭天仙聖,<sup>69</sup> the patriarch of one Daoist school, Xu Jingyang 許旌陽;<sup>70</sup> and there were specifically local sites, such as a stone tiger that was whipped for rain,<sup>71</sup> or a cave of more than a *li* deep with an efficacious pond at the end.<sup>72</sup> Local gazetteers after the Yongle reign suggest that the City God had an important role as well. In short, rainmaking activities could be deployed at quite a variety of sacred sites. As usual, the records mention no more than sites, and not the actual people who perform the rituals attached to them, other than the most obvious participants: the local populace 鄉民. It is relatively safe to assume that in most cases various specialized ritual practitioners would be involved.

<sup>65</sup> *Yanping fuzhi* 延平府志, p. 1109. Sire Dingguang's Buddhist persona had originated in Buddha Dīpaṃkara, more commonly referred to in Chinese as “the Buddha who ignites the lamp” 燃燈佛. This Buddha, however, was also known with his less Buddhist name, “Holy Sire of Fixed Radiance” 定光聖公, p. 1110; 1264. He was moreover known as a native from Quanzhou 泉州 named Zheng Ziyan 鄭自嚴, p. 1443. See John Lagerwey, “Dingguang Gufo: Oral and Written Sources in the Study of a Saint,” p. 77-129. In *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998)

<sup>66</sup> *Guangxin fuzhi* 廣信府志, p. 1793.

<sup>67</sup> *Ji'an fuzhi* 吉安府志, p. 2015.

<sup>68</sup> *Xinjin fuzhi* 新淦縣志, p. 2018.

<sup>69</sup> *Changsha fuzhi* 長沙府志, p. 2171.

<sup>70</sup> *Xinchang zhi* 新昌志, p. 2820.

<sup>71</sup> *Xiangtai zhi* 相臺志, p. 2109-10.

<sup>72</sup> *Yiling zhoushi* 夷陵州志, p. 2161.

To pray for rain was indeed no small matter, as the expulsion of the Drought Demon could concern an entire region and exceeded individual interest, even cutting across class boundaries. Rain prayers were of a collective and supra-local kind, sometimes involving the participation of almost one hundred “Earthgod communities.”<sup>73</sup> By the beginning of the fifteenth century there seem to have existed shrines for rain-producing dragons (or mountains, the residences of dragons) throughout an absolute majority of Han China.<sup>74</sup> In most cases, attached to the shrine would be a “dragon pond” or spring (龍潭 or 龍湫) in which the dragon was said to reside, or in more poetic terms, where his “dragon palace” 龍宮 would be built. There, sacrifices were made to the dragon. The dragon pond was also the site where the Daoist priest would cast his talismans into the water in order to communicate directly with the dragons responsible for the region, issuing his commands: “talismanic orders” 符令 or 符命.<sup>75</sup>

During prayers for rain before the Ming the local official was merely a participant and certainly not the main performer of the ritual.<sup>76</sup> In a recent study, Donald Sutton shows

<sup>73</sup> 「水旱禱者八十餘社」, *Xin'an zhi* 新安志, p. 1058.

<sup>74</sup> *Taiyuan zhi* 太原志, p. 179; *Liaozhou zhi* 遼州志, p. 378; 396; *Kunling zhi* 昆陵志, p. 569; *Yanzhou fuzhi* 嚴州府志, p. 625; *Wuxing xuzhi* 吳興續志, p. 802; 825-6; 829; *Jinhua fuzhi* 金華府志, p. 916-8; *Yicheng zhi* 宜城志, p. 1019; *Jingcheng zhi* 涇城志, p. 1045; *Qiupu xinzhi* 秋浦新志, p. 1073; *Fuzhou fuzhi* 福州府志, p. 1099; *Puyang zhi* 莆陽志, p. 1113-4; *Qingyuan zhi* 清源志, p. 1135; *Quanzhou fuzhi* 泉州府志, p. 1145; *Jianning fuzhi* 建寧府志, p. 1196-7; *Linding zhi* 臨汀志, p. 1249; 1264; *Jiangzhou zhi* 江州志, p. 1514; *Guangxin fuzhi* 廣信府志, p. 1793; *Linchuan zhi* 臨川志, p. 1915; *Jianchang fuzhi* 建昌府志, p. 2002-3; *Ganzhou fuzhi* 贛州府志, p. 2041-2; *Ruijin xianzhi* 瑞金縣志, p. 2051; *Yiling zhouzhi* 夷陵州志, p. 2161; *Baoqing fuzhi* 寶慶府志, p. 2278; *Guangzhou fuzhi* 廣州府志, p. 2469; *Shaoyang fuzhi* 韶州府志, p. 2472-3; *Nanxiong luzhi* 南雄路志, p. 2476; *Nanxiong futu jingzhi* 南雄府圖經志, p. 2532; *Qiangwu zhi* 蒼梧志, p. 2896; *Jiangyang xupu* 江陽續譜, p. 3183.

<sup>75</sup> Up to the present day, the “vernacular” (*fa men* 法門) talismans of Daoist priests in Northern Taiwan, as well as those in Hunan (PRC), are headed by stylized versions of the two characters 雷 and 令, making them “thunder commands.”

<sup>76</sup> For example, a local official in Jiahe ordered a three day Daoist *jiao* in 1190, to be held at the district hall, in honor of the Dragon Lord 龍君, whereupon it was reported to have rained (*Jiabe zhi* 嘉禾志, p. 701). Two other cases where officials were ordered by the local prefect to participate in rural rain prayers are recorded for Linding 臨汀 during the reign of Shaoxing 紹興 (1131-63) and during the Jiatai 嘉泰 reign (1202-05) (*Linding zhi* 臨汀志, p. 1254). In both of these cases the local authorities ordered the erection of a temple in honor of

how officials were happy to leave these practices to non-official practitioners during the early decades of the Ming dynasty.<sup>77</sup> Yet by the Yongle reign local officials representing the imperial bureaucracy were known to have gradually started to perform rainmaking rituals as well. In those cases where they turned to other practitioners, their attitude became stricter, or more selective, and it seems that may they have started favoring Daoist practitioners of Thunder Ritual over Buddhists.<sup>78</sup>

Late in the Yongle reign, an example of rather spectacular tolerance towards Daoist practitioners is known from Taihe 泰和 (present day Jiangxi). In 1422, after devout feats of fasting, as well as visits to Buddhist and Daoist temples that resulted only in little rain, two members of the local gentry consulted with the local populace in order to find out about

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the local dragon king. Despite the attempts of some early Ming officials to attribute successful rain-prayers to the sincere prayers of the bureaucrat, literati writings from the late Yuan and early Ming suggest that it was common for the local bureaucracy to delegate rainprayers to Buddhist or Daoist priests. For example, in 1343 local officials in Wujiang 吳江 (present day Jiangsu) employ the service of a Daoist priest, who obtains thunder and rain with a panoply of ritual techniques directed at dragons, culminating in a *jiao* at his temple (Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 (1292-1364), *Qiao Wu Ji* 橋吳集, (Beijing: Shumu wenxian, 1988), 9.18a-19b). Local officials in Xinzhou 忻州 (present day Shanxi) sent both Buddhists and Daoists to perform rainprayers at a dragon pond during the catastrophic famine of 1344 (Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190-1257), *Yishan Ji* 遺山集, 40.7b-8a. Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1984). Generally speaking, although it seems that some officials declared that rainprayers were not among their duties, most would still perform them if requested (Chen Lü 陳旅 (1287-1342), *Anyatang Ji* 安雅堂集, 4.9b-10a. Taipei: Zhongyang tushuguan, 1970). There are indications that bureaucrats would not always agree to perform rainprayers immediately, but only after one or more pilgrimages to sacred sites, including Daoist and Buddhist temples (Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333), *Wuwen Zhengji* 吳文正集, 35:16b-19a. Taipei: Xin Wenfeng, 1985). Just before the end of the Yuan dynasty, a local official in Yulin 鬱林 (present day Guangdong) orders a Daoist *zhai* in order to receive rain (*Yulin zhi* 鬱林志, p. 3059). And in the biography of the Three Masters Li from Anhui we have treated above, a multitude of requests for rainmaking are mentioned, most of them on individual personal title (probably by wealthy locals of a certain standing), some of them on demand by the representatives of an entire region (during the years 1316, 1317, 1336), and one of them requested by a local official (in 1369).

<sup>77</sup> Donald Sutton, "Local Drought Crises and Charismatic Competition among Clerical and Extra-clerical Ritualists in Ming China," Paper presented at the AAS, New York, 28 March, 2003. Even at the time when officials were performing rainprayers autonomously, they would still not immediately claim exclusivity for their performances, but visit various shrines or temples first. One record describes how Li Jiben 李繼本 (*jinsbi* 1357) frequents more than four different sacred sites before obtaining rain in 1371. Li Jiben, *Yishan wenji* 一山文集, Beijing: Shumu wenxian chuban, 1998.

<sup>78</sup> For example, in a story about rainprayers in 1369, the local bureaucrat first prays to a Buddhist shrine, but when his prayers are not answered, he angrily threatens to destroy the shrine and turns to Deng Zhongxiu, the thunder ritualist who was to be invited to court two years later (Yang Weizhen 楊維楨 (1296-1370), *Dong Weizhi Ji* 東維子集, 10.19b-20a. In *Qinding Siku Quanshu*. Taipei: Shangwu, 1983).

rainmaking techniques. The locals referred them to a certain master Xiao Zhixiang 蕭志祥, who agreed to set up his altar at the local Daoist temple and applied several ritual techniques to attain his goal. The next day, indeed, it rained; but the locals were not satisfied and asked the Daoist to perform more rituals. This time he summoned the gods of the local wells, and again his techniques proved effective. Yet the people once more refused to accept the amount of rain produced and demanded another performance. Finally the priest “refined his *qi* to nurture his spirit, commanding gods and spirits” 鍊氣養神，檄召神祇.<sup>79</sup> Thereupon, a plentiful rain descended from the heavens. Whatever one may think of the capacities of this Daoist to produce rain, had the local populace wanted to they would have had ample opportunity to resort to other rainmaking experts.

Local officials applied different techniques.<sup>80</sup> Official “sacrificial addresses” 祭文 or “missives” 告文 in the liturgies of local bureaucrats were usually short and quickly recited. The bureaucrat addressed gods no less explicitly than other religious practitioners did. The difference lay in the scope of the prayer text of the official, which was completely unconcerned with the local gods. In other words, the *Ru* left unused an entire arsenal of divine power that lay ready to be used in the cults of local religion.

In a text from the ninth year of the Xuande reign (1434), local officials from Jurong 句容 near present day Nanking composed a “missive praying for rain” 祈雨告文 that limited the addressed deities to the “gods of the locality that are on the Register of

<sup>79</sup> Wang Zhi 王直 (1379-1462), *Yan wen houji* 抑菴文後集, 6.9ab. In *Qinding siku quanshu*. Taipei: Shangwu, 1983.

<sup>80</sup> For example Xie Tinggui 謝庭桂 in 1467 (*Changzhou fuzhi xuyi* 常州府志續集, 27:4b); also see the case of Wang Wenzhen 王文珍, who successfully prayed for rain at the rain altar 雩壇 of the local community 里社 during the reign of Chenghua (*Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志, 1.13b).

Sacrifices” 境內祀典之神.<sup>81</sup> This effectively meant an official petition that was directed to a mere handful of nameless gods, such as Wind, Rain, Thunder, and Lightning, in the abstract representation of the imperial canon<sup>82</sup>. It also meant a complete avoidance of any local god; no famous military heroes of ancient times, no dragon king, and least of all anything that could be related to the shamanistic traditions of local spirit-mediums. At the same time, the idiom applied in the bureaucratic text closely resembles Daoist rainmaking rituals roughly from the same period.<sup>83</sup>

Some years after the official rainmaking ritual in Jurong even court officials started to concern themselves with these liturgies. The minister of Rites, Qiu Jun 丘濬 (1420 – 95), is quoted in the *Ming Histories*, again stressing “sincerity” of the official’s ritual performance (thus implying the Daoist insincerity), and lamenting the intrusion of non-classical ritual into court-circles:

The Son of Heaven used to make additional altars for rain-praying outside of the suburban and heavenly altars. Because later generations have not transmitted this ceremony, each time when a drought occurs, the emperor draws upon heterodox people for their prayer-services. They do not strive hard to achieve efficacy by sincerity of intent, but they force the matter by magical trickery. Such defamation!<sup>84</sup>

天子於郊天之外，別爲壇以祈雨者也。後世此禮不傳，遇有旱暵，輒假異端之人爲祈禱之事，不務以誠意感格，而以法術劫制，誣亦甚矣！

<sup>81</sup> *Hongzhi Jurong xianzhi* 弘治句容縣志 12.19b.

<sup>82</sup> *Ming huidian* 明會典, juan 81-85. Wanli edition. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989.

<sup>83</sup> cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 47, 48, 50.

<sup>84</sup> Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, *Ming Shi* 明史, p. 1257. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974.



In addition to showing contempt for ritual practitioners from outside the ranks of the *Ru*, “heterodox people,” Qiu Jun’s complaints imply that court officials felt frustrated with the fact that they were not the prime performers of rainmaking rituals. It seems to be expressive of their need to engage in the contested area of rainpraying, and to assert themselves vis-à-vis the popular performances of Daoist rituals. At least, as far as the materials we have allow us to observe, Daoists had thus far been the only group allowed into the sphere of court ritual. Other religious groups patronized around this time, such as Tibetan Buddhists, seem not to have not been involved in prayers for rain; that is, based on the records in official and Daoist sources.

Aside from rain making rituals, the court’s requests for *jiao* and *zhai* seem to have reached their zenith during the Ming dynasty. Yuan dynasty requests for the execution of a *jiao* had occurred before, but not to the degree in any way comparable to the Ming – or at least they were not recorded so frequently.<sup>85</sup> During the period from Hongwu to Jingtai (1368 – 1456) imperial requests for *zhai* and *jiao* to the Celestial Masters from Mt. Longhu were carried out twenty-nine times.<sup>86</sup> Given the fact that we have already seen several instances of imperial requests to other Daoist practitioners, such as Zhou Xuanzhen, Deng Zhongxiu, and Liu Yuanran, we may assume that the actual number of rites on imperial command that was requested from Daoists other than those from Mt. Longhu was higher. All of these Daoist sacrifices were held on imperial demand, and at least as early as 1440

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<sup>85</sup> 1295 (DZ 1463 *Han Tianshi Shijia* [HTSSJ] 漢天師世家, 3.12b), 1298 (HTSSJ 3.14a), 1302 (HTSSJ 3.14a), 1320 (HTSSJ 3.18b), 1325 (HTSSJ 3.19a), 1359 (HTSSJ 3.24a).

<sup>86</sup> 1383 (HTSSJ 3.28); 1385 (DZ 1462 *Huang Ming enming shilu* [HMEMSL] 皇明恩命世錄, 3.3b), 1407 (HTSSJ 3.28b), 1408 (HTSSJ 3.29a), 1410 (HTSSJ 3.29b), 1413 (HMEMSL 4.4b), 1417 (HMEMSL 4.5ab), 1420 (HTSSJ 3.30b), 1421 (HTSSJ 3.30b), 1424 (HTSSJ 4.8b-9a), 1429, 1430, 1431 (HTSSJ 4.2a), 1434 (HTSSJ 4.2b), 1436 (HTSSJ 4.2a), 1439 (HTSSJ 4.3a), 1440 (HTSSJ 4.3b), 1441 (HTSSJ 4.2a), 1443 (HTSSJ 4.3b), 1449, 1450 (HMEMSL 6.4b), 1452, 1453, 1455 (HMEMSL 6.5a).

several of them were performed in the “inner court” 內庭,<sup>87</sup> or specifically in the “Shrine for the Dark Emperor in the Great Inner [Court]” 大內玄天祠 in 1440 and 1461,<sup>88</sup> or even in the Hall of Imperial Peace 欽安殿 in 1486 and 1490.<sup>89</sup> It is no wonder, then, that court officials felt Daoists were encroaching upon their territory.

### 5.6. Dating the Pure Tenuity marks in *Daofa huiyuan*

In the meantime the compilation of the Daoist Canon had been nearing its completion. The Zhengtong emperor apparently was interested in having the process of compiling and editing proceed as smoothly as possible, when he ordered the chief editor to the Imperial Palace in 1444: “The emperor ordered the Right Performer of Rituals from the Daoist Registry, Shao Yizheng, to edit the scriptures of the Daoist canon inside the Forbidden City” 命道錄司右演法邵以正，點校道藏經於禁中。<sup>90</sup> The connection between the Pure Tenuity affiliations of Shao Yizheng, the compiler/editor of the Daoist Canon, and the Pure Tenuity content of *Daofa huiyuan* will help draw a picture of fifteenth century Daoist ritual in greater detail.

It has been suggested before that a relationship might exist between Shao Yizheng or his predecessor Liu Yuanran and the compilation of *Daofa huiyuan*.<sup>91</sup> I believe that although direct evidence for this connection is still lacking, these two would certainly have been the most likely candidates to venture such a project, because of their ritual ancestry as well as

<sup>87</sup> DZ 1463, 4.5a (1449); 4.4a (1490); 4.16b (1565); DZ 1462, 6.5a (1452), 5b (1457); 6a (1464); 7.3b (1486); 8.9a (1528); 9.5b (1564).

<sup>88</sup> DZ 1462, 6.7b-8a; DZ 1463, 4.3ab.

<sup>89</sup> DZ 1463, 4.9a.

<sup>90</sup> *Yingzong shilu*, 122.2443-4.

<sup>91</sup> Kristofer Schipper, “Master Chao I-chen and the Ch’ing-wei School of Taoism,” pp. 16. In Akizuki Kan’ei 秋月觀映 (ed.), *Dōkyō to Shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化. Tōkyō: Hirakawa, 1987; also see Schipper & Verellen, *Companion*, p. 32-33.

their suitable positions. Even further analysis of authorship and more precise deductions about the dating of the books within *Daofa huiyuan* are possible. The rare attempts at dating the texts of *Daofa huiyuan* are far from exhaustive, and much light remains to be shed upon the specific contents of the scriptures as a separate dating device in addition to the most obvious clues such as authorial attribution or explicit dates.<sup>92</sup>

As far as the *Daofa huiyuan* is concerned, I surmise that the most formulaic rituals with the highest degree of standardization were most likely written during the early fifteenth century, a fact that would place them among the most recent texts of the entire Daoist Canon. The first fifty-five texts of *Daofa huiyuan* can safely be classified as Pure Tenuity scriptures, and it is within the ramifications of this school that the entire editing process of *Daofa huiyuan* must be sought. At the time of publication the editors defined their tradition as consisting of liturgies of Thunder Ritual that originated in the revelations of the matriarch of Upper Purity 上清 called Wei Huacun 魏華存 (252 – 334). This alleged alliance between Wei Huacun and Thunder Ritual recurs throughout all fifty-five Pure Tenuity texts, something that differentiates them from a relatively large number of texts within the same compendium but aligns them with the *Golden Book*. The first scripture of *Daofa huiyuan* moreover contains an exposition by the eminent Southern Song liturgist Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾, whose “Nine Essentials of Daoist Ritual” 道法九要 are placed in line with Xu Sun 許遜 and Sa Shoujian 薩守堅 – the founders of the Jingming 淨明 school of Daoism.<sup>93</sup> Again, this is similar to *Golden Book*.

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<sup>92</sup> Piet van der Loon, “A Taoist Collection of the Fourteenth Century,” in Wolfgang Bauer (ed.), *Studia Sino-Mongolica, Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, pp. 401-05. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979; Schipper, “Master Chao I-chen”; Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “The Cult of the Wu-t’ung / Wu-hsien in History and Fiction: The Religious Roots of the *Journey to the South*.”

<sup>93</sup> For an extensive treatment of the topic, see Li Fengmao 李豐懋, *Xu Xun yu Sa Shoujian: Deng Zhimo Daojiao xiaoshuo yanjiu* 許遜與薩守堅：鄧志莫道教小說研究. Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1997. For a study with more

The fifty-five Pure Tenuity books can be distinguished from each other further. It will be useful to treat the older texts first. In four sets of decreasing antiquity these are **(a)** *Daofa huiyuan* 9, with a post-face by Huang Shunshen 黃舜申 (1224 - ?); **(b)** 2, 16, 30, with a Pure Tenuity genealogy of patriarchs that ends with Huang Shunshen (thus roughly from the early fourteenth century); **(c)** 5, 7, 8, 14, 17, 18, with colophons, prefaces, or other writings by Zhao Yizhen, the seventeenth patriarch; **(d)** 15, 19-21, 23, 25, 26, 32-34, 46, 49, with a Pure Tenuity genealogy of patriarchs that ends with Zhao Yizhen. This last group **(d)** is necessarily written some time after Zhao Yizhen's death, but not necessarily much later, as is suggested by a reference to the seventeen patriarchs of Pure Tenuity made before Zhao Yizhen's death.<sup>94</sup>

While, roughly, the first part of the Pure Tenuity books is to some degree dateable, the latter part (esp. 39-55) contains far fewer clues. This latter part of those fifty-five books is so similar in style, format and individual segments that it seems they originate from the same studio. They are well-ordered ritual programs with recurring segments that are similar throughout this set of texts, and that are obviously crystallizations of earlier texts. The segments of which they are composed carry similar names, and contain (configurations of) deities that obviously would not fit into earlier texts – two characteristics that will be treated below. The fact that these chapters are given a modest position at the end suggests that they might be written by the compilers of *Daofa huiyuan* themselves. Of these later texts that range from *Daofa huiyuan* 39 to 55, only two (46 and 49) have an explicit *terminus post quem* of 1382.<sup>95</sup> I will call those fourteen texts the Yongle manuals **(e)**.

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attention devoted to the Confucian aspects of this Daoist school, see Huang Xiaoshi 黃小石, *Jingmingdao yanjiu* 淨明道研究. Chengdu: Bashu, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, p. 867.

<sup>95</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 46 comprises a collection of Qingwei writs and includes the name of Zhao Yizhen at the end of the common Qingwei genealogy, just as in *Daofa huiyuan* 49 – these are thus also from the period after 1382.

To summarize, the first fifty-five books of the *Daofa huiyuan* read like a well composed separate liturgical compendium within the total of 268, in which the practical manuals for actual use on the ritual stage are preceded by more explanatory texts regarding origins, pantheon, lineage, talismans, and individual deities that are typical of the Pure Tenuity school. In fact, the Yongle manuals **(e)** form the nexus of the preceding materials; they constitute the Pure Tenuity practical application of a more variegated range of earlier thoughts and practices. Given the time of their publication it seems almost impossible that Zhao Yizhen's most eminent disciple, Liu Yuanran, would not be involved in such a project.

Other, more concrete factors may corroborate the assumption that the higher numbers within the Pure Tenuity books correspond to later dates of production. Viewing Pure Tenuity from the vantage point of Marshal Deng Bowen *cum suis* adds some more foundation to the above suppositions. Not only are the three Marshals Deng, Xin, and Zhang (as an integral triad) absent from the earlier Pure Tenuity manuals **(a)**, **(b)**, **(c)**, and **(d)** (except for the pantheon in *juan* 3), which is astonishing enough, but they are literally omnipresent in the Yongle manuals **(e)**. This, again, corresponds in time with Zhou Side's *Golden Book*.

Similarly, even as individually occurring deities, Deng Bowen and Xin Hanchen are virtually absent from the earlier manuals. Zhang Yuanbo, on the other hand, occurs more frequently in the earlier texts (8, 11, 23-27, 36, 41), even largely overlapping with **(d)**. The three marshals of the Thunder Division thus seem to be a relatively late addition to the liturgical pantheons of Pure Tenuity and reinforce the suspicion that Liu Yuanran must have played a formative role in the production of the Pure Tenuity lineage as preserved in *Daofa huiyuan*.

It is an explanatory statement by Zhao Yizhen himself that suggests the relatively novel character of Pure Tenuity. In his “Explanation of Praying” 祈禱說 Zhao Yizhen first asks the question that he is about to address: “For Pure Tenuity praying, originally no altar needed to be ascended. What does that mean?” 清微祈禱，本無登壇。何也。<sup>96</sup> From his subsequent explanation it appears that Pure Tenuity practices until recently had assumed the more antique notion of cosmic correlation: because the body was conceived as a small cosmos 小天地, therefore “if my heart is straight, then the heart of the cosmos will be straight” 我之心正，則天地之心正. Thus in the practice of Pure Tenuity “the transformations are within my body, and not on the altar” 造化在吾身中，而不在于登壇。<sup>97</sup> According to Zhao Yizhen’s explanation it was the single-minded performance of ritual on the altar that needed to be supplemented by inner cultivation.

Whereas Marshal Deng was firmly grounded in one old exorcistic tradition (as we have seen in the previous two chapters), namely Five Thunder Ritual (roughly spanning *Daofa huiyuan* 56 – 82), he is conspicuously absent from another more archaic tradition: Heavenly Reed 天蓬. In none of the *Daofa huiyuan* texts that belong to this tradition (155-173) is he mentioned as such, and neither are the other members of his triad. This, again, is telling, because Heavenly Reed is referred to in Pure Tenuity rituals (3, 19, 20, 21, 36, 39, 40, 44, 45). As I have mentioned, the association of these manuals with Jin Yunzhong (see chapter 3) may allow us to date the Heavenly Reed texts to the first half of the thirteenth century.

Finally, the uniformity of the separate ritual segments within the Yongle manuals (petitions, summons, etc.) is remarkable. Most programs contain items that characterize the

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<sup>96</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 8.2a.

<sup>97</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 8.2b.

Pure Tenuity lineage background, their heavenly offices, and most important, the Marshals of the Thunder Division. Compared to the confusing wealth of Daoist denominations, ritual forms and divine agents in the rest of *Daofa huiyuan*, the Yongle materials are soothingly limited in range. They all possess the gods of thunder at key positions in the celestial bureaucracy, such as the “Nine Monarchs,”<sup>98</sup> the “Nine Offices of Thunderclap,” three marshals, etc. A typical Yongle manual contains the following segments: “Report to the Nine Monarchs” 奏九宸, “Notification of Ancestor Wei [Huacun]” 箋魏祖, “Report to the Nine Offices of Thunderclap” 奏雷霆九司, “Report to the Northern Dipper” 奏北斗, “Petition to the Eastern Peak” 申東嶽, “Petition to the Three Marshals” 申三帥,<sup>99</sup> “Petition to the Two Thunderlords” 申二雷君,<sup>100</sup> “Mandate of the Talisman to Open the Heavens” 開天符誥, “Jade Document” 瓊書, “Lineage Document” 家書, “Mobilization of the City God” 檄城隍. This is a clear programmatic similarity with the *Golden Book*.

If my hypothesis that the printing of the Yongle Daoist Canon was delayed by the compilation of the *Daofa huiyuan* (and the *Forgotten Pearls*) is correct, then it seems likely that the delay was caused by the search for books in private possession – not for books that the practitioners wrote themselves. Thus the Yongle manuals could have barely caused any delay. It is possible, therefore, that the date of Yongle’s preface to the Canon, 1419, is the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the most recent Pure Tenuity manuals.

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<sup>98</sup> The Nine Mansions are: The Great Emperor of Longevity 長生大帝, The Great Emperor Qinghua of the Eastern Ultimate 東極青華大帝, The Heavenly Worthy of Thunder 九天應元雷聲普化天尊, The Thunder Ancestor of the Ninefold Heaven 九天雷祖大帝, The Heavenly Emperor of Great Unity 上清紫微碧玉宮太一天帝, The Great Emperor of the Sixfold Cave Heaven 六天洞淵大帝, The Imperial Lord, Heavenly Ruler of the Six Waves 六波天主帝君, The Perfected Lord Kehan 可韓司丈人真君, The Perfected Lord, Envoy of the Ninefold Heaven 九天採訪真君.

<sup>99</sup> Needless to say, these are Deng, Xin, and Zhang.

<sup>100</sup> These two are Gou 苟 and Bi 畢.

This, once more, suggests Liu Yuanran as the most likely author/compiler for these manuals. On the one hand I have found no evidence that Shao Yizheng was involved in the compilation at any time before 1444.<sup>101</sup> Yet after the death of the first compiler, Zhang Yuchu, in 1410, the task of continuing the compilation had been given to Liu Yuanran, who returned to Nanking in 1432. Thus unless some unknown compiler had been at work between 1432 and 1444, Shao Yizheng had been the main responsible.

Perhaps as a consequence of the long road these rituals had traveled from the altars of the local Daoist master into the manuals of imperially sponsored Daoists, the demonic gods of the local cult had become associated with the classical gods of “Daoism proper.” Deities such as the Three Pure Ones 三清 and the Three Agents 三官, or even the Jade Emperor 玉帝 connect the demonical Thunder Rituals of the local cult with the “great rites” 大法 of the initiated Daoist. Subordination to such deities was the final act of Daoist appropriation in the long process of assimilation and standardization.

### 5.7. The year 1488: A long memorial against Daoism

The compilation of ritual anthologies apparently had truly canonized the gods of thunder. It seems that the second half of the fifteenth century witnessed the final stage in the development of thunder as a presence at court – and in society. While several emperors continued their involvement with the practitioners of thunder, court officials protested the imperial deviations from the canon. During this latter part of the fifteenth century their criticisms seem to have become increasingly vocal, and at the same time increasingly alienated from the general religious practice of Ming China. The scene was set for the fierce

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<sup>101</sup> Chen Guofu gives the same date, from a different source (p. 175).



conflicts between court officials and the popular beliefs of the imperial house that are known to have poisoned the atmosphere at court in the sixteenth century.<sup>102</sup>

In 1446 the emperor invited the Celestial Master to the Renzhi Dian 仁智殿 and asked him to write a “talisman of Celestial Lord Zhao” 趙天君符.<sup>103</sup> In 1449, only a few years after the publication of the Daoist Canon, the Zhengtong emperor ordered the Celestial Master to hold a *jiao* at the Chaotian Gong and to pray for clear skies. The Daoists in question summoned the gods of thunder, who allowed their impressive bodies to be viewed once again:

Upon summoning the gods of thunder to battle, there was a huge eagle with blue claws and red wings who held great wind and cried. At the Penglai Gate he seized the written summons and after dispersing the clouds he soared off. The watching crowd turned pale out of fear. Immediately the sky was bright and the air clean.<sup>104</sup>

檄召雷神，有巨鷹，藍距赤翅，挾大風而唳。蓬萊門攫檄排雲而上。觀者駭然變色。應時，天朗氣清。

Whatever one may think of such evidential miracles, they are a sign that the cultural production concerning thunder ritual was far from over. Indeed, in 1455 the Jingtai 景泰 emperor (r. 1449 – 57) ordered Daoists to court in order to question them specifically about

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<sup>102</sup> Carney Fischer, *The Chosen One: Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990; Ray Huang, *1587, A Year of no Significance: the Ming Dynasty in Decline*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

<sup>103</sup> DZ 1463, 4.4b.

