

拾壹、解讀《北遊記》中鏡、劍和真形意象

Mirrors, Swords & True Form in *Beiyou ji*

沈明文 Todd Stoll

Introduction

Yu Xiangdou 余象斗 collated the hagiography of Xuantian shangdi 玄天上帝 and gave it popular form in the Ming dynasty folk novel, *Beiyou ji* 北游記 (Journey to the North).¹ In the course of relating the story of Xuantian shangdi's rebirths and perfection, the author uses mirrors (jing 鏡) and swords (jian 劍) as symbols to construct a belief system which values true form (zhenxing 真形; zhenzheng zhi shen 真正之身). Perfection in Daoism is a process of recognition and refinement which returns the adept closer to the source, back to the state before creation within the Prior Heavens (xiantian 先天). To tap into that source is to return breath-force (qi 氣) to its original, undivided state (yuanqi 元氣), and transcend the mortal processes of maturation which lead to decay through loss of breath. Conversely, demonic cultivation works in the direction of decay, but does so in a dialectic of interaction with a partial exposure to the source. Demonic cultivation is in essence a mutation.² As such, it obscures true, original form. In practice, the perfected work to recover and reveal true form, while demons work to disguise and corrupt form.

Yu Xiangdou's narrative engages this understanding of perfection and demonic cultivation in the interactions of Xuantian shangdi with two categories of deviant spirits. The first group includes three spirits with connections to Wudangshan 武當山 as local place and earth (tudi 土地).³ They notice

1 The full title in the Ming edition is: *Beifang zhenwu zushi xuantian shangdi chushen zhizhuan* 北方真武祖師玄天上帝出身志傳. Here, for the sake of simplicity I will refer to the novel by its later, more popular title—*Beiyou ji*.

2 Cf. *Soushen ji* 搜神記. See: Von Glahn 2004, 86. Also, see: DZ 790, *Nuqing guilu* 女青鬼律, discussed in Strickmann 2002, 80–87.

3 They are: the Mother Goddess of the Mountain (*dang shan shengmu* 當山生母);

Xuantian shangdi practicing cultivations nearby, and so disguise themselves as young women in an attempt to steal his refined essences through sexual intercourse. A soon-to-be perfected Xuantian shangdi beheads or chases off these spirits with his Treasure Sword (*baojian* 寶劍). The second group includes demons who were originally assigned to his command in heaven, but ran off before he reached his post. These demons begin to return to the command of Xuantian shangdi as his thirty-six Heavenly Generals (*tian jiang* 天將) after Xuantian shangdi himself returns to his own original identity and true form. His individual return involves laying a moral foundation to pacify the Heart-Mind (*xin* 心), and from this foundation he is then able to subdue and regather wayward, dark forces (*heiqi* 黑氣) as proper force (*zhengqi* 正氣). After reaching ascension Xuantian shangdi receives a Seven Star Sword (*qixing jian* 七星劍), and with this sword he channels True Fire (*zhenhuo* 真火) and True Water (*zhenshui* 真水). This sets a process of transformation in motion that by the end of the novel leads to 「dark forces regathered (returned to order)」 (*heiqi shou wan* 黑氣收完)⁴ and to 「great peace under heaven」 (*tianxia da taiping* 天下大太平).⁵ The process which accomplishes this relates to: the theories and practices of inner alchemy (*jindan* 金丹); to a Buddhist

a Bamboo Pole Demon (*zhugan jing* 竹竿精) growing beside Xuantian shangdi's meditation platform; and an Earthworm Demon (*shan jing* 蟪精) living in the earth nearby. The phallic symbolism of the latter two (in their true forms) suggests that they are demonic manifestations of Xuantian shangdi's own desire. Their transformations into seductive young women may be viewed then as projections of that desire turned inward, and in this reading Xuantian shangdi wins a battle for control of his own Heart and Mind (*xin* 心) when he cuts them off.

4 *Beiyou ji* 1602 edition, 224. After the final conversion: 「The Venerable Teacher was very pleased to see that dark forces (deviant breath-force) in the middle world (mortal world) had been completely eliminated (exhausted), and that the people were at peace and happy」 (祖師大悅見中界黑氣俱盡人民安樂). In this context there is a double sense of having completely eliminated demonic disturbances, and of having completely exhausted 「deviant」 or 「wayard breath」. The Jade Emperor then confirms that: 「dark forces have all been regathered (returned to order)」; or, alternately: 「deviant breath-force has been regathered (returned to order)」 黑氣收完.

5 *Ibid*, 235.

concern with Original Mind (benxin 本心), and to a Confucian concern with station and the Rectification of Names (zhengming 正名)—all set within a Daoist frame.

In contrast to that of other recent research, this study is specifically concerned with Yu Xiangdou's 1602 edition of the novel and with its worldview. I hope to show the various layers of intended 「meaning」 in that edition—its agendas, and thereby to answer why Yu Xiangdou published a new hagiography of Xuantian shangdi for a popular, late Ming audience. Whereas previous research began with an assumption that the true agendas of *Beiyou ji* are to be found elsewhere in earlier spirit writings and/or canonical texts, this study builds its understanding from a social semiotic study of Yu Xiangdou's illustrated edition. I discuss the specific value constructions in *Beiyou ji*'s narrative involving mirrors, swords and true form, and relate them to the practices and concerns that led to Ming syncretism and the rise of Quanzhen 全真 at Wudangshan.

Mirrors in *Beiyou ji*'s Text

In chapter one⁶ of *Beiyou ji*, the Three Pure Ones (Sanqing 三清) ask the as-of-yet unperfected 「Firstborn」⁷ Xuantian shangdi if he knows who he was in a previous existence. Firstborn answers that he does not, so he is then told that he may find his answer in a Heaven Reflecting Mirror (zhaotian jing 照天鏡). Therein he will see his true form, the Jade Emperor (Yudi 玉帝). Firstborn is also instructed that he may once again attain his original form through cultivation of the way.⁸

In chapter six, his soul is reborn once again. In this birth, too, he must be

6 The 1602 edition is not divided into formal chapters, but is instead divided into four juan 卷 with titled section (ze 則) divisions. Here I refer to these sections as chapters. Qing dynasty and later editions follow this understanding by formally dividing the text's sections into chapters (hui 回).

7 In chapters 1 and 2 Xuantian Shangdi is called Changsheng 長生, this references a double meaning of 「Firstborn」 and 「Immortal.」 Thereafter, he is either called Venerable Teacher (Zushi 祖師), or Crown Prince (Taizi 太子).

8 *Beiyou ji* 1602 edition, 14-15.

reminded of his original identity. Here the Celestial Worthy, Miaole tianzun 妙樂天尊 tests him by asking him what he sees in a basin of water. What he sees is the Jade Emperor and an Immortal looking into a mirror and having a discussion. He does not understand the significance of these images, so he is told to look one more time into the reflection. This time he sees an ox plowing a field. The Celestial Worthy then explains to the unperfected soul that:

「The Jade Emperor (form) has become Your Majesty (by means of) the reincarnation of a soul. The Immortal (form) is what Your Majesty can cultivate in this birth. If Your Majesty does not cultivate (that form) in this birth, then he will obtain an ox (form) in the next. These forms express the appearances of (Your Majesty's) Three Existences.⁹

玉皇上帝迺陛下之魂化身仙人迺陛下今生可修者陛下今生不修來世即為牛矣此現三世之形容」¹⁰

Next, in chapter twenty-one we come across a paradox involving mirrors. Here we find a demon who uses a mirror as a weapon. Unlike other mirrors which reflect true form, this Demon Reflecting Mirror (zhaomo jing 照魔鏡) makes thoughts become muddled and vision blurred. Xuantian shangdi is traveling with the generals he has converted when he comes upon a demon named Fu Ying 副應 blocking the road. The group prepares to move forward, but Fu Ying launches his mirror weapon. This causes the thoughts and vision of the generals to become unclear. He then launches the weapon a second time, but Xuantian shangdi easily destroys the mirror by spurting true fire (zhenhuo 真火) from the south¹¹ with his sword.¹²

9 This last line might also read: 「These forms express the appearances of the Three Worlds.」 A double-meaning may be intended in which the 「emptiness of form」 and 「true form」 are both expressed.

10 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 52.

11 This is a reversal of his normal position. Xuantian shangdi is a god of the north, and his associated element is water, cf. wuxing 五行 correlations. Metal (the mirror is made out of bronze) generates water in the wuxing generative (sheng 生) order; however, fire conquers metal in the wuxing conquering (ke 克) order.

Lastly, in chapter twenty-three we encounter a tale of two girls who are struck dead by the Thunder Lord (Leigong 雷公). The Thunder Lord thinks he sees the girls commit a crime, but is mistaken in what he sees. The Thunder Lord reports his mistake to the Thunder Envoy (Leishi 雷使), and the Thunder Envoy revives and invests the girls with Thunder and Lightning Mirrors (leidian jing 雷電鏡). With these mirrors the girls now invested as Ladies are told that in the future if someone is to be struck dead:

「You must first release a lightning flash, with that illumination (I may then) understand (the situation clearly).

你先放電光照得明白」¹³

Mirrors in Daoist Texts and Temples

In these passages, the author of *Beiyou ji* is drawing on established practice in Daoism wherein mirrors were used to reveal true forms and thereby convey both locative and transcendent powers. Ge Hong's *Baopuzi Neipian* 抱朴子內篇 discusses these powers.¹⁴ There he relates that mirrors may be used in mountains as protection from demons who disguise and transform themselves.¹⁵ Ge Hong also discusses a Bright Mirror (ming jian 明鑑) method which enables the practitioner to multiply his/her own body.¹⁶

Lagerwey¹⁷ discusses a text from the Six Dynasties period (420-589) titled, *Taishang mingjian zhenjing* 太上明鑑真經 (DZ 1207) which gives us further insight into Bright Mirror methods. In this text the Daoist adept visualizes divinities in four mirrors in a process of refinement which reenacts the gestation of Laozi in the womb. This refinement brings one 「face to face with the true form of the Old Infant」 - that is, back to the 「thing which forms

12 *Beiyou ji* 1602 edition, 202-203.

