

Reading Resonance in Tang Tales: Allegories and Beyond

by

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## ABSTRACT

As many modern scholars have warned, the complexity of Tang narratives is far beyond the reach of Lu Xun's twentieth-century generic labels. Therefore, we should have an acute awareness of the earlier limiting view of these categorizations, and our research should transcend the limitations of these views in regard to this extensive corpus or to being confined to rigid and meager reading of the richness of the stories. This dissertation will use a transdisciplinary methodology that incorporates both history and literature in close reading of seven Tang tales composed in the mid-to-late Tang eras (780s–early 900s), to break the boundaries between the two generic labels, *chuanqi* and *zhiguai*, and unearth significant configurations within these literary texts that become apparent only through stepping across genre.

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. The TERM *CHUANQI* AND THE SCOPE OF TANG TALES

*Chuanqi* 傳奇 (“transmitting the extraordinary”) is often considered a specific genre of traditional Chinese writing and is translated as “Tang tales” by Western scholars. The term *chuanqi* was first used by Pei Xing 裴鏞 (fl. 865-875) as a title for his collection of tales.<sup>1</sup> It was only after many centuries that *chuanqi* came to be as a generic designation for a specific category of tales during the pre-modern period. Scholars hold different opinions about who first adopted this concept in the history of Chinese genres.<sup>2</sup> Like many other

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<sup>1</sup> This point was first mentioned in *Houshan shihua* 後山詩話 [Houshan Poetry Talks] by Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053-1102) of the Song dynasty (1053-1101). In terms of Chen’s record, Yin Shilu 尹師道 (1001-1046) considered the style of “Yueyang lou ji” 岳陽樓記 (Record of Yueyang Tower) by Fang Zhongyan’s 范仲淹 (989-1052) as “*chuanqi* style” 傳奇體耳. Chen further explained that “*Chuanqi* means the collection of tales written by Pei Xing in the Tang” 傳奇，唐裴鏞所著小說也. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) followed this point and said: “Nobody knows from where the name of ‘*chuanqi*’ originated or from which dynasty...So-called ‘*chuanqi*’ in the Tang was first used as a title for a collection of *xiaoshuo* written by Pei Xing” ‘傳奇’之名，不知起自何代.....唐所謂‘傳奇’，自是小說書名，裴鏞所撰. See his *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 [Notes from the Shaoshi Shanfang Studio] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 555. Many modern Chinese scholars adopted this opinion. Also see Zhu Xiuxia 祝秀俠, *Tang dai chuanqi yanjiu* 唐代傳奇研究 [Studies on Tang Tales] (Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua chubanshe, 1957), 6-7; Li Jianguo 李劍國, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xu lu* 唐五代志怪傳奇敘錄 [Narration and Accounts on the Records of Anomalies and the Tales of the Remarkable of the Tang and the Five Dynasties] (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1993), 1: 6. A different opinion was brought out by Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 in his *Tang chuanqi jianzheng* 唐傳奇箋証 [Annotation and Emendation on Tang Tales] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2000), 5-7. Zhou argues that the original name of “Yingying zhuan” 鶯鶯傳 was “*chuanqi*” and it was Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) instead of Pei Xing who first used this term. Li Zongwei 李宗為 agrees with Zhou Shaoliang’s 周紹良 opinion. About this opinion, also see further analysis in Li’s *Tangren chuanqi* 唐人傳奇 [Tang Tales] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Li Jianguo suggests that Xie Caibo 謝采伯 (1172-1251) in his preface to *Mizhai biji* 密齋筆記 [Notes from the Occult Studio] (1241) first considered both *chuanqi* and *zhiguai* 志怪 (recording the strange) as two types of writing. (*Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xu lu*, 1:9.) Another opinion is held by Shi Changyu 石昌渝. His evidence is *Nanchun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368), in which Tao claimed that “during the Tang there was [a type of writing like] *chuanqi*” 唐有傳奇. (Shi Changyu, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun* 中國小說源流論 [Beijing: Sanlian shushe, 1994; reprint 1995], 144.) Cheng Yizhong 程毅中 thinks that in Tao Zongyi’s comment, the usage of the term *chuanqi* refers to one type of drama genre rather than *xiaoshuo* 小說 (literally, “petty talk”) genre. He argues that it was Yü Ji 虞集 (1272-1348) in his *Daoyuan xue gu lu* 道園學古錄 [Records of Learning from the Ancients by Daoyuan]

modern scholars, both Cheng Yizhong<sup>3</sup> and Rania Huntington<sup>4</sup> support the opinion that it did not become a “clear subdivision of *xiaoshuo*” until it was adopted by Hu Yinglin of the sixteenth century.

However, modern scholars hold the consensus that it was only after Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) that *chuanqi* was established as a new bibliographic category for classifying Tang narratives and henceforth became widely accepted as a generic term.<sup>5</sup> Since fictionality is an important rhetorical part of fiction, Lu Xun, relying on Hu Yinglin, posited that it was since the Tang dynasty that writers started deliberately writing tales, and *chuanqi* should be read as the first “self-consciously” created fictional accounts of the fantastic.<sup>6</sup>

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that first adopted it as a category of tales. (Cheng Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shihua* 唐代小說史話 [Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1990], 12.)

<sup>3</sup> Cheng, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shihua*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rania Huntington, *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 16.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Huntington points out that the designation for the two genres *chuanqi* and *zhiguai* 志怪 (recording the strange) “became first firmly established only in the twentieth century when Lu Xun used them.” (Huntington, *Alien Kind*, 16.) Glen Dudbridge also states that “for Tang narrative one important category was bequeathed by Lu Xun: since his time the label *chuanqi* has clung stubbornly to his anthology pieces from the Tang and Song.” See this opinion in “A Question of Classification in Tang Narrative: The Story of Ding Yue.” Reprinted in Glen Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 197.

<sup>6</sup> “Fiction was also like poetry—there was a complete change when it came to the Tang era. Although it still could not divorce itself from collecting the strange and recording that which had been left out of historical account, the sign of evolution in the complexity of narrative accounts and the resplendence of style and diction, in comparison to the crudely arranged, abridged structures of the Six Dynasties, are evident. What is especially manifest is that only from this time do we have fiction written with intent. Hu Yinglin in his *Grove of Brushes* (36) says: ‘Talk of transformations and the other world flourished in the Six Dynasties, but much recorded in these accounts was contradictory and erroneous, and was not necessarily all devised out of their imaginations. When it came to the men of the Tang, they applied their intent to their fondness for the unusual, relying on fiction in which to lodge their points in writing.’ His “applied their intent” and “devised out of their imaginations” just meant self-consciously creating [fiction].” 小說亦如詩，至唐代而一變，雖尚不離於搜奇記逸，然敘述宛轉，文辭華艷，與六朝之粗陳梗概者較，演進之跡甚明，而尤顯者乃在是時則始有意為小說。胡應麟（《筆叢》三十六）云：“變異之談，盛于六朝，然多是傳錄舛訛，未必盡幻設語，至唐人乃作意好奇，假小說以寄筆端。”其云“作意”，云“幻設”者，則即意識之創造矣。The above passage on the fictionality of *chuanqi* is widely quoted by modern scholars in the field of traditional Chinese fiction and fiction criticism. (See Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, 54.) The English translation is from William H. Nienhauser, Jr., “Creativity and Storytelling in the



As a result, the historical status of *chuanqi* as a sub-category and a sub-genre of “fragments and petty talk” 叢殘小語<sup>7</sup> or “street talks and alley gossip” 街談巷語<sup>8</sup> was unprecedentedly promoted in Lu Xun’s new theory. Since the Han dynasty, Chinese traditional scholarship originally treated *xiaoshuo*—a corpus of multifarious texts which varies in genre from one historical bibliography to the next—as supplemental materials to the standard history and placed them either under the philosophy division (*zi bu* 子部) or the under the history division (*shibu* 史部) of the traditional four-fold catalog but never under the belles-lettres division (*jibu* 集部).<sup>9</sup> Although many *xiaoshuo* titles were moved from the history section to the philosophy section in later dynasties, the status of *xiaoshuo* still mainly relied on its importance to historiography and the value of *xiaoshuo* lay in its historical authenticity. Nearly all the ancient bibliographical treaties were composed by historian-bibliographers. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe extensive criticism on

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Ch’uan-ch’i: Shen Ya-chih’s T’ang Tales,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (1998): 32.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from Huan Tan’s 桓譚 (ca. 43 B.C.E.-A.D. 28) *Xinlun* 新論 (New Treatise), in Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531), *Wen xuan* 文選 [Selections of Refined Literature] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986; reprint 2007), 31.1453: “Hsiao-shuo writers gather together fragments and little sayings and collect stories they hear to make short books. For domestic affairs and the like, hsiao-shuo includes words of some value.” 若其小說家，合叢殘小語，近取譬論，以作短書，治身理家，有可觀之辭。The English translation is based on the entry “Hsiao-shuo” by Kenneth J. DeWoskin in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 423.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Ban Gu’s 班固 (32-92) “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (Treatise on Bibliography), in *Han shu* 漢書 [History of the Han] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 30.1745: “The *xiaoshuo* school probably evolved from the office of petty officials. The works were street talk and alley gossip, made up by those who engaged in conversations along the roads and walkways” 小說家者流，蓋出於稗官；街談巷語，道聽途說者之所造也。The English translation is from Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “The Sou-Shen-Chi and the Chih-Kuai Tradition: A Bibliographic and Generic Study” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1974), 195-196.

<sup>9</sup> “Since the Han Dynasty, the prejudice regarding *xiaoshuo* from historians has been almost the same. The bibliographies of [xiaoshuo] were also categorized as a branch of historiography. It is certainly difficult to have a theory which can get beyond this type of classification” 史家成見，自漢迄今蓋略同：目錄亦史之支流，固難有超其分際者矣。Lu, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, 6.

the well-known works viewed as *zhiguai* or *chuanqi* by modern scholars. These works were most often accused of “being ignorant about the distinction between truth and falsehood, or being confused about the concepts of right and wrong” 真偽不別，是非相亂 due to their “entirely fabricated writing” 全構虛辭.<sup>10</sup> Even when historian Li Zhao 李肇 (fl. 806-820) offered positive comments on tales like “Zhen zhong ji” 枕中記 (Record of the World within a Pillow) and “Mao Ying zhuan” 毛穎傳 (Account of Fur-point [brush]), his opinion was still delivered from a historian’s standpoint.<sup>11</sup> Lu Xun’s new theory identified *chuanqi* as fictional, rather than factual, and as the true beginning of fiction in China, the important traits of which were fictionality, narrative plots, and literariness. For modern scholarship after Lu Xun, “the notion that Tang tales are fiction has become a standard assumption in much of the scholarly discourse concerned with these tales.”<sup>12</sup> Apparently, Lu’s genre study abandoned the conventional conceptions of *xiaoshuo* and *chuanqi*, and enabled him to escape the constraints of the previous prejudice which had been supported for more than a millennium. Their former debased status—“books of marvels enjoyed neither the legitimacy of official historical writing nor the dignity of recognized literary forms”<sup>13</sup>—

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<sup>10</sup> This is how historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721) in *Shi tong* 史通 [Generalities of Historiography] commented on collections like *Dongming ji* 洞冥記 [Record of Penetrating the Mysteries] and *Shi yi ji* 拾遺記 [Record of Gleanings]. See Liu Zhiji, *Shi tong* (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1969), 34.126.