<sup>104</sup> DZ 1463, 4.5a.

“all the secret methods of thunder” 問諸雷秘法<sup>105</sup> – very much like the Ming founder had done before him, but this time with an explicit emphasis on the rituals in stead of the gods that were their subjects.

Court officials started expressing strong discontent with Daoist ritual. The *jiao* and *zhai* performed at the inner court in 1449, 1452, 1457, 1461, 1464, 1486 and 1490, added to the many other imperial requests for Daoist services, no doubt exacerbating the looming conflict. Right after the Chenghua 成化 reign (1465 – 87), court officials tried to prevent the new emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 from bestowing further favors upon Daoists. In the first year of his Hongzhi 弘治 reign (1488 – 1505), Supervising Secretary Zhang Jiugong 張九功 (*js.* 1477) presented an unusually long memorial with a scathing review of the religious situation in the Ming capital, directed largely at the role fulfilled by Zhou Side’s temple, the Xianling Gong.<sup>106</sup>

Zhang Jiugong’s appeal to the emperor’s conceptualization of what a correct Sacrificial Canon ought to look like, was an attack on Daoist divinities. He listed a number of cults that according to him did not deserve offerings. While he started his enumeration by mentioning the cult to Buddha Śākyamuni, it is devoted mostly to a critique of the worship of statues of two manifestations of Lao Zi, and the fact that one of these manifestations, “Most High Lord Lao” 太上老君, apparently was taken very literally to be the highest of all gods. He asks the question how it is possible that Lao Zi, who was “also a human demon” 亦人鬼, could be higher than the Lord On High 上帝. More interestingly, Zhang Jiugong unwittingly tells us something about court practices of the preceding reigns:

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<sup>105</sup> DZ 1463, 4.5b.

<sup>106</sup> *Xiaozong shilu*, 13.304-15.

Thus I hope that from now on, for occasions of imperial birthdays and the like, you will not order *zhai* and *jiao* to beget blessings, and that for funerary rites you will not order *zhai* and *jiao* for “recommending and elevating,” and that in either case you will not set dates for sending officials to offer sacrifices to Buddha Śākyamuni at the Great Xinglong Temple, and to the Three Pure Ones of the Three Realms at the Chaotian Gong. Then the Sacrificial Canon will be in order.<sup>107</sup>

伏望自今以始，凡遇 萬壽千秋等節，不令修建吉祥齋醮，或遇喪禮不令修建薦揚齋醮，俱不先期遣官，祭告釋迦牟尼文佛于大興隆寺，及三清三境天尊于朝天宮。則祀典正矣。

Zhang Jiugong’s hope for improvement of the religious practices at court with the enthronement of a new emperor seems to be the result of an aversion from practices current until then: holding *zhai* and *jiao* several times a year. From his words, one gets a sense that the imperially commissioned Daoist (and Buddhist) rituals were more numerous than the records of the Celestial Masters suggest. He adds the wish that the emperor will refrain from sending officials as subordinate participants in these religious occasions.

After the critique of Lao Zi (wrapped in the critique of the Buddha), the second cult addressed by Zhang Jiugong was the one to the Great Emperor of Purple Tenuity 紫微大帝. Apparently this deity’s residence “was fashioned after the likeness of the palace halls of the court” 朝廷宮殿之象, and he received offerings in the Xianling Gong. For Zhang Jiugong the worship of this god “made to resemble a human being, and addressed with the epithet of emperor” 像之如人，稱之爲帝 was a practice not endorsed by the Sacrificial Canon.

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<sup>107</sup> *Xiaozong shilu*, 13.307.

In the third place came the cult to the Heavenly Worthy of Thunder. Zhang Jiugong attacked several aspects of this god. Firstly he dismissed the fact that this deity had come to “supervise all the gods of the Five Thunders and the Thunder Division” 總司五雷雷部諸神 as a fabrication of the Daoists of his day. Secondly he maintained that the cult did not deserve its sacrificial cult in the Xianling Gong because the worship of thunder had already been included in the Southern Suburban sacrifices to Wind, Clouds, Thunder and Rain 風雲雷雨 – a cult that consisted of divine representations in the form of wooden tablets. Indeed, Zhang Jiugong repeated earlier his critique that the practice of “installing a statue and naming epithets” 設像名稱 was nowhere endorsed.

The fourth cult deprecated Daoists even further, addressing the legendary first patriarch of Daoism, Zhang Daoling 張道陵. The memorial sneers at Zhang Daoling, saying that he was “more or less similar to the Yellow Turbans” 大抵與黃巾相類. The messianic Yellow Turbans rebelled against the government of the Eastern Han, and to compare the Celestial Master movement to the Yellow Turbans echoes the appellations found in early Chinese historiography, labeling Zhang Daoling’s movement as the “Bandits of the Five Pecks of Rice” 五斗米賊.

The list continues with the Big and Small Black Dragons 大小青龍 (mentioned above in connection to Liu Yuanran’s unsuccessful prayer for rain); with the “uncanonical” 不經 Daoist practices surrounding Wenchang Dijun 文昌帝君; with the cult to the Dark Emperor 玄帝 on Mt. Wudang; with the cults of two Daoist “Great Emperors” 大帝 related to Zhou Side’s Xianling Gong (especially criticized is the practice of dressing them up with imperial attire); and of the Eastern Peak 東嶽 and the practice of bringing sacrifices

to him as if he were a “human demon” 人鬼 (i.e. a cult based upon an unnaturally deceased human).

Finally, in his critique of the recent development of the City God he shows his alienation from what was popular belief, and what was practiced by local officials, by saying that “the God of Walls and Moats is not a human demon” 城隍之神非人鬼也. The fact of the matter is that the Ming dynasty continued the Tang custom of associating the cult to Chenghuang in each locality with a local hero.

The ferocity of Zhang Jiugong’s diatribe notwithstanding, it seems that the emperor was not impressed. As it turned out, Empress Zhang 張, the consort of the Hongzhi emperor (1488 – 1505), had become an initiated Daoist; on her ordination scroll we find the “Register of the Five Thunder Scripture of the Three Caverns of Supreme Purity” 上清三洞五雷經籙 mentioned as the second item on a list of scriptures transmitted to her.<sup>108</sup> The fame and charisma of thunder ritual could not be better illustrated.

The emperor did relieve court officials from their subordinate participation in sacrifices to some Buddhist and Daoist gods, but only those that were perceived to be the least acceptable: they no longer had to participate in the *zhai* and *jiao* for Lao Zi, Zhang Daoling, Ziwei Dijun, Wenchang Dijun, and the Two Dragons. He did not grant them dispensation from the sacrifices to the Eastern Peak, the Dark Emperor, to the City God, and the Daoist two “Great Emperors.” The latter two were stripped of their imperial titles but not of their imperial attire.

Similarly, the ideas expressed by Zhang Jiugong seem to have had little effect outside the court. If local officials similarly opposed these religious phenomena, the historical

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<sup>108</sup> Stephen Little (ed.), *Taoism and the arts of China*, pp. 211. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago in association with University of California Press, 2000.

records have largely omitted such antagonism. Literati records show that Daoist ritual continued to be practiced widely, even if they involved Spiritual Agent Wang,<sup>109</sup> Marshal Wen,<sup>110</sup> Marshal Guan,<sup>111</sup> or Marshals Gou and Bi.<sup>112</sup>

The Xianling Gong would remain the site for annual offerings on the birthday of the Heavenly Worthy of Thunder 九天應元雷聲普化天尊 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. As made clear by Zhang Jiugong's memorial, the relevance of this temple within the extended Daoist world of the Ming dynasty was not limited to one god alone. It was among the three most prominent Daoist institutions of the early Ming.<sup>113</sup> The Xianling Gong was of particular importance for the promotion of deities. In 1465 a Sacrifice for the Ascent to the Perfected 升真醮 had been held, a rare ritual of unique importance suggesting that the celestial realm was still open to newcomers during the late fifteenth century.<sup>114</sup>

Daoists from the temple had received imperial promotions in 1475, 1476, 1480, and on a large scale in 1486.<sup>115</sup> A certain Gu Jue 顧珏 represents an odd link between the Xianling Gong and the Ministry of Rites. Gu Jue had been the “temple impersonator” 廟祝 of the Xianling Gong, and had been practicing techniques of possession and divination (neither his rank nor praxis were necessarily Daoist). He was promoted within the Court of Imperial Sacrifices 太常寺 from the rank of Vice Minister 少卿 to Chief Minister 卿 in 1483. It is said that his two sons perpetuated his arts.<sup>116</sup> We read that his possession techniques (or perhaps really the spirit possession techniques with which Zhou Side had

<sup>109</sup> Lu Can 陸燾 (1494 – 1551), *Gengsi Bian* 庚巳編, p. 65, 107. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987.

<sup>110</sup> Lu Can, *Gengsi Bian*, p. 36.

<sup>111</sup> Lu Can, *Gengsi Bian*, p. 107.

<sup>112</sup> Lu Can, *Gengsi Bian*, p. 34-5.

<sup>113</sup> That is, alongside the Lingji Gong and the Chaotian Gong.

<sup>114</sup> DZ 1462, 6:9b; DZ 1463, 4.7b.

<sup>115</sup> *Xianzong shilu*, 276.4644.

<sup>116</sup> *Xianzong shilu*, 240.4062.

made some fame) were still current in 1476, when a “divine possession lad named Gu Lun 顧綸 from the Xianling Gong was given a cap and a belt.”<sup>117</sup> It may thus very well be that Gu Lun was Gu Jue’s son.

The gigantic size of the temple is illustrated by the scale of the restorations that were carried out between 1481 and 1482. In total no less than 3,465 soldiers were involved, each receiving a monthly salary of one bushel of rice and a *jīn* of salt each.<sup>118</sup>

In the year 1500 there were renewed appeals from court officials such as Yu Mao 于璫, who protested against Daoist involvement in a facet of imperial ceremonial affairs that had already been an issue during the reign of Hongwu: *zhai* and *jiao* for the Spring and Autumn offerings 春祈秋謝齋醮. Yet, from the Hongzhi emperor’s response we understand that the site for these offerings was at the Xianling Gong. Only weeks later the emperor stubbornly promoted Li Zhengjue 李正珩 and three other Daoists from the Xianling Gong to a higher rank – again under protests of officials, which were again ignored.<sup>119</sup> In 1501 huge amounts of palace resources were spent on *zhai* and *jiao* in the Xianling Gong.<sup>120</sup> The temple continued to play a role during the sixteenth century. In 1506 the new emperor Wuzong 武宗 of the Zhengde 正德 reign (1506 – 21) promoted a Daoist from the Xianling Gong, and another Daoist in 1509.<sup>121</sup>

On this ominous note of official resistance against Daoist involvement in court affairs (and vice versa) ends the first period of 150 years of imperial support for Daoism. After this period, emperors started showing fatigue with the rigid attitudes of the *Ru* at court.

<sup>117</sup> *Xianzong shilu*, 159.2904-5.

<sup>118</sup> *Xianzong shilu*, 221.3815; 228.3905.

<sup>119</sup> *Xiaozong shilu*, 159.2861.

<sup>120</sup> *Xiaozong shilu*, 177.3265.

<sup>121</sup> *Wuzong shilu* 武宗實錄 33.814. The first Daoist was Liu Yunhui 劉雲徽; the second was Zhu Zhengzeng 朱正增 (*Wuzong shilu*, 68.1508).

If previous reigns had witnessed a certain respect from all involved parties towards each other, after the reign of Zhengde the court became a battle field where high-pitched protests from officials led to severe sanctions from the emperor. Whereas the early protests seem to have forced the emperor to engage, later during his reign he seems to have simply withdrawn from interactions with his officials.

### 5.8. The Jiajing Imperial cult of Thunder

With the advent of the Jiajing reign (1522 – 66), the tide gradually turned against the Xianling Gong. Whereas the Jiajing emperor started out just like the emperors before him, by ordering or bringing sacrifices at the temple, this emperor was not satisfied yet: he had an imperial temple constructed that was devoted exclusively to the cult of thunder. Little is known about the imperial cult to thunder as far as the divinities involved, or the people involved. Yet the cult seems to have enjoyed a reputation that went beyond the court, as outside donors came to the court to make their contributions. The temple was moreover built outside the Forbidden City, and thus not strictly separated from the world of commoners.

The young emperor was confronted with a hostile attitude from his court advisors in ritual matters, as is evident from the “Great Ritual Controversy” 大禮議. As Carney Fisher meticulously describes in *The Chosen One: Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong*, this infamous ritual controversy revolved around matters of court ceremony and historical precedents, especially concerning the inclusion of his parents within the imperial ancestry. Officials were moreover no less badly disposed concerning the emperor’s Daoist predilections than during previous reigns. Grand Secretary Yang Tinghe 楊廷和 (1459 – 1529) remonstrated against the emperor ordering *zhai* and *jiao* rituals as early as the second



year of his reign, in 1523. Yang Tinghe tried to convince the emperor with the old adagio that, in the case of prayers for rain, one simply should perform the rituals with utmost sincerity instead of relying upon Buddhists or Daoists.<sup>122</sup>

As with other matters, the Jiajing emperor was barely inclined to heed any advice given by his court officials. Early in his reign he ordered his first Daoist advisor, Shao Yuanjie 邵元節, to take charge of rituals for rain and snow in 1524. Two years later, in 1526, the emperor promoted Shao Yuanjie to the rank of Perfected 真人; at the time he was still a priest at the Palace of Upper Purity on Mt. Longhu. But before long Shao Yuanjie was ordered to the Xianling Gong in Beijing.<sup>123</sup> In his new prestigious position he soon managed to have the emperor appoint two of his disciples from the Xianyuan Guan 仙源觀 in his native Guixi 貴溪 (Jiangxi) to high positions.<sup>124</sup>

It appears that the emperor was particularly attached to Shao Yuanjie. In 1527 the emperor granted a request for a brief furlough on Mt. Longhu only on the condition that he would return quickly to resume his post.<sup>125</sup> Not much later Shao Yuanjie was moreover appointed head of the Xianling Gong.<sup>126</sup> In 1530 officials led by Gao Jin 高金 filed a complaint about the emperor's obvious favoring of Shao Yuanjie, but the emperor ignored their dissent.<sup>127</sup> From 1532 onwards, court officials increasingly bemoaned Shao Yuanjie's increasing role in court ritual.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, as is recorded with peculiar attention in the *Ming*

<sup>122</sup> *Shizong shilu* 世宗實錄, 26.733-36.

<sup>123</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 61.1427.

<sup>124</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 66.1530; they were given "ranks such as that of Right Orthodox One" 右正一等職, which may or may not mean they were appointed in the Daoist Registry.

<sup>125</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 73.1649.

<sup>126</sup> *MS*, p. 7894.

<sup>127</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 117.2766.

<sup>128</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 143.3328.

*Histories*, they bemoaned the emperor's repeated personal performances of rainmaking rituals.<sup>129</sup>

Shao Yuanjie did not contribute to a better relationship by applying the same strategies that so many Chinese men in influential positions had used before: he exerted his influence to get his kin appointed to good positions. In 1533 Shao Yuanjie's grandson Shao Qinan 邵啓南 was given a high ranking post at the Daoist Registry.<sup>130</sup> It was probably also upon his recommendation that a priest from the Daolu si was appointed a post in the imperial ritual bulwark of the Ming, the Court of Imperial Sacrifices.<sup>131</sup>

During the first years of Jiajing's reign business went on as usual, but things were about to change drastically, bringing about one of the most curious religious developments of the Ming. By the first decades of the sixteenth century the Xianling Gong had become an important Daoist temple in the Ming capital, functioned as a major site for religious events more generally speaking, and was even visited as a tourist attraction by literati.<sup>132</sup> Just as the Hongzhi emperor had done before him, a *jiao* for the Autumn thanking was ordered by the emperor in 1530.<sup>133</sup> In 1532 Guo Xun 郭勳, the Marquis of Wuding, requested a *jiao* at the temple.<sup>134</sup>

Then, something strange happened. The next record of an imperially sponsored *jiao* at the Xianling Gong did not occur until 1548.<sup>135</sup> Somehow the great imperial sacrifices at the Xianling Gong had apparently almost brought to a complete end. We know from other records that the Jiajing emperor continued frequenting the Xianling Gong to participate in

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<sup>129</sup> *MS*, p. 1224, 1257-58, 1278-79.

<sup>130</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 146.3391-2.

<sup>131</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 168.3687.

<sup>132</sup> Susan Naquin, *Temples of Peking*, pp. 150; 268-9.

<sup>133</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 106.2761.

<sup>134</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 134.3188.

<sup>135</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 333.6105.

Daoist ritual sessions, sometimes dressed up as a Daoist priest, and reciting incantations alongside his palace ladies as late 1542.<sup>136</sup> Yet, as we will see, the ritual focus of imperially sponsored Daoist rituals had shifted to another place, and was inspired by the advent at court of another Daoist.

Before Shao Yuanjie died early in 1539, he had appointed Tao Zhongwen 陶仲文 (*zi* Dianzhen 典真) as his successor.<sup>137</sup> The appointment of this new advisor to the emperor cannot be seen apart from the later construction of the imperial Thunder temple: the “Thunderclap Hall of Overwhelming Response” Leiting Hongying Dian 雷霆洪應殿 (alternatively called “Altar of Overwhelming Response” Hongying Tan 洪應壇, or simply “Thunder Palace” Lei Gong 雷宮). Although the famous scholar-official Wang Shizhen 王世真 recorded that Tao Zhongwen “opened his ritual office” 開法局 inside the Xianling Gong, and lived in a grand residence just outside, the new Thunder Palace would now host the grand Daoist rituals of the Ming court.<sup>138</sup>

The first omens of the emperor’s new ritual regime are manifest when Tao Zhongwen reports the construction of a Thunder Altar (or temple?) in his native town of Tuanfeng 團風鎮 in the county of Huanggang 黃岡 (Hubei).<sup>139</sup> While this project caused further discontentment among court officials, who lamented the large expenses, Tao Zhongwen’s activities were soon known outside of court circles. In the seventh month of 1540 a Daoist from Hefei arrived in Beijing and announced to the court that he was willing

<sup>136</sup> Zhang Han, *Songchuang mengyu*, p. 98-99.

<sup>137</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 222.4617.

<sup>138</sup> Wang Shizhen 王世真, *Yanshantang Bieji* 弇山堂別集, 11.6b. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1965.

<sup>139</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 236.4823, 245.4921.

to produce great amounts of silver and donate it to the construction of the Thunder Altar(s?).<sup>140</sup>

As the emperor continued to support Tao Zhongwen and even further elevated his status, officials expressed concerns that went beyond the economical. They condemned Daoists generally as charlatans deserving to be executed, and their criticisms specifically targeted the perilous moral consequences of the project of the thunder temples.<sup>141</sup> Whatever the exact circumstances of Tao Zhongwen's influence on the emperor was, whatever his motivations, the fact is that, first, in 1541 the Hunan thunder temple was reported complete.<sup>142</sup>

Very soon after that, towards the end of 1542, orders were given to build an entirely new temple devoted to the cult of thunder – this time the construction site was located to the west of the Taiye Pond 太液池, just outside of the Forbidden City. The name originally designated for this temple was “Thunder Hall, Blessing the Dynasty and Strengthening the People” 祐國康民雷殿.<sup>143</sup> Yet when the temple was reported to be ready, only a year later in 1543, it was referred to by the name that it retained throughout the reign of Jiajing, namely “Hall for the Overwhelming Response of Thunderclap” 雷霆洪應殿.<sup>144</sup> This temple was euphemistically referred to by court officials as the “Rain Temple” 零殿, which accurately referred to the main purpose of the temple, yet which made it seem unconnected to its Daoist leanings.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 239.4857.

<sup>141</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 246.4938-9.

<sup>142</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 253.5077.

<sup>143</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 266.5269-70.

<sup>144</sup> *Shizong shilu*, 273.5364.

<sup>145</sup> Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1567), *Qianshantang ji* 鈐山堂集, 18.7a. In *Gugong zhenben congkan* (vol. 526). Haikou: Hainan, 2000.

The *Veritable Records* of the Jiajing emperor contain an overwhelming amount of references to this temple that otherwise has been virtually obliterated from historical writings about the Ming dynasty. Even in Susan Naquin's monumental study on the temples of Peking, the temple is nowhere mentioned. With the exception of the years 1544-45, as well as 1550-51, the *Veritable Records* mention imperial rites at the Thunder Temple for every year, and often several times a year, such as in 1562, when the emperor performed or participated in grand rituals at the Thunder Temple no less than five times.

The verdict of historians has been in line with the concern of the court officials: this emperor was under the influence of manipulating Daoist charlatans (a tautology according to some anyway). Barend ter Haar has remarked that no evidence exists for the accusations made against the Jiajing Daoist advisers, and that they are probably fabrications.<sup>146</sup> Yet whatever Tao Zhongwen's intentions, it is clear that during the Jiajing reign the usual interactions with the Celestial Masters had been interrupted after Shao Yuanjie's death in 1539. Until then, the allegiance between the patriarchs of Mt. Longhu and the emperor had been firm, with the emperor directing enquiries to the Celestial Masters at several occasions, as well as repeatedly bestowing honors upon them.<sup>147</sup> However, soon after Tao Zhongwen inherited Shao Yuanjie's position, interactions ceased, and no records remain for the years between 1541 and 1549 – a drought that was only ended because the dying Celestial Master wanted to introduce his heir apparent to the court before it would be too late.

If the successor of the Longhu Daoist Shao Yuanjie, Tao Zhongwen, had caused a certain alienation between the court and the Celestial Masters, matters were probably additionally complicated by the fact that the Celestial Master who presided over Mt. Longhu from 1550 onwards, Zhang Yongxu 張永緒 (1539 – 1566), was barely ten years old and in

<sup>146</sup> See Barend ter Haar's entry on Tao Zhongwen in Pregadio's Daoism encyclopedia (forthcoming).

<sup>147</sup> DZ 1463, 4.11a-13b.

no position to impress the emperor. In the ensuing years, until 1566, in which year both the Jiajing emperor and Zhang Yongxu died, interactions were few and far between.

After the end of the Jiajing reign there effectively was no new Celestial Master appointed, even though the fiftieth Celestial Master Zhang Guoxiang 張國祥 (? - 1611) was appointed Superintendent of the Palace of Upper Clarity on Mt. Longhu the second year of the Longqing 隆慶 era (1567-72).<sup>148</sup> Zhang Guoxiang's inherited position did not receive the usual imperial acknowledgment until 1577, thus ending a period of *sine regno* that lasted more than ten years.

Were Thunder Rituals still used as powerful means in the hands of those who wanted to protect the empire, or were the gods of thunder now “merely” dispatched to battle the Drought Demon and other vicious spirits? Indeed, just as had been the case during the Hongwu and Yongle reigns before, during the Jiajing reign too, Daoist ritual was utilized with the concrete aim of warding off alien threats. The slogan of “protecting the dynasty” 護國 that prevailed in religious rhetoric was quite unambiguously carried out by Daoist ritual practitioners – and it was to them that this slogan may have been thought to apply first and foremost. Invocation of the divine generals and marshals continued to be performed in order to ward off alien armed forces. In 1555 the frightened local defenses against the Japanese pirates were supplemented by protection from military gods. After building a high altar and taking a blood oath, “a text was composed to inform Heaven and ask for the assistance of the famous generals past and present, more than thirty men since the King of Martial Perfection [Jiang Ziya].”<sup>149</sup> The author records that the divine helpers did indeed manifest themselves, yet at the same time he takes issue with those of the “official mansions

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<sup>148</sup> *Muzong shilu* 穆宗實錄, 16.434-5.

<sup>149</sup> Tian Yiheng, *Linqing rixi*, 28.4ab.

in the city and the gentlemen of the region who equally frequent temples and monasteries in order to hold *jiao*, and who burn incense in order to pray for protection and for the retreat of the enemies.”<sup>150</sup> Once more it is suggested that even the upright officials who worked in the service of the emperor were involved in religious practices from which they claimed to refrain.

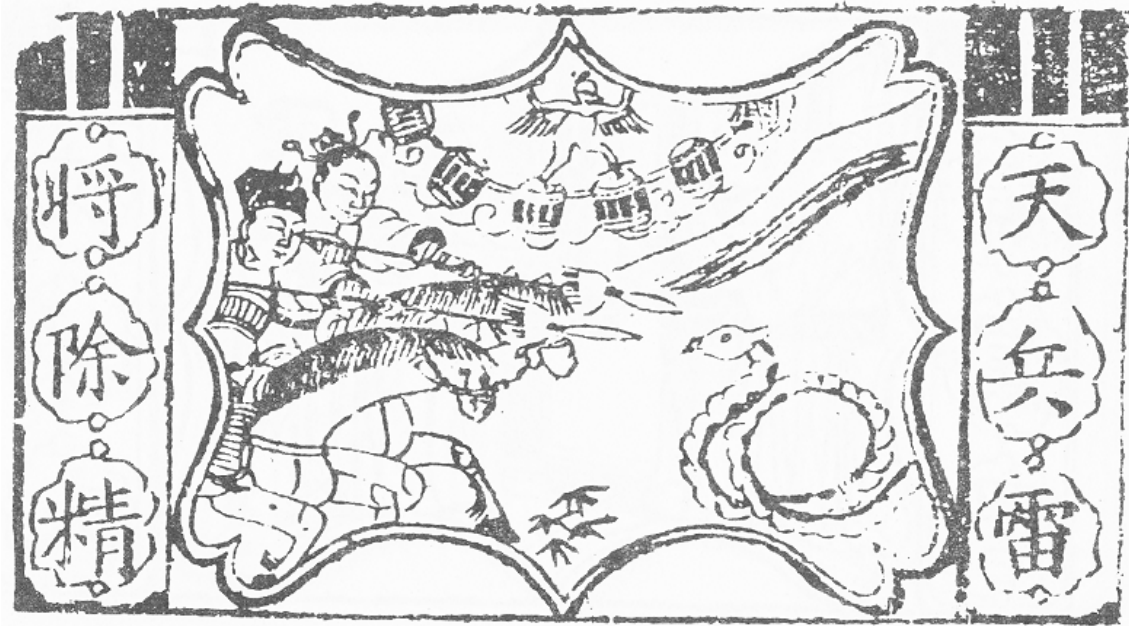
If Thunder Ritual had long become a well known ritual procedure by the Ming dynasty, we have seen that the imperial cult to Thunder reached its peak during the reign of Jiajing with the building of the Thunder Temple. Moreover, the Daoist Thunder Division had become a conspicuous part of ritual performances throughout the empire. By the mid Ming dynasty, whether one considered the court, its imperial officials, or the commoners that lived their lives in urban neighborhoods or rural backwaters, the divine heirs of the Tang dynasty Sire Thunder were hard to overlook. The next two chapters will investigate the roles played by the divine troops of the Thunder Division in literature, drama, and performances of theatrical ritual during religious festivals.

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<sup>150</sup> Tian Yiheng, *Linqing rixha*, 28.4b.

☯ 6 ☯

**Containment and Canonization:**  
Capturing Demons with Words



Picture 6.1. – “Heavenly troops and Thunder Generals Expelling a Spirit”  
Note the Thunder General in a semicircle of drums.  
*Xiang Xing gongan* 詳刑公安. Wanli edition

### 6.1. The trajectory towards canonization of late Ming narratives

The frequent occurrence of gods from the Thunder Division in vernacular “novels” from the late Ming dynasty, to be illustrated in the pages to come, may at first sight seem inexplicable. Why would a standard set of demonic gods almost exclusively known as Daoist ritual agents have become the common stock of “literature”? The solution to this apparent contradiction, I believe, has to be sought in the ritual structure that many of the famous sixteenth century works of vernacular fiction share: the trajectory via which lowly demons could ascend into divine pantheons, as laid out in the previous five chapters.

In this chapter I will show how the narrative exploits described in such works from the late Ming correspond to the Daoist rituals of sublimation – nominally as well as



functionally – that I have analyzed in the previous five chapters. Just like the demonic gods of these rituals, the participation of demonic figures in catching other demonic figures allowed their status to be enhanced. By revealing their violent powers, they betrayed the need to have their demonic nature civilized. Their contribution to the conquest of demons qualified them for a canonization, even if their contribution had been to take upon themselves the role of victim.

Recent studies by Li Feng-mao have begun to unravel a “narrative structure” that connects the stories of “banished immortals” with their purpose of undergoing “trial and hardship” in an earthly setting. For Li Feng-mao, it seems, the main point in the adventures of that those “banished immortals” are compelled to make, is the redemption ultimately achieved by undergoing hardship.<sup>1</sup> According to him, what these banished figures are allowed to achieve is a return to their original body. Although Li Feng-mao, a scholar of Daoism, does emphasize the connection of vernacular narratives with Daoist ritual, he does not mention the trajectory of sublimation that ultimately brings the demonic characters a divine promotion.<sup>2</sup> It is exactly this aspect of the narrative structure that I would like scrutinize here.

Many of the famous books printed during the late Ming dynasty – particularly the Wanli 萬曆 reign (1573 – 1620) – concluded the narrative exploits of their protagonists with the stipulation of a list, enunciated during a ritual ceremony. This list constituted the

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<sup>1</sup> Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Chushen yu xiuxing: Mingdai xiaoshuo zhaifan xushu moshi de xingcheng je qi zongjiao yishi 出身與修行：明代小說謫凡敘述模式的行成及其宗教意識.” *Guowen xuezhì* 國文學誌 7 (Dec., 2003), pp. 85-105; an argument not altogether different from this one is made in Li Fengmao, “Chushen yu xiuxing: zhongyi shuihu gushi de qizhuan wenti yu zhefan xushi – shuihuzhuan yanjiu xulun 出身與修行：忠義水滸故事的奇傳文體與謫凡敘事 — 《水滸傳》研究緒論.” Paper prepared for the Fourth Conference on Vulgar Literature and Refined Literature 第四屆通俗文學與雅正文學, Zhongxing University, December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, Li Fengmao does describe the trajectory from demon to god elsewhere, outside of the context of literature. See his “Cong chengren zhi dao dao chengshen zhi dao 從成人之道到成神之道：一個台灣民間信仰的結構性思考.” *Dongfang zongjiao yanjiu* 東方宗教研究 4 (1994), pp. 184-209.

bestowal of honors (titles, fiefs, etc.) upon the characters from their respective stories; it was a list of canonizations. The most famous example of a book containing such a list is the *Canonization of the Gods* 封神演義. This work was sometimes referred to with an alternative title: the *List of the Canonization of the Gods* 封神榜. Included on the list were all the characters that had figured in the story; all were thought to deserve retribution for their respective roles in the conflict that was resolved throughout the story – both the “good” characters as well as the “bad” characters. Their mere participation was enough to be promoted (by Daoist ritual) into a celestial position.