13 *Ibid*, 222.

14 Ware 1966 dates the *Baopuzi* to 320 C.E.

15 Ware 1966, 281-282.

16 *Ibid*, 306.

17 Lagerwey 1987, 281-282.

in Chaos [hundun 混沌].」 In this context we see that magic mirrors not only reveal the true forms of the demonic, but may also reveal the true form (prior form, or potentiality) of perfection.

Edward L. Davis¹⁸ discusses Song dynasty (960-1279) Buddho-Daoist therapeutic rites in which child-mediums are asked to divine true events in a mirror so as to aid ritual masters in the exorcism of malevolent beings who have possessed their clients. In this context, multiple true forms, or events may be revealed. The Thunder Lord episode from chapter twenty-three in our text references this understanding of mirrors as clearly revealing true events.

The Yuan dynasty (1260-1368) text, Shangyang zi jindan dayao tu 上陽子金丹大要圖 (DZ 1068) includes an illustration of a mirror used in a Bright Mirror (ming jing 明鏡) method.¹⁹ The illustration is copied from an earlier Five Dynasties (907-960) text without an accompanying commentary²⁰, but its placement in this later Quanzhen (全真) self-cultivation manual indicates that bright mirror methods were included in that tradition's repertoire of inner alchemy practices. The theoretical basis of this collection of practices involves a cosmology shared with DZ 1207, in which true form relates to a unified state before creation. The practices discussed lead an adept through stages of perfection in a return to that unity. Note that this illustration has images of the eight trigrams, thirty phases of the moon, and twelve hexagrams. As in DZ 1207 we may gather that this Bright Mirror method involves a manipulation of time and stages of gestation or refinement (associated with lunar phases in alchemical writings). It is also significant that the mirror is divided into nine fields (four outer and five inner) by concentric circles leading to the center where the names of the five elements (wuxing 五行) are written.²¹ This may relate to the process of Nine

18 Davis 2001, 87-170.

19 See the DZ 1068 illustration below.

20 See Schipper and Verellen 2004, 2: 1182.

21 Compare this illustration with the DZ 267 mirror illustration below. The DZ

Returns (jiuhuan 九還) by which essences are refined and perfected through interactions of the five elements.

Another Quanzhen text from the Yuan, Shangcheng xiuzhen sanyao 上乘修真三要 (DZ 267) includes an illustration of a Heart-Mind (xin 心) Mirror.²² At the beginning of the text there is an illustration of an adept who looks like Xuantian shangdi—he has long, loose hair and a beard, he is barefoot, and he is holding a sword. This adept prepares to 「end impermanence」 (liao wuchang 了無常) through cultivation and refinement of a disciplined Heart-Mind (xin 心), Fundamental Human Nature (xing 性), and Life Force (ming 命). The text above the mirror illustration reads: 「If the Heart-Mind is too complete, the mirror is without brightness」 (xin tai yuan, jing wu ming 心太圓, 鏡無明)²³. In other words, ‘a complicated heart/mind is like an unclear mirror.’ If you calm the Heart-Mind, you will be able to return to the way which is pure and bright. A series of ten images in the text illustrate just that—through the symbolism of a horse being trained, we are shown steps that lead wild agitation to peaceful rest. After laying a mental and spiritual foundation of cultivation, the adept is then led through stages of inner alchemy in a return to the 「complete perfection」 (quanzhen 全真) of the True Origin (zhen yuan 真元), and to the 「true emptiness which is not empty」 (zhen kong bu kong 真空不空)²⁴ of Non-Action (wu wei 無為).

For the Ming (1368-1644), the period in which our text was written, there is further, continuing evidence of ritual mirrors revealing both demonic and perfected true forms. In the Golden Peak Hall of Imperial Scriptures (Jinding

267 illustration also includes the five elements in its center.

22 See the DZ 267 illustration below (volume 2, number 6). Also, see DZ 574 for more on the Heart-Mind Mirror.

23 Alternately, it may also read: The Mind Mirror of Supreme Non-Being is Complete Understanding (xinjing taiwu yuanming 心鏡太無圓明). Both may be intended in a “magic square” of reading from multiple directions for similar meanings.

24 This corresponds to “the Supreme Non-Being which is not without being” (tai wei bu wei 太為不為).

Huangjing tang 金頂皇經堂) on Wudang Mountain²⁵ there is an enormous Demon Reflecting Mirror (zhaoyao jing 照妖鏡). On the backside of the mirror are the words 「Xuantian shangdi」 玄天上帝 and two flying dragons. It also has four suspension nobs from which it would have been hung. The mirror was donated by a Henan scholar in the Zhengde 正德 reign (1506-1521) of the Ming dynasty.²⁶ This mirror is evidence of both the importance and continuing ritual use in the Ming of mirrors for apotropaic purposes. Given the context in which it was kept—a hall for the ritualistic reading of scriptures—we may gather that not only was it suspended to keep demons at bay, but also further to aid in the refinement of the performers.

Also at Wudang Mountain, immediately inside the main doors of temples, we find two protecting gods, White Tiger (Baihu 白虎) and Green Dragon (Qinglong 青龍). Over each of their solar plexus is a mirror. There, mirrors protect both them and the corporate body of the temple from outside demonic attack. Any demon appearing at their gate would have its true form revealed, and consequently would not be able to advance through deception.

Just outside of the Triple Main Gate (sanmen 三門) of Foshan Zumiao (佛山祖廟), the Moon Goddess (Yueshen 月神) and Sun God (Rishen 日神) raise mirrors to reflect essences of the moon and sun upon the entrance.²⁷ Inside, there is an enormous bronze mirror similar in size to the one at Wudangshan. It is kept in the front hall where Xuantian shangdi's generals stand guard. There it keeps demons at bay and illuminates the hearts of devotees entering the temple to worship. According to an inscription on the back of the mirror it was cast in the Jiajing (嘉靖) reign of the Ming dynasty in the year 1540.

25 Wudangshan 武當山: The place of Xuantian shangdi's perfection and ascension, as well as his devotional center.

26 See: Hu Jinghua 2004. 「武当山发现全国最大古铜镜」. 北京娱乐信报.

27 Compare this arrangement to the DZ 431 mirror illustration (below) which pictures the sun and the moon illuminating the Five Sacred Mountains (the axis-mundi linking heaven and earth). The commentary on this illustration notes that ritual mirrors are used to illuminate the Heart-Mind (xin 心) and to reflect the transformations of demons so as to return to the path which is pure and bright and to rectify spirits with that which is proper.

As in these Daoist texts and temples, the characters of Beiyou ji see and divine original forms and events in mirrors, and so draw closer to truth through self cultivation and ritual practice. We noted above that Firstborn discovers his true form in the Heaven Reflecting Mirror. He asks the Three Pure Ones if he can once again attain his Original True Form (zhenzheng zhi shen 真正之身). Both the question and its answer tell us what is to be gained by the journey north. The north is, after all, the position from which the emperor sits facing south, and the Jade Emperor is the emperor of heaven. North is also the direction of the turtle and snake symbol Xuanwu 玄武 which is literally part of Xuantian Shangdi's body in our story. But 「north」 is just part of the frame surrounding 「form」. The 「return」 in our journey, which references pristine form, is equally emphasized. The Three Pure Ones embody the pristine form of the Prior Heavens, and so answer Firstborn from that position:

「If you want to return to the true form of your previous being, it is only necessary to cultivate what is proper.²⁸ Study Daoist Complete Perfection²⁹, only thus can (you) obtain a return to the source as (you were) before.

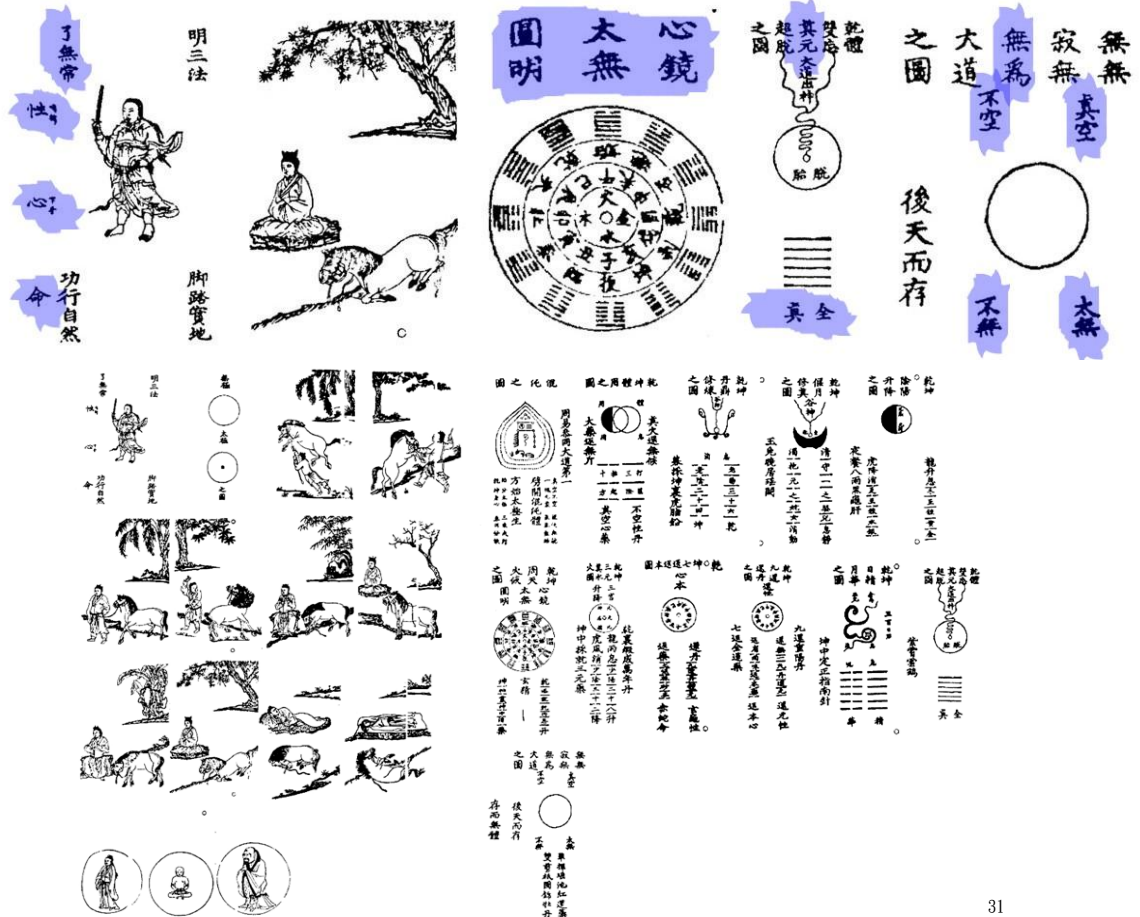
汝要復前生真正之身除非要修行為正學道全真纔得依本還原」³⁰

28 Just before the ascension of Xuantian shangdi, the Celestial Worthy observes that the perfected, soon-to-be Xuantian shangdi has indeed cultivated 「what is proper.」