<sup>11</sup> Li Zhao in his *Guoshi bu* 國史補 [Supplements to the National History] compared the two Tang narrative writers, Shen Jiji 沈既濟 (ca. 740-ca. 800) and Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), with the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145-ca. 86 B.C.E.): “‘The Record of the World in Pillow’ composed by Shen Jiji is similar to the implied words of Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (ca. 369-286 B.C.E.) and the like. As to ‘The Account of Fur-point’ by Han Yu, its writing is exceptional, not inferior to that of the historian Sima Qian. The two pieces certainly present their fine talent of writing history” 沈既濟撰《枕中記》，莊生寓言之類；韓愈撰《毛穎傳》，其文尤高，不下史遷。二篇真良史才也。

<sup>12</sup> Sarah M. Allen, *Shifting Stories: History, Gossip, and Lore in Narratives from Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, 113.

was apparently changed along with his redefinition of *chuanqi*. Lu Xun's theory and his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* greatly influenced all later studies of various aspects of *xiaoshuo* and *chuanqi*. His opinions are mentioned and followed in almost every history of Chinese fiction or criticism of fiction. Thus, Glen Dudbridge concluded that "fiction/*xiaoshuo* became canonical in the twentieth century, historians of Chinese literature have ever since been content to refocus their categories accordingly."<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, if we examine Lu Xun's theory further, it is not difficult to find that his definition of *chuanqi* is still amorphous: Besides the generalized concept that they were "written with intent", Lu simply characterizes *chuanqi* as "lengthy pieces that are moreover able to intricately depict [characters and events]" 文章很長，並能描寫得很曲折。<sup>15</sup> In addition, Lu gathers only twenty-nine tales into his *Tang Song chuanqi ji* 唐宋傳奇集 [Anthology of *chuanqi* Tales in the Tang and the Song Dynasties]. Because of the ambiguity of the generic definition and the complexity that modern scholars uncovered in this corpus, the numbers of Tang tales categorized as *chuanqi* collected in their anthologies differ considerably from Lu Xun.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the following fundamental, but essential, questions are raised by the modern scholars in the field: What works should lie within the boundaries of the *chuanqi* genre? Does this generic label have any limitations?

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<sup>14</sup> Dudbridge, "A Question of Classification in Tang Narrative," 197.

<sup>15</sup> Lu Xun, *Han wenxue shigang* 漢文學史綱 [The Outline of Literature History of Han Dynasty] (Taipei: Fengyun shidai, 1990), 19.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Wang Pijiang's 汪闞疆 *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小说 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978) included 75 pieces and Li Jianguo 李劍國 listed more than 250 works under this genre in *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xu lu*. Both Nienhauser ("Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch'uan-ch'i", 34) and Allen (*Shifting Stories*, 8) have detailed discussion on this issue.

As an influential scholar of Tang tales, William H. Nienhauser Jr. strives to provide more details and a possible answer to the first question: “It seems reasonable to adopt Lu Hsün's ideas concerning ‘consciously created stories’ which are ‘quite long’ and reveal some intricacy of plot, and to refer to texts which conform to these guidelines as *ch’uan-ch’i* (T’ang tales).”<sup>17</sup> “Tang tales are short pieces of approximately 350 to 3500 characters, disciplined in both form and style.”<sup>18</sup> “The average *ch’uan-ch’i* contained between fifteen hundred and two thousand Chinese characters.”<sup>19</sup> Based on the above viewpoints, Nienhauser lists twenty-five works generally categorized as *chuanqi*. Meanwhile, he also admits that “the extent of this corpus is sometimes difficult to determine, with longer *chih-kuai* resembling shorter *ch’uan-ch’i*.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, drawing a clear line between the two subgenres of *xiaoshuo* has always been problematic. Even when Hu Yinglin explained his six-fold demarcation of *xiaoshuo* texts, he had already noticed this issue.<sup>21</sup> Lu Xun suggests that fictionality is the single most obvious trait to clarify the generic distinction between the two subgenres, but “for the majority of tales we have no way to tell how much a writer relied on source and how much he invented himself.”<sup>22</sup> Nienhauser concludes that

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<sup>17</sup> Nienhasuer, “Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch’uan-ch’i,” 68.

<sup>18</sup> See the entry “*ch’uan-ch’i*” in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 356.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See this opinion in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., “Tang tales,” chapter 33 in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, edited by Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 582-590.

<sup>21</sup> “As for the ‘records of anomalies’ and ‘tales of the remarkable’, they belong to extremely fluid genres and readily move from one category to the other. [For example,] in some cases there are both types of tales in one work. And in other cases, there are features befitting both genres in one tale. [When classifying them, we] should preferably recognize what [feature] takes dominance.” 至於志怪、傳奇，尤易出入，或一書之中，二事並載，或一事之內，兩端並存，舉其重而已。See Hu Yinglin, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 [Miscellaneous Notes from the Young Aunt Mount Studio] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 13.7b. This English translation is from Laura Hua Wu, “From Xiaoshuo to Fiction,” 353.

<sup>22</sup> Allen, *Shifting Stories*, 9.

Shen Jiji “had no preconceived idea of a generic format (let alone a generic label) for his work,” and their tales represent a “variety of approaches, subjects, and structure.”<sup>23</sup> When we discuss this issue from the perspective of Tang tale writers, we need to notice that actually, many cases are similar to Shen’s case.

Based on the issue revealed by the first question, scholars represented by Glen Dudbridge further challenge this generic thinking and generic labelling. Dudbridge alleges that both *chuanqi* and *zhiguai* are misleading terminologies, since *chuanqi* is merely a twentieth-century generic classification, and *zhiguai* refers to an unbroken tradition of “recording the strange” covering “a large and very mixed literature” from antiquity to the present day, rather than being a generic term.<sup>24</sup> In Dudbridge’s opinion, such categories “polarize the rich and fluid corpus of Tang narratives crudely into two broad and ill-defined categories,”<sup>25</sup> and they are like “pigeon holes” which “mislead and hinder our efforts to read Tang narrative sensitively.”<sup>26</sup> He recommends that our reading should “reach beyond the inherited categories” and “confront the primary texts as best we can in their own environment and accept all the complexity.”<sup>27</sup> Allen is one of those scholars who support Dudbridge’s opinion. Not only does she agree that “considering Tang tales as fiction restricts us to a small proportion of the extant materials... [and] limits our understanding of both the select ‘fictional’ tales and the larger tale corpus of which they are a part,” but she also suggests that both *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* are more usefully seen as a “spectrum,”

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<sup>23</sup> Nienhasuer, “Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch’uan-ch’i,” 70.

<sup>24</sup> Dudbridge, “A Thousand Years of Printed Narrative in China,” 13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Dudbridge, “A Question of Classification in Tang Narrative,” 207-208.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 197-198.

indicating the breadth of corpus, rather than as generic labels.<sup>28</sup> Chinese scholars have also raised concerns on the issue. For instance, in their eyes the juxtaposition of *chuanqi*, *zhiguai* or *zhiren* 志人 (recording people) is problematic, because *chuanqi* as a literary genre is mainly defined by literary features and styles, while *zhiguai* and *zhiren* are generically categorized by subject matter, which unavoidably causes overlapping among these generic labels and logical confusion.<sup>29</sup>

As Dudbridge and other scholars have warned, the complexity of Tang narratives is far beyond the reach of Lu Xun's twentieth-century generic labels; therefore, we should have an acute awareness of the rather limiting view of these categorizations, and our research should avoid either being restricted to very limited proportions of this extensive corpus or being confined to rigid and meager reading. As a result, it has become a trend that an increasing number of Western and Chinese scholars intentionally use “story,” “tale,” and “*xiaoshuo*,” rather than “fiction,” “*chuanqi*,” and “*zhiguai*” to refer to the narrative materials they study. This trend is similar to what Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗 (1907-2002) argued in the 1980s in his *Tangren xiaoshuo yanjiu* 唐人小說研究.<sup>30</sup>

This dissertation intends to follow this trend in order to study Tang tales composed in the mid-to-late Tang eras (780s–early 900s), by breaking the boundaries between the two generic labels, *chuanqi* and *zhiguai*, and focusing on the significance of the below-the-surface configurations of those literary texts. Except for “Houtu furen zhuan” 后土夫人傳

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<sup>28</sup> Allen, *Shifting Stories*, 8, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Sun Xun 孫遜 and Pan Jianguo 潘建國, “Tang chuanqi wenti kaobian” 唐傳奇問題考辨, *Wenxue Yichang* 文學遺產 6(1999): 34-35.

<sup>30</sup> Wang Mengou refuses to adopt the genre of *chuanqi* and argues that it is not able to represent Tang tales appropriately. Wang Mengou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi* (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju), 1: i-ii.

(The account of Lady Houtu), all the rest of the tales discussed in this dissertation are from the *Xuanguai lu* 玄怪錄 [Records of the Mysterious Anomalies] by Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779-848) and the *Xu xuanguai lu* 續玄怪錄 [Continuation of the Records of Mysterious Anomalies] by Li Fuyan 李復言 (fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century). Moreover, the former is commonly labelled as *chuanqi*,<sup>31</sup> but the latter is more often viewed as *zhiguai* by modern scholars. Although Lu Xun considers the *Xuanguai lu* as a renowned and influential *chuanqi* collection,<sup>32</sup> modern scholars still have different opinions about its generic category. For instance, Li Jianguo puts both texts in the category of *chuanqi zhiguai* collections, while Cheng Yizhong<sup>33</sup> treats them simply as *zhiguai* collections. If we think outside of these “generic boxes” and pursue the deeper dimensions of significance hidden in these stories, which are filled with goddesses, demons, spirits, ghosts, metamorphoses, the netherworld, and so forth, a much broader vision will be brought before our eyes.

There are many studies, and as many intriguing opinions, on the authorship and textual transmission of the *Xuanguai lu* and the *Xu Xuanguai lu*. For instance, besides a biography of Niu Sengru, Min Woong Park also presents in detail the textual history and translation of the *Xuanguai lu*.<sup>34</sup> Robert Joe Cutter traces the lineage of the Southern Song edition of the *Xu Xuanguai lu* and analyzes the problems with variations in the title and

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<sup>31</sup> See the respective analyses by Cheng Yizhong and Li Zongwei of the *Yiwen ji* 異聞集 [Collection of Extraordinary Writings] in *Tangdai xiaoshuo shi*, 236-241 and *Tangren chuanqi*, 154.