Other works from the same period contain similar lists. The hundred and eight rebel-bandits of *Watermargin* 水滸傳 were problematic heroes because of their perpetual inclination to use extreme violence against their adversaries. Yet at the end of the book they were pronounced to be stellar deities, included on a list that was read by a Daoist during a Daoist ritual. Again, their participation in the resolutions reached throughout the story qualified them for a canonization – even if their success was achieved most violently.

Perhaps the most famous vernacular work of the late Ming is *Journey to the West* 西遊記. In the same vein as the above two works, the five main protagonists of this story are canonized as divine functionaries in the last chapter of the book. As had been announced early in *Journey to the West*, a divine position would be their reward in case they could help solve the problems encountered by a Buddhist monk on his pilgrimage to the West. Throughout the story minor demonic characters were subdued by the monk’s fellow pilgrim Sun Wukong 孫悟空 and given celestial ranks (or returned to their original position in Heaven).

The number of works that revolve around a similar structure could be extended much further. Due to considerations of space I can only treat a small number. Aside from the three above cases I will limit myself to two other books: *Journey to the North* 北游記 and *Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean* 三寶太監西洋記.

Although this chapter merely aims to establish the ritual trajectory towards divine canonization as contained in many of the famous works of the late Ming, the presence of this trajectory does set these works off against other vernacular narratives. The above mentioned five works all seem to share a relationship to religious phenomena as they existed during the Ming dynasty. In that sense they differed from other works, mostly written later, that more appropriately deserved the label of “fiction.” That type of vernacular novel, such as *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史, *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言, or *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢, seems to have been written more as a self-conscious literary genre by literary talents. These novels were produced as fiction in literati studios, whereas, as I will argue, the works treated in this chapter had grown out of a ritual environment. It is for that reason that the present chapter seeks to avoid applying the word “novel” to the latter category.

In the next chapter I will try to formulate further ways of distinguishing between the religious (ritual) narrative and the literary novel. A reintroduction of the obsolete term “epos” would be tempting, or perhaps “romance,” or “saga.” For the moment, however, for lack of a better designation I would like to propose to take the titles of the works under consideration more seriously. They present themselves as “records” 記, “traditions” 傳, or “expoundings” 演義, thus suggesting a certain historical or didactic validity.<sup>3</sup> While modern

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<sup>3</sup> A number of titles in the Daoist Canon of 1444 contain the term *yanyi* 演義, with a cognate homonym for *yan* written as 衍義. This may suggest that the work was referring itself to these traditions. Cf. DZ 717 *Daode zhenjing yanyi shouchao* 道德真經衍義手鈔; DZ 768 & 769 *Tujing yanyi bencao* 圖經衍義本草; DZ 1277 *Daofa*

readers may not be inclined to find any historical realities in these works that have commonly been defined as “fiction,” my personal experience in China and Taiwan has taught me that people with a less “modern” education more naturally accept the versions of history presented in such books. It seems all the more likely that people during the Ming dynasty were not aware of the kind of historical “objectivity” that modern scholars find acceptable. As I will show in section 6.6. below, vernacular versions of history were certainly used by educated minds at the time when these records, biographies and expoundings were printed. Instead of speaking of “vernacular fiction” or “novels in the vernacular language,” I would like to speak of vernacular or popular chronicles.



Picture 6.2. – “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” 武王伐紂  
Pinghua 平話 version from 1321 - 1323

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*zongzhi tu yany* 道法宗旨圖衍義. For a further discussion see Anthony Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber*, pp.257-58. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

## 6.2. *Fengshen yanyi*: canonization of demons

The [*Expounding of the*] *Canonization of the Gods* forms a chronicle that takes as its topic “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” 武王伐紂. This is more explicitly formulated in the subtitle “Unofficial History of King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” 武王伐紂外史. This account of the founding of the Zhou 周 dynasty through King Wu’s defeat of the last ruler of the preceding Shang 商 dynasty was from the outset associated with the canonization of deities in other sources from the sixteenth century as well as from before that time.

The version in hundred chapters was written during the late Ming dynasty, probably in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The edition of the *Sixue caotang* 四雪草堂 publishing house of Chu Renhuo 褚人穫 has become the standard for all modern reprints. This edition of 1695 is based upon an (only slightly different) edition by Shu Zaiyang 舒載陽, approximately dating from around 1620, which is the earliest extant edition. At the beginning of the second fascicle of Shu Zaiyang’s edition is inscribed: “Edited by Xu Zhonglin, the Old Hermit of Zhongshan” 鍾山逸叟許仲琳編輯. Some scholars have taken this evidence as conclusive and attributed the authorship of *Fengshen yanyi* to Xu Zhonglin.<sup>5</sup> Others found indications, in other sources than the book itself, that a certain Lu Xixing 陸西星, a Daoist priest of the Jiajing period who wrote approximately ten other books on Daoist and Buddhist subjects, is the author.<sup>6</sup> Up to the present day, all scholars dealing with the problem of the authorship have had to admit that the last word has not been said in this matter.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Koss, “The Relationship of Hsi-yu Chi and Feng-shen Yen-yi”. *T’oung-pao* 65:4-5 (1979), pp. 143-65.

<sup>5</sup> Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略. 1930 reprint ed. Hong Kong: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian, 1958.

<sup>6</sup> Liu, Ts’un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962.

The plot of *Canonization of the Gods* being based upon “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou,” the basic storyline thus recounted the founding of the Zhou dynasty from a martial perspective. Although many of the characters commonly found in historical records about this dynastic conquest (such as *Shiji* 史記) played their part in the story, even a cursory reading of the book reveals that in the late Ming version the war was achieved with the help of the gods. This was not a unique fiction of the author: in other versions of “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” from the same time period, the battle was fought on the two fronts of the world of light and the spirit world.

Such a dual vision of the founding of the Zhou is given in a hagiography of the Dark Emperor 玄帝 contained in Luo Maodeng’s 羅懋登 collection *Sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 三教源流搜神大全 (1593 – 98).<sup>7</sup> Consistent with Daoist ritual discourse, the Dark Emperor battled the Archdemons of the Sixfold Heavens who had been allowed to wreak havoc in the mortal world as a consequence of King Zhou’s immoral government.

In the world of light there was [King] Wu of the Zhou attacking King Zhou [of the Shang] in order to pacify and order the [altars] of Soil and Grain. In the realm of darkness there was the Dark Emperor to collect the Archdemons, in order to separate men from demons. [...] The Dark Emperor locked up the demon hordes in the Great Caves of Fengdu.<sup>8</sup>

陽則以周王伐紂，平治社稷。陰則以玄帝收魔，間分人鬼。玄帝〔略〕鎖鬼眾於酆都大洞。

<sup>7</sup> See Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miaoshan*, p. 68. Revised edition. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 (*fl.* Wanli reign), *Sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 三教源流搜神大全, p. 33-6. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1990.

In Luo Maodeng's hagiography of the Dark Emperor it is this short fragment about the founding of the Zhou that serves as the occasion after which he had accumulated enough merit to receive his "venerable title" 尊號. Just as in the Song dynasty rituals that prepared demons for their trajectory towards sublimation, described in chapter 4, the Dark Emperor "locked up the demon hordes" beneath Mt. Fengdu. Moreover, a ritual manual of the thunder tradition records the story of a minister during the time of King Zhou's corrupt rule. After having withdrawn to a mountain and sworn an oath to rid the world of demonic malfesances, the minister is deified as General Zhu 朱將軍, and associated with Mt. Fengdu.<sup>9</sup>

There may thus have existed something like a (Daoist?) narrative tradition that associated King Wu's dynastic conquest with the process of bestowing celestial positions upon deities. Aside from the two late Ming versions there existed an earlier version of "King Wu's Attack on King Zhou" that is many centuries older. The *Extensive Records* contain the following record:

When King Wu attacked King Zhou, his capital was in the city of Luo. The next year, when it was dark and cold, it rained and snowed for more than ten days, more than one *zhang* deep. On the morning of the new time cycle there came five gentlemen riding horse carriages, followed by two riders. They stopped at the King's gate. Jiang Ziya sent someone out with a bowl of rice porridge, saying: "Our lordship is inside; he is just talking to the Son of Heaven. For as long as he has not come out, he offers this warm porridge to mind your cold." After they finished the porridge, Jiang Ziya said: "Our guests may appear. The five carriages and two riders,

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<sup>9</sup> *Daofa binyuan* 227.1ab.

they are the Gods of the Four Seas, together with the Earl of Rivers, the Earl of Wind, and the Rain Master. The God of the Southern Sea is called Zhurong, the God of the Eastern Sea is called Goumang, the God of the Northern Sea is called Zhuan Xu, the God of the Western Sea is called Nou Shou. The Earl of Rivers, the Earl of Wind, and the Rain Master [were thus called], you can ask them to call them before you. [The others] you will have to summon them in, each by his name.” King Wu thereupon was seated at the top end of his hall, and those who came for the audience were seated below, yet inside the gate. When he asked Zhurong to come in, the five gods were frightened, looking at each other gaspingly.<sup>10</sup> Zhurong and the others came in bowing. King Wu asked: “In such cold weather you came from afar, what matter needs to be addressed?” The gods said: “Heaven has attacked the Yin dynasty and established the Zhou, we respectfully come to receive our mandate.” Looking at the Earl of Wind and the Rain Master, he issued a command, having each of them observe their position.<sup>11</sup>

武王伐紂，都洛邑。明年陰寒，雨雪十余日，深丈余。甲子平旦，五丈夫乘馬車，從兩騎，止王門外。師尚父使人持一器粥出曰：「大夫在內，方對天子。未有出時，且進熱粥，以知寒。」粥皆畢，師尚父曰：「客可見矣。五車兩騎，四海之神，與河伯、風伯、雨師耳。南海之神曰祝融、東海之神曰勾芒、北海之神曰顛頊、西海之神曰蓐收。河伯、風伯、雨師，請使謁者。各以其名召之。」武王乃于殿上，謁者于殿下門內。引祝融進，五神皆驚，相視而歎。祝融等皆拜。武王曰：「天陰乃遠來，何以教

<sup>10</sup> Zhurong was the god of the South, and his element was Fire. To call him in first was a sign that the element of the previous reign, metal, had been replaced.

<sup>11</sup> *Taiping guangji* 291.2312: “Sihai shen” 四海神.



之？」皆曰：「天伐殷立周，謹來授命。」顧敕風伯、雨師，各使奉其職也。

Having thus established the fact that “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” was frequently used as a narrative for canonizing deities, the late Ming vernacular chronicle *Canonization of the Gods* appears less as a unique figment of some literary mind, and more like a narrative tradition that belongs to a broader religious environment. The dual vision of dynastic founding achieved with the help of the Dark Emperor, moreover, had previously been applied to Zhu Yuanzhang’s founding of the Ming dynasty (see chapter 4 of this thesis).

*Canonization of the Gods* does not mention the Dark Emperor directly, yet those who fight on the side of the dynastic challengers led by King Wu are supported by the gods of the Temple of Jade Vacuity 玉虛宮 on Mt. Kunlun 崑崙. The term “Jade Vacuity” is a relatively straightforward epithet for the Dark Emperor, who is often called “Grand Preceptor of Jade Vacuity” 玉虛師相.<sup>12</sup> Ming audiences would have easily understood this reference, as the main temple on Mt. Wudang, built during the reign of Yongle, bore the title Temple of Jade Vacuity. In other words, *Canonization of the Gods* reproduced the perception of “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou” as an enterprise supported by the Dark Emperor.

The unique character of *Canonization of the Gods* has to be sought in the fact that the characters that are canonized at the end of the book are inserted into the dynastic enterprise of King Wu by the highest Daoist gods, who send several supernatural beings to the world of mortals in order to redeem their demonic status and pass on to a higher celestial sphere. In chapter one this is expressed by one of the deities in charge as follows:

<sup>12</sup> See a stele inscription from 1552 in Chen Yuan, *Daojia jinshi lie*, pp. 1291-92. Beijing: Wenwu, 1988; see Luo Maodeng, *Sanjiao yuanliu souchen daquan*, p. 35; also see the Pure Tenuity rituals in *Daofa huiyuan* 29, 39, 48.

Once King Wu attacks [King] Zhou, you will complete your merit by your help. [...]

After the events have ended, I will make you attain true fruition as well.

俟武王伐紂，以助成功。〔略〕事成之後，使你等亦成正果。

This “true fruition” here refers to the transformation they are allowed to make into a divinity with a canonical status. From the beginning, all the wars waged in the story are conceived as part of the plan that is to lead to the canonization of the gods. The Daoist Heavenly Worthy of Primeval Beginning 元始天尊 compiled his “list [or placard] of divine canonizations” 封神榜 for this purpose, and King Wu’s adviser Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 is appointed as the performer of the ritual that encompasses the canonization. Constantly reminding the reader of the teleology behind the demonic participation in this dynastic battle, the author introduces the two sons of the corrupt King Zhou, Yin Jiao 殷郊 (one important “Marshal” in actual thunder ritual)<sup>13</sup> and Yin Hong 殷洪, as follows:

“This Yin Jiao later would be the Great Year-star on the “List of Divine Canonizations;” Yin Hong was to be the God of the Five Grains – both famous divine generals.”<sup>14</sup>

那殷郊後來是「封神榜」上直年太歲；殷洪是五穀神，皆有名神將。

This premature announcement of certain characters to be included on the list of canonizations is repeated throughout the story, sometimes even phrased as “receiving

<sup>13</sup> Yin Jiao occurs in the following Pure Tenuity manuals: *Daofa huiyuan* 27, 30, 37, 41, 43, 44, 47-49. Ritual manuals devoted to Yin Jiao are *Daofa huiyuan* 246, 247; *Fabai yizhu* 30, 35, 44.

<sup>14</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 1.

offerings on the altar for the Canonization of the Gods” 祭封神臺.<sup>15</sup> But until the victims of untimely death can be invested with a divine rank and position, they are still impure – they can be seen from afar as “noxious energies” 沴氣 *liqi*, “fiendish energies” 妖氣 *yaoqi*,<sup>16</sup> or “anomalous energies” 怪氣 *guaiqi*.<sup>17</sup> In order to reach their transformation, many fierce and cruel battles have to be fought. Each time when a character dies, “a ray of his spirit enters the Altar for the Canonization of the Gods” 一道靈魂進封神臺去了.<sup>18</sup> This altar is alternatively called Shan Altar 禪臺, a fact that relates the canonization with the imperial Feng and Shan rites 封禪祀.<sup>19</sup> The performance of the great Feng and Shan rites similarly was meant to confer a mandate on a new ruler, who then “received the mandate and reported to Heaven” 受命告天.<sup>20</sup>

The altar for the canonization (constructed at the end of the story) is described in great detail. Segmented in three levels, the altar is familiarly patterned according to the “shape of the eight trigrams” 八卦形. The center of the altar is occupied by the statues of August Heaven and Consort Earth 皇天后土, seconded by Mountains and Streams, Soil and Grain 山川社稷, with the banners of other deities surrounding them. Furthermore on the altar are five archaic emperors, with the Yellow Emperor in their middle. Finally, many different kinds of offerings are laid out on and before the altar. This is no less than the model for an imperial sacrifice as performed in the rites of Feng and Shan, for which both

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<sup>15</sup> E.g. *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 39 and *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 98. Also included in the title of a Yuan dynasty play; cf. Zhong Sicheng 鍾嗣成 (ca. 1277-1345), *Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿, p. 15, 17. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> See Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty*, pp. 175. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Heaven and Earth have to be notified. An prayer text 祝文 is addressed to Heaven and Earth. As we have seen in chapter 4, since the reign of Ming Taizu these sacrifices were conducted with the participation of Daoists.

Crucially, the gods canonized are strictly Daoist, and overwhelmingly known from ritual traditions that aimed at sublimating baleful spirits. Moreover, the characters canonized at the end of the book were baleful spirits themselves – they had been killed in battle. The leader of the army that defended the old Shang dynasty, Grand Tutor Wen 聞太師, is canonized as the most important thunder god: the Celestial Venerable of the Ninefold Heavens 九天應元雷神普化天尊.<sup>21</sup> His main officers are mentioned in the same configurations as those known from standardized pantheons of fifteenth century thunder liturgies (see chapter 5): Marshals Deng 鄧, Xin 辛, Zhang 張, and Tao 陶.<sup>22</sup> They are represented in their familiar shape with their bat-like flesh wings, holding hammer and awl. After them come Pang 龐, Liu 劉, Gou 苟 and Bi 畢.<sup>23</sup> The list contains sixteen other names that can be found in actual Daoist thunder pantheons.

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<sup>21</sup> Grand Tutor Wen figures in chapters 1, 27, 30, 31, 35-52; he is killed by Yunzhong Zi.

<sup>22</sup> These are the main protagonists in chapters 41-43, 45, 47-49, 51-2; Deng is killed by Li Nuozha, Xin is killed by Lei Zhenzi; Zhang is killed by Huang Feihu, and Tao is killed by Huang Tianxiang.

<sup>23</sup> These are the main protagonists of chapters 59-61. Pang is killed by Li Nuozha, Liu is killed by Deng Jiugong, Gou is killed by Huang Tianxiang, and Bi is killed by Yang Jian.



Picture 6.3. – Marshal Deng (with wings) invoked in chapter 49 of *Canonization of the Gods*

Of the celestial offices configured with characters from *Fengshen yanyi* the Thunder Division is the biggest with twenty-four officers. The other divisions are smaller yet they are also known from Daoist liturgies. The six officers of the Fire Division 火部 were known as the “clerks and soldiers from the Fire Division of the Sixfold Heavens” 六天火部吏兵.<sup>24</sup> The Department of Plagues 瘟部 was known from Daoist liturgies that filled the divine ranks of

<sup>24</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 222, 226.

this Celestial organ with “roaming spirits” 遊魂 at least as early as the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>25</sup> Other deities from the same thunder liturgies are canonized. The “Dipper Mother” 斗母 is promoted into the Dipper Division 斗府.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Zhao Gongming 趙公明 is invested with his Daoist title of protective deity belonging to the “Mystic Altar of the Orthodox Unity on [Mt.] Longhu” 正一龍虎玄壇.<sup>27</sup>

There are 115 characters canonized as stellar gods. Twenty eight of them are canonized as the constellations. The Thirty Six Heavenly Paladins 三十六天罡 and Seventy Two Earthly Killers 三十六地煞 receive an investiture.<sup>28</sup> There are investitures for the Dipper Division 斗部, the Five Stellar Lords of the Big Bushel 北斗五星君, the Division of the Great Year 太歲部, and so on. Without exception these are powerful astral exorcists that pervaded Daoist liturgies from the Song and after.

To conclude this section on the *Canonization of the Gods*, the following needs to be emphasized. Notwithstanding their divine ranks and titles, the characters that are canonized at the end of the book are subaltern deities. With the exception of the Celestial Venerable of the Ninefold Heavens, all gods are assigned to subservient positions in a martial bureaucracy. There is a substantial difference between these “lowly” characters and the higher representatives of Heaven, who do not receive a canonization on the list. The latter category includes the highest Daoist deities, such as Lao Zi and the Three Pure Ones, as well as the highest Buddhist deities, such as Mañjuśrī 文殊菩薩, or Samantabhadra 普賢菩薩

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<sup>25</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 267.8a.

<sup>26</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 83; 189; 191; 214.

<sup>27</sup> Zhao Gongming appears in chapters 46-49. He is killed by Lu Ya.

<sup>28</sup> See section 6.3 below for a further discussion of these groups of stars.

(mentioned with their Daoist epithet of Perfected Being). While many such deities play a role in the story of *Canonization of the Gods*, none of these more famous gods is canonized.

This differentiation between the subaltern gods of martial bureaucracies and the higher gods of Buddhism and Daoism is precisely the difference between sublimated demonic gods, on the one hand, and “pure” (sublime?) gods on the other. The former category is predominantly useful in ritual, while the latter was more likely to be addressed as main gods in temples. The canonizations of *Fengshen yanyi* are thus more than just nominally identical to the ritual pantheons of Daoist liturgies; what the canonizations embody is exactly the trajectory of sublimation – from demon to god.

The story of Li Nuozha 李哪吒, perhaps the most famous character of *Canonization of the Gods*, is precisely such a Daoist sublimation: after having grown from “roaming spirit” to local temple cult, Li Nuozha receives a divine body during a ritual of body-reconstitution performed by Tai Yi 太乙 – the Daoist god who is usually enacted during the rites of Universal Salvation 普渡.<sup>29</sup> From that point onwards, Li Nuozha devotes his energies in the service of his Daoist masters. Indeed, the late Ming story was preceded by at least two centuries of actual Daoist rituals. As “Nuozha the Crownprince” 哪吒太子 or “King Nuozha of the Orthodox Unity” 正一哪吒王, Daoist priests deployed him in various martial rituals.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 14.

<sup>30</sup> See *Daofa huiyuan* 230.1a, 232.3a, 233.3b; *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 35.59a.



Picture 6.4. – Sire Thunder in chapter 10 of *Canonization of the Gods*



### 6.3. *Shuihu Zhuan*: Heavenly Paladins and Earthly Killers

At first sight [the *Biographies of the*] *Watermargin* 水滸傳 may not seem to be a likely candidate for an exploration of the demonic trajectory. The version of the book that has become standard, edited by Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608 – 1661), only contains sparse references to gods – that is, if taken to mean the famous gods of Buddhism and Daoism. In reality the book revolves around a pantheon of 108 gods: Thirty Six Heavenly Paladins and Seventy Two Earthly Killers. Just as in *Fengshen yanyi* these were contained on a list of canonizations constituted by the 108 main characters of the story – most of them skilled in extremely violent techniques of battle.

The earliest extant version of *Watermargin* from 1610 comprised 120 chapters. In that version the list of canonizations is presented halfway through the story, while the second half is devoted to the martial exploits of the same 108 characters in their deified personae. It deserves to be pointed out right away that Jin Shengtan's edition has the book end with the ritual of canonization; just as in *Fengshen yanyi* the teleology of the narrative is geared towards this list.

Before considering the specific trajectory of sublimation in *Watermargin*, a few words about the Heavenly Paladins and the Earthly Killers are necessary. These two groups of stars belong to the Northern Bushel, they are summoned to earth during certain Daoist rituals in order to expel noxious energies.<sup>31</sup> The role of the Paladins, in Daoist ritual, is so common that it appears to have been unnecessary for authors of Daoist liturgies to explain much of

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<sup>31</sup> See Li Fengmao, "Chushen yu xiuxing: Mingdai xiaoshuo zhefan xushu moshi de xingcheng ji qi zongjiao yishi," pp. 99-100. For a general discussion of these stars, see Hou Ching-lang, "The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars," pp. 193-228. In Anna Seidel and Holmes Welch (eds.), *Facets of Taoism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

their working. One of the very few Daoist books that contained an “Explanation of the Heavenly Paladin” 天罡說 states the following:

If you want to chase out thunder and deploy lightning, subdue evil Archdemons, help the living and absolve the dead, for all these and other matters, only the Heavenly Paladins are essential.<sup>32</sup>

驅雷役電，制伏邪魔，濟生度死，一切諸事：專以天罡為主

While the range of applications for the Heavenly Paladins here ends up being all inclusive, the first two are actually quite typical for the rituals of sublimation: thunder and Archdemons.

The Heavenly Paladins of *Watermargin* are all stars – the “Heavenly Paladin Stars” 天罡星. According to the above mentioned Daoist book, the Paladin is the last star of the handle of the Bushel. However, there are too many other attributions to different stars that this can be accepted as the standard explanation. The only consistent association of the Paladin(s) is with the Northern Bushel – the seat of the Daoist exorcist bureaucracy, among other things.

The Earthly Killers are not much more intelligible. The word commonly translated as “killer” 煞 is a type of noxious energy associated with the Great Year 太歲. This stellar deity, in his Daoist version known as Yin Jiao 殷郊 and canonized in *Fengshen yanyi* (see above), is sometimes mentioned as the “raiser of Killers” 起煞.<sup>33</sup> These killers, too, are represented as stars in *Watermargin*, consistent with Daoist exorcist practice that targets the

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<sup>32</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 151.3b.

<sup>33</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 86.5a; or “Killer Officials of the Great Year” 太歲煞官, as in *Daofa huiyuan* 233.7b.

“stellar Killers” 星煞.<sup>34</sup> A Daoist ritual known as “Great Method for Life and Fatality of the Heavenly Paladin” 天罡生煞大法 contains an invocation that consists of thirty-six characters in pseudo-Sanskrit – the same number as the Heavenly Paladins in *Watermargin* and *Canonization of the Gods*.<sup>35</sup>

In a much more straightforward way than *Canonization of the Gods*, Jin Shengtian’s edition of *Watermargin* is embedded in Daoist ritual. The story opens with a grand Daoist *jiao* and it ends with a Daoist ritual, too. The first chapter, entitled “Celestial Master Zhang Holds Prayers Against the Plague; Defender-in-chief Hong Heedlessly Releases the Ghostly Monsters” 張天師祈禳瘟疫；洪太尉誤走妖魔 describes the advent of the Song dynasty after a longer period of chaos in Chinese history. Several emperors are identified as celestial beings, the most conspicuous of which is Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927 – 76), the founder of the Song, whose celestial persona is ominously said to be the Great Immortal of Thunderbolt 霹靂大仙 – that is the same title as carried by the Chief Marshal of the Thunder Division Deng Bowen (see chapter 3). *Watermargin* describes how, during an epidemic in 1058, court officials advise the emperor in the first place to grant a general pardon to imprisoned criminals, and in the second place to ask the thirtieth Celestial Master Zhang Xujing to hold a Great Offering Covering Heaven 羅天大醮 in order to avert the catastrophe. While the release of prisoners is mentioned in passing, the narrative focuses solely on the ritual.

Upon completion of the ritual, the story quickly introduces the demonic subjects that will be placed on the trajectory of sublimation. The imperial envoy that has been sent to the Temple of Upper Purity of the Celestial Masters on Mt. Longhu, led by Defender-in-chief

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 138, 246.

<sup>35</sup> See *Daofa huiyuan* 211.

Hong Xin 洪信, is given a tour on Mt. Longhu. Among the many halls that he visits, one in particular catches his eye: the Hall for Quelling Archdemons 伏魔之殿. He inquires as to the meaning of this hall. Zhang Xujing answers that it is the hall in which one Celestial Master from the Tang dynasty has “locked up the Archdemon Kings” 封鎖魔王. Hong Xin demands that he is allowed to take a look at the Demon Kings, but Zhang Xujing says that his ancestor pronounced a taboo on opening the doors, and he would not dare open the hall. Hong Xin stubbornly insists, accusing the patriarch of deceit; he threatens to report back to the throne that Mt. Longhu is populated by a bunch of imposters unworthy of the title of Celestial Master, falsely claiming to possess “methods for quelling Archdemons” 伏魔之法 – with all the possible negative consequences. Zhang Xujing yields, and accompanies the Defender-in-chief into the Hall for Quelling Demons.

The details that follow are similar to the descriptions of the prison-well drawn by Daoist practitioners on the ground to contain baleful spirits (see chapter 3). Upon tearing off the talismans sealing the doors, they enter a room in which they find “a den ten-thousand *zhang* deep in the ground” 一個萬丈深淺地穴 covered by a stone (remember that thunder ritual sealed of the earth-prison with a brick). Hong Xin ignores Zhang Xujing who beseeches him to leave everything untouched and removes the stone. Immediately a ray of black vapors bursts out of the hole and disperses into all directions before anything can be done. Zhang Xujing then explains that the den had contained the Thirty Six Heavenly Paladins and Seventy Two Earthly Killers, together forming the one hundred and eight Archdemon Lords 魔君, who, once released, would cause great harm to living beings. The framework here set up for *Watermargin* is very close to rituals of imprisoning demons. The

specific words used (even in rituals performed today as *feng xiemo jin* 封邪魔禁),<sup>36</sup> “Sealing of the Evil of Archdemon’s Confinement,” were known from thunder ritual.<sup>37</sup>

Thus starts the episodic introduction of the 108 violent rebel-bandits of the Marsh that is so well known to Chinese readers since the Ming, and to anyone who has only the faintest familiarity with Chinese vernacular literature. The heroes are introduced individually. They come from very different walks of life, yet most are pushed into a life of banditry by the cruel forces of a corrupt society. In stories permeated with violence and vulgar scenes, the 108 protagonists find their way to each other and form a band. Consistent with the demonic agents of Daoist ritual they are qualified because of their skills in successfully applying extreme violence.

If, at that point, the reader had forgotten that he was reading not just about any random hundred and eight bandits, but about the hundred and eight Demon Lords that had been released from their imprisonment on Mt. Longhu, he is reminded of this crucial fact in chapter 42. The leader of the gang, Song Jiang 松江, receives a revelation by the Dark Maiden of the Ninefold Heaven 九天玄女. With a Heavenly Document 天書 – a common appellation for Daoist revelations – the Dark Maiden addresses Song Jiang as “Leader of the Stars” 星主 and tells him that he will receive a celestial appointment if he is willing to “spread the Dao on Heaven’s behalf”:

“Star-leader Song: I give you this Heavenly Document in three chapters, and you will be able to “spread the Dao on Heaven’s behalf” as leader. Being loyal and virtuous as a servant, you will aid the empire and appease the people, warding off

<sup>36</sup> Observation from my fieldtrip to Hunan, September 2004.

<sup>37</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 228; also 121, 240; legendary antecedent in *Daofa huiyuan* 181.

deviousness and returning to the upright. When you will have completed your merits and fulfilled your fruition some day, you will serve as an uppermost official. [...] Because your demonic heart has not yet been cut off, Star-leader, and because your Daoist cultivation has not yet been completed, the Jade Emperor has temporarily banned you to the lower world, but before long you will again be able to ascend the Purple Mansion. Yet do not fail to think the slightest [of the heavenly document, to be learnt by heart]. If some day you will descend beneath Mt. Fengdu, even I cannot save you.”

宋星主！傳汝三卷天書，汝可替天行道爲主。全忠仗義爲臣，輔國安民，去邪歸正。他日功成果滿，作爲上卿。[...] 玉帝因爲星主魔心未斷，道行未完，暫罰下方，不久重登紫府。切不可分毫失忘。若是他日罪下酆都，吾亦不能救汝。

Just as in *Fengshen yanyi*, the demonic subjects of *Watermargin* are thus made to participate in a grand celestial scheme through which they can redeem their impure status and ascend into a pantheon. Here, too, their “fruition” consists of a canonization. As Archdemons they are deemed to end up beneath Mt. Fengdu. However, the message to be understood is that Song Jiang *cum suis* are given an opportunity to avoid future imprisonment; by a loyal promulgation of the Dao they can fulfill their meritorious service in the service of Heaven, and ultimately earn themselves a position in the Purple Mansion – the seat of the Heavenly Administration. Phrases such as “spread the Dao on Heaven’s behalf” were common stock of any Daoist ritual, alongside “warding off deviousness and returning to the upright.”

