

以祖師之名：雷法，內丹，與真武
In the Name of the 「Ancestor Master」：
Thunder Rite, Inner Alchemy, and Zhenwu

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中文摘要

北宋晚期，役使雷將呼風喚雨或祛邪治病的雷法開始流行。雷法科儀中常見道士透過存想「化身為」或「存身為」為該法主神，以求有效地召役雷將。亦即行法道士需改變自我身份，以該法法主的身份指揮主法雷將。這樣的法主，可以說是行法道士的保護神，在一些雷法傳統中，這個保護神是真武。鄧有功編的《上清天心正法》中的「追治山魃」一節指示道士在召將治山魃時先「變神」為真武，再一一召喚法中官將。此時道士已不是他本人，而是保護神本身。這樣的身份/意識轉化，看似附身，但是道教傳統神明觀，是不能接受道士為外神附身的解釋，適逢此時道教內丹學說逐漸發展，內丹修練中的聖胎理論為「變神」提出合適道教傳統的解釋。也就是說，道士平日修習內丹，培養聖胎，這個聖胎可以隨時通過內煉存想提出，長成為法主。如此一來，內丹理論融合入「變神」，發展出可以符合道教神學的道士自我身份改變的理論。

內丹修習之外，道士持續其古老傳統，在存想中朝覲天庭。這時保護神/法主自然成為朝覲的對象。以真武為例，以真武為保護神的道士，稱真武為祖師，每日打坐，朝覲祖師真武。這樣密切的祖師弟子關係，進而影響了道教科儀。這一點從飛章的儀式可以發現。比較〈金闕先生家書祕

文〉和《赤松子章曆》可以明白看出，就科儀中的重要性而言，真武隱隱然有取代太上太一成為儀式權威的來源的跡象。這樣一種強調以法主為祖師，以祖師為法之權威來源，和北宋以來，宗派意識和宗派認同的發展，若合符節。

Introduction

The Thunder Rites (leifa 雷法) entered the Daoist ritual repertoire relatively late in Chinese history. However, it grew fast. Thunder Rites allow the initiated practitioners to deploy thunder deities, most are martial figure of violent nature addressed as 「general」 or 「martial」 to do bids for them. While such deities' employment in Daoist rituals was still controversial, and limited to select orders during the early 10th century, the ritual landscape was very different by the beginning of the 12th century, the final decades of the Northern Song dynasty. The Thunder Rites took a central position on the imperial religious stage and rose to significance in the Daoist ritual world. Lin Lingsu 林靈素 (d. 1119), the powerful Daoist religious advisor in the court of Huizong (r. 1100–1126), was renowned for performing the Five Thunders rituals.¹ Heavenly masters of the Northern Song dynasty, in contrast to their predecessors during later Tang and the Five Dynasties, embraced the Thunder Ritual. Zhang Jixian 張繼先 (1092–1126), the thirtieth generation Heavenly Master, designed several methods of the Thunder Rites system according to Song sources.² 12th-century Daoist ritual compendiums were also marked by the prevalence of the Thunder Ritual.

Thunder Rites serve to summon rain (or clear weather) and to

1 Even the *Songshi* which denounces Lin Lingsu as a complete fraud has to admit, albeit reluctantly, that Lin could practice the Five Thunder Rites that induced thunder, see *Songshi* 462.13529.

2 Livia Kohn ed. *Daoism Handbook* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2004), 433. Ren Jiuyu 任繼愈 ed. *Zhongguo Daojiao shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1999, 2nd ed), esp. 738.

exorcise harmful spirits. Since ghosts and demons were thought to cause illness in Daoist pathology, the ritual was also a therapeutic remedy.³ Cases in which the thunder ritual masters successfully treated demonic possessions (read: psychotic disorder) or blew up temples of rival deities with thunderous burst of flames can be found in various non-Daoist sources. Modern scholars have offered scientific explanations of such miraculous ritual powers, including the effects that 「ritual theater」 could produce on patients' psychological condition⁴ and Daoist masters' knowledge in gunpowder.⁵ However, to the codifiers of the Thunder Rites, the true efficacy of their performance derived from the fact that it was carried out by the thunder deities under the command of the initiated ritual masters.