<sup>32</sup> “There were many works which were composed of the tales of *chuanqi* and were compiled into a single-author collection during the Tang dynasty, but none of them was as renowned and influential as Niu Sengru’s *Xuanguai lu* ”造傳奇之文，薈萃為一集者，在唐代多有，而煊赫莫如牛僧孺之《玄怪錄》。 *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, 71-73.

<sup>33</sup> Cheng Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shi*, 181-182.

<sup>34</sup> Min Woong Park, “Niu Seng-ju (780-848) and his *Hsian-kuai lu*” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993), 1-334.

form of during its transmission.<sup>35</sup> Both of them raise concerns about the authorship of the tales included in the two collections; thus, they question whether or not the tales should belong to Li Fuyan, Niu Sengru or some other authors.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the authorship of the *Xu Xuanguai lu* is attributed to Li Fuyan, but his identity and biographical information are controversial. Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱 suggests that Li Fuyan should be Li Liang 李諒 (755-833) whose courtesy name is Fuyan,<sup>37</sup> while Cheng Qianfan 程千帆 remarks that Li Fuyan was a scholar who passed *jinshi* 進士 exam in 840.<sup>38</sup> Cheng Yizhong questions both popular assumptions and argues that neither of the views is tenable.<sup>39</sup> David Allen Herrmann in his dissertation also discusses the authorship of the *Xu Xuanguai lu* and identifies Li Liang as its author.<sup>40</sup> This dissertation will also attempt to provide more clues and new perspective for examining these issues.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Joe Cutter, "A Note on the Transmission of the *Hsü Hsüan-kuai lu*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96.1(1976), 124-131.

<sup>36</sup> Park, "Niu Seng-ju (780-848) and his *Hsüan-kuai lu*," 70-87; Cutter, "A Note on the Transmission of the *Hsü Hsüan-kuai lu*," 131.

<sup>37</sup> Bian Xiaoxuan, "Xu Xuanguai lu zuozhe ji xiezuo niandai tansuo" 續玄怪錄作者及寫作年代探索, *Jianhai xuekan* 江海學刊 10 (Oct. 1961): 42.

<sup>38</sup> Chen Qianfan, *Tangdai jinshi xingjuan yu wenxue* 唐代進士行卷與文學 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 85.

<sup>39</sup> Cheng points out that Li Liang passed away in 833, but "Qiling ke" 麒麟客 in *Xu Xuanguai lu* was composed at least during the Dazhong 大中 period (847-870). Meanwhile, if Li Fuyan passed his *jinshi* exam in 840, how could he was already the District Magistrate of Peng 彭 city. See Cheng's detailed discussion on this issue in his *Xuanguai lu*, *Xu Xuanguai lu*, 9-18.

<sup>40</sup> David Allen Herrmann, "The construction and positioning of 'Chang Lao': A key to the authorship and contents of the 'Hsü Hsüan Kuai Lu'" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin- Madison, 2010), 32-86.



## B. A TRANSDICIPLINARY METHODOLOGY AND ALLEGORICAL READING

Traditional scholarship suggests that Tang tales, because of their content and function, are to be understood as fantastic or imaginary stories and thus without any significance beyond the story itself. For instance, Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1148) pointed out that “most events in Tang tales are fantastic” 唐小說事多誕.<sup>41</sup> This opinion has been upheld by Yü Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) who thinks that Tang tales were composed by giving far-fetched meanings to idle imaginations and thus were written just for entertainment:

Among the talented scholars of the Tang, the persons who had insights into the classics, arts, the Way and scholarship were few. They only attached importance to being fond of composing literary writings. They had nothing in their leisure to apply their minds to, and therefore they imagined events of mysterious and fantastic encounters, and artistic talents and entrancements. They then used [the fancies] as the ideas of their poetry and prose in their social intercourse, and fashioned narratives by adding far-fetched meanings. At places of scholars gathering, everyone took out his ‘practical compositions’ to entertain and amuse one another. It was unnecessary that these events be true, so they were called “transmissions of strange stories.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>*Bishu luhua* 避暑錄話 [Recorded Conversations Made Escaping the Heat], in *Yingyin Wenyuange shouchaoben Siku quanshu* 影印文淵閣手鈔本四庫全書 (reprint; Taibei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1972.), 45.3869.

<sup>42</sup> Yü Ji, *Daoyuan xue gu lu* 道園學古錄 [Records of Learning from the Ancients by Daoyuan] (Taibei: Shangwu yin shu guan, 1968), 38.29.

唐之才人，於經藝道學有見者少，徒知好為文辭。閒暇無所用心，輒想象幽怪遇合，才情恍惚之事，作為詩章答問之意，傳會以為說，盍簪之次，各出行卷，以相娛玩。非必真有是事，謂之“傳奇”。

Like Yü Ji's, Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801) neither held a high opinion of Tang tales and their writers, nor did he consider them to be interesting works composed by creative minds. Based on the themes found in the Chinese love-poetry tradition, his prejudiced comments claim that Tang tales were merely the combination of far-fetched ideas and pure imagination, along with similar descriptions of romantic attachments:

It was not until the Tang that there were individual stories, which were separately categorized as *chuanqi*. These stories were mostly about emotional men and women, [describing] nothing more than sorrows and joys, separations and reunions [in life].... Among all the tales like this kind, some are far-fetched stories that arouse one's suspicion that they might be true, and some are completely based on pure fantasy. Though their feelings and situations are multifarious, their themes are mostly similar.<sup>43</sup>

唐人乃有單篇，別為傳奇一類。大抵情鍾男女，不外離合悲歡。……  
凡如此類，或附會疑似，或竟托子虛，雖情態萬殊，而大致略似。

In contrast to the above opinion supported by many traditional scholars, another view suggested that *yan wai zhi yi* 言外之意 (a significance beyond words) could be found in Tang tales. For instance, Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202), who left comments on both Tang

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<sup>43</sup> Zhang Xuecheng, *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通義 [General Analysis of Literature and History] (Taiwan: Shangwu yishuguan, 1967), 5.35b-36a.

tales and drama, praised them for “being delicate as well as having thoughts and concerns” (*wanzhuan you sizhi* 宛转有思致).<sup>44</sup> He attributed this important feature to the long enduring Chinese poetic tradition inherited by the Tang literati. Based on his reading of the stories and tales regarding ghosts and spirits in different dynasties, Hong Mai also declares that these works all embed within them “implied words” (*yuyan* 寓言):

Those accounts of anomalies by Qi Xie and talks on Heaven by Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369-286 B.C.E.) are abstruse, illusive and indiscernible. It is impossible to ask for an explanation. Up to the time of Gan Bao’s (fl. 317-322) *Soushen ji* [In Search of the Spirits], Duke Qizhang (784-840)’s<sup>45</sup> *Xuanguai lu* [Records of the Mysterious Anomalies], Gushenzi’s *Bo yi zhi* [Comprehensive Collections of Strange Events], *Hedong ji* [Records of Hedong], *Xuanshi zhi* [Records of a Palace Chamber] and *Qishen lu* [Records of Studying Gods], must hold “implied words” within.<sup>46</sup>

夫齊諧之志怪，莊周之談天，虛無幻茫，不可致詰；逮幹寶之《搜神》、奇章公之《玄怪》、谷神子之《博異》、《河東》之記、《宣室》之志、《稽神》之錄皆不能無寓言於其間。

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<sup>44</sup> “Translate the whole quote: “For the most part, Tang writers were all good at writing poetry so, no matter if *xiaoshuo* or *xiju*, all are fabrications about ghosts and spirits, and all are delicately circumlocutive and appeal to the mind.” 大率唐人多工詩，雖小說戲劇，鬼物假託，莫不婉轉有思致。See *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 [Miscellaneous Notes from the Rong Studio] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 194.

<sup>45</sup> Here refers to Niu Sengru. Niu’s ancestor Niu Hong 牛弘 (545-610) was granted the Duke of Qizhang Prefecture during the Sui dynasty (580-618). This honorific title was later used to address Niu Sengru respectfully.

<sup>46</sup> See Hong Mai’s preface to his *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 [Records of Yijian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 243.

Hong Mai cites these collections of stories, partially from the Western Jin (316-420) to the Song (960-1279), but mainly from the Tang, a representative cases to support his opinion that Tang tales were not merely far-fetched stories written for entertainment. Miao Quansun 繆荃孫 (1844-1919) in his preface to *Zuixing shi* 醉醒石 also confirms a deeper significance beneath the surface of the tales. He remarks that some Tang tales are subtly able to touch upon current politics and demonstrate their writers' "vigor of writing styles" and "breadth of mind":

It was only upon reaching the Tang that *xisoshuo* and *chuanqi* were bifurcated into two categories. Some of these tales were invented fancies for one's own amusement and some were insinuations about current politics. Tang writers took them to be their practice texts because they demonstrated the power of their writing and were able to reveal their breadth of mind. And what they composed became widely spread and known in their era.<sup>47</sup>

至唐而歧小說、傳奇爲二類。或嚮壁虛造，或影射時政，唐人以爲行卷，以其可以見筆力，可以見胸襟，而所撰遂盛行於世。

Tang readers who were familiar with such Tang tales as "Bu Jiang Zhong baiyuan zhuan" 補江總白猿傳,<sup>48</sup> "Zhou Qin xing ji" 周秦行紀 (Record of Traveling to the Zhou

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<sup>47</sup> Miao Quansun's opinion is quoted by Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xu lu*, 1:10.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志 [Memoirs of Reading in the Jun Studio] recorded that: "Chongwen zongmu consider it a tale composed by someone who disliked Xun." 《崇文總目》以爲唐人惡詢者爲之。See Chao Gonwu 晁公武 (ca. 1105-ca. 1180), *Junzhai dushu zhi*. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990). Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (fl. 1211-1249) also commented on this tale, saying that: "[Ouyang] Xun's appearance look like a macaque. Probably, he and Zhangsun Wuji (594-659) had jeered at each other. Based on the jest, this account thereupon was expanded so as to make the thing real. Though it is under Jiang Zhong's name, it must be composed by someone with an anonymous name." 詢貌類彌猴，蓋嘗與長孫無忌互相嘲謔矣。此傳遂因其嘲，廣之以實其事，託言江總，必無名子所爲也。Hu Yinglin agreed with this apt interpretation: "'The account of White Ape' is the tale used by the people in Tang to

and Qin),<sup>49</sup> “Niu Yang ri li” 牛羊日曆 (The Calendar of Niu and Yang),<sup>50</sup> and “Hejian zhuan” 河間傳 (Account of a woman from Hejian),<sup>51</sup> would not be surprised about this opinion.