While the above should have illustrated fairly well how the old Daoist adage of dealing with the Demon Kings determines the course of *Watermargin*, it is with the ritual that

concludes the enterprise of the bandits that they are officially invested with martial titles and canonized as gods. The author of *Watermargin* provided ritual descriptions in minute detail: a three-tiered altar with the Daoist Three Pure Ones at the center, surrounded by the Twenty Eight constellations, as well as some other gods.

There are four gods guarding the altar: Generals Cui 崔, Lu 盧, Deng 鄧, and Dou 竇. Because these gods figure throughout “methods for quelling demons” described in Daoist thunder liturgies, they ritually reconnect the canonization at the end of the book with the “methods for quelling demons” mentioned in the first chapter.<sup>38</sup> In the Daoist manuals they are sometimes referred to as the Heavenly Attendants 天丁, and identified as the Four Heraldic Animals of East, West, South, and North.<sup>39</sup> At other times they are simply called the Four Generals (of which there are many), and they figure in rituals that feature the Golden Brick (previously seen to symbolize the act of closing the well-prison).<sup>40</sup> In two instances the aspects of these above texts are combined, and the four gods are matched with Marshal Wen in order to accompany him on his exorcist exploits.<sup>41</sup> In all cases they are active in regard to Mt. Fengdu; in the case of *Watermargin* they symbolize the renewed ritual containment of the Archdemons.

From a purely Daoist perspective the core feature of these rituals is the same as in *Watermargin*: the opening of the Gate of Heaven in order to spread the pure energies of the Dao into the world and purify it. In the story of *Watermargin* these energies burst forth from the North-western position of the altar (here too called Gate of Heaven) as a swirling disk of

<sup>38</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 170: *Huntian feijie sisheng fumo dafa* 混天飛捉四聖伏魔大法; *Fabai yizhu* 31: *Beidi sisheng fumo bifa* 北帝四聖伏魔祕法.

<sup>39</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 170.17a; *Fabai yizhu* 31; also see Zhou Side’s *Shangqing Lingbao Jidu Dacheng Jinshu*, 35.55a.

<sup>40</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 229.16b, 17a.

<sup>41</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 254.3a-5a, and *passim*; *Fabai yizhu* 15.18a; see chapter 3 for a more extensive description of Marshal Wen’s sublimation.

fiery light.<sup>42</sup> The disk of light in *Watermargin* plunges itself into the Southern position of the altar, called the Palace of Fire. When the Daoist priests performing the ritual see this they take rakes and shovels and dig after the fire, which leads them to a stone stele with inscriptions in the illegible writing of 龍章鳳篆, once more referred to as “heavenly writing” 天書. One priest knows how to read the characters and reveals that they match each of the hundred and eight bandits with a star. It is thus a similar written list on which the bandits are contained and canonized within a stellar division of the celestial administration as in *Canonization of the Gods*.

This revealed list of celestial titles marks the end of the Daoist offering. Song Jiang’s group initiates a second ritual, constructs a new altar, and pledges loyalty to the task of “spreading the Dao on behalf of Heaven” 替天行道 as it was given to them by the Dark Maiden of the Ninefold Heaven.

In a procedure almost identical to *Canonization of the Gods*, here too the author has demonical entities placed on a trajectory (proposed by heavenly authorities) that takes them via violent battles into a stellar pantheon. Although the story is in itself devoid of strong religious colorings, the outset as well as the final goal are both explicitly represented as Daoist – and the trajectory from demon to god (proposed by a representative of the Daoist Ninefold Heaven) is no different.

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<sup>42</sup> 如栲栳之形 “in the form of a willow basket,” a description that defines its shape (round) and approximate size (as big as a basket for holding grains, the 栲栳 *kaolao*, also known as 笆斗 *badou*).





Picture 6.5. – Thunder God in *Tang Zhong Kui quanzhuan* 唐鍾馗全傳  
Wanli edition

#### 6.4. *Xiyouji*: powerful spirits serving mortal masters

Perhaps the most interesting case of those under consideration here is [*Records of the Journey to the West* 西遊記]. The plot of this narrative consists of many intricately interwoven storylines, all coalescing into a great story of sublimation. It will not come as a surprise to learn that this great book, too, ends with a canonization of its main protagonists – first and foremost Sun Wukong 孫悟空. He is mockingly referred to as the “Handsome Monkey King” 美猴王; the irony of this name is reinforced in almost every second chapter, when he is either mistaken for Sire Thunder, or his pointy snout likened to Sire Thunder’s beak. The story has enjoyed an enduring popularity that continues until the present day, and its protagonists have become proverbial. The earliest extant edition in hundred chapters, from the Shide Tang 世德堂 house, dates back to 1592. The pictures of this edition are

comparatively poor, which corroborates the suspicion that (as with many other “earliest extant editions”) it was a cheap edition produced for a market that had to satisfy a great demand.

It has been suggested that the story of *Journey to the West* can be divided into three parts: (1) chapters 1 – 7: Sun Wukong’s story; (2) chapters 8 – 12: Xuanzang’s 玄奘 early career and the Tang emperor’s descent into hell; (3) chapters 13 – 100: the journey to the West proper.<sup>43</sup> According to Karl S.Y. Kao, who sought mythical patterns in *Xiyouji*, especially the case of Sun Wukong was one of a supernatural being whose power of action emulates that of gods in the “Taoist-Buddhist conception.”<sup>44</sup> Although Kao wanted to illustrate very different issues, his remarks are useful: the trajectory of sublimation is roughly subdivided in the same three segments, and Sun Wukong in a way did emulate divine power. That is to say: he gained power, assumed increasingly impressive ranks, and ultimately was given a position equal to gods in the “Taoist-Buddhist conception.”

It would be hard to find a story that better illustrates the career of a powerful spirit than that of Sun Wukong. The birth of this ape-spirit is said to have taken place right after the differentiation of primordial chaos (I have described the case of a similar ape-spirit that was exorcized by Celestial Master Zhang Xujing during the Song dynasty, in chapter 3). He was thus born together with the universe itself. Aside from his old age, and the powers he could accumulate under the influence of the alternating radiation of sun and moon, this makes him into a being that has a cosmic connection with his environment – he can “connect” 通 with them.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Karl S.Y. Kao, “An Archetypal Approach to *Hsi-yu chi*.” In *Tamkang Review* 5 (1974), pp. 65.

<sup>44</sup> Kao, “An Archetypal Approach,” p. 66.

Sun Wukong's correspondence with the universe is made explicit in *Xiyouji* by the fact that he was born spontaneously from a stone that cohered exactly with the numbers of the cosmos, patterned according to the Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams. Under the purifying influence of Heaven and Earth, as well as the sun and the moon, whose centuries of alternation refined it, an "immortal embryo had formed inside" 内有仙胎, the stone burst open and gave birth to a little monkey spirit 猴精.<sup>45</sup> Immediately upon his transformation from stone to monkey he beamed two rays of Golden Light up into the Gate of Heaven – which is a reverse of the usual process, where Heaven sends rays down to earth. Only in cases that signify the coming into being of an extraordinary creature are the celestial authorities warned with such beams – obviously this forebodes Sun Wukong's subversive nature.

Being endowed with such exceptional features, Sun Wukong was the stereotype of a powerful spirit that should not be left to follow his own whims. If unattended he could continue to accumulate power (see section 1.5. of the introductory chapter), to extort donations and interfere in mortal (or celestial) affairs. Indeed, the gods in Heaven misjudge the monkey and choose to mind their own business. Of course this turns out to be a disaster. Because Sun Wukong is neither a mortal, nor included in an ancestral lineage, he does not belong to anyone's purview. Within the shortest time he has assumed the title and prerogatives of "king" of a certain locality, something that is a clear parallel with the Demon Kings or Archdemon Lords we have seen over and over again. Not satisfied with his little kingdom he travels beyond the boundaries of his original locality to study Daoist ritual 道法

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter 5, 7. The English word spirit here quite accurately captures the Chinese sense: it is a spiritual substance that has been refined – just as with the spirits of a more alcoholic kind.

with a master.<sup>46</sup> From Master Subhūti he learns the transformations 變化 of the Thirty Six Heavenly Paladins and Seventy Two Earthly Killers.

Equipped with these powerful Daoist methods Sun Wukong returns home, where he has to overcome a Demon King who occupied his mountain cave during his absence. During the battle the reader for the first time witnesses him use his famous technique of pulling out hairs and transforming them into anything he wants. Throughout the story he applies the technique in order to produce copies of himself, or able bodies that can help him fight his demonic adversaries. In this first instance in chapter 2 Sun Wukong uses it to “change it into two or three hundred little monkeys” 變做三二百個小猴. This peculiar technique was not an invention of the author of *Xiyouji*; it existed in ritual practice as performed by Daoist priests to produce martial proxies. In an example from the late fourteenth century, recorded by Song Lian, we read about a certain Daoist that his “steps of Yu formed a Heavenly Paladin, pulling out hair to make soldiers” 禹步成罡，拔髮爲兵.<sup>47</sup> A ritual manual from the Heavenly Reed tradition, written at least one and a half century before *Xiyouji* (and probably much earlier even), mentions that in the practice of summoning forth divine troops “the spiritual agents, generals and scribes come out through the pores” 靈官、將吏，自毛竅出.<sup>48</sup> Consistent with the Golden Glow of self-incineration practices I have described in chapter 3, the pores could radiate with the same Golden Glow, and make the gods manifest: “From all the holes and pores in the body of down and hair burst forth ten-thousand rays of Golden Glow; [...] the ten-thousand gods all manifested themselves

<sup>46</sup> *Daofa* 道法 is the term used by the master’s other disciples in chapter 2.

<sup>47</sup> Song Lian 宋濂, *Song Lian quanji* 宋濂全集, p. 223. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 158.1ab.

inside this Golden Glow” 一身毛髮孔竅都迸出萬道金光 [...] 萬神俱現於金光中.<sup>49</sup> In Daoist literature generally, the pores were regarded to be the “source of transformations” 造化之源.<sup>50</sup>

The ape-spirit’s powers thus have increased dramatically, and his scope of operation now also starts to increase. When he finds himself in need of a weapon and proceeds to the Crystal Palace 水晶宮, he encounters his first “god.” He coerces the Dragon Kings into giving him a powerful weapon and a fitting attire. Still not satisfied, Sun Wukong plunges into the depths of hell and erases his name from the registers of death. In passing he befriends himself with Six Demon Kings.

This is the moment, finally, that the celestial authorities decide they have to arrest him; it is a moment for the first deployment of the divine troops. The Jade Emperor suggests they send down “divine generals” 神將. One of the subordinate gods then remarks that Sun Wukong could be a useful addition to the heavenly ranks, because:

he has the capacity for subduing dragons and quelling tigers [...] we should call him up to the upper realm, give him a minor official function, provide him with a name record in the registers, and confine him here. If he accepts the mandate of Heaven, then we can later reward him with a promotion; if he is disobedient to the mandate,

<sup>49</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 77.22ab.

<sup>50</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 1.10b; the word *qiao* 竅, in this case, is used for the “dark pass” 玄關, which was absolutely not primarily interpreted as the pore of a hair. It is the other way around: the pores mentioned in *Daofa huiyuan* 158.1ab and 77.22ab were miniature versions of the great orifice through which the human body could correspond with its environment. See for a corroborating passage elsewhere: *Daofa huiyuan* 67: 人能通此一竅, 則萬竅皆通, 動一神, 則萬神俱動; 真雷霆之竅也. In the light of Schafer’s (1951) observations on the physical implications of ritual exposure, perspiration, this may be another piece of evidence that posits the “uncivilized” technique of burning shamans as a predecessor to the “civilized” efficacy of Daoists (see my chapter 3).

then we can capture him here. First of all it will not stir the masses and trouble the masters, and secondly we can welcome an immortal in an orderly fashion.<sup>51</sup>

有降龍伏虎之能〔略〕把他宣來上界，授他一個大小官職，與他籍名在籙，拘束此間。若受天命，後再陞賞，若違天命，就此擒拿。一則不動眾勞師，二則收仙有道也。

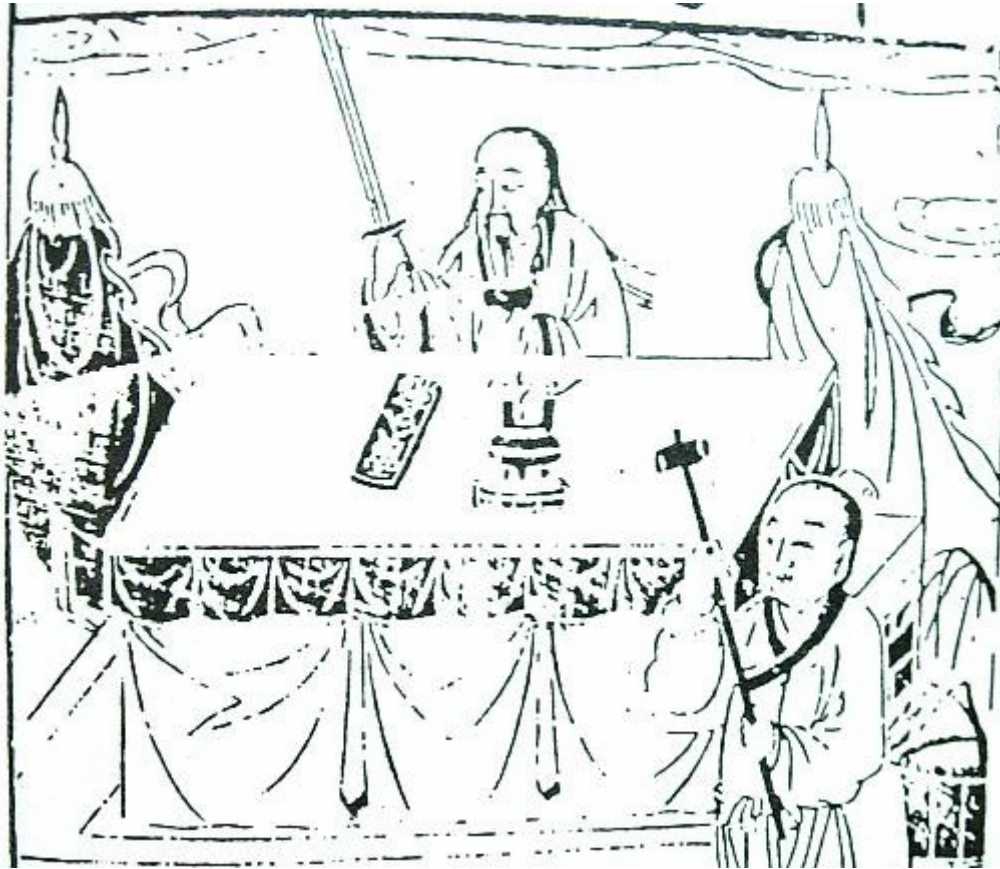
At this point Sun Wukong could have been satisfied. Although this promotion into heavenly ranks was intended to “confine him” in Heaven, he made the heavenly grade and received a registration on the heavenly registers. As is apparent from a recapitulation of this event at the end of chapter 7 of *Xiyouji*, this register belongs to the Daoist Jade Capital, which equally was the locus of appointment in the ritual of “mandating the demon” described in the first chapter of this thesis.

The procedure of capturing Sun Wukong is set in motion. The celestial officers who capture him are the usual suspects from thunder ritual: Deng, Xin, Zhang, and Tao, as well as Pang, Liu, Gou, and Bi (see the canonization of the Thunder Division in *Fengshen yanyi*). It is the almost exact representation of a thunder ritual, and for reasons of space I will refrain from providing more details. Suffice it to say that the gods of the thunder division make several other similar appearances throughout the story. The triad of Deng, Xin, and Zhang are brought into play center stage in the setting of a minutely described thunder ritual, covering chapters 44 – 46. In other words, the author of *Xiyouji*, too, was familiar enough with the ritual agents of thunder liturgies that he would have them impose the same treatment on Sun Wukong as they would have imposed upon noxious spirits in the actual

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<sup>51</sup> *Xiyouji*, ch. 3.

world of religious practice. The author places Sun Wukong at the beginning of a trajectory towards sublimation.



Picture 6.6. – A Daoist master with a “thunder command”-block on his altar table (detail; *Xiyouji*, Chapters 44 – 46)

Yet Sun Wukong is not a common spirit; he is the famous protagonist of a famous story and his trajectory towards sublimation is long and protracted. Before long he wreaks havoc in Heaven, stealing the peaches of immortality – an episode that has a familiar antecedent in local Daoist lore.<sup>52</sup> He has to be caught again. This time he ends up in the hands of Lao Zi himself – or rather, in his furnace. Yet again, this furnace is not just a furnace. It is an Eight

<sup>52</sup> For a story about a temple devoted to a white gibbon who steals the elixir of the famous Daoist Wu Yun 吳筠. Because of the hot-tempered mood 發躁 it produces in him, he jumps into the water and dies. ‘After his death he becomes potent, and many crazy anomalies occur, which are therefore not recorded.’ 其後有靈，頗狂怪，故不錄。 See *Wuxing xianzhi* 吳興續志, p. 829.

Trigram Furnace, structured on the principle of the Nine Palaces (see chapter 3). Lao Zi explains the tremendous forces that Sun Wukong has accumulated, and therefore it is necessary to place him:

in the furnace of Eight Trigrams, where he will be smelted by high and low heat.

When he is sublimated from my elixir, his body will be extinguished into ashes.<sup>53</sup>

放在「八卦爐」中，以文武火段煉。煉出我的丹來，他身自為灰燼矣。

Once more, this could be an end-point, the final sublimation of the noxious spirit. All the markers for such a process of sublimation are spelled out: the fire enclosed within the Eight Trigrams, the smelting, the incineration, and the ashes from which a new being can be born. Yet Lao Zi, too, underestimates Sun Wukong. The author of *Xiyouji* has Sun Wukong here play a trick on Lao Zi that will make the sublimation practices completely backfire. Instead of being smelted by the combined fiery impact of all the trigrams, Sun Wukong hides in the Palace of the trigram *xun* 巽, which stands for the force of wind, and is located in the Southeast corner of the Nine Palaces. The author only explains that the ape hides in the palace of wind so that he may avert the flames of Lao Zi's oven. Yet to many readers it must have been clear that the author had Sun Wukong play a more brilliant prank: hiding in the Southeast meant residing in the Door of Earth, whence there is a magnificent view into the Gate of Heaven, located directly opposite in the Northwest. He resembles the Daoist priest in his ritual appearance before the Gate of Heaven:

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<sup>53</sup> *Xiyouji*, ch. 7.



Entering the Dipper, he strides towards the Nine Palaces and retreats in the Central Palace of the Paladin, closing the Door of Earth by concealing it, and viewing the Gate of Heaven.<sup>54</sup>

入斗，步至九宮，退罷中宮，隱閉地戶，望天門。

Sun Wukong not only enjoys the view; his toughened body has become even stronger. A verse in *Canonization of the Gods* says: “In the furnace of the Old Thearch, troops are sublimated” 老君爐裏煉成兵.<sup>55</sup> Lao Zi may have wanted to transform the monkey spirit into a more useful being, even a celestial soldier, but not into an invincible monster. Of course Sun Wukong escapes again and has to be captured one last time.

His ultimate surrender explicitly prepares him to participate in an enterprise that resembles the storylines of *Canonization of the Gods* and *Watermargin*. The gods allow him to participate in a scheme set up for him (and his demonic companions) to gain merit and ascend into a stable celestial position. Just as we have seen before with *Canonization of the Gods* as well as with *Watermargin*, Sun Wukong and his companions are promised attainment of “true fruition” if they are willing to work for Xuanzang on his pilgrimage (chapter 8); and they too receive a canonization.

Before that, Sun Wukong first has to be captured. This final surrender is achieved by the Buddha, assisted by the “Thirty-six Generals of Thunder” 三十六員雷將. Together they manage to suppress him – quite literally – by placing him underneath a mountain (another familiar feature of Daoist ritual described in chapter 3). The mountain chosen for this act of quelling is not without a certain exorcist symbolism in itself: Mt. Five Phases 五行山. There

<sup>54</sup> *Daofa buiyuan* 160.6b.

<sup>55</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 3.

he will be locked up for five-hundred years until the opportunity arises for him to accumulate merit in the service of San Zang. The reader is warned: Sun Wukong's highest celestial rank is yet to come.

This first integral part of *Xiyouji* would constitute a perfect example of how a spirit assumes power and needs to be arrested by the Thunder Division. However, the author designed his story in a way that gave many other demonic beings a chance to accumulate enough merit for a canonization. In one beautiful instance Sun Wukong meets a corpse-demon 屍鬼 he had previously subdued (ch. 17), now employed as a “great god guarding a mountain” 守山大神 (ch. 26). Of the other “Five Saints” 五聖 who travel East with the pilgrim, two are Daoist gods. They had escaped their duties in Heaven, and lived a free life on earth – free from the duties of a demonic god in the service of Heaven. All of these gods equally are forced (or allowed?) to participate in the many battles that await the Five Saints on their pilgrimage to the West. Aside from the main characters, many other Archdemons, demons, and spirits were allowed to participate in the trajectory of sublimation. Most of them are revealed to be lesser divine beings who escaped their subservient roles in Heaven, and had started to accumulate power on earth as dangerous creatures.

I mentioned that two of the Five Saints are Daoist gods. The first is Zhu Bajie 豬八戒. This hog-like creature is none other than the great Marshal of the Heavenly Reed 天蓬元帥, whom we have seen as the main officer in the ancient Daoist tradition of Tianpeng that served the Dark Emperor, to which an entire set of scriptures is devoted in *Daofa huiyuan*.<sup>56</sup> The second is Friar Sandy 沙僧, whose real identity is “Great General of Curtain

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<sup>56</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 156-168 and more.

Raising” 捲簾大將 – equally known from Song dynasty Daoist rituals.<sup>57</sup> This god, responsible for rolling up the curtain that conceals that Gate of Heaven, also occurs in *Journey to the North* 北游記 (ch. 9; more about this work below) and *Watermargin* (ch. 42). The white horse of Xuanzang is also a banned spiritual being.

The motivation for a pilgrimage to the West is provided by *Xiyouji*'s author in the second part of the story, about Xuan Zang. If this is the real beginning of the story, then *Xiyouji* is just as embedded in ritual as *Shuibu Zhuan*: one great ritual at the beginning, and one at the end. The story relates how the emperor of the Tang dynasty has made a visit to the netherworld where he learned that his world of light can only be peaceful if the realm of darkness is equally calm. In the netherworld, alternatively called “Earth Mansion” 地府, Fengdu, or Pass to the Demon Gate 鬼門關, he is told to hold a Land and Water Ritual 水陸大會 – a grand ritual that will help the hordes of restless souls to “transcend and absolve” 超度 as it is stated in chapter 11, or to have “the dead ascend into Heaven” 超亡者昇天 according to chapter 12. It is for the reason of obtaining scriptures on this topic that San Zang is ordered by the Tang emperor to embark on his perilous journey. The “Land and Water” ritual was performed both by Buddhists and Daoists during the Ming dynasty, so it is not necessary to go into a debate as to which of the two is really meant here.

It deserves to be noted, finally, that it is with the performance of this same ritual that the story is concluded in the last chapter, and that the Five Saints are promoted with a task and title in the celestial bureaucracy.

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<sup>57</sup> *Daofa buiyuan* 147.1ab; for a brief introduction of the ritual see Schipper, K.M., *Le Fen-teng: ritual taoiste*. Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, 1975; also John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, p. 55.

### 6.5. *Beiyouji* and *Xiyangji*: two journeys towards canonization

Examples of late Ming stories that are based upon a similar trajectory towards canonization could be extended much further. Here I would like to limit myself, in concluding, to a short analysis of two more examples from the Wanli reign that revolve around a journey 遊. More literally than *Canonization of the Gods* or *Watermargin* they give expression to the idea of a (pilgrim's) progress – a process of sublimation. I will illustrate in the final chapter of this thesis that such journeys seem to have been closely associated with the “tours” 遊 or “processions” that gods made during religious festivals.

If the *Canonization of the Gods* seems like an example of the theme of “containment and canonization” that could barely be surpassed in its exemplarity, one episodic narrative that probably preceded the composition of *Fengshen yanyi* even better illustrates the theme: the [Records of the] *Journey to the North* 北遊記 – a short appellation for the “Recorded Biography of the Mortal Life of the Emperor of the Dark Heaven, True Warrior of the North” 北方真武玄天上帝出身志傳.<sup>58</sup> It is the story of the many transformations 化身 of the Jade Emperor, who escapes from his celestial office and eventually is reborn as the Dark Emperor. From beginning to end, the story revolves around the fights staged in order to retrieve the “Thirty-six Heavenly Generals” 三十六員天將 (cf. section on *Xiyouji*) who escaped to earth when the Jade Emperor disappeared. They have been transformed into demonical apparitions and have to be conquered so that they may once more fulfill their task of protecting mortals with their celestial qualities.

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<sup>58</sup> One of the few monographs devoted to this topic is by Gary Seaman, Seaman, Gary, *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel Pei-yu Chi*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

What needs to be pointed out is that almost all of the characters of this story are the demonical predecessors of the same, famous thunder gods we have seen so often, thirty six in total. Each of them receives a divine canonization at the end of the story. Deng, Xin, Zhang, as well as Pang, Gou and Bi are among them. Zhao Gongming and Yin Jiao, Guan Yu – we have all seen them before. Strikingly, the most important patriarchs of the Qingwei tradition of thunder ritual are canonized alongside: Xu Xun 許遜, Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾, Zu Shu 祖舒, Xin Hanchen 辛漢臣, Wei Huacun 魏華存, and Lu Shizhong 路時中. Since these latter six figures did not play any role in the story, the emphatic ritual interest betrayed by this insistence on the patriarchs of Thunder Ritual is clear.

A second book about a journey, *Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean* 三寶太監西洋記, was written by Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 by 1597.<sup>59</sup> Similar to *Xiyouji*, this book takes a westward journey as its topic. In this instance, too, the historical realities that provide the setting for the story demand that the main character is Buddhist in his preferences. The great eunuch Zheng He 鄭和 was said to have been a devout Buddhist, and the story contains many heroic feats with a Buddhist coloring. Yet as the plot unfolds, the narrative action is taken over by familiar Daoist rituals of the Celestial Master.

As with other stories, Luo Maodeng's is one more example of a plot embedded in ritual. This second story about a journey to the strange lands located in the west, with many “foreign devils” 番鬼 to be subdued on the way, is structured around the annual festival for the restless souls on 7/15, here referred to as 盂蘭盆 *Yulanpen*.<sup>60</sup> It is during this ritual

<sup>59</sup> Ptak, Roderich, *Cheng Ho's Abenteuer im Drama und Roman der Ming-Zeit: Hsia hsi-yang, eine Übersetzung und Untersuchung: Hsi-yang chi, ein Deutungsversuch*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996. For a more Daoist reading, see Nikaido Yoshihiro 二階堂善弘, “Sanpō taikan seiyōki' e no tashōsetsu no eikyō 『三宝太監西洋記』への他小説の影響,” pp.242-67. In *Dōkyō bunka e no tenbō 道教文化への展望*. Tōkyō: Hirakawa Shuppansha, 1994.

<sup>60</sup> *Sanbao taijian xiyangji*, ch. 1.

occasion that a report is delivered to the Buddha that some of the Archdemon Kings from the Sixfold Heaven that had been locked up by the Dark Emperor during “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou,” have escaped from Mt. Fengdu – Luo Maodeng applies the same wording he already applied in the hagiography of the Dark Emperor he wrote shortly before this book. The Dark Emperor has once more descended to earth to fulfill his exorcist task, and a Buddho-Daoist figure called 定光佛, or 燃燈古佛, will assist him.<sup>61</sup>

This story also ends with some familiar twists. There are tours through hells (ch. 87) and long lists of plaintiffs who file a suit against the protagonists who have killed them (ch. 88), as well as the verdict resulting from most cases: their punishment consists of the task to help the King of the Turning of the Wheel 轉輪王 (ch. 89, 90). In chapter 92 another “Land and Water Retreat” 水陸齋 is performed, and celestial investitures awarded in chapter 97. Stories of establishing merit 建立一功 by battling demons are told in chapter 98, a list of foreign countries presented to emperor Yongle in chapter 99, and the last chapter is concerned with the construction of a temple devoted to the Heavenly Consort 天妃, the goddess protecting seafarers known as Mazu 媽祖.

In between the rituals of salvation performed at the beginning and end of the story, the narrative actions barely differ from the other novels: encounters of battle. The same thunder generals we have seen dozens of times before, such as Ma, Zhao, Wen, and Guan are invoked continuously, sometimes individually, often in their standard ritual configuration. In chapter 55 a ray of golden light pierces the Southern Gate of Heaven (as was the case in *Xiyouji*), alarming the Jade Emperor who assembles the four generals of the Heavenly Reed quartet, the Thirty-six Paladins, the Seventy-two Earthly Killers, as well as (1) Ma, Zhao,

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<sup>61</sup> See John Lagerwey, “Dingguang Gufo: Oral and Written Sources in the Study of a Saint,” p. 77-129. In *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 10 (1998).

Wen, Guan; (2) Deng, Xin, Zhang, Tao; (3) Pang, Liu, Gou, Bi. The list could be furthered with many examples, including actual descriptions of thunder ritual, and of altar lay-outs.

## 6.6. The Daoist Canon of 1607

In his revised edition of *Records of the Search for Gods* 搜神記, printed in 1607, the fiftieth Celestial Master Zhang Guoxiang 張國祥 (d. 1611) used a hagiography including the exact same phrase as had been used twice by Luo Maodeng to describe the dual enterprise of “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, a citation of two lines from *Journey to the West* in another hagiography from *Records of the Search for Gods* shows that the vernacular “novels” from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries may have been understood to belong to an overtly religious sphere rather than to the realm of mere fiction. Zhang Guoxiang’s edition allows for the use of *Journey to the West* in order to provide evidence for certain “legends” just as he would use other “historical” sources. In a hagiography of the Gods of Gates 門神 that he included in his *Records of the Search for Gods*, he refers to a phrase from chapter 10 of *Journey to the West*:

In the “little ode” of *Journey to the West* there is a phrase: “They were once heroic warriors, servants of the greatest merit; but now they became for all time the guardians of homes, in all ages the protectors of the gates.”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> For a discussion on dating, see Glen Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miaoshan*, p. 57-59. Revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> DZ 1467 *Soushen ji* 搜神記, 6.18ab.

《西遊記小詞》有「本是英雄豪杰舊勳臣，只落得千年稱戶尉，萬古作門神」之句。

Zhang Guoxiang's collection of hagiographies is set up as a historical study: he presents the “histories” of gods, making use of a great range of sources. Among the authors and works he cites are the *Records of the Listener* by Hong Mai,<sup>64</sup> Song Lian (Ming Taizu's historiographer),<sup>65</sup> Lin Xiyi 林希逸,<sup>66</sup> Su Shi 蘇軾,<sup>67</sup> Niu Sengru 牛僧孺,<sup>68</sup> and others.