Interpretations of the nature of thunder deities are varied,⁶ but the bottom line is that they are the force that carries out the demands of the ritual masters. Summoning the thunder deities and commanding them to act forms the core of Thunder Rites. The many schools of the Thunder Rites are in a sense different systems of

3 Haunted ghosts are not necessarily demonic; they could be vengeful ghosts trying to obtain justice. For the most up to date research on this subject incorporating the socio-political background of the early Daoism, see Stephen Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (U of California Press, 2007). Ghosts acting from justifiable revenge was a valid concern of ritual masters performing exorcism during Song times, as reflected in contemporaneous anecdotes, see, for example, the story translated by Edward Davis in his *Society and the Supernatural of Song China* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 2001), 88-9

4 Edward Davis, *Society and the Supernatural of Song China* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 2001), 107-114.

5 Judith Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural," in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory eds. *Religion and Society in Tang and Song China* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii Press, 1993), 241-305, esp. 285-6.

6 Lowell Skar, "Administering Thunder: A Thirteenth-Century Memorial Deliberating the Thunder Rites," in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9 (1996-97): 159-202, esp. 178. Lowell Skar, "Ethical Aspects of Daoist Healing: The Case of Song and Yuan Thunder Rites," in Keizō Hashimoto, Catherine Jami, and Lowell Skar eds., *East Asian Science: Tradition and Beyond* (Osaka, Japan: Kansai U. Press, 1995), 221-229, esp. 226.

methods and theories designed to control the deities in question. Each new method claimed to be more effective than the old, and new schools grew up around them to glorify the master and the teachings.

Daoist clerics regard themselves as 「gentlemen (or gentlewomen) of the Way」. They see themselves as men and women ordained into the celestial hierarchy who possess the authority to command lesser deities. Their religious authority is confirmed through the admittance ceremony, an imperially inspired protocol, and initiatory knowledge contained in scriptures, oral secrets, and the ceremonially bequeathed ritual register (falü 法籙). However, the development of new gods necessitated the creation of new rituals; the deities of Thunder Rites were perceived even more violent than others and controlling them required an innovative approach. Deng Yougong, the Daoist master and an important codifier during the 12th century,⁷ recommended the method called Bianshen neilian 變神內鍊 or 「deity-transformation by inner refinement」.⁸

Bianshen neilian 變神內鍊 (deity-transformation by inner refinement)

Deng termed his foolproof method 「the way of deity-transformation by inner refinement」. This transformation resulted in the incarnation of a deity authoritative enough to command multiple subordinate deities. In the section devoted to the methods of defeating mountain demons (shanxiao 山魘), Deng instructs the initiates on the meditative techniques to prepare for battle against them:⁹

「On the day [you] go to treat with the mountain demons, first

7 For a critical review of the debate about when Deng was active – the first or second half of the 12th century, see Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley, LA & London: U of California Press, 2002), 271–7.

8 Correct Ritual of the Heavenly Heart of the Upper Clarity (Shangqing tianxin zhengfa 上清天心正法; TC 566) ch. 2.1–2 (ZHDZ 30.248b–c).

9 Shangqing tianxin zhengfa 5.1 (ZHDZ 30.267a).

cleanse yourself and make an audience with the high emperor (shangdi) in silent [meditation] to respectfully make the case [for performing the forthcoming exorcist ritual]. Visualize the North Emperor leaving the stellar palace, ascending to the [audience] hall and taking the seat. The emperor summons Zhenwu along with other [fellows] and orders them to take control of the source of wickedness in the three realms. Then, contemplate Zhenwu coming directly to the front of the table [at the altar] with the decree. Stand up! [Perform the ritual sequence of] divinity-metamorphosis and become the grand general Zhenwu with loosened hair and bare feet, holding the fire sword of Samādhi in the right hand and forming a mudra with the left hand, while standing on Xuanwu (i.e. a turtle and a snake). After this divinity-transformation by inner-refinement (bianshen neilian) is finished, then walk the stellar guidelines of the Three Platform and the Dipper. After all of the walks are completed, invoke the officials and generals of the many bureaus of the southern court; visualize each and every of them.」 凡欲追治山魃，... 臨去治日，先淨身，默朝上帝，奏陳因依。存見北帝自星宮中升殿而坐，召真武等，令攝三界邪源。復想真武領敕命下界，直至案前。起身變神為真武大將，披髮跣足，右手仗三昧火劍，左手叉印，足踏玄武。變神內煉迄，次步三台七星罡，一一了畢，呼召南院諸司官將，一一存。