A number of modern scholars have further enriched and developed the above pre-modern view of Tang tales. One of the important approaches they adopted is transdisciplinary, which seeks to integrate historical and literary studies. In his preface to *Niu Li dangzheng yu Tangdai wenxue* 牛李黨爭與唐代文學 [Niu-Li Factional Conflict and Tang Literature], Chinese scholar Fu Xiren 傅錫壬 explains why he adopts a transdisciplinary path to study both Tang history and literature, and states that this

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defame Ouyang Xun. Xun was skinny and slender in stature, so an anonymous in his time made use of fabricated words to defame him.” 《白猿傳》，唐人以謗歐陽詢者。詢狀瘦削，像猿猴，故當時無名子造言以謗之。See Chen Zhensun, *Zhizhai shulu jieti xu* 直齋書錄解題 [Annotated Book Catalogue from the Zhi Studio] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 317 and Hu Yinglin, *Sibu zheng'e* 四部正譌 [Correct Errors of the Four Branches] (Beijing: Pushe shuju, 1929; 1933 rpt.), 70.

<sup>49</sup> Former scholars represented by Zhang Ji 張洎 (933-997), Chao Gongwu and Hu Yinglin believed that this tale was a personal attack upon Niu Sengru written by Li Deyu's disciple Wei Guan 韋瓘 (b. 789-?). Chen Zhensun agreed with this opinion and noted that: “The piece of ‘the Record of Travel to the Zhou and Qin’ was composed by a personal enemy of Niu Sengru” 《周行秦紀》一篇，奇章怨家所為。See *Zhunzhai shulu jieti*, 89.

<sup>50</sup> Hu Yinglin pointed out that this tale is another personal attack to Liu Sengru and “must be composed by the person who belongs to Li Deyu (787-849) clique and dislikes [Liu] Ke (fl. 835).”必贊皇之黨，且惡軻者為之也。According to the record that “Song possessed hatred towards Sengru” 松有恨僧孺，he also assumed that Huangfu Song 皇甫松 might be the real author. See Hu's view in *Sibu zheng'e*, 69.

<sup>51</sup> There are many different pre-modern commentaries on this tale. One of the important commentaries is in *Zhitang dushi guanjian* 致堂讀史管見 by Hu Yin 胡寅 (1098-1156). He viewed it as a political allegory used by its author, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819) to criticize Tang Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820): “Zihou lodged his satire in the character of lascivious women who was chaste at the beginning but failed to carry it through so as to slander Xianzong.” 子厚志託諷淫婦人有始無卒者，以詆憲宗。This allegorical reading was supported by Huang Zhen 黃震 (1213-1281). He also noted that Liu Zongyuan would like to “use it to manifest that it is difficult to possess emperor's favor.” 借以明恩之難持。See Huang Zhen 黃震 (1213-1280), *Huangshi richao* 黃氏日鈔 [Daily Copy by Huang], in *Dushuji sizhong* 讀書記四種 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan, 1998), 12.89.

integrated study methodology enables researchers to either perceive contemporary historical truth or to reach a more extensive cultural meaning:

The Tang dynasty is an era in which a variety of literary styles reached their heyday, in which genres were completed, and in which there were many literati. The mutual influence of history and literature on each other could reach to deep and extensive levels...Moreover, by enlisting some of the phenomena produced in the interaction between history and literature, we can have insight into the actual state of history of that time, perhaps make a thorough analysis of the literary surface, and find our way toward a broader cultural significance that engages what it is to be human.<sup>52</sup>

唐代是一個文風鼎盛、文體已備、文士眾多的時代，歷史與文學的相互影響力可以達到深而廣的層面……而且更籍着歷史與文學相互交錯的某些現象中，窺見了當代歷史的真象，或透析了文學的表面，探觸到了和人類接觸更廣泛的文化意義。

Thus, he strongly endorses this path for our future research. Fu Xiren can be viewed as one of the representatives of modern Chinese historians and literary critics who passionately embrace the scholarly idea that the study of two different disciplines, history and literature, can be successfully combined and integrated rather than be completely separated.

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<sup>52</sup> See “Zixu” 自序, in Fu Xiren, *Niu Li dangzheng yu Tangdai wenxue* (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1984), 1-2.

Many studies have explored the sources, development, and achievements of this traditional approach. The consensus is that Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890-1969), an influential Chinese historian in the twentieth century, should be considered as one of the most important and creative scholars who contribute to the transdisciplinary approach.<sup>53</sup> His development of research methodology “using literature and history to mutually verify each other” (*wenshi huzheng* 文史互證) has been widely discussed and appreciated by Chinese modern scholars. For instance, Wang Yongxing points out that Chen “adopted the methodology of historiography to poetics” (*yi zhishi zhi fa zhi shi* 以治史之法治詩) through investigating the spatial, temporal, and societal settings in the history of each poem.<sup>54</sup> Yeh Wen-hsin 葉文心 uses *Liu Rushi biezhuān* as an example to confirm that Chen Yinke effectively combined poetry and history to pursue historical truth and distinctive interpretation.<sup>55</sup> Jing Shuhui 景蜀慧 also views the methodology as one of the most prominent contributions which Chen made to the traditional historiography; moreover, Professor Jing asserts that this approach integrates textual criticism, focuses on historical meaning and hermeneutic interpretations, and probes into historical truth.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This consensus is represented by the recent works including *Chen Yinke xiansheng shixuexu lǚe gāo* 陳寅恪先生史學述略稿 (Wang Yongxing 王永興, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998); *Chen Yinke yu zhongguo wenhua* 陳寅恪與中國文化 (Liu Kedi 劉克敵, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999); *Chen Yinke yu ershi shiji zhongguo xueshu* 陳寅恪與二十世紀中國學術 (Hu Shouren 胡守任, ed., Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2000); and *Chen Yinke wannian shiwen shizheng* 陳寅恪晚年詩文釋證 (Yu Yingshi 余英時, Enlarged and revised edition; Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> See detailed analysis on this opinion in *Chen Yinke xiansheng shixuexu lǚe gāo*, 189-198.

<sup>55</sup> “Kaoju shixue yu renwu zhuanji: qiantan Chen Yinke xiansheng *Liu Rushi biezhuān*” 考據史學與人物傳記：淺談陳寅恪先生《柳如是別傳》，in *Chen Yinke yu ershi shiji zhongguo xueshu*, 312-314.

<sup>56</sup> “‘Wenshi huzheng’ fanfa yu Wei Jin Nan Bei chao shi yanjiu” ‘文史互證’方法與魏晉南北朝史研究, in *Chen Yinke yu ershi shiji zhongguo xueshu*, 167.

Chen Yinke's own works and comments indeed demonstrate his emphasis on the interrelationship between history and literature. On the one hand, Chen views a variety of literary forms as potential historical material and shows their historical significance and unique value in historiography. For example, when he studied the renowned Tang tale "Yingying zhuan" 鶯鶯傳 by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) and led readers to understand why Yingying was abandoned as a *youwu* 尤物 (bewitching beauty) at the end of this love story, Chen pointed out that this account reflects both the moral standards and social customs of the scholar-official class (*shidafu* 士大夫) during the Tang dynasty. According to his research, since Yingying was not a daughter from a Tang noble family, but a courtesan, the marriage between her and Scholar Zhang (the self-image of Yuanzhen in the account) would have been completely despised by society. At the end of this study, he comments: "This account<sup>57</sup> is not merely a masterpiece of Tang tale. It is also an excellent historical material for both the [Yong] zhen (805) and Yuan [he] (806-820) periods" 此傳亦是[永]貞、元[和]朝之良史料，不僅為唐代小說之傑作已也。<sup>58</sup>

Another example is Chen's investigation of "Xin Gongping shangxian" 辛公平上仙 (Xin Gongping Encountered Immortals) collected in the *Xu Xuanguai lu*.<sup>59</sup> At the beginning of the article, Chen stated that although the "veritable records of Shunzong"

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<sup>57</sup> It refers to "Yingying zhuan".

<sup>58</sup> Chen Yinke, *Yuan Bai shijian zhengao* 元白詩箋證稿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 112-116.

<sup>59</sup> "Shuzong shilu yu Xu Xuanguai lu" 順宗實錄與續玄怪錄 (*The Veritable Records of Emperor Shun and the Continuation of Records of Mysteries and Anomalies*), in *Chen Yinke shixue lunwen xuanji* 陳寅恪史學論文選集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 391-398.



(*Shunzong shilu* 順宗實錄) by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) is a national history and the *Xu Xuanguai lu* is a collection of literary stories, both works could “mutually bring to light” (互相發明 *huxiang faming*) history of Yuanhe period as well as the hidden relationship between Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820) and eunuchs.<sup>60</sup> Chen then presented many historical records from the *Shunzong shilu* as cross references to support his analysis of how, “[Li] Fuyan borrowed the Taoist term of ‘released into transcendence by weapons’ (兵解 *bingjie*) to record the fact that Xianzong was actually murdered.”<sup>61</sup> At the end of Chen’s new interpretation, he concludes that the tale, “Xin Gongping shangxian” is “surviving history material” that reveals the truth about Xianzong’s death. Chen further claims that we should not ignore the tale’s historical value simply because it was viewed as *xiaoshuo* (小說 petty talk). Instead, he thinks that both the *Xu Xuanguai lu* and the *Shunzong shilu* are equally significant.<sup>62</sup> In his study of Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (772-846) poetry, he also compares poems to *Shunzong shilu*, and states that Bai’s poetry is as superb as Du Fu’s 杜甫 (712-770), and because it reflects historical reality, it good enough to be viewed as “poetry-as-history” (詩史 *shishi*).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “*Shunzong shilu* yu *Xu Xuanguai lu*”, 391.

<sup>61</sup> “[李]復言假道家‘兵解’之詞，以紀憲宗被弑之實……”See “*Shunzong shilu* yu *Xu Xuanguai lu*”, 392.

<sup>62</sup> “*Shunzong shilu* yu *Xu Xuanguai lu*”, 398.

<sup>63</sup> “*Shunzong shilu* which was transmitted to nowadays is Changli’s original edition. Therefore, we can still discover the real situation of how eunuchs-dominated market harmed people at that time. This poem by Letian completely matches it. Through this kind of matches, we understand that Bai’s poetry is truly good enough to be poetry-as-history. Compared with Shaoling[yelao]’s works, Bai’s is no less superb.” 今傳世之順宗實錄，乃昌黎之原本，故猶得從而窺見當日宮市病民之實況，而樂天此篇竟與之脗合。於此可知白氏之詩，誠足當詩史。比之少陵[野老]之作，殊無愧色。Chen Yinke, *Yuan Bai shijian zhenggao*, 249.