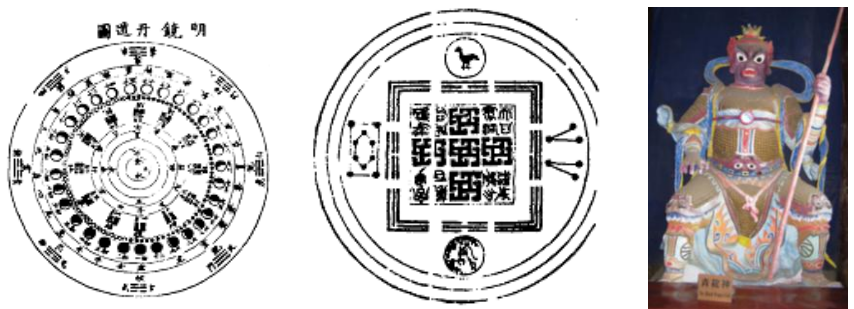
29 Alternately, 學道全真 may read: 「Study the Way's complete perfection.」 In this reading the reference is also to the Quanzhen school, but through a reference to its practices and not through a direct reference to its name. See the DZ 267 illustration below (volume 2, number 11) where 「complete perfection」 (quanzhen 全真) relates to the True Origin (zhen yuan 真元).

30 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 15.

References



31



32

31 Top Row: DZ 267, detail; Bottom Row: DZ 267 (L) volume one illustrations, (R) volume two illustrations.
 32 Image 1: DZ 1068; Image 2: DZ 431; Image 3: Qinglong at Wudangshan.



33

Swords in Beiyou ji's Text ³⁴

In chapter one of Beiyou ji, Firstborn takes up a sword³⁵ in anger and attempts to chop down a Future Buddha (rulai 如来) disguised as a Daoist whom he mistakenly believes has stolen the numinous lights of a Treasure Tree (baoshu 寶樹). He finds that this action is neither fruitful, nor conducive to his perfection. The sword breaks.³⁶ Likewise, a king in chapter two uses a sword against Firstborn in anger and though he succeeds in cutting him to pieces, Firstborn reforms as he was before.³⁷ However, by the middle of the chapter the soul must be reborn once again after accepting the seductions of a queen with a promise to meet her again in the next life.

In his second birth the crown prince again displays his anger when he calls for the beheading of a 「barbarian」 envoy.³⁸ This anger creates a war between the two kingdoms, but before it is fought the Celestial Worthy disguises himself as a Daoist priest (daoshi 道士) and comes to the soul's rescue. From a stockade tower near a pass surrounded by the barbarian army the Daoist priest:

33 Images 1-2: Yueshen and Rishen at Foshan Zumiao; Image 3: Wudangshan bronze mirror (Photo:chinawudang.com); Image 4: Foshan Zumiao bronze mirror.

34 Images 1-2: Yueshen and Rishen at Foshan Zumiao; Image 3: Wudangshan bronze mirror (Photo:chinawudang.com); Image 4: Foshan Zumiao bronze mirror.

35 Here the text reads dao (刀) which may be read as either 「knife」 or 「broadsword.」 I translate it as sword because this episode parallels episodes in chapters 2 and 6, in which commands to 「cut off limbs」 and/or “behead” are contemplated or given.

36 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 11-12.

37 Ibid, 18-19.

38 Ibid, 25-26.

「unbound his topknot and loosened his hair. He held a Seven Star Sword in his hand, and offered a bowl of pure water. In his mouth he murmured an incantation of True Words, then he directed the guards to open the gate of their frontier fort a little. Instantly the heavens darkened and the earth was obscured. Then from out of the void there came flying sand and rolling rocks, striking directly toward the north.

披頭散髮手持一把七星劍捧一碗清水口中念動真言咒語吩咐手下點開關門一霎時間天昏地暗飛沙走石自空而來一直打向北方」³⁹

The barbarian army is then completely destroyed by this magic of 「flying sand and rolling stones,」⁴⁰ and so the battle is won without the king or his army raising a sword in anger.⁴¹ The Celestial Worthy departs, but then returns ten years later to encourage the grown prince (now the king) to leave his family and kingdom. The king consents and ascends a mountain to begin cultivation of the Way with meditation practice and scripture recitations. However he later fails another test when he agrees to marry a peach maiden in a future life in exchange for her peach. This leads to another birth.

In his third birth our soul is once again reborn as a prince who grows to be a king, and once again wants to use a sword in anger. In this birth the king orders his commander of the vanguard to decapitate the Celestial Worthy who has disguised himself as a Daoist priest, but the Celestial Worthy asks that the king first answer who he was before being born into the mortal world. The king answers that he does not know. Here, as in chapter one, the soul

39 Ibid, 30-31.

40 「Flying sand and rolling stones」 (feisha zoushi 飛沙走石) is an idiom meaning 「a very strong wind or storm.」

41 Here we may note that the Celestial Worthy is teaching the soul proper martial methods that do not involve anger, and instead employ the natural forces of the Way.

is then reminded with a mirror test.⁴² However, this time he distrusts what he sees and hears, and therefore orders his commander of the vanguard to behead the Daoist. The Celestial Worthy puffs out a breath to knock over the commander and escapes on a cloud. From that cloud he again warns the king that if he does not renounce his life of pleasure he will be reborn as an ox in the next life. He also adds that once the soul sinks to that existence, it is doomed to remain there for ten-thousand years. This changes the king's mind and he decides to leave his family and kingdom for a life of asceticism in the mountains.⁴³ There he attains the Way, and ascends to heaven where he receives a Seven Star Sword (qixing jian 七星劍) and is allowed to sit beside the Jade Emperor sharing the same cushion. Yet he discovers that his ascension is incomplete after he is told that he must live out forty-two remaining years originally allotted to him.⁴⁴ This means that the use of this sword and a true return to unity with the Jade Emperor are both postponed until yet another birth. Only after he completes his share of suffering will he finally be able to reach full perfection. He therefore turns himself into a ray of golden light and enters the womb of the queen of Jingluo (淨洛).⁴⁵

He is then reborn into his final birth, once again as a crown prince. One New Year's Eve the crown prince wanders outside of the palace to tour the four quarters of the capital. Meanwhile, the goddess Doumu 斗母 has disguised herself as a Daoist priest and is

42 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 51-52.

43 Ibid, 53-54.

44 This indicates that he has not cultivated all that is necessary to 「turn his fate.」

45 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 61-66. Compare with chapter two where he meets the queen of Geshe 哥闍 in the Jingle 淨樂 Palace. Later editions of the novel name his final kingdom as Jingle also, instead of Jingluo—this neatly adds an end to his cycle of births in the same place where his sexual desire began, but fails to address his first birth born of desire for the tree.

also touring the four quarters, 「in order to investigate the Heart-Minds of mortals」 (yi tan ren xin 以探人心). One after the other in the four quarters the crown prince encounters commoners who get carried away with wine, lust, money, and anger. He cries out in exasperation, and Doumu (the goddess of the Dipper—the constellation which governs mortal lifespan) answers his call saying that she knows how to get rid of these four evil desires. Without being ordered, the commander of the vanguard strikes out at the Daoist priest with his sword, but the goddess escapes on a cloud. There she reveals her true form and tells the prince:

「The Origin of the Way has no root,⁴⁶
A person must search for it within himself;
If you long for wealth and status,
Apprehension will obscure your true spirits.
道本無根 要人自尋 若戀富貴 恐昧真靈」

The prince vows to put aside his kingdom and leave his family.⁴⁷ Later, at the end of chapter seven he does just that, and follows the goddess to Wudang Mountain. There he bows down to her as his master and she teaches him scriptures and meditations to cultivate the Way.

Yet, it is only after the Gutting God cuts out his stomach and intestines to free his body of the Filth of the Five Viscera (wuzang zhong zhi hui 五臟中之穢) that the almost perfected Xuantian shangdi receives a Treasure Sword (baojian 寶劍) from the Celestial

46 Compare this statement to the episode of original desire which plants roots—the desire for the Treasure Tree (baoshu 寶樹) which causes Firstborn to raise a sword in anger. Instead of uprooting his desire for the tree (the body-symbol of the Buddha), he instead tries to use a sword to cut down one of the tree's spirit treasures disguised as a Daoist (the true bodily form of the Future Buddha).

47 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 68-70.