The specific ritual characteristics of *Canonization of the Gods*, *Watermargin*, *Journey to the West*, and other works must have been familiar to Zhang Guoxiang. He was the compiler of the *Supplement to the Daoist Canon* 續道藏 that was printed in 1607 on imperial request. Consisting of only fifty-six books, this *Supplement* was a minor addition to the existing canon of 1444. Similar to the rich religious content of vernacular stories from the Wanli reign it contained an unusually large amount of materials related to “popular religion,” as is illustrated by the example of Zhang Guoxiang's *Records of Divine Inquiries*. The *Records of Divine Inquiries* included a wide range of cults, ranging from hardcore Buddhist deities to rather local popular gods – and the same can be said from the *Supplement*.

A glance at the list of titles teaches us that the familiar Daoist ritual canonization of local cults was paralleled in the late Ming by a textual canonization of local cults. Moreover, this textual canonization was extended to Buddhist canonical texts as well. The first scripture of the Wanli *Supplement* is a Daoist version of the Buddhist Lotus Sutra, entitled “Lotus Sutra of the Wondrous Law belonging to the Uppermost Middle Way” 太上中道妙法蓮華經

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<sup>64</sup> DZ 1467, 4.19b.

<sup>65</sup> DZ 1467, 5.4b.

<sup>66</sup> DZ 1467, 5.9a.

<sup>67</sup> DZ 1467, 5.9b.

<sup>68</sup> DZ 1467, 5.19b.



(DZ 1432). While Daoist adaptation of Buddhist deities or their absorption into Daoist pantheons was by no means a new phenomenon, the candid avowal to canonize a core scripture of Buddhism was unprecedented.

Individual deities were made a part of this same development of canonization. Zhang Guoxiang's selection of scriptures to be included in the *Supplement* shows a range of deities that are not unambiguously Daoist, Buddhist, or "popular." Only the Jade Emperor seems to have been widely regarded as a Daoist god during the Ming.<sup>69</sup>

DZ 1440 "Collected Commentaries to the [Jade] Emperor's Scriptures" 皇經集註

DZ 1441 the Eastern Peak 東嶽

DZ 1442 the Three Agents 三官

DZ 1443 Spiritual Agent Wang 王靈官

DZ 1444 the Medicine King 藥王

DZ 1445 the Lady of Azure Nebula 碧霞元君

DZ 1446 Lord Guan 關公

DZ 1447 the City God 城隍

DZ 1448 Marshal Ma 馬元帥 (Huaguang 華光)

Kristofer Schipper has recently related the occurrence of these variegated divinities to the inclusion in the *Supplement* of several commentaries to Daoist books by controversial literati

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<sup>69</sup> This is corroborated by several sources. See Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 (*fl.* Wanli reign), *Sanbao taijian xiyangji* 三寶太監西洋記, p. 457 (ch.44): 一個玉皇大帝，一個觀世音菩薩，解釋了釋、道二家之爭，一駕祥雲而去。 Daoist initiatory knowledge had been tied to the Jade emperor since the Yuan and through the Ming, see *Huizhou fuzhi* 徽州府志 10.32b: 乃授以〈玉皇經〉，教真文符籙。 Also see Lu Can 陸燾 (1494-1551), *Gengsi Bian* 庚巳編. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), p. 106-7: 素奉道，乃日持誦〈玉皇經〉凡數百部。

such as the prolific writer Li Zhi 李贄 (1527 – 1602) or the great bibliophile Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540 – 1619). Li Zhi’s writings were popular among elite circles, yet banned by more conservative contemporaries; Jiao Hong was scorned by fundamentalists from the Donglin faction 東林黨. According to Schipper, the contents of the *Supplement* seem to suggest that Zhang Guoxiang wanted to align himself with less radical currents in society.<sup>70</sup> It seems certain that the position taken by such men as the Donglin partisans, condemning religious phenomena that were “uncanonical” 不經 as “heterodoxy” 異端 or “evil” 邪, was one by which they set themselves off against all religion that was not talked about by Kong Zi.

However this may have been, we can say something rather substantial about Zhang Guoxiang’s selection of books. The nine scriptures listed above are a typical example of a basic pantheon that would be invoked for the performance of a Daoist ritual. With the exception of the Lady of Azure Nebula, whose presence is rarely found in Daoist pantheons, the other deities fit into most liturgies – in the order of the above books.<sup>71</sup> Among the highest gods first addressed in ritual would be the Jade Emperor. Ranked lower, yet still occupying high positions, the Eastern Peak or the Three Agents could follow after the Jade Emperor. Martial deities such as Spiritual Agent Wang, Lord Guan, or Marshal Ma would be dispatched to act upon whatever local demonic entity might be causing trouble. And as I have pointed out in chapter 4, the City God was an almost standard representative of the local celestial bureaucrats in cooperation with whom the Daoist priest would arrange his ritual.

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<sup>70</sup> Schipper & Verellen, *Companion*, p. 38.

<sup>71</sup> During the Ming dynasty, on the other hand, the Lady of Azure Nebula, was closely associated with the cult (and temple) of the Eastern Peak; See Susan Naquin, “The Peking Pilgrimage to Miao-feng Shan: Religious Organizations and Sacred Site,” pp. 333-77. In Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Thus I would like to suggest that Zhang Guoxiang's selection of books reveals his alignment with the local cult. The double inclusion of the Eastern Peak – as Eastern Peak and through the Lady of Azure Nebula of the Eastern Peak – even seems to make it into a very local Pekinese affair. While the God of the Eastern Peak had for centuries (if not millennia) been worshiped in temples and invoked in rituals throughout large parts of China, the cult to the Lady of Azure Nebula was “distinctly regional.”<sup>72</sup> In Peking, sacred sites dedicated to her were built in a tempo that was “significantly livelier” during the Wanli reign than before.<sup>73</sup> To include her scripture in the Wanli *Supplement* revealed the relationship between Daoism (or Daoist ritual) and the local cult. The fact that Zhang Guoxiang resided on Mt. Longhu in Jiangxi reinforces the impression that it was not simply a consequence of the environment he lived in – it was a conscious choice to connect his practice with a locality.

His selection of ritual manuals is of prime relevance to the subject of this thesis, the trajectory of sublimation. From the texts he selected it is evident that the Celestial Masters had long embraced the Thunder Rituals of previous practitioners. Apologies for the acknowledgment of demonic gods were no longer deemed necessary, and their ritual appearances were woven seamlessly into the fabric of Daoist ritual.

The rituals of the manuals in the *Supplement* also relate to those of the late Ming vernacular stories. The grand ritual at the end of *Watermargin* that culminated in the opening of the Gate of Heaven; Sun Wukong's repeated appearances before the Gate of Heaven – we have seen them as the core of Daoist ritual in other chapters. The Wanli *Supplement* addresses this ritual specifically. The *Scripture on the Creation of the World, by the Most High Lord Lao* was by no means a ritual manual.<sup>74</sup> This short book contained a mythical survey of the

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<sup>72</sup> Susan Naquin, “The Peking Pilgrimage to Miao-feng Shan,” p. 334.

<sup>73</sup> Susan Naquin, “The Peking Pilgrimage to Miao-feng Shan,” p. 335.

<sup>74</sup> DZ 1437 *Taishang laojun kaitianjing* 太上老君開天經. Attributed to the Six Dynasties (220-589).

various stages of gestation that the cosmos has undergone, and that were accompanied by transformations of Lao Zi into new divine manifestations. The scripture concludes with some concise ritual instructions for the Daoist priest on how to open Heaven and communicate with the Dao, in order to release its pure energies and dispel the impure energies that make the world a hazardous place.

One key statement of this text is found at a crucial node within the enumeration of the phases of gestation of the universe. According to the text: “Upon the death of Primordial Chaos the Nine Palaces [came into being]” 混沌既沒而九宮.<sup>75</sup> This is the same cosmology as expressed in chapter one of *Xiyouji*, where Sun Wukong was born during the differentiation of Primordial Chaos, with a body fashioned “after the Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams” 按九宮八卦. Indeed, according to the *Scripture on the Creation of the World, by the Most High Lord Lao* this is the model of Lao Zi’s body.<sup>76</sup> Sun Wukong, the quintessential master of transformations, was thus made to echo Lao Zi, the mythical master of transformations. Sun Wukong had studied the Daoist rituals of transformation called the “Thirty Six Heavenly Paladins and Seventy Two Earthly Killers;” Heaven had given him the duty to apply these skills in order to conquer obstacles that the monk Xuan Zang would encounter. One might wonder whether his powers were made to resemble the transformative powers of a Daoist priest who is said in almost every ritual manual to “spread the transformations on Heaven’s behalf” 代天行化.

As far as rituals of sublimation in the Wanli *Supplement* are concerned, they remain within the realm of the demonic trajectory that we have seen in vernacular stories. The most extensive descriptions are included in the *Mysterious Liturgy for Sublimation by the Purple Emperor*

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<sup>75</sup> DZ 1437, 3b.

<sup>76</sup> DZ 1437, 6ab.

紫皇鍊度玄科 (DZ 1451).<sup>77</sup> The subject of the manual is a ritual of sublimation belonging to the purview of the Purple Emperor – an alternative appellation used for the Dark Emperor, commander of the soldiers of darkness. Here, too, the process closely corresponds with the capture of noxious spirits (such as Sun Wukong) in vernacular narratives. After paying his respects to a large number of familiar high deities, such as the Three Pure Ones, the Jade Emperor, various stellar gods, thunder gods, etc. (2a-3b), the priest asks various marshals to descend onto his altar and assist him with his “sublimation” of the orphan souls (4ab). As maintained by earlier Daoist scriptures, such assistance would allow former demons to ascend to higher positions. For example, the highest officer of the Thunder Division, Deng Bowen, had “established his merit” 立功勳 by killing Chi You in the service of the Yellow Emperor and was subsequently ordered by the Jade Emperor to preside over Thunderclap.<sup>78</sup> A character from *Fengshen yanyi* was also said to have worked for the Yellow Emperor, and having “previously established his merit by attacking Chi You” 征伐蚩尤，曾有勳功。<sup>79</sup> In chapter 3 we have seen that Guan Yu, too, was absorbed into the Daoist pantheon after he had defeated a newly emerged Chi You.

Other thunder marshals we have seen in *Fengshen yanyi* and *Xiyouji*, etc., play a particularly important role throughout the rest of the ritual: Marshals Gou and Bi, who are the gods guarding the Gate of Thunder.<sup>80</sup> I have explained in the introduction that Gou and Bi represent fire and water respectively, and occur within the Qingwei rituals of “sublimation

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<sup>77</sup> Although the scripture is undated and anonymous, its references to the entire panoply of Daoist traditions known from *Daofa huiyuan* make it likely to attribute its production to the time shortly before the printing of the Supplement in 1607. The text seems to surpass the usual Qingwei accretions of the fifteenth century by referring to Orthodox Unity 正一 (2b), Lingbao 靈寶 and Qingwei 清微 (3a), as well as Tianpeng 天蓬 (4b). Even the relatively unknown schools of Ziting 紫庭, Fengdu 酆都, and Dongyue 東嶽 (Peking again?) are characterized as separate traditions (3a).

<sup>78</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 80.14b.

<sup>79</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, ch. 99.

<sup>80</sup> DZ 1451, 4b: 雷門陰陽苟畢二雷神.

with water and fire” 水火鍊度.<sup>81</sup> Sun Wukong’s master applies a similar technique, called the “forging and refinement by water and fire” 水火煅煉.<sup>82</sup> In Zhou Side’s *Golden Writing* the two marshals occur within the same context of sublimation by water and fire (see chapter 5 of this thesis).

In the text selected by Zhang Guoxiang for the *Supplement* these two marshals make sure that the orphan souls “return to their origin” 返本 (7b) or “return to their source” 返泉 (17a). Yet the ultimate goal was not to destroy them, or keep them there, far from it: “the Most High [Lord Lao] has a method: if one mingles the twelve energies with the origin, one can produce the twelve circulations, and return [the orphan souls] to the living Way of men” 太上有法：十二炁混元，能生十二經絡，返生人道.<sup>83</sup> Similar to the ritual of “mandating demon” we have seen, the Daoist priest swallows twelve mouths full of “perfect energies” 真炁, and inside his body a spirit is formed in the shape of an infant.<sup>84</sup> The priest then re-produces a human body, with all the apertures, viscera, bones, joints, etc., until the body of the orphan soul is complete 亡魂形體俱全.<sup>85</sup> Thus, a new being is re-created out of the recycled energies of previously perished souls, while life is poured into the new body by injecting it with the energies of the Five Directions and the Ninefold Heaven.<sup>86</sup> A demonic soul is thus absorbed into the priest’s body and receives a new life 命 – or as the ritual parlance has it, a new “mandate.”

As we have seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, the ritual technique for seizing baleful spirits commonly consisted of the drawing of an earth-prison in the form of the character

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<sup>81</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 17, 23.

<sup>82</sup> *Xiyouji*, ch. 2.

<sup>83</sup> DZ 1451, 17a.

<sup>84</sup> DZ 1451, 22b.

<sup>85</sup> DZ 1451, 23a.

<sup>86</sup> DZ 1451, 24a.

for “well” 井 or other miniature representations of the Nine Palaces, such as mirrors shaped according to the Eight Trigrams, or metal coins with a square hole. By the sixteenth century, the practice of drawing earth-prisons in the ritual space had become so widespread that it became a target of official objections against religious festivals. A critique was formulated that intended to “do away with heterodoxy in order to revere the correct Way” 闢異端以崇正道:

The law has clear regulations for a prohibition of the evil arts of the “master shaman.” Today there are these ignorant people who call themselves “senior master,” “hearth-dwelling Daoist master,” and “ritual master and ritual matron,” or “holy master.” They open grand altar grounds and falsely **draw earth prisons**; they secretly fabricate liturgical books and deceptively transmit Buddhist songs.<sup>87</sup>

禁止師巫邪術，律有明條。今有等愚民，自稱「師長」、「火居道士」，及「師公師婆」、「聖子」之類，大開壇場，假畫地獄；私造科書，偽傳佛曲。

Apparently, the Daoist attempt to liberate the local community from their demonic afflictions by marshaling them into pantheons was common enough to be singled out as a religious practice that needed to be eradicated. Whether one wanted to proscribe such activities or patronize them, it seems they were hard to get around.

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<sup>87</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 3.16b-17a.

### 6.7. Some words on *Three Kingdoms*

In concluding this chapter I would like to devote some words to the absence from my discussions of one important work of the late Ming: [*Expounding of the Records of*] *Three Kingdoms* 三國志演義. The reason to exclude this book from this chapter is not because I think it would not fit the trajectory towards canonization. To the contrary, the cult to Guan Yu was one of the most widespread cults of the Ming; an overwhelming majority of late Ming gazetteers mentions the presence of a local temple dedicated to this deity, often several of them; as Marshal Guan, he moreover was an important officer in the Daoist Thunder Division. It would seem that for the majority of the people who had not received an education providing them with the modern standards of historicity (or in the standard Chinese histories, for that matter), reading about Guan Yu (or seeing him acted out in theatre) primarily meant seeing a god.

The problem with this book is the list of canonizations. Instead of presenting one coherent list at the end of the book, as is the case with the other works considered in this chapter, canonizations are bestowed upon the martial characters who participate in the unfolding events several times throughout the story of *Three Kingdoms*. In other words, there is not just one single list, but scattered investitures, and several small enumerations of promotions. Moreover, although the religious connotations in reading about such important deified figures as Guan Yu may have been understood by many readers, the investitures of *Three Kingdoms* are not explicitly framed as religious events. It is only for this reason of uniformity that I have not discussed *Three Kingdoms* as one of the late Ming works containing the trajectory towards canonization.

As we will see in the next chapter, however, Guan Yu played an important role in the rituals and dramatic performances of the local religious festival. There, he was a main



protector of the local community against demonic intrusions – alongside the other martial characters of the late Ming religious chronicle.



Picture 6.7. – Top: thunder god in *Three Kingdoms* edition from 1591



Picture 6.8. – Bottom: thunder god in *Three Kingdoms*, Mao Zonggang edition (1660's)



## The Late Ming Ritual Field “Novels” between procession, tour, and trajectory

### 7.1. Gods of Ritual, Theatre, and “Novels”

Where did the gods come from? If the ritual trajectory towards canonization was such a conspicuous feature of late Ming “novels,” and if the particular similarities with Daoist rituals of “sublimation” were so pertinent, perhaps the question that needs to be considered here is: where did the stories come from? Instead of limiting our answer to purely textual antecedents, as scholars have commonly tended to do, I would like to investigate the broader cultural situation of the late Ming “novel” around the time that the standard editions were printed (roughly during the late sixteenth century).<sup>1</sup> I will attempt to locate the history of these story cycles in the performative context of the religious festival, attributing the stories’ antecedents to ritual, theatre, and festival processions. In doing so, I suggest that our understanding of these late Ming books may benefit from a less “literary” approach: the books may very well have been understood as part of the religious lore that circulated in the performative sphere of divine cults.<sup>2</sup>

If the inconclusive debates on the dating, authorship, and even the original versions of most late Ming “novels” have illustrated one thing, it is that each of those books existed in more than one version. Their various titles, similar or alternative, had been mentioned by literati authors writing before they were printed in those versions we now call the “earliest extant.” To further complicate the histories of these works, almost every single specimen of

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<sup>1</sup> One important exception to the common textual bias is Glen Dudbridge’s study of the *Xiyouji*, in which oral and other performative traditions are taken more seriously. See Dudbridge, *Hsi-yu Chi: Antecedents to the Seventeenth Century Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Meir Shahar has argued that “vernacular literature” was a “vehicle” (p. xviii) or a “medium” (p. 3) for promulgation and/or standardization of ritual lore. I would like to go a bit further and argue that that they were not merely a medium for transmission, but an indissoluble part of the para-liturgical environment. See Shahar, *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998.

the late Ming religious chronicles contained episodes that had previously circulated autonomously as dramatic works, and quite a number of them had shorter antecedents in the form of “simple tales” 平話 from the fourteenth century. To say the least, these stories that are now conveniently labeled as “novels” 小說 and reprinted in standard editions were, therefore, hybrid products that had been assembled out of several story cycles that accrued over time. Instead of seeing this heterogeneity as an obstacle to our understanding of *xiaoshuo*, I would like to suggest that we should take seriously the direction in which the very compound origins of these stories are guiding us. I believe that the printed editions of *xiaoshuo* that have become late Ming “novels” represent a radical disjuncture from the fluid and dynamic existence of their subject matter before they were fixed in well-known standard texts.

As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, the late Ming “novel,” or, as I prefer to call it, the “religious chronicle,” is representative of the dominant story cycles that were performed as theatre in the local religious festival (“repayment festivals” 賽會, “gods’ festivals” 神會, “festivals for the Earthgod” 社會, “temple festivals” 廟會, etc.). As a part of festive ceremonies on sacred occasions, the enactments of these story cycles were staged in a ritual context developed side by side with (and forming a constitutive part of) ritual processions. Indeed, they were of a certain ritual nature themselves.

My argument focuses on those forms of theatre that involve martial prowess, applied in drama to overcome the same diabolic adversaries who figure in the books treated in chapter 6. Although the story cycles of the religious festival were not restricted exclusively to such demonic battles, martial spectacles formed a significant part. In this context I attribute particular importance to “procession theatre” 遊戲. It is my belief that the “pilgrim’s

progress” described in the adventures of the pilgrims in *Journey to the West* corresponds to the tours made by the gods in religious processions. Whether enacted by actors, or embodied in divine statues that were carried around, it seems that the demonifuge feats performed by the gods of the local festival corresponded largely to those of the vagabond rebels of *Watermargin*, the military campaign in *Canonization of the Gods*, the voyage of *Eunuch Sanbao’s Records from the Western Ocean*, and the wanderings in *Journey to the North*.

After exploring the demonic content of festivals and the exorcist functions of the procession, I will show that the Daoist rituals performed in close proximity of these activities may have contributed their specific Daoist trajectory of canonization to the vernacular story cycles that were molded out of festival theatre. The fact that the late Ming religious chronicles featured thunder gods so conspicuously can then be explained by the strong presence of these gods during religious festivals.

For this chapter I have used a large number of local gazetteers. As pointed out in chapter 4 of this thesis, due to the bias against (local) religion that was expressed by their compilers, local gazetteers oftentimes either completely ignored local religious phenomena, or described them only in the most condensed form. If one mistook their fragmented representation of cults, festivals, and practitioners to form an integral picture, Ming dynasty gazetteers would severely distort our understanding of religion. One compiler from the Jiajing reign (1522 – 66) concluded his section on local customs by repeating Kong Zi’s words: “Revere demonic gods but stay away from them” 敬鬼神而遠之.<sup>3</sup> The glimpses into Ming dynasty popular religion we are allowed deserve to be treated with all the more consideration.

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<sup>3</sup> *Shaowu fuzhi* 邵武府志, 2.47a

## 7.2. Procession theatre: welcoming the gods for exorcisms

Theatre and religious festivals usually went hand in hand.<sup>4</sup> On a general level, sixteenth century dramatic performances could be staged for a variety of explicitly religious occasions, such as the anniversaries of local gods or the ceremonies of ghost month.<sup>5</sup> While other festivals seemed to be of an agricultural nature, such as the “Spring Prayer and Autumn Repayment” 春祈秋報, they in fact were equally dedicated to gods: the “Five Grains” 五穀 and “Five Soils” 五土, or the Earthgod 社.<sup>6</sup> A generic term often used for the religious festival was the “repayment festival to welcome the gods” 迎神賽會. This welcoming of the gods entailed the descent of several gods to earth and their subsequent arrival among the community, by means of their embodied presence in statues or actors: thus they came to life.

Crucially, the ways through which festival religiosity was expressed did not meet the puritan standards of literati: it was intensely dynamic and overtly demonic. In a treatise on “regional ceremonies” 鄉禮 with a preface dated 1549, an official from Guangdong called Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490 – 1566) associated the religious festival with eruptions of diabolic habits. Throughout his text it is clear that he adhered largely to ceremonial outlines that had

<sup>4</sup> Wilt L. Idema, “Traditional Dramatic Literature,” p. 788. In Victor H. Mair (ed.), *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Also see the classic formulation of the ritual aspect of Chinese theatre: Piet van der Loon, “Les origines rituelles du théâtre Chinois.” *Journal Asiatique* 265:1-2 (1977), pp. 141-68.

<sup>5</sup> Systematic and thorough studies of popular religious festivals are surprisingly hard to find. One of the earliest and most comprehensive studies still is by Groot, Jan J.M. de, *Jaarlijksche feesten en gebruiken van de Emoy-Chineezzen; een vergelijkende bijdrage tot de kennis van onze Chineesche medeburgers op Java*. Pontianak, 1880 (translated into French as *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Émoui (Amoy) : étude concernant la religion populaire des Chinois*). Also see Tanaka Issei 田中一成, *Chugoku saishi engeki kenkyū* 中国祭祀演劇研究, pp. 36-64; 292. Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1981. One relatively broad study of temple festivals during the Ming and especially the Qing periods (with a special emphasis, however, on the temple of the City God) is: Zhao Shiyu 趙世瑜, *Kuanghuan yu richang – Ming Qing yilai de miaobui yuminjian shehui* 狂歡與日常—明清以來的廟會與民間社會. Beijing: Sanlian, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> For a study on the gods included in the sacrificial rituals during Ming dynasty religious festivals, limited to one region, see: Wu Xiuling 吳秀玲, “*Shi shen ru shen zai: you ‘paishenbu’ tan Ming Qing Shangdang saishu de shenqi xinyang* 事神如神在：由〈牌神簿〉談明清上黨賽社的神祇信仰.” Paper prepared for the Workshop on Ritual Lore, Academia Sinica (Taiwan), January 2004.

been stipulated by the great eleventh century literatus Zhu Xi, and that therefore all popular ritual customs were considered degenerate. Huang Zuo considered such religious aspects of the festival as the custom “to dress up as gods or leap around like demons” 扮神跳鬼 to be inappropriate. To him, these performative aspects did not seem to have any relevance for what he considered to be the central act of the festival – the ancient communal ritual:

For the two sacrifices of Spring and Autumn, one has to respect the ceremonies of the ancient gatherings of the Earth God, praying for good harvests and giving thanks for its repayment. Most important is one’s pure devotion. It is not allowed to dress up as gods or leap around like demons to make the festival lustrous, and come to a point that men and women mingle freely. The authorities will investigate offenders and indict them.<sup>7</sup>

凡春秋二祭，當遵古人社祈年報賽之禮。務在靖誠。不許扮神跳鬼以為盛會，致使男女混雜。有司察其違者，罪之。

Indeed, he was equally disgusted with the performance of music, “variety plays” 雜劇 (or “farces”), and other merrymaking at smaller ceremonial occasions, such as for family reunions and funerary rituals.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he protested against the patronage of ritual practitioners at the local level, saying that “it is not allowed to hold *jiao* and perform sacrificial exorcisms of the stars, or to listen credulously to shamans” 不許設醮、禳星，聽信巫覡。<sup>9</sup> The proper “pure devotion” seemed to be transgressed by all these phenomena.

<sup>7</sup> Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490-1566), *Taiquan xiangli* 泰泉鄉禮, 5.5a. In Wang Yunwu (ed.), *Siku quanshu zhenben siji* (vol. 54). Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1972.

<sup>8</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 1.10a; 1.13a.

<sup>9</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 1.15a.



Yet the demonic and even explicitly exorcist aspects of the festival were hard to separate from the actual proceedings. A famous official active in the sixteenth century, Wang Zhideng 王穉登 (1535 – 1612), wrote an interesting account that focused not on the festival as it was supposed to be, but with more of an eye for the festival as it was actually practiced in the Wu-region (roughly around Shanghai) during the late Ming. His *Compilation on the Communal Gatherings in the Region of Wu* 吳社編 (published before 1571;<sup>10</sup> hereafter simply *Compilation*) similarly situates these gatherings in the context of the demonic, and his disapproval concerned similar matters as in Huang Zuo's case.<sup>11</sup> Wang Zhideng, too, refers to the original purposes of the event. The first two functions of the festival mentioned by him are (1) the prayers for a good harvest, and (2) the expulsion of noxious energies – two functions he seemed to endorse. He moreover states that the people believed that during these festivals the gods descended to earth:

The institution of the village gatherings was only meant to pray for annual plenty, to exorcize calamitous energies, to harmonize groups, and to celebrate the Great Peace. But the customs of the Wu-region are degenerate, as they delight in deceit, and honor the anomalous. They slight the way of man, and value demons and gods. They have abandoned the doctor's recipe, worshiping shamans instead. They have destroyed the lineage temple and erected licentious shrines. They have done away with [the fear of] ancestral calamity<sup>12</sup> and pay reverence to demons of the field. Alas, how devious! And it has been so long! Each time between spring and summer they falsely claim that their gods have descended. Thereupon all these idlers, vagabonds, and good-for-nothings

<sup>10</sup> This date can be determined thanks to a reference to Wang Zhideng's *Compilation* in *Changzhou xianzhi* 長洲縣志, 1.10a. The gazetteer is from 1571.

<sup>11</sup> Wang Zhideng (fl. Wanli reign) 王穉登, *Wu she bian* 吳社編. In *Guangbaichuan xuehai*, p. 2361-77. Taipei: Xinxing, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> In imperial China, ancestors were simultaneously “revered and feared” 敬畏, and held responsible not only for blessing, but also for calamities.

lose themselves in this business, confusing the thoughts of the common people and deceiving the views of the young and ignorant.<sup>13</sup>

里社之設，所以祈年穀，祓災禳，洽黨閭，樂太平而已。吳風淫靡，喜訛尚怪，輕人道而重鬼神，捨醫藥而崇巫覡。毀宗廟而建淫祠。黜祖禍而尊野厲。嗚呼！弊也，久矣！每春夏之交，妄言神降，於是游手逐末亡賴不逞之徒。張皇其事，亂市井之聽，惑穉狂之見。

Moreover, the rest of Wang Zhideng's treatise is permeated with theatrical content: titles of plays, dramatic roles, props. On top of his mentioning of the festival as intending to “exorcize calamitous energies,” he associates these dramatic performances with the physical proximity of the gods.<sup>14</sup> This proximity is an important point and the connections of demons and drama with exorcism will be considered in more detail below. However, it is necessary first to consider other religious festivals and their relationship to demonic theatre.

On the surface, theatre performed during local festivals of Jiajing and Wanli was not always overtly related to the realm of darkness. Usually it was described with unspecific terms such as “mixed plays” 雜戲 or simply “theatre” 戲劇.<sup>15</sup> Although the performances occurred at religious celebrations, these terms unfortunately reveal nothing about their content. However, many localities organized plays that involved the enactment of demons running through the streets, chasing and being chased. Sometimes this was done with “demon masks” 鬼面, as “demon judges” 鬼判, or even “adorning demonic statues” 裝扮

<sup>13</sup> Wang Zhideng, *Compilation*, p. 2361 – 77.

<sup>14</sup> The phrase Wang Zhideng uses is “at whatever dwellings where gods may be lodged” 凡神所棲舍.

<sup>15</sup> *Jianchang fuzhi* 建昌府志, 3.4a; *Guiji xianzhi* 會稽縣志, 3.3a; *Hongya xianzhi* 洪雅縣志 *zhi* 志, 15a, 16a; *Chizhou fuzhi* 池州府志, 2.2b-3a; *Jiangyin xianzhi* 江陰縣志, 4.9a; *Tongzhou zhi* 通州志, 2.48a; *Longqing zhi* 隆慶志, 7.14b; *Tongling xianzhi* 銅陵縣志, 1.16a; *Gushi xianzhi* 固始縣志, 8.15a; *Lanyang xianzhi* 蘭陽縣志, 1.9b; *Xingning xianzhi* 興寧縣志, 1.4a; *Cili xianzhi* 慈利縣志, 6.3a; *Xinchang xianzhi* 新昌縣志, 4.4a.

鬼像。<sup>16</sup> One gazetteer applies the term “demon plays” 鬼戲 (or “demonic spectacles”).<sup>17</sup> If the particular genre of these dramas may have differed from region to region, the reference to the demonic seems to have been salient.

Enactments of demonic figures were often labeled as Nuo 傩, after the great exorcisms of the Han Dynasty.<sup>18</sup> According to the compilers of Ming gazetteers they aimed at the “expulsion of demons” 趕鬼, or at “sending off plagues” 遣疫.<sup>19</sup> The Nuo was (or were) thought to be a god(s) that was welcomed predominantly for the real purpose of being able to enact his “expulsion” 逐 from the community, or to “return” 還 him to his dark realm. In other words, the Nuo provided an occasion to stage the demonic and conquer it.