On the other hand, Chen thinks that understanding the social environment and milieu are necessary prerequisites to understanding ancient people's thinking and lives.<sup>64</sup> He stresses that any reading or textual criticism of literary texts should be based on their coeval history and culture to achieve accurate historical understanding. Chen commented, "Nowadays, if we read Bai [Juyi]'s poems without reading Tang history, it is very doubtful to what extent we can understand them" 今之讀白 [居易] 詩，而不讀唐史者，其了解程度，殊不能無疑。<sup>65</sup> He also posited that "The history of Tuizhi [Bai Juyi] is the footnoting of his poems" 退之之史即樂天詩之註腳也。<sup>66</sup>

As the most important sinologist who has comprehensively studied Chen Yinke, Yu Yingshi elucidates Chen's historiographical accomplishments in his *Chen Yinke wannian shiwen shizheng*. Yu concludes that exploring the intellectual world and life of historical figures by means of textual criticism of literature was Chen's pioneering development in traditional textual criticism.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, he suggests that "original/authorial intent" (*benyi* 本意) has its historical objectivity and we should strive to pursue the authorial intent behind literary texts through combining evidential examination and scholarly interpretation:

That it is not easy to grasp an author's "original intent," is something already admitted by ancient Chinese people. But if we completely give up

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<sup>64</sup> See "Feng Youlan zhongguo zhexueshi shangce shencha baogao" 馮友蘭中國哲學史上冊審查報告, in *Jinmingguan congkao, erbian* 金明館叢稿, 二編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 247.

<sup>65</sup> *Yuan Bai shijian zhenggao*, 229.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 249.

<sup>67</sup> *Chen Yinke wan nian shiwen shizheng*, 223.

this kind of effort due to its difficulty and even gloss over it by saying “original intent” is not important at all, could mean never hold its ground in the Chinese tradition. From Mencius (ca. 372-289 B.C.E.), Sima Qian, Zhu Xi (1130- 1200) to Master Chen, they all paid attention to how to remotely connect with authors’ minds that were hundreds of years earlier. Through the interaction between “evidential examination” and “hermeneutics” in different levels, the “original intent” of ancient people’s texts can be seen by later generations in most cases. “Original intent” has its own historical objectivity and does not disappear due to the merging between subject and object; all this has already been repeatedly tested and verified in the Chinese humanist tradition. Master Chen’s studies on Yu Xin (513-581), Du Fu, Bai Juyi, and Yuan Zhen, as well as Qian Qianyi and Liu Rushi, can all demonstrate this.<sup>68</sup>

作者“本意”不易把握，這是中國古人早已承認的，但是因為困難而完全放棄這種努力，甚至進而飾說“本意”根本無足輕重，這在中國傳統中無論如何是站不穩的。從孟子、司馬遷、朱熹，以至陳先生都注重如何遙接作者之心於千百年之上。通過“實證”與“詮釋”在不同層次上的交互為用，古人文字的“本意”在多數情形下是可以為後世之人所共見的。“本意”自有其歷史的客觀性，不因主客交融便消失不見；這在中國的人文傳統中是屢試而已驗的。陳

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<sup>68</sup> See “Mingyue zhi zhao wujia lu” 明月直照吾家路, Yu’s preface of 1986 edition included in his enlarged and revised 1998 edition of *Chen Yinke wan nian shiwen shizheng*, 9.

先生研究庾信、杜甫、白居易、元稹以至錢謙益與柳如是都可以作證。

Besides appreciating Chen's achievements, Yu also adopts Chen's own transdisciplinary approach to study Chen's intellectual world and personal life in his later years. Yu claims that it is through Chen's approach that he is able to enter the ancient people's spiritual world and to be familiar with Chinese cultural tradition.<sup>69</sup>

Bian Xiaoxuan 卞孝萱 (1924-2009) is the modern Chinese literary critic who first applied Chen's approach to study Tang tales. Like previous historians, he also emphasized the unique value of literary works in historiography and the reconstruction of past motives and hidden meanings:

The mentality of the writer is something you cannot find in historical texts. It is only in works of literature that they can be explored. How much more, given the varnishing, the taboos and the unsaid, and the distortions in historical writing, must one rely on extra-historical materials to effect comparisons and judgements?<sup>70</sup>

[作者的心態] 這在史書中是看不到的，只有在文學作品中才能探索出來，何況史書中有粉飾，有隱諱，有曲筆，不可都信，有賴於利用史書以外的材料進行比較、判斷。

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted from "shu cheng zi shu" 書成自述, Yu's personal narration in *Chen Yinke wan nian shiwen shizheng*, 15.

<sup>70</sup> See Bian Xiaoxuan, *Tangren xiaoshuo yu zhengzhi* 唐人小說與政治 [Tales and Politics of the Tang] (Fujian: Lujiang chubanshe, 2003), 4; *Tang chuanqi xintan* 唐傳奇新探 [New Exploration on Tang Tales] (Nanjing: Jiangshu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 1.

Meanwhile, as a literary critic, Bian focuses more on literary works *per se* and their symbolic and allegorical meanings, which he asserts have been deliberately hidden in Tang tales; furthermore, he argues that the study of both the political background of works and the political attitude of authors are the keys to lead the way to truly understand these literary works. He asserts:

[We should] start from the political background of the composition of tales, begin to work from the political attitude of writers of tales, consider the particular descriptions [in the tales] and contemporary customs and beliefs together, and concentrate on combining [history and literature texts] together to mutually verify [what is true]...to get beyond the surface of literary embellishment to explore mental map authors use to create, which after all is the “true implied meaning” of the works.<sup>71</sup>

以小說寫作的政治背景為出發點，從小說作者的政治態度入手，專與通結合，文與史互證……透過表面的藻繪，進入作者的心胸，探索作者的創造意圖，也就是作品的真正寓意。

In his *Tang chuanqi xintan*, Bian attempts to provide completely new interpretations of Tang tales by studying twenty-three tales composed by eighteen writers. For instance, Bian argues that Li Mei's 李玫 (fl. 847-870) “Penyu quan youhun” 噴玉泉幽魂 (Haunting Specters at Jade-gushing Fountain) expresses deep sorrow and admiration for the civil officials who were slaughtered by Inner Palace eunuchs in the

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<sup>71</sup> Bian, *Tangren xiaoshuo yu zhengzhi*, 1.

“Ganlu shibian” 甘露事變 (Sweet Dew Incident) in December, 835. In addition, “Nanke taishou zhuan” 南柯太守傳 [The Account of the Perfect of the South Branch] is not only a philosophical story about how the main character Chun Yufen 淳于棼 became enlightened by a dream in which he spent his whole life in the kingdom of an ant colony under a locust tree, but also reflected the trend of giving imperial princesses in marriage to provincial military commanders in order to strengthen the authority of the central government in the mid-Tang times.<sup>72</sup> Bian also agrees with Chen Yinke that “Xin Gongping shangxian” alludes to the murder of a Tang emperor by eunuchs. The difference between the opinions of Bian and Chen on this tale mainly lies in which emperor it alludes to, Shunzong 順宗 (r. 805-806) or Xianzong.

Besides traditionally-trained Chinese scholars, some Western scholars, represented by Glen Dudbridge and Sheldon Lu, also attempt to discover the thoughts expressed in literary texts to achieve a meaningful reading, and reduce the sharp distinctions between the content and methodologies of the two fields, history and literature. According to Daria Berg’s analysis, both Dudbridge and Lu adopt the approach which belongs to “new historicism,” although the two scholars do not use the term.<sup>73</sup> Berg thinks that this approach not only “abandons the distinction between a literary text and its cultural or historical backdrop and demands an investigation into the margins as well as the centre,” it also “can provide us with an analytical tool for seeing both literary and non-literary texts in context

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<sup>72</sup> See Bian’s detailed allegorical reading on this tale in *Tangren xiaoshuo yu zhengzhi*. 399-408.

<sup>73</sup> Daria Berg, “What the Messenger of Souls has to Say: New Historicism and The Poetics of Chinese Culture,” in *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), 184.

and reconstructing resonance and significance within a cross-generic discourse.”<sup>74</sup> In order to reconstruct this kind of “resonance and significance,” Dudbridge adopts Collingwood’s theory to emphasize the necessity of thinking through to the inside of an event or individual to “re-enact” past thoughts: “His work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, besides what happened, what was in the mind of the actant to cause the action should also be investigated to reconstruct our own view of the past.

Moreover, compared with other literary genres, Chinese narrative works originally stem from historiography and thus are much closely interrelated with history. Wilhelm and DeWoskin express the opinion that since the beginning of Chinese narrative history, fiction and genuine historical writing have been mutually entwined, and hence historical facts and fictional descriptions have been blended.<sup>76</sup> Sheldon Lu further enumerates three modes for reading Tang tales to investigate possible resonance and significance behind these stories written over one thousand years ago: historical mode, allegorical mode, and entwinement of the historical and allegorical mode. His analysis of “Renshi zhuan” 任氏傳 (The Account of Miss Ren) is a good example of how the elements of historicity and fictionality are blended in Tang tales: “the story itself is true both as allegory and as history.

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<sup>74</sup> Berg, “What the Messenger of Souls has to Say,” 184.

<sup>75</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 213.

<sup>76</sup> Please see this opinion in Hellmut Wilhelm, “Notes on Chou Fiction,” in *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture*, edited by David C Buxbaum and Frederick W. Mote (Hong Kong: 1972), 252; Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “The Six Dynasties Chih-Kuai and the Birth of Fiction,” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 23.

The two are combined along the metaphorical as well as the metonymical axes of narrative.... Allegory and history operate in the fictional text—for once—at the same moment.”<sup>77</sup>

Although there are some major differences between the Western concept of “allegory” and the Chinese concepts of “implied meaning” (*yuyi*), “implied words” (*yuyan*) or “profound meaning” (*shenyi* 深意),<sup>78</sup> the foundational approach regarding how to read literary works in a substantial way in both concepts seems to be the same. In the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetic*, literary critic and literary theorist Northrop Frye considers “allegory” as “a term that denotes two complementary procedures: a way of composing lit. and a way of interpreting it.” He further explains that “to compose allegorically is to construct a work so that its apparent sense refers to an ‘other’ sense. To interpret allegorically (“allegoresis”) is to explain a work as if there were an “other” sense to which it referred.”<sup>79</sup> A similar view is also presented in his work *Anatomy of Criticism*.<sup>80</sup> This opinion is echoed by Angus Fletcher in *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*. Fletcher points out that allegory “says one thing and means another,” and thus expresses

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<sup>77</sup> Lu, “Reading T’ang Fiction,” 106-113.

