

The Organon of the Twelve Hundred Officials and Its Gods

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Abstract

The *Qianerbai guan yi* or *Organon of the Twelve Hundred Officials* provided lists of Daoist deities whose help against demonic evil could be implored in written petitions ritually submitted to an otherworldly judiciary. The tradition can be traced to the beginnings of the Way of the Heavenly Master in second/third-century Sichuan and thus holds important clues concerning the ideology and practice of the early Daoist religion. A good deal of material pertaining to these lists has in fact been transmitted, but its apparent deficiencies have left scholars speculating about the original text. The first part of this article reasons,

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conversely, that a definite original of the *Qianerbai guan yi* never existed but that the material circulated from the beginning in multiple, considerably overlapping yet varying, manuscript versions, just as the form in which it has been transmitted suggests. The text-scholar's urge to trace textual versions to unified and presumably uncorrupted originals is of little help in the case of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, whose origin and transmission are better approached contextually with reference to the peculiar view the Heavenly Master Daoists had concerning the renewed and continual dispensation of the pneumata (*qi*) of the Dao through the structures of their liturgical work. The second part of the article deals with the gods listed in the *Qianerbai guan yi* registers, whose names and descriptions don't sit snugly with the fundamental Daoist definition of divinity as abstract cosmic *qi*. Quite a few of the *Qianerbai guan yi* deities rather reflect images of the "demonic," popular gods supposed to be averted by them. This agrees with Rolf A. Stein's observations about overlaps between Daoism and popular religion. But the use of originally alien spirits in Heavenly Master rituals against the evils purportedly wrought by precisely such outsiders begs the question of how this fits with Daoism's oft-proclaimed intent to transform the landscape of Chinese religion according to Daoist parameters. To gain a better understanding of this issue and its ramifications, I recapitulate the constraints imposed on popular religious worship in China's classical literature, which impacted the more wide-ranging Daoist demonization of all gods receiving sacrifices. The following section elaborates Daoism's contrasting theology of "non-eating," purely cosmic divinities, but also points out that the very insistence on transformation precluded a stringent definition of the Daoist pantheon in these terms, which is evident, for example, in Tao Hongjing's difficulties in trying to present the realms of the divine according to an unequivocal scheme. The ambiguities necessarily adhering to the politics of inclusion and transformation are considered in more detail in the succeeding segment on other relevant Daoist sources of the fourth and fifth centuries. In conclusion I show the amazing consistency of Daoist attitudes vis-à-vis popular cults and their objects by tracing a double-strategy of categorizing spirits as aliens and containing them in symbolic layouts known as Five Prison Camps from the early days of the Heavenly Master movement through much later Daoist rituals aimed at subjugating non-Daoist practitioners and their gods to the structures informing contemporary local Chinese religion. Yet, despite the undeniable effects of its liturgy, the interactions with China's lived religion have also transformed Daoism itself. The incorporation of extraneous gods into its system has erased neither sacrifice nor the shamans and spirit mediums associated with their cults, but instead necessitated accommodations of these in

principle still rejected aspects of “ordinary” religion.¹

Text and Context

When, in the late fifth/early sixth century, the grand Daoist master Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536)² studied the portions of the Shangqing 上清 (Highest Purity)³ hagiography of Lady Wei Huacun 魏華存 (251–

¹ Early drafts of this article were presented at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the AAS in Chicago and the Symposium in Celebration of *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, hosted by the University of Chicago in October 2005. My thanks go to two anonymous readers for their suggestions; I hope my revisions are able to clarify the issues they have kindly pointed out to me. References to texts in the Daoist Canon follow the serial numbers in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, ed. K. M. Schipper and F. Verellen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004). Readers will also find there information about sources that are cited in my notes without proper introduction. I would like to dedicate this article to Maria Cedzich, my mother.

² On Tao Hongjing’s activities as a court alchemist and advocate of the Shangqing revelations and their eschatology, see Michel Strickmann, “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 123–194.

³ Shangqing or Highest Purity is the name of an exalted heavenly region inhabited by high-ranking immortals (“realized” or “perfected” persons; *zhenren* 真人) who, between 364 and 370 C.E., conferred the eponymous Shangqing revelations to the visionary Yang Xi 楊羲 and his patrons, the southern Chinese aristocratic Xu 許 family. Because the revelations singled out Mt. Mao (Mao shan 茅山) near the Eastern Jin 晉 (317–420) capital of Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing) as a sacred place, the tradition is also often labeled Mao-shan tradition. More than a century after these events, Tao Hongjing collected, categorized, edited, and annotated manuscript versions of these revelations—those that he determined to be authentic. Thanks, in part, to the meticulous care with which Tao applied himself to that project, the Shangqing tradition is the best-studied aspect of medieval Daoism in modern scholarship. Among the most foundational western inquiries we may cite Michel Strickmann’s work, which focuses above all on historical and socio-cultural issues: “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy,” *T’oung Pao* 63.1 (1977), pp. 1–64; “On the Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching” as cited above; and *Le Taoïsme du Mao chan: Chronique d’une revelation* (Paris:

334)⁴ that he intended to include in his *Secret Instructions for the Ascension to Perfection* (*Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣; DZ 421), he

Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1981). Isabelle Robinet's famous studies are more concerned with the revealed texts themselves and their content: *Méditation taoïste* (Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1979) [in English: *Taoist Meditation*, translated by Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993)]; "Les randonnées extatiques des taoïstes dans les astres," *Monumenta Serica* 32 (1976), pp. 159–273; and *La revelation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, 2 vols. (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1984). More recently, Stephen R. Bokenkamp has shed light on a far less-understood, darker, aspect of the Shangqing tradition involving the relationship of the recipients of the revelations with their family dead: *Ancestors and Anxieties: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007).

⁴ Lady Wei Huacun was a priestess of the Heavenly Master tradition during her human life. According to her hagiography, she was received among the perfected immortals of the Shangqing heaven when she left this world. From there she returned in Yang Xi's visions during 364–370 and became his special tutor from the realms beyond. Among the many texts she revealed to him, Yang Xi also received a biography of herself, which was purportedly compiled by another immortal being, a certain Fan Miao 范邈, Middle Officer of the [otherworldly] Guards (*zhonghou* 中候). The work followed the typical pattern of revealed Shangqing hagiographies, that is, the Lady's life description proper was followed by the methods that had enabled her to assume her exalted immortal status. Today only quotations survive from the complete original work, but its narrative portion obviously was the model for Yan Zhenqing's 顏真卿 768 stele inscription in honor of Wei Huacun; see "Jin Zixu yuanjun ling shangzhen siming Nanyue furen Wei furen xiantan beiming 晉紫虛元君領上真司命南嶽夫人魏夫人仙壇碑銘," in *Yan Lugong wenji* 顏魯公文集, Sibei beiyao, 6: 6b–9b. For details concerning Wei Huacun's hagiography, see Isabelle Robinet, *La revelation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, vol. 2, pp. 399–405 and my "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen" (Ph.D. dissertation, Würzburg, 1987), pp. 27–34. For a comprehensive study of the Wei Huacun of hagiography and her post-mortem fiefdom, the Southern Peak (Nanyue 南嶽), see James Robson, "Imagining Nanyue: A Religious History of the Southern Marchmount through the Tang Dynasty (610–907)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2002).

realized that some contents of this text concerned the liturgical practice of Heavenly Master Daoism.⁵ This in itself was not surprising, since Lady Wei, the apotheosized matriarch of the Shangqing revelations, had in her earthly life held the priestly position of a “Libationer” (*jijiu* 祭酒)⁶ in the tradition of the Heavenly Master (Tianshi dao 天師道).⁷ Tao Hongjing consequently interpreted the material as a new revelation,

⁵ For text-critical details about the *Dengzhen yinjue* and the Heavenly Master materials included therein, as well as a translation of these materials, see my “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister,” pp. 19–60 and 107–158.

⁶ The term *jijiu*, which was adopted as the generic designation for priests in the Heavenly Master tradition, originally referred, as R. A. Stein has demonstrated, in an informal way to village elders, who poured alcoholic offerings (libations) at communal sacrifices (although both alcohol and sacrifice were subject to the Heavenly Master program of transforming common religious practice); see “Remarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle ap. J.-C.,” *T'oung Pao* 50 (1963), pp. 42–59, and Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no dōkyō* 初期の道教 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1991), pp. 149–151.

⁷ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.5b. The Way of the Heavenly Master developed in the south-western parts of China in the second century C.E. It is possible, though still unverified, that the group had links to the larger movement of the Yellow Turbans, which rose in rebellion in 184 C.E. The Heavenly Masters had their own founding myth, according to which, in 142 C.E., the divine Laozi (Taishang Laojun 太上老君) revealed himself to the commoner Zhang Daoling 張道陵, bound him into the Covenant with the Powers of the Orthodox One Way (*Zhengyi mengwei zhi dao* 正一盟威之道), appointed him Heavenly Master, and entrusted him with reordering the lives of the people through a communal and liturgical organization, based on a renewed distribution of the cosmic *qi* 氣 (pneuma/ta). In the last decade of the second century, Zhang Lu 張魯, who claimed to be Zhang Daoling’s grandson, systematized and centralized the religion in Hanzhong 漢中 (covering a region in the northeast of modern Sichuan and the southwest of modern Shaanxi). Zhang Lu’s system furnished the evolving Daoist religion with its liturgical foundation, which has remained a pillar of the tradition throughout its history. On the historical background of the founding of the original Heavenly Master church-state in Hanzhong, see Werner Eichhorn, “Bemerkungen zum Aufstand des Chang Chio und zum Staate des Chang Lu,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 3.2 (1955), pp. 291–327. The classical study of early Heavenly Master institutions and their relationship with the utopia of Da Qin 大

meant to up-date and stream-line the older Heavenly Master tradition, which in his eyes, as in the opinion of many other Daoist leaders living in the turbulent period of the third to six centuries, had not escaped the corruptions of time.⁸

秦 as well as local village organization is Rolf A. Stein's article cited in n. 6 above. A good survey is in Terry F. Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), pp. 61–80; rich documentation concerning early Heavenly Master history and religion is found in Chen Guofu 陳國符, *Daozang yuanliu kao 道藏源流考* (Taipei: Xiangsheng chuban she, 1975) [reprint of revised edition Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963], pp. 98–104 and 308–369, and Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no dōkyō*, pp. 77–159 and 309–406. For an insightful study of the tradition in Chinese, see Qing Xitai 卿希泰, *Zhongguo daojiao shi 中國道教史* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chuban she, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 146–192.

⁸ For Tao Hongjing's criticism of what he considered the corrupted ritual practice of Heavenly Master officers in his time, see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.13a–b. The Way of the Heavenly Master survived the centuries after the disbandment of the Hanzhong organization in 215 and the north-south political division of the Chinese territory in 316 in a diffused, fragmented state. On the one hand, the absence of a centralized institution facilitated the spread of the tradition among larger segments of the populace and, especially in the south, provided new Daoist formations with structural models. On the other hand, purists decried the softening of the old rules regulating priesthood, communal organization, and ritual practice, as well as the rise of sectarian millennial and syncretic movements and the relapse of former member households into the sacrificial cults of ordinary religion. Irregularities in priestly ordinations and other deviations are deplored already in two short third-century documents contained in DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing*. DZ 785 *Laojun yinsong jie jing* and DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* preserve fragments of the fifth-century reforms promoted by Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448) and Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477), who separately aspired to establish Daoism as a unified state-sponsored religion in the north and south respectively. The anonymous southern text DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing*, perhaps slightly later than Lu Xiujing's work, outlines a unitary ideology for a reformed Daoism, which shows connections with Lu Xiujing's visions, especially in its skillful adaptation of Mahayana Buddhists notions. On the dispersal of the original Hanzhong church, see Terry F. Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 66–80. The third-century *Dadao jialing jie 大道家令戒* (*Rules Governing the Family of*

The revised ritual instructions in Lady Wei's *Life* comprised among others a list of twenty-four plus one "lords" (*jun* 君)—along with their precise functions, celestial offices (*gong* 宮), and following composed of generals (*guanjiang* 官將), clerks, and soldiers (*libing* 吏兵)—whose help Heavenly Master priests might request in the formal petitions (*zhang* 章) they submitted on behalf of diseased or otherwise afflicted parishioners to the *Sanguan* 三官 (Three Offices), an otherworldly judiciary institution administering a complex spirit bureaucracy.⁹ Provided that such requests were granted, so was the assumption, the invited divinities would descend to dispel the demonic forces that most immediately had caused the disruptions of normalcy.

This rationale was fundamental to the healing rituals of Heavenly Master Daoism, and Tao Hongjing had no difficulty identifying the model on which the list of spirit helpers in Wei Huacun's hagiography was originally based. He refers to this source as *Qianerbai guan yi*

the Great Dao), contained in DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing*, has been translated by Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 149–185. On Kou Qianzhi and his endeavors, see Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, "Cui Hao yu Kou Qianzhi 崔浩與寇謙之," *Lingnan xuebao* 嶺南學報 11.1 (1950), pp. 123–150; Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞, "Laojun yinsong jiejing jiaoshi 老君音誦誡經校釋," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 28.1 (1956), pp. 17–38; and Richard B. Mather, "K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy of the Northern Wei Court, 425–451," in *Facets of Taoism*, pp. 103–122. For a translation of DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe*, see Peter Nickerson, "Abridged Codes of Master Lu for the Daoist Community," in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 347–359. The first *juan* (scroll) of DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* has been translated by Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 186–229.

⁹ For a reconstruction of the Heavenly Master petitioning ritual, see my "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister," pp. 61–106. Peter S. Nickerson has studied and translated the text of such a petition in an important contribution to Stephen R. Bokenkamp's *Early Taoist Scriptures*, pp. 230–274. A survey of the background and practice of ritual petitioning is also found in Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, ed. Bernard Faure (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 1–50.

千二百官儀 or *Organon of the Twelve Hundred Officials*¹⁰ and asserts that its origins are traceable to the Heavenly Master community in second/third-century Hanzhong 漢中.¹¹ Tao himself possessed an old manuscript of this text hailing from there, which, as he proves in his *Dengzhen yinjue* through numerous and lengthy quotations, showed significant overlap with the list in Lady Wei's *Life*, except that it was far more comprehensive than the latter with its only twenty-five deities.¹²

Scholars have been mystified about the form, content and nature of this ancient text, the original of which is believed to be lost.¹³ What

¹⁰ The title has also been translated as “Ritual” or “Protocol of the Twelve Hundred Officials,” but the concrete manuals that circulated under this title contained no scripts or protocols for the actual performance of rituals. These handbooks were inventories of the spirit officials to be invited in the petition rituals and, in this respect, obviously stood closer to the so-called “registers” (*lu* 籙), which constituted a fundamental genre of Heavenly Master liturgical texts. The term *yi* 儀 in the title means “model,” “rule,” or “proper conduct” and stands in Daoism generally for the cosmic models underlying its liturgy both in writing and performance. This also holds for the *Qianerbai guan yi*. Because we necessarily have to use the title with respect to both the celestial prototype and the actual texts in human writing, I have chosen the translation “*Organon* of the Twelve Hundred Officials,” considering that the Greek term *organon*, originally meaning simply a set of work or reference tools, is also used in philosophy with respect to the abstract principles guiding specific discourses.

¹¹ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.14b and 23a.

¹² Tao Hongjing's manuscript of the *Qianerbai guan yi* contained eight *juan*; see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.19b1. He quoted a total of thirty passages from this text in his *Dengzhen yin jue* to compare the respective deities to twenty-two of the spirit officers listed in Wei Huacun's hagiography. His references to the structure and chapter contents of his manuscript leave no doubt that it was far more comprehensive than the material in Lady Wei's vita.

¹³ The first to pay close attention to the *Qianerbai guan yi* was Fukui Kōjun 福井康順, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū* 道教の基礎的研究 (Tokyo: Shoki bunbutsu ryūtsū kai, 1965), chap. 1. Fukui concluded that the text was an elaborated version of the *Sanguan shoushu* 三官手書 (see pp. 20–21 and n. 39, below) compiled some time between the composition of Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343) *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 and Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue*. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, pp. 360–365, considered the *Qianerbai guan yi* in context with a general exploration of

remains apart from Tao Hongjing's precious quotes and comments seems to consist mostly of uncertain references and fragments dispersed in later compilations. However, as we shall see below, some quite substantive parts turn out to have been transmitted elsewhere in the Daoist canon.¹⁴ Still, all this seems to amount to no more than a small

the petition ritual of the Heavenly Masters. For more recent studies see Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi*, pp. 161–173; Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美, *Rikuchō dōkyō shi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), pp. 392–394; and Wang Zongyu 王宗昱, “Tōshin inketsu ni mieru tenshidō 登真隱訣に見える天師道,” *Tōhō shūkyō* 東方宗教 96 (2000), pp. 19–37.

¹⁴ Some references in both Daoist and non-Daoist sources relating to the *Qianerbai guan yi* and the petitions used in Heavenly Master ritual do not seem to refer to any concrete text all, but to “the ideas behind the matter,” as we might say, or, in Daoist terms, their cosmic models. I give here only the most important examples (for more exhaustive citations including mentions in historiographic and Buddhist sources, see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, pp. 360–365, Fukui, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 2–52, and Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no dōkyō*, pp. 137–158). DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe*, 1b refers to “1,200 officials and the texts of 10,000 petitions” (*qianerbai guan zhangwen wantong* 千二百官章文萬通); DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing*, 2a10 cites an incantation used in the petition rituals, which mentions 1,200 officials in context with the gradual diversification of the primordial breaths of the Dao; this is in line with Tao Hongjing's explanations of the spirits as discussed below. DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* (“Petition Almanac of Chisong zi”), a late reconstruction of an earlier work by the same (or a very similar) title, 1.18b refers to the “organon of the 1,200 officials and the three hundred great petitions (*qianerbai guan yi sanbai da zhang* 千二百官儀三百大章).” The earliest clear reference we have to a concrete manual by the title *Qianerbai guan yi* appears in Lady Wei's hagiography in DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.23a. DZ 463 *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao*, 10.19a, an early eighth-century code compiled by Zhu Junxu 朱君緒, refers to a handbook by the title *Qianerbai guan yi*, but the passage in question merely paraphrases the location in Wei Huacun's hagiography just mentioned; the same holds for DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 2.22a. In the years 1188 and 1201, Lü Yuansu 呂元素 referred in his *Daomen dingzhi* (DZ 1224), to a *Qianerbai guan hao jing* 千二百官號經 (1.38b) and a *Qianerbai guan zhang jing* (7.36a). The two citations most likely related to the same handbook, which he considered authoritative; but the precise identity of this text is uncertain. DZ 1430 *Daozang quejing mulu*, 1.7b lists a *Zhengyi fawen zhibing xiaozai qianerbai*

part of the original, about which numerous questions persist. If, as the title indicates, the *Qianerbai guan yi* really did introduce twelve hundred divine officials ready to serve in petition rituals, the names of over half of them would have to be considered lost. If it included model texts of petitions addressed to the spirits—three hundred, twelve hundred, or even ten thousand, as some mentions appear to suggest—the size of the original work must have been immense. But Tao Hongjing’s manuscript apparently contained no petition texts; nor does he confirm the enormous losses that the figures given above would seem to imply. And speculations about the original, based on Tao’s descriptions of the eight *juan* (scrolls) of ancient material he had in his hands, have been incongruous. All efforts to reconstruct or just re-imagine the presumed original of the *Qianerbai guan yi* have so far only led to inconclusive or contradictory results.¹⁵

Having pondered about the questions surrounding this text for years to little avail, I eventually have come to wonder if the problem may not lie with *our search* for such a presumably complete original of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, rather the *Organon* itself. From all we can gather from Tao’s comments, the manuscript he drew on not only fell

guan hao 正一法文治病消災千二百官號 as a lost work. The only work transmitted in the Ming Daoist canon that evidently reproduces significant portions of *Qianerbai guan yi* material is DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*, about which more follows immediately below. However, in the petition texts collected in the *Chisong zi zhangli* we find the names of many officials that figured in *Qianerbai guan yi* manuals. The same can be said about the petition models in DZ 617 *Taishang xuanqi zhuhua zhang* compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933).

¹⁵ Kobayashi Masayoshi has tried to work with Tao Hongjing’s descriptions of his manuscript in order to reconstruct the structure of the original. Proceeding from Tao’s assertion that his text comprised eight *juan* and assuming, based on another, not quite so specific, remark Tao’s, that each *juan* must have listed fifteen spirits, he concludes that the number of twelve hundred officials was reached by taking account of the staff members attributed to each of the major spirit-officials; see *Rikuchō dōkyō shi kenkyū*, pp. 392–394. Kobayashi’s calculations, however, are difficult to substantiate, and it is not quite clear, why he bases his reconstructions on Tao Hongjing’s references to a text that, in Kobayashi’s view, itself was merely a Liang dynasty (502–557) derivative of the original.

considerably short of a full count of twelve hundred officials,¹⁶ it must itself already have been based on several earlier copies. This is at least indicated by the numerous discrepancies Tao discovered both in the document itself and in comparison with the short list of officials given in Wei Huacun's hagiography. Tao above all bemoans frequent recurrences of divine officials with similar names but varying functions and diverging celestial abodes.¹⁷

In this respect, the manuscript he possessed must have closely resembled the only other version of the the *Qianerbai guan yi* that the Ming Daoist Canon transmits under the title *Chapter on Officials for Petitions of the Statutory Texts of the Orthodox and United [Church]* (*Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 正一法文經章官品; DZ 1218).¹⁸ This title indicates that the material was once part of the canonical Heavenly Master collection (*Zhengyi fawen*) in the medieval Daoist canon.¹⁹ Comprising four *juan*, the text is quite substantial. If we look at the content, we find a high degree of agreement with Tao's quotes in the *Dengzhen yinjue*. But while the latter provide information about only

¹⁶ If Tao's manuscript comprised eight *juan*, as he says (DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.19b1), the first of which listed fourteen spirits (3.19a4–5), and the third one (curiously) only one (3.19a10–19b1), it seems impossible that the remaining six *juan* of the text counted 1185 more officials.

¹⁷ See, for example, Tao's remarks in DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.20b concerning three variant listings for a Yunqi jie'e jun 運氣解厄君 and 3.21b concerning four slightly varying occurrences of a Wushang tian jun 無上天君 in his manuscript.

¹⁸ For a discussion of this text and its ideology, see Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi*, pp. 162–186. An important analysis of the text has been contributed by Liu Lin 劉琳, "San Zhang wudou mi dao de yibu zhongyao wenxian: Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin 三張五斗米道的一部重要文獻：正一法文經章官品," *Guji zhengli yu yanjiu* 古籍整理與研究 4 (1989), pp. 35–41.

¹⁹ Based on a citation in DZ 1138 *Wushang biyao* 46.16b–18a, a Daoist encyclopedia compiled around 574, Kristofer Schipper argues that the origins of the *Zhengyi fawen* are traceable to the Six Dynasties period (220–589) and that the collection became a formal part of the Daoist canon during the Sui (581–618) and early Tang dynasties (618–907); see *The Taoist Canon*, pp. 10–20. But the *Zhengyi fawen* was subjected to several revisions along with the successive re-iterations of the *Daozang*, and it is uncertain when the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* was first included in the collection.

thirty spirits whom Tao accepted as comparable to the deities in Wei Huacun's list, this ledger assembles hundreds of spirit officials, whose names and titles point in some cases clearly to Han dynasty origins,²⁰ although their number does not, by any approximation, reach the figure of 1,200.²¹ There may be some additions postdating the text's late Han origin. We find that at least two spirits listed among the crowd there were, in Tao Hongjing's judgment, based on his old transcript, not yet known in the ancient *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition but appeared for the first time in the revelation made to Wei Huacun in the fourth century.²²

What appears more significant is that the text carries traces of an official redaction under the Northern Song: several locations display observances of the name taboos of the Song founder, Taizu 太祖 (Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤, r. 960–976), and his father, Xuanzu 宣祖 (Zhao Hongyin 趙弘殷).²³ Apart from their pious concern for these taboos, however, the Song editors seem to have gone about their task with a remarkably light hand.²⁴ The material abounds with internal

²⁰ See Liu Lin, "San Zhang wudou mi dao de yibu zhongyao wenxian: Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin," pp. 35–41, and Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi*, p. 162.

²¹ In an in-depth analysis of the text, Wang Zongyu has counted a total of circa 550 helper-spirits, or about 400 if we exclude apparent multiple listings. Wang's analyses were the subject of a paper contributed to a conference in Hong Kong in 2001. At this time, I don't know if this meticulous study has in the meantime been published.

²² DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.1a: Chitian shiqi jun 赤天食氣君 and Shoushen tuming jun 收神土明君; cf. DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.22a–b, which has Shoushen shangming jun 收神上明君. There is, however, a possibility that Tao Hongjing's manuscript of the *Qianerbai guan yi* was not exhaustive and that the spirits were in fact listed in one or the other version of the *Qianerbai guan yi* circulating among Daoist families, even before the composition of Lady Wei's hagiography.