Worthy.⁴⁸ With this Treasure Sword, he then begins to confront his own desires, see through false forms, and cut off his attachments. First, a bamboo demon disguises itself as a beautiful girl, and then tries to climb up onto the Venerable Teacher's meditation platform to steal his perfected essence. The Venerable Teacher beheads the demon with his sword.⁴⁹ Next, an earthworm demon disguises itself as a beautiful girl, and also tries to steal his perfected essence. This demon uses a Body Nailing Magic (ding shen fa 釘身法)⁵⁰ to try and pin him down, but the Venerable Teacher succeeds in pulling his sword out and she disappears.⁵¹

The Celestial Worthy sees that the Venerable Teacher's spirit and Heart-Mind have remained in a Proper State (zhengqi 正氣) during these attacks to his body from the two demons. Therefore the Celestial Worthy concludes that the Venerable Teacher has reached perfection, and he reports this to the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor then summons the Venerable Teacher to his court, and gives him a Seven Star Sword (qixing jian 七星劍) to subdue and transform Evil Forces (yaoqi 妖氣).⁵²

With this sword, Xuantian shangdi points and channels either True Water (zhenshui 真水) or True Fire (zhenhuo 真火) to defeat demons embodying the five elements (wuxing 五行). After they submit, he then gives all but one of them a Fire Elixir (huo dan 火丹) to swallow. The remaining demon—Hua Guang 華光—receives a Concentrated Water Pearl (ju shui zhu 聚水珠) to swallow.⁵³ This

48 Ibid, 89-90.

49 Ibid, 91-92.

50 Her Body Nailing Magic may be understood as the opposite (reverse function) of a Daoist's sword used to pin down demons at an altar. See the 「Swords in Daoist Texts and Temples」 section below.

51 Ibid, 92-95.

52 Ibid, 96-100.

53 Hua Guang is a special case. He embodies Bingding Fire of the South 南方丙丁之火 which is the opposite of Xuantian Shangdi's Rengui Water of the North 北方壬癸之水.

refinement of the five elements converts the demons back into generals of the Way.

At seeming odds with this construction of swords being efficacious in use against demonic, false form, we then read in chapter twelve that Xuantian shangdi is 「defeated」 by a demon despite his sword. Furthermore, this demon is a Sword Demon (dao jing 刀精). How do we understand this paradox? The answer may be found in a further exploration of numinous efficaciousness—ling 靈. Both the perfected and demonic may acquire ling. The nature of this efficacy is different, however. Perfected ling is acquired through a return to original essence, while demonic ling is acquired through mutated distance from that original essence. In chapter twelve we find that the 「victorious」 demon is a weapon that has been left behind by its master, Guan Yu 關羽, who is off practicing further cultivations. This misplaced object is similar to Xuantian shangdi's stomach and intestine which also became demons after being cut out. These two episodes illustrate the danger of misplaced possessions. On their own, cut off from processes of perfection, these objects deviate from their original form and become demonic. A sword is a powerful instrument, but it is only a conduit of inner essence. What then is this demonic sword channeling, and how may it be rectified?

In chapter twelve, Guan Yu has left his post to study Buddhist teachings in the Western Heaven. So as not to offend Buddhist laws, he has left his sword behind. Yet he fails to abide by the laws of his own heaven when he runs off without first informing his master. Meanwhile his sword has mutated into a demon. This demon then kills Xuantian shangdi with a flurry of flying swords, but Xuantian shangdi is then revived by the Three Pure Ones with True Words (zhen yan 真言) and three breaths. Immediately thereafter, Xuantian shangdi travels to the Western Heaven to inform Guan Yu about what has happened in his absence. When he arrives the Buddha summons Guan Yu and explains:

「You are a minister, and he is your lord. If the lord wants his minister to die, then the minister must die. If a father orders

his son's death, then the son must die. He has now come (for you), how can you manage to not go (with him)?

汝乃臣子他乃主主欲臣死不得不死父叫子亡不得不亡他今既來安有不去之理⁵⁴」

Guan Yu understands that this means Xuantian shangdi is his lord and that he should obey him. Guan Yu then subdues and reclaims his sword, and both pledge allegiance to Xuantian shangdi.

The Buddha's words reveal the fault in Guan Yu's behavior which initiated the sword's demonic cultivation. He did not maintain proper order when he left his post, and because of this he was out of place. His sword channeled that disorder as a further attack not just on the authority of Xuantian shangdi as lord, but also as demonic breath injuring his body and life force. What rectifies the actions of both Guan Yu and his sword is a return to proper place—a realignment in which the prioritization of original breath-force (yuan qi 元氣) and of hierarchical social station is reinstated.

In summary, several functions of swords are emphasized in the novel. In the first eight chapters swords are raised in anger. This anger is a hindrance to perfection and to the preservation of life. The Celestial Worthy shows the soul how a sword can be used without anger and instead be used to control nature in chapter four. In chapter nine the soul receives a sword to cut off his remaining desires. This sword protects his refined essences from demons. After reaching complete perfection he then receives another sword to help him regather his wayward generals who have become demons. This sword channels True Fire and True Water to refine and return his generals-turned-demons to their true forms. In chapter twelve, however, Xuantian shangdi encounters a Sword

54 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 135. Here Yu Xiangdou is using a Confucian discourse on the rectification of names (zheng ming 正名) as a polemic against the abandonment of Daoist practices for Buddhist practices. He is, however, not dismissing Buddhism. By putting these words in the mouth of the Buddha himself, the author is instead attempting to invoke Buddhist authority in an argument for the Three Teachings as One (san jiao he yi 三教合一) within a Daoist frame.

Demon who channels disorder which threatens to halt and reverse his work.

Swords in Daoist Texts and Temples

In swords, as with mirrors, Beiyou Ji draws on a prior discourse of ritual usage and association. In the early medieval Taiqing 太清 text, Taiqing jing tianshi koujue 太清經天師口訣 (DZ 883) we read:

「When you compound the great medicines, you should always stay in a quiet place in the mountain forests. Build the Chamber of the Great Medicines and hang four swords at its four sides. Then make the Pellet for Expelling the Demons and the Talisman for Expelling the Demons. You should affix and hang them [inside the Chamber]; if you do not do so, when the time comes to compound the great medicines their essence and pneuma (jingqi) would be inhaled by the demons. This is why you should protect the medicines by driving away noxious demons and spirits.⁵⁵

凡合大藥必在山林靜所作大藥屋四面懸劍並作卻鬼丸卻鬼符安之懸之始可合大藥不爾者鬼神喻藥精氣必作符藥卻惡鬼神也」

This passage illustrates the use of ritual swords in protecting sacred space – here the Chamber of the Great Medicines. Inside such chambers, a three-tiered platform altar would be built, with swords and mirrors placed nearby to protect it from demons. There is the danger that demons may become even more powerful and mutate further if they are allowed to acquire refined essences. These 「great medicines」 grant powers of control over form since their ingestion allows ones body access to the potentiality of the origin. Refinement itself does not ensure perfection. Adherence to proper form and place, to the natural laws of the Way, in re-tracing the unfolding of creation is what leads one to perfection. Demonic refinement is a confusion of return and further unfolding. Swords protect altars, then, by fixing positions. This

55 Translation: Pregadio 2006, 88.

becomes even more evident when we consider their specific placement on altars. In our external-alchemy (waidan 外丹) text above, and in later inner-alchemy (neidan 内丹) illustrations drawing on external-alchemy texts, swords are placed in the four directions. Other ritual texts call for placing one sword on top of the three-tiered altar. Together with mirrors, they help rectify forms in retraced steps to their origins. Mirrors reveal their true form, and swords pin them in place.

This function of swords may also be seen in a ritual performed within community temples. Lagerwey⁵⁶ discusses the Daoist ritual of Sealing the Altar (jin tan 禁壇) in which a Daoist priest uses a sword to seal the altar area against demonic disruption. To accomplish this, the priest uses his sword to chase a demon who has entered through 「the gate of the demons」. The priest drives him back into the northeast corner (the gate of demons), and places a bucket of rice there in which he writes the character 「demon」(gui 鬼) with his sword. He then imprisons the demon under lines drawn with the sword to represent a net, presses the demon under the character for 「mountain」(shan 山), and finally fixes the demon by planting his sword upright in the rice.⁵⁷ There, subdued, the demon is converted 「into a guardian of the altar's most vulnerable corner」.⁵⁸ In this ritual, the Daoist's sword acts to control and refine demons: it binds them in true form, a state which changes the way in which they then act. So changed, the 「demons」 now become instruments of the way itself, but only so long as they remain 「pinned down」 by that sword.

At the microcosmic level the orifices of the Daoist adept's body correspond to the gates of the ritual altar. The True Earth Chart (zhentu tu 真土圖) in the inner alchemy text Xingming Guizhi 性命圭旨 pictures two swords planted in the ground beside a meditating adept. The two swords act to seal and protect the reaction vessel or body of the adept from leaks

56 Lagerwey 1987, 90–105, 303–305. Also, see: Saso 1972, 67–72.

57 Contrast this with the Body Nailing Magic the earthworm demon uses to pin down the Venerable Teacher.

58 Lagerwey 1987, 102.

and/or intrusions. Saso⁵⁹ describes how demons attack and cause sickness through the Gate of Life (sheng men 生門)⁶⁰ as evil breath (hei qi 黑氣). He notes, 「Within the microcosm of the body, [the gate of life] is the gate through which seminal essence, primordial breath, and spirit escape, leading man inevitably from life to death. The Taoist by his meditations of inner alchemy seeks to seal off the gate of escape and keep life breaths, spirit, and vital essence within the microcosm.」⁶¹ To defend against this noxious breath, the Daoist priest may draw upon thunder breath. In the course of gathering that breath the priest recites the following mantra: 「The One Primordial Breath of the Prior Heavens; By ordered stages rules the myriad spirits!」⁶² The Three Breaths (san qi 三氣) of Xuantian shangdi's revival may be seen, then, as a re-enactment and re-prioritization of original breath (yuan qi 元氣): 「The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures.」⁶³ The two swords of the True Earth Chart also directly act as agents in this process of re-ordering creation back to its unified source. The commentary on the chart explains that the swords represent yin 陰 as True Water and yang 陽 as True Fire. The process of refining the two with True Earth—the 3:5:1 Process—produces the elixir of harmonized essence, vital breath and spirit. This process of refinement is represented in the chart through the positioning of the two swords (water as 1 + fire as 2 = 3) in the earth (5) beside the body of a meditating adept (the sealed vessel refilled with original breath—the one).⁶⁴

59 Saso 2000, 244-250.

60 The 「gate of demons」 in this context is called the Gate of Life. See: Saso 2000, 244-246.

61 Ibid, 246.

62 Ibid, 252.

63 Lau 1963, Book Two: XLII.

64 In Five Phase 五行 theories wood=3, fire=2, metal=4, water=1, and earth=5. Water is positioned in the north, earth in the center, and fire in the south—so for water and fire to mix they have to meet in earth.