<sup>78</sup> The major differences between the Chinese and western concepts on allegory has been widely discussed by Paulin Yu, Andrew H. Plaks, Sheldon Lu, and many other scholars. For instance, Lu highlights that Chinese tradition views the world as “a continuous and contiguous whole”, while what underlines the Western conception of allegory is “a fundamental ontological dualism”, namely, “a material, visible world and a spiritual, invisible world”. (Lu, “The Poetics of Historiography,” 84.) Plaks also explains that this duality of Western allegory “does not apply in the Chinese literary system”, since in the Chinese tradition, “the poles of duality emerge as complementary within the intelligibility of the whole”. (Plaks, “Allegory in *Hsi-yu chi* and *Hung-lou meng*”, 168).

<sup>79</sup> Alex Preminger, et al., *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), 31.

<sup>80</sup> “A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying ‘by this I also (allos) [allegory < allos (other) and agoreuein (to speak openly)] mean that.’” Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), 90.



“something other (allos) than what the open and direct statement tells the reader.”<sup>81</sup> Quintilian claims that “Allegory... presents one thing in words and another in meaning.”<sup>82</sup> Andrew H. Plaks further posits: “by ‘allegory’ we may understand a mode of composition in which extended structural patterns of a narrative text are intended to refer, in their overall configurations, to correspondingly complex patterns of intelligibility on some level not directly presented.”<sup>83</sup> According to the above definitions, consciously pursuing “an ‘other’ sense” or “extended meaning” remains the essential purpose of allegory; therefore, there is consistency with Sheldon Lu’s statement: “The Chinese and Western traditions are equally concerned with the unseen and deeper dimensions of meaning beyond the surface configurations of the text.”<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, integrating both historical and literary studies of Tang tales to interpret their allegorical/deeper meaning, pursuing their “original intent,” and comprehending ancient authors’ thoughts and experience in historical and social milieu are aspects of an effective approach for both Western and modern Chinese scholars. For example, Dudbridge’s study of “Li Wa zhuan” 李娃傳 (The Tale of Li Wa) finds allegorical references to the Zheng 鄭 family, a great noble clan from Xingyang 滎陽 county during Bai Xingjian’s 白行簡 (ca. 776-826) time: “contemporary readers must have recognized

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<sup>81</sup>Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1964), 2, 7.

<sup>82</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 8:6:44.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew H. Plaks, “Allegory in *Hsi-yu chi* and *Hung-lou meng*,” in *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 165.

<sup>84</sup> Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, “The Poetics of Historiography,” *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetic of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1994), 83. In addition, Chen Jue suggests that the meaning of *yuyi* in Bian’s theory “is very close, though not identical, to *Roman à clef*”. See Chen Jue, “Review of *Tang chuanqi xintan*,” *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005): 497.

that behind the deliberately flawed device of anonymity the *Li Wa chuan* concerned one of the great clans of the old northern aristocracy.”<sup>85</sup> Similarly, after a thorough study of Shen Yazhi’s important works, Nienhauser concludes that Shen’s career “supports the contention of modern scholars that Tang tales were the first ‘consciously created fiction,’ as well as the traditional reading of *ch’uan-ch’i* as text that often had extended political meanings.”<sup>86</sup> He thinks that Shen Yazhi “suited each piece...to his own creative (or practical) intentions,”<sup>87</sup> and his narrative corpus has “obvious ties to real people.”<sup>88</sup> The important reason why Tang tales, like “Feng Yan zhuan” 馮延傳 (An Account of Feng Yan), were “narrative centered and politically inspired,” is that these narratives have “the intention of winning friends and influencing people.”<sup>89</sup> Nienhuaser not only divides Tang tales into two types in view of their characters, but also claims that extended meaning can be found in the above two types of Tang tales.<sup>90</sup> Beside Chen Yinke and Bian Xiaoxuan, Wang Mengou is another renowned modern Chinese scholar who adopted this approach to study Tang tales. His interpretation of “Huo Xiaoyu zhuan” 霍小玉傳 (The Tale of Huo Xiaoyu), the love tragedy of Huo Xiaoyu 霍小玉 and Li Yi 李益, is a response to the story’s

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<sup>85</sup> See Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa: Study and Critical Edition of a Chinese Story from the Ninth Century* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), 41. Besides his best-known work, *The Tale of Li Wa*, Dudbridge’s other articles on Tang tales include “A Second Look at *Li Wa chuan*,” in Eugene Eoyang and Lin Yao-fu, ed., *Translating Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 67–76; ‘The Tale of Liu I and Its Analogues, in Eva Hung, ed., *Paradoxes of Traditional Chinese Literature* (Hongkong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1994), 61–88; “A Question of Classification in Tang Narrative: the Story of Ding Yue”, in Alfredo Cadonna, ed., *India, Tibet, China: Genesis and Aspects of Traditional Narrative* (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1999), 151–80; etc.

<sup>86</sup> “Creativity and Storytelling in the Ch’uan-ch’i,” *CLEAR*, 70.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> See *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 593.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 593-594.

contemporary politics, i.e., the Niu [Sengru]-Li [Deyu] 李[德裕] (787-850) factional strife.<sup>91</sup> Dudbridge also criticizes the custom of reading text from a single perspective, advocating a more open and diversified reading: “we are free to reread the texts from the past as other lights guides us.”<sup>92</sup> There is no reason to refuse diverse interpretations of literary texts and perceptions of any historical past.

In short, in following the transdisciplinary approach discussed above, this dissertation will seek to reinterpret seven Tang tales by pursuing resonance between texts and decoding possible extended meanings.

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<sup>91</sup> Wang Mengou, “‘Huo Xiaoyu zhuan’ zhi zuozhe ji gushi beijing” 霍小玉傳作者及故事背景, *Tangren xiaohsuo yanjiu, erji* 唐人小說研究, 二集 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1971), 57-70.

<sup>92</sup> Dudbridge, “Tang sources for the study of Religious Culture,” 107.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### EVIL EMANATIONS AND PUNISHMENT FROM THE NETHERWORLD

#### 1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF “CEN SHUN” AND “WANG GUOLIANG”

##### 1.1 The Calamity of Eunuchs

Palace eunuchs are often considered by historians as a significant power of the court politics during the mid-to-late Tang times. As inner subjects of emperors, eunuchs gradually usurped the political authority of the court. This prolonged process is concluded by *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 [The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid the Government]: “The calamity of eunuchs began with Emperor Minghuang (r. 712-756), widely spread in the times of Suzong (r. 756-762) and Daizong (r. 762-779), fully developed in the reign of Dezong (r. 779-805), and reached its culmination in the reign of Zhaozong (r. 888-904)” 宦官之禍，始於明皇，盛於肅、代，成於德宗，極於昭宗.<sup>93</sup> During the Kaiyuan 開元 (713-741) and Tianbao 天寶 (742-756) periods, eunuchs represented by Gao Lishi 高力士 (d.762) started intervening with governmental affairs. Many of them were bestowed with the third rank general.<sup>94</sup> It was Suzong who appointed top-ranking eunuchs like Li Fuguo 李輔國 (d. 762), Cheng Yuanzhen 程元振 (d. 764) and Yu Chao'en 魚朝恩 (d. 770)

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<sup>93</sup> Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), comp., *Zizhi tongjian* (Beiping: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 263.8598.

<sup>94</sup> “Xuanzong respected and valued the inner palace. Whenever a eunuch slightly satisfied his imperial decree, he would bestow a post of the third rank general to him and decorate his gate with halberds. Therefore, Yang Sixu, Li Jingren, Lin Zhaoyin, Yin Fengxiang and other eunuchs had the same noble status and honor as Lishi” 玄宗尊重宮闈，中官稍稱旨，即授三品將軍，門施榮戟，故楊思勗、黎敬仁、林招隱、尹鳳祥等，貴寵與力士等. Liu Xu 劉煦 (887-946) et al., comp., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 [The Old History of the Tang] (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 184.4757.

to a variety of commissionerships and allowed them to get involved with military command, the business of central government, provincial appointment, and even imperial succession.<sup>95</sup> When it reached Emperor Dezong's reign, eunuchs' independent military control and power were greatly enhanced after eunuchs became commandants of the entire palace armies including Shen'ce 神策 (Divine Strategy) Army and Tianwei 天威 (Heavenly Might) Army in the twelfth year of Zhenyuan 貞元 (796).<sup>96</sup> The above change undoubtedly raised eunuchs to a powerful position that enabled them to become formidable rivals of officials for the next hundred years. In the reign of Emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (805-820), the two posts of Palace Secretaries (Shumi shi 樞密使) also grew in importance in taking control over the palace and central government. Together with the two posts of Palace Commandant-protector, the installation of this system further consolidated the discretionary power of eunuchs.<sup>97</sup> From 859 to 904, the calamity of eunuchs culminated into an unprecedented level, which sharply deteriorated the political and economic

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<sup>95</sup> Please refer to Michael T. Dalby, "Court politics in late T'ang times," in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3 Sui and Tang China, 589-906, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 571-574.

<sup>96</sup> In "Dezong benji" 德宗本紀 (The basic anal of Dezong), it records that "in the day of *yichou* [of the sixth month], [Dezong] first set up the posts of Palace Commandant-protector and Palace Protector in both the left and the right brigades, and then awarded these posts to eunuchs." [六月] 乙丑, 初置左右護軍中尉監、中護軍監, 以授宦官. See *Jiu Tang shu*, 13. 383-384. In "Huangguan liezhuan" 宦官列傳 (The memories of eunuchs), these important military appointments are also mentioned: "Dezong..... did not want military subjects to lead massive forces. He intended to entrust eunuchs to command both the left and right brigades of Shen'ce, Tianwan and other armies, so he set up two posts of Palace Commandant-protector and two posts of Palace Protector to be in charge of palace guards. [Dou] Wenchang (fl. 783-796) and [Huo] Xianming (d. 798) were appointed as Palace Commandant-protectors. Since then, the authority of Shen'ce imperial armies completely belonged to eunuchs" 德宗.....不欲武臣典重兵, 其左右神策、天威等軍, 欲委宦者主之, 乃置護軍中尉兩員、中護軍兩員, 分掌禁兵, 以[竇] 文場、[霍] 仙鳴為兩中尉, 自是神策親軍之權, 全歸於宦者矣. (See *Jiu Tang shu*, 184.4754.)

<sup>97</sup> Two posts of Palace Commandant-protector and two posts of Palace Secretaries were known as "four powerful top-ranking eunuchs" (*quanyan sigui* 權閹四貴). See Hu Sanxing's 胡三省 (1230-1302) annotation in *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), 243.7852.

situation of the Tang Empire. It was only until Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852-912) brutally slaughtered hundreds of eunuchs in the third year of Tianfu 天復 (903) that eunuchs were eliminated from the stage of court politics.