²³ DZ *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.17b10, 1.21b8, 2.15b6, and 4.5b5 (where *yin* 引 is substituted for *hong* 弘 in the name of Zhao Hongyin). However, the avoidances are not consistently applied throughout the material, which could indicate that the material was supplemented by further manuscript versions even later.

²⁴ The only other indications of editorial interference are the division of the material into four *juan* and a table of contents that was apparently drawn from the section

discrepancies, lacunae, and what appear to be copying mistakes, and the fact that numerous passages recur twice or more times with just minor variations leaves no doubt that—as apparently was the case with Tao Hongjing’s manual—the document is based on several earlier, overlapping, yet variant models.²⁵ What presents itself here is, in other words, anything but a unified corrected edition, let alone a successful reconstruction of what we might imagine the original to have looked like in its pristine condition. Yet, it is precisely its uneven, discontinuous character that suggests that the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* goes back to the same ancient tradition that Tao Hongjing acknowledged in his own composite *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscript.

For his part, Tao Hongjing deplored the shortcomings in his transcript and, in general, put more trust in the starkly condensed, but far more systematic list found in Lady Wei’s newly revealed hagiography.²⁶

headings in the original manuscript(s), which ordered the spirits according to their functions. The table of content varies in places from the headings in the text.

²⁵ For exact references concerning apparently recurring passages in the text, see, n. 65 below. Several thematic sections are repeated in the text (and also listed twice in the table of contents), although each time including somewhat differing listings of deities.

²⁶ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.22b, maintext quoted from Wei Huacuns’s hagiography and commentary by Tao Hongjing. The condensation of the list to twenty-four plus one spirits is cosmologically significant in that the spirit-officials are correlated in this way with the three times eight spirits emerging via differentiation from the primal three pneumata of the cosmos and present also in the upper, middle, and lower sections of the human body, a scheme underpinning various meditational practices in the Shangqing tradition; see, e.g., DZ 405 *Shangqing zijing jun huangchu ziling daojun dongfang shangjing*. As for the curious addition of a twenty-fifth divinity to the set of twenty-four, see DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 7.16a, which quotes a passage from Tao Hongjing’s *Zhengao* (not contained in the received text). This passage explains the scheme of twenty-four cosmic *qi* as corresponding to the nine pneumata of the eastern “heaven,” the three pneumata of the southern heaven, the seven pneumata of the western heaven, and the five pneumata of the northern heaven. Added to these twenty-four is the one *qi* of the central heaven, from which all twenty-four emerged and which thus encompasses and rules them all. In other words the single root, the Dao itself, appears here as the overarching entity, not as a twenty-fifth factor. The same schema

Despite his concerns about the old manual's corruptions, however, which are fastidiously pointed out in his annotations, he neither doubted its authenticity, nor did he think that it was incomplete. No word in the *Dengzhen yinjue* indicates that he suspected the existence of a still more original *Qianerbai guan yi* that counted exactly twelve hundred divine agents. What we do find explained in quite some detail instead is that the numbers attributed to the spirits' collectives—be it twelve hundred, as in the manuscript tradition of the *Qianerbai guan yi* itself, or twenty-four (plus one as the root source), as in Wei Huacun's vita—were conceived exclusively in terms of the cosmological differentiation of pneumata (*qi* 氣) in the interconnected cycles of space and time, rooted in the crystalline heaven of Grand Purity (Taiqing 太清). In reality, Tao states, there is no limit to the potential configurations of these pneumata and their hypostases, the healing agents activated through Heavenly Master liturgy. The count of divine officials in the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition was, in other words, undetermined. Lady Wei's hagiography maintained that the deities took shape in accordance with the specific circumstances of any emergency appeal for divine intervention. Tao Hongjing's comment on the passage in question further indicates that the spirits' infinite derivation from cosmic *qi* depended entirely on the aptitude with which individual Libationer priests applied and propagated the foundational cosmological patterns, emblematically expressed through number schemata. One eminently important point implied here is that the priests had in fact considerable freedom concerning the spirit agents they deployed in their rituals. They could shape, adjust, and multiply them as they saw fit under ever-varying individual circumstances, as long as they conformed to the paradigms underlying the proper differentiation of cosmic *qi*.²⁷ While such cosmological structures do not figure prominently in the descriptions of the deities found in the surviving *Qianerbai guan yi* fragments, we shall find them nonetheless implied in the encompassing liturgical and administrative framework in which these spirit officials were deployed.

Setting this point aside for the moment, the explanations in the

apparently also applied to the twenty-four/twenty-five positions in Heavenly Master parishes to be discussed below.

²⁷ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.22b–23a. The relevant passages are translated and further discussed below, pp. 52–53.

Dengzhen yinjue challenge us, I believe, to rethink some of our assumptions. For one thing, speculations about a set of twelve hundred officials in the original *Qianerbai guan yi* appear to rest on a weak foundation if that number was used only to highlight the deities' emblematic character. But if the number can deliver no clues with regard to the size, structure, and content of an original text, we are left wondering what kind of an original we should in fact search for. This leads to another important question. How are we to understand that Tao Hongjing, having proved his manuscript to be in many respects a deficient and, above all, composite text, could still be convinced of its age and general authenticity? Is it possible that Tao endorsed the tradition behind the text rather than the form in which this tradition had come to him?

In this context, it might be helpful to briefly remind ourselves of what could be called the text scholar's fixation. We are trained to trace received texts to their sources, which, naturally, we assume to be written texts. In other words, we normally are engaged in a quest for *Urtexts*, complete, unified, and presumably correct written originals, whence the all too often rather unsatisfying versions that have come to us derive.²⁸ I would not dispute that similar notions also have always existed among Daoists, but we have to heed some specifics here.

The Daoist tradition has typically traced its texts to cosmic and divine models. The *Urtexts* writ in the sky legitimate the transcripts made by human hands as revelations.²⁹ In the course of the fourth and

²⁸ On this point, see also Robert Ford Campany's relevant remarks with regard to the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, in *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 118–128.

²⁹ As Anna Seidel has shown, the idea of writings as sacred tokens corresponding to celestial models is not specifically Daoist. Extraordinary natural objects or artifacts, as well as charts (*tu* 圖), registers (*lu* 籙), and tallies (*fu* 符) were seen far more broadly as manifestations of Heaven's Mandate to the rulers of humanity. Seidel argues that toward the end of Han dynasty Daoists began to adapt this cultural memory in the hope to reestablish the cosmic order that the emperors had failed to maintain. See her "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments—Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes

fifth centuries, the Daoist emphasis on the sacred origins of writing crystallized above all in the narrative genre of the *jing* 經, the self-contained sacred book, whose conception has been magnificently described by Isabelle Robinet.³⁰ The *jing* formed the core of the Shangqing revelations, whose most fervent promoter was Tao Hongjing, as well as of the Lingbao 靈寶 tradition, favored by Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477). As embodiments of celestial light and pneuma, they entitled those who had legitimately received them to be registered in the lists of immortality and partake of the marvels of cosmic transformation. Once transcribed in human writing, however, they were deemed fixed. They had to be safeguarded and received ritual worship, because the deities whose names they mentioned were thought themselves to be present in them. Rightful owners enjoyed the protection of guardian spirits specifically dispatched to watch over them and the texts. Under penalty of death, however, these divine scriptures were never to be divulged to the uninitiated or, worse still, willfully forged. Tao Hongjing himself has graphically described the dangers awaiting those who did not comply with this stipulation in his *Zhengao* 真誥 (*Declarations of the Perfected*; DZ 1016).³¹

Divine scriptures of the genre of *jing* played an secondary role in the early Heavenly Master tradition, although, as Kristofer Schipper has repeatedly underlined, similar notions also applied (and still apply) to the writings held sacred in the Way of the Heavenly Master: sacred charts (*tu* 圖), registers (*lu* 籙), tallies (*fu* 符), collections of rules (*jie* 戒), penal codes (*lü* 律), and also petitions (*zhang*).³² All these written manifestations of the carefully measured and graded liturgical and

Chinoises, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 291–371.

³⁰ I. Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, pp. 19–28.

³¹ DZ 1016 *Zhengao* 19.9b–20.4b. This appendix to Tao’s collection of records and notes concerning Yang Xi’s visions of the Shangqing immortals has been translated by Michel Strickmann, “The Maoshan Revelations,” pp. 41–64.

³² E.g., in *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1, pp. 10–11. Schipper originally studied the questions about the nature of the liturgical texts in the Heavenly Master tradition in a paper that was presented at the Third International Conference of Taoist Studies in Unterägeri (Switzerland) in 1979: “The Concept of K’o in Taoist Liturgy.” To my knowledge this article has not been published, although it has inspired a generation of students in the field.

bureaucratic system of *ke* 科, were also thought to derive from the cosmic models or *yi* 儀 transmitted to Zhang Daoling when the divine Laozi, Lord Lao, the body of the Dao, invested him, in 142 C.E., as the first Heavenly Master. Yet the explanations in the *Dengzhen yinjue* with regard to the *Qianerbai guan yi* and its gods suggest a concept of revelation that differs in one respect fundamentally from that of the *jing* in medieval Daoism. The spirit officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* were evidently not thought to have manifested themselves in a single revelatory event. What transpires here is instead the peculiar idea that their disclosure took place continually through the rituals that priests performed in response to particular needs—or to put it in other words, the oft-cited initial transmission of the *Qianerbai guan yi* (and other liturgical matter like the petitions) to Zhang Daoling was not determined with regard to precise contents, nor was the material immediately fixed in writing.

Given the margins for individual adjustments admitted here concerning the deities of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, it is hardly surprising that the integrity of revelations conceived in such terms depended most crucially on the skill with which priests discerned the cosmic patterns that were to give rise to spirit-helpers under such presumably always specific, yet always slightly varying conditions. There was a decided risk of arbitrariness and even charlatanry here, and Tao—painfully aware of it—expressed his doubts about the *jijiu* priests of his time in no uncertain terms. He considered the majority of them not only utterly mediocre, but even denied their membership in the original covenant that Lord Lao had entered into with Zhang Daoling and the powers of heaven and earth.³³

Tao's remarks are, in my view, closely related to what an early third-century source of the Heavenly Master tradition, the *Rules for the Family of the Great Dao* (*Dadao jialing jie* 大道家令戒), presents, as it harshly criticizes corruptions that had lately appeared in sacerdotal investitures. The selection of Libationers no longer sprang from the correct and genuine pneumata of the Dao administered through the

³³ Tao Hongjing's distinction between *jijiu* of the Covenant with the Powers (*mengwei jijiu* 盟威祭酒) and "those ordinary talents (*changcai* 常財)," referring to the majority of priests in his days, is expressed in DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.6a and 15b (cf. also 3.12b–13b).

parish office of the Controller of Spirits (*lingshen* 領神).³⁴ Instead of paying proper attention to the differentiation of cosmic pneumata (*jueqi* 決氣), the *sine qua non* in the selection and appointment of community priests, those responsible for the conferral of appointments had come to rely on “the shadowy dreams of their wives,” as the text puts it.³⁵ The precise meaning of the otherwise uncommon term *jueqi* used here and in another passage of the text has given rise to speculations.³⁶ The graph

³⁴ On this office, see also below, p. 24.

³⁵ *Dadao jialing jie* in DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 17a6–7. The *Dadao jialing jie*, one of the earliest transmitted documents of the Way of the Heavenly Master, admonishes Libationers and remnants of the community after the dispersal of the Hanzhong organization to return to the practices of old. For a translation of the text, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 149–186.

³⁶ Bokenkamp (*Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 151–152 and 177–178) understands the term *jueqi* as “breaking through the pneumas” or “distinguishing (voices emanating from) the pneumas,” which he relates to spirit communications received through mediums. He takes this and another passage in which the term *jueqi* occurs as indications that “the Celestial Masters were, by this time if not earlier, engaged in mediumistic practices,” and speculates that the *Dadao jialing jie* might be seen as a postmortem communication from Zhang Lu, leader of the former Hanzhong community, revealed through a medium. Bokenkamp and Terry Kleeman (who has argued along similar lines; *Great Perfection*, pp. 78–79;) see further evidence for the tradition’s involvement in spirit-mediumism in the office of the *lingjue* 領訣 (Controller of Discriminations) which figures in an early list of parish ranks transmitted in a Tang text and is indeed said to control cases “in which men and women possessed by *qi* transmit words” (*nan nü bei qi chuanyu* 男女被氣傳語; cf. also pp. 24–25 below). I concur with Bokenkamp and Kleeman that spirit possession continued to play a role among the populace in Heavenly Master communities. But, in my view, the set goal of the organization as a whole—and the function of the *lingjue* office in particular—was to transform these practices through the introduction of the principle of correct *qi* determinations. Condemnations of spirit communications delivered through song in trance possession, as in the practices of the so-called *wu* 巫 (shamans or mediums), are found early on in Daoist literature (e.g., DZ 188 *Xuandu lüwen* 21b–22a; DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 5.4b6; DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 8a7–8; DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 1b10–2a1) and are continually reaffirmed throughout the later history of Daoism. If, as Bokenkamp indicates, the mention of “wives” and their

jue relates originally to the flow and channeling of water, whence derive all further significations such as “dividing,” “distinguishing,” “sorting,” “deciding,” and “judging.” Taking into account both occurrences in the text, the compound *jueqi* appears to refer to the flow and differentiation of *qi* effected and communicated by the Dao itself as well as its proper discernment, delineation, and further distribution by the Heavenly Master priests. As the text further specifies, the lack of attention to this central matter not only impacted the clerical and communal organization in this world, but, more seriously, also disrupted the ritual interactions with the spirit administration. Priests who attained office without verification based on the proper discernment of *qi*, transgressed the natural (trans) formations of pneuma (*landui tiandi qihou* 濫對天地氣候) and handled written communications with the Three Offices (*sanguan wenshu* 三官文書) only to serve themselves and indulge their gluttony.³⁷

The Three Offices (*Sanguan* 三官), were, as already mentioned, the ultimate cosmic instances of judgment inscribed in the invisible dimensions of Heaven, Earth, and Water. Their staff kept the cosmic records of life (*mingji* 命籍) and determined the life-spans of individuals

shadowy dreams in the passage in the *Dadao jialing jie* must be seen as a reference to (female) mediums and the shamanic traditions of Chinese popular religion (*Early Daoist Scriptures*, p. 178), and if, as Bokenkamp says himself there, the severely critical tone the text adopts in that respect cannot be missed, this location cannot possibly support the general supposition that the text itself was delivered by a medium. Bokenkamp and Kleeman correctly point out that the term *jueqi* occurs in another passage of the *Dadao jialing jie* (15a1), where it is clearly associated with verbal communication (*chuanyu*) and positively affirmed as an action of the Dao itself. (A similar instance recurs in another ancient fragment preserved in DZ 789, 21b7–10.) Of course, speculating that in these cases, the “transmission of words” has to be taken metaphorically would be unwarranted, as we have no way to access the original event of this transmission, let alone the experience of the original recipient(s). What I hope to demonstrate here, however, is that the conception of *jueqi* in this early text clearly emphasizes an interpretational shift with regard to divine communications, whose validity and acceptability were henceforth made dependent on the proper division of *qi* both in the manner it communicated itself and in the way it was received, classified, verified, and made workable in the Daoist liturgy.

³⁷ DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 17a9–10.

based on their comportment. Those suspected to be at fault—especially members of the priesthood—suffered the torments of spirit inquisitions (*kao* 考/*kaozhao* 考召), manifest in disease and misfortune; and if convicted of serious crimes, the unfortunate were sentenced to death. The only way to be delivered from such punishment was through the confession of sins by way of a petition, which once again pledged culprits to the system guarded by the fearsome judges.³⁸ These “handwritten depositions to the Three Officers” (*sanguan shoushu* 三官手書), as the petitions also were also called, were thus in fact weighty testimonials.³⁹ Their contents, both confessions as well as promises, were

³⁸ See, e.g., DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 8b–9a.

³⁹ The term *sanguan shoushu* appears in a passage quoted from the *Dianlüe* 典略 (a lost historiographic source) in Pei Songzhi’s 裴松之 commentary to Zhang Lu’s biography in *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 8.264. According to this source, these were confessions of diseased community members in Zhang Lu’s church-state, addressed to the *Sanguan* and written out in three copies. The first of these was deposited on a mountain (destined for the Heavenly Office), the second one buried in the earth (destined for the Earth Office), and the third one submerged in water (destined for the Water Office). The description concerning content and purpose of these writs conforms precisely to that of the *zhang* petitions known from early Daoist sources, except that, according to the information we have there, the latter were not sent in three copies to their destinations. Nor were they submitted in the way described in the *Dianlüe*; rather they were ultimately burned, which happened *after* their original ritual submission (see below). The *Dadao jialing jie* provides no information about these practical matters in connection with its mention of the *sanguan wenshu* (a term that certainly refers to the *sanguan shoushu*, although I believe that the concern here is not so much with single documents but written communication with the Three Offices more generally). We know neither when exactly nor for what reasons the posting procedure was changed, nor why Daoist sources commonly speak of *zhang* rather than *sanguan shoushu*. A rather late collection of petition samples assigned to Du Guangting (850–933) transmits, interestingly, the text of a petition labeled “Petition to Register a Daoist Priest’s Handwritten Deposition with the Three Offices of Heaven, Earth, and Water (*Daoshi tiandishui sanguan shoushu luzhuang zhang* 道士天地水三官手書籙狀章). Its intention is a complete confession of all sins committed by a cleric since the age of seven *sui* to obtain a full reconstitution of his (or her) life-span, once spirit inquisitors (*kaoli* 考吏) had verified the truthful-

thought to be subject to meticulous verification through the records maintained in those otherworldly offices, and only if their sincerity was substantiated were the inquisitors (*kaoli* 考吏 / *kaoguan* 考官) recalled.⁴⁰ If these vital negotiations with the Three Officers were brought to naught by Libationers who were not properly integrated in the encompassing liturgical cosmos of *qi* and, in addition, violated its regulated flow, the resulting conditions—graphically conjured up by Lu Xiujing—threatened to bring down the entire system.⁴¹

Speaking through the *Dadao jialing jie* is indeed the voice of the Dao itself made manifest through differentiations of *qi* (*jueqi*) to exhort the clergy of an organization that by then had lost its central leadership.

ness of the confession (DZ 617 *Taishang xuanci zhuohua zhang* 2.12a–15a; cf. Kristofer Schipper in *The Taoist Canon*, 481–482). This sample text does not actually contain a full confession of sins: the transgressions were probably to be filled in by individual supplicants. But it remains open if the original *sanguan shoushu* should be seen as a particular kind of petition, concerned more specifically with the confession of sins by members of the clergy. The *Dianlue* passage does not support this view, and the passage in the *Dadao jialing jie* is not explicit on this point. Two entries in DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.5a1–3 and 15a6–7 list divinities that seem to help with the resolution of handwritten letters (presumably containing accusations) by 1,200 inquisitor spirits (by forwarding?) the petitioner’s self-testimony. These passages might be significant, but both are garbled, vary among themselves, and thus are extremely difficult to evaluate. Although rarely mentioned in the sources, the *sanguan shoushu* have received fairly close attention from Fukui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 27–52 and Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no dōkyō*, pp.151–157. Ōfuchi’s discussion is interesting, as he highlights the binding character of the writ that actually functioned like a bipartite oath. The petitions in general functioned as pledges, they materialized the original Covenant of the tradition for each individual supplicant, and—like all contracts—they were bipartite, with their divine counterparts in the files kept with the Three Offices, against which they were verified. The “correct text” (*zhengben* 正本) of a petition hence was constituted by the seamless match of the two parts.

⁴⁰ DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 8b–9a, cf. Nickerson, “Abridged Codes of Master Lu for the Daoist Community,” pp. 358–359.

⁴¹ DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe*; cf. Nickerson, “Abridged Codes of Master Lu for the Daoist Community.”

The voice recalls the foundation of the movement, the transmission of the Orthodox One Way of the Covenant with the Powers (*Zhengyi mengwei zhi dao* 正一盟威之道) to Zhang Daoling. At that time, in 142 C.E., Zhang was bound into a contract with heaven and earth and charged to establish twenty-four parishes (*ershisi zhi* 二十四治) to distribute (*fenbu* 分布) the primordial *qi* of the Dao and thereby reorder the lives of the people.⁴² The reminiscence serves to admonish contemporary office holders of the Way of the Heavenly Master and remind them of the importance of their own mission. The distribution of the life-giving pneumata of the Dao had to be carried on, especially in those troubled times of political separation and displacement, and therefore the reestablishment of the traditional parish system and installation of capable office holders was paramount.

The original twenty-four parishes—correlated with twenty-four cosmic *qi* defining the solar terms (*jieqi* 節氣) of the year and the divine structure of the human body—were seen as the physical, institutional, and geographical embodiments of the breaths of the Dao. They were, in other words, the principal organs through which the pneumata spread into all aspects of life in the Heavenly Master's community.⁴³ To achieve this, each parish established in turn twenty-four ranked positions that administered this process through a division of specific functions. That the proper analysis, delineation, and verification of *qi* were at the core of their operations is illustrated by an early list of these offices, which, like the register of spirit officials in Wei Huacun's vita, enumerates not just twenty-four but twenty-five positions.⁴⁴ Let us look at some examples.

⁴² DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 14a–b; cf. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, p. 171.

⁴³ On the system of the twenty-four parishes (or dioceses) in its wider range of cosmological correlations allowing for adaptations after the dispersal of the original communities, see Franciscus Verellen, “The Twenty-Four Dioceses and Zhang Daoling: The Spatio-liturgical Organization of Early Heavenly Master Taoism,” in *Pilgrims, Patrons, and Place: Localizing Sanctity in Asian Religions*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 2003, pp. 15–67. Concerning the projection of the twenty-four cosmic pneumata into the human body, see n. 26 above.

⁴⁴ Transmitted in DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* (“Pearlbag of the Three Caverns,” compiled around 680 by Wang Xuanhe 王懸河) 7.19a4–5. The source of this list

According to the text, oversight over the other twenty-four ranks was assigned to the Controller of Pneumata (*lingqi* 領氣). Because he had the most encompassing knowledge of pneuma, his task was to provide fundamental guidelines for the diagnosis of alterations including abnormalities in *qi* formations, based on the color scheme of the five phases.⁴⁵ The Promoter of Spirits (*xingshen* 行神), spread the pneumata (*buqi* 布氣) and propagated the teachings of the Dao by expounding them.⁴⁶ The Officer of the Four Pneumata (*siqu* 四氣) managed the household registers when they were due for submission to the parish and, on the basis of them updated the corresponding parish records, entering births and deleting the names of those who had died.⁴⁷ The

of twenty-four offices pertaining to any Heavenly Master parish is identified as the *Xuandu li* 玄都律 (“*Penal Code of the Mysterious Capital*”), a significant part of which seems to derive from the early days of the Heavenly Master organization, although the *Daozang* transmits only a severely truncated edition that cannot pre-date the early Tang dynasty (DZ 188 *Xuandu liuwen*). The received text no longer contains the list itself, but clearly refers to it; see DZ 188 *Xuandu liuwen* 19a. Concerning the cosmological significance of a twenty-fifth encompassing entity in schemes based on the number of twenty-four, see n. 26 above.