The ritual master acquires divine authorization (from the North Emperor in this case¹⁰) through an audience at the heavenly court. After listening to (and presumably approving) the case, the Northern Emperor would order General Zhenwu to go down to the human realm to pacify the wicked. Zhenwu's 「descending」 takes the form of moving directly to the front of the altar table, i.e. the very spot where the ritual master would be prostrating. Once Zhenwu has made his

10 This is a reasonable assumption since the manual belongs to the Heavenly Heart ritual lineage.

descent, the ritual master begins the next step of meditation to 「become」 (wei 為) Zhenwu. It is after completing the transformation through inner refinement (bianshen neilian qi 變神內煉迄), that the practitioner begins the ritual choreography to summon the divine officers and generals (guanjiang 官將).

Exactly how is the deity-transformation by inner refinement conducted? Again, it is a meditative exercise. The practitioner, as instructed, first visualizes (cun 存) the body as a dried tree (kushu 枯樹) being burned by the fire of heart (yang, li 離 trigram) and washed away by the 「water」 of kidney (yin, kan 坎 trigram). What remains is the pure qi as a shining pearl. The practitioner recites the deity-transformation invocation and visualizes a self-transformation into an infant (ying'er 嬰兒). The infant, in a bubble of red radiance, grows larger. After more mudra and invocations, the practitioner visualizes the bursting of the radiant bubble and the infant transforms into the 「Heavenly Master or Tianpeng 天蓬 or Zhenwu 真武 at will.」¹¹ With the identity of these high authorities, the ritual master could call on divine generals and officials in an efficient manner.

Generating and cultivating an 「infant」 in one's inner body is a concept only too familiar to students of the Inner Alchemy tradition. In the neidan terminology, elixir is often referred to as a fetus (taier 胎兒, lit. embryo-child) and depicted in the form of a baby.¹² It is a sacred embryo (shengtai 聖胎) of the practitioner and one of the most characteristic concepts of neidan.¹³

11 The Heavenly Master here undoubtedly refers to Zhang Daoling. Tianpeng is one of oldest divine commanding-general in Daoist ritual. The Tianpeng invocation can be found in the *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhengao* 真誥; TC 1016) by Tao Hongjing (456-536).

12 It is also called “perfected one” (*zhenren* 真人), “mysterious pearl” (*xuanzhu* 玄珠) and other similar terms that allude to the same images.

13 Fabrizio Pregadio, *The Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 2006), 205.

Of course, the notion of an 「embryo」 (tai) dwelling in the microcosm of one's body as the essence of the self was not invented in the Inner Alchemy tradition. Scholars have pointed out that such a notion existed from at least the 2nd century AD, the time when the Xiang'er Commentary of the Laozi was composed.¹⁴ The Central Scripture of Laozi (Laozi zhongjing), dated between the 3rd and 5th centuries, includes references of nourishing the 「perfected self」 (zhenwu 真吾) which resides in one's stomach in the form of an infant (chizi 赤子; lit. 「reddish child」; reddish refers to the color of a newborn). However, in the early texts, the 「infant」 is innate. It is in the Inner Alchemy tradition that the 「sacred embryo」 must be generated by the practitioners themselves.¹⁵ In this sense, the 「infant」 in Deng's method is consonant with the liturgy of Inner Alchemy but not with that of earlier traditions.

It should be noted that fusion of the of the ritual master's qi and the deity's qi is still necessary. A liturgical manual of the Five Thunders Ritual called 「The model ritual for submission, dispatch, conglomeration, and refinement, (Zouchuan hunlian fashi 奏傳混鍊法式), collected in the ritual compendia Lost Pearls provides us a good example:¹⁶

Form both your hands into the mudra of deity-transformation; lay them next to your waist. First, visualize yourself as a dried log. Joining your thumbs to the tips of the middle fingers (掐午文), inhale the qi of the South and unite it with the qi of the heart to form the perfected fire (真火). Flick your thumbs from the tip of your middle fingers (兩手剔午), [thus] lighting the log on fire. Immediately, the flame rises up. Then put your thumbs on the tips

14 Kato Chie 加藤千惠, 「Laozi Zhongjing yu Neidan sixiang de qi yuan 老子中經與內丹思想的起源,」 *Zongjiao xue yanjiu* 35 (1997.4): 40-47; Pregadio, *The Great Clarity*, 210-1; Kohn, 「Modes of Mutation」.