There was a sense of movement about these performances, as they toured the streets, involving an entire locality.<sup>20</sup> Their theatrical enactments were understood to have an exorcist function. Several sources indicate that the protagonists were not merely demons, but demons with a function: “Musicians dress up as the demon judges, their music leads the way and every household rewards them. These are old procedures of the Nuo” 樂工扮鬼判，鼓樂導往，各家賞勞之。即傩之遺法。<sup>21</sup> In this instance from Henan the musicians acted the role of demon judges. Another example, from Hunan, again shows that the expulsion of the Nuo was a dynamic, ritual affair: “During the few days before the year is over, the villages employ a lot of shamanic masters. Clad in vermilion robes and wearing demon

<sup>16</sup> *Qinzhou zhi* 欽州志, 1.31a; *Chaling zhouzhi* 茶陵州志, p. 872; *Tongxu xianzhi* 通許縣志, p. 83 (33a); *Changde fuzhi* 常德府志, 1.29b.

<sup>17</sup> *Jiangle xianzhi* 將樂縣志, 1.5b.

<sup>18</sup> Bodde, Derk, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-A.D. 220*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

<sup>19</sup> *Liuhe xianzhi* 六合縣志, 2.4a; *Kunshan xianzhi* 崑山縣志, 1.6a; *Xinchang xianzhi* 新昌縣志, 4.4b; *Chun'an xianzhi* 淳安縣志, 1.7a; *Changde fuzhi* 常德府志, 1.29b; *Jiangyin xianzhi* 江陰縣志, 4.4a; *Guiji xianzhi* 會稽縣志, 3.3a; *Jianchang fuzhi* 建昌府志, 3.5a.

<sup>20</sup> *Weishi xianzhi* 尉氏縣志, 1.31a.

<sup>21</sup> *Weishi xianzhi* 尉氏縣志, 1.31a.

masks, to the [rhythm of the] gongs and drums, they clamor and dance until the break of dawn. This is called: Returning the Nuo.” 歲將盡數日，鄉村多用巫師。朱裳鬼面，鑼鼓喧舞竟夜。名曰：「還儺」。<sup>22</sup>

The Nuo may have been the most basic form of local ritual theatre and did not appeal to literati observers as sophisticated entertainment – at least they seldom would admit their amusement in their writings. Yet the larger festivals were known to boast much more elaborate drama. From a recent study by Zhao Shiyu on temple festivals during the Ming and Qing it is clear that “procession theatre” was a common element of these festivals. A statue of the god in whose name the celebrations were organized was taken “out on a tour” (出遊 or 出巡) through the earthly realm of his jurisdiction. These tours often connected urban neighborhoods with surrounding rural areas by the itinerary of the procession (proceeding through city and countryside), as well as by both rural and urban participants.<sup>23</sup> Urban residents thus would not discard them as rustic phenomena: theatre of great festival processions was common to cities.

In his analysis Zhao Shiyu strongly emphasizes the aspect of entertainment that procession theatre provided.<sup>24</sup> He does, however, not explain that while drama naturally aimed to entertain, in the case of the local festival it purportedly was staged in order to entertain the gods: the people “performed variety theatre in order to entertain the gods” 扮演雜劇，以樂神。<sup>25</sup> That explains also why “the people performed farces in front of the temple(s) that each hamlet had” 扮雜劇于各村所有神廟前。<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Changde fuzhi* 常德府志 1.29b; similarly in *Chaling zhoushi* 茶陵州志, *fengsu* 6.21a.

<sup>23</sup> Zhao Shiyu, *Huangkuan yu richang*, esp. pp. 164-66, 179-84 (and *passim*).

<sup>24</sup> Zhao Shiyu, *Huangkuan yu richang*, pp. 192-8.

<sup>25</sup> *Longqing zhi* 隆慶志, 7.14b; also see example below: *Qingliu xianzhi* 清流縣志, 2.20b.

<sup>26</sup> *Guangping fuzhi* 廣平府志, 16.6b.

Zhao Shiyu does not consider possible religious interpretations of this theatre. This omission is particularly puzzling in cases of people wearing a “demon mask” and running through streets and alleys to “send off plagues” 遣疫. Even in some of the examples of grand processions Zhao Shiyu included in his book, authors of local gazetteers seem to have understood that the intention of theatre processions was to “expel demons” 逐鬼.<sup>27</sup> In one case from the early Qing, residents of Songyin 松陰 in Zhejiang used to “welcome the City God, as well as Grand Protector Wen, to make an inspection tour through city and countryside, in order to expel plagues” 迎城隍神、溫太保神，周巡城鄉，所以逐疫。<sup>28</sup> Generally speaking procession theatre has received virtually no attention from scholars on late Ming and early Qing Jiangnan theatre.<sup>29</sup> Below I would like to look in some more detail at the processions themselves, before turning to their dramatic repertoire. The examples provided in this section are all from the Jiajing and Wanli reigns.

There are indications that the admixture of procession and theatre had temples as their starting point as well as their destination, much like the situation in present-day Taiwan. It was commonly the case that the gods were seated in palanquins as if they were alive, carried around on shoulders, and making inspection tours through their realm. In this theatrical procession they traversed the local community, for example during the Triple Inspection Tour 三巡會 of the City God.<sup>30</sup> One source from Guangdong situated the

<sup>27</sup> Zhao Shiyu, *Huangkuan yu richang*, p. 195.

<sup>28</sup> Zhao Shiyu, *Huangkuan yu richang*, p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> Tanaka Issei, “The Social and Historical Context of Ming-Ch’ing Local Drama.” In David Johnson, Andrew Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (eds.), *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, p. 147 ff. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985; for the modern period, scholars have paid attention to the procession, but not its theatre. For short discussions, see David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: Folk Religion in a Taiwanese Village*, pp. 45-6. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972; Feuchtwang, Stephan, *Popular Religion in China: the Imperial Metaphor*, p. 79-84. Richmond: Curzon, 2001. Scattered references are made in David Johnson (ed.), *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: “Mu-lien Rescues his Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture*. Berkeley: University of California, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Guo Qitao, *Exorcism and Money*, p. 51; Zhao Shiyu, *Huangkuan yu richang*, p. 164.

religious procession between the local Temple of Dark Mystery 玄妙觀 and the Palace of the Eastern Peak 東嶽宮 (both Daoist temples), and adds this was customary in another location too.<sup>31</sup> From Hubei comes the example of Guan Yu, where the crowds went “carrying the Marquis [Guan Yu] out, he would proceed through all neighborhoods and markets” 昇侯出，周行坊市。<sup>32</sup> A description from Henan mentions how a certain “temple god(s)” 廟神 (unclear which) was taken out of the temple to produce rain.<sup>33</sup> The procession included theatre, but it also constituted an audience for dramatic spectacles. Theatre was staged in the presence of the gods in procession, too. According to a source from the Jiajing reign: “On 7/27 reverently take the god’s statue out on a tour, performing theatre to amuse him” 二十七日：奉神像出遊，裝扮雜劇以樂神。<sup>34</sup>

Local religious drama was in many cases associated with martial practices, and even with military men. A prohibition from the *Great Ming Code* 大明律 stated: “If people from the army dress up (as?) gods’ statues, sounding the gong and beating the drum, holding festivals to welcome the gods – one hundred beatings with the rod” 若軍民裝扮神像，鳴鑼擊鼓，迎神賽會者：杖一百。<sup>35</sup> If this seems like an odd rule to be included in the imperial legal code, the following example shows why military men were associated with the religious festival. In this case of procession theatre from early sixteenth century Guangdong, we can see that the martial aspect of Lord Guan was acted out by the “defense stations” 衛所, the local military bases of the Ming dynasty:

<sup>31</sup> *Huizhou fuzhi* 惠州府志, *dili* 地理 47a.

<sup>32</sup> *Mianyang zhi* 沔陽志, 10.4b.

<sup>33</sup> *Xuzhou zhi* 許州志, 1.3a.

<sup>34</sup> *Qingliu xianzhi* 清流縣志, 2.20b.

<sup>35</sup> *Da Ming Lü* 大明律, 11.34.

On the eleventh day [of the fifth month] the defense stations dress up for the street processions during the festival for King Guan, and they reach their conclusion on the thirteenth day. They gather at the temple whence they set out to perform the theatre of the festival processions. At this time the military men annually hold a *sai* in order to pray for protection. The military officials pronounce an oath, each wearing cangues. Some of them continue to stand in front of the King's statue brandishing their swords for three days! That is called "to stand [with] the sword."<sup>36</sup>

五月：十一日，衛所扮裝『關王會』街遊，至十三日畢。集廟中，因演所裝遊會之戲。軍士每於是時為賽祈保，武官心願。各帶枷鎖，有沙刀佇立王像前三日者。謂之：「站刀。」

The defenses of a local community apparently were not only organized on a strictly military level, but as we have seen so often throughout this thesis there was a dual organization, both in the realm of mortals and the realm of spirits. In other words, in the same way that the founder of the Ming dynasty ensured the protection of his empire by the spirit realm, the local "defense stations" similarly understood their task to be in cooperation with the gods. Or, given the fact that the feat of brandishing a sword for three days in the proximity of a god's statue may very well have been achieved with the aid of trance techniques, perhaps some of the emperor's soldiers increased their mortal powers with the help of spirit possession.

One very detailed description of a religious festival is provided by Fan Lian 范濂 (fl. 1573 – 1619), in his account of a celebration for the Dark Emperor. Here, too, the martial aspect is quite prominent: the Dark Emperor was also known as the True Warrior 真武, and

<sup>36</sup> *Qiongtai zhi* 瓊臺志, 7.18a.

the god that clears the way for his procession, Spiritual Agent Wang, was a Daoist Thunder Marshal as well.<sup>37</sup> In 1591 a temple called “Little Mt. Wudang” 小武當 and dedicated to the Dark Emperor was built in Sijing 泗涇 (to the immediate southwest of Shanghai). Involving the entire locality, “the rich donating materials and wealth, the poor contributing their bodies and strength,” the construction of the temple was kicked off. On the day that the incense burner was ritually placed inside the temple, a procession preceded the incense burner, and the divine proxies of the Daoist pantheon were employed in the larger context of religious festival:

Spiritual Agent Wang was used at the head [of the procession] to open up the roads and purify the ways. He bolted to the East and dashed to the West, all along the houses – such a disgrace. Another day was selected by divination, to welcome the Dark Emperor for the ascension into his hall. Again, Spiritual Agent Wang was used to purify the ways. There were more than ten groups of theatre-lads and courtesan-girls, as well as countless drummers, musicians, banners, and lamps. [...] Men and women toured the streets, a myriad of people holding incense and reciting chants.<sup>38</sup> All the literati asked the Dark Emperor to enter their gates.<sup>39</sup>

前用王靈官開道淨街，沿門東沖西撞，極其無恥。已又卜日，迎祖師登殿。亦用王靈官淨街。戲子妓女約十餘班，鼓樂旂燈無算。[...] 男婦道遊，拈香念佛者千計。士人皆迎請祖師入門。

<sup>37</sup> See the section on Zhou Side in chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>38</sup> I avoid translating the word *Fo* 佛 with “Buddhist” because it appears to have denoted the general activity of reciting, or chanting, rather than specifically meaning Buddhist chants.

<sup>39</sup> Fan Lian 范濂 (*Ji. Wanli reign*), *Yunjian jumu chao* 雲間據目抄, 2.6b-7a. In *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* (vol. 1). Taipei: Xinxing, 1962.



This late Ming glimpse of a religious festival presents us with a vivid picture of the ways in which local communities, divine cults, temple rituals, and physically dynamic theatre all formed an interrelated network. Even literati were seen to participate.

Spiritual Agent Wang, one of the most famous protectors of, and protagonists in Daoist ritual (see chapter 5), here equally acts and protects within less strictly Daoist spheres. Here it is interesting to consider briefly the ritual of “Mandating the Archdemons,” treated in chapter 1 of this thesis, because it seems to contextualize the position occupied by Spiritual Agent Wang vis-à-vis the Dark Emperor: “Once the multitude of Archdemons had submitted to the saintly transformation of the Celestial Worthy, **they would charge ahead in front of the carriages of the Supreme Saints of All Heavens and the Perfected Beings of Wondrous Acts, sweeping the dust away and opening the road for them.** [boldface added]” Thus Spiritual Agent Wang – originally a demonic spirit who had received a new mandate as a servant of Daoism – fulfilled the same function as the Archdemons that had been made subaltern to the Daoist priest. Coincidentally, indeed, Fan Lian maintains elsewhere that since the Longqing and Wanli reigns the male actors “all use Daoist robes” 皆用道袍.<sup>40</sup> Thus, similar to the situation described in chapters 2, 3, and 4, Daoist priests (or their imitators) constituted a visible presence during the late Ming religious festival – not only in temples, but also in processions and the pertaining theatre.

It is abundantly made clear that these processions were not merely carnivalesque forms of entertainment – even though they surely were meant also to be entertaining. Similar to the tours of the demon judges we have seen above, as well as the example of City God and Grand Protector Wen, or the purification by Spiritual Agent Wang, the tours made by gods were also thought to have had a certain exorcist effect. A reference from Jiangxi about

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<sup>40</sup> Fan Lian, *Yunjian jumu chao*, 3.1a.

a temple to the (Daoist) God of the Eastern Peak corroborates this : “In prostration and worship they take the Perfected Lord [of the Eastern Peak] on a tour, so that he may expel impure energies” 伏奉真君出遊，以祛沴氣.<sup>41</sup> The hybrid nature of these processions, being theatre, as well as exorcist ritual, devotion, and carnival, is exemplified by the Five Dragons / Five Counts 五龍/五侯 of Changzhou 長洲 county in Jiangsu. The cognate character of exorcism and theatre did not escape the local observers, but here the perspective is reversed – they did not see theatre that resembled ritual, but ritual that resembled theatre:

On 5/18 it is their divine anniversary. During the period beforehand the festival communities twine silk into a booth. With flags and drums, brimming with clamor, they run through streets and alleys with the gods seated in sedan-chairs, in order to avert calamity and disease with them. The event greatly resembles theatre.

五月十八日爲神生日。先期賽社結綺爲亭。旗鼓喧闐，輿神偏走街巷，以祈禳災疫焉。事頗類戲。<sup>42</sup>

A final example from Qiongtai 瓊臺 in Guangdong illustrates more explicitly the exorcist function of religious processions. In the example below a Daoist is hired by “neighborhoods” 坊 to hold a *jiao*. Two things deserve particular attention: it is said that the Daoist summons down the gods, and that people from villages join the ritual “carrying the statues of their gods.”

<sup>41</sup> *Guangxin fuzhi* 廣信府志, 9.16b.

<sup>42</sup> *Changzhou xianzhi* 長洲縣志, 11.16b.

On 1/6 several of the neighborhoods employ a Daoist master to hold a *jiao* offering. He summons the gods with clever sleight.<sup>43</sup> The villages thereupon join in, carrying the statues of their gods. He pastes talismans from door to door in order to ward off calamity. This is called “sending off the plague.”<sup>44</sup>

六日：各坊或用道士設醮，**媚**嫵調神。村落則加擡神像。沿門貼符以禳。  
名曰：「遣瘟」。

Was it common practice to hire Daoist priests for the annual exorcisms? On the basis of the sources cited above we may at least conclude that the local religious festival was often characterized by a certain Daoist presence. Even if actual Daoist priests were not explicitly mentioned, we have seen that the embodied presences of certain Daoist gods (such as Grand Protector Wen or Spiritual Agent Wang) involved their ritual invocation by Daoist priests. The same Daoist presence, of course, would be expected at Daoist temples. It needs to be emphasized that the repeated references to Daoist gods, temples or practitioners virtually represent the entire range of denominations mentioned in these local gazetteers – although it may be possible that in some cases I have failed to recognize other practitioners, I have certainly not attempted to focus on Daoism only. This is not to suggest that Buddhist practitioners were absent. As I will indicate in the following section they certainly must have also been present at a great number of occasions. Here, I emphasize the Daoist aspect simply to lend weight to the barely recognized fact that Daoist ritual was commonly performed at occasions that were not nominally Daoist.

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<sup>43</sup> This may seem like an awkward phrase, with a rare character *mai* **媚**, which is a synonym of *xia* 黠 “clever.” However, the summoning of gods was certainly an affair that required the Daoist priest to assume a superior position vis-à-vis the gods, thus degrading them, or “sleighting” them. This could be among the actual prescriptions for Thunder Ritual, “to scold the Thunder Gods” 叱罵雷神 (*Daofa huiyuan* 110.8a).

<sup>44</sup> *Qiongtai zhi* 瓊臺志, 7.14a.



Picture 7.1. – The Founder of Daoism portrayed with his “thunder commanding block” 雷令 (Wanli reign, fragment).

### 7.3 Daoist altars: calling down the gods for a worldly tour

#### 7.3.1. Daoist performances during festivals

The dramatized appearances of martial gods during festivals were most likely thought to protect the local community, in a tangible way, against harmful forces. However, the gods did not act autonomously. They needed assistance from the mortal crowds. The appearance of ritual practitioners during such festivals therefore is hardly surprising. Daoist participation has not received much attention in studies of local religion. In this case such an omission is not merely a consequence of official reticence about the activities of ritual practitioners, but also due to the non-monastic character of many Daoists. In previous chapters I have described numerous cases of Daoist ritual practitioners during the Tang and

Song who did not have any ties to monastic communities, and who were therefore less of a historically visible presence. This situation continued during the Ming.

The ritual practitioners participating in the local festivals were a varied lot. Huang Zuo's treatise on regional customs laments the participation of "all kinds of people doing the evil arts, such as the senior master, the hearth-dwelling Daoist priest, ritual master and ritual matron, holy master and nun, as well as Buddhists and Daoists without ordination certificate" 師長、火居道士、師公師婆、聖子尼姑，及無牒僧道，各項邪術人等。<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere Huang Zuo proscribes the "evil arts of the shamanic master" 師巫邪術。<sup>46</sup> In Wang Zhideng's *Compilation* he describes how in his part of Jiangnan an entire town would be involved in the festival. While Daoists 道人 would strike their bells and expound scriptures, the crowds would dress up elaborately for the occasion, wearing flowers, and carrying incense burners through the streets.<sup>47</sup>

Some records suggest that Buddhists and Daoists acted in cooperation, for example in Hunan during the advent of the new year,<sup>48</sup> or in the region of Shanghai even at several junctures per month,<sup>49</sup> in Anhui during the sixth month.<sup>50</sup> Whereas Buddhist and Daoist festivities were clearly separated in name, this did not mean their practices were organized separately. Even a specifically Buddhist occasion such as the anniversary of Buddha Śākyamuni on 4/8 did not entail Buddhist rituals exclusively, but as one record from Sichuan shows, also the organization of Daoist *jiao* "in order to ward off calamity."<sup>51</sup> Identical

<sup>45</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 3.17b-18a.

<sup>46</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 3.16b.

<sup>47</sup> Wang Zhideng, *Compilation*, 3b-5b.

<sup>48</sup> *Cili xianzhi* 慈利縣志, 6.3a.

<sup>49</sup> *Liube xianzhi* 六合縣志 2.3b-4a; in this region Buddhists and Daoists were hired simultaneously for funerary rites, too (*Pujiang zhibi* 蒲江志略 2.3b).

<sup>50</sup> *Chizhou fuzhi* 池州府志, 2.3a.

<sup>51</sup> *Hongya xianzhi* 洪雅縣志, *zhi* 志 15a.

proceedings are recorded for Jiangxi.<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere, in Fujian, the “Buddhist” festival of Yulanpen 盂蘭盆 on 7/15 culminated in sacrificial offerings in the temple to the God of the Eastern Peak 東嶽廟, a temple commonly imbued Daoist with associations.<sup>53</sup> The character of these festivals seems to have been inclusive rather than exclusive. The example of a Daoist *jiao* that was joined by people from rural villages in Guangdong, mentioned above, is paralleled by a similar occurrence from Fujian. In this case the occasion of the *jiao* was itself enough to become the center of popular festivities, causing invitations to be extended to “other gods to join the *jiao*.”<sup>54</sup>

Even official festivals of a seemingly non-religious kind could involve Daoists, such as the important rituals on New Year’s eve 除夕, or the emperor’s birthday. One record from the Jiajing reign shows how in Jiangxi the local magistrate led his officials together with the local household representatives to the Daoist Temple of Dark Mystery 玄妙觀. Wearing their “imperial robes” 朝服, the officials would attend to the main ritual in the Daoist temple.<sup>55</sup> Similar procedures were officially endorsed for the emperor’s birthday 萬壽聖節, as well as “officials’ birthdays” 千秋令節.<sup>56</sup>

Another factor that may have caused the local Daoist priest to be elided from historical records is the similarity of his martial rituals with those of the shaman 巫. Daoists often performed their more solemn rituals inside a temple, while their more spectacular

<sup>52</sup> *Jianchang fuzhi* 建昌府志, 3.4a.

<sup>53</sup> *Jianning fuzhi* 建寧府志, 4.2a; see “The Ritual Behind the Opera: A Fragmentary Ethnography of the Ghost Festival, A.D. 400-1900,” pp. 191-223. In David Johnson (ed.), *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: “Mu-lien Rescues his Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture*. Berkeley: University of California, 1989.

<sup>54</sup> *Shaowu fuzhi* 邵武府志, 2.43b.

<sup>55</sup> *Nan’an fuzhi* 南安府志, 10.1b.

<sup>56</sup> *Nan’an fuzhi*, 10.3ab; the term *qianqiu lingjie* is rather vague; it could refer to birthdays of high officials. Given the fact that the birthdays of divine bureaucrats (i.e. popular gods) in Taiwan are designated with the same term, it is not impossible that in Ming Jiangxi it referred equally to the anniversaries of gods.

demonic rituals were executed before a crowd (see below, 7.3.2). At least in the eyes of outsiders, such as the official who was not native to the region where he held office, the two kinds of practitioners may have been hard to distinguish. The following example from Xingning 興寧 in Guangdong records the ordination ritual of what is said to be a “shamanic master” 巫師. His designation as a “ritual official,” however, suggests that this was in fact a Daoist. His ritual paraphernalia, too, were typical of Daoists – as was the non-martial ritual setting of the ordination.

After choosing an auspicious day, a high structure is built outside in a field, called the “ritual altar.” The “shamanic master” is seated on top of it, while the initiate kneels down. Family and friends all gather, and with flowery red in their hair they celebrate the initiate: “Today an official will be reported!” The “shamanic master” transforms him with a ritual name, and gives him a flag, a seal, an ox-horn, and a goat-knife. These are called ‘ritual insignia.’ [The initiate] kowtows and accepts. Accompanied by drums and horns he is welcomed back to his house. This is called “to receive ritual.” It is also called “to cross the water.”<sup>57</sup>

擇吉，野外構高棚，謂之「法壇」。坐巫師其上，受法一人跽伏，親朋咸集，花紅插滿頭，慶之曰：「今日得官誥矣。」巫師易以法名，授帆一、印一、牛角一、羊刀一，謂之「法章」。稽首拜受。鼓吹迎祀於正寢，謂之「受法」。又謂之「度水」。

The announcement of an “official” is precisely an expression of the self-perceived role of Daoists as “ritual officials” 法官 belonging to a celestial bureaucracy, “spreading the Way on

<sup>57</sup> *Xingning xianzhi* 興寧縣志, 4.35b-36a.

Heaven's behalf." Moreover, the techniques this particular tradition in Guangdong uses included the "iron talisman," which was common to Daoist priests during the Ming.<sup>58</sup>

Now that we have seen how these Daoist ritual performances were common practice at various religious or festive occasions, we can finally analyze the phenomena associated with Daoist ritual as it was practiced – and as I have described them within the context of the "novel" (chapter 6).

### 7.3.2. Daoist martial ritual and the visible presence of the Thunder Marshals

The thunder altar 雷壇 was one space in which the demonic gods of thunder were visibly present. "Altar" here should be taken to mean "ritual space:" rather than a pedestal with a statue it covered an area for solemn worship and ritual choreography.<sup>59</sup> It was from the thunder altar that the gods blended in with the other (theatrical) performances of the local festival. The thunder altar was the stage for performances of Daoist "martial" 武 ritual, which stood in sharp contrast with the classical "literary" 文 ritual (see section 1.7.). Martial ritual was loud, dynamic, and fundamentally geared towards exerting control over demons – contrary to solemn classical ritual, which was oriented towards communication with Heaven and unity with the pure energies of the Dao. The acrobatic displays of martial Daoist ritual were usually performed in the open air and they were likely to draw a fascinated crowd of onlookers. It may very well be that these altars have formed the stepping stone for the gods of thunder to emerge in the vernacular story cycles that were performed during the local festival. While the specific story cycles will be considered towards the end of this chapter, I

<sup>58</sup> See the biography of the Three Masters Li from Anhui in the previous chapter. Also cf. *Daofa huiyuan* 49, 131

<sup>59</sup> As described by John Lagerwey, at least since medieval times the Daoist "altar" 壇 designated not only the table on which statues and offerings were placed, but the entire space in which (a group of) Daoists would act out their ritual sequences. See John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, pp. 25-36. New York: Macmillan, 1987.



will first show the relevance of the thunder altar *per se* for the content of the late Ming religious chronicles.

As we have seen in chapter 4, evinced by the fifteenth century manuals from the Pure Tenuity tradition as well as from Zhou Side's *Golden Book*, the gods of the Thunder Division had become a standard presence in Daoist ritual. Thus they were present not only in rituals that aimed at producing rain, or expelling demons, but even in classical ritual. These grand offerings to Heaven were ceremonies that often lasted several days, and always included a broad spectrum of ritual segments – several of them martial. Especially the demarcation of the ritual space at the beginning of larger rituals required the presence of thunder gods, as well as the concluding ceremonies during which the gods would be sent off. The procedure of “Mandating the Archdemon,” claimed by several authors to be an indispensable part of any Daoist ritual, similarly was such a martial segment. As we have seen, the thunder gods were invoked for that “mandate,” too.



Picture 7.2. – Zhang Liang 張良 (center) attacks Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 with Thunder God (right; from *Quanxiang Qinbing Liuguo pinghua* 全相秦併六國平話. Edition from 1321 – 23)

Layouts of thunder altars were included in several books.<sup>60</sup> The usual outline would prescribe a three-tiered stage, either round or in the hexagon shape of the Eight Trigrams. The example closest in time to the late Ming is the one in the *Golden Book* by Zhou Side from around 1432. In that version the three-tiered stage is replaced by three squares drawn with chalk powder. The deities placed on this altar are none other than the usual suspects Deng, Xin, and Zhang, supplemented with the Thunder Envoys of Yin and Yang, as well as those gods of the Thunder Division that are associated with the priest as his personal protectors:<sup>61</sup>

In front of the altar, use chalk powder to draw the Earth as a square. The altar has three levels:

On the inner tier, line up the three marshals Deng, Xin, and Zhang. Place Deng at the *li* position (South/Fire); Xin at the *zhen* position (East/Thunder), and Zhang at the *xun* position (South-East/Wind). At the four corners place the thrones of the Great Gods of the Four Oceans, and in front of them each a jar full of water. With a “brick talisman” press the water in it. Erect a “Thunder Summoning Pennant” in the center of the altar, install an incense table, and lay out a sword, a thunder block,<sup>62</sup> and a seal.

In the middle tier, set up the thrones of the Five Thunder Envoys: Jiang in the East, Bi in the South, Hua in the West, Lei in the North, and Chen in the Center. Attached at the *kun* (South-West/Earth) position, add the thunder gods that fall under the Thunder Division of the ritual master in question, divided according to their respective directions.

<sup>60</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 56.27a-29b, 37b-38b; 62.34b-36a; 93.3b-5a; 123:27ab; 200.2a; 201.2a; 202.1a; *Shangqing Lingbao jidu dacheng jinshu* 25.24b.

<sup>61</sup> In Southern Taiwan as well as in central Hunan, Daoist priests are assigned one or six thunder gods respectively, decided on the basis of their personal “eight characters” 八字 (cosmic data of life, “horoscope”).

<sup>62</sup> The “thunder block” 令牌 is a ritual object for summoning thunder, also entitled “Five Thunder Command” 五雷令. Cf. chapter 62 of *Jin Ping Mei*, where the priest “beats the table” 據案擊令牌 in a thunder ritual.

In the outer tier, set up the thrones of the Wild Thunder Envoys. Ma in the East, Guo in the South, Fang in the West, Deng in the North, and Tian in the Center, also at the *kun* position. Add numinous signs of the City God, local Earthgod, local temple, and the dragon-pond. According to the season, line up the gods and spirits that spread thunder, wind, and rain, all together at the lower level. Offer incense, flowers, lamps, and candles as prescribed.

就壇前以粉畫地爲方。壇三重。內重列鄧、辛、張三帥。鄧在離、辛在震、張在巽。四角立四溟大神位。其前各置一缸盛水。以「磚符」鎮水中。壇心植「召雷旗」。設大香案，安劍、令、印式。中重列五雷使者位；東蔣、南畢、西華、北雷、中陳。則附于坤位，法師所部雷神，依方排列。外重列蠻雷使者位；東馬、南郭、西方、北鄧、中田。亦附于坤位，城隍、里社、當境廟貌、龍潭靈跡。當季行雷霆、風、雨神祇，並環列下重。各以香、花、燈、燭供養如法。

Central importance, literally, is attributed to the triad of Deng, Xin, and Zhang, while the usual two sets of Thunder Envoys are placed in subordinate positions on the middle and lower levels.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the particular gods that belong to the Thunder Division of the ritual master are also set up.

The outline shows that the gods of the Thunder Division were not only invoked by the priest in a silent, meditative procedure. Although the interior visualization was certainly a part of such rituals, apparently many of the relevant gods were displayed on and around the

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<sup>63</sup> The three marshals are also placed on the sacrificial table in *Daofa huiyuan* 56.29a.

altar, probably in the form of paper statues.<sup>64</sup> One source, *Journey to the West*, suggests moreover that the names of the thunder gods were publicly displayed and highly visible. In an episode spanning chapters 44 – 46, Marshal Deng is the main thunder god invoked for a rainmaking ritual on an altar very similar to the version outlined above. While the other gods are not mentioned by name, there are also the five Wild Thunder Envoys; jars with water that have talismans floating in them (five instead of four); a pennant with the names of the thunder gods in the altar's center; there are other (paper) gods, such as “envoys carrying talismans” 執符使者, and the local Earth God. The ritual practitioners equally use swords as well as thunder blocks. This thunder altar from *Journey to the West* reinforces the impression that the thunder gods were not only very visible, their names could be read by the audience as well. Below I will show that for illiterate members of the audience, the loud invocation of thunder by the priest formed an occasion to witness Daoist ritual agents.