⁴⁵ DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 7.19a4–5. The term used here for the diagnostic discernment of *qi* is *zhiqi* 知氣, literally “knowledge of *qi*.” Correlations with the basic scheme of the five phases applied of course to all aspects of community organization and liturgy in the Heavenly Master tradition, including the parish system and population, rituals and the divinities employed in them, as well as the corporeal pneumata of the priests. A passage in the received text of DZ 188 *Xuandu liuwen* 19a regarding the twenty-four parish offices, for example, details that their presiding officers, when they submitted petitions thrice a month on behalf of the entire parish population, should visualize the merit officers (*gongcao* 功曹) as well as the clerks and soldiers inhabiting their bodies according to the living pneumatas of the five quadrates (*wufang shengqi* 五方生氣).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.19a10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.19a8–9. The household registers (*huji* 戶籍 or *zhailu* 宅錄), to be maintained by members of the community, had to be submitted to the parish three times a year at the so-called three assemblies (*sanhui* 三會) on the seventh day of the first month, the seventh of the seventh month, and the fifteenth of the tenth month. On the basis of these, the parish center updated its own records (*zhilu* 治錄 or *mingji* 命籍) concerning the faithful. Moreover, it was believed that the “ten

Inspector of the Pneumata (*duqi* 都氣), organized the three yearly assemblies (*sanhui* 三會) and kept records of minor parish clerks, distinguishing them according to age, location, and exact title.⁴⁸ The Controller of Spirits (*lingshen* 領神), of whom we have heard already in the *Dadao jialing jie*, was in charge of selecting the talented (*xianliang* 賢良) and sorting out pretenders by verifying transgressions against the pneumata.⁴⁹ The Controller of Appointments (*lingshu* 領署) compiled dossiers about the twenty-four officers, listing their names, ranking the merit they had accrued on account of the ritual petitions they had administered while in service, and, accordingly, revised their records of life (*mingji*).⁵⁰ The officer of the Sagely Pneumata (*shengqi* 聖氣) tallied, at year's end, the petitions that had been submitted during the term and the merits accrued through them, and forwarded the results to the powers on high.⁵¹ The Registrar of Pneumata (*shangqi* 上氣) contained (*shou* 收) the “ten thousand demons” and classified them as either correct *qi* 正氣 or deviant essence 邪精.⁵² The Controller of Determinations (*lingjue* 領決) verified verbal communications from demonic *qi* (*guiqi* 鬼氣) possessing men or women and classified the

thousand” spirits of the Three Offices as well cross-checked and verified their own data on the populace with these records. See DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelie* 2a–4b and *passim*, and Nickerson, “Abridged Codes,” p. 353.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.18b10–19a1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.18a10–18b1; cf. p. 18 above.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.18b4–5. The registers of life mentioned here were the records kept in the parish center, the earthly counterparts of the files kept in the Three Offices, which were verified against the former three times a year during the parish assemblies.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7.19b2. The procedure administered by the *shengqi* is otherwise known as the “statement of merits,” for which see immediately below.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.18b9. I take the graph *shang* 上 in the title of this officer in its verbal sense “to send up.” What is meant here is likely that the spirits, once they had been classified according to the basic quality of their substance and, on that basis, either accepted or rejected, the information was forwarded to the higher spirit authorities interacting with the priestly administrators in this world. The distinctions between correct and corrupt *qi* and *jing* (essences), are further elucidated below, pp. 42–44. This location and the following two passages are relevant to the conditional integration of common deities into the Daoist system, discussed below, pp. 79–91.

cases apparently based on a scheme of ethnic labels, including Qin 秦, Yi 夷, Hu 胡, Rong 戎, Di 狄, Di 氐, and Qiang 羌.⁵³ The Great Supervisor of Assaults (*da dugong* 大都攻) used a similar taxonomy based on ethnic descriptions to keep record of contractual temples (*fumiao* 符廟) and verify if (and, presumably, to what extent) the spirits residing there participated in the fight against deviant *qi* (*buzheng qi* 不正氣) and the persistent ghosts of evil persons.⁵⁴

All this demonstrates the crucial role assigned to the discernment and channeling of *qi* through the administrative and liturgical system. From the supervision of the clergy, whose performance was annually reviewed and rewarded with promotions and life-span extensions, through community organization and management of the people's affairs, to adjudications concerning popular spirits, their indictment, or possible employment, everything was analyzed, categorized, and assessed by reference to the pneumata of the Dao.⁵⁵

This list offers several important insights to which we shall return below. Of immediate interest here is its mention of an event of great significance that took place toward the end of the year, when the merit

⁵³ Ibid., 7.19a6–7. Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 78–79, takes *lingjue* as an alternate term for *jueqi* 決氣 (the “differentiation of *qi*,” as discussed above), an identification for which I see little reason or evidence. But this passage unmistakably refers to occurrences of spirit-possession. What is important to realize here is, however, that this by no means endorses spirit-mediumism as a regular praxis of Heavenly Master Daoism. What is at issue here is rather the interrelationship between Daoist praxis and popular religious practices toward which the Heavenly Master tradition took a critical stance. Claims concerning communications from spirits were evidently subjected to investigations concerning their legitimacy. If the office could establish validity in one or the other case, these spirits were apparently eligible to join the system. We shall return to this important point and the significance of the use of ethnic labels in this context below, pp. 79–87.

⁵⁴ DZ 1139, 7.17b9–10. The designations here are Qin 秦, Hu 胡, Di 狄, Qiang 羌, Man 蠻, Yi 夷, Rong 戎, Di 氐, Chu 楚, and Yue 越.

⁵⁵ The text that deals most comprehensively with the application of cosmological parameters to Heavenly Master liturgy is DZ *Chisong zi zhangli* (*Petition Almanac of Chisong zi*), which, in its received version, is a late compilation, yet contains a great deal of early material; see Franciscus Verellen, “The Petition Almanac of Chisong zi,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), pp. 291–343.

accounts of both priests and gods were settled between the administrators of the Heavenly Master on earth and their divine correspondents in the realms beyond. This year-end communication appropriately took the form of a solemn ritual known as the Statement of Merits (*yangong* 言功).⁵⁶ Priests and gods had worked together during the term in lengthy procedures to resolve the problems that people had brought to their attention; now they were eligible for promotions in rank, and the human officers also for an addition of years to their lives. The people who had benefitted from their interventions, had obtained deliverance from disease, demonic manifestations of the family dead,⁵⁷ or simply profited in the market,⁵⁸ conveyed the prescribed tokens of rice, silk, writing

⁵⁶ The collective *yangong* rites, referred to here took evidently place at the last of the three annual assemblies on the fifteenth day of the tenth month. Their focal concern was to give thanks to and reward human as well as divine ministers for their written negotiations (the petitions) on behalf of the community. By the time of Tao Hongjing, the *yangong* did not always take the form of a large collective ceremony. According to his instructions in the *Dengzhen yinjue*, a statement of merit was to be performed typically as soon as a petition appeared to be successful, when an illness showed signs of improvement, or other crises began to subside. Tao Hongjing also informs us that the *yangong* necessitated the submission of another memorial (also called *zhang*) specifically keyed to the event. It listed the merits of the spirits that had helped in a previous emergency, along with the material pledges that symbolically measured these merits, and requested future blessings; see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.13b–14a. DZ 615 *Chisongzi zhangli* 5.8b–10a also transmits among several samples for such thanksgiving petitions one to be submitted for the entire community at the third yearly assembly.

⁵⁷ The fear of being afflicted by one's own ancestors, who, either due to their own transgressions or those of another deceased family member, were drawn into litigations before the tribunal of the Three Offices and looked for a substitute among their living family members to take the punishment, was indeed wide-spread. These "plaints from beyond the tombs" (*zhongsong* 塚訟) have been described by Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 10–25, and Peter Nicker-son, who has also translated the text of a relevant petition, see "The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints," in *Early Daoist Scriptures*, edited by Stephen Bokenkamp, pp. 230–274. The topic has recently been revisited by Stephen Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxieties*, especially chapters 2–4.

⁵⁸ That such seemingly trivial concerns were of great importance in the early Heav-

materials, and other things that adequately reflected the ministers' achievements and indicated their new entitlements. The goods were to be distributed as charity to the poor, while the paperwork, that is, the original texts of the petitions, were at the end of the ritual sent by the power of fire and smoke to the invisible judiciary of the *Sanguan* for confirmation and redemption.⁵⁹

Given the thoroughly bureaucratic features of the tradition, it is not unexpected that we read of major petitions being copied before they were burned and remaining on file. The purpose of these transcripts is not spelled out in clear terms, but rather obliquely referred to in form of a warning. By no means, should these used or "expired" texts (*guben* 故本) be simply copied again for other rituals. For the circumstances calling for a priest's interference with the invisible institutions were never exactly alike and always necessitated the invitation of different spirit officials. And yet, "For all petitions there exists a correct text (*zhengben* 正本)," states the passage, "and transcribing it requires careful collation and clear differentiations."⁶⁰

Several interesting insights emerge here. Transcripts of earlier supplications obviously *were* consulted in the composition of new petitions, although it was prohibited to simply recopy them. The correct text of every petition was preconditioned by individual circumstances and the particular spirit officials responding to them. In my understanding, the text hints here at the necessity for petition texts, including

enly Master community is indicated by the spirit officials specifically responsible for such matters. See, e.g., DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3. 9a–b and DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.18a–19a and 4.14a–b.

⁵⁹ For the burning of petition texts, see DZ 463 *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 11.16b–17b and DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 2.26b–27a. Both texts quote the *Taizhen ke* 太真科 (*Code of Grand Perfection*), a liturgical code the beginnings of which seem to go back to the early stages of the codification of Heavenly Master materials in the fifth century; see Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac," p. 294. The passage in question, however, may be older.

⁶⁰ DZ 463 *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 11.16a–b, on the "Storage of Used Petitions" (*zangzhang guben* 藏章故本), quoting from the *Taizhen ke*. The same passage in slightly edited form recurs in DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 2.26a–b and is partially translated by Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda," p. 301.

the confessions they contained, to agree exactly with the records in the administration beyond. As mentioned above, only after the truthfulness of the writings was ascertained through comparison with the files kept in the cosmic realm of *qi*, were the corresponding spirit officers dispatched to set an end to the inquisition by the tormenting spirit-detectives (*kaoli*). In this sense, petitions functioned exactly like the bipartite *fu* (talismans, tallies) and were hence also often called *zhangfu* 章符 (tallied *zhang*).⁶¹ In cosmological terms we might say that, as was the case with the gods whose help was requested, the ultimate and only correct model for any petition rested in corresponding, very specific formations of *qi*, which had to be carefully searched out and retraced in comparison with, but never simply based on, the texts used in previous cases. Ultimately the texts of petitions could not be fixed. They emerged and dispersed again with the transformation of *qi* involving every individual emergency and the rituals enacted to resolve them. Hence also the custom of burning the handwritten originals: the divine pneumata temporarily lodged in these texts had to be released again and reverted to their fluid cosmic state.⁶² The copies that were retained, on the other hand, merely froze expired situations in time, and thus could not serve as more than general samples.

The live pneumata relating to any specific supplication were embodied above all in the spirit officials named in the petitions, who, as the passage makes clear, therefore also constituted the critical variable in the petition texts. No doubt, Libationers involved in petitioning

⁶¹ E.g., DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.11a.

⁶² An alternative, recommended in the hagiography of Wei Huacun, was to process the original petitions into pills that the persons, on whose behalf they had been written, took as medicine. In these cases, the pneumata returned via the micro-cosm of the body to their eternal, indeterminate condition; see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.12a–b. Peter Nickerson has reported in this context an anecdote confirming the practice in the fifth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, according to which a famous Buddhist monk diagnosed the unremitting constipation of the Daoist Chi Yin 郗愔 (313–384) as caused by the ingestion of too many tallies (*fu*); see “The Great Petition,” pp. 253–254, n. 20; cf. *Shishuo xinyu*, reprint of Wang Xianqian’s 王先謙 critical edition of 1891 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), Shujie 術解, 3A.20. 24b–25a, and Richard B. Mather, Shih-shuo hsin-yü: *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 361.

procedures stood most on their own—and were most in need of guidance—with respect to these gods. That guidance was, as we know, provided by the *Qianerbai guan yi*—but again, where precisely should we locate the origins of this reference tool in the ordinary world?

Theoretically, as we have seen, the gods attending to this ledger had their roots in the dynamic configurations of *qi* rather than any predetermined text in human writing. Just as was the case with the ultimate models of petitions, the *Qianerbai guan yi* was considered a cosmic text. In practical terms, however, the material in the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*, the most substantial source we have concerning the ancient tradition, allows us to make an exceedingly interesting observation. Several passages in this text clearly show that they were directly taken from the texts of petitions, evidenced by the fact that remnants of the narrative in the latter were carried over into the itemized listings of the former.⁶³

Of course, we could object here, this might just suggest that those, who had their hands in the production of this compilation, took their clues from whatever relevant material there was to reconstruct an original that itself was already lost. Even admitting this possibility, however, I would argue that, with great likelihood, those who compiled this apparently deficient text merely resorted to the technique that was used from the beginning in generating *Qianerbai guan yi* lists.

Considering that, on the one hand, the ultimate models of both petitions and the *Qianerbai guan yi* were believed to be writ in the eternally moving formations of *qi* in the sky, but that, on the other, the texts of exemplary petitions were copied to serve as samples in similar ritual occasions, and that there was a particular need for practical orientation concerning the most crucial aspect of the petitions, the gods invited in them, who always had to be specifically adjusted to the situation, it only seems reasonable that such guidelines were drawn from the same sources. All comparable information that was to be had about eligible spirit officials—their names, celestial residences, jurisdictions, retinues, and even the kind of pledge offerings (*gui* 脆/*xin* 信) they required—was contained in the petition texts and could be extracted from there to compile ledgers. In this way flexible guidance was offered,

⁶³ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.7b3–8b6, 1.11a9–11b5, 1.12a4–12b3, 1.19b8–9, 2.7b4–6, 2.12b6–7, 3.1a6–8.

while the danger of direct copying from used texts was effectively circumvented—and, perhaps most importantly, the fundamental openness that the idea of text as reflection of cosmic dynamics demanded remained unimpaired. While one concern was to prevent mere mechanical handling of the petitions, another was, as we have seen, the possibility of priests simply inventing spirits to aid their rituals. In this respect too, the circular procedure of transferring the names of exemplary deities from exemplary into ledgers, from where they could be selected again, under corresponding circumstances, for new petitions set certain constraints. Which of the risks had to be weighted more seriously was, as we might imagine, no easy decision, and that tension would seem to be reflected in the practice itself—as well as more generally in the fact that the codification of Daoist liturgical material never became really final.

Be that as it may, everything suggests that the assemblage of the *Qianerbai guan yi* lists has to be viewed in this context. The ledgers provided sample inventories of the gods that constituted the very essence of the petitioning rituals and the texts that supported them. This also explains why in the *Dengzhen yinjue* the *Organon* is twice referred to as *Qianerbai guan yi zhu* 註, an itemized list.⁶⁴ Neither in its concrete written form—written in human script, to be precise—nor in its cosmic dimension, was the *Qianerbai guan yi* thought to constitute a closed text. The divine original, or the *Urtext* of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, as we might say, existed in the perpetual shifting of cosmic *qi*. It was reflected, though never fixed, in lists that were excerpted from copies of exemplary petition texts, which in turn derived from the genuine ritual work of priests, who were theoretically expected to be fully competent in the paramount duty of discerning and conducting *qi*. From this perspective, all excerpted passages transferred into the lists, including modifications, could count as authentic, if merely partial and potential, transcripts of the ultimate, limitless *Qianerbai guan yi* and its divinities.

Tao Hongjing's descriptions of the old manual in his possession and the condition of the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*, strongly indicate that the material was transmitted in multiple manuscript versions, which showed considerable overlaps—proving some degree of standardization

⁶⁴ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.12b9–10 (in Tao Hongjing's commentary) and 23a4 (in quote from Wei Huacun's hagiography).

—but also varied significantly in details. Perhaps it happened out of a perceived need for verification and unification that shorter manuscripts were compiled into longer ones, as evidently was the case with Tao Hongjing’s manual and the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*. But because the material was infinitely varied even within otherwise very similar listings and no editor (not even Tao Hongjing) could possibly decide which variations were to be judged more authentic or more original, the results remained remarkably patchy. This is glaringly evident in parts of the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*, where, at first glance, entire sequences of name-listings seem to repeat themselves, but closer examination reveals that the details don’t match even in a single instance.⁶⁵ The fact that it was a sheer impossibility to produce a coherent and corrected version of the *Qianerbai guan yi* based on existing material is, in my opinion, another strong indicator that there never existed a single integral original—apart from the cosmic text—to begin with.

Tao Hongjing—who, in spite of the many discrepancies in his old manuscript of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, acknowledged it as principally authentic—was clearly aware of both the tradition’s self-understanding and the circumstances that impacted its transmission. What most significantly supports this impression is that he not only hesitated to reject even such passages in his text as he suspected to be corrupted, but in at least two instances even considered emending the condensed list of spirit officials in the revealed hagiography of Wei Huacun on the basis of the older manuscript.⁶⁶ As for the *Qianerbai guan yi* version that has

⁶⁵ Compare in this respect particularly the passages in DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.4b4–6a6 and 1.14b9–16a10.

⁶⁶ For Tao Hongjing’s general suspicion about corruptions in his *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscript, and his view that they were a natural result of the material’s long history of transmission, see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.14b and 3.23a. For passages in which he recommends cross-checking of similar entries in the list in Wei Huacun’s hagiography and the *Qianerbai guan yi*, see 3.14b, 3.22a, and 3.22b. The passages where he discusses potential errors in Wei Huacun’s hagiography are found in 3.18b5, 3.15a1 and 3.20b4–5; the latter two concern the same deity. It is interesting that, in 3.15a1, Tao Hongjing first decides on an error in the version in Wei Huacun’s vita, but in 3.20b4 suppresses his temptation to actually correct the passage in question, out of respect for the newly revealed list.

survived in the *Daozang*, we may also be able to look at that from a new perspective. Apart from a few very minor editorial alterations, the four *juan* of the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* constitute as original a text as we can ever hope for.

The evidence arrayed here with regard to the origin and transmission of the *Qianerbai guan yi* points to a tradition that understood itself as fundamentally open. Revelation (the differential manifestation and proper delineation of the cosmic *qi*) and mission in the church of the Heavenly Master apparently formed a single process, believed to be still unfolding through the liturgical praxis of the priests. There is at least one instance where we find the self-understanding of a similarly open tradition explicitly expressed, and this case deserves to be mentioned at the end of this section. The received main-text of the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (*Scripture of Great Peace*) displays all the discrepancies to be expected in a compilation put together from several manuscript traditions, although a consensus prevails that its ideology is fairly coherent and consistent in the way it responds to main-stream Han dynasty views. While modern experts are striving to isolate the layers that make up the text as we have it—one of which, significantly, may have been transmitted through Heavenly Master channels—there is little expectation of retrieving an original *Taiping jing* in this way.⁶⁷ In fact, the text itself would seem to advise against such an undertaking. As Barbara Hendrichske's sensitive translation of a substantive portion of one layer of that strange book has made transparent, the tradition behind it conceived of itself as engaged in an ongoing revelation directly linked to continual textual creation and social transformation. In these parts we find ourselves witnessing teaching sessions, during which a Heavenly Master sometimes refers to an initial celestial revelation,⁶⁸ but more often admonishes his disciples to make transcripts of his exegeses and to

⁶⁷ Since the *Taiping jing* is not really my concern here, I desist from referencing the most important recent scholarly contributions in this area and refer instead simply to Barbara Hendrichske's new study and translation of this intriguing text, where further information can be conveniently found: *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping jing and the Beginnings of Daoism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ E.g., Hendrichske, *Taiping jing*, pp. 155–160; cf., Wang Ming 王明, *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), pp. 60–70.

keep collecting, comparing, and revising their notes in order to ensure the integrity of the mission.⁶⁹ I do not wish to assert here an ordinary connection between the *Taiping jing* and the Heavenly Master tradition, but there can be no doubt that its outlook on revelation, writing, tradition, and transmission strongly resembles what we have seen above with respect to the Way of the Heavenly Master.

The Twelve Hundred Officials

If for all these reasons we might never be able to reconstruct a single agreed-on master text of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, the deities registered in its various versions certainly deserve closer attention. The lords and their extended military and clerical staffs present the earliest known collectives of spirits employed in specifically Daoist rituals, and fourth and fifth-century Daoist sources take pains to differentiate them from the gods ordinarily worshipped by the populace at large, in particular the deified spirits of the restive dead, but also animal spirits and other supposedly demonic forces of nature. The Twelve Hundred Officials, as we have seen, are explained as essentially cosmic magnitudes functioning in a bureaucratically structured universe, which is entirely in keeping with the fundamental Daoist theology that its pantheon was constituted solely by hypostases of abstract cosmic forces. What is suspicious with the Twelve Hundred Officials, however, is that their theological definition appears like a theoretical afterthought. The deities' individual descriptions in the *Qianerbai guan yi* present them hardly as abstract entities, but, to the contrary, in sufficiently idiosyncratic terms the most self-conscious popular god might take pride in.

Striking are first of all their names, which, unlike the titles of divinities found in other Heavenly Master spirit-registers,⁷⁰ defy any

⁶⁹ E.g., Hendrichske, *Taiping jing*, pp. 196–201; cf., *Taiping jing hejiao*, pp. 83–87.

⁷⁰ Particularly the *Xianling* ordination registers 仙靈錄, whose spirits were, according to what we can see from Tang-dynasty specimens, systematically categorized and designated according to cosmological principles, beginning from the basic division between Yin (numinous officials, *lingguan* 靈官) and Yang (immortal officials, *xianguan* 仙官). For the system of these registers, as it evolved between the Six Dynasties and Tang periods, see Kristofer M. Schipper, "Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts," in *Religion und Philosophie in Osta-*

uniform theoretical derivation. Peculiar and at times bizarre, the appellations of the Twelve Hundred Officials seem just as diverse as those of the demonic crowds and popular spirits whose worship Daoists hoped to extirpate. Moreover, the Twelve Hundred Officials are credited with conveying the same worldly blessings small-town-dwellers and peasants ordinarily must have prayed for to their village gods. From seasonable weather, bumper harvests, and prosperous livestock, to market profits, happy marriages, the easy delivery of children, and, of course, the dispelling of diseases, the deities of the *Qianerbai guan yi* evidently fulfilled the functions of precisely those whose influence they were to break—the ordinary gods, who, as Daoists saw it, contrary to the people’s hopes, often only wrought havoc on them.⁷¹

There is, in other words, some ambiguity about the Twelve Hundred Officials, a certain liminality, which quite agrees with Stein’s argumentation that, as much as medieval Daoists tried to distinguish their own religion from the “excessive” or “licentious” cults of the people (*yinci* 淫祠), the two realms remained connected in a dialectic relationship through which they continually borrowed from and impacted each other.⁷² And to the extent that gods functioned as symbols through which such interchanges were ritually negotiated, the Twelve Hundred Officials warrant a re-examination of Daoist and popular notions of divinity in relationship to each other.

Licentious Cults

Stein maintained that Daoists defined their liturgical system, in fact its *raison d’être*, in contrast to an image of “popular religion,” which they largely shared with the official classes.⁷³ It evolved from the social

sien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger, ed. Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Pohl, and Hans-Hermann Schmidt (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), pp. 127–148.

⁷¹ Even a cursory glance at the table of contents in DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* confirms the comparatively quotidian concerns involving the tradition.

⁷² Rolf Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” in *Facets of Taoism*, pp. 53–81.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–71.

strictures set up in the Confucian canon of rites, whose goal was to enable the state to keep popular religious worship under control and maintain the sacrificial privileges from which the ancient aristocracy and the later official class derived their power and social status.⁷⁴ To be sure, the canonical rules above all defined and limited the cults that could legitimately be observed by the higher classes, including the Son of Heaven himself. The earliest sources pay hardly any attention to the religious concerns and practices of the ordinary population. However, as an oft-cited passage in the *Liji* 禮記 indicates, this relative silence was not just a matter of accidental oversight; it amounted to an indirect statement about the virtual exclusion of commoners from legitimate religious practice:

The Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, to [the spirits presiding over the] four quarters; to [the spirits of] the hills and rivers; and offers the five sacrifices of the house—all in the course of the year. The feudal princes present oblations, each to [the spirits presiding over] his own quarter, to the [spirits of] its hills and rivers; and offer the five sacrifices of the house—all in the course of the year. High officials offer the five sacrifices of the house—all in the course of the year. Members of the lower aristocracy (*shi* 士) present oblations to their ancestors. There should be no presuming to resume any sacrifice which has been abolished [by proper authority], nor to abolish any which has been so established. A sacrifice which is not proper to offer, and which is yet offered, is called a licentious sacrifice. Excessive sacrifices bring no blessing.⁷⁵

If anything, this passage seems to ignore ordinary people and their religious needs quite pointedly. It certainly was not meant to say that

⁷⁴ See Mark E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 17; Terry Kleeman, “Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China,” *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 7.1 (1994), pp. 191–197.

⁷⁵ *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, Shisanjing zhushu 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), “Quli 曲禮 2,” 5.12a–13b. Translation with minor modifications according to James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki. Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Müller, vol. 27 (London: The Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 116.

these people did not have their religious customs; the implication is rather that they ought not to engage in them without official authorization. On the other hand, references to accepted forms of popular cult practice are sparse; they include mentions of vegetarian offerings to one's forebears in the privacy of a home's bedroom,⁷⁶ oblations to the hearth and door gods,⁷⁷ appeasement sacrifices to prematurely deceased sons,⁷⁸ and participation in various communal festivals in the spring, autumn, and at the end and the beginning of the year such as the *she* 社, *zha* 蜡, and *la* 臘 sacrifices.⁷⁹ The latter were fixed according to time and place and obviously also supervised by local nobles and village elders.⁸⁰ We have no idea what the domestic offerings to the hearth or door god, family forebears, and sons, who died before they had married and produced offspring, really involved. Evidently, however, these rites were seen as being in agreement with the basic rule, expressed in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, that "the spirits do not receive oblations from those who are not of their kind, and the people do not make offerings to [spirits] who do not belong to their group."⁸¹

Since this fundamental regulation was never challenged, it is difficult to gauge how much the situation changed in early imperial times. Han sources give more explicit credence to the people's right to ritually care for their dead progenitors, but we do not know how far these observances were indeed integrated with the ancestor cult of the elites, or simply continued to hold a shadowy niche somewhere apart

⁷⁶ *Liji zhengyi*, "Wangzhi 王制," 12.10a–11b.

⁷⁷ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa 祭法," 46.9b.

⁷⁸ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.10b.

⁷⁹ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jiao tesheng 郊特牲," 25.14b–18b, 26.5b–8b; "Zaji 雜記 2," 43.5b–6a.

⁸⁰ The *sanlao* or *jijiu*, whose honorific title was later adopted by the ministers of early Daoism.