15 Pregadio, *Early Daoist*, 138.

16 *Retrieved Pearls* 2.1-2 (ZHDZ 41. 454c-455a).

of your index fingers (掐巳文) to generate the wind from the xun diagram [the trigram associated with the wind according to the Yijing] to blow away the ashes; leave no traces. [Now] visualize an infant growing increasingly bigger within the cinnabar field (dantian 丹田). With loosened hair and barefoot in a black robe and golden armor, looking like Zhenwu. Beneath his feet, there is a green turtle exhaling qi which unites with the qi of kidneys. Also, there is a red snake [under his feet] exhaling qi which unites with the qi of the heart.

兩手握變神訣，叉腰。先存身為枯木，以兩手掐午文，吸南炁一口，與心炁合為真火。兩手剔午，發火下木根，一時燒上。次掐巳文，發巽風，吹散灰塵，別無纖翳。存丹田內一嬰兒漸大，披髮跣足，皂袍金甲，如真武相，足下有蒼龜吐炁，與腎炁合，有赤蛇吐炁，與心炁合。

The mudra mentioned at the beginning of the citation indicates that the purpose of the practice is to transform oneself into the divinity. The first step in this process is to visualize oneself as a 「dried log」. Through burning, the material body is ritually reduced to non-existence – it is not only burned to ashes, but the ashes are further blown away by wind. The wood (「dried log」) and wind are two of the eight cosmological phenomena represented in the Eight Trigrams. After the old body is symbolically destroyed, the next step is to generate a new body (yinger or the 「infant」), the new and perfected self.¹⁷ This new body grows into Zhenwu. The adept further unites with Zhenwu through the deity's emblematic animals, the turtle and snake. The turtle represents the trigram of kan (water) and the snake the trigram of li (fire). The turtle and snake exhale the qi that mixes with the qi of the practitioner's kidney and heart which, again, is also associated with water and fire respectively.

17 For a discussion of the 「inner infant」 as a representation of the real self, see Pregadio, *The Great Clarity*, 211.

Once the qi from Zhenwu and that from the ritual master have merged properly, the ritual master completes the procedure of deity-transformation and 「becomes」 Zhenwu. The ritual master is then empowered to deploy the divine troops to vanquish the demons.

Despite the claims of being foolproof, Deng's method of 「deity-transformation by inner refinement」 still requires cultivating the bond between the ritual masters and the patron-like deities. Several manuals offered instructions to this purpose. The 「Efficacious Writing for Quick Submission to the Dark Heaven」 (Xuantian jizou lingwen 玄天急奏靈文) instructs practitioners to have a 「daily audience with Zhenwu」 (meiri chaoli 每日朝禮) in the following way:¹⁸

Everyday, in the early morning or in the quiet night, sit straight, grind your teeth twenty-four times, swallow saliva twenty-four times. Meditate on a bright spot between the two kidneys that shoots up along the spine up to the back of head and arrives at the Niwan Palace.¹⁹ [Then] silently recite the mantra of the golden radiance flashing and chant the full title of the Transformation of the Heavenly Worthy of the Golden Gate [Emperor; i. e. Zhenwu] three times. In several moments, the radiance spreads and shines through in ten directions. [Then you would see] the Dark Emperor sitting straight in the Jade Capital Mountain, that is the niwan. The initiate sits as still as a mountain. Next, meditate on the four agents on duty, the one who is of the heart coming out through the left eye, the one of the liver coming out through the right eye, the two of the lungs and kidneys coming out through the two ears. They stand in stillness in the clouds, and make an audience by bowing on their knees. [In the vision] the practitioner, in the

18 *Retrieved Pearls* 20.8 (ZHDZ 41.489c).