## 1.2 The Conflicts between Eunuchs and Court Officials

The conflicts between palace eunuchs and court officials were also increasingly evident as eunuchs encroached on governmental authority in the areas of military, finance and politics during the mid-to-late Tang eras. Traditionally, the term of “Northern Offices” (Beisi 北司) was adopted to designate those eunuch institutions that included the Department of the Inner Palace (Neishi sheng 內侍省) and a variety of Eunuch Offices (Neisi 內司),<sup>98</sup> whereas the term of “Southern Commands” (Nanya 南衙) was used to refer to the governmental institutions that were headed by prime ministers (Zaixiang 宰相). As a result, both terms generally serve to describe the stinging confrontations between the two political cliques.

During these turbulent periods, there were three times when the “Northern Offices” and “Southern Command” openly clashed with each other, among which two of them merit our particular attention: The first time occurred in the first year of Yongzhen 永貞 (805) when Shunzong ascended the throne. Although Shunzong’s reign merely lasted less than

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<sup>98</sup> “Wenzong ascended throne... At that time, eunuchs held military armies, prevailed and controlled over the country, and were called ‘the Northern Offices.’ They committed murders, insulted the court, formed cliques and usurped powers. Out the court they coerced all the officials into submission; in the court they manipulated and bullied emperors.” 文宗即位……方宦人握兵，橫制海內，號曰“北司”，凶醜朋挺，外脅羣臣，內掣侮天子。Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), comp., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 178.5293.

ten months, a well-known failed coup d'état called “Yongzhen (805) (Political) Reforms” (Yongzhen *gexin* 永貞革新) was carried out during this period, which was strongly supported by the Emperor Shun and executed by the clique of Wang Shuwen 王叔文 (d. 806) and Wang Pi 王伾 (fl. 805). The main purpose of Yongzhen Reform was to restrain the political power of eunuchs and to take the military commands of palace armies away from eunuchs. The following historical records in *Zizhi tongjian* shows how this political attempt was resisted by eunuchs and ended with failure helplessly:

After Wang Shuwen put Fan Xichao (d. 815) and Han Tai (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century) in charge of the Shen'ce Army in the west of capital, all the eunuchs did not realize [his intention] yet. Only when all the generals at the environs of capital happened to bid farewell to the Palace Commandant-protector respectively with letters and explained that they would be subordinated to Xichao did eunuchs realize that their military power would be seized by Shuwen and his clique. They were greatly furious and said, “If we obey his intrigue, we will absolutely die by his hands.” So they secretly ordered their messengers to return and inform every general that, “Do not allow your armies to be commanded by other people.” When Xichao arrived at Fengtian county, none of the generals arrived there. Han Tai galloped back and reported it to Shuwen. Shuwen could not think of any strategy [to handle it] but merely said, “Nothing I can do! Nothing I can do!”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 236.7617.

王叔文既以范希朝、韓泰主京西神策軍，諸宦者尚未寤。會邊上諸將各以狀辭中尉，且言方屬希朝。宦者始寤兵柄為叔文等所奪，乃大怒曰：“從其謀，吾屬必死其手。”密令其使歸告諸將曰：“無以兵屬人。”希朝至奉天，諸將無至者。韓泰馳歸白之，叔文計無所出，唯曰：“柰何！柰何！”

Compared with the first confrontation between court officials and eunuchs, the second one “the Sweet Dew Incident” in history was much more violent and disruptive. As an ambitious and diligent emperor, Wenzong initiated this tragic political battle. Li Xun 李訓 (fl. 823, d. 835), an academician of Imperial Academy, and the denizen Zheng Zhu 鄭注 (d. 835) of the inner court were the two strategists Wenzong relied on to eradicate the eunuchs politically. Li Xun was promptly promoted by Emperor Wen to the position of Prime Minister in the fourth month of 835.<sup>100</sup> In December of 835, Li Xun and Zheng Zhu plotted a seemingly flawless plan to assassinate the eunuch tyrant Qiu Shiliang 仇士良 (781-843)<sup>101</sup> and the other eunuchs. It was reported to Emperor Wen that an auspicious sign, the “sweet dew” (*ganlu* 甘露)<sup>102</sup>, had descended upon a pomegranate tree in the outer palace, but in fact, Li and Zheng had already pre-arranged an ambush there. After Emperor Wen was informed of their secret plan, he invited the eunuchs to watch the unusual

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<sup>100</sup> “Li Xun was appointed as “the Attendant Gentleman of the Ministry of Rites and the Jointly Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery” 李訓為禮部侍郎，並同中書門下平章事。 See “Zhaixiang biao xia” 宰相表下 (Treatise of Prime Minister, Part B). See *Xin Tang shu*, 63.1722.

<sup>101</sup> One of the most powerful and cruel eunuchs in the imperial palace of the Tang. See his biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 132.5872-5875.

<sup>102</sup> Sweet dew in medieval time was a highly symbolic substance, which symbolize sovereign’s virtue and benevolence. In *Laozi*, it states that “Heaven and Earth were in harmony, therefore sweet dew descended” 天地相合，以降甘露。 (See *Laozi*, 32.1A.)



phenomenon. However, the eunuchs perceived the ambush and sent their Shen'ce Army to slaughter court officials. Besides the Li clique, thousands of officials including three prime ministers and their families were massacred.<sup>103</sup> The consequences of this political incident were so severe that the Northern Offices led by Qiu Shiliang gained almost complete control of the emperor and the Tang imperial court afterwards.

On the one hand, similar to the Wang clique, court officials Li Xun, Zheng Zhu and their clique attempted to end “the calamity of eunuchs” with the support of Wenzong. On the other hand, because the eunuchs’ political power was more threatening in the reign of Wenzong, both the emperor and the Li clique were more eager than ever to eliminate all the eunuchs thoroughly. The first strategy planned by Li and Zheng was to gather all the eunuchs and execute them at the powerful eunuch Wang Shoucheng’s 王守澄 (d. 835) funeral, which also demonstrates the reconcilable conflict during this period:

At the beginning, Zheng Zhu and Li Xun conspired together. When Zheng arrived at [Fengxiang] province, he selected hundreds of robust men as bodyguards. They all held white cudgels and carried axes in their arms. Wang Shoucheng would be buried around the southwest of Bailu plain. [According to the plan], Zhu would request the emperor to allow him to guard the funeral, so those bodyguards would follow him. Then, he would request the emperor to order all the eunuchs supervised by Palace Commandant-protectors to attend the funeral ceremony at the area of Chan River. Zhu would seize this opportunity, close the gate, order all his

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<sup>103</sup> See the details of this political incident in both Li Xun and Zheng Zhu’s biographies, *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4395-4401.

bodyguards to kill those eunuchs with axes, and make sure that none of them would survive.”<sup>104</sup>

始，鄭注與李訓謀，至 [鳳翔] 鎮，選壯士數百，皆持白梃，懷其斧，以為親兵。王守澄蓋葬於白鹿原西南。注奏請入護葬事，因以親兵自隨。仍奏令內臣中尉以下盡集滻水送葬，注因闔門，令親兵斧之，使無遺類。

Therefore, like the military wars that happened on battle fields, these kinds of political battles that took place between “Northern Offices” and “Southern Commands” were also filled with long-term military preparation, deceitful strategies, life-or-death struggles and cruel slaughters.

It is based on the above historical context that both “Cen Sun” 岑順 and “Wang Guoliang” 王國良, the two Tang tales are reexamined and reinterpreted. The following analysis will be devoted to particular political clashes and hidden political attitudes towards “the calamity of eunuchs” embedded in both tales.

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<sup>104</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7910.

## 2. “CEN SHUN”: A REFELX TO THE SWEET DEW INCIDENT IN 835

According to the *Taiping guangji*, the story entitled “Cen Shun” was from the *Xuanguai lu*.<sup>105</sup> This piece is also entitled “Jinxiang Jiangjun” 金象將軍 (General Golden Elephant), with an anonymous author, in a collection of anecdotes titled *Guang yan yi bian* 廣艷異編 [The Extensive Compilation of the Captivating and Extraordinary] compiled by the Ming scholar Wu Dazhen 吳大震 (ca. 16<sup>th</sup> century-17<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>106</sup> Because it is not included in any Ming editions of the *Xuanguai lu*, it is categorized as “Buyi” 補遺 (addenda) in Cheng Yizhong’s collated and annotated edition.<sup>107</sup>

If we focus on this individual piece, “Cen Shun” is often categorized as a *zhiguai* work. In the story, Cen Shun was a man who excelled in military abilities. When he stayed in an abandoned residence, he was invited as a military leader by an army under General Golden Elephant (Jinxiang *jiangjun* 金象將軍) to fight their enemies from a foreign state, but his health gradually deteriorated as the war went on. After Shun’s relatives evacuated the floor of the chamber that he was sleeping in, they found a set-up Chinese chessboard in an old grave. This meant that the chess pience were netherworld soldiers and that Shun had been “hit by evil emanations” 為鬼氣所中. Many modern scholars follow Hu Yinglin’s opinion<sup>108</sup> and consider this tale the oldest extant reference to a *xiangxi* 象戲

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<sup>105</sup> See Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), ed., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961; 1995 Reprint), 369.2935-2937.

<sup>106</sup> Wu Dazhen, *Guang yan yi bian*, in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng bianweihui* 古本小說集成, vol.146 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 21.895-899.

<sup>107</sup> Cheng Yizhong, *Xuanguai lu*, *Xu Xuanguai lu*, 126-128.

<sup>108</sup> “The *xiangxi* game appeared slightly later. The Wu 武 Emperor of the Northern Zhou (543-578) has twenty rolls of the *Scripture of xiangxi Game*...But nothing can be used to examine it after Tang. Only

(literally, means “elephant chess”) that resembles modern Chinese chess. The important value of the tale mostly lies in Chinese Chess history rather than in Chinese narrative history. Because Niu Sengru claimed that this supernatural case took place in the first year of Baoying 寶應 period (April, 762-June, 763), the famous chess game illustrated in the tale was named “Baoyin chess game.” Hence, it seems that “Cen Shun” is merely another ghost story for fantasy and entertainment.

However, if we question Niu Sengru’s authorial motivation and liberate our minds of historical suggestion to speculate beyond the gloomy spaces and mysterious armies that he creates in such a “ghost story,” we may open the door to a more exciting thought. The major scene of the tale is focused on the battles between the army led by General Golden Elephant and its enemy from the Northern Mountain, but at the end of the story, the battlefield turned out to be a huge chessboard in an underground tomb and both armies were actually chessmen, which subtly implies that besides on actual battlefields, atrocious battles can also happen in other places, and the opposing sides of the war do not have to be conventional military troops. Certainly, one such locus likewise filled with atrocious and sinister confrontations in history was the imperial palace. The Southern Commands led by the Prime Minister and the Northern Offices controlled by palace eunuchs had been constant opponents on this political stage during the mid-to-late Tang times. It is interesting to discover that all the semantic and phonetic puns, analogies, metaphorical images, allusions, and fictional characters contained in “Cen Shun” direct us

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the story on Cen Shun in *Xuanguai lu* can be used as an evidence.”象戲稍為後出，北周武帝有《象經》二十卷……而唐以後殊無可考，惟《玄怪錄》岑順一事可據。See Hu Yinglin, *Shaoshi shanfang congshu*, 40.546.

towards the historical memory concerning these political battles and particularly to a significant event which occurred in the ninth year of Wenzong's reign (835), the Sweet Dew Incident.