⁸¹ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, "Xigong 僖公 10," 13.11b. A similar well-known statement is attributed to Confucius in the *Lunyu* 論語: "To sacrifice to spirits that are not one's own is to be presumptuous," *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏, Shisan jing zhushu (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 2.7b; cf. Edward Slingerland, *Confucius: Analects* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company), 2003, p. 16.

from the latter. In principle, the Han statutes reiterated that all privately initiated worship among commoners that exceeded the cult of deceased family elders fell under the prohibition of licentious cults.⁸² At its most basic level, then, the religion of commoners in ancient China was defined entirely on social grounds and tolerated only in so far as it conformed to the imposed strictures of recognized group relationships.

At a secondary level, popular cults that existed outside these regulations—and presumably there always were far more of these than authorized forms of popular worship—were also stigmatized as “licentious” on account of their exuberant celebrations. What non-Daoist and Daoist sources typically decry in such ritual activities are singing, dancing, music, and drumming, going hand in hand with the slaughtering of animals, communal banquets, intoxication, and the “mingling of humans with spirits” facilitated by mediumistic practitioners, called *wu*.⁸³ In the opinion of China’s elites, which Daoist rhetoric usually affirmed, nothing of this conformed to the norms of ritual propriety (*li* 禮) fit for the common people.

These denunciations have led some Sinologists to emphasize the ecstatic and orgiastic characteristics of the licentious popular cults as their chief distinction. But we need only look at the prescriptions for religious and sacrificial practices in the classical books to see that the popular rituals were in essence no different from those of the elite. The ritual slaughter of animals, the communal meal, song, music, inebriation, and the presence of the spirit(s) in the “Incorporator(s)” (literally, “corpse,” *shi* 尸) also stood at the center of the aristocratic ancestor cult.⁸⁴ Moreover, as Lothar von Falkenhausen has convincingly shown,

⁸² *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 25A:1193–114; cf. also *Fengsu tongyi tongjian* 風俗通義通檢, by Ying Shao 應劭 (late second century); *Index du Fong sou t'ong yi*, Centre franco-chinois d'études sinologiques (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing, 1968, reprint of Beijing, 1943), 9, p. 67.

⁸³ See, e.g., DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 1a; DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing*, 1b–2a.

⁸⁴ See, e.g. *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義; *Shisanjing zhushu*, 13.2, 3a–11b, along with the analyses and translation by Martin Kern, “*Shi Jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of the ‘*Chu ci*’ (Thorny Caltrop),” *Early China*, 25 (2000), pp. 49–111 and *Liji zhengyi*, “*Jitong* 祭統,” 49.9a–b. The likelihood of alcohol-induced trance among the Incorporator(s) of the ancestral spirits during these

the male and female *wu* 巫 (shamans, spirit mediums), even though made bureaucrats in the *Zhou Li* (*Rites of Zhou*), were employed in sacrifices and exorcisms for their skill at directly communing with the spirits, and in this differed in no way from their counterparts in popular religion.⁸⁵

The boundary that the traditional elites established between their own religious practice and that of the ordinary populace can therefore not have hinged on the nature of the rituals per se. Some members of the lettered elite might have discredited people's understanding of the meaning of the sacrificial rites, which, as we know, intellectuals in the succession of Confucius saw in increasingly symbolic terms as a display of the sacrificers' virtue of reverence rather than the actual feeding of spirits.⁸⁶ But the ritual classics themselves do not explicitly endorse this reinterpretation, and it is far from certain to what degree it ever took hold even among the privileged classes.

This suggests, in turn, that popular religious worship diverged from the standards of *li* only in that it concerned spirits other than those thought to fit the proper family and group relationships defined for the common population, that the rituals took place on dates other than those prescribed, and that they did not comply with canonical sumptuary rules. Considering, in addition, that the ritual codes contain all but no provisions for people's own religious practice,⁸⁷ the dictum in the *Liji* that "the rites do not reach down to the people"⁸⁸ has a *double entendre*. On the one hand, the ritual standards, and especially the lofty reinterpretation of rites for the elite, can barely have been accessible to those who did not read; on the other, the books of rites, by their very

sacrificial banquets has been shown persuasively by Jordan Paper, *The Spirits are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 111–115.

⁸⁵ Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The *Wu* Officials in the *Zhou Li*," *Early China* 20 (1995), pp. 279–300.

⁸⁶ E.g., the famous "Discussion of Rites (*lilun* 禮論)" in *Xunzi* 荀子.

⁸⁷ An exception exists in a passage of the *Guoyu* 國語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1978), pp. 564–565, according to which "ordinary people eat vegetables and use fish for the [ancestor] sacrifice."

⁸⁸ *Liji zhengyi*, "Quli 1," 3.4b.

disregard for the religious practices and needs of ordinary people, *a priori* also precluded their inclusion in the sacred realm of *li*.

To the central Chinese state, this bottom-line exclusion of popular religion proved practical and, in principle, remained in place, even though political, economical, and cultural factors apparently often called for considerable accommodations. We know that relevant adaptive strategies reached a high degree of formalization at the latest by the Northern Song, when systematic structures and procedures to legitimize local deities and their cults on account of their agreement with Confucian social ethics were put in place and allowed for case-by-case decisions concerning the borderlines of propriety, leading to a massive inclusion of local cults in the official Register of Sacrifices (*sidian* 祀典).⁸⁹ Yet there are plenty of examples even in early imperial and medieval China of erstwhile unacceptable popular cults advancing to positions of high honor within the framework of the official state religion. One of the most impressive cases is perhaps that of the White Tiger spirit, which will occupy us below. And the religious exploits of rulers like Qin shi huangdi 秦始皇帝 (r. 221–210 B.C.E.) or Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 B.C.E.) provide still more evidence that, all in all, the political control of religion in China was neither a matter of theology, nor one of curbing substantially diverging ritual practices.⁹⁰ It was essentially a matter of social status and established lineage—in addition to knowledge of the minutiae of standardized ritual form as laid down in the classical literature.

Daoist Demonization of Popular Gods

Theological reasons were, however, early on claimed by Daoists, who promoted a new religion *for*, albeit not *by*, the people and who had to convince not only them but also state authorities about the unquestionable respectability of the divine powers harnessed in Daoist rituals.⁹¹ Stein found the main support for his thesis that the line early

⁸⁹ See Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁹⁰ For the religious inclinations of Qin shi huangdi and Han Wudi, see *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), ch. 28.

⁹¹ I use the terms theology and theological with respect to Chinese religion in

Daoists drew between unacceptable and accepted forms of spirit worship agreed *grosso modo* with the social strictures concerning sanctioned and “excessive” (licentious) forms of sacrifice in a well-known fifth-century source. Lu Xiujing’s passionate pleas for a return to the principles of Heavenly Master liturgy contain the following passage:

Only the Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven. The Three Dukes sacrifice to the five sacred peaks. The feudal lords sacrifice to the mountains and rivers. Ordinary people feast their forebears on the auspicious five *la* 臘 days, and sacrifice to the god of the locality (*she* 社) and the hearth god in the second and the eighth months. Apart from this, there may be no sacrificing. Any feasting of one’s forebears other than on the five auspicious *la* dates, and any sacrifice to the god of the locality and the hearth god [on days] other than [those defined as] local community days (*sheri* 社日) in spring and autumn constitute violations of the licentious-cult rule.⁹²

Lu’s phraseology quite obviously reflects the basic codes of sanctioned sacrifice included in the *Liji* and, more so even, the *Hanshu*. But the same Daoist text defines the crucial dividing line between licit and illicit spirit worship in yet far more categorical terms, when it succinctly refers to the so-called Pure Bond (*qingyue* 清約) of the Daoist religion: “Gods do not eat and drink and Daoist Masters do not accept money.”⁹³

Sacrifice, understood as the feeding of spirits, was in fact anathema in Heavenly Master liturgy—and the Heavenly Master petition rituals in particular explicitly aimed at averting the ills believed to be spread by spirits who depended on sacrificial feeding.⁹⁴ The liturgical material

their literal sense.

⁹² DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 1b.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1b.

⁹⁴ Without intending to embark here on a discussion of sacrifice in general and more particularly in China (there is still much work to be done on these issues), the feeding metaphor evidently became predominant from the Zhou period on. As the passage quoted from Lu Xiujing’s code indicates, the rejection of sacrifice in the Heavenly Master tradition accordingly concerned the feeding of any foods to spirits rather than only offerings of meat and blood. The term *xueshi* 血食

included in Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue* as well as other medieval Daoist sources associate these spirits with death, decay, and pollution.

("blood-eating") is mostly used interchangeably with the compound *yinshi* 飲食 in early Daoist texts and thus stands metonymically for the eating habits of the despised spirits of ordinary religion in general. As Robert Campany has recently pointed out, the term *bigu* 辟穀, with regard to adepts of immortality, similarly refers to the abstinence from food in general, rather than just the avoidance of grain; see his *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 22–24 and "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Medieval China," *Toung Pao* 41 (2005), pp. 9–10 and n. 25. The Daoist pledges, which often included rice and grain among other non-eatable items such as writing materials, should not be seen as "vegetarian offerings" to the Daoist divinities. As we shall see below, these pledges were not meant to sustain the gods, nor were they in fact offered to them. Interestingly enough, however, it seems that the killing of animals and the use of their blood in oaths with divine powers, are not rejected in early Daoist texts, as they apparently were understood as a category altogether separate from the model of sacrificial feeding; see, e.g., 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 1.6a. There is also no denying that sacrificial food offerings entered Daoism through lineages originally not connected to the tradition of the Heavenly Master (e.g., DZ 388 *Taishang lingbao wufu xu* 3.3a–b) and played a role in some subgroups of Heavenly Master Daoism during the Six Dynasties (especially the movement behind the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* and related texts). These offerings went by the label *jiao* 醮 and usually included wine, fruit, and dried meat. Conspicuous is that they are typically addressed to the Five Emperors (*Wudi* 五帝), who had received sanctioned state sacrifices for hundreds of years, the gods of the Five Peaks (*wuyue* 五嶽), and the five plague gods, all of whom continued to play ambiguous roles throughout the history of Daoism; see, e.g., DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 19.4b–5a, DZ 1288 *Yuanchen zhangjiao licheng li* 1.3a–b; DZ 809 *Taishang sanwu bangjiu jiao wudi duanwen yi*. (The ambiguity of the Five Emperors, the gods of the five peaks, and the plague gods will become more obvious below.) Moreover, even sacrifices of the bloody, raw kind, re-entered Daoist rituals, as is particularly conspicuous with some of the thunder gods in the new healing rituals of the Song period (see below, pp. 89–90 and n. 264)—even though the theoretical bottom-line that prohibited the feeding of Daoist deities remained in place. There are, in other words, still numerous issues concerning the Daoist understanding of sacrifice awaiting further research, not to mention that western concepts as well remain debated.

They are typically described as the “old” or “stale pneumata” (*guqi* 故氣) of deceased humans or as the “overaged essences” (*laojing* 老精) of animal and plant-life, including what we would call inanimate matter, and even man-made objects.⁹⁵ It was thought that these rotting remains of the organic universe resisted orderly recycling in the cosmic system—and their natural dissolution as discrete entities—once their lifecycles had expired. While disintegration nonetheless slowly took its toll, the fouling substances, often mixing with each other, still clung to the living world, haunting the population and demanding sustenance in the form of sacrifice. But those who yielded to the threats of such nefarious spirits and provided them with food and worship would, as Daoist sources keep warning, bring even greater calamity upon themselves.⁹⁶

The most dangerous sub-division among these spirits—or, more correctly, *substances*—of death was thought to be that of the stale pneumata of deceased humans, who returned as wrathful ghosts rather than beneficent ancestors. Indeed, the traditional and still largely elitist ancestor cult of the Han provided little in terms of mitigating the widespread fear of ghosts in China. Yet, self-evident as the contrast between

⁹⁵ For the term *guqi*, identified by Tao Hongjing as the “stale pneumata” of the family dead see, e.g., DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.19a6–8; the terms *laojing* and *zhong lao zhi jing* 眾老之精, appear *ibid.*, 3.19b3–8. A standard source for demons of the latter sort is Ge Hong’s *Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces the Un-carved Block*; see Wang Ming 王明, *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 17, p. 299–308. But a rich and interesting repository of many varieties of demonic essences (and other malignant spirits) is found also in DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü*, a Heavenly Master text to which we shall turn below.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 1a, DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 1.2a. In connection with the notion that food offerings to unrelated demonic spirits were seen as a direct cause of misfortune and disease, it is worthwhile to consider a passage in the *Taiping jing*, which holds that excessive food offerings to the ancestor spirits invite other demonic creatures to partake of them and afflict the sacrificers with diseases; see *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校, pp. 51–52; cf. Hendrischke, *Taiping jing*, p. 130. The first one to draw attention to this passage was Maxime Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the *T’ai-ping ching*,” *Facets of Daoism*, pp. 35–36. As we shall see below, p. 79, this notion remained common in Daoism.

vengeful ghosts and kindly ancestors may seem, in essence, the two groups of spirits were originally not seen as categorically different.

A common designation used in early Chinese texts for the spirits addressed in the ancestral rites is *guishen* 鬼神.⁹⁷ *Gui* is often glossed by the homophone *gui* 歸, “to return,” which generally referred to the return of the composite life forces of a human to their natural abodes after death.⁹⁸ More specifically, *gui* 鬼 denoted the transformation of a person’s physical components and functions (*po* 魄), which at death returned to the soil. *Shen* 神, on the other hand, is typically related to the diffusion of a dead person’s more ethereal components (*qi* 氣) and functions (*hun* 魂) in the sky.⁹⁹ *Shen* is also often associated with the term *ming* 明, meaning “luminosity” or “awareness.”¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy, however, that the classical sources seem to employ the compound *guishen* mostly in a generic sense, and that the luminosity of *shen*, rather than being equated with the full consciousness of individual ancestral spirits, was held to be no more than some fairly diffuse sort of awareness.¹⁰¹ It appears then that, in ancient China, *gui* and *shen* were principally conceived as just the collectives of human *hun* and *po* life forces as they existed dispersed in the soil and in the sky. Indeed, the classical texts suggest that, as Marcel Granet has argued long ago, *guishen* became truly individuated as distinct ancestors, or *zu* 祖, only through the correct performance of the classical ancestor sacrifices, during which the *gui* and *shen* of a forbear were reunited, physically embodied in the Incorporator (*shi* 尸) and the ancestor tablet, and permanently enshrined in an ancestral hall. Ancestral status was thus inextricably linked to the elite ancestor cult and the meticulous

⁹⁷ For a far more detailed treatment of the conception of ghosts in the traditional literature of China and the Shang oracle bones, see Mu-chou Poo, “The Concept of Ghost in Ancient Chinese Religion,” in *Religion and Chinese Society*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press & École Française d’Extrême Orient, 2004), pp. 173–187.

⁹⁸ *Liji zhengyi*, “Jifa,” 46.5a. Cf. also *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 883.6a–b.

⁹⁹ *Liji zhengyi*, “Jiao tesheng,” 26.15b.

¹⁰⁰ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, “Zhaogong 昭公 7,” 44.9b–10b; *Liji zhengyi*, “Jiyi 祭義,” 47.10a–11a.

¹⁰¹ *Liji zhengyi*, “Tangong xia 檀弓下,” 9.10a.

observance of its rules.¹⁰²

Of course, as we have seen, the full and approved participation of the common population in that hallowed system of worship remained a matter of doubt well into the Han period. It is hence no surprise that the *Liji* laconically states in a passage: “Ordinary officers and the common people have no ancestral shrines. When they die, they are called *gui* 鬼.”¹⁰³ Again, we are well advised not to construe the term *gui* here as “ghosts” in the sense of individual haunting spirits. Just as in the compound *guishen*, *gui* refers here more generally to the natural reversion of a former human’s life components after death. What the text evidently wants to express is that the dead of the lower classes were precluded from reaching individualized ancestral status, just as their families were denied full participation in the ancestor cult.

The phenomenon of the dead reappearing among humans as malevolent ghosts, is, on the other hand, early on explained as rather an anomaly in the natural process of disintegration and reversion. In this respect, the *Zuozhuan* contains the following key passage:

When Zichan 子產 went to [the principality of] Jin 晉,¹⁰⁴ Zhao Jingzi 趙景子 questioned him:¹⁰⁵ “Is it possible that Boyou 伯有 became a ghost (*gui* 鬼)?”¹⁰⁶ Zichan answered: “It is quite possible. The first

¹⁰² *Liji zhengyi* “Jiyi,” 47.10a–b; “Jifa,” 46.5b–6a. Cf. Marcel Granet, *The Religion of the Chinese People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), pp. 80–90. David N. Keightley, argues the same with respect to the ancestors during the Shang; see his “The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy,” in *Religion and Chinese Society*, pp. 3–63.

¹⁰³ *Liji zhengyi*, “Jifa,” 46.6a–b.

¹⁰⁴ Zichan is Gongsun Qiao 公孫僑 (581–521), Prime Minister of Zheng 鄭.

¹⁰⁵ Zhao Jingzi is identified as Zhao Cheng 成, Military Adjutant of Jin.

¹⁰⁶ Boyou, alias, Liangxiao 良霄, a dissipated son of the Count of Zheng, was assassinated through the machinations of Zixi 子皙 and Sidai 駟帶 in 543. But he returned in dreams to the people in Zheng promising that he would take revenge; and indeed the persons whom he had singled out as his victims died at exactly the times he had announced through the dreams. As the events led to a panic among the population of Zheng who feared that more ghostly murders would follow, Gongsun Qiao raised Boyou’s son to a leading position in the principality, whereupon the haunting stopped.

thing that develops [in the gestation of] a human is what we call *po* 魄. Once *po* is engendered, the Yang components [of that human being] are called *hun* 魂. If a human exercises sufficient power in handling the life essences (*jing* 精) of other beings, his *hun* and *po* components are strengthened. This will cause his life essences to become clear and vigorous, which [ultimately] will render his *shen* luminously aware. Even when ordinary men and women die a violent death, their *hun* and *po* life forces are apparently still able to take possession of other humans as dissolute disease demons (*yinli* 淫厲). How much more would this hold true for Liangxiao 良霄?!¹⁰⁷

According to this account, ghosts as maleficent, pathogenic agents occur where human life components withstand their complete decomposition and re-absorption in the cosmos and instead keep clinging to human life. While the cause for this resistance to natural recycling is generally found in violent death, the individual potency of such remnants of deathly violence is seen in direct proportion to a person's vigor and power during life. Here the text appears to anticipate a view that is shared by many medieval Daoist sources: the masses of those whose life was forcefully cut short tended to manifest collectively, in anonymous ghostly hordes, whereas prominent, mighty, and well-nourished victims also retained a strong individual presence as wrathful revenants.

The *Liji* accords these dangerous, disease-causing ghosts, called *li* 厲, hierarchically fixed places in the sanctioned ritual order. The king was to maintain public sacrifices to the so-called "grand *li*" (*taili* 泰厲), feudal lords held communal offerings to the "ducal *li* (*gongli* 公厲), while high-ranking officials merely provided privately for the *li* of their clans (*zuli* 族厲).¹⁰⁸ Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) interestingly relates the public sacrifices to *li* spirits to seasonal mountain sacrifices under the Han, whose rationale he explains by citing a remark by Gongsun Qiao

¹⁰⁷ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, "Zhaogong 7," 44:9b–10b. The story is taken up and, of course, refuted by Wang Chong 王充 in his *Lunheng* 論衡, "Siwei pian 死偽篇," pp. 326–328; cf. Alfred Forke, *Lunheng*, second edition (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), pp. 208–211. For a ritual contest of songs, in which Boyou's violent death was already presaged, see *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, "Xianggong 襄公 27," 38.9a–10b.

¹⁰⁸ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.9a–b.

also figuring in the *Zuozhuan* account just cited. Asked for his reasons for putting Boyou's son up for a leadership position in Zheng, the Prime Minister purportedly answered: "When the spirits of the dead have a place to return to, they won't become evil ghosts. I gave him [sc. Boyou] a place to return." In this case the place of return was the large ancestral temple Boyou's son was allowed to maintain on account of his promotion. With respect to the popular sacrifices mentioned by Zheng Xuan, the mountains served as ritual abodes for ghosts who were harmful, as long as they had no such place of refuge.¹⁰⁹

What is even more intriguing is that the text of the *Liji* itself associates the characters *li* and *shan* (mountains) in the figure of Lishan shi 厲山氏, whose very name, brought up in the same larger context, seems to cast him indeed as a mythological prototype of all *li* spirits.¹¹⁰ Significantly, it is Yan di 炎帝, the Flaming Emperor, father of Shennong 神農 (Divine Husbandman), who is assigned the role here. Yan di was also believed to have been vanquished by the waters brought down on him by Huang di 黃帝 (Yellow Emperor) in a murderous fraternal battle.¹¹¹ In the *Liji* passage he figures first among fourteen mythic heroes remembered as much for their endeavors on behalf of civilization as for their involvement with violence—be it as perpetrators, victims, or both.¹¹² These were the truly great among the *li* spirits, who, as such, were to receive their propitiatory sacrifices outside the boundaries of the ancestor cult at public events in the great domains. But while the *Liji* passages and Zheng Xuan's commentary imply that these communal offerings could also include less-known and even anonymous ghosts, domestic sacrifices to prematurely deceased descendents (*shang* 殤) were again severely restricted. The houses of the lower nobility and common families could provide appeasement offerings only in case of the death of the oldest son. Only the king, feudal lords, and high officials were permitted to pay cult also to dead grandsons and great-grandsons, and—it barely needs mention—there were no provisions at all for deceased unmarried daughters.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.9b.

¹¹⁰ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.10b.

¹¹¹ See Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, pp. 179–180.

¹¹² *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.10b–12b.

¹¹³ *Liji zhengyi*, "Jifa," 46.10b.

It seems safe to say that the extreme limitation of sanctioned rites for the unfortunate dead must have intensified sentiments of guilt and the fear of ghosts. Common belief held that aggrieved ghosts were driven by the wish to avenge their fates, and thus most immediately threatened those who were directly to blame for their misfortune. But guilt as a fact is less easily established and allocated than guilt feelings are collectivized and projected. Collectivized feelings of guilt call for collective attempts of appeasement. People's sacrifices to the "unquiet dead" have always been based on the common Chinese rationale that hospitality and banqueting will induce a sense of gratitude and obligation on the part of the recipients and that the maintenance of the resulting reciprocal relationship would eventually turn potential foes into allies—or in religious terms, ghosts and demons into gods. We might recognize in this rationale for sacrificial relations the genius of Chinese popular religion—and the cause for its perseverance—but, officially, such ritual reciprocity was considered incommensurable with the Confucian rites and the pre-set rules of who could sacrifice to whom.

Projected, the inadequacy of proper ritual care became the culpability of the unlucky dead themselves. There was a wide-spread belief that a dead person's unredeemed crimes might endanger surviving family members. The early portions of the *Taiping jing* conceptualize the idea that collective ancestral guilt might accumulate over generations and negatively impact the destiny of all living descendants as an "inherited burden" (*chengfu* 承負).¹¹⁴ Tomb ordinances of the Latter Han period and beyond testify to widely held fears that living family members might be implicated in the crimes of their dead.¹¹⁵ And Michel

¹¹⁴ See *Taiping jing hejiao*, 37. 48, pp. 57–61; Hendrischke, *Taiping Jing*, pp. 141–152 and her "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the *Taiping jing*," *East Asian History* 2 (1991), pp. 1–30.

¹¹⁵ See Anna Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt—Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Graburkunden der späteren Han-Zeit," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, pp. 161–183; "Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs," in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, ed. Akizuki Kan'ei 秋月観暎 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987), pp. 21–57; Terry Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," in *Chūgoku no shūkyō: shisō to kagaku* 中國の宗教: 思想と科学 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1984), pp.1–34. Donald Harper has studied documents, in which, conversely, the descendants take the blame for neglecting

Strickmann has vividly shown to what extent the negative image of the family dead—the potential threat they posed, on account of their sinful lives, to those surviving them—took firm hold, especially in medieval Daoism.¹¹⁶

In the eyes of fourth- and fifth-century Heavenly Master Daoists, resistant ghosts (*nigui* 逆鬼),¹¹⁷ along with all other demonic remains of expired life, belonged to the decaying world of the lower Six Heavens (*liutian* 六天) and as such were in conflict with the newly revealed law of the upper Three Heavens (*santian* 三天).¹¹⁸ It was a grave error when

their duties toward the spirits: “Contracts with the Spirit World in Han Common Religion: The Xuning Prayer and Sacrifice Documents of A.D. 79,” *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie* 14 (2004), pp. 227–267.

¹¹⁶ Strickmann, “Therapeutische Rituale und das Problem des Bösen im frühen Taoismus,” in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, pp. 185–200; *Le taoïsme du Mao Chan*, pp. 82–178; *Chinese Magical Medicine*, pp. 1–23.

¹¹⁷ See, e.g. DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 1.1a, 2a, 2b, 4. 1a and *passim*.