19 In Daoist theory, one's brain is divided into nine palaces; Niwan (the old Chinese translation for Nirvana) is one of them. It is located three inches behind the point where the eyebrows cross.

appearance of the Perfected One with a writing-tablet held in hands, comes out in front from the Yellow Court, kneels straightly and has an audience. After finishing the report (qishi 啓事), meditate on the golden radiance joining together from four directions as before. The practitioner returns to the Scarlet Palace, looks down on the spot between the kidneys, sees the brightness and sits still. This means that the process (shi 事) is finished. If this audience is meant to capture malicious spirits, meditate on the Dark Emperor with his loosened hair, bare-feet, and ferocious expression, and the divine soldiers on each side guarding him carefully; if this is an ordinary situation, meditate on the Sage's cheerful face; if this is for rescuing misfortune, meditate on the sage's compassionate face.

In this daily veneration practice, the god, Zhenwu in this case, is like a powerful supervisor who listens to the ritual master's report patiently and reacts accordingly. The relationship between the two parties is direct and interactive. The bureaucratic model commonly used to characterize Daoist rituals of petitioning heavenly authority does not capture the dynamics between the ritual master and the divinity. On the other hand, an honorific address – 「ancestor master」 (zushi 祖師) – that is often used to refer to the founding patriarch or matriarch of a given ritual lineage in Thunder Rite liturgical manuals denotes a more accurate role that the deity played in this type of meditative practice. As a matter of fact, one of the many honorific appellations for Zhenwu is 「ancestor master.」

「Ancestor Master」 (Zushi 祖師)

The divine 「supervisor」 with whom the ritual masters meditate has, in the form of the 「ancestor master」 already played an

important role in rituals since the time of early Heavenly Daoism. The Master Red Pine's Petition Almanac (Chisong zi zhangli 赤松子章曆), an important collection of rituals concerning presentation of petitions to the heavenly court that were developed by generations of Heavenly Masters Daoism over centuries,²⁰ attests to this longevity. In instructing Daoist priests to submit the petitions, the text says,

Prostrate yourself in front of the [altar] table. Meditate on the red qi 炁 coming out from your heart and ascending to heaven.²¹ ... The eighteen foot wide heavenly gate comes in sight. All the numerous guards [accompanying you] stop here. Only General Zhou, the functionaries on duty, and the Petition-submitting Jade Lad carrying the petition in his hand arrive through the tower-gate. Turn west; pay your respects to the Ritual Master of Orthodox Unity of Three Heavens whose name is Zhang Daoling. After bowing to him, you relate the circumstances and reasons for the petition and memorial. The Heavenly Master approves.²² Bow on your knees nine times, then go to the Phoenix Pavilion and enter the door. In a moment, a divine lad in vermilion clothing and black cap emerges to receive the petition from the Petition-submitting Jade Lad, and enters [the Phoenix Pavilion]. In a short while, he comes out again and leads [you] to see the Most High as well as the Great One.... Submit the petition to the Most High who reads through it. The Great One makes a note on the petition according with the wish of the Most

20 Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to *Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac*." In *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 14 (2004): 291-343.

21 Although the text here seems to suggest that it is the red qi that ascends to the sky, what follows in the passage clearly indicates that it is the priest takes the ascending trip.

22 The original phrase, Tianshi jiubai 天師九拜 (Heavenly Master bows on his knees nine times), does not make sense. I changed the text according to a similar version of the instruction found in the *Shangqing tianxin zhengfa* 6.8 (ZHDZ 30.274c).

High. He assigns it to the [office] 「The Great Purity of the Jade Platform」, telling them to write 「comply」.... Bow on your knees twice,²³ bid farewell to the Great High, exit. Bow on your knees twice again to bid farewell to the Heavenly Master.」科曰：操復畢，便於案前伏地，便存赤紅炁從己心中出，上昇天。... 見天門。門度一丈八尺，諸侍衛悉住，唯與周將軍及直使功曹，傳章玉童擎章表至闕門之下西，謁見正一三天法師姓張名道陵。載拜訖，具陳章表事由。天師允諾，即往鳳凰閣門之下入。須臾，有一仙童朱衣玄冠出，就傳章。玉童手中接章表入，少頃，復出，引入見太上。... 又見太一著朱衣玄冠，呈太上章表，太上一覽，太一承太上意署，太清玉陞下作依字。... 心載拜，辭太上出門。又載拜，辭天師。

Zhang Daoling, the ancestor master who founded the Heavenly Master school, played a pivotal role in this petition presenting ritual. He is the first authority that the ritual master meets in the heavenly court. He pre-approves the petition, and the rest is simply ceremony (The Most High is expected to comply the petition). Zhang leads the ritual master in making the audience with the Most High (ie. Laozi) and in obtaining the final approval. The importance of the ancestral master in the ritual performance is clear.

