

Women's Salvation and Collective Order: A Penitential Ritual for Deliverance from the Lake of Blood Performed in Hong Kong*

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I. Introduction

In traditional Chinese society, it is believed that unnatural deaths such as premature death, violent death, death by accident, and the like would lead to imprisonment in the netherworld. The departed souls of women who died in childbirth or those who had contaminated the water with their bodily effluvia would have to be imprisoned in *xuehu* 血湖 (Lake of Blood) after their death. According to Daoist texts,¹ *xuehu* is situated in the earth prison at Xiashi 硤石無間地獄 underneath the boundless water quarters to the north of Fengdu 酆都. It is so named because it is filled with post-partum blood from childbirth or menstrual flow of women. The place is dark, gloomy, filthy, and stinky. The imprisoned women, however, would be delivered from the infernal afflictions through proper ritual performances. The Ritual for Deliverance from *xuehu* is to be performed in a woman's funeral, on the anniversary of her death 死忌日, or during the Yulan 盂蘭 or Ghost Festival.²

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¹ See Appendix I for a list of texts that have significant references to *xuehu* in major collections of Daoist texts. The collections include the *Ming Zhengtong Daozang* 明正統道藏, *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書, and *Zhuanglin xu Daozang* 莊林續道藏.

² See also ミシエル・スワミア (Michel Soymié), "Ketsunbonkyō no shiryōteki kenkyū" 血盆經の資料的研究, in *Dōkyō kenkyū* 道教研究, vol. 1, ed. Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊 and

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The concept of the *xuehu* is not exclusive to Daoism. Buddhism has similar beliefs but the term it refers to is *xuepen* 血盆 (blood basin). Some textual study on the scriptures of *xuehu* or *xuepen* has been done. Both Michel Soymié and Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福 have worked on the relationship between the Buddhist and the Daoist scriptures. Xiao points out that the idea of *xuepen* did not appear in Buddhist or Daoist scriptures until the Tang to Song dynasties, and that the idea of *xuehu* has a closer affinity to the taboos related to female blood in Daoism. According to Xiao, the *xuepen* hell mentioned in Buddhist texts is situated in Zhuiyang xian 追陽縣, Yuzhou 羽州—a place in China, not India. He therefore considers Buddhist *xuepen* an imitation of the Daoist *xuehu*.³ Soymié, however, has remarked that the liturgies of Daoist *xuehu* appeared after those of the Buddhist *xuepen*. He points out, nonetheless, that the *Xuepen jing* is not included in the *Tripitaka* 大藏經, while the *Xuehu jing* 血湖經 is incorporated in the *Daozang* 道藏, indicating that the concept of *xuepen* is not taken as seriously in Buddhism as it is in Daoism. A variety of names such as *xuehu*, *xuechi* 血池, *xuehu diyu* 血湖地獄, *xueyuchi* 血汗池, *xueyuhe* 血汗河, *xuehe* 血河, *xuehechi* 血河池, and *xuechiyu* 血池獄 are recorded by Soymié in his essay.⁴ Besides possible reference to the use of a basin during child delivery in ancient China, the concept of *xuepen* may have affinity to scriptures dedicated to repaying debts, particularly those owed to the parents. For example, *Shi'ende* 十恩德 has lines mentioning the post-partum blood filling up a basin, the *Fumu enzhong jing jiangjingwen* 父母恩重經講經文 collected in the *Dunhuang bianwen ji* 敦煌變文集 (Dunhuang Collection of Transformation Tales) mentions the pains [the mother] suffers and the blood spilling on the ground during childbirth.⁵ The *Yue Wumu wang jiangba nannü bao'en jing* 岳武穆王降拔男女報恩經 collected by Yoshioka Yoshitoyo explicitly connects the female bodily discharge to the sin of pollution and the eventual suffering in the Lake of Blood.⁶ Neky Cheung has also documented *xuepen* being mentioned in a rite called *bao niang'en* 報娘恩 (Repaying the Debt of Mother's Kindness) in her study of the ritual *jiezhu* 接珠 (Receiving Buddhist Prayer

(Note 2—Continued)

Michel Soymié (Tokyo: Shōrinsha, 1965), p. 141. On the Ghost/Middle Prime Festival, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Lü Pengzhi, “The Lingbao Fast of the Three Primes and the Daoist Middle Prime Festival: A Critical Study of the *Taishang Dongxuan Lingbao Sanyuan Pinjie Jing*,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011), pp. 35–61.

³ Xiao Dengfu, *Daojiao yu Fojiao* 道教與佛教 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1995), pp. 298–99.

⁴ Soymié, “Ketsunbonkyō no shiryōteki kenkyū,” pp. 127–50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶ *Ibid.*

從一個在香港舉行的血湖懺罪儀式探討婦女的救贖 與天地人之間的和諧關係

(摘要)

張德貞

中國傳統社會相信死於非命、早逝、暴斃等會導致死者的靈魂困於陰間地府受苦，而婦女在生理週期排出的經血、因墮胎或因生產而排出的腥穢物等，對河川流水造成污染、或因生產而死亡等皆構成她們死後要在酆都硤石無間地獄內的血湖受苦。該處名為血湖，是因為湖內盡是婦女生理週期及生產時排出的污染物。血湖內幽暗、污穢、腥臭。通過為婦女濟度而舉行的血湖懺儀式，婦女的亡魂可以得以免於墮落血湖受苦。

作者以2009年香港雲泉仙館在中元節舉行的血湖懺儀式為個案研究，探討社會對女性生理及生殖有關的污血禁忌。作者認為，血湖懺儀式一方面對婦女因生理週期的經血及與生產有關的污血穢物等，導致墮落血湖受苦的不安起心理治療作用；另一方面，儀式中的懺悔告罪內容反映對婦女的個人救贖之外，對家庭及社會間的人際和諧關係以至與自然及宇宙間的均衡追求更是關切。

關鍵詞：血湖懺 女性生理及生殖有關的污血禁忌 婦女宗教儀式 家庭、社會、自然界及宇宙間的和諧關係 香港雲泉仙館

Keywords: penitential ritual for salvation of women from the Lake of Blood; taboo on female bodily pollution; women's ritual; family, social, and cosmic harmony; Yunquan xianguan in Hong Kong