¹¹⁸ E.g., DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.7a, 8b, 9a, 22a in passages quoted from Wei Huacun’s hagiography; DZ 1203 *Taishang santian zhengfa jing* 1a–3a; DZ 1273 *Zhengyi tianshi gao Zhaosheng koujue* 1a–b; DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 1a–b; DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 1.1a–3b. The Three Heavens inaugurated the renewed Daoist order in the original revelation of the divine Laozi to Zhang Daoling. The *Santian neijie jing* provides the best explanation as to how the Three and Six Heavens were understood. The cosmic order began to take shape with the unfolding of the three pneumata, called *xuan* 玄 (obscure), *yuan* 元 (primordial), and *shi* 始 (initial) constituting the embodiment of the Dao in Taishang Laojun, the cosmic Laozi. These three pneumata prefigured the three cosmic dimensions of heaven, earth, and living beings/humankind (including the watery realm of the dead). Through repeated self-incarnations or self-differentiations, Laozi established the same threefold structure in each of these spheres, and further subdivisions of the pneumata of his body finally completed the empirical world in all its variety. Through human transgressions, however, the triple realms of earth and living beings, six of them altogether, gradually degenerated, despite intermittent corrective measures on the Dao’s/Laozi’s part. The purpose of the transmission to Zhang Daoling, finally, was to erase the hopelessly tangled “order” of the six heavens of the lower two realms altogether and reset these spheres through the infusion of the unspoiled patterns of the three heavens of the upper heavenly realm (see specifically, 1.5b). In the Daoist perspective, the Six Heav-

people supplied the stale pneumata of slain army leaders and dead soldiers with sacrificial food, worshipping them as divine “generals” and “ladies”; for such efforts could only aggravate the intrinsically demonic propensities of nature elements resisting biodegradation, and instead of blessings those falsely proclaimed gods would bring only ruin and disease to humankind.

In such terms argues, for instance, Lu Xiujing, whose code of a restored order of Heavenly Master liturgy nominally permits, as we have seen above, sacrifices to ancestors, the god of the locality, and the hearth god at certain dates. But its condemnation of sacrificial practices in general and its insistence on the non-eating habits of Daoist spirits imply all the same that, from the perspective of Daoism, all spirits and gods receiving sacrifice, even those approved by the ritual authority of the state, were considered mere remnants of the old, rotten, and demonic order of the Six Heavens. The *Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* (*Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經; DZ 1205), another work that has often been cited here, makes this unmistakably clear: “From now on, everything that does not accord with the Orthodox Law of the Three Heavens, which is the true Way of all heavens, is to be considered as

ens were thus associated with all aspects of the “expired” order, including the state sacrifices. The fourth century Shangqing revelations, further associated the Six Heavens with the “Citadel of the Dead,” Mt. Fengdu 酆都; see DZ 1016 *Zhengao* 15.1a–4b. Moreover, as Wang Zongyu has demonstrated, a notion of six heavens had developed also in the early imperial religion with a focus on the cult of Taiyi 泰一 (Great Monad) and the Five Emperors (*Wudi* 五帝); see his “Daojiao de liutian shuo 道教的六天說,” *Daojiao wenhua yanjiu* 道教文化研究 16 (1999), pp. 22–49. It is quite possible that this particular association also reinforced the programmatic Daoist opposition against the Six Heavens, in which case one might say that Daoists proved foresight in delineating their concept of the *liutian* strictly in terms of their own cosmology instead of openly confronting the imperial sacrifices. But the Daoist concept is even richer, as its firm cosmological anchoring permitted also a skillful assimilation of the Buddhist notions of the Six Heavens of Desire (*yujie liutian* 欲界六天) and among these especially the Sixth Heaven of Mara (*liutian Mowang* 六天魔王); see, e.g., DZ 87 *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* 3.28b, including commentary by Yan Dong 嚴東 (fl. 485).

stale pneuma.”¹¹⁹ In this sense, Daoist theology arrived at a complete and quite categorical demonization of sacrificial religion and its objects of worship.

Daoist Theology

The Daoist insistence on strictly separating ordinary gods, whose defining characteristic was that they ate or received sacrifices, from truly Daoist divinities, who abjured sacrificial meals, found its clearest expression in the liturgy of the Heavenly Master tradition, which, as Strickmann and others have shown long ago, replaced sacrificial foods by so-called “pledges,” the Chinese terms for which are *xin* 信 or *gui* 贖.¹²⁰ These pledges included items like paper, writing brushes, silk, oil, or even raw produce, but they were most decidedly not meant to physically sustain the deities to whom they were promised, nor were they really offered to them. *Xin* or *gui* rather stood as guarantees for the sincerity of the vows expressed in and through the petitions by which supplicants pledged their lives to the judiciary of the Three Offices and the renewed order of the Dao. Beyond that they also functioned as what one might call fiduciary deposits commensurate with the merit priests and spirit-officials accrued through their participation in the ritual interactions, which, in turn, would result in their promotion in rank. The goods themselves were distributed in the parishes to cover general ritual expenses, provide priests with their most immediate liturgical supplies, and support the poor as well as local recluses.¹²¹ The crucial importance of these *xin* or *gui* was, in other words, exclusively symbolic, and sources underline that it was vital to understand this correctly. Supplicants who refused to put up these pledges out of concern for their material value, or priests who used them to enrich themselves, misunderstood and broke the contract that formed the very foundation of

¹¹⁹ DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 1.6b.

¹²⁰ The graph 贖, used in the *Dengzhen yinjue*, is glossed with *gui* 贖, meaning “goods,” but also “bets” or “vows” made in competitions. The *Zhengao*, intriguingly, has instead *gui* 詭, the meanings of which range from “debt,” “demand,” to “cheating,” “feigning,” and “extraordinary” in the sense of deviating from norms (e.g., DZ 1016, 7.7b, 18.8b–9a, 19.12a–b).

¹²¹ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.12b–13a, commentary.

the religion—and in this sense, they quite literally gambled their lives away.¹²² As strictly contractual deposits, these contributions were hence seen in every respect different from the sacrificial food offerings through which practitioners of popular Chinese religion hoped to oblige their objects of worship—and from the gift-metaphor believed by many to undergird sacrificial offerings in general.¹²³

¹²² See, e.g., Tao Hongjing's commentary in DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.12b–13a; *Dadao jialing jie* in DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 17a–b; DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelie* 7b–9b.

¹²³ The contractual nature of these pledges is obvious in their increasing standardization in later compilations such as DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 1.2a–17b. Tao Hongjing's insistence on strictly following guidelines with respect to these pledges concerns their kind and appropriateness depending on the circumstances that called for a petition and the invitation of corresponding spirit officials; see DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.13a. He still allows for flexibility with respect to their amount, although *not* because higher promises to the spirits could induce them to better responses. His concern was, quite to the contrary, to discourage attempts at bribing spirits by transgressing the proper limits and stood in direct reference to a passage from Wei Huacun's hagiography, which stated: “[If pledges are too many/high], this is an affront against the true pneumata and the spirit officials will reject service” (ibid., 3.13b–14a). Guidelines for pledges, were, according to Tao, found partly in his manuscript of the *Qianerbai guan yi* (though, as he remarks, evidently with some displeasure, only in its first *juan*), but existed, as he says, also otherwise (*Dengzhen yinjue* 3.19a10–b2). The stipulations in the *Chisong zi zhangli* on the other hand, fix the exact amount of pledges relating to specific petition rituals, even though they include goods of markedly higher value than the simple pledges mentioned in Tao's quotes from his *Qianerbai guan yi* and relevant indications in DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*. All this shows, in my opinion, that the Daoist pledges were by no means meant to “bargain” with the spirits, in the way Keightley says was done with the ancestors of the Shang through pledges recorded on oracle bones. While these oracle bone pledges otherwise bear indeed a striking similarity to the pledges set out in the Daoist petitions (see Keightley, “The Making of the Ancestors,” pp. 9–11), the obvious efforts made in the case of the latter to “fix prices” (including even “inflationary adjustments” thought necessary as times, social conditions, and “market values” changed) indicate that the goal here was precisely to prevent the negotiability of pledges and with that the spirits' service. In this sense, the Daoist pledge-

Their anti-sacrificial system elevated Daoists above any suspicion of violating the social limitations of sacrifice according to the canon of rites; it also enabled them to claim superiority for their divinities not only above the despised gods of popular religion, but also those of the official cult, and even the otherwise unimpeachable ancestors. While all these existed within the progressively worn-out cycles of procreation, metabolism, death, and sacrifice, Daoist divinities did not depend on food. As already noted, the fourth-century hagiography of Wei Huacun and Tao Hongjing's comments to it in the *Dengzhen yinjue* underscore the fact that the "officials" enrolled in the registers of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition embodied the ideal symbolic-numerological as well as legal-bureaucratic order of the universe beyond the cycles of biological corruption. Let us here have a closer look at the passages:

The numbers of these officials, generals, and their civil and military staff are produced by the three [original] pneumata of the Domain of the Dao (*dao* 道家) through stimuli provided by [external] circumstances. These are not [the spirits of] humans born between heaven and earth. In their essential and unadulterated form [these pneumata] spread far and wide so that [external] things can get in contact with them, whereby [the pneumata] are transformed and become those civil and military spirit officials.¹²⁴

Tao Hongjing elaborates this in the following words:

The transformations of the pneumata of Taiqing are boundless. Even the phrase "a hundred times thousand times ten-thousand kinds of

es differ drastically from the personal reciprocity of obligations characterizing the gift-exchange often assumed to underlie sacrifice. In J. Van Baal's categorization, these pledges would fall on the side of contractual or trade relationships versus the exchange of personally binding gifts in both "sacrifice" (defined by him as "offerings accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering") as well as "offering" in a more general sense, which might or might not involve the killing of victims; see his "Offering Sacrifice and Gift," *Numen* 23.3 (1976), pp. 161–178.

¹²⁴ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.22b–23a; passage quoted from Lady Wei's hagiography.

[pneumata]” cannot fathom their limit. Therefore, even if we try to describe [this vast potential] in the most encompassing terms, one form will still lead to the next. [The officials] must not be simply invented (*bu turan kongli* 不徒然空立); [their transformations] can be attained [only] through attention to the [cosmic] patterns (*li* 理),¹²⁵ although these are difficult to explain in words. All officials and generals of the *xian* 仙 and *ling* 靈 [registers] are of this type.¹²⁶

There is a noticeable stress here that the *Qianerbai guan yi* officials are not former humans, but configurations of the triple pneuma of Taiqing emerging directly from the uncreated Dao itself.¹²⁷ These pneuma-spirits form spontaneously in response to external stimuli, that is to say, the concrete circumstances of any particular emergency, disease, or other affliction. Yet, as Tao Hongjing explains, this process of formation follows precise patterns. What he seems to mean here is that these patterns, which “are difficult to describe in words,” express themselves in symbolic-numerological terms, which priests for their part must know and be able to apply. Since the actual number of the spirits is, as Tao maintains, in reality inexhaustible—just as one pneuma configuration of the Dao always leads to another one—numerical designations, such as twelve hundred, twenty-four, seventy-five, or one hundred and fifty [officials], can in fact only be emblematic. To be more precise, these numbers must relate to the quasi-arithmetical patterns ruling the differentiation of cosmic pneumata, which, according to Daoist view, give continual, cyclical birth to the universe as a whole. The same principles hence also had to guide the ritual generation of the civil and military officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* and, as Tao is quick to add, the spirits of the progressively diversified *Xianling* ordination registers, which in his time were in wide use in the Heavenly Master tradition.¹²⁸ In Tao’s perspective, adequate knowledge of these cosmo-numerological schemata was a *sine qua non* in any Daoist priest’s correct handling of spirit-registers and the rituals that actually created

¹²⁵ I take *li* 理 here to relate to both the cosmic patterns themselves and their recognition by priests through a disciplined mental process of discernment.

¹²⁶ *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.23a.

¹²⁷ See n. 118 above.

¹²⁸ See n. 70 above.

the deities—and precisely because their creation thus bypassed ordinary biological processes, which made other spirits dependent on physical sustenance, the Twelve Hundred Officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* and their homologues, the deities of the *Xianling* registers, logically also required no sacrifices.

This definition of the divinities enabling Heavenly Master liturgy has often been cited as the *locus classicus* for the radical difference Daoists perceived between their own gods and those of popular religion.¹²⁹ I hasten to add that, theoretically and ideally, the distinction is certainly valid. From another, no less theoretical, perspective, however, one might argue that any *a priori* separation in such strict terms would also have precluded all interaction between the two contrasting models of religion. Yet the emphasis in many medieval Heavenly Master sources on transformation (*hua* 化) with the explicit goal to deliver the population from fear and their perceived obligations to feed demonic gods leaves no doubt that the formation of the Daoist liturgical system was sparked by the hope to reorganize the cult of sacrifice alongside legal, bureaucratic, and cosmological notions.¹³⁰ Theoretically, therefore, there should have been an interface allowing for the kind of transformative action that, according to Daoist self-understanding, typifies the tradition.¹³¹

Practically, of course, Daoists could never have restricted their pantheon only to deities directly originating from pure heavenly *qi*. It would have isolated them in a larger religious landscape in which the divinization of humans was, according to Michael Puett, seen early on as

¹²⁹ E.g., Kristofer Schipper and Wang Hsiu-huei, “Progressive and Regressive Time Cycles in Taoist Ritual,” in *Time, Science, and Society in China and the West*, ed. J. T. Fraser, N. Lawrence, and F. C. Habe (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), p. 190.

¹³⁰ E.g., *Dadao jialing jie* in DZ 789 *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jieke jing* 14a (cf. Bokenkamp’s translation in *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 170–171); DZ 1273 *Zhengyi tianshi gao Zhao Sheng koujue* 1a–b, DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 1a–b (cf. translation by Nickerson, “Abridged Codes,” pp. 351–352), and DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 5b–6b.

¹³¹ Note also that the slogan “to promote transformation on behalf of Heaven” (*daitian xinghua* 代天行化) defines the function of Daoist priests even today; see Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, p. 66.

possible and desirable.¹³² Since immortality did become the central goal of Daoism over the early centuries of its formation, the same possibility had to be postulated within its framework. Besides, the focus of Heavenly Master rituals was not only the absolution of the living from afflictions brought on by demonic, sacrificial gods, but quite pronouncedly also on the salvation of the dead and their promotion in the Daoist spirit world. Thus, there had to be channels linking spirits coming through the tainted biological world (*houtian* 後天) with the pre-natal pneumata of the former heavens (*xiantian* 先天), even if this foreshadowed ambiguities within the Daoist conception of divinity.

It is not surprising therefore that the fourth-century Shangqing revelatory documents that Tao Hongjing integrated into his *zhengao* 真誥 include an impressive account of the post-mortem stations achieved by both immortality adepts and what one might call historic prime candidates for “ghosthood,” all in a single hierarchical tableau.¹³³ But the most interesting testimony to the difficulty of categorizing and ranking Daoist spirits according to a single unequivocal schema existed probably in Tao Hongjing’s own attempt to draw up a systematic and encompassing chart of the hierarchies of the divine, entitled *Diagram of the Ranks and Functions of the Perfected and Numinous [Powers]* 真靈位業圖.¹³⁴

¹³² M. J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹³³ See DZ 1016 *Zhengao*, *juan* 14–16.

¹³⁴ The work likely formed one of the lost parts of Tao’s *Dengzhen yinjue*. It exists today, apart from lengthy quotations in DZ 1138 *Wushang miyao* 無上祕要, *juan* 83–84 and DZ 1128 *Daomen jing fa xiangcheng cixu* 道門經法相承次序 2.16a–20a, only in form of a reconstruction, compiled by a rather clueless editor, Lüqiu Fangyuan 閻丘方遠, some time before 893 (that is, Lüqiu’s move from the Tiantai Mountains 天台山 to Hangzhou, as he still signed the work with the title he held at Tiantai Shan). In Lüqiu’s reconstruction, DZ 167 *Dongxuan Lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 洞玄靈寶真靈位業圖, the ranking of the divinities has largely lost its original order. Besides, Tao’s original comments not only are often abridged or deleted, but have been supplemented with or replaced by new comments (possibly Lüqiu’s own). Lüqiu Fangyuan’s difficulties in reconstructing Tao Hongjing’s original might have derived from earlier re-workings, although this remains speculation. Another explanation, no less speculative, is that the errors derived from an unsuccessful attempt to translate what originally might in

To judge from the somewhat unsatisfactory remainders of the original work, Tao apparently distinguished between at least three theologically distinct categories of divinity:

Spirits that exist spontaneously by themselves (*ziran zhi shen* 自然之神). This class probably also included deities “manifesting through the transformation and coagulation of pneuma” (*qi huajie cheng* 氣化結成).

Spirits arising from transformations of what we would call physical nature, but according to Daoist demonology representatives of the category of demonic essences (*jing*), who attach themselves to other spirits, creatures, and natural phenomena (*huafu zhi shen* 化附之神), such as, for instance, a minor river spirit allied with a major one. Apparently the range of ranks in this group reached from the lowliest nature demons to fully acknowledged nature gods.

Deities who were originally born from wombs (*taisheng zhi shen* 胎生之神), specifically human wombs. The most important subdivision of this class was made up of humans who attained divine status and office on account of their cultivation of the Dao (*xuedao* 學道), in other words, the immortals and Perfected Ones, but it also included those former human-borns, who, after first ending up as mere ghosts, achieved a rank in the hierarchy of immortals through protracted periods of ritual promotion.

In Tao Hongjing’s original tableau, these categories evidently cut across the larger range of various divine ranks, and the boundaries between them seem to have been fluid. Not even the ostensibly

fact have been a diagram into a linear register. But Lüqiu Fangyuan, if not already some earlier infelicitous editor of Tao’s fragmented original, also faced other perplexities in Tao’s tableau. Evidently, for example, the latter completely ignored the figure of Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊 (the Heavenly Worthy of Prime Incipience), whom the fifth-century Lingbao 靈寶 scriptures had established as the most exalted hypostasis of the Dao and who later came to be accepted as the first among the Three Purities 三清, the ultimate Daoist trinity. To Tao Hongjing, who rejected the Lingbao revelations, Yuanshi tianzun was an expendable figure. To later Daoists, however, a pantheon without this deity was unimaginable, which explains why, in Lüqiu Fangyuan’s recension, Yuanshi tianzun is, obviously in retrospect, identified with a divinity who, on account of another confusion, is listed there erroneously at the very top of the pantheon.

foundational distinction between uterine (*taisheng*) spirits of former humans and extra-uterine deities is really unequivocal. Thus, according to Tao's original chart, the highest positions in the exalted celestial sphere of Jade Purity (Yuqing 玉清) were held by gods so abstract that they did not even manifest themselves; they were inaccessible to the immortals who belonged to the lower regions, let alone ordinary humans.¹³⁵ Yet Tao apparently imagined that, even in this most transcendent of all realms, ranks might eventually be obtained by humans who had successfully cultivated the Dao.¹³⁶ In the Highest Purity, or Shangqing, realm immediately below Jade Purity, most inhabitants were originally womb-born students of the Dao, perfected persons with weighty official functions in the cosmic play.¹³⁷ Supposedly erstwhile humans also prevailed in the spheres of Grand Bourne (Taiji 太極) and Grand Purity (Taiqing 太清). Tao Hongjing counted quite a few figures of traditional Chinese mythology in these realms: Yao, Shun, Yu, the Yellow Emperor,¹³⁸ as well as the Count of the [Yellow] River (Hebo 河伯) and the Goddess of the Luo River (Luoshui shennü 洛水神女).¹³⁹ The youngest daughter of the River Count, however, was according to Tao, not originally human. She and others of her ilk, so he speculated, were mere transformations of minor waters that had attached themselves to higher water gods of human origin.¹⁴⁰ Then again, Tao

¹³⁵ DZ 1128 *Daomen jing fa xiangcheng cixu* 2.17b.

¹³⁶ This is at least indicated by a line of comment in DZ 167 *Dongxuan Lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 2b which, although modified, might well derive from Tao Hongjing's original commentary.

¹³⁷ DZ 1128 *Daomen jing fa xiangcheng cixu* 2.77b–18b and DZ 167 *Dongxuan Lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 3a–8a. According to the Shangqing texts and Tao Hongjing's systematization, the different realms populated by gods and immortals are in descending order: Yuqing 玉清, Shangqing 上清, the intermediate sphere of Taiji 太極 (Grand Bourne), Taiqing 太清, Jiu Gong 九宮 (Nine Palaces), the grotto heavens on earth inhabited by terrestrial immortals (*dixian* 地仙), and the nether region of Mt. Fengdu 酆都 or Luofeng 羅酆 administered by former humans, who after death attained positions as "ghosts officials" (*guiguan* 鬼官).

¹³⁸ DZ 1138 *Wushang miyao* 84.15b; these sage emperors were placed in the Taiji realm.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.1a–b; all of them in the Taiqing heavens.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.1b.

maintained that the positions of the Lords of the Five Sacred Mountains (Wuyue jun 五嶽君) were filled by humans-turned-gods, serving there on five-hundred-year turns,¹⁴¹ while he considered the more elevated Divine Emperors of the Five Quadrates (Wudi 五帝) as extra-uterine divinities of the “self-so” (*ziran* 自然) kind.¹⁴² Tao’s commentary moreover specified that these five emperors were not identical with the spirits of the same name whose cult was controlled by the Ministry of Rites, which means he excluded the latter on account of the state sacrifices they received.¹⁴³ All in all, the gods who had been born from human wombs far outnumbered other divinities in this pantheon distilled from the Shangqing revelations. They not only filled the ranks of higher and lower immortals and gods in the various celestial regions and on earth, but also administered the netherworld. Moreover, Tao’s location of the River Count, the Goddess of the Luo River, the River Count’s youngest daughter, and the Lords of the Five Sacred Mountains in the realm of Taiqing—all of them explained as either former humans or, as in the case of Hebo’s youngest daughter, just demonic transformations of overaged essences (*jing*)—seems to conflict with the ritual incantation addressing the Taiqing heaven in the eastern quadrate in the Heavenly Master audience ritual according to Wei Huacun’s hagiography. The implication of this formula is indeed that Taiqing was constituted exclusively by the three primordial, purely cosmic, pneumata of the Dao, untainted by the biological cycles of life and death.¹⁴⁴

About the official-spirits of the *Qianerbai guan yi* ledgers, placed in the Taiqing realm as well, Tao, however, remained adamant: the positions of these officials could never be obtained through human endeavor; they became concrete only through transformations of pneuma (*qi huajie cheng* 氣化結成).¹⁴⁵ In other words, Tao strictly denied the

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 84.1b.

¹⁴² I have borrowed the term “five quadrates” for *wufang* 五方 from Sarah Allen, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 75–76, who makes a persuasive case for this translation.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 84.1b–2a.

¹⁴⁴ See DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.8b–9a; compare this also to Tao’s commentary *ibid.*, 3.23a and DZ 1215 *Santian neijie jing* 2a–b.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 84.2a.

possibility that any of these spirits originally derived from humans—regardless of whether these were accomplished immortals or merely promoted ghosts—or any other creatures of natural devolution.

Demons Turned Into Gods

Yet even a casual survey of the transmitted fragments of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition reveals numerous inconsistencies in the neat theological definition of the Twelve Hundred Officials that Tao Hongjing so strongly asserts. Bluntly put, neither the condensed list of these officials in the hagiography of Wei Huacun, nor Tao Hongjing's comparative quotes from his old *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscript, nor the *Qianerbai guan yi* material transmitted in the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhanguan pin*, nor quotes in various other sources hold much in support of the allegedly pure cosmological origin of the deities. To be sure, the divinities hold official ranks and command staffs of civil and, above all, military subalterns; it is also evident that they are frequently classified according to the theories of Yin and Yang and the five phases. But all this seems fairly basic. Little points to an underlying thoroughly coherent system, which, as Tao Hongjing claims, allowed for the precise differentiation of one official from the other, according to fixed patterns.¹⁴⁶ Notably, such quasi-mathematical principles are recognizable in the later *Xianling* ordination registers, whose spirits Tao Hongjing explicitly likens to the officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, but the latter largely defy any organization into a uniform scheme.

The Twelve Hundred Officials impress as anything but abstract. Their functions are keyed to the concrete every-day fears and needs of what must have been a largely peasant and small-town population; in fact they seem to reflect the kind of hopes that people ordinarily might have carried to the shrines of popular gods. Even more perplexing are the names of these divine officials, which in general are fairly idiosyncratic. They range from the bizarre and fantastic, to the euphemistic or merely descriptive, to, in fact, the sobriquets of quite familiar figures. Through what channels, for example, did the Master of Masters, Confucius (Fuzi jun 夫子君), get into the registers of the earliest Daoists, where he is said to guide male and female priests from

¹⁴⁶ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.23a.

youthful folly to sagehood—and to make sure they rejected “ghostly talk” (*guiyu* 鬼語)?¹⁴⁷ And how does it strike us that Qin shi huangdi, the First Emperor, (Qinhuang dingqi jun 秦皇定氣君) reappears among the Twelve Hundred officials with the responsibility of increasing procreation among domestic animals?¹⁴⁸ These names may impress as the most flagrant contradictions to the repeated assertions in the *Dengzhen yinjue* that the officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition are not derived from human originals. But there are more indicators for unmistakable overlaps between this early Daoist pantheon and the “gods of the profane.” Here are some further examples.