In Thunder Rites, the ancestor masters' role became more significant. A manual entitled 「The Secret Writing of Home Letters to the Master of the Golden Gate」 (Jinque xiansheng jiashu biwen 金闕先生家書秘文)²⁴ contains rituals to be used to 「capture haunted spirits and demolish the temples [of wicked spirits]」 (zhuosui famiao 捉祟伐廟) and to pray for rains or clear weather.²⁵ These are typical functions of a Thunder Rite. The 「home letter」 in the title refers to a request submitted to Zhenwu (addressed by his more exalted title, the Supreme Emperor of the Dark Heaven or Xuantian shangdi

23 載拜 is an alternative form of 再拜.

24 The text, comprises chapter 27 of the *Pearls Retrieved* (ZHDZ 41.523a-527b).

25 ZHDZ 41.524. b. 3-5.

玄天上帝) for the authorization of a ritual performance.²⁶ To dispatch the home letter, the ritual master 「burns incenses, transforms into the divinity (bianshen 變神), walks the guideline of the Dipper (bu dougang 步斗罡), forms the 『jade mudra』 (yujue 玉訣) with his right hand and 『sword mudra』 (jianjue 劍訣) with the left, strikes the command-tablet (ling 令) three times.」 Each phrase denotes a specific preliminary exercise that are the elements of a basic program of Daoist ritual performance. The next sequence, 「summon the generals」, recounts the names of the Four Functionaries on duty at the Dark Heaven (sizhi gongcao 四值功曹) and the unnamed 「many marshals and generals of the Thunder Bureau」.

After the invocation, the ritual master begins the meditative journey to make an audience with Zhenwu, the 「Visualization and meditation for presenting the home letter」 (bai jiashu cunyun 拜家書存運). In the audience, the ritual master submits the petition (i. e. the 「home letter」) to the heavenly court. The journey begins with the visualization of a ray of red radiance coming out of the heart, then,

「Look directly at the heavenly gate located in the north. Visualize the red (hong 紅) radiance from the altar reaching directly to the heavenly gate, tens of thousands of miles with no end [in sight]. Four envoys on duty standing in front to lead the way; one envoy respectfully holds the home letter in hand, the general-officers listed in the [priest's] ritual register²⁷ follow behind. Ride the red radiance and go. After awhile, see a long bridge, illuminated with flickering light. After passing the bridge, get on the red radiance and keep going. After a short time, see a golden tower of twelve stories appeared. Climb to the top of the tower,

26 A similar version of this petition-dispatching meditation practice can be found in Xuantian jizou lingwen, in *Fahaiyizhu* 20.6 (ZHDZ 41.488a).

27 「*Falu zhong guanjiang*」 法籙中官將; they are assigned to the priest's command when the latter received the ritual register.

get back on the red radiance and move on. A red bridge comes into sight. Cross it, and see the Jade Gate (yuque 玉闕) of the Central heaven (zhongtian 中天) covered by colorful clouds. Enter the gate. The general-officers in the registers wait at the gate; only yourself and the four envoys on duty enter the gate. Turn right and go into the Courtyard of the Aiding Sage (Yousheng Yuan 佑聖院) which is heavily guarded by generals and thunder deities at the door. Enter the gate; the four envoys respectfully hold the home letter and pass it to the perfected official (zhenguan 真官) in charge of petitions. The perfected officer receives the home letter and, with a cheerful face, respectfully presents the petition, and leads the practitioner directly to the hall. Bow down on your knees nine times, get up... make a report point by point as you wish.