In Hebei Province in the Beifangcheng Zhenwu Temple 北方城 真武廟 main hall, Beiji Gong 北極宮, there is a forty-eight panel mural depicting Xuantian shangdi's hagiography. This mural illustrates several related ritual functions of swords I have just outlined above: to protect the altar/body and refined essences; to fix demons in place; and to refine yin and yang. Panels 19, 21, 24 and 27 are reminiscent of the horse-as-mind illustrations in DZ 267 I discussed above in the 「Mirrors」 section. As in those illustrations, there is a return from distraction in panel nineteen to stillness in panel twenty-seven. In the mural this return is further expressed as a refinement of yin 陰 and yang 陽 (black and white tigers in front of the meditating Crown Prince in panel 21) that results in the state of pure yang (the white tiger only beside an upright sword and upright Crown Prince in meditation).⁶⁵ Additionally, in panel twenty-four the sword planted upright has fixed the tiger in place before his meditation platform, and in panel twenty-seven the angle of the sword on his back appears to pin the tiger in position beside him.

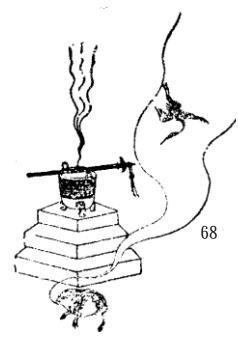
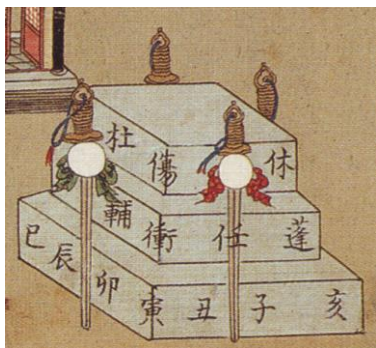
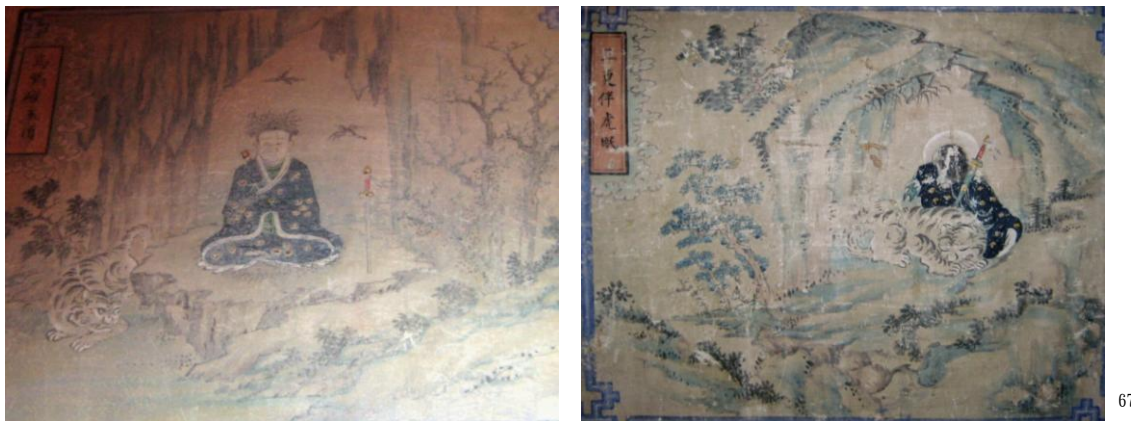
Recall that in the novel the refinement of the Heart-Mind is expressed as a battle against demons disguised as seductive women. Despite this difference, in both the mural and novel the refinement of the Heart-Mind involves the sword bestowed before full ascension. In DZ 267 the focus of the first volume involves the construction of a solid mental and spiritual foundation of cultivation; the second volume builds on this foundation with a discussion of the stages of inner alchemy and cultivation of Life Force (ming 命). The novel follows this structure by changing the emphasis of cultivation after full ascension in chapter nine to inner alchemy

65 Note that the white tiger has black stripes, and that the black tiger has white stripes. This relates to yin and yang containing a portion of one another in the state after creation within the Later Heavens (houtian 後天).

processes of refining and regathering wayward bodies and breath. This new emphasis involves a new sword—the Seven Star Sword (qixing jian 七星劍), which is bestowed immediately after he accepts the mission to 「subdue Malign Breath-Force」 (shou yaoqi 收妖氣).⁶⁶

66 Beiyou ji 1602 edition, 100.

References



67 Beifangcheng 北方城 Zhenwu Temple Mural (Panels: 19, 21, 24, and 27).

68 Image 1: Little and Eichman 2000, 347; Image 2: Lagerwey 1987, 305; Image 3: DZ 1220; Image 4: DZ 151.

69 First Three Images: Song bronze mirrors; Fourth Image: True Earth Chart in: *Xingming guizhi* 性命圭旨.

True Form in Beiyou ji

In unpacking the meanings of mirrors and swords in the *Beiyou ji* we have seen how they fit into the author's interpretation of form. Original form aligns with perfection, while altered form aligns with the demonic. Mirrors in *Beiyou ji* reveal and help guide us to original forms, while swords in the hands of the perfected help pin down altered form and change its course away from decadence. What this tells us about the difference between demons and the perfected is that they are defined relative to their adherence to proper social and cosmic order. Demons disrupt life and universal peace by altering true form into a mutation cultivated in deceit. The 「journey」 of our story, then, is an act of rectification.

Xuantian shangdi reaches self-perfection and is led to heaven, but there he learns that evil clouds have filled the world below. Further still, he learns that the source of that evil arises from his very own subordinates who have run away down into the Middle World (*zhongjie* 中界) of mortals. Therefore, his mission after perfection involves conquering these demons, and converting them back into his generals. This mission clearly illustrates the relationship between demonic and perfected form in *Beiyou ji*. Here the demonic is not some unknowable other, but part of the self. The rectification of Evil Forces (*yaoqi* 妖氣) regroups the divided corporate body as a container of True Force (*zhenqi* 真氣). As long as that vessel remains sealed, Evil Force is negated in a state of undifferentiated potentiality (*hundun* 混沌).⁷⁰

To our assessment that the (journey) of our story is a rectification, then, we may also add that this rectification reunites the divided body into a harmonious whole. On the individual level Xuantian shangdi regains the sacredness and sanctity of body of the ruler through his perfection and return to the Jade Emperor. Our demons, too, are reunited to this body vis-à-vis their submission to Xuantian shangdi.

70 See Girardot 1983.

The Corporate Body

As part of her dissertation on the cult of Xuantian shangdi, Chao⁷¹ traces the textual histories of the deities who appear in our novel as demons-turned-generals. In chapter one Chao discusses the development of Xuanwu 玄武. Beginning as an astronomical symbol for the direction north, Xuanwu was pictured as an intertwined turtle and snake. That representation persists to the present, but alongside this (meaning) Xuanwu also began to converge with an anthropomorphic god of the north in the Five Dynasties period (907-960). In Daoist texts dating from the Song (960-1279), Yuan (1260-1368), and Ming (1368-1644), Xuanwu further became attached to the hagiography of the emerging Xuantian shangdi.

Regarding the remaining thirty-four generals, Chao believes the Sanjiao soushen daquan 三教搜神大全 may have been a hagiographical source from which our author constructed an interpretation of Xuantian shangdi's Thirty-six Generals. Chao suggests that this text, together with various ritual texts from the Daoist Canon (Daozang 道藏), contains an original, true understanding of who the generals are. She states that Beiyou ji, 「obscures the relationship between the divine associates [the generals] and the Thunder Ritual. With help of the Collection [三教搜神大全] and liturgical manuals in the Daoist Canon, we can determine that at least eighteen of the divine associates are thunder deities or deities of the Thunder Ritual.」⁷² First, I would like to explore the connection between Beiyou ji's Thirty-six Generals and Thunder traditions. Later I will return to consider whether this connection is the main emphasis in our text, or whether, instead, it is the foundation from which a new understanding is built.⁷³

71 See Chao 2003.

72 Chao 2003, 173.

73 This is not to question Chao's erudite reconstruction of a thunder god/ritual connection, but rather to ask if this is the limit of our understanding of who they are. While identifying sources is an important aspect of clarifying their history, who they are is also determined by how that history is interpreted and used in new constructions.

DZ 1412, Taishang yuanshi tianzun shuo beidi fumo shenzhou miaojing 太上元始天尊說北帝伏魔神咒妙經, from the Song, represents a tradition which was most probably a source for the later Thunder Ritual tradition, Tianxin zhengfa 天心正法. In this text, Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊 orders Beidi 北帝 to descend with an army to Mount Fengdu (Fengdushan 酆都山) to eliminate the six harmful effects caused by the Demon Kings of the Six Heavens (Liutian mowang 六天魔王). These six harmful effects may be 「turned to a protective use」 through the exorcistic methods introduced in the book.⁷⁴ Of interest to us here is the pattern of Yuanshi tianzun's ordering Beidi to descend to defeat demons, which is paralleled in our text with the Jade Emperor's ordering Xuantian shangdi to descend to defeat demons. Also, in both texts the demons and their 「effects」 may be turned from harmful to protective use.