The names of a number of officials recall figures from classical mythology and ritual, if sometimes in an intriguing new guise. We find Taiyi 太一 (the Great Monad)¹⁴⁹ and the five celestial emperors (*Wudi*),¹⁵⁰ the planets Mars (Yingxing 營星/Yinghuo 熒惑)¹⁵¹ and Venus (Taibai 太白),¹⁵² and Xuanwu 玄武, the spirit of the North, who here, interestingly, commands a host of infant spirits (*nüeli ying'er* 癘吏嬰兒) who avert malaria among male children (*nanzi* 男子).¹⁵³ The ancient Count of the Yellow River recurs in several passages,¹⁵⁴ and there is also mention of the monster spirit Qiongqi 窮奇,¹⁵⁵ who is identified in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 as the wayward son of Shao Hao 少昊,¹⁵⁶ as a man-eating bovine

¹⁴⁷ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.19a–b. “Ghostly talk” is the typical reference to spirit communications delivered through the mouths of common mediums in Daoist sources.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.3a3–4; 4.2b9–10 preserves a variant name, Taihuang taiyuan jun 秦皇太元君, but obviously refers to the same divinity.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.16b6–7: Duke of the Great Monad, Lord of the Flowery Canopy 太一公華蓋君.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.7b3–8, listed one by one.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1.4a8–9, 1.14a7, 2.3a9–10, 2.13a6–7, 4.7a7–8.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.2a10–2b2, 3.1b3–5. Two further passages (1.9a9–9b2, 4.8a6–8) list the Great White (Venus) Lord of the East and West.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.10b5–6.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.18b10, 3.3b9–10, 4.3b4–5, 4.12a9–12b1. More on the River God in the Heavenly Master tradition follows below.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.2b1–2.

¹⁵⁶ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi*, “Wengong 文公 18,” 20.12a–b.

or feline chimera in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經,¹⁵⁷ and as a wind god in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子.¹⁵⁸ As we know, this infamous creature was also impersonated by one of the masked exorcists in the Nuo 儺 rituals performed at the Han court;¹⁵⁹ and in Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343) *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (*Master Embracing the Un-carved Block*), twelve of his kind lead the vanguard of the Old Lord 老君, Laozi embodying the Dao, who arrives in a visualization surrounded by the heraldic spirits of the four quadrates.¹⁶⁰

Some of the early Daoist god-officials seem related to regional traditions and lore of west and southwest China. The land of Shu 蜀 was early on linked to sericulture. According to its mythological tradition, the rulers of Shu descended from Cancong 蠶叢 (Silkworm-clump), a divine figure who by the later Han was worshipped as the inventor of sericulture.¹⁶¹ The rearing of silk-worms remained a major economic factor in the region of Shu, and so it is not surprising that we find divinities related to the industry taking a place of some importance in the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition.¹⁶² The most interesting among them is the so-called White Silkworm Lady, (Baican jun 白蠶君),¹⁶³ who, according to the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin*, may be invited to

¹⁵⁷ DZ 1031 *Shanhai jing*, “Xi-shan 西山” 2.21a and “Hainei beijing 海內北經” 12.2a.

¹⁵⁸ DZ 1184 *Huainan honglie jie* 8.7a.

¹⁵⁹ Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Hou Hanshu jijie*, “Liyi zhi 禮儀志 B,” 10a–b. Cf. Derk Bodde, *Festivals of Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.–A.D. 220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 82, 86–90 and Marcel Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1926), pp. 240, 258, 306 and 318–320.

¹⁶⁰ Wang Ming, *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 15, p. 273.

¹⁶¹ Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, pp. 263–272.

¹⁶² DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* includes two sections (1.16b–17a and 4.1a–2a) dealing particularly with concerns of sericulture. For a translation of a petition text on the protection of silkworms, see Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda,” pp. 310–311.

¹⁶³ In the petition mentioned in the previous note, black and white silkworms are associated with dragons (Yang/East) and tigers (Yin/West), and thereby identified as male and female respectively; cf. Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda,” p. 311.

ensure plentiful crops in general.¹⁶⁴ But in another Heavenly Master source, which apparently preserves very early material, the *Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律 (*Demon Statutes of Nüqing*), a female silkworm protector invoked to defeat female silkworm demons, responds to the name “Horse Maiden” (Magu 馬姑).¹⁶⁵ This undoubtedly is an allusion to the well-known legend, first recorded in the *Soushen ji* 搜神記 about a girl from Shu, who was abducted and transformed into a silkworm cocoon by the spirit (or rather the skin) of a dead horse whom she previously had promised to marry.¹⁶⁶ The regional myth of the Horse Maiden thus evidently provided a source for the recruitment of spirits into Heavenly Master liturgy.

More complex is the background of another Daoist spirit official, named General White Tiger of the Southern Mountains (Nanshan Baihu jiang 南山白虎將), who is promoted as a fighter against domestic rats and their spooky essences (*jingguai* 精怪).¹⁶⁷ We know, of course, that by Han times, the White Tiger spirit was long acknowledged as the heraldic animal associated with the western quarter and further identified with the seven lunar mansions—or more specifically the constellations Can 參 and Fa 伐—in the western sky.¹⁶⁸ On account of the associations applied to his astrological determination, the White Tiger, in the Han period, occupied a prominent place as a guardian of warfare and capital punishment.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, he also had the ill reputation of

¹⁶⁴ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.17a.

¹⁶⁵ DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 4.4a.

¹⁶⁶ Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹, ed., *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), pp. 172–173. For an analysis of this relatively late reworking of a far earlier myth and a translation of the *Soushen ji* account, see Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press), pp. 199–200.

¹⁶⁷ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.6b.

¹⁶⁸ Yasui Kōzan 安居香山, Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八, *Chōshū issho shūsei* 重修緯書集成 (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1988), vol. 4A, “Chunqiu yuanming bao 春秋元命包,” p. 78 and vol. 4B “Chunqiu zuozhu qi 春秋佐助期,” p. 70; *Lunheng* 16, “Zaohu 遭虎,” p. 249.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., *Liji*, “Liqu,” 3.3a–b, where the White Tiger and the other directional spirits are explained as protective deities surrounding the army setting out on campaigns, and *Shiji* 27.1306 concerning the star’s association with

presaging violence and death, which already in early times gave rise to rites aiming at his expulsion.¹⁷⁰

But there is more. Hou Ching-lang has provided evidence of links between the ambivalent star god and the ancient tribal myth of the Ba 巴 minority.¹⁷¹ The Ba people, who settled in the areas of Shu, Ba 巴, and what from Qin times on was called Southern Commandery (Nan jun 南郡; in modern Hubei), traced themselves to a divine ancestor known as Lin jun 廩君 (Lord of the Granary), whose postmortem metamorphosis into a white tiger purportedly gave rise to a cult involving human sacrifice.¹⁷² This myth is, in turn, to be seen in relationship with the charter myth of the Bانشun Man 板楯蠻, a branch of the Ba, known for their martial prowess, their poetry, songs, and dances—and as tiger hunters. According to the *Huayang guo zhi* 華陽國志 and the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, the Bانشun Man or Children of the Strong-Headed Tiger (Jiangtou huzi 弭頭虎子), traced their ancestry and tribal superiority to the heroic killing of a white tiger, which, along with a crowd of ordinary tigers, supposedly ravaged the regions of Qin, Shu, Ba, and Han (Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Hubei) under the reign of King Zhaoxiang 昭襄王 of Qin (306–251 B.C.E.). In recognition of that meritorious deed, the king of Qin drew up a covenant (*meng* 盟) with the tiger killers, which accorded tax and legal privileges to them, provided, of course, that they remained loyal to their Chinese overlords. These privileges were reconfirmed by the founder of the Han dynasty—whom the Bانشun Man helped to overthrow Qin—and were still in place in the late second century C.E. when the loyalty of the Bانشun Man and other minority populations to the Han state decreased precipitously.¹⁷³ Bانشun Man people counted among the most ardent adherents of the Heavenly Master movement that emerged at that

capital punishment.

¹⁷⁰ *Lunheng* 16, “Zaohu,” pp. 249–251.

¹⁷¹ Hou Ching-lang, “The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars,” in *Facets of Taoism*, 217–218. For a thorough account concerning the Ba, their identity, region of settlement, and early history, see Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 25–54.

¹⁷² *Hou Hanshu jijie* 86.8b–9b; Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 47–49 and 117–119.

¹⁷³ *Hou Hanshu jijie* 86: 10a–11a; *Huayang guozhi* cited after Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 39–40 and 41–42.

time from the same region.¹⁷⁴

All this taken into account, there is reason to surmise that the White Tiger General of the Southern Mountains in the *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscripts associated quite complex socio-political and religious relationships. How exactly matters were interlinked is difficult to know, but with some probability one might construct the following image. A totemic tribal god, assuaged by human sacrifices, is subdued by a descendent group of the tribe, which becomes thereby privileged and bound in covenantal membership to Chinese civilization. In the same vein, the erstwhile barbarian god is adopted into the larger context of Chinese culture and receives sacrifices as the tutelary of sanctioned war and capital punishment. As the Han empire declines and the loyalties of large portions of the population, both Chinese and non-Chinese, begin to crumble, alternative politico-religious programs invite new allegiances. Ba and Banshun Man people, whose primary settlements lay beyond the southern mountain-range (Nanshan 南山) of Baling 巴嶺 (the mountains delimiting the lands of the Ba in the north), become supporters of the fledgling Heavenly Master organization, which assimilates the potent symbol of their identity, transforming it in due course in line with the religion's anti-sacrificial principles. As a spirit serving in the Heavenly Master liturgical system, the White Tiger spirit, had to forsake not only its original appetite for human flesh but for sacrifices altogether. Civilized once again, he has now the function to hunt down and expel other yet blood-lusting creatures.

It is significant, however, that neither the state nor the Heavenly Master domestication of the White Tiger ever cancelled out its dark image as a bringer of sheer violence and death. Wang Chong's 王充 (27–ca. 97) testimony confirms that the spirit was subjected to rites of exorcism—and likened to blood-sucking local officials—under the Later Han.¹⁷⁵ Nor did the White Tiger's recruitment into the Daoist camp of non-eating divinities entirely pacify the god. In the *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscripts, the deity's ambiguity is still clearly evident in his redefined role as a martial exterminator of rodents and domestic specters. Moreover, in the long term, the White Tiger was effectively never reined

¹⁷⁴ They were also the founders of the Daoist Cheng-Han state (302–347) in Sichuan; see Kleeman, *Great Perfection*.

¹⁷⁵ *Lunheng* 16, “Zaohu,” pp. 249–251.

in by the functions assigned to him in the *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscripts. He remains down to the present day a baneful star in need of ritual appeasement and aversion.¹⁷⁶ The White Tiger is certainly not the only ambivalent figure among the officials in the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition. A measure of ambiguity seems to adhere to many of the gods, and although this by itself can be taken to point to etiologies involving earlier popular religious traditions, the different ways in which ambivalent and antagonistic forces are set to play in the *Qianerbai guan yi* sources yield still more insight in the underlying dynamics.

While the *Qianerbai guan yi* listings maintain a strict delimitation between the Daoist spirit-warriors and their demonic adversaries, the examples I have so far given prove that popular gods could be incorporated into the ranks of the divine officials. Obviously, however, such cases were subject to complex and protracted negotiations. Unlike the White Tiger, for example, Tai-sui 太歲, the Great Year star, is consistently listed in the *Qianerbai guan yi* sources among the heterodox adversaries of the divine officials,¹⁷⁷ which is surprising since, by the fifth century at the latest, the Great Year General was depicted as one of the original participants in the sworn oath that cemented the foundations of the Daoist system as an anti-sacrificial cult.¹⁷⁸ It appears indeed that the ancient cult of this baleful star and the rites aimed at averting his influence were too entrenched in the generally shared religion to be transformed. Tao Hongjing, commenting on a passage in Lady Wei's vita on divination concerning the movements of Taisui, concedes that all those not yet assured of immortal rank are still subjected to the time dictates of the fearsome star; he obviously also accepts the necessity of

¹⁷⁶ Hou, "The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars," pp. 209–215.

¹⁷⁷ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.18a1–2 has a Lord of the Northern Capital (Beidu jun 北都君) take care of the eating and drinking demons (*yinshi zhi gui* 飲食之鬼) commanded by the General of the Great Year; in 3.5a5–6 it is a Lord Yangfang 揚方君 who is called to neutralize the twelve lunar counter-stars (*shi'er yuejian* 十二月建) subordinated to the general; and in 3.6b2–3 Lord Changluo 昌落君 is said to be in charge of Taisui's movements. For a study of this protean star-god, see Hou Ching-lang, "The Chinese Belief in Baleful Stars," 197–209. I have borrowed the expression "twelve lunar counter-stars" from Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda," p. 334.

¹⁷⁸ DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 1.6a.

prognostic techniques in this context, even though such practices were in principle eschewed in the Way of the Heavenly Master.¹⁷⁹ But the prohibition of divination concerning astral dangers did not stand for long, as is clear from the rich computational materials included in sources such as the *Chisong zi zhangli*, and Taisui himself, perhaps the most fearsome among those threats, could never be bound by the cosmological structures set up by the Daoist tradition.¹⁸⁰

The *Qianerbai guan yi* texts present us with yet other intriguing examples. The Count of the [Yellow] River (Hebo) received human and animal sacrifices from the Shang well into the Zhou dynasty;¹⁸¹ apparently he was also one of the figures that were soon enrolled in the Daoist ledgers. But the Daoist career of this ancient god is fraught with ambiguities. The material in the *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* introduces the spirit in various passages as lying on different sides of the dividing line between orthodox and heterodox divinity. Whereas in one case Hebo and his emissaries are assigned the official task of arresting the noxious emanations arising from tombs,¹⁸² other entries explicitly subject the River Count to the control of a higher-ranking Daoist spirit official.¹⁸³ The latter perspective seems in line with the *Nüqing guilü*,

¹⁷⁹ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.19b–20a. For the prohibition of divination in the Heavenly Master tradition, see, e.g., *Laojun yibai bashi jie* 老君一百八十戒 in DZ 786 *Taishang laojun jinglü* 7a7 and DZ 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelüe* 8a–b.

¹⁸⁰ See Hou, “Baleful Stars,” pp. 196–205. This is all the more surprising since later Daoists attempted to recapture Taisui under the persona of Marshal Yin 殷元帥, a thunder divinity figuring prominently in a number of exorcistic rites dating from the thirteenth century and later; see, e.g., DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 37.1a, 43.14b–15a, 246 and 247.

¹⁸¹ For Hebo as a major nature divinity in Shang religion, see Sarah Allen, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*, p. 101 and Keightley, “The Making of Ancestors,” pp. 5–6. For his role under the Zhou, see Granet, *Danses et légendes*, pp. 467–482.

¹⁸² DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 3.3b.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4:3b3–5 subordinates Hebo and his water clerks, apparently in charge of fishermen, to a Grand River Lord (Taihe jun 太河君), whose function is to persuade those fishermen to discard their hooks and burn their nets out of compassion with the creatures. In 4:12a9–12b1 the River Count (whose surname is given

which reveals that the “Hebo demon” can be spell-bound by the secret name Wei 遼.¹⁸⁴ All in all, Daoist texts from the fourth century on associate the River Count with the realms of the dead. There are indications that he was identified as head of the Water Office (*Shuiguan* 水官), the third and most dreaded of the Three Offices (*Sanguan*),¹⁸⁵ which would indeed have made him one of the most important Daoist gods. But eventually, medieval Daoists assigned Hebo only a subordinate post in the *Shuiguan* as warden of one of the “prisons” there.¹⁸⁶ Still, Hebo apparently was not content with this minor position. In a late Heavenly Master source, we find him attacked once more by Daoist spirit-armies as the cult object of “heterodox masters” (*suzhong xieshi* 俗中邪師), who reportedly worshipped him as the Water Officer himself.¹⁸⁷

here as Lü 呂), his sons—the Thirty-six Water Emperors—daughters—the Twelve Stream Maidens—and other water gods are responsible for rain under the command of the Little Lord Dark Brightness (Xiao Xuanming jun 小玄明君). In 4.12b5–6 the River Count and his sons serve the same function under the Lord of the Four Waters and Nine Valleys in the Palace of Tai shan (Taishan gong zhong sishui jiugu jun 太山宮中四水九谷君). The surname Lü for the god apparently derives from a Han apocryphal tradition connected to the River Chart (*Hetu* 河圖); see *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎, by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (fl. mid-ninth century) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 128.

¹⁸⁴ DZ 790 *Nüqing guili* 2.4b1.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., DZ 188 *Xuandu liuwen* 20a5; DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 4.16a1–2 (in a petition for the protection of children); and a number of not quite explicit but suggestive mentions in DZ 1016 *Zhengao*, for instance, 6.13b main text and commentary by Tao Hongjing.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., DZ 184 *Taizhen yudi siji mingke* (an early systematization of liturgical patterns and rules integrating the Shangqing and Lingbao textual revelations) 1.6b1; DZ 616 *Chisong zi zhangli* 4.17b4, in a petition to cut off continual contagion (*fulian* 復連) through the spirits of the dead; and DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 7.34b7 (citing the biography of Zhao Wenhe 趙文和). In the systematization of the *Sanguan* system in DZ 456 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjue gongde qingzhong jing* 14a6 (a core text of Lu Xiuqing’s Lingbao canon), Hebo figures among the divine immortals (*shenxian* 神仙) in the highest of the three departments of the Water Office.

¹⁸⁷ DZ 1217 *Taishang zhengyi jie wuyin Zhouzu bilu* 3a.

That such apparent discrepancies are neither a matter of textual corruption, nor an issue of a tradition lacking overall integration is unmistakably clear from a number of similar instances in the *Qianerbai guan yi* texts. Affirmations of the Lord of Heaven (Tianweng/gong 天翁/公 or Huangtian shangdi 皇天上帝) and the Five Emperors of the classical tradition contrast with passages indicating that these gods merely arrogated (*zicheng* 自稱) these positions.¹⁸⁸ Even such intrinsically Daoist divinities as the presiding officials of the Three Offices (*Sanguan*) and the Twelve Hundred Officials could arouse the suspicion of being mere impostors.¹⁸⁹ Yet, puzzling as it appears that some gods are presented as fully integrated in the Daoist system in one place only to be accused as self-entitled demons in another, a closer look at the relevant passages clarifies what was implied. Whether it is the Lord of Heaven, the Five Emperors, the *Sanguan*, or the Twelve Hundred Officials who are blamed with being impostors, the criterion that identifies them as such is in each case that they exacted food offerings from the population (*cong min qiu yinshi* 從民求飲食).¹⁹⁰ Because this was precisely what Daoist theology rejected for its gods, these creatures could only be pretenders. The *Nüqing guilü* tells us more about how such spirits supposedly communicated their demands. “Behind hundreds of verbal communications to which people listen there are only demons but no gods” says the text in one passage,¹⁹¹ and it clarifies that its targets here are “those who do not believe in the genuine pneumata and laughingly turn their back (on the Dao) to have private commerce with demons (*buxin zhenqi zhe ji xiao huan yu gui sitong* 不信真氣者及笑還與鬼私通).” In other passages, blame is laid on “false Daoists, who are [merely] *wu* practitioners (*wushi buzheng daoshi* 巫師不正道士),”

¹⁸⁸ For Tianweng/gong or Tianhuang shangdi, cf. DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.10b7–8 and 4.13a3–4 with *ibid.*, 2.18a5–6 and 2.19a5–8; for the Wudi, cf. *ibid.*, 1.7b5–8 with 2.19a3–4.

¹⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, 2.19a9–b1 and 19b10–20a1 for *Sanguan* impostors, and DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 6.8b9 for a comparable passage. For self-entitled 1,200 Officials, see DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.19b6–7 and, for a comparable passage, *Nüqing guilü* 6.8a7.

¹⁹⁰ See again DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.19a5–6, 2.19a3–4, 2.19a9–10, 2.19b10–20b1, and 2.19b6–7.

¹⁹¹ DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 1.8b9–9a1.

or again “those who falsely lay claims to the great Dao but deceptively promote the words of demons (*jiatuo dadao wang yan guiyu* 假託大道妄言鬼語).”¹⁹² A major concern of the text is, in other words, that even divinities already incorporated into the Daoist system could be reclaimed by non-Daoist practitioners or shamanic-mediumistic leaders and thus give rise again to sacrificial cults. While Daoists thus maintained a strict bottom-line separating their own true gods from the eating, possessing “demons” of popular religion, the border line was nonetheless highly permeable and could be passed in either direction. The transformation of popular deities into abstract cosmological entities in need of neither food sacrifice nor mediums through whom they spoke could never be taken for granted and remained thoroughly ambiguous. To gain a better picture of the dynamics and tensions involving Daoist aspirations of transforming popular cults, we have to take a closer look at two more early medieval Daoist sources, both of which evidently continue the rationale of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition.

The *Nüqing guilü* (*Demon Statutes of Nüqing*), which was most likely compiled in the fourth century in the south of China, but clearly harks back to earlier Heavenly Master notions, presents itself explicitly as a code meant to bind extraneous demonic forces into the Daoist system. The text presents long lists of dubious spirits ranging from the killer ghosts (*sha* 煞), emanating from the recently deceased and other apparitions of death, to various nature sprites, phantoms of buildings, stoves, wells, toilets, and worn household supplies, down to devilish parasites of menstrual blood and plague spirits of every imaginable sort. All of them are grouped according to kind, named, and subordinated to basic cosmological patterns, mostly the five-fold divisions of space and time, although the killers are defined by the binary digits relating to the sixty-day cycle.¹⁹³ From the narrative sections of the book emerges a peculiar vision of the relationship between gods, ghosts, and demons in an age of doom. As helpers of the divine in the distribution of cosmic pneumata, demons and ghosts were, we learn here, originally charged with the inquisition and labeling of unbelievers. In the general corruption of the time, however, they have gone rampant, and, “deceitfully assuming the names and titles of divinities” to conceal their ambiguous

¹⁹² Ibid., 1.8b6–7, 4.1b2, 3.2a6–7; cf. also 5.4b6.

¹⁹³ DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 1.4b–8a.

nature and functions, have caused countless people to die.¹⁹⁴ Now the lists detailing their true identities and names, which had long been hidden away, are to be revealed anew. People are assured that if they return to moral ways and proper sexual relations—cosmicized through the pertinent rites of the Heavenly Master—the registers will empower them to harness the ghostly crowds and so turn demonic harm into divine blessings.¹⁹⁵ This provides a remarkable explanation for the ambiguity characterizing the deities of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition, the vexing tendency of shifting borderlines between orthodox demons and false gods that apparently typifies the Daoist view of the numinous realms as a whole, and the paramount role that was hence assigned to constant re-classifications and re-registrations of spirits. Connections between the *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscripts and the *Nüqing guilü* are recognizable in several instances; I should like to highlight here only one example.

In its final part, the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* installs five ultimate demon rulers above the hordes of demonic low-life catalogued in the book's other sections. They are ordered to comply with the pneumata of the five phases, quadrates, and seasons and are sent to purge the world of its impurities by spreading diseases, each of them a different kind; but they are also charged with registering the names of all those chosen to experience the approaching reign of Great Peace.¹⁹⁶ The names of these plague administrators, Liu Yuanda 劉元達, Zhang Yuanbo 張元伯, Zhao Gongming 趙公明, Zhong Shiji 鍾士季, and Shi Wenye 史文業 lead us into the very thicket of incessant negotiations concerning the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 1:8b.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 1:8a–9a, 1:1a–b. There is great emphasis throughout the text on the necessity to perform the sexual rites of the Way of the Heavenly Master in the appropriate manner, as this is considered to be the people's contribution to the spreading of the life-giving pneumata of the Dao (*xing shengqi* 行生氣). The rites are also referred to as “(One), Three, Five, Seven Nine” in accord with the time intervals to be followed (3.4b), the “Contractual Mandate of the Yellow Book” (*Huangshu qiling* 黃書契令; 3.4b), and the “Great Essentials of the Yellow and Red” (*Huangchi dayao* 黃赤大要 5.2b). Modified versions of these rituals, which cannot predate the late fourth century, are transmitted in DZ 1294 *Shangqing huangshu guodu yi* and DZ 1343 *Dongzhen huangshu*.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.2a–b.

divine and demonic between popular and Daoist religion. The pentad of spirits, which holds prominence even in the contemporary Chinese religious landscape, looks back onto an extraordinarily long history of contesting claims and rejections.