After the audience, the ritual master returns from the heavenly court via the same route as he came. Then, grinding his teeth and swallowing saliva – standard procedures at Daoist rituals – the ritual of submitting the home letter comes to the end. The next sequence, 「Dispatch the Home Letter to the generals on commission」 (fa jiashu qianjiang 發家書遣將), Then, the divine generals and soldiers are dispatched to carry out to the ritual master's command.

In this ritual, Zhenwu acts as an ancestor master, paralleling Zhang Daoling's role. Although Zhenwu was addressed with the exalted title 「supreme emperor」, the location of his office, in a side compound of the heavenly palace similar to Zhang Daoling's, betrays the true protocol. As a matter of fact, the 「home letter」 is typically used for submitting petitions to 「ancestor masters」 in Thunder Rites. It is thus noteworthy to find that approval from a 「mere」 ancestor master, Zhenwu, was all the ritual master needed to command the thunder generals. A traditional authority such as the Most High became less central in the thunder rituals as the

ancestor masters rose in prominence. This transition, was the end result of a process in which practitioners performed daily meditation with ancestor masters. The rise in the latter's status I would suggest, reflects the close association between practitioner and master in the formation of Thunder Rite lineages.

Conclusion

The obvious key to an efficacious Thunder Rites performance is the ritual master's success in summoning the thunder generals. Two methods of summoning are discussed in this article. One method is to command the deities by a telepathic-like correspondence made possible by the ritual master's regular practice of internalizing the qi of the thunder deities. The other method is to assume the identity of a high authority in the Daoist pantheon. The two methods developed from two distinct but complementary Daoist interpretations of the thunder deities.

Daoist masters, such as Bai Yuchan and Wang Wenqin, emphasized that fundamentally, thunder deities were materialization of qi. In light of such an understanding of the nature of thunder deities, their life stories and miracles hold little importance in the rituals.²⁸ What is important in the rituals is that the ritual masters have sufficiently cultivated their own qi. By the twelfth century, the Inner Alchemy tradition was so well developed that it could offer the proper theory and techniques for the ritual masters to cultivate their qi.

Nevertheless, hagiographies of the thunder deities were still given a prominent position in many ritual manuals that were part of the Daoist canon. The deities were portrayed as apotheosized saints or rectified demons granted titles and offices in the lower ranks of the Daoist celestial imperial hierarchy. This indicates

²⁸ Skar, 「Administering Thunder」, 178.

that the Thunder deities were not always regarded as pure qi even within the canonic tradition of Daoism. Their material aspect made it possible for them to receive positions in the Daoist divine bureaucracy. In accepting the thunder deities as individual beings and granting them titles, Daoism institutionalized the subordination of the newly assimilated spirits. For centuries, this had been the traditional method that the Daoist movement utilized to absorb local cults without endangering the status of its masters and veteran deities.

Nevertheless, something new was created when Daoist ritual masters slipped into their old role of commanding thunder deities of lower ranks. Deng Yougong's method of deity-transformation enables the ritual master to assemble a thunder army to demolish the demons not under the authority of an office, but through the identity of a high authority. As Judith Boltz points out, ritual movements that surfaced during and after the 10th century were not content simply to invoke the deities. The new movements developed the innovation of ritual masters becoming the deity, so they could be 「perceived not merely as a manipulator of divine forces but as the agent through whom they took charge.」²⁹ For Daoist masters, divine possession is not an acceptable explanation for such an identity transformation. Ordained Daoists do not view themselves as neighborhood shamans passively awaiting divine possession; they aspire to be the master of the puppets themselves. Thus, when the ritual masters speak and act in the manner of a deity, they do not present themselves as acting in a trance or in ecstasy. Instead, this must be the result of transforming the 「inner body」-- the 「true-self」-- into the deity.³⁰ This reflects the great efforts

29 Boltz, *A Survey*, 25.

30 Liu Zhongyu connects this idea to the transformation through visualization used in the early Shangqing tradition; see his "A Brief Discussion on Visualization Meditation" (Cunxiang jianlun 存想簡論). In *Shanghai jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao*

Daoist masters took to separate themselves from the agents of popular religion. The contribution of Inner Alchemy to Daoism went far beyond meditation. The concept in Inner Alchemy of cultivating an infant in the inner body who could be transformed into a deity was powerful enough to become the prevailing theory.