In the Tianxin zhengfa tradition itself Beidi is the tradition's Patriarchal Master (zushi 祖師) and presides over the Department of Exorcism (Quxie yuan 驅邪院). Beidi's three principal agents are: Tianpeng 天蓬, Xuanwu 玄武, and Heisha 黑殺 (also called the Talismanic Envoy of Xuanwu, Xuanwu fushi 玄武符使). In the Tianxin zhengfa text, Shangqing tianxin zhengfa 上清天心正法 (DZ 566), Tianpeng leads thirty-six generals (sanshiliu yuan tianjiang 三十六員天將).⁷⁵ In devotional art Xuanwu and Heisha are represented almost identically—both have long loose hair and a beard, are barefoot, and hold a sword. Heisha's title, Talismanic Envoy of Xuanwu, helps clarify why that is so. Talismans in early China were composed of two connecting pieces, and on the battlefield when a general received the matching half it was his confirmation of a true command from the throne.

74 Schipper and Verellen 2004, 1089–1091.

75 DZ 566, SH 10:613–614. Also, see: Schipper and Verellen 2004, 1064–1067; and Davis 2001, 77–78.

Next, in the reformed Shenxiao 神霄派 tradition of Bai Yuchan 白玉蟾, a new deity is introduced to head the thirty-six generals of the Thunder Agency (Leibu 雷部). His name is Jiutian yingyuan leisheng puhua tianzun 九天應元雷聲普化天尊. His iconography is also remarkably similar to that of Xuantian shangdi: both have long, loose hair and a beard, and both are barefoot and carry a sword. As Xuanwu acquired greater recognition from the imperial court in the Song, he became more widely known as an independent god. Yet, even as a separate god he became represented as a 「talismatic」 match to Leisheng puhua tianzun in devotional art from the Yuan through the Ming. However, one feature that often distinguishes the two is a third eye on Leisheng puhua tianzun's forehead. This feature also often distinguishes Xuanwu from Heisha.⁷⁶

As Chao documents, the generals associated with Xuantian shangdi did not remain an unchanging group, nor did their individual hagiographies remain unchanged. In the Song, as the Perfected Warrior (Zhenwu 真武) or Dark Warrior (Xuanwu 玄武), he was grouped with Heisha, Tianpeng, and a fourth god, Tianyou 天猷, to form the Four Saints (Sisheng 四聖) under Beidi. In the Yuan, his status was raised to Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heavens (Xuantian shangdi 玄天上帝), and four subordinate generals become associated with him: Generals Guan 關, Zhao 趙, Ma 馬 and Wen 溫. These four became known as the Four Great Heavenly Generals (Si da tianjiang 四大天將). The main halls of Wudangshan's Zixiao Gong 紫霄宮 and Nanyan 南岩 are arranged as illustrated in the Yuan dynasty painting below: Celestial Generals Guan and Zhao guard Xuantian shangdi's lower right, and Celestial Generals Wen and Ma guard his lower left.

With each new regrouping of Xuantian shangdi's associations, greater importance was focused upon his position as emperor (shangdi 上帝; dadì 大帝).⁷⁷ Beginning as part of a quartet of exorcist-generals under Beidi,

76 In several Yuan-Ming murals of the Four Saints this third eye on Heisha is represented as a jeweled headband.

77 See Chao 2003, chapter one for a detailed history of the development and

he then became the leader of generals who individually were known for their demon quelling attributes. In so doing, Xuantian shangdi assumed both the name and function of his former lord, Beidi 北帝.⁷⁸

In the late Song, as mentioned above, Bai Yuchan reformed the Shenxiao tradition. That reformation developed into the Qingwei Tradition (Qingwei pai 清微派). In the Yuan dynasty Zhang Shouqing 張守清 (1254-1336) helped propagate Qingwei thunder teachings and made them a crucial component of his New Wudang Tradition (Xin Wudang pai 新武當派). This new tradition's other main component was the Zhengyi sect, but it also drew on the inner alchemy methods of the Quanzhen priests practicing at the mountain's Eight Immortal Temple (Baxian Guan 八仙觀). By the early Qing, however, the authority and influence of the Quanzhen order surpassed that of the Zhengyi. Despite this change of affiliation, the Qingwei remained part of the Wudang Tradition.

Leisheng puhua tianzun was an important deity in both the Shenxiao and Qingwei traditions, and remains an important deity at Wudangshan to this day. The reader will please recall that it is this deity who heads the thirty-six generals of the Thunder Agency. How that deity and the Qingwei tradition as a whole relates to the Quanzhen teachings in the late Ming, is crucial to our understanding of the Thunder tradition present in *Beiyou ji*. That it is to say, Leisheng puhua tianzun and the Qingwei tradition were part of the foundation upon which the later Ming Wudang Quanzhen tradition and our novel were built. Thunder deities and the Thunder tradition remain present in these late Ming contexts, but are used in new constructions of meaning that are not bound by their former usage. Wudang Quanzhen, then, is the new frame within which thunder gods

imperial patronage of the Zhenwu cult.

78 See Chao 2003, 4-6.

and their traditions are presented in *Beiyou ji*. To quote again from chapter one:

「If you want to return to the true form of your previous being, it is only necessary to cultivate what is proper. Study Daoist Complete Perfection⁷⁹, only thus can (you) obtain a return to the source as (you were) before.

汝要復前生真正之身除非要修行為正學道全真纔得依本還原」⁸⁰

This recognition of Quanzhen as critical to the return to original form, explains why Thunder gods are seen to transgress against the order of heaven, and must be subjugated and placed under the command of Xuantian shangdi in his journey to perfection. That is to say, there is a new understanding of the perfection of the Way which reorders the relationship between thunder gods and their traditions with Quanzhen.

In the *Shenxiao* and *Qingwei* texts there is a mediation of the roles of Leisheng puhua tianzun and Xuantian shangdi. As seen in the *Qingwei* illustration below, the two are associated with different, yet overlapping groups of deities. With the Heavenly Worthy and Jade Emperor seated in the center, they and their associates stand on opposite sides. This arrangement suggests a complementary relationship, though, and does not suggest conflict.

Beiyou ji interprets their relationship in a different manner. First of all, Leisheng puhua tianzun is not mentioned at all. Instead, Leigong 雷公, The Envoy of Thunder and Clouds of the Eight Orientations (*Bafang yun lei shi zhe* 八方雲雷使者), and the Envoy

79 As noted above, 學道全真 may also read:「Study the Way's complete perfection.」

In this reading the reference is also to the Quanzhen school, but through a reference to its practices and not through a direct reference to its name.

See the DZ 267 illustration above (volume 2, number 11) where 「complete perfection」 (*quanzhen* 全真) relates to the True Origin (*zhen yuan* 真元).

80 *Beiyou ji*. 1602 Edition: plate 15.

of Rain and Thunder of the Five Directions (Wufang yu yun shi zhe 五方雨雷使者) are mentioned as commanders of the Thunder Agency. After Leigong mistakenly kills the two Zhu 朱 sisters for a crime they did not commit, they are reanimated and become part of the command – making five. When the Venerable Teacher arrives at their mountain and investigates the flashing and crashing of thunder and lightning, the envoys readily submit to his authority. When questioned by the Venerable Teacher the envoys explain that because they as brothers were not willing to be separated from one another, the Jade Emperor commanded them to remain there for an eternity. The Venerable Teacher accepts their submission and commands them to 「shake the south in spring and summer, and shake the north in fall and winter」 春夏震南秋冬震北.⁸¹ He tells them, 「Thereby you will keep the feelings of older and younger brothers for one another intact」 以得全汝兄弟之情.⁸² The two Zhu sisters and Leigong are then given titles by the Jade Emperor, and their names appear in the list of thirty-six invested generals at the end of the chapter.⁸³

The illustrations of the Shenxiao text *Gaoshang yushu leiting baojing fuzhuan* 高上玉樞雷霆寶經符傳 show Leigong receiving *Leisheng puhua tianzun*. Furthermore, the Eight Orientations and Five Directions are represented as groups of eight and five agents instead of being conflated into two envoys, as in *Beiyou ji*. Here Leigong and the thunder agents of the eight orientations and five directions are clearly under the command of *Leisheng puhua tianzun*. The absence of his command in *Beiyou ji* allows for their readily

81 Ibid, plate 223.

82 Ibid, plate 223. We may read this as a reference to the Confucian teachings on familial piety, which also explains why they are not given titles by the Jade Emperor and consequently do not appear in the list of thirty-six generals. They are still tied to the affairs and affections of the mortal world, and are not yet 「persons who have left the family」 (*chu jia ren* 出家人).

83 Ibid, plate 228.

submitting to the authority of Xuantian shangdi. There is no conflict with another commander, and therefore no need to mediate conflicting roles. In our novel, Xuantian shangdi effectively replaces Leisheng puhua tianzun as the commander of thirty-six generals. But he is not just the new commander of the Thunder Agency—he is the commander of a new agency of which the thunder gods are just part, albeit an important part.

Furthermore, as I illustrated in the discussions of Guan Yu's weapon and the Thunder Envoy brothers, there is a Confucian presence in our text. Yet, that too is presented through a Quanzhen interpretative lens. The question then is not about what Beiyou ji 「obscures」 in a debased re-presentation of Song-Yuan traditions, but about what it clarifies in the new cultural context of the Ming.

Wudang Quanzhen cultivation and refinement through inner alchemy, is precisely the cultural context in which our text attempts to clarify the life and associations of Xuantian shangdi. In our discussions above we have shown that Beiyou ji defines that culture in part by stating 「what it is not.」 In part, it is not the sexual predation of Fangzhong 房中, and it is not a deviant stepping out of station to benefit one's own personal gain and glory. It is not surprising to find then that these are the primary transgressions of our demons before they are converted and reincorporated as Xuantian shangdi's generals. So while it is true that 「at least eighteen of the divine associates are thunder deities or deities of the Thunder Ritual,」 how their stories are told—to what purpose—is what references the author's agenda.