On this altar the Daoist “ritual official” showed his martial side – and in doing so he would pronounce the names of the thunder gods. Thunder gods originally being demonic, they could be addressed directly and unceremoniously with their names. With “disheveled hair and his sword drawn” 披髮仗劍 the Daoist did preparations for the summoning of the thunder gods at several component squares of the altar. Accompanied by music he burnt talismans, recited spells, and instructed his assistants to carry out other parts of the ritual. Reciting more spells, he “paces to the rhythm of the drum, and dances the Guideline,<sup>65</sup> while holding his sword and fiercely yelling: Envoy Zhang! Quickly make clouds, lightning, and the

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<sup>64</sup> In many descriptions of rituals in *Daofa huiyuan* the term “paper horses” 紙馬 is used. This was a generic term for paper gods in many parts of China. In present-day ritual procedures in Hunan, hundreds of paper images are placed around the altar (many of them thunder gods; each god has his name written on the statue). The artisan producing these paper gods is called a “paper horse artisan” 紙馬匠.

<sup>65</sup> At this point I follow Poul Andersen and translate *gang* with Guideline instead of Paladin, because here it clearly refers to the ritual practice described in his article; see his “The Practice of BUGANG.” *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 5 (1989-1990), pp. 15-53.

sound of thunder arrive at the altar! Abundantly manifest your response!” 步鼓舞罷，仗劍  
 猛呼：「張使者！速起雲電雷聲至壇，大彰報應！」<sup>66</sup>

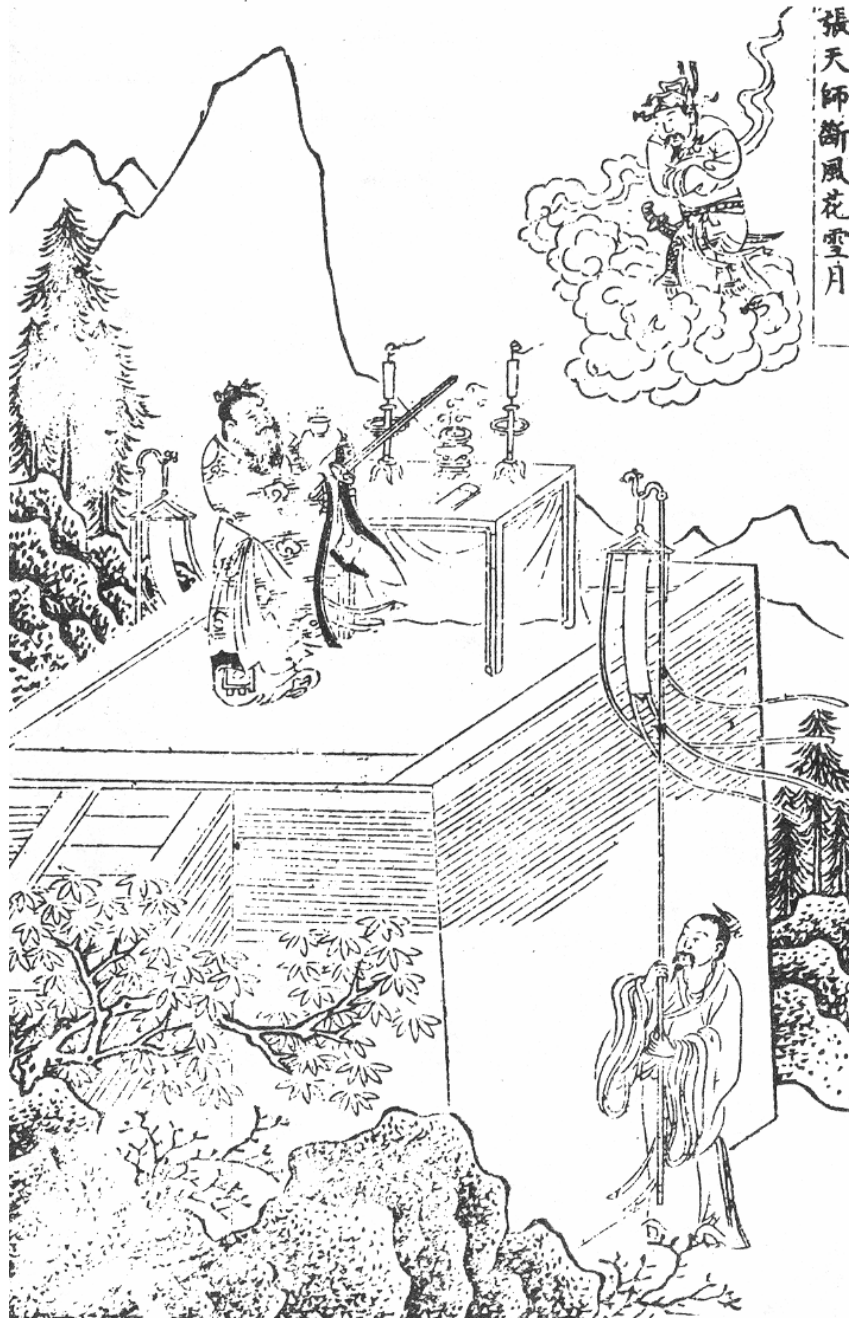


Figure 7.3. – The Celestial Master summoning Thunder Envoy Zhang. Note the thunder commanding block on the table (Zang Jinshu 臧晉叔 (fl. ca. 1600), *Yuan qu xuan* 元曲選).

<sup>66</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 62.35ab.

Loud and dramatic was also the oath of loyalty that was read in order to keep the demonic thunder marshals bound to their task. This oath was accompanied by the sacrificial offering of a rooster. It was a powerful reminder of the distinction between the classical “literary” ritual of Daoists, performed in seclusion, and the vernacular “martial” ritual, acted out in public.<sup>67</sup>

Next, hold a live crowing rooster in your left hand. Let an assistant hold the rooster’s legs and wings. You, master, hold the neck of the rooster, and with the sword in your hand butcher it. Let the blood trickle into an empty cup, and add the wine to it. Mix it using the sword. Give the blood-wine to the generals and clerks [of thunder], pronouncing the oath: “Holding a sword in my hand, I take the dripping blood of this butchered rooster as my oath. I swear that I will “Spread the transformations on Heaven’s behalf, to help the dynasty and save the people; deploy wind and summon thunder, to separate men from demons.” You clerks and soldiers! Follow me on the turning of my seal, soldiers!<sup>68</sup> And proceed upon my command, generals! If you hear my talismanic summons, quickly descend to present yourself!<sup>69</sup>

次，左手執生叫雞。令侍者捉雞足及翅。師執雞頸，右手仗劍斬雞。瀝血於空盞內，以酒侵入，用劍攪勻。將血酒與將吏，誓曰：「仗劍在手，吾以斬雞瀝血爲誓。誓願：代天行化，助國救民；役召風雷，區別人鬼。汝等吏兵！兵隨印轉！將逐令行！聞吾符召，疾速降臨！」

<sup>67</sup> For a distinction of Daoist ritual on the basis of sacrificial offerings (not mentioning literary or martial), see Asano Haruji, “Offerings in Daoist Ritual,” pp. 291. In Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth (eds.), *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002

<sup>68</sup> As we have seen in section 7.3.1., the seal was one of the ritual paraphernalia of the Daoist practitioner. My own fieldwork has taught me that in Daoist ritual of the present day, the seal is used, among other things, to guide the actions of the soldiers of darkness.

<sup>69</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 123.27b.

Bloody and violent, resembling the shamanic master's performances, Daoist martial ritual aimed at manifesting the presence of the demonic thunder marshals (and, perhaps, demonstrating the chain of command that the Daoist presided over). While the names of these gods were pronounced during their invocations, they were also written: on pennants, talismans, and (probably) on the paper images that represented the thunder gods on the Daoist altar. In short, few Daoist gods were more of a tangible presence than those belonging to the Thunder Division.

Intriguingly, the thunder gods are also representative of the “tour” that temple gods made in their festival processions. Once called down to earth, the gods of thunder would be ordered to make just such a tour. Searching the locality for baleful spirits, the marshals, generals, and soldiers were expected to engage in battles with anything that was thought to harm the community. In Daoist literature of the earliest times such tours are frequently mentioned: “The Heavenly Emperor always comes [down] from the Gate of Heaven to make tours on days belonging to *wu* and *xu* [of the sexagenary cycle]” 天帝常以戊戌日從天門來遊.<sup>70</sup> In late imperial times, many of the aspects that we have seen above to be enacted by the processions of gods were embodied in the person of the commander of the Thunder Division, Marshal Deng. In one of the books devoted to this divinity, he asks the armies of thunder to follow him on his tours:

Generals of Thunder, Soldiers of Thunder! Follow me in my descents and ascents,  
on tours of inspection through the three realms!<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> DZ 615, 2.27b; this collection contains many other examples.

<sup>71</sup> *Daofa huiyuan*, 80.14a.

雷將雷兵！巡繞三界，從吾降升！

His task on earth was to expel several kinds of diseases, as well as to “subdue the Archdemons” 降魔 (80.24b) and “chase away plagues” 驅瘟 (80.34b). In another scripture, targeting the Archdemons of the Sixfold Heavens, the two Marshals Deng and Xin (here referred to as Celestial Lords) are said to come down to earth on specific days belonging to the calendrical phases of *ren* 壬 and *gui* 癸. These phases, recurring once every five days, represent the North and the emergence of demons.

On days belonging to *ren* and *gui*, the Celestial Lords descend to the world of men.

They promote the transformations on Heaven’s behalf, and cleanse fiendish airs.<sup>72</sup>

天君每遇壬癸之日，下降人間。代天宣化，掃蕩妖氛。

Larger groups of exorcist divinities, such as the Four Saints 四聖, were also said to “descend on tours through the world of dust” 下遊塵世.<sup>73</sup>

Whenever the demonic thunder marshals respond to the priestly summons and subdue the malfeasances of rampant demons, they are subsequently rewarded for their help. The reward consists of the same procedure that the main protagonists of vernacular narratives receive: their names are registered on a “placard,” 榜 or a “register” 籙 – in almost identical fashion as I have described in the case of the late Ming “novel”! In the excerpt from a ritual procedure below, Marshal Deng is summoned to help cure a sick person.

<sup>72</sup> *Daofa buiyuan*, 154.6b.

<sup>73</sup> *Fabai yizhu*, 32.16a.



It is your duty to help [this patient] immediately recover his full harmony, purify him of all residual energies. Your past sins may then be erased from the Black Registers, and your living name may then soon be recorded in the Cinnabar Books! Your life will be firm ever after. The members of your lineage will be blessed!<sup>74</sup>

務俾 某 頓復沖和，盡蠲故炁。往罪即消於黑簡，生名早註於丹書。身命永堅，室家胥慶。

The entire ritual procedure is similar to the trajectory towards canonization described in late Ming religious chronicles. As we have seen in chapter 6, Sun Wukong's companions equally were gods (one of them, Zhu Bajie, being the Daoist Marshal of Heavenly Reed from the Thunder Division) who accompanied Xuanzang on a tour that was permeated with demonic battles. Sun Wukong, too, was a spiritual being and had already been given a lowly position in Heaven – he was moreover confused with “Sire Thunder” in every other chapter of the book.

*Journey to the North* phrases this aspect of the tour quite explicitly: “Every year on the twenty-fifth day of the second month, [the Dark Emperor] descends to tour the world below 遊下界, together with his legions of generals, inspecting good and evil 巡察善惡” (ch. 23). The opening of *Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean* similarly paves the way for the story by saying that the Dark Emperor “has descended to the mortal world in order to regulate it” 降下塵凡治世 and rid it of “beastly stench and venomous breaths” 腥羶毒氣 (ch. 1). In my discussion of *Canonization of the Gods* in the previous chapter I have pointed out

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<sup>74</sup> *Daofa huiyuan* 80.38a.

that Heaven sent supernatural beings to earth in order to help King Wu in his dual reordering of the universe. Even though in this case no references were made to a tour, the “military campaign” against King Zhou likewise is a martial process carried out under the aegis of the Dark Emperor. One of the last lines of the book makes the battle look like an exorcist, too: “Therefore [King Wu] was instructed to attack King Zhou and wash away his beastly stench” 故教伐紂，洗腥羶 (ch. 100). Similarly, the last lines of *Watermargin* include a phrase stating that the “Heavenly Paladins and Earthly Fatals descended to the domain of dust” 天罡地煞降塵寰 (ch. 71). The reason for this event had been explained some lines before: “Spread the Way on Heaven’s behalf, protect the realm and bring peace to the people” 替天行道，保境安民.

We can conclude by observing that the gods of the Thunder Division were not only a standard part of Daoist rituals performed at religious festivals, but that they were visible, audible, and even tangible. Similar to the exorcist tours made by the gods in festival processions, the exorcist tasks of Thunder Gods were executed on martial tours made through the celestial realm. If the presence of these gods in (1) Daoist ritual and (2) religious festivals were thus conceptually very similar, it certainly was consistent with the divine characters of (3) the vernacular narratives considered in this thesis. Moreover, the fact that the thunder gods could earn a place in celestial registers by performing exorcist feats on their ritual tours through the mortal realm reinforces the impression that the divine registers of canonization included towards the end of vernacular narratives were not mere conventions of the genre: there was a very concrete ritual function to them.

Having established some functional congruencies, we need to know whether the narrative cycles that featured the thunder gods were actually performed during the local religious festival, and whether they contain the same registers of canonization.

#### 7.4. The dramatic repertoire of the religious festival

Reading through the lists of titles performed in late Ming local drama, for example those studied some decades ago in Tanaka Issei's voluminous works, we find many episodes belonging to those story cycles that have become known to us today as late Ming "novels."<sup>75</sup> While these plays included a great range of topics, the episodes that have formed *Watermargin*, *Journey to the West*, *Three Kingdoms*, etc., frequently recur. Tanaka was primarily interested in the performative arts of ritual theatre and did not pursue their relationship to printed versions of vernacular religious chronicles. Moreover, some of the relevant materials were not yet available to him for research, or had not been discovered. Below I will analyze a number of these materials in order to make the argument that the thunder gods manifested themselves in rituals performed in the proximity of exactly those story cycles that would later contain the trajectory towards canonization.

Two main works will be considered in this analysis of the performances during the local religious festival. The first, Wang Zhideng's *Compilation* from the region around present-day Shanghai, has been introduced above. The second was written roughly around the same time, yet stemmed from a different region. It is the only exhaustive list of theatre plays performed at festivals of the late Ming known to me: *Forty Melodies in the Transmitted Register of Proceedings for Festivals to Welcome Gods* 迎神賽社禮節傳簿四十曲宮調 (hereafter simply *Register*). Written by a *yinyang*-master 陰陽先生 called Cao Guoxian 曹國憲 in 1574, it provides a detailed outline of the form and sequence of gods' festivals in the Northern Chinese province of Shanxi 山西. In contrast to Wang Zhideng's *Compilation*, which was

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<sup>75</sup> Tanaka Issei 田中一成, *Chūgoku saishi engeki kenkyū* 中国祭祀演劇研究, pp. 334-52, 394, 498-500. Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1981.

descriptive, negatively predisposed towards popular religion, and not exhaustive, the Shanxi *Register* was compiled as an aide in the actual organization of a complete festival. Although the texts differ in their objectives as well as in their geographical origins, it is striking how their contents direct our attention to the same practices. As we will see, the titles and *personae* of plays in both the *Compilation* and the *Register* are largely congruent with the main vernacular story cycles. Moreover, in the Shanxi *Register* we find how canonization plays a fundamental role.

Wang Zhideng starts his descriptions by mentioning a number of popular festivals that he witnessed in Jiangnan. To begin with, he defines the Pine Flower Festival 松花會 and the Fierce General's Festival 猛將會 as two festivals that he had only witnessed during his childhood, exclusively performed for disasters of “drought and locusts” – occasions for exorcists. Apparently they were less relevant in his contemporary practice than the other festivals he mentions: those for King Guan 關王會 and for Guanyin 觀音會,<sup>76</sup> as well as the festival for the “Sagely Saints of the Five Directions” 五方賢聖會. Whereas the former two festivals are clearly dedicated to Guan Yu and Guanyin respectively, the latter is unclear. Were they the Five Emperors of the Five Directions 五方五帝, so important in Daoist ritual? Or were they the Five Manifestations 五顯 / 五通? Or even the Five Saints 五聖 of *Journey to the West*?

Wang Zhideng outlines the most common theatre plays performed during these three festivals. By far the largest portion of Wang Zhideng's account is occupied by various enumerations of “farces” (zaju), their main characters, secondary characters, “gods and demons,” and even certain theatrical props – or ritual paraphernalia. Equally describing the

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<sup>76</sup> Same festival mentioned in *Jiangyin xianzhi* 江陰縣志, 3.3b.

chaos and disarray accompanying these spectacles, the text contains the following concrete examples:

The *zaju* are *Hulaoguan*,<sup>77</sup> *Qujiangchi*,<sup>78</sup> *Chu bawang*,<sup>79</sup> *Dandaobui*,<sup>80</sup> *You Chibi*,<sup>81</sup> *Liu Zhiyuan*,<sup>82</sup> *Shuijingong*,<sup>83</sup> *Quan nongcheng*,<sup>84</sup> *Caisang niang*, *San gu caolu*,<sup>85</sup> *Ba xian qingshou*.<sup>86</sup>

雜劇則：虎牢關、曲江池、楚霸王、單刀會、游赤壁、劉知遠、水晶宮、勸農丞、採桑娘、三顧草廬、八仙慶壽。

The first thing to notice about this list is that the literatus Wang Zhideng, such a vocal opponent of the devious practices of the religious festival, was able to attach titles to the plays he saw being performed. The other thing is that many of his titles are recorded in uncommonly concise tri-lemmas, quite reminiscent of (and indeed included in) the bulk of titles present in the fourteenth century *Register for Recording Demons* 錄鬼簿. This is still the oldest extant catalog of playwrights and the titles they wrote – note the fact that the title speaks of demons, not of theatre.

<sup>77</sup> Also known as *San zhan Lü Bu* 三戰呂布 on the *Register*; cf. Zhong Sicheng 鍾嗣成 (ca. 1277-1345), *Lu gui bu* 錄鬼簿, p. 17: *Zhan Lü Bu* 斬呂布; p. 7, 23, 66, 76. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji, 1991.

<sup>78</sup> cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu*, p. 19. For the extant play, see Zang Jinshu 臧晉叔 (fl. ca. 1600), *Yuan qu xuan* 元曲選. Beijing: Wenxue guji, 1955: *Li Ya xianhuajiu qujiangchi zaju* 李亞仙花酒曲江池.

<sup>79</sup> Also included in *Register* as *Bawang shechao fengguan* 霸王設朝封官 and *Dabui hai* 大會垓.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Register*. *Dandaobui* 單刀赴會. cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu*, p. 60.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Register*. *Zhuge Liang chibi aobing* 諸葛亮赤壁鏖兵. cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu*, p. 66: *Qixingtan Zhuge Liang jifeng* 七星壇諸葛祭風.

<sup>82</sup> Episode from the novel *Cantang Wudai shi yanyi zhuanyuan* 殘唐五代史演義傳, attributed to Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (ca. 1330-1400). Also cf. *Register*. *Yaoqi dawei* 咬齊打韋 and *Damofang* 打磨坊.

<sup>83</sup> Famous episode from *Xiyoyi*.

<sup>84</sup> cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu* (various); later also included as a scene in Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 *Mudanting* 牡丹亭.

<sup>85</sup> Episode from *Three Kingdoms* with Liu Bei 劉備.

<sup>86</sup> Same title in constellation 28 of the *Register*. Furthermore, there exists a play by Zhu Youdun 朱有燉 (1379-1439), *Yaohibui baxian qingshou* 瑤池會八仙慶壽.

The correspondence of the sixteenth century festival plays with the plays on this fourteenth century list may lead us to two careful conclusions. One is that if the plays of the religious festival were not so alien to the representatives of the literary world as to be unrecognizable to them, they suggest the existence of a commonly performed repertoire of story cycles long before the printing of “novels.” Secondly, Wang Zhideng moreover mentions them as autonomous episodes instead of as parts of an integral narrative. He thus perceived them as individual plays. This is another indication of story cycles that circulated before the end of the sixteenth century.

Yet perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this short list is that it contains works otherwise associated primarily with the narrative cycles of *Three Kingdoms* (five out of eleven) – the episodic narrative featuring King Guan. Performances of a deity with historical origins during a religious festival: how was King Guan perceived in this environment? What does this imply for the later printed versions of the book? As I already indicated at the end of the previous chapter, it may very well have been the case that those people who first formed the audience of *Three Kingdoms* did not read a “novel,” but the life of a saint – a religious chronicle, or a hagiography. Indeed, to label their consumption of these stories as “reading” may be misleading altogether.

In addition, *Journey to the West* (one out of eleven) is represented by one of its most famous episodes: Sun Wukong and his visit to the Dragon Palace. As it happens, in *Xiyouji* this episode is situated in the first part of the narrative where the actual journey has not yet started. Was Sun Wukong already defined within a narrative that associated him with Buddhist lore? The episode in the Dragon Palace, at least, was one that did not feature Sun Wukong’s later companions, such as Xuanzang or the other pilgrims.

The impression that a relatively fixed set of story cycles was preeminent among the performances of the religious festival in the region of Wu is reinforced by Wang Zhideng's categorization of the relevant "demonic gods."

The gods and demons are: Guanyin, Erlang ("the Second Bloke"),<sup>87</sup> Heavenly Master Zhang, the Eighteen Arhats,<sup>88</sup> [the cast of] 'Zhong Kui Sends His Sister to Her Wedding,'<sup>89</sup> [the cast of] 'Fetching Scriptures in India,' Sire Thunder and Mother Lightning, Lady Houtu.<sup>90</sup>

神鬼則：觀世音、二郎神、漢天師、十八羅漢、鍾馗嫁妹、西竺取經、雷公電母、后土夫人。

While all of the above personae are the subject of some episode of one larger story cycle or another, the plain fact of them being mentioned is of course not enough to situate them here as if they referred to *xiaoshuo* or related narrative figures. Although, for example, Guanyin, Erlang, and the Eighteen Arhats are prominent figures in *Journey to the West*, and the Celestial Master in *Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean*, these names might as well refer to other appearances in other stories. Yet two other entries, [the cast of] *Zhong Kui Sends His Sister to Her Wedding* and [the cast of] *Fetching Scriptures in India* are clearly expressive of larger narrative cycles: the former belonging to the adventures of the demon queller Zhong Kui

<sup>87</sup> Also known as the god of theatre.

<sup>88</sup> These also occur in the *Register*, listed under the titles *Xida taiqi you simen* 悉達太子游四門 and *Tangseng xitian qujing* 唐僧西天取經.

<sup>89</sup> In rural Anhui this play is still performed annually.

<sup>90</sup> In the *Register* there are plays devoted to her, such as *Wuyue chao houtu* 五嶽朝后土 and *Erxian xingdao chao houtu* 二仙行道朝后土, while she is enacted in other plays, such as *Wangmu niangniang pantaohui* 王母娘娘蟠桃會.

(printed in a late Ming book called *Biography of the Demon Slayer* 斬鬼傳), and the latter of course to the *Journey of the West*. This may require us to consider the possibility that his second enumeration also refers to the same limited set of story cycles. In that case, this list of “demons and gods” would be coherent with the occurrence of various episodes from *Three Kingdoms* in Wang Zhideng’s first passage. However that may be, from these first two short lists made by Wang Zhideng, both *Three Kingdoms* and *Journey to the West* are unambiguously present as story cycles.

The tendency to sever the names of important figures from their narrative context can be observed in what Wang Zhideng classifies as “historical persons.” In this case, too, there are multiple references to existing story cycles:

The [historical] figures are: Wu Zixu, Lady Sun, Jiang Ziya,<sup>91</sup> Wang Yanzhang,<sup>92</sup> Li Bai, Song Gongming, “the Return of the Mandarin,”<sup>93</sup> the Eighteen Scholars, the Thirteen Eunuchs,<sup>94</sup> “The Widows Conquer the West,”<sup>95</sup> the Eighteen Feudal Lords.<sup>96</sup>

人物則：伍子胥、孫夫人、姜太公、王彥章、李太白、宋公明、狀元歸、  
十八學士、十三太保、征西寡婦、十八諸侯。

<sup>91</sup> One of the main figures in *Fengshen yanyi*.

<sup>92</sup> Character from *Cantang Wudai shi yanyi zhuhan*; also cf. *Register: Kan bingshu* 看兵書.

<sup>93</sup> This obviously is a title, but I have not been able to identify it.

<sup>94</sup> The famous 13<sup>th</sup> eunuch is Li Cunxiao 李存孝 (“Li Cunxiao, the Thirteenth Eunuch, General Flying Tiger” 十三太保飛虎將軍李存孝. Two Yuan zaju are associated with him: *Cunxiao dahu* 存孝打虎 and *Ku Cunxiao* 哭存孝.

<sup>95</sup> Title from cycle of *Yangjia jiang yanyi* 楊家將演義. Also see Fan Lian’s comments on the religious festival below.

<sup>96</sup> Episode from *Three Kingdoms*; also cf. *Register: Zhan huaxiong* 斬華雄.



Several characters need to be pointed out as belonging to famous late Ming story cycles. Jiang Ziya (*Canonization of the Gods*), Thirteen Eunuchs (*Journey to the North*), the Eighteen Feudal Lords (*Three Kingdoms*), The Widows Conquer the West (printed as a book called *Generals of the Yang Clan* 楊家將, earliest extant version from 1606), Wang Yanzhang (*History of the Five Dynasties*). It is unlikely that this selection of historical figures is in any way exhaustive. More probably it reflects the bias of this literati author, listing only those figures that would somehow fit his standards of decency, and excluding others – for example, spirits such as Sun Wukong or Li Nuozha.

To obtain a complete overview of the possible repertoire of the religious festival we need to consider Cao Guoxian's *Register* from 1574. This manual for the ritual theatre of a Shanxi festival to “welcome the gods” consists of four parts of unequal length, each containing itemized lists. The first two lay out the ritual proceedings for invoking the Eight Astral Lords 八星君, and Twenty Eight Constellations 二十八宿 respectively. The third part lists theatrical plays attached to each of the Twenty Eight Constellations, and the final part provides lists of characters participating in some of those plays.

Part I is entitled “Forty Melodies from the Book for Correct Transmission of the Astral Charts of Zhou Music” 周樂星圖本正傳四十曲宮調 (hereafter simply *Astral Charts*). In it, performance art was invested with sacred prestige by matching the eight tones 八音 of the Zhou dynasty music system with eight astral deities. A short historical exposition situating the matching of music and religion in the time of King Zhuang of the Zhou 周莊王 precedes the list of the deities with their attributes; all are military men and nobility from the past. The divine manifestations of the eight tones are envisioned as belonging to a celestial order. In this short section, history both accounts for cosmic principles and

embodies them. According to the rules stipulated by Huang Zuo in his treatise on the local festival during the same period, the eight tones formed the basis of the musical system that was used in festivals, and they had to be learnt by heart – they constituted somewhat of a canon in themselves.<sup>97</sup> As we will see below, subsequent sections revolve exclusively around the principle of ordering, and, more specifically, canonizing.

Part II was important for the understanding of the context in which this ritual theatre was thought to take place. It forms the necessary prelude to Part III, which lists twenty-eight complete sets of theatrical sequences, based on the Twenty Eight Constellations. Part II first described the historical role played by the deified Twenty Eight Constellations in the broader historical precedents that had led to the empire of which Shanxi formed a part. A short narrative treats emperor Guangwu 光武 of the later Han dynasty, the “Glorious Martial” emperor who reunified China by a military conquest after the collapse of the former Han. According to this story, Guangwu invoked the constellations in their martial manifestations as “generals” 將軍 onto his altar and offered them divine canonizations 封 as a reward for their help in subduing Wang Mang 王莽 and Su Xian 蘇憲.

After this narrative explanation, the actual canonizations of each of the Twenty Eight Constellations are described, with their full title, rank, and geographical position to which they are assigned.<sup>98</sup> Aside from these twenty eight canonizations, there are other lists canonizing the two generals and two ministers of the Dippers of the Four Directions, as well as another set of eight astral generals. The structure of these canonizations on the one hand was thus a part of a holistic narrative about “China,” and on the other they each were

<sup>97</sup> Huang Zuo, *Taiquan xiangli*, 3.10b.

<sup>98</sup> The Twenty Eight constellations formed the basis for the celestial geography of China in which each region corresponds to a constellation. This system, usually explained in the opening section of Ming local gazetteers as “astral fields” 星野 or “division of the fields” 分野, seems to have been current throughout the Chinese empire.

smaller narratives about the individual martial achievements of the astral gods. Cao Guoxian thus emphasized a theme similar to the trajectory towards canonization that I have analyzed: the canonization of military assistants to a ruler in his dynastic conquest. This forms the narrative framework within which the dramatic performances devoted to the Twenty Eight Constellations are defined.

Part III, then, describes with great precision all tunes and plays to be performed at the staged canonization of each General of the Twenty Eight Constellations. At each occasion of this Shanxi festival only one set of plays would be selected for performance (by divination).<sup>99</sup> Each individual set was structured on the basis of seven sacrificial offerings (“cups,” 盞). This was a common format for “welcoming the gods” 迎神 and “sending off the gods” 送神, even for the imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth as stipulated by Hongwu in 1377.<sup>100</sup> With each cup, offered to the particular General of one Constellation, the titles are listed of one to three “troupe plays” 隊戲. Concluding the theatrical performances are always three separate performances: “real troupe” 正隊, “plays of the [acting] guild” 院本, as well as *zaju*. One author has argued that the “troupe plays” were offered directly to the deities, whereas the other three types were meant rather for entertainment of the mortal participants in the festival.<sup>101</sup> This is not certain.

The material is slightly unwieldy because it contains many theatre titles that have not yet been identified, roughly one third of the total repertoire. These titles possibly were exclusively local traditions that have not been recorded elsewhere. Instead of providing

<sup>99</sup> Wu Xiuling 吳秀玲, “Lun Jindongnan gusai yanxi de yishixing yinsu 論晉東南古賽演戲的儀式性因素.” *Minsu quyi* 民俗曲藝 128 (2000), pp. 282-83.

<sup>100</sup> *Ming Taizu yuzhi daji* 明太祖御製文集, *juan* 12; also see Song Lian, *Song Lian quanji*, pp. 333-35; for detailed descriptions of such offerings during a local festival in Jiangxi, see *Nan'an fuzhi* 南安府志 *juan* 10 (*passim*).

<sup>101</sup> Zhang Zhizhong 張之中, “Duixi, yuanben, yu zaju de xingqi 隊戲、院本、與雜劇的興起.” *Zhonghua xiqu* 中華戲曲 3 (1987), pp. 153-4.

itemized lists of each set of performances, I will proceed directly with a discussion of those titles that are a part of the more famous story cycles. Of the identifiable titles mentioned, a majority corresponds with scenes from well known plays, and with episodes from late Ming novels – in short, they are scenes belonging to larger narrative cycles. The predominant cycle is *Three Kingdoms*. Most of the plays from this cycle relate the martial exploits of Guan Yu, most commonly his slaying of Chi You 蚩尤 in the salt lake (thus, I might add, the version of Guan Yu's history that was used in Daoist hagiography).