Significantly, at least two of the five figures can be traced to historic personages. Zhang Yuanbo, or Zhang Shao 劭 by his personal name, of Runan 汝南 (Henan) is remembered in an uncanny story as the friend of Fan Shi 范式 (byname: Juqing 巨卿) in the early days of the Later Han. He died prematurely and, full of longing for his friend, announced his death to the latter in a dream. Just as his coffin was carried to the tomb, it halted all of a sudden and could no longer be moved until Fan, riding in an unadorned carriage drawn by a white horse (*suche baima* 素車白馬), finally arrived from far-off Jinxiang 金鄉 (Shandong) to bid him a last farewell.¹⁹⁷ As if to make sure that this association was never forgotten, the figure of Fan Juqing has remained closely linked to the group in many sources.¹⁹⁸ The other historic figure in the pentad is Zhong Shiji 鍾士季 or Zhong Hui 鍾會 (225–264), the ruthless warrior who played a decisive part in the conquest of Shu for the Wei, but then considered rebelling and was promptly slaughtered by his own rebelling soldiers.¹⁹⁹

Zhao Gongming, the most prominent among the five, is not easily traced to a person in history, but he was, according to the testimony of Tao Hongjing, already listed in his *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscript as a plague demon (*wengui* 瘟鬼). Tao Hongjing provides this information in

¹⁹⁷ *Soushen ji* 搜神記, pp. 144–145; *Hou Hanshu jijie*, 81.9a–10a. According to the *Hou Hanshu* version of the story, Zhang Shao was also a close friend of Zhi Yun 郅惲, a specialist in the arts and literature of prognostication (*weishu* 緯書), who among other things reportedly announced to Wang Mang the short duration of his rule; see *Hou Hanshu jijie* 9b–19b. Of potential interest in this context is the repeated occurrence of a Lord Riding an Unadorned Carriage Drawn by a White Horse (*Suche baima jun*) in the *Qianerbai guan yi* texts charged to avert ghostly emanations of the recently deceased contaminating their descendants; see, e.g., DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.13a and 3.3a.

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., DZ 296 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian*, by Zhao Daoyi 趙道一 (dated 1294), 18.8a–9a; DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 232. 6b (in incantation); 233.17a (in incantation); 235.2b; 236.4b.

¹⁹⁹ *Sanguo zhi*, 28.784–794.

a context along with a method of situating an auspicious tomb, which he found among the written legacy of the original recipients of the Shangqing revelations, although he doubted the authenticity of this particular text. In this source, at any event, Zhao Gongming is called upon as the leader of a group of divine tomb protectors associated with the five quadrates.²⁰⁰ Interestingly, this is another tradition remembered in far later sources, as we read in one of them that the plague gods are wont to change shapes along with the seasons, mixing with birds in the spring, appearing to people in the guise of their ancestors in the summer, mingling with the five divisions of earth gods (*tugong* 土公) in the fall, and hiding around the tombs of the five surname groups in the winter.²⁰¹ Tao Hongjing's choice of words in reference to Zhao Gongming as a "plague demon" may indicate that, in his *Qianerbai guan yi* manuscript, the spirit's name was mentioned among the opponents of one or the other divine official, but considering the ambiguities that evidently already enshrouded this tradition, we can by no means be sure about this point.²⁰²

If anything, the diffused and fragmented situation of Daoism as a whole during the fourth century and beyond further obstructed the drawing of unequivocal delineations, and the proper affiliation and function of Zhao Gongming and his troupes consequently remains unclear. The extent to which the lines between various Daoist currents and popular traditions blurred during this time is evident in an episode in the *Soushen ji* 搜神記. The story recounts that one night, while he was ill and on the verge of dying, [Sima] You 司馬祐 (d. 326), a prince

²⁰⁰ DZ 1016 *Zhengao* 10.17b–18a. For a translation of this document, see Kleeman, "Land Contracts and Related Documents," pp. 1–34.

²⁰¹ DZ 754 *Taishang shuo xuantian dasheng zhenwu benzhuo shenzhou miaojing* 18b–19a. The text includes a detailed commentary composed after the Song by Chen Zhong 陳侗 on a popular scripture dedicated to the worship of the Zhenwu 真武, the Ruler of the Dark Heavens 玄天大聖. Chen cites a Zhengyi (Heavenly Master) hagiography 正一傳 as his source for the information provided here concerning the five plague gods.

²⁰² DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 1.21a–22b lists several entries concerning plague spirits, which are generally grouped in pentads, although no individual names are given. Significantly, however, such groups appear among both the divine officials and their demonic opponents.

of the imperial clan holding the rank of General Cavalier Attendant (*sanqi shilang* 散騎侍郎),²⁰³ received the visit of a person, by then deceased, who introduced himself as a former peer and countryman. The apparition revealed that, in the other world, he concurrently held the position of a squad leader under Zhao Gongming, one of three ghost generals charged with a mission of great political concern (*guojia dashi* 國家大事) in that very year, and that he had come to invite Sima You to join his ghostly retinue.²⁰⁴ Upon Sima You's earnest pleas, however, that he could not possibly leave behind his aged mother without protection, the phantom obtained an exemption from the Grand Old Master Laozi (Da Laozi 大老子)—and Sima You was charged to deliver, in lieu of himself, others to the demonic contingent. In addition, he was given ten odd red brushes to mark those whom, for whatever reason, he wanted to see spared. Sima You's health promptly recovered; and in the aftermath, all those whom he pointed out to be taken by the dark crowds quickly succumbed to death, whereas those marked by the red brushes passed unscathed through disease and war. The account ends with the information that later Sima You found his experience confirmed by the contents of a "heterodox writ" (*yaoshu* 妖書) that described the

²⁰³ The text actually reads Wang You 王祐, I accept, however, the identification with Sima You, proposed by Wang Shaoying in *Soushen ji*, p. 64. Sima You, Prince of Runan 汝南王, was a grandson of Sima Liang 司馬亮 (d. 291). After his flight to the south in 311/2, he received a number of high military positions under the first two emperors of the Eastern Jin (317–420). The rank of a Cavalier-Attendant in Ordinary (*sanqi changshi* 散騎常侍, equivalent to *sanqi shilang*) was granted to him between 323 and 325. The events related in this episode must thus be situated between 323 and Sima's death in 326; see *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 59.1591–1594.

²⁰⁴ For exactly what political mission the ghost hoped to win Sima You between 323–325 is understandably not indicated by the text, but it may be significant that the year 324 was marked by two decisive events: (a) the sudden death of the military strongman Wang Dun 王敦 (266–324), who more or less controlled the court at that time and was about to take over power by himself, and (b) the execution of the leaders of a messianic movement with Daoist leanings, Li Tuo 李脱 and Li Hong 李弘; see *Jinshu*, 98.2553–2566; 6.160; 58.1575; and Anna K. Seidel, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung," *History of Religions*, 9.2&3 (1969–1970), p. 231.

nefarious hordes under the command of the generals Zhao Gongming, Zhong Shiji, and a third one whose name is not mentioned, as dispatched by the Emperor on High (Shangdi 上帝) himself to “fetch people” (*quren* 取人).²⁰⁵

There are certainly similarities between this portrayal of Zhao Gongming’s armies and their description in the *Nüqing guilü*. We note in particular that, like the pentad in the latter, the triad here is portrayed as acting on the higher order of the Great Old Master (and the Celestial Emperor). But that claim to divine justice unravels with the charge to the desperate Sima You to choose other human victims in his place. In this respect, the story is reminiscent of another fourth-century warning tale about a weak mortal taken in by fraudulent spirits. According to Tao Hongjing, Hua Qiao 華僑, who briefly served as a go-between in the interactions between the fourth-century Xu family of Jurong and the Perfected beings of the Shangqing heavens, had, prior to his conversion to Daoism, served “ordinary” gods (*sushen* 俗神), to whom he pointed out more than ten persons of talent to join their spectral club.²⁰⁶ With the *Soushen ji* anecdote we find ourselves in a similar grey-zone of religious belief—and apparently close to the fears expressed in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* about impostor gods. Yet the story of Sima You shares traits with other reports about communications with the spirits of the dead through which the elite families of fourth-century south China engaged in relentless strife for prestige and political influence.²⁰⁷

But the best insights into the ambiguous etiology of Daoist spirit armies are perhaps offered in the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* 洞淵神咒經 (*Spirit Spells of the Abyss*; DZ 335), the main text of a somewhat syncretic movement emerging, during the fourth century, in south-China

²⁰⁵ *Soushen ji*, pp. 63–64.

²⁰⁶ DZ 1016 *Zhengao* 20.13b–14a. See also Julius N. Tsai, “Reading the ‘Inner Biography of the Perfected Person of Purple Solarity’: Religion and Society in an Early Daoist Hagiography,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 18.2 (2008), pp. 201–203.

²⁰⁷ As Stephen Bokenkamp has recently shown, even some of the Shangqing material collected by Tao Hongjing in his *Zhengao* seems to push the limits of Daoist orthodoxy in the pursuit of rather worldly agendas; see Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxieties*, pp. 95–157.

from the original Heavenly Master tradition.²⁰⁸ The book shares the apocalyptic vision of the *Nüqing guilü*, including the notion of unchecked demon hordes wreaking havoc among humans. Among these, however, it focuses particularly on the legions of dead warriors, whose dismembered remains are said to roam the clouds, infesting helpless humankind with unspeakable diseases.²⁰⁹ This motif *per se* is not new. Leaving mythological accounts aside, the miasmas spread by the cloud-traveling ghosts of those who had died in foreign regions were a concern even in the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition,²¹⁰ and the *Nüqing guilü* seems to concretize the anonymous collective of these spirits in the figure of a certain Li Sanke 李三可, “the headless dead general of the defeated armies [roaming] in clouds.”²¹¹ The *Spirit Spells of the Abyss* gives the name Li Zi’ao 李子敖 or Li Ao 李敖 for the metaphorical leader of these cloudy hordes,²¹² but it further associates them with a panoply of vanquished military commanders well remembered by history, among them Bai Qi 白起 (d. 257 B.C.E.) and Wang Jian 王翦 (fl. 236–221 B.C.E.), the mighty generals leading the conquest of the late Warring States for Qin,²¹³ Wang Li 王離 (fl. 221–207 B.C.E.), Wang Jian’s grandson, who fell into the hands of Xiang Yu 項羽,²¹⁴ Han Xin 韓信 (d. 196 B.C.E.),²¹⁵ the hero who conquered the realm for Liu Bang 劉邦,

²⁰⁸ For this text and its tradition, see the study of Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du Ve siècle: Le livre des incantations divine des grottes abyssales*, Paris: Collège de France, 1990. That the core of the received text, comprising *juan* 1–10 and 19–20, dates to the early 420s, is indicated by praise heaped on the founder of the Liu Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479), Liu Yu 劉裕 (r. 420–422). However, the apocalyptic vision of the text was clearly articulated in anticipation of the fall of the preceding Eastern Jin (317–420), which indicates that the tradition actually originated in the fourth century.

²⁰⁹ DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 4.1a.

²¹⁰ DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhangguan pin* 2.12b–13a

²¹¹ DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 1.2a; cf. also 1.3a, and 2.6a, where we find the Ghost of Great Harmony who has only a head, but no body, and breathing heavenly *qi* spits clouds around himself.

²¹² DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 4.1b, 7.6b and *passim*.

²¹³ See *Shiji*, 73.2331–2342.

²¹⁴ *Shiji*, 73.2341–2342.

²¹⁵ *Shiji*, 92.2609–2630.

only to be betrayed and murdered with the latter's tacit support, Wang Mang 王莽 (33 B.C.E.–23 C.E.), whose dreams for his own Empire failed, Gao Pei 高沛 (d. 214 C.E.), stalwart of the country of Shu, who was executed by Liu Bei 劉備,²¹⁶ Zhong Shiji (Zhong Hui), the scheming military leader of the Wei, who also figures as one of the five plague gods in the *Nüqing guilü*,²¹⁷ and Deng Ai 鄧艾 (d. 264 C.E.), who, together with Zhong Hui, conquered Shu for the Wei, but was accused of treason by the latter.²¹⁸ Even Nügua 女媧 and Zhurong 祝融 are added to the list.²¹⁹ All these powerful spirits, explains the text, who from the time of Fu Xi on have received worship under each successive reign, summon retinues around themselves, and the “little ghosts beneath heaven” (*tianxia xiaogui* 天下小鬼) are eager to join them as soldiers, hoping for food and drink or, in other words, sacrifices. These masses spy on people's families to get hold of their sons and daughters, entangle them in lawsuits with the worldly authorities, give rise to fire and water catastrophes, upset the peace among household gods and ancestors, afflict people with diseases, and kill for no good reasons.²²⁰

This scenario clearly locates the root cause of the demonic evil wreaking havoc among the population in the state-supported sacrificial cults, especially those offered to powerful dead warriors. Consequently, and in a manner that is remarkably reminiscent of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition, the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* also dispatches spirit armies to put an end to those unholy activities. The leaders of the demonic hordes are subdued and, from now on, will work in a peace corps.²²¹ Diseases will be healed, people must be released from prisons, household spirits are to be called to order, ancestral grudges must be settled, sacrificial rights determined, and the family dead will be raised above the three unfortunate stations (*santu* 三塗) to the status of refugees in the Dao (*zai Dao guibei* 在道鬼輩), who, leisurely roaming around, bestow only

²¹⁶ *Sanguo zhi*, 37.955.

²¹⁷ Also mentioned in this list of mostly identifiable, historic, ghost-army leaders is Liu Yuanda, according to the *Nüqing guilü*, the leader of the five powerful punishing spirits contracted by the Daoist system.

²¹⁸ *Sanguo zhi*, 28.775–783.

²¹⁹ DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 7.5b and 6b.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.6a.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.3a–5a.

blessings on the living.²²² If they cooperate with the project, follow the command of the ritual master (*fashi* 法師), fulfill their task as exorcists, and release humans from their afflictions, the erstwhile demon leaders are promised promotions in rank.²²³ But they remain subject to continuous judgment; if found to cause any more distress, their heads shall be shattered into pieces by yet more powerful “devil kings” (*mowang* 魔王),²²⁴ who themselves had previously been forced into submission by the Most High Lord of the Dao.²²⁵

This suggests in quite explicit terms that the recruitment of orthodox powers that were to be sent against demonic agents went hand in hand with the subjugation of the latter. Those who submitted were sworn into the Daoist system and hence had to forfeit popular sacrifices; in return, they received the chance of redemption and promotion through their participation in Daoist rituals. In the ideal case, the ritual process would progressively cleanse the spirits and transform them into pure pneuma configurations, exactly as the hagiography of Wei Huacun and Tao Hongjing define the essence of the spirit armies in the *Qianerbai guan yi*. But the *Spirit Spells of the Abyss* also reminds us that such transformations could not be taken for granted. Hence, to the extent that such recruits still might disobey orders and relapse into the demonic—or be reclaimed by the sacrificial cults of popular religion—they not only retained ambiguous traits, but also remained subject to renewed subjugation and conscription, in just the fashion the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* suggests.

As the later history of Daoism shows, this was the case with figures such as the White Tiger, the Great Year Star, and somewhat ironically above all the five demon lords, including Zhao Gongming, who in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* are established as the most powerful among the re-conscribed Daoist agents. The previously quoted account in the

²²² Ibid., 7.8a4–5. The Buddhists term *santu* refers originally to rebirth in either the purgatories, or the ghost and animal realms; in Daoist texts, however, the term is often used with respect to three types of punishments received after death; see Erik Zürcher, “Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence,” *T’oung Pao* 66.1–3 (1980), p. 128.

²²³ Ibid., 7.7b4.

²²⁴ Ibid., 7.7b5, 8a5–7.

²²⁵ Ibid., 1.2a–b and *passim*.

Soushen ji proves that Zhao Gongming and his cohorts continued to play a shady role. Even though Daoist ritual sources of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth centuries and later emphatically re-assert control over the spirits, the popular cult of the pentad, typically carried by *wu* practitioners and involving sacrifices, continued in undiminished form throughout late imperial China and survives particularly, ambiguous as it ever was, in modern Taiwan.²²⁶ Interestingly, however, Lu Shizhong 路時中, a famous twelfth-century Daoist liturgist, already denied that popular forms of the cult, which by then had indeed become the targets of state persecutions,²²⁷ really focused on the Daoist spirits. The generals of the five squads of plague control, we read there, have sworn an oath and long taken refuge in the orthodox Way. For this reason, Zhang Yuanbo has in the meantime also become the liaison for the thunder department (*leifu zhifu* 雷府直符),²²⁸ Zhao Gongming serves in an

²²⁶ See, e.g., Liu Zhiwan 劉枝萬, “Taiwan zhi wenshen xinyang 台灣之瘟神信仰,” “Taiwan zhi wenshen miao 台灣之瘟神廟,” and “Tainan xian Xigang xiang wenjiao jidian 臺南縣西港鄉瘟醮祭典,” in *Taiwan minjian xinyang lunji* 台灣民間信仰論集 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban, [1963] 1983), pp. 225–400; Michael Szonyi, “The Illusion of Standardizing the Gods: The Cult of the Five Emperors in Late Imperial China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56.1 (1997), pp. 113–135.

²²⁷ See, e.g., *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, recovered by Xu Song 徐松 (1781–1848), photolithographic reproduction, Beijing tushu guan, 1936; “Li 禮 20A,” 12b: report of 1034 by a tax officer concerning his demolition of a temple to the five plague gods in Tanzhou 潭州 (modern Changsha, Hunan).

²²⁸ Zhang Yuanbo is indeed frequently identified with Emissary Zhang (Zhang shizhe 張使者), the third in a triad of prominent thunder gods (the other two being Deng Bowen 鄧伯溫 and Xin Hanchen 辛漢臣) in the Shenxiao 神霄 thunder rites (*leifa* 雷法), the origins of which are commonly attributed to Wang Jun 王俊 (byname Wenqing 文卿; 1093–1153). There are numerous rituals focusing on these three divinities in DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan*, some of which also foreground Zhang as the central deity. For an interesting etiology of the gods, in which they are identified with well-known figures of Chinese mythology, see Bai Yuchan’s 白玉蟾 (fl. 1194–1229) account in *Xiantian yiqi huolei Zhang shizhe qidao dafa* 先天一氣火雷張使者祈禱大法 in *Daofa huiyuan* 82.23b–29b. Nonetheless, Emissary Zhang also was the object of medium cults; in 1025 some ten of his shrines in Gaoyou 高郵 (Jiangsu) were razed by the local magistrate; see *Song huiyao jigao*, “Li 20A,” 12b.

alternative function as Generalissimo of the Mystic Altar (Xuantan dajiang 玄壇大將),²²⁹ and the other three preside over the prisons of Fengdu. None of them any longer does any harm. It is rather the licentious sacrifices fickle-hearted people set out for these gods that once more attract lowly demons to partake of them and spread diseases.²³⁰ More in line with the *Nüqing guilü*, but intriguing in yet another perspective, is the information provided by a later author, who explains that the plague gods indeed confine (*shouliu* 收留) the shadowy demons of the popular temples and their armies, leading them however on tours of inquisition to cut short the lives of incorrigible sinners.²³¹

Prisoners of the Way?

Let us recall here finally what the old list of offices in the early Heavenly Master communities had to say about interactions with popular cult forms. There was an officer, who sorted demons as either correct *qi* or deviant essence, another who verified cases of spirit-possession and classified them by help of generic ethnic descriptions, and a third whose function in fact deserves closer examination.²³² “The Grand Supervisor of Assaults, says the relevant passage, controls the ‘contractual temples’ (*fumiao*) of Qin 秦, Hu 胡, Di 氐, Qiang 羌, Man 蠻, Yi 夷, Rong 戎, Di 氐, Chu 楚, and Yue 越 encamped beneath heaven [and determines whether they actually] attack deviant *qi* and the resistant ghosts of evil people. All this [the officer] clearly verifies and records (*kaolu* 考錄).”²³³ These “contractual temples” are intriguing, all the more so since

²²⁹ “Mystic Altar” refers to the headquarters of the later Heavenly Master tradition on Mt. Longhu. Zhao Gongming’s Daoist cult indeed reached new heights with the increasing importance attributed to the Heavenly Master tradition in late imperial times. This is confirmed by the great number of healing rituals centered on Zhao as the guardian of Longhu shan in collections such as DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan*. For narrative accounts on Zhao in this function, see *Daofa huiyuan* 236.1a–2a; DZ 296 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian*, 18.8a–9a, and DZ 1463 *Han tianshi shijia* 2.2b.

²³⁰ DZ 220 *Wushang xuanyuan santian yutang dafa* 24.12a–13a

²³¹ DZ 754 *Taishang shuo xuantian dasheng zhenwu benzhuang shenzhou jun* 5.19a.

²³² See pp. 24–25 above.

²³³ DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 7.17b9–18a1.

reference is also made to them in a quotation from the *Qianerbai guan yi* in Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue*. There they are alternatively called "Five Prison Camps" (*wu yuying* 五獄營), and the eating habits of their inhabitants are targeted by a Daoist spirit official and his army. Tao Hongjing confirms that at issue here were the sacrificial shrines maintained by mediumistic practitioners (*wu* 巫) in Daoist settlements.²³⁴

Our first observation here is that, whereas the *Qianerbai guan yi* passage focuses on the suppression of the sacrificial cults commonly devoted to ordinary temple gods, the description of the parish office states expressly that these spirits—presumably after they had renounced their food offerings—could join the Daoist system by participating in the fight against other demonic evil, especially the malignant spirits of the dead. Also interesting is that the Supervisor of Assaults identified the shrines under his control by using ethnic names. Obviously, the ten labels enumerated in this respect are too generic to have been helpful in reference to concrete ethnic groups, but associations between spirits and barbarians are common in medieval Daoist texts. With respect to the early Heavenly Masters, ethnic labels figure conspicuously in the names of several spirit officials in the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition,²³⁵ and the central role assigned to a "demon soldier" (*guibing* 鬼兵) named Hu Jiu ... 胡九口口 in an enigmatic, often-discussed stele dating to 173 C.E. is suggestive in this respect as well.²³⁶ To some extent, these references

²³⁴ DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3. 21b. The comparable passage in Lady Wei's life refers more narrowly to the destruction of the mediumistic altars maintained in private dwellings (*fangmiao zuoxi* 房廟座席); and Tao Hongjing explicates that in this case the concern was that newly converted members of the community, who had to destroy the house altars they formerly tended for ordinary gods, needed protection against potential acts of revenge on the part of the discarded spirits.

²³⁵ See, e.g., DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3:20a–b: Si Hu jun 四胡君; DZ 1218 *Zhengyi fawen jing zhang guan pin* 1.21b3–4 and 22a4–6: Beique Jiu Yi jun 北闕九夷君; 1.22b2–3: Beicheng Jiu Yi jun 北城九夷君; 2.1b8–9 Hu jiangjun 胡將軍/Hu bingshi 胡兵士; 2.7b8–9 Shan Yi jun 山夷君.

²³⁶ This important inscription, transmitted by Hong Gua 洪适 (1117–1184) in his *Lixu* 隸續, includes a number of non-standard as well as missing characters, which has given rise to various interpretations. Many have followed Hong Gua's suggestion that Hu Jiu ... (two characters missing after the name) referred to a living new member of the organization being initiated by a group of six named

certainly reflect the importance of minority populations as allies in early Heavenly Master communities.²³⁷ On the other hand, we know that the barbarian spirit armies domineering in fourth and fifth-century Heavenly Master texts were inspired by wide-spread xenophobic anxieties after the loss of the central provinces to foreign invaders.²³⁸ This indicates that the reasons for choosing ethnic labels as classifiers for spirits were from the beginning related to more deep-seated ambivalences. Associations between spirits, animals, and foreign tribes served as markers of the strange in China even in earliest times. Yet mythological accounts also show that these symbols had the power to reaffirm the sense of internal legitimacy and order, to the extent they could be aligned with, or contained by, the structures of the familiar center.²³⁹ It is not difficult to

jijiu. Terry Kleeman has argued that Hu Jiu ... is the name of a divinity sanctioning the ordination of the six priests. I agree with Kleeman's understanding of Hu Jiu ... as a spirit, but see this spirit as the one entering the bond (*yue*) witnessed by the six priests. See, e.g., Chen Yuan 陳垣, comp.; Chen Zhichao 陳智超 and Zeng Qingying 曾慶瑛, eds., *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), p. 4; Stein, "Remarques sur les mouvements du Taoïsme politico-religieux au II^e siècle ap. J.-C.," p. 43; Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*, pp. 41–42; Kleeman, *Great Perfection*, pp. 68–69; and my "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister," pp. 55–56.

²³⁷ See Kleeman, *Great Perfection* and also his "Ethnic Identity and Daoist Identity in Traditional China," in *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual*, ed. Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 23–38.

²³⁸ See, e.g., DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* and DZ 335 *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, *passim*.