References





Reading Beiyou ji

84 Images: 1, Detail of Xuanwu and Heisha in a painting of the Four Saints. See Little and Eichman 2000; 2, Xuantian shangdi. See Ma 2007a; 3, Leisheng puhua tianzun. See Liao 2006; 4, Yuan dynasty painting with the Four Heavenly Lords in front of Xuantian shangdi. See Little and Eichman 2000; 5, Gaoshang yushu leiting baojing fuzhuan 高上玉樞雷霆寶經符傳. See Little and Eichman 2000.

85 Qingwei Scripture: Gaoshang Yuhuang benxing jijing 高上玉皇本行集經. Image: see Ma 2006.

Willem Grootaers, Liu Ts'un-yen, Gary Seaman and Chao Shin-yi read *Beiyou ji* as a religious folk novel. Each interprets the religious intentions and focus of the text in relation to a prior textual 「source.」 Grootaers and Liu read it in relation to classical hagiographies—specifically, those of the Daoist Canon and the *Sanjiao soushen daquan*. Chao elaborates on this, and illustrates the Thunder and Plague tradition backgrounds of *Beiyou ji*'s generals.⁸⁶ Conversely, Seaman reads it as an account originally rendered through a spirit writing cult centered in the imperial court, and so sees it tied to the court's socio-political religious culture. Yet each of these writers contend that Yu Xiangdou's version of *Beiyou ji* is his own personal embellishment of these source materials. These writers further suggest that Yu's version was hastily thrown together, creating a disjointed narrative that obscures these prior sectarian agendas.

None of these writers ask why Yu Xiangdou has something new to say, nor do they appreciate that this might represent a new interest. The history of Daoist textual production follows a pattern of 「finding lost texts」 that provide new sectarian movements a connection to already established traditions.⁸⁷ While Yu Xiangdou makes no claim that his hagiography is a 「found text,」 his novel, along with a number of other Ming novels, fits this pattern of linking new interests with established traditions. My reading of *Beiyou ji* is an attempt to understand why Yu Xiangdou edited a new, popular hagiography of Xuantian shangdi, and what specific values are constructed in that telling.

I have interpreted Yu Xiangdou's *Beiyou ji* foremost through an analysis of symbol relationships in the text itself to flesh out value constructions. I have then attempted to relate those structures to both the prior and contemporary discourse of Daoist culture in which Xuantian shangdi and his symbols have been understood. Those cultural contexts are situated in specific historical

86 Zhou 2005 charts the specific agreements and disagreements between representations of the thirty-six generals in *Sanjiao soushen daquan* and *Beiyou ji*.

87 For example, see Hymes 2002, chapter two, and Schipper 2004, 3.B.5 on the Tianxin zhengfa.

periods, but further reference one another creating 「layers of meaning.」 At issue with other readings of our text, I see those「layers」surrounding the core of a newly emerging Quanzhen inner alchemy perspective of Zhenwu and his generals centered at Wudangshan in the late Ming dynasty.

The audience of Quanzhen teachings outside of monastery walls in the late Ming was not the elite, classically trained officialdom, but rather the merchant class and their clientele who read in the vernacular. Politically, this alliance between Quanzhen and the merchant class developed due to Ming imperial favoring of the Zhengyi 正一 sect. Quanzhen adapted to this unstable environment by establishing closer ties with common people and vernacular culture. Yu Xiangdou was a member of the merchant class in Fujian Province who appears to have taken an interest in the mass appeal of Quanzhen teachings. His family operated a publishing house, and he personally edited a number of religious folk novels in addition to *Beiyou ji*.

Yu Xiangdou's intended audience in the late Ming would most likely have had both an understanding and interest in the sectarian agendas of the emerging Wudang Quanzhen tradition, as well. The influence of this new tradition spread far beyond the borders of Hubei Province. In Fujian itself Zhenwu temples had close ties with Wudangshan. It is important to understand that Wudangshan was understood as the center of the worship of Xuantian shangdi throughout the empire. In the late Ming and early Qing, Baiyunshan Baiyun Guan 白雲山白雲觀 in Shaanxi,⁸⁸ and Yuntai Guan 雲台觀 in Sichuan⁸⁹—in addition to dozens of other Xuantian shangdi

88 Baiyunshan Baiyun Guan was established by the Quanzhen priest Li Yufeng in 1605—three years after *Beiyou ji* was published. The Wanli emperor bestowed a copy of the Daoist Canon on the temple in his honor in 1618, and built a pavilion to house it in 1619. See: Zhang Yingchao 「山阳天柱山道教.」 http://hk.netsh.com/bbs/873/html/table_3366821.html. Also, see: Li Zhanzhou. 「白云山庙观胜.」 *China Taoism*, 2000:4. http://www.chinataoism.org/showtopic.php?id=871&cate_id=513.

89 In the early Kangxi reign era of the Qing, Yuntai Guan was converted to the Quanzhen Longmen 龍門 sect by Zhang Qingyun. He belonged to a group of five Wudang priests who had traveled to Sichuan in order to spread the sect at Qingchengshan. See: Yin Zhihua 「Cloud Platform Temple.」 <http://eng.taoism.org.hk/>

temples—received traveling Quanzhen priests from, and/or organized pilgrimages of their parishes to, Wudangshan in Hubei.

It was not necessary, then, for our author or his audience to be in the monastic Quanzhen order itself in order to have an understanding or interest in its sectarian agendas. Rather, its ideology embodied an emerging dominant structure of discourse through which the story of Xuantian shangdi was told and understood by both priests and nuns and the laity alike. Though the language (classical or vernacular) and the texts (canonical hagiography or 「folk novel」) of the groups differed, both drew upon a shared set of symbols put together to express similar values.

As we have seen in our discussion above, the presentation of those values in the Ming dynasty *Beiyou ji* is anything but simplistic. It is not simply a ‘debased and disjointed’ representation of earlier canonical concerns. Instead, it is a very complex negotiation of both classical and vernacular traditions that developed in the Song through the Ming. All of this is framed within the sectarian agendas of Wudang Quanzhen ideology with the intention of incorporating various traditions and places through a universally accepted recognition of Wudangshan as the cult center.

Almost two centuries before our novel was published by Yu Xiangdou, the Yongle 永樂 emperor transformed Wudangshan into what was arguably the grandest temple complex in the empire. In the last chapter before the ritual appendix in our novel, we read that Xuantian shangdi and his thirty-six generals helped the Yongle emperor defeat the Tartars. After the battle the emperor summons the Heavenly Master Zhang (Zhang Tianshi 張天師)—head of the Zhengyi sect—to explain who the god was who helped save his life, and where the god comes from. The Heavenly Master explains that the god comes from Wudangshan, and that 「river travelers and merchants」 built a temple to him at the foot of the mountain. The emperor then

travels to Wudangshan and orders that thirty-thousand workers build a Golden Hall at the summit together with thirty-six halls and seventy-two palaces. After completion of the construction, the emperor selects eighteen Daoist officials and directs the Heavenly Master to hold a week long Ritual of Cosmic Renewal. After this, the emperor makes arrangements for long-term support of the newly built complex.

As we read in this section, Zhengyi priests were given authority over the mountain at this time, and the cult center prospered due to imperial support. In the succeeding years, though, that support waned. As Seaman 1987 notes in his introduction, it was the Jiajing 嘉靖 emperor (1521–1567) who later helped reestablish imperial support for Wudangshan. Seaman argues that *Beiyou ji*—in particular the last chapter—may be read as an argument to convince the Jiajing emperor to renew such support. I instead understand the audience as the 「river travelers and merchants」—the lay devotees of Xuantian shangdi. It was not only imperial support that had changed in these later years of the Ming dynasty, but the Daoist authorities at the mountain, too.

In the final years of the Ming, Quanzhen began to emerge as a major sect on the mountain. It primarily reached out to the common people in the years of waning imperial support, and Wudangshan found renewed strength through them. The pilgrimage plaques embedded in the mountain attest to this support. While it is true that the Jiajing emperor did support the mountain greatly, it was the common people who provided the most sustained support. Works like *Beiyou ji* were written in both a language and style that would attract the merchant class and its clientele. Clearly the appeal in the final paragraph is primarily addressed to the masses, and not the imperial household:

「The Venerable Teacher of Wudangshan manifests powers of numinous spirit. He saves those who meet with difficulties from their difficulties. He saves those who meet with disasters from those disasters. He calms the wind upon the rivers and brings waves to rest. In those homes where the god is worshipped, the sons are filial and the grandsons obedient. Requests to protect parents, and requests of wives for a family heir are all considered. His renown has reached into the two capitals and thirteen provinces. Those who bring forth incense and pray for good fortune are without number. Those with a reverent heart will see in midair a form, floating naturally in flight towards them, of red satin hanging from the master's body. This is called「the suspended prize.」All under heaven, whether man, woman, or child, come bowing with each step. One after another they come, chanting 「Buddha of Boundless Longevity!」For ten thousand requests, ten thousand responses come. Thus it has continued up to the present day, some two hundred years from that time. Incense has continued to burn, now as in the beginning. Forever receiving worship, there is Great Peace Under Heaven.

武當山祖師大顯威靈逢難救難遇災救災江中風平波息民感神恩人家有孝子順孫求保父母妻子求嗣者無有不驗名揚兩京一十三省進香祈福者不計其數有虔心者半空中自然飄飄然飛一紅緞來挂子身上名曰挂彩天下萬民不論男婦小兒或有一步一拜者紛紛然而來口念無量壽佛萬感萬應今至二百餘載香火如初永受朝拜天下大太平」⁹⁰

Seaman translates the last twelve characters of the paragraph as:

「Incense has kept burning there, now as then, and the perpetual offerings of the imperial court have kept all under heaven at peace.⁹¹

90 *Beiyou ji*. 1602 Edition: plate 235.