Second in number are the military exploits from the cycle of *Generals of the Yang Family*, as well as *Journey to the West* and *Canonization of the Gods*. In all of these cycles the martial aspect is quite dominant. More generally, the other identifiable titles overwhelmingly occur in late Ming novels. There are titles belonging to *Watermargin*, and *History of the Five Dynasties*, but also to *The Story of the Late* 琵琶記 and *Records of the Western Chamber* 西廂記.

The *Register* includes a list that sums up several individual plays with their roles and props. The contents of these plays bespeak exorcist ventures. For example, although in the play entitled “King Wu’s Attack on King Zhou,” not a single supernatural character is mentioned, the list of necessities includes an exorcist’s mirror 照妖鏡. Or, in another play about dynastic founding, “The Tyrant King Finds a Dynasty and Promotes Officials” 霸王設朝封官, no less than three such paraphernalia are mentioned.<sup>102</sup> In the play about Guan Yu slaying Chi You, the Celestial Master makes an appearance, as well as Sire Thunder and the soldiers of darkness. In a play about the Queen Mother of the West, equally, thunder gods make an appearance, alongside the Daoist Three Pure Ones and the Marshal of the Heavenly Reed. Many other such examples could be mentioned.

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<sup>102</sup> Namely “Xuanyuan’s mirror” 軒轅鏡, a “Wind-subduing stone” 鎮風石, and a “Star-illuminating gem” 照星寶.

Important to point out, finally, is the similarity of this dramatic repertoire with Wang Zhideng's *Compilation*. There is hardly a single item in the lists of Wang Zhideng's Jiangnan *Compilation* that is not included in this 1574 *Register* from Shanxi, and this is true for the *dramatis personae* as well. This Shanxi manual, at least, borrowed its material from the same narrative cycles that were to become the great masterworks of the Ming novel, insofar as the contents of the plays can be inferred from their titles.

There are fragmented references to theatre titles in other sources, too. The above mentioned Fan Lian wrote a scathing critique of the vulgar nature of the “festivals for welcoming gods” in the region around Shanghai, sometime after 1590. He points out that the subject matter of the religious festival had always consisted of records from “unofficial histories” 野史, and that their language was coarse 俚鄙. Although he unfortunately mentions only four plays, yet of those four plays three occur in the Shanxi *Register*: *Xiao Qinwang* 小秦王,<sup>103</sup> “The Widows Conquer the West” 寡婦征西,<sup>104</sup> and “Wang Zhaojun Emerges from the Fortress” 昭君出塞.<sup>105</sup> In a Jiaping gazetteer from Jiangxi it was said that during the Autumn Retribution the people “do stories, such as *The Eighteen Scholars* and *Emperor Ming Tours the Moon Palace*, and the like” 爲故事，如《十八學士》、《明皇遊月宮》之類。<sup>106</sup> Here, the former of these two plays is included in Wang Zhideng's *Compilation*. While the plays mentioned certainly represented a small minority of the total repertoire, and no examples of episodes from vernacular story cycles were included, the titles do support the

<sup>103</sup> This one corresponds to Yu Boyuan's 于伯淵 play *Xiao Qinwang* 小秦王; cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu*, p. 17.

<sup>104</sup> A title from the Yang Jiaping cycle, also on the *Register* (see above). This play is being performed in religious festivals in Taiwan up to the present day (Taibei, Baosheng dadi shengdan, May 5, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> This title is known both as a *duxu* on the *Register* and as a Yuan *zaju* by Zhang Shiqi 張時起; cf. Zhong Sicheng, *Lu gui bu*, p.13, 69. Also performed in Taiwan, Taibei, Baosheng dadi shengdan, May 12, 2004.

<sup>106</sup> *Nan'an fuzhi* 南安府志, 10.19b.

hypothesis that local festivals featured dramatic performances that were limited to a more or less predictable repertoire.

To conclude, in the two extensive sources written in Shanxi and in the Shanghai region, we can find a predominance of titles associated with the larger late Ming story cycles. These, apparently, were the most popular story cycles during the Ming in great parts of the empire. Aside from this predominance in each of them separately, their repertoire largely overlaps: of the eleven *zaju* from Wang Zhideng's Shanghai *Compilation*, seven are included in the *Register*. All of Wang Zhideng's "gods and demons" are to be found in Shanxi, while his historical figures number (at least) four on a list of eleven. The fragments from Fan Lian, as well as from the Jiangxi gazetteer, seem to corroborate the popularity in Ming local theatre of episodes that later became famous as part of the late Ming "novel." The lists studied by Tanaka Issei reinforce this conclusion.

Thus, even if the Shanxi *Register* would not have situated its own plays in the context of canonization, and even if we would not know that the Shanxi plays contained clear exorcist elements in seemingly secular "historical" plays, we would still be able to make the argument that needed to be made in this section: the dramatic repertoire performed during religious festivals in the proximity of Daoist ritual consisted for an important part of episodes of the narrative cycles that were printed in standard editions as religious chronicles.

If one contextualizes the abundant presence of Daoist ritual agents in vernacular literature, as well as the trajectory toward canonization that was the shared plot of so many late Ming "novels," with the theatrical performances of religious festivals, it seems reasonable to thoroughly reconsider the common definition of these stories as belonging to the realm of "literature." This is not to deny that the stories were enjoyable for an individual reader, yet at the time they first materialized as books, audiences may very well have

understood them as a part of a ritual repertoire. From the outset they may have belonged to the realm of performed religion.

Notwithstanding the fact that these stories soon became standardized printed editions that were regarded as more serious than their performed predecessors – at least in the privileged opinions of lettered men – they may have rather belonged to the world of the demonic from which Kong Zi’s heirs had to abstain. That is, publicly.

It seems that if late Ming literati were aware of the performative context of *xiaoshuo*, they did not subscribe to the ritual function of theatre. The famous seventeenth century literatus Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597 – 1679) recorded a curious dialogue he conducted with an elderly gentleman about the theatre performed during a rain-prayer in 1632. In a long enumeration of the characters acted out (including “six gods of the Thunder Division”), the props used, and the outfits worn, Zhang Dai is asked what these characters have to do with *Watermargin*, and what *Watermargin* has to do with prayers for rain:

During the seventh month of 1632 all the villages prayed for rain, day after day they enacted the gods of the tide and the demons of the sea, all struggling to spit on them.<sup>107</sup> In my neighborhood they performed *Watermargin*. [There follows a long enumeration of characters, props, and outfits, including “six gods of the Thunder Division” 雷部六, as well as a *mahāsattva* 大士, which probably refers to Guanyin.] Old Father Li Nanhua asked me, muttering about these strange things: “How is *Watermargin* in any way relevant for rain-praying? When the mountain bandits here stand up, what sense does it make to welcome the bandits?” I raised my head and thought about it. Indeed it was absurd and I had nothing to say. Then I replied: “There is some relevance. When the Heavenly Paladins are all caught, they can be

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<sup>107</sup> It was an ancient practice to spit on (unsuccessful) gods in order to provoke them into action.

lodged in the sanctuary of Defender-in-chief [Hong Xin]. Use six big banners and write “Obey the Order and Solicit Peace” on two of them; “Advantageous Winds and Fine Rain” on one; “Stop the Bandits and Appease the People” on one; and write even bigger “Timely Rain” on two of them, to lead the way. The spectators will love it and praise it loudly, and even the elders will chuckle when they go home.

108

壬申七月，村村禱雨，日日扮潮神海鬼，爭唾之。余里中扮《水滸》。  
 〔略〕季祖南華老人喃喃怪問余曰：「《水滸》與禱雨有何義味相近？余山盜起，迎盜何爲耶？」余俯首思之，果誕而無謂。余應之曰：「有之。天罡盡，以宿太尉殿焉。用大牌六：書「奉旨招安」者二，書「風調雨順」者一，「盜息民安」者一，更大書「及時雨」者二，前導之。觀者歡喜讚嘆，老人匿笑而去。」

The excerpt above suggests that for lettered men of the time, the popular practice of performing certain stories at certain occasions was interpreted according to a different logic than was current among the villagers who organized festival theatre. This may have been a consequence of the public denial by intellectuals to being acquainted with the actual popular religious practice, but it may also be that by 1632 vernacular story cycles such as *Watermargin* were already predominantly known as textual objects – at least, among lettered men.

## 7.6. Final Hypothesis

<sup>108</sup> Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 (et al.), *Shuibuzhuan ziliao huibian* 水滸傳資料彙編, p. 443. Tianjin: Nankai daxue, 2002.



Thus far I have advanced the claim that the narrative cycles that were popular during the religious festival as theatrical plays formed one main bedrock of the late Ming “novel.” The practices to which these story cycles were attached, however, did not come to an end with the publication of printed books. Dramatic enactments of Sun Wukong’s adventures or King Wu’s conquests continued to be performed. The books, too, retained strong ritual characteristics, presenting us with further indications as to the ritual occasion with which they were associated. Following Wilt Idema’s observation that plays were “primarily performed on ritual occasions, as part of the ritual,” I would like to suggest that these vernacular story cycles equally were associated with ritual occasions.<sup>109</sup> They may have belonged to a kind of “para-liturgy” of ritualistic activities that were performed at various ritual occasions: anniversaries of gods, seasonal festivals, crises, etc. Just as each god was thought to have his or her particular strengths and functions, so did the narrative cycles.

Glen Dudbridge has suggested that a narrative such as *Journey to the West* could perhaps primarily be seen as “the enactment of a progress toward paradise” that was a part of “various ritual situations: funeral processions, burials, processions to inaugurate the Yulan 盂蘭 ceremonies of the seventh lunar month.”<sup>110</sup> I would like to extend that suggestion to all of the narratives treated in the previous chapter of this thesis. Let us conclude with a step by step survey of the ritual occasions for *xiaoshuo*.

To begin with the most explicit example: the story cycles of *Journey to the North* were appropriate to perform at the festival in honor of the Dark Emperor. His descent to earth on 2/25 as stated in the story (see above) gave the local community enough time to prepare, organize, and carry out several days of celebrations before the festival of his anniversary on

<sup>109</sup> Wilt Idema, “Traditional Dramatic Literature,” p. 788.

<sup>110</sup> Glen Dudbridge, “The *Hsi-yu Chi* Monkey and the Fruits of the Last Ten Years.” *Chinese Studies* 漢學研究 6:1 (June 1988), p. 483.

3/3.<sup>111</sup> Gary Seaman, moreover, has pointed out that the Ming version of the *Journey to the North* was printed with a ritual appendix for worship and sacrifice to the Dark Emperor.<sup>112</sup>

The ritual environment of the large euhemerism of *Canonization of the Gods* is described explicitly. In chapter 98, when the “stage for canonizing the gods” 封神臺 is about to be built, none other than the Duke of Zhou 周公 draws a chart that positions this stage opposite of the Altar for Heaven and Earth 于天地壇前. The ritual of canonization starts with a supplication to the “God(s) and Spirit(s) of August Heaven and Consort Earth” 皇天后土神祇. Thus, the story cycles of *Canonization of the Gods* were fit for performance during local religious occasions such as *chuxi* 除夕 or *yuandan* 元旦 when the “god(s) and spirit(s) of Heaven and Earth” 拜天地神祇 were worshiped;<sup>113</sup> and “all the gods and demons” 諸鬼神 received offerings.<sup>114</sup> If local gazetteers merely say that at these occasions the people “worshiped Heaven and Earth” 拜天地,<sup>115</sup> it was most likely to be understood that they worshiped “the gods and demons of Heaven and Earth.” Even the imperial sacrifices to Heaven and Earth were defined as “offerings to Heavenly gods and Earthly spirits” 祭天神地祇.<sup>116</sup> Situated “opposite of” the altar to Heaven and Earth, the ritual for canonization (which in fact constitutes the entire story) presents itself as just outside of the real liturgy, a “para-liturgy.”

<sup>111</sup> *Zhenyang xianzhi* 真陽縣志, p. 658; *Guide zhi* 歸德志, 1.9b; *Xiayi xianzhi* 夏邑縣志, 2.8a.

<sup>112</sup> Seaman, Gary, *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel Pei-yu Chi*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

<sup>113</sup> *Tongling xianzhi* 銅陵縣志, 1.16a.

<sup>114</sup> *Liuhe xianzhi* 六合縣志, 2.3b; *Huangzhou fu zhi* 黃州府志, 1.17b; *Jiangle xianzhi* 將樂縣志, 1.6a.

<sup>115</sup> *Weishi xianzhi* 尉氏縣志, 1.29b.

<sup>116</sup> *MS*, p. 1540; moreover, in 1532 the name of the “Altar for Mountains and Rivers” 山川壇 was changed into “Altar for Heavenly Gods and Earthly Spirits” 天神地祇壇 (*MS*, p. 1280).

*Journey to the West* (as well as *Eunuch Sanbao's Records*) is entrenched at the beginning and end by ritual performances of the Land and Water Retreat 水陸齋. This salvation ritual was commonly performed by both Buddhists and Daoists, also during Ghost Month. Below I have included one example of a ritual procession during the Yulanhui 盂蘭會, celebrated on 7/15. It is important to note that this example is from the Zhengde reign (1506 – 21), thus before the earliest extant printed version of *Xiyouji*.

On this day they return to the proximity of the area of the Retreat, where they surround the head of the festival and pay him respect. They prepare a steep bridge of two or three *zhang* high and ten to twenty *zhang* in length. They decorate the gate of the bridge with the demonic statues of Oxhead, Horseface, and Yama. The Buddhist monks cross the bridge while holding their staffs (*kbakkhara*), leading the masses of worshipers to follow them. They pass over the bridge prostrating themselves once with every step, each of them shouting. Once they arrive at the altar for the Retreat, they burn a memorial of intent, and paper clothes at the places where the ancestors are worshiped. When it is over, they disperse.<sup>117</sup>

是日回附齋場，團拜會主。預叫橋，高二三丈，袤一二十丈。橋門裝束牛頭、馬面、閻羅、鬼像。釋僧執錫杖過橋，導眾拜者隨之。逾橋一步一拜，各有所呼。至齋壇，各于祀先祖處焚疏意、紙衣。畢散。

This looks very much like the kind of enactment that Dudbridge has in mind, with one difference: instead of a progress to paradise this case looks more like a journey to hell. The

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<sup>117</sup> *Qiongtai zhi* 瓊臺志, 7.18b

staff 錫杖 carried here by the monk(s) is described in chapter 12 of *Xiyouji* as a weapon to “destroy the Earth Pass” 破地關, may have been understood as a reference to the ritual of “attacking the Earth Prison” 破地獄.<sup>118</sup>

*Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean* is equally framed as an exorcist journey that starts on 7/15 – the Ghost Festival. As we have seen in previous sections, the rituals during this festival were performed by Buddhists and Daoists together – just as in the hybrid religious adventures of *Journey to the West* and *Eunuch Sanbao's Records*. The final chapters of the latter work are devoted to numerous promotions/canonizations into the administration of King Yama. Perhaps it is because of these two narratives of journeys into foreign lands with “foreign devils” 番鬼 that some local festivals featured the performance of “old events” (stories) 故事 with people “dressed as Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, as lions and cranes, as ‘Bao Lao,’<sup>119</sup> and other such theatre; also as foreign devils and dancing elephants” 裝僧道、獅鶴、鮑老等劇。又裝番鬼、舞象。<sup>120</sup>

We have already seen at the end of the previous section that *Watermargin* could be performed during rainprayers – perhaps because there was a significant relationship between rain and water? Perhaps the Thirty-six Heavenly Paladins and Seventy-two Earthly Fatales were thought to exorcize the Drought Demon? The story does not seem to provide any answers, leaving us with the same wonder as Zhang Dai and his friend. Yet, elsewhere it has been observed that the ritual oaths to Heaven and Earth sworn in *Watermargin* served as the

<sup>118</sup> This is another ritual sphere shared by Buddhists and Daoists, although Buddhist overtones are clear. During the ritual of attacking the Earth Prison, Daoist priests decorate themselves with Buddhist insignia.

<sup>119</sup> The character of Bao Lao is moreover known from at least two occurrences in *xiaoshuo*: first in *Watermargin* (ch. 33), where it refers to a form of dance, later in *Rulin Waishi* 儒林外史 (ch. 26).

<sup>120</sup> *Qiongtai zhi* 瓊臺志瓊臺志 14a

model for rituals of the local “Hall of Allegiance” 忠義堂.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps *Watermargin* thus was performed in correlation with the rituals of local militia, the “upright armies” 義兵?

Obviously, there is not one answer to these questions, and the ritual occasions with which they could be associated probably were not limited to one specific event either. Some story cycles were probably more preeminent during certain festivals than others, but there is no reason to assume that other cycles were excluded. Plays from *Three Kingdoms*, for example, seem to have been performed at most occasions, and probably for a reason.<sup>122</sup> The Shanxi *Register* from 1574 corroborates this. The popular festival being a phenomenon that was organized in cooperation with clerics, but not dominated by them; in most cases such festivals were not “Daoist” festivals, nor “Buddhist” ones, although both groups performed their specific rituals and left their specific marks upon the process. From a Daoist perspective, the many demonic gods from the Thunder Division were just such marks.

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<sup>121</sup> Yuan Bingling, *Chinese Democracies: A Study of the Kongsis of West Borneo, 1776-1884*. Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, 2000

<sup>122</sup> *Three Kingdoms* is a narrative that has provided one of the proverbial views of Chinese history, seeing it in a traditional dynastic process: “A long union will ultimately disintegrate, a long disintegration will eventually unite” 合久必分，分久必合. A barely noticed feature of *Three Kingdoms* is its constant reference to the Twenty Eight constellations. In the form of “stellar fields” 星野 or “division of the fields” 分野 these Twenty Eight Constellations were thought to have patterned earthly geography. The overwhelming majority of Ming local gazetteers start their records with an explanation of the particular stellar field their particular locality belongs. As we have seen with the local festival in Shanxi, the sequence of the dramatic performances was entirely based upon the Twenty Eight Constellations. I would say that if there was any way by which the local community expressed their regional identity in the face of the larger national narrative to which they were made to belong (or wanted to belong), it was through the enactments of story cycles from *Three Kingdoms*.

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032: *Shangqing longtian tongming liandu dafa* 上清龍天通明鍊度大法  
033: *Shangqing longtian tongming liandu dafa* 上清龍天通明鍊度大法  
034: *Qingwei longtian tongming neilian bizhi* 清微龍天通明內鍊祕旨  
035: *Qingwei tongmin liandu wenjian* 清微通明鍊度文檢  
039: *Qingweichuandu wenjian* 清微傳度文檢  
044: *Qingwei rangyi wenjian* 清微禳疫文檢  
045: *Qingwei rangbingjie wenjian* 清微禳兵劫文檢  
046: *Shangqing shenlie feijie Wulei dafa* 上清神烈飛捷五雷大法  
047: *Shenjie Wulei qidao jian* 神捷五雷祈禱檢  
048: *Shenjie Wulei qidao jian shi* 神捷五雷祈禱檢式  
049: *Shenjie Wulei qidao jian shi* 神捷五雷祈禱檢式  
050: *Qingwei qiqing wenjian pin* 清微祈晴文檢品  
055: *Qingwei zhidianxie wenjian pin* 清微治顛邪文檢品  
056: *Shangqing Yufu Wulei dafa Yushu lingwen* 上清玉府五雷大法玉樞靈文  
057: *Shangqing yushu wulei zhenwen* 上清玉樞五雷真文  
059: *Shangqing yushu wulei zhenwen* 上清玉樞五雷真文  
061: *Gaoshang Shenxiao Yushu zhanqian Wulei dafa* 高上神霄玉樞斬勘五雷大法  
062: *Gaoshang Shenxiao Yushu zhanqian Wulei dafa* 高上神霄玉樞斬勘五雷大法  
066: *Leiting gangmu shuo* 雷霆綱目說  
067: *Leiting xuanlun* 雷霆玄論  
072: *Leiting mochao neizhi* 雷霆默朝內旨  
073: *Tianshu leizhuan shang* 天書雷篆上  
075: *Tianshu leizhuan xia* 天書雷篆下  
076: *Wang Huoshi leiting aozhi xu* 汪火師雷霆奧旨序  
077: *Leiting miaoqi* 雷霆妙契  
080: *Hubuo liling Deng tianjun dafa* 歛火律令鄧天君大法  
082: *Xiantian yiqi huolei Zhang shizhe qidao dafa* 先天一炁火雷張使者祈禱大法

- 083: *Xiantian leijing yinshu* 先天雷晶隱書
- 086: *Xiantian leijing yinshu* 先天雷晶隱書
- 089: *Jiutian leijing yuanzhang* 九天雷晶元章
- 092: *Xiantian liuyi tianxi shizhe dafa* 先天六一天喜使者大法
- 093: *Leiting sanyao yiqi huolei shizhe fa* 雷霆三要一氣火雷使者法
- 094: *Leiting hubuo Zhang shizhe bifa* 雷霆歛火張使者祕法
- 097: *Shangqing feijie wulei qidao dafa* 上清飛捷五雷祈禱大法
- 098: *Jiutian bitanlei daoyu dafa* 九天碧潭雷禱雨大法
- 100: *Leiting tiezha zhaolong zhiyu fufa* 雷霆鐵劄召龍致雨符法
- 101: *Wulei qidao xingchi bifa* 五雷祈禱行持祕法
- 110: *Hundun xuanshu dafa* 混沌玄書大法
- 113: *Diling baozhu wulei qidao dafa* 帝令寶珠五雷祈禱大法
- 116: *Taiji dulei yingshu* 太極都雷隱書
- 121: *Nangong huofu wuyang leishi bifa* 南宮火府烏暘雷師祕法
- 122: *Taishang sanwu shaoyang tiemian huochu wulei dafa* 太上三五邵陽鐵面火車五雷大法
- 123: *Taishang sanwu shaoyang tiemian huochu wulei dafa* 太上三五邵陽鐵面火車五雷大法
- 124: *Shangqing leiting huochu wulei dafa* 上清雷霆火車五雷大法
- 128: *Jiuzhou sheling yanglei qidao jianshi* 九州社令陽雷祈禱檢式
- 129: *Leiting jiansha nianyue shuji* 雷霆箭筈年月樞機
- 131: *Shijia shuifu qifengyun zhiyu fa* 石匣水府起風雲致雨法
- 136: *Taiyi tianzhang yanglei pili dafa* 太一天章陽雷霹靂大法
- 137: *Taiyi tianzhang yanglei pili dafa* 太一天章陽雷霹靂大法
- 138: *Taiyi tianzhang yanglei pili dafa* 太一天章陽雷霹靂大法
- 141: *Taiyi tianzhang yanglei pili dafa* 太一天章陽雷霹靂大法
- 144: *Taiyi tianzhang yanglei pili dafa* 太一天章陽雷霹靂大法
- 147: *Dongxuan yushu leiting dafa* 洞玄玉樞雷霆大法
- 151: *Dongxuan yushu leiting dafa* 洞玄玉樞雷霆大法
- 152: *Dongxuan yushu leiting dafa* 洞玄玉樞雷霆大法
- 154: *Hunyuan liutian miaodao yiqi ruyi dafa* 混元六天妙道一氣如意大法
- 155: *Hunyuan liutian ruyi dafa* 混元六天如意大法
- 156: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 157: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 158: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 159: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 160: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 162: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 166: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 167: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 168: *Shangqing tianpeng fumo dafa* 上清天蓬伏魔大法
- 169: *Huntian feijie sisheng fumo dafa* 混天飛捉四聖伏魔大法
- 170: *Huntian feijie sisheng fumo dafa* 混天飛捉四聖伏魔大法



- 171: *Shangqing tongchu wuyuan sufu yuce zhengfa* 上清童初五元素府玉冊正法
- 173: *Yuanying taihuangfu yuce* 元應太皇府玉冊
- 176: *Yuanbe qianjiaofu yuce* 元和遷教府玉冊
- 178: *Wufu cewen zhengfa houxu* 五府冊文正法後序
- 181: *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法
- 182: *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法
- 183: *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法
- 184: *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法
- 185: *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法
- 188: *Taiyi huofu wulei dafa* 太乙火府五雷大法
- 189: *Taiyi huofu zougao xinwen* 太乙火府奏告心文
- 190: *Taiyi huofu wulei dafa* 太乙火府五雷大法
- 191: *Taiyi huofu tongshen neidian bifa* 太乙火府通神內殿祕法
- 193: *Taiyi huofu neizhi* 太乙火府內旨
- 195: *Hunyuan yiqi bagua dongsben tianyi wulei dafa* 混元一氣八卦洞神天醫五雷大法
- 196: *Hunyuan yiqi bagua dongsben tianyi wulei dafa* 混元一氣八卦洞神天醫五雷大法
- 199: *Jinbuo tianding shenxiao sanqi huoling ge* 金火天丁神霄三氣火鈴歌
- 200: *Jinbuo tianding fengqi zishu* 金火天丁鳳氣紫書
- 201: *Jinbuo tianding yushen jieguan yunzhuo* 金火天丁玉神解關雲篆
- 202: *Shenxiao jinbuo tianding dafa* 神霄金火天丁大法
- 203: *Jinbuo tianding zhezhaoyi* 金火天丁攝召儀
- 205: *Jinbuo tianding yangmang liandu yi* 金火天丁陽芒鍊度儀
- 206: *Jinbuo tianding zhaoguyi* 金火天丁召孤儀
- 210: *Danyang jilian neizhi xu* 丹陽祭鍊內旨序
- 211: *Tiangan shengsha dafa* 天罡生煞大法
- 214: *Yuyin qianyuan dantian leifa* 玉音乾元丹天雷法
- 217: *Ziting zhuijia buduan dafa* 紫庭追伐補斷大法
- 219: *Shenxiao duanyi dafa* 神霄斷瘟大法
- 222: *Zhengyi mashen lingguan huoxi daxian kaozhao bifa* 正一吽神靈官火犀大仙考召祕法
- 224: *Jinbei yuanguang huoxi daxian Zhengyi lingguan Ma yuanshuai bifa* 金臂圓光火犀大仙正一靈官馬元帥祕法
- 226: *Zhengyi lingguan Ma shuai bifa* 正一靈官馬帥祕法
- 227: *Taiyi huoxi leifu Zhu jiangjun kaofu dafa* 太一火犀雷府朱將軍考附大法
- 228: *Leifu Zhu shuai kaoxie dafa* 雷府朱帥考邪大法
- 229: *Lingguan Chen Ma Zhu sanshuai kaozhao dafa* 靈官陳馬朱三帥考召大法
- 230: *Shangqing Ma Chen Zhu san lingguan mifa* 上清馬陳朱三靈官祕法
- 232: *Zhengyi xuantan Zhao yuanshuai bifa* 正一玄壇趙元帥祕法
- 233: *Xuantan Zhao yuanshuai bifa* 玄壇趙元帥祕法
- 240: *Zhengyi xuantan yuanshuai liuyin caoye wuxiu leifa* 正一玄壇元帥六陰草野舞袖雷法
- 244: *Yuqing Lingbao wuliang duren shangdao* 玉清靈寶無量度人上道
- 245: *Shangqing Lingbao wuliang duren shangdao* 上清靈寶無量度人上道

- 246: *Tianxin disi dafa* 天心地司大法  
 254: *Dongyue Wen taibao kaozhao bifa* 東嶽溫太保考召秘法  
 255: *Diqi Wen yuanshuai dafa* 地祇溫元帥大法  
 256: *Diqi Wen yuanshuai dafa* 地祇溫元帥大法  
 259: *Diqi guomo Guan yuanshuai bifa* 地祇馘魔關元帥秘法  
 260: *Fengdu langling Guan yuanshuai bifa* 豐都朗靈關元帥秘法  
 262: *Fengdu kaozhao dafa* 豐都考召大法  
 264: *Beiyin Fengdu taixuan zhimo heilü shoushe xiennu fa* 北陰豐都太玄制魔黑律收攝邪巫法  
 265: *Beiyin Fengdu taixuan zhimo heilü lingshu* 北陰豐都太玄制魔黑律靈書  
 267: *Taixuan Fengdu heilü yige* 泰玄豐都黑律儀格  
 268: *Taixuan Fengdu heilü yige* 泰玄豐都黑律儀格

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- P. 2257 *Taishang Dadao Yuqing jing* 太上大道玉清經  
 P. 2474 *Taishang dongxuan Lingbao shengxuan neijiaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶升玄內教經  
 S. 3722 *Taishang dongxuan Lingbao shengxuan neijiaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶升玄內教經  
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From: Cooke, George Alexander, *A Modern and Authentic System of Universal Geography, Containing an Accurate and Entertaining Description of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America being a Complete and Universal History of the Whole World ...Including interesting Narratives from all the Navigators that have made New Discoveries ... Forming a Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels*. London: Richard Evans, 1817

Figure 1.2. – The great demonifuge Zhong Kui carried on a sedan-chair by servile demons

(Painting by Dai Jin, 1388 – 1462; fragment). Stephen Little (ed.), *Taoism and the Arts of China*, p. 272. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago in association with University of California Press, 2000

Figure 1.3 – Tomb guardian holding his tongue in one hand, and a snake in his other.

Found near Chengdu in Sichuan. Eastern Han dynasty. Robert Bagley (ed.), *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*, p. 307. Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2001

Figure 1.4. – Outline of Daoist altar shaped after Nine Palaces; summoning thunder facing

巽; court ritual facing 乾. (*Daofa huiyuan* 113.21ab)

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*banhua jicheng* 中國古代小說版畫集成. Shanghai: Hanydu dacidian chuban, 2002

Figure 2.2. – Thunder God from late imperial edition of *Shanhai jing* 山海經, p. 329. Taipei:

Liren, 1982

Figure 2.3. – Fu Xi (left) as depicted in the Wuliang Shrines 武梁祠 from the first century of our era. From the database of the Documentation and Information Center for Chinese Studies, Kyoto University (<http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/>).

Figure 2.4. – Sire Thunder pounding drums. Rubbing of a tomb-wall from the Eastern Han (25 – 220) From the database of the Documentation and Information Center for Chinese Studies, Kyoto University (<http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/>).

Figure 2.5. – To the left-hand side of the central divinity: Thunder God surrounded by drums on the ceiling of Dunhuang cave 249 (Western Wei dynasty, 535 – 56) From: Zhang Wenbin, *Dunhuang—A Centennial Commemoration of the Discovery of the Cave Library*. Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 2000

Figure 2.6. – Ming dynasty print of a thunder god, with wings, apron, leopard skin, hammer and awl (fragment; see 5.2 below).

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Figure 2.9.2 – Two Thunders during the Northern Song. Maspero, Henri, “The Mythology of Modern China: The Popular Religion and the Three Religions,” pp. 274. In J. Hackin (et al.), *Asiatic Mythology: A Detailed Description and Explanation of the Mythologies of all the Great Nations of Asia*. New York: Crowell, 1932

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Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, p. 265
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