²³⁹ In this context, see, e.g., Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), especially pp. 1–17, 101–159. Of note here is also that in some Shangqing meditations, barbarians appear as mediators of the marvelous. DZ 1332 *Dongzhen taishang zidu yanguang shen yuanbian jing* 3a–5a, for example, prescribes visualizations in which the adept is approached, one by one, by the representatives of foreign spirit lands in the four directions; they are designated as the elders of Hu 胡, Yue 越, Xuan 玄, and Qiang 羌. DZ 1373 *Shangqing waiguo fangpin qingtong neiwen* 4a–7a has descriptions of six realms, four in the cardinal directions plus one each in the zenith and the center. Each of these lands is categorized by its attributes and resident peoples (Hu 胡, Yue 越, Di 氐, and Qiang 羌 in the

see that the use of ethnic classifiers for extraneous spirits contracted into the Heavenly Master system and the identification of their temples as Five Prison Camps fulfill a similar symbolic purpose. The number five, of course, suggests that these shrines or prison camps were further aligned with the five phases and their correlates. Moreover, the term *wu yuying* itself is evocative of the five army divisions in active duty (*wuying* 五營), and, more specifically in a ritual context, the horsemen of the five garrisons of the palace guard (*wuying qishi* 五營騎士), who concluded the grand Nuo exorcism at the Han court by hurling the torches used to expel demons into the Luo river.²⁴⁰ There is little doubt that the associations adhering to these terms and the Nuo rites were well known to the leaders of the early Heavenly Master movement.²⁴¹

But there is more. Heavenly Master Daoists adopted a system of local organization—based on correlations between the five phases, the five tones of the pentatonic scale (*wuyin* 五音), and the symbols of the cycles involving the ten Heavenly Stems (*tiangan* 天干) and twelve Earthly Branches (*dizhi* 地支)—to align names, surnames, and dwellings. Wang Chong outlines the methods, as he ridicules the common belief among his first-century contemporaries that by anchoring their lives in this way in the structures of the cosmos they could forestall misfortune.²⁴² In the early Heavenly Master communities, the same

four quarters), based on a scheme of six tones (*liuyin* 六音). For analyses of these Shangqing texts, see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, pp. 178–185 and Julius Nanting Tsai, “In the Steps of Emperors and Immortals: Imperial Mountain Journeys and Daoist Meditation and Ritual” (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2003), pp. 132–153.

²⁴⁰ *Hou Hanshu*, “Liyi zhi B,” 10b.

²⁴¹ For a persuasive account of the connections between the *fangxiang shi* of the Nuo, common funerals, and Daoist ritual, see Peter Nickerson, “‘Opening the Way’: Exorcism, Travel, and Soteriology in Early Daoist Mortuary Practice and Its Antecedents,” in *Daoist Identity*, pp. 58–77.

²⁴² See Wang Chong, *Lunheng*, “Jieshu 詰術,” 25.381–384. The almanacs excavated at Shuihudi, however, make it likely that similar practices were already common during the late Warring States period; see, e.g., *Yunmeng Shuihudi Qinmu* 雲夢睡虎地秦墓 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981); Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 and Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通, *Yunmeng Qinjian rishu yanjiu* 雲夢秦簡日書研究 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chuban she, 1981); Marc Kalinowski, “Les traités de Shuihudi

schemes interlinked parishes and member households, including their dwellings, private ritual buildings (*jing* 靜), and, most importantly, tombs.²⁴³ The concern here was primarily ritual, rather than propitiatory, as it was through these channels that priests negotiated problems arising from the intersecting worlds of humans and spirits with the authorities of the cosmic administration. And early sources speak above all to the weight placed on the correct integration of tombs in this network. The accurate correlation of the spatial, temporal, and tonal schemes with the determinants of family fate and individual destiny supposedly assigned the deceased to the appropriate division in the divine bureaucracy, which then stationed corresponding guardians around the tomb, ensured the safe passage of the departed into the afterlife, and determined the right spirit advocates to be contacted by the living in case of postmortem complaints.²⁴⁴

et l'hémérologie Chinoise à la fin des Royaumes-Combattants," *T'oung Pao* 22 (1986), pp. 175–228; Donald Harper, "A Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54.1 (1985), pp. 459–489; and Harper, "Spellbinding," in *Religions of China in Practice*, pp. 241–250. For a discussion specifically of the scheme involving the five tones, see Marc Kalinowski, "Les traités de Shuihudi," pp. 200–204.

²⁴³ For the alignment of surnames and tombs in Daoism according to the scheme of the five tones, see, e.g., DZ 1016 *Zhengao* 10.12b3; DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 3.20b10–21a2, commentary; DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 5. 31b, commentary; and *Daomen dingzhi* 1.35a–b, including commentary. For the arrangement of private calm chambers or *jing* according to an order correlating the five quadrates with the ten celestial stems, see DZ 188 *Xuandu liuwen* 15a. Concerning the spirits of the dead, cf. also DZ 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 7.1a, which, quoting from the *Xuandu li* [wen], states that the Heavenly Master parishes were the place to which one's *xing* 性 (nature), *ming* 命 (life-mandate), and *hun*-spirits (*hunshen* 魂神) belonged, indicating that the parishes (rather than the individual households) were also the proper place of "return" (*gui* 歸) for the deceased.

²⁴⁴ In this regard, see specifically, DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 5. 31b. The commentary inserted here in the petition text against sepulchral complaints explains that descendants of the deceased had to address the right divinity through which to handle the case, depending on the classification of their surname with one of the five tones. For those grouped in the *jiao* 角 category (East), the deity handling the case is Goumang 勾芒, those of the *zheng* 徵 category (South) address Ju-

It is in this context that we find indeed a group of Daoist spirits classified by ethnic labels in combination with cosmological coordinates. The *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* informs us about a fivefold Netherworld administration (*wuyin* 五陰) attached to Mt. Tai 泰山, center of the registration of the dead associated since Han times with the Five Sacred Mountains.²⁴⁵ This organization, we learn, took care of deceased community members, depending on the season in which they died and on the stellar lodge (*xiu* 宿) with which their names were enlisted. The presiding spirits of four of these divisions are fully introduced: The Lord of the Nine Yi (Jiu Yi jun 九夷君) arranged matters for those who died in the spring and whose names belonged to one of the seven eastern constellations, the Lord of the Eight Man (Ba Man jun 八蠻君) did the same for those departing in the summer and registered with one of the seven southern constellations; the Lords of the Six Rong (Liu Rong jun

rong 祝融, those of the *shang* 商 category (West) address Rushou 蓐收, those of the *yu* 羽 category (North) address Xuanming 玄冥, and those aligned with the tone *gong* 宮 (Center), address Gouchen 勾陳. Critical as these matters were, medieval Daoist texts reveal a great deal of variation in regard to them. As we shall see immediately below, in the tradition of the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, the spirits handling matters involving the dead have ethnic designations. A document dealing with tombs contained in 1016 *Zhengao* 10.16b–18a indicates that the divinities located around tombs and dealing with taboos concerning them are Zhao Gongming 趙公明 and his cohorts; see above, pp. 72 and 79.

²⁴⁵ For Taishan and the five mountains in Han mortuary inscriptions, see, e.g., Anna Seidel, “Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt.” In Daoism, the role of Mt. Tai and the five mountains remained disputed due to concerns about the sacrifices they received in the state cult. Yet even some medieval Daoist traditions, including that of the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, promoted *jiao* offerings to the emperors of the five directions, the five mountains, the five “barbarian” leaders discussed immediately below, as well as the five plague gods. By the thirteenth century, temples dedicated to Mt. Tai (*Dongyue miao* 東嶽廟) existed in every major city. They were typically supervised by Daoist priests who could “borrow” spirit soldiers (*yinbing* 陰兵) from Mt. Tai’s contingent of shadows. Although the practice was still opposed by some lineages (see, e.g., “Taishang tiantan yuge 太上天壇玉格” [late twelfth/early thirteenth century?] in DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 255. 5a–b), it ultimately prevailed (see, e.g., DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan*, *juan* 253–256 and DZ 780 *Diqi shangjiang Wen taibao zhuan* as well as the rituals described below).

六戎君) and the Five Di (Wu Di jun 五狄君) took care of those summoned in the fall and winter who were booked with one of the seven western or northern lodges.²⁴⁶ In a related ritual text, designated as an “oral petition” (*kouzhang* 口章), the same group of spirits is not only called upon to resolve individual issues between the dead and the living, but is in fact the controlling instance in a complex arrangement of both good and evil spirits according to the four cardinal directions, the five quadrates, the stellar lodges, the dipper stars, as well as the cycles of the ten Heavenly Stems and twelve Earthly Branches. There is no doubt that the main purpose of this long spell was the imposition of those orderly structures on the seemingly chaotic variety of disease-spreading demons it invokes—and thus their integration into the Daoist system. Among those individually named in this context, we recognize not only many of the dead generals, bespelled already in the main scripture of the tradition, but also the pentad of the plague gods, who, as we have seen, were sworn in as the overlords of the demonic masses converted in the *Nüqing guilü*.²⁴⁷ Just as was the case in the *Nüqing guilü* and the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, it is clear here that the spirits’ integration is coterminous with their containment, a fact that is further stressed by numerous references to their “contractual temples” or “encampments” (*tun* 屯).²⁴⁸ Reading through the seemingly endless listing of spirits by

²⁴⁶ DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 20.6a–8a. The same group also appears in a different context in the transmitted versions of the sexual rituals whose origin goes back to the beginnings of the Way of Heavenly Master. DZ 1343 *Dongzhen huangshu*, which provides the theoretical underpinnings for the ritual, lists three individually named deities for each of the four divisions corresponding to the life coordinates of the partners at the specific times they realize their sexual union (13a–15b). The correlate DZ 1294 *Shangqing huangshu guodu yi*, which prescribes the actual ritual, provides the individual names of these deities at different steps of the ceremony. Both texts present reworked and systematized versions, which, on account of a number of details, cannot date earlier than the fourth century. We know in fact that modified versions of these rites emerged during this century; see, e.g. DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 20. 22b. For these reasons I do not believe that these barbarian spirits originally derived from these texts.

²⁴⁷ 1290 *Taishang dongshen dongyuan shenzhou zhibing kou zhang* 26b–27a.

²⁴⁸ DZ 1290 *Taishang dongshen dongyuan shenzhou zhibing kou zhang*, especially

name or otherwise, one easily loses track of who is supposed here to stand on what side. There is no way to miss the fact that ambiguity again looms large in this text among both Daoist conquerors and their adversaries. Yet there are subtle differentiations. A good number of individual names, such as those of the five plague gods, are marked as just “self-claimed” (*zicheng*). The same expression was used, we may recall, in the *Nüqing guilü* to distinguish self-entitled popular gods from those whose name, title, and rank was confirmed through the Daoist system (and there the plague gods counted among the latter).

Here then we finally have identified all criteria for the admission of popular gods into the Daoist pantheon. Eligible spirits had to be disconnected from sacrificial cults promoted by unauthorized shamans and mediums; they had to be assimilated to the structures of correlative cosmology; their names or designations had to be certified by Daoist priests; and, as is apparent with the spirit-officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi*, they were charged with primarily exorcist functions in Daoist rituals. Under these conditions, the occupants of “contractual temples” or “prison camps” were transformed into allies and became Daoist versions of their original popular selves—or were absorbed by the Daoist gods who supposedly had subdued them.

The four barbarian lords and their armies introduced in the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, plus a fifth party associated with the center and Qin 秦, the Chinese, seem positioned precisely at this intersection. They recur in Daoist texts throughout the Chinese Middle Ages and beyond as defenders of the Daoist faith, exorcising nature demons,²⁴⁹ ensuring safe travel,²⁵⁰ averting plagues,²⁵¹ and battling heterodox practitioners.²⁵² Their divisions are invariably assigned the same, rather unusual, emblematic numbers, and in most cases they are explicitly linked to the character-compounds of the ten Heavenly Stems in correlation with the spatio-temporal pattern of the five phases and the

11b–15b, and 9a, 18a,23a, 29a,30b, 31a, 32b.

²⁴⁹ DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 4.1a–2b.

²⁵⁰ DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 6.26a–27a and DZ 617 *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang* 2.6b–8a.

²⁵¹ DZ 220 *Wushang xuanyuan santian yutang dafa* (twelfth century) 24.13b.

²⁵² DZ 1217 *Taishang zhengyi jie wuyin Zhouzu bilu* 1b.

scheme of five tones.²⁵³ Apart from their association with the realms of the dead subordinated to Mt. Tai, they are unambiguously Daoist—just as all those spirit-officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi tradition*, whose names are known today only from Daoist petition texts.

Ironically, however, their elevation above the murkier realms of popular religion also renders these figures less potent as agents of transformation than, for example, the plague gods, Taisui, or the White Tiger spirit who have remained contested throughout the long history of Daoism's interaction with the lived religion of the people. Obviously, there is power in ambiguity, as only spirits whose names, stories, and fearsome powers are actually able to hold a spell over people's imagination can also impact patterns of worship. Later Daoist rituals have taken advantage of this realization and given center stage to the contest itself—to great effect.

Let us see how two comparatively late Daoist ritual texts (13th century?) deal with the containment (*shou* 收) of heterodox *wu* practitioners and the employment (*yi* 役) of local spirits.²⁵⁴ The shamanic practitioners and their gods are identified and categorized there by help of the scheme of the five tones and incarcerated in corresponding prisons (*yu* 獄). The latter are internally established in the priest's body, drawn onto the floor of the altar space, on paper, or in the air in form of the character *jing* 井,²⁵⁵ and furthermore materially represented by a pottery jar filled with vinegar and wine.²⁵⁶ The spirit soldiers the priest summons

²⁵³ Detailed explanations of the deities and their protective relationship with individuals based on the system of the five tones are found, for instance, in DZ 1288 *Yuanchen zhangjiao licheng li* 1.9a and 2.6b–7b. This text bears similarities with the tradition of the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* in that it sees itself clearly as continuing the Way of the Heavenly Master, albeit with modifications. The latter include techniques of fate calculation and prognostication, as well as offerings of fruit, wine, and dried meat to the emperors of the five directions (cf. e.g., DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 10.3b–4a and 19.4b–5a); cf. also DZ 1217 *Taishang zhengyi jie wuyin Zhouzu bilu* 1b.

²⁵⁴ “Leifu zhushuai kaoxie dafa 雷府朱帥考邪大法,” DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan*, *juan* 128 and “Zhengyi xuantan yuanshuai liuyin caoye wuxiu leifa 正一玄壇元帥六陰草野舞袖雷法,” *ibid.*, *juan* 140.

²⁵⁵ DZ 1220, *juan* 128.6a–b, 8b1, and 9a–b; *ibid.*, 140.4b–5a, and *passim*.

²⁵⁶ DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 128.8a–10a and *ibid.*, 140.5b1, 10b–11a.

for this undertaking are in one case identified with the five plague gods, subordinated to the Daoist Marshal Zhu 朱元帥,²⁵⁷ and in the other with the so-called “five furies” (*wu chang* 五猖) or “cavalries of the five camps” (*wuying bing ma* 五營兵馬), placed under the command of Zhao Gongming, leader of the plague gods, advanced to guardian of Longhu shan, the headquarters of the Heavenly Master tradition since the late Tang.²⁵⁸ In both scripts the captured demons and their mediums are symbolically buried, and sealed underneath Mt. Tai.²⁵⁹ Subjected there to a smelting process—a nuclear fusion of sorts of the elementary forces of fire and water (= thunder)—the erstwhile foes are transformed into allies and hence themselves subordinated to the Five (Prison) Camps.²⁶⁰ One of the texts in fact prescribes a visualization in which the spirits are returned—inside a pig’s intestine—to their temples.²⁶¹

It is fascinating to observe how these rituals dramatically enact the complexities and ambiguities that characterized Daoism’s historical interrelationship with local cults, including virtually all elements whose involvement in the process can be shown analytically. Perhaps even more striking is that the structures underlying that relationship and embedded in these rites have in fact left a clear imprint on concurrent Chinese village-religion. There is no way to miss the connection between the spirit camps believed to protect southern Chinese temple communities from the four sides and the center (*wuying* 五營) with the Daoist prison camps in the early Heavenly Master organization. Even in modern Chinese religion, these camps are associated with the five mountains, the five emperors, the five plague gods, the five furies, and the spirits of the dead. They still remain specifically related to spirit mediums, and Daoist ritual masters call on both the mediums and the shadow armies (*yinbing* 陰兵) of these camps during the great village offerings (*jiao* 醮).²⁶² Significantly also, the camp contingents are

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 128.10a.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 140.11b–13b.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 128.3b, 8b; 140.12a, 13a.

²⁶⁰ As made explicit in an incantation in DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 240.12a10–12b1.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 240.14b–15a.

²⁶² See, e.g., David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: The Folk Religion of a Taiwanese Village* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 42–59; Donald S. Sutton, *Steps of Perfection: Exorcistic Per-*

summoned today by exactly the same emblematic numbers assigned to the five divisions of barbarian troops in early medieval Daoist sources.²⁶³

Undeniably, the Daoist project of transforming popular worship has had results. Yet, it is also clear that Daoists never succeeded in eliminating their chief targets. On the contrary, the main staples of the people's religion—sacrifice, shamanism, and spirit mediumship—thrive today in close interplay with Daoist rites. Has the Daoist mission thus ultimately been a failure? Or did the very persistence of these cult forms cause Daoists to subject not only popular gods, but also *wu* practitioners and sacrifices themselves to the controlling structures of Daoist rites? This at least could explain the otherwise perplexing fact that even bloody offerings found a place in later Daoist thunder rituals of inquisition,²⁶⁴ and that a figure like Han Xin 韓信, who is already depicted as one of the objects of Daoist conversion in the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing*, today receives animal sacrifices from Daoist priests in Hunan.²⁶⁵ Or are we facing here some more complex dynamics, accompanied by a deep sense

formers and Chinese Religion in Twentieth-Century Taiwan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 15–45; Paul R. Katz, “The Pacification of Plagues: A Chinese Rite of Affliction,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9.1 (1995), pp. 55–100. For the connection of the gods of the five camps and funerary rites, see John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (London: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 200–201.

²⁶³ See Ōfuchi Ninji, *Chūgoku no shūkyō girei* 中國の宗教儀礼, Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1983, p. 1040; cf. DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 20.6a–8a; DZ 1290 *Taishang dongshen dongyuan shenzhou zhibing kouzhang* 11b–15b; DZ 1288 *Yuanchen zhangjiao lichengli* 1.9a, and DZ 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 4.2a.

²⁶⁴ See, e.g., “Taishang tiantan yuge,” in DZ 1220 *Daofa huiyuan* 250.17b, which states that wine and meat are appropriate offerings for thunder gods in Daoist rituals. “Shangqing yushu wulei zhenwen 上清玉樞五雷真文,” (twelfth century?) in *Daofa huiyuan* 57.9a prescribes sheep blood, sheep meat and the head of a sheep in addition to fruit and wine for the thunder gods. The leader of these, Deng Bowen, is said to be fond of the blood of geese (*ibid.*, 16a). The Netherworld divinities of the Grand Method of Fengdu receive wine, rice, and animal offerings, including raw animal entrails; see “Bei Yin Fengdu taixuan zhimo heilü lingshu 北陰酆都太玄制魔黑律靈書,” in *Daofa huiyuan* 265.15a.

²⁶⁵ See Patrice Fava, director, “Han Xin’s Revenge: A Daoist Mystery,” DVD (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, CNRS Images, 2005).

shared by both Daoists and practitioners of the people's lived religion that one cannot exist without the other, that no transformation can take place where there is nothing to be transformed, and that there can be no affirmation without some institution possibly providing it?

I have previously dealt with the divinities of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition, exploring the possibility that their roots may lead precisely into the realms against which Daoists from the beginning defined their own system.²⁶⁶ There, I pointed out the links between early Heavenly Master liturgy and the mortuary cult of the Latter Han period. Stressing the focus of the petition rituals on the redemption of the deceased, I argued that these soteriological claims had to be intrinsically connected to the notions of accruing merit and continuous promotion involving the rituals themselves and the Twelve Hundred Officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition employed in them. But if that was so, the redeemed dead and the ritual agents had to be seen in a single, continuous line of transformation. The evidence I gathered in my previous work to support this thesis ranged from that enigmatic second-century stele—in which, I believe, the spirit of a deceased is promoted to the status of a ghost-soldier (or a spirit official in terms of the *Qianerbai guan yi*) and bound by oath to henceforth promulgate the Daoist liturgy of the Heavenly Master²⁶⁷—to quite explicit statements in early medieval Daoist sources concerning the prospects for deceased persons of being promoted in spirit offices. The most detailed account in this respect is undoubtedly that identifying office holders in the administration of the dead transmitted as a part of the Shangqing revelations in Tao Hongjing's *Zhengao*.²⁶⁸

Here I have expanded my focus on the spirit officials of the *Qianerbai guan yi* sources to include some concrete examples of popular sacrificial cults reflected in that tradition. My goal was to understand the theoretical and practical conditions of such inclusions and to pursue their ramification in Daoism's continued interaction with popular religion. Of course, in the eyes of the Daoists, the sacrificial cults of the ordinary

²⁶⁶ “Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen,” especially pp. 42–60, and “Ghosts and Demons, Law and Order,” *Taoist Resources* 4.2 (1993), pp. 23–35.

²⁶⁷ See pp. 80–81 and n. 236 above.

²⁶⁸ DZ 1016 *Zhengao*, *juan* 14–16.

religion were inherently connected to the concerns about death and the dead in general, and I think that the data I have assembled here are congruent with my previous results. Let me then try to restate my thesis: Beginning with the movement of the Heavenly Master, Daoist liturgy was not limited to merely opposing the sacrificial model of both state cult and popular religion, but also involved the active attempt of transforming these cults according to its own legal, bureaucratic, and ethical standards, which surely excluded sacrificial relations. But in order to succeed, this large-scale project of transformation had to open channels providing for the adoption and absorption of in principle rejected spirits into its ritual system. In my view, Daoist spirit ledgers, the earliest of which presumably were constituted by the lists of the *Qianerbai guan yi* tradition, were both means and proof of this process. Finally, the fact that the Daoist ambition of transforming the entire religious landscape of China along its own liturgical guidelines never quite succeeded is reflective of ongoing negotiations and contestations between lived religion and Daoism—as well, I should hasten to add, as Buddhism, especially from Tang times on. But had it been otherwise, Daoism would at the same time also have lost its very *raison d'être* as the catalyst of never-ending transformation.

《千二百官儀》及其神祇

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摘要

《千二百官儀》提供了一份道教神祇的名單，在道教儀式中通過向另一個世界的司法部門呈上書寫形式的章文，祈求這些神祇幫助驅邪。這個傳統可以追溯到二至三世紀活動於四川地區的天師道，因此它保留有早期道教的思想體系及其實踐活動的重要痕跡。事實上，雖然許多與此名單相關的文獻得以流傳下來，但其明顯的資料缺失使得學者們試圖推想其原來的文本。本論文的第一部分即顛覆性地提出從未存在過一份明確的《千二百官儀》原本，最初開始流傳的文本反而是內容互有交疊卻又互不相同的多種稿本，就如同它現在流傳下來的形式所展示的一樣。文本學者試圖追尋一個統一的、可能未被破壞的稿本之努力，並無助於《千二百官儀》研究。我認為對其源流與流傳的研究應該放在不同的歷史處境中，並參照貫穿於儀式架構中的天師道士關於道炁的更新與持續流布的獨特理念。

論文的第二部分處理的是出現於《千二百官儀》的神祇，他們的名字與描述並不完全符合道教對神祇的基本定義，即抽象的宇宙之炁。相反，其中相當多的神祇反映的是原本應是被道士避開的「惡魔型」民間神祇形象，這一點證實了斯坦因 (Rolf A. Stein) 關於道教與民間宗教之間存在相互交疊的觀點。然而，天師道儀式使用原本異己的力量來對抗據稱恰恰由這些外道所製造的邪惡力量，由此產生這樣一個問題：它如何與道教常常宣稱的根據其自身標準來改造中國宗教圖景的意圖相契合？為了對這個議題及其後果有更好的認識，我將首先再現中國古典文學中強加於民間宗教崇拜上的約束，這影響了道教對接受祭祀的所有神靈更為廣泛的妖魔化行為。

本文接著的部份將詳細闡述道教反差極大的「非血食」神（即純粹的天文神祇）之神學，同時指出正是道教對改革的堅持妨礙了一個建基於此神學之上的嚴格的道教神譜定義的產生，最明顯的例子莫過於陶弘景意欲根據一個明確的框架以呈現神祇世界的過程中所遭遇的困難。另外，我還將涉及四至五世紀的相關道教文獻，以細緻地探討在堅持包容與改革時必然相伴隨的意義模糊性。

在最後的綜述中，我將展現相對於民間宗教信仰而言，令人驚奇的道

教態度的一貫性及其目標。道教的雙重策略將在這裡被追述，從早期的天師道運動直至晚期的道教儀式，道教一方面將一些神祇歸為異己力量，另一方面，又將這些神祇包容進像「五營」這樣一個象徵性佈局中。這個策略目的在於降服非道教的宗教從業者以及他們的神祇並進行結構性收編，其影響是構成當代中國地方宗教面貌。這一運動除了對道教崇拜儀式產生無庸置疑的影響，其與中國實存的宗教之間的互動亦改變了道教自身。對外來神祇的吸收，並未清除與之相關的祭祀或靈媒，反之，對這些要素所必須進行的調試在原則上也仍舊排斥著「常規的」宗教。