91 Seaman 1987, 208.

火如初永受朝拜天下大太平」

His interpretation appears to hinge on two character, chao bai 朝拜, which he renders as 「offerings of the imperial court. 」 However, as can be seen in the illustration's text blocks above those words in plate 235, chaobai are actions that relate to 「Wudangshan's masses」 (Wudangshan zhongmin 武當山衆民). In full translation this reads: 「Wudangshan's masses worshipping」 (Wudangshan zhongmin chaobai 武當山衆民朝拜). On a preceding page (plate 232) the text relates that the Heavenly Master is in audience of the (Yongle) emperor (Huangdi sheng dian tianshi chaojian 皇帝升殿天師朝見). The emperor has summoned him to ask which god it was that helped him defeat his enemies in battle. The Heavenly Master replies that it was Xuantian shangdi, and that the common people have built a statue and temple to worship him at the foot of Wudangshan. This inspires the emperor to build a large temple complex on the mountain. That in turn inspires worship at Wudangshan by the masses (pictured as two subjects in plate 235), which then leads to: 「The ten-thousand people receiving the Supreme Emperor's pervading benevolence」 (wan min shou shangdi enze 萬民受上帝恩澤) in plate 241. There is a chain of actions and effects here which begins with the merchants and travelers building a temple at the foot of the mountain. The benevolence of the emperor creates an atmosphere of increased devotion, but the efforts of the people themselves are what eventually bring them 「the Supreme Emperor's pervading benevolence. 」 Plate 241 comes at the end of the Ritual Appendix, in which the people are the audience of rules and instructions on how to worship Xuantian shangdi. Furthermore, as the Heavenly Master explains to the emperor in plate 232:

「This god achieved proper fruits through his own self efforts,

and is devoted to ferrying the ten-thousand people to safety. If they meet with disasters, then he saves them from disasters. If they get into difficulties, then he saves them from difficulties. If they encounter a catastrophe while traveling by boat, then he is able to save them all. All of these merchants originally established a temple (to him) at the foot of Wudangshan.

其神自成正果救濟萬民逢災救災逢難救難行船有過者皆得其救各商原立有一廟宇於武當山下」

I read this as saying that one's own efforts are what is most important. The king however answers that if the common people know how to repay the benevolence of the god, then how can he as the recipient of the benevolence of this god on behalf of all beneath heaven fail to do so. When he then visits the temple that the common people built he sees that the god's image is the same as his own. This illustrates the special role played by the king as a mediator of heaven's benevolence. That role requires him in turn to share that benevolence with the people, which he does through gifts of material and land to help ensure continuing worship in the future. Visually, this is illustrated by the king on his knees in plate 232, followed by two subjects on their knees in plate 235, and then three subjects on their knees in plate 241. Yet, in terms of the language, actors, and actions involved there is a parallel between the two passages quoted above. Therefore, despite the lip service paid the imperial court as the mediator of heaven's benevolence, the last word is given in thanks to the actions of the merchants and travelers who initially set things in motion. It is they who first responded with proper actions.

Lastly, one might object that in the first quote above, Xuantian shangdi—a Daoist god—is called 「The Buddha of Boundless Longevity 無量壽佛。」 Yet that bestowing of a Buddhist title on him only

reaffirms my argument of how hostile forces are incorporated through inclusion in the novel. The final cause of Dark Force (heiqi 黑氣) in our novel is a Buddhist monk rising in the west—the direction from which Buddhism entered China. Xuantian shangdi defeats this heterodox force by enlisting the aid of the Crown Prince of Snow Mountain (Xueshan taizi 雪山太子) who has reached perfection through meditations on compassion.⁹² That is to say, Xuantian shangdi incorporates a higher level of selfless Buddhist teachings thereby eliminating distinctions. From the end of the Song forward, Daoism and Buddhism came into conflict with one or the other winning imperial support for a time. The Three Teachings as One movement of the Ming attempted to keep that conflict subdued. Quanzhen Daoism adopted that frame and thereby incorporated Buddhist and Confucian teachings. This did not, however, diminish the Daoist agenda of the sect. In practice, it instead helped to broaden its audience by relating its beliefs to those of the other competing dominant ideologies.

References



241



235



232

92 *Beiyou ji*. 1602 Edition: plates 216-18.

93 *Beiyou ji*. 1602 Edition: (right to left) plates 232, 235, and 241.

Primary Sources

Baopuzi neipian 抱朴子內篇. Ge Hong 葛洪. In Wang Ming 王明. *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校

釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007, revised and enlarged edition.
Beiyou ji 北遊記. Yu Xiangdou 余象斗.

1602 edition. *Beifang zhenwu zushi xuantian shangdi chushen zhizhuan*
北方真武祖師玄天上帝出身志

傳. Reprinted in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng: 80*. Shanghai:

Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990.

Daode jing 道德經. Laozi 老子. Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2004.
Shanhai jing 山海經. In Ma Changyi 馬昌儀. *Guben Shanhai jing tushuo* 古
本山海經圖說. Guilin:

Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2007.

Soushen ji 搜神記. Gan Bao 干寶. In Li Jianguo 李劍國. *Xinji Soushen ji*
/ *Xinji Soushen ji hou ji* 新輯搜神

記 / 新輯搜神記後記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007.

Sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan 三教源流搜神大全. Xu Chongli 徐崇立

edition. No further publication

information provided. Purchased at Wuhan's Changchun Guan 長春觀.
Xingming guizhi 性命圭旨. Yin zhenren 尹真人. Beijing: Beijing Baiyun
guan fanyin, 1989.

Texts from the Ming Daoist Canon, *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏

DZ = Work number in the *Zhengtong Daozang*.

SH = Volume and page number in: *Daozang* 道藏. Shanghai: Shanghai
shudian, 1988. 36 volumes.

DZ 151, SH 3:102 (TC 2:832-34). *Jinyi huandan yinzheng tu* 金液還丹印證
圖

DZ 267, SH 4:903. *Shangcheng xiuzhen sanyao* 上乘修真三要

DZ 431, SH 6:683 (TC 1:617). *Shangqing hanxiang jianjian tu* 上清含象劍
鑑圖

DZ 566, SH 10:607. *Shangqing tianxin zhengfa* 上清天心正法

DZ 790, SH 18:239. *Nuqing guilu* 女青鬼律
DZ 883, SH 18:787. *Taiqing jing tianshi koujue* 太清經天師口訣
DZ 1068, SH 24:70. *Shangyang zi jindan dayao tu* 上陽子金丹大要圖
DZ 1207, SH 28:422. *Taishang mingjian zhenjing* 太上明鑑真經
DZ 1220, SH 28:669 (TC 2:1105). *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元
DZ 1412, SH 34:392. *Taishang yuanshi tianzun shuo beidi fumo shenzhou miaojing* 太上元始天尊說北帝伏
魔神咒妙經

Secondary Sources

- Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont. 1999. *The Analects of Confucius*. New York: Ballantine.
- Andersen, Poul. 1991. 「Taoist Ritual Texts and Traditions with Special Reference to Bugang, the Cosmic Dance.」 Ph.D. dissertation, University of Copenhagen.
- _____.1980. *The Method of Holding the Three Ones: A Taoist Manual of Meditation of the Fourth Century A. D.* (Studies on Asian Topics, no. 1). Copenhagen: Curzon Press.
- Birrell, Anne, trans. 2000. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Chao, Shin-yi. 2003. 「Zhenwu: The Cult of a Chinese Warrior God from the Song to the Ming Dynasties (960-1368).」 Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Davis, Edward L. 2001. *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Girardot, Norman. 1983. *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grootaers, Willem A. 1952. 「The Hagiography of the Chinese God Chen-wu.」 *Folklore Studies* 11 (2): 139-181.
- Hymes, Robert. 2002. *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Keupers, John. 1977. 「A Description of the *Fa-ch'ang* Ritual as Practiced

- by the *Lu Shan* Taoists of Northern Taiwan.」 In *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*, edited by Michael Saso and David Chappell, 79–94. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii – Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 18.
- Lagerwey, John (1992). 「The Pilgrimage to Wudangshan.」 In *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, edited by Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu, 293–332. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 1987. *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lau, D.C., trans. 1963. *Tao Te Ching*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Li, Yuanguo 李遠國. 2003. *Shenxiao leifa* 神霄雷法. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe.
- Liao, Wen 廖文. 2006. *Huashengxuan zang shuiluhua jingshang* 懷聖軒藏水陸畫精賞. Chengdu: Sichuan meishu chubanshe.
- Little, Stephen with Shawn Eichman. 2000. 「Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior」. In *Taoism and the Arts of China*, Stephen Little with Shawn Eichman, 290–311. Berkeley: The University of California Press.
- Liu, Ts'un-yan. 1967. *Chinese Popular Fiction in Two London Libraries*. Hong Kong: Lung Men Bookstore.
- _____. 1962. *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Ma, Shutian 马书田. 2007a. *Zhongguo sushen* 中國俗神. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe.
- _____. 2007b. *Zhongguo guishen* 中國鬼神. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe.
- _____. 2006. *Zhongguo daoshen* 中國道神. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe.
- Pregadio, Fabrizio. 2006. *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Medieval China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Saso, Michael. 2000, new edition. *Taoist Master Chuang*. Eldorado Springs: Sacred Mountain Press.
- _____. 1972. *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal*. Pullman: Washington State University Press.
- Schipper, Kristofer and Franciscus Verellen, eds. 2004. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Seaman, Gary, trans. 1987. *Journey to the North: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Annotated Translation of the Chinese Folk Novel Pei-yu-chi*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 1986. 「The Divine Authorship of Pei-yu chi」. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 45, no. 3: 483-497.
- Strickmann, Michel. 2002. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Von Glahn, Richard. 2004. *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.
- Wang, Guangde 王光德 and Lizhi Yang 楊立志. 1993. *Wudang dao jiao shi lue* 武當道教史略. Beijing: Huawen.
- Ware, James R. 1966. *Alchemy, Medicine & Religion in the China of A. D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung*. New York: Dover.
- Wile, Douglas. 1992. *Art of the Bedchamber*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Zhou, Xiaowei 周曉薇. 2005. *Siyou ji congkao* 四游記從考. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.