## 2.1 The Analogies between Cen Shun and Emperor Wenzong

The tale introduces Cen Shun's courtesy name and talents first: “*zi Xiaobo* 孝伯 (The Filial Elder Brother), was fond of study and had literary talent in his youth. He particularly excelled in military strategies in his old age” 字孝伯，少好學有文，老大尤精武略. Besides being ambitious and marvelous, Cen Shun was further described as a virtuous gentleman. He seemed to be a perfect embodiment of filial piety, literary talent and military strategies when he first appeared in the story. If we look back to these official histories, we will find out that Wenzong was highly extolled for the similar attributes. Wenzong was complimented by the Tang standard histories as “being benevolent and filial” 仁孝<sup>109</sup> and “having natural filial sentiments” 孝義天然<sup>110</sup>. In addition to being filial-

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<sup>109</sup> In “Wenzong benji” 文宗本紀 (Basic anal of Emperor Wen), how Wenzong exhibited his natural filial piety towards three empresses is described with details: “At that time, together with the empress Guo of Xianzong titled ‘the Grand Dowager Empress’ who resided in the Xingqing Palace, the Empress Dowager Baoli who was the mother of Jingzong (r. 824-826) and the Empress Dowager Xiao who was the mother of Wenzong himself were called ‘the Empress Dowagers of the three palaces.’ The emperor’s natural instinct was benevolent and filial. When he wished good health to the three empress dowagers, his affection for them were the same. Once, the imperial garden offered cherries and its chief officer’s letter wrote: ‘Bestow [cherries] to the Empress Dowagers of the three palaces separately.’ The emperor said, ‘How could the word “bestow” be used when send stuff to the palaces of empress dowagers?’ He took a brush and changed the word ‘bestow’ to ‘present’ immediately.” 時憲宗郭后居興慶宮，曰太皇太后，敬宗母寶曆太后及上母蕭太后，時呼“三宮太后”。帝性仁孝，三宮問安，其情如一。嘗內園進櫻桃，所司啟曰：“別賜三宮太后。”帝曰：“太后宮送物，焉得為賜。”遽取筆改賜為奉。 *Jiu Tang shu*, 17.580.

<sup>110</sup> Besides the stories in “Wenzong benji,” another anecdote which established Wenzong’s reputation for filial piety in the history is also recorded in the memoir of his mother, the empress Xiao. He

hearted, the emperor also had “the reputation of being fond of literature and classics” 好文之譽.<sup>111</sup> For instance, the *Xin Tang shu* records that he visited both Zheng Tan 鄭覃 (d. 842) and Wang Qi 王起 (760-847) several times in person to study classics: “The Emperor [Wenzong] advocated literary talent, and was fond of the study of the classics” 文宗上文，好古學.<sup>112</sup> Because he “was fond of study and indulged in the classics” 好學嗜古, he opposed Zheng Tan’s repeated petition of abolishing *jinshi* examination.<sup>113</sup> According to *Tang yulin* 唐語林, “Whenever [Wenzong] discussed political affairs with his prime ministers, subjects and academicians, he would certainly praise the scholars who had talents in artistry and literature, so most of them were promoted because of their literary talents at that time.” 每宰臣學士論政，必稱才術文學之士，故當時多以文進.<sup>114</sup> Even the only existing anecdote on Wenzong recorded in the *Taiping guangji* has to do with how incredibly erudite he was. The story begins by stating “the Tang emperor Wenzong had extensively read all sorts of books during his leisure time after holding court” 唐文宗皇帝聽政暇，博覽群書.<sup>115</sup> It is also noticeable that Wenzong’s posthumous title includes *xiao*

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painstakingly searched for empress Xiao’s long-lost younger brother for many years. See the whole story in *Jiu Tang shu*, 52.2201-2203.

<sup>111</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4411.

<sup>112</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 167.5118.

<sup>113</sup> See “Xuanju zhi (shang)” 選舉志上 (Treatise on state examinations and appointments, part A) in *Xin Tang shu*, 44.1168.

<sup>114</sup> This quotation is under the category of “wenxue” 文學 (literature) in Wang Tang 王讜 (fl. 1101-1110), comp., *Tang yulin jiaozheng* 唐語林校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 2.148.

<sup>115</sup> In the *Taiping guangji*, this very brief anecdote titled “Tang Wenzong” 唐文宗 is listed under the category of “bowu” 博物 (broad learning of things). *Taiping guangji*, 197.1480.

孝<sup>116</sup> and his temple title is *wen* 文. According to the regulations for posthumous titles, “studying diligently and having great curiosity to ask all sorts of questions is titled *wen*” 學勤好問曰文.<sup>117</sup>

As to Cen Shun’s ambition and talent in military strategies, it is also associated with his native place, Runan 汝南, in the story. This place name refers to Runan commandery 汝南郡. There is a particular saying regarding the legendary location, which has been widely circulated since the last years of Eastern Han: “Both Ru[nan] and Yin[chuan] have many marvelous intelligentsias” 汝、潁多奇士. This saying originated from a letter that Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) sent to his strategist Xun Yu 荀彧 (163-212), in which Cao grieved over the death of another strategist, Xi Zhicai 戲志才 (162-196): “After Zhicai passed away, there is no one I can plan affairs with. Both Ru[nan] and Yin[chuan] certainly have many marvelous intelligentsias, but who can succeed him?” 自志才亡後, 莫可與計事者, 汝、潁固多奇士, 誰可以繼之?<sup>118</sup> When Ben Song 賁嵩 (3<sup>rd</sup> century-4<sup>th</sup> century) commented on Zhou Yi 周顛 (269-322), he also used this saying to praise Zhou: “Both Ru[nan] and Yin[chuan] certainly have many marvelous intelligentsias! Recently, the right way has declined, but today I met Zhou Boren again. He will rejuvenate the spirit of the old custom and make our nation both peaceful and orderly” 汝、潁固多奇士! 自頃雅道

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<sup>116</sup> Emperor Wen’s full posthumous title is *yuan sheng zhao xian xiao huangdi* 元圣昭献孝皇帝.

<sup>117</sup> See “Shifa jie” 謚法解, in *Shiji Zhengyi* 史記正義, annotated by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century) (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 18.

<sup>118</sup> Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297), *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 [The Three Kingdoms] (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 14.431.

陵遲，今復見周伯仁，將振起舊風，清我邦族矣。<sup>119</sup> Thus, Runnan as a geographical allusion was often connected with marvelous intelligentsias, political and military ambitions, and even rejuvenation of the nation historically. This allusion also matches Wenzong's biographical information without surprise. His biography reveals that he had been conceiving persistent political ambitions as well as heroic deeds since he was a young prince. Like his father Muzong 穆宗 (r. 820-824), Wenzong was also enthroned by palace eunuchs, but he was eager to model himself after his great ancestor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649), to carry on a series of social reforms, to wrench himself from the eunuchs' clutches, and finally, to restore the glory of Tang empire. He particularly sought for both political and military strategies to wipe out the palace eunuchs' power. The following historical records evidently display the above ambitions of Wenzong:

In the past, when Emperor [Wenzong] was in his vassal state, he was fond of reading *Essentials on Politics from the Zhenguan reign* (627-649). Whenever he read about how Emperor Taizong diligently carried on his political strategies, he had a mind to [model after] him...Because many incidents continually arose from the inner palace for several generations, the emperor was particularly afraid of the eunuchs and intended to eliminate them entirely.<sup>120</sup>

初，帝在藩時，喜讀貞觀政要，每見太宗孜孜政道，有意于茲。……而帝以累世變起禁闈，尤側目於中官，欲盡除之。

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<sup>119</sup> Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579-648) et al., *Jin Shu* 晉書 [History of the Jin] (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 69.1850.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted from Wenzong's basic anal, *Jiu Tang shu*, 17.580.



At that time, the total number of high-ranking eunuchs was four thousand six hundred and eighteen. In the court they participated in the central government and held military power; out of the court they inspected provinces and administrated judicial systems. Shouldered with his ancestors' shame, Wenzong resented the enemies within his reach,<sup>121</sup> and deliberated over how to eradicate the steps leading to catastrophe and annihilate the excesses.<sup>122</sup>

是時高品白身之數，四千六百一十八人，內則參秉戎權，外則監臨藩嶽。文宗包祖宗之恥，痛肘腋之讎，思翦厲階，去其太甚。

After the Yuanhe period, the overarching principles of the central government were discarded and changed. Wang Shoucheng, the Palace Commandant-protector of Shen'ce Army bore the crime of regicide. Two emperors had been replaced but it was still impossible to execute Wang Shoucheng. All the people in the world under Heaven were indignant. When Wenzong ascended the throne, he deliberated over how to wash the long-harbored shame of Yuanhe and eradicate the factions [of eunuchs].<sup>123</sup>

元和後，權綱弛遷，神策中尉王守澄負弑逆罪，更二帝不能討，天下憤之。文宗即位，思洗元和宿恥，將翦落支黨。

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<sup>121</sup> *Zhouye* 肘腋 literally means “elbow and armpit.” It is often used to describe that a calamity happens at a very close distance. Here refers to inner palace where both emperors and eunuchs resided.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted from “Huanguan liezhuan” 宦官列傳 (the Memoir of Eunuchs), *Jiu Tang shu*, 187.4754-4755.

<sup>123</sup> See “Liu Bi leizhuan” 劉賁列傳 (the Memoir of Liu Bi) in *Xin Tang shu*, 107.5293.

Another reason that Runan was adopted as Cen Shun's hometown is that this place also alludes to Wenzong's title of nobility, King Jiang 江. According to *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 [Commentary to the Water Classic], the historical site of Jiang was located at the south of Anyang 安陽 county's ancient city and a historical remain called Jing Terrace still existed there.<sup>124</sup> The "Treaties on prefecture and kingdoms" in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 record that Anyang belonged to Runan Commandary.<sup>125</sup>

With respect to the first year of Baoyin, the time when Cen Shun experienced the haunted house, it was also loaded with historical significance and profound meanings. It was in this year that Daizong 代宗 (r. 762-779) became the first Tang emperor to be endorsed by eunuchs to ascend the throne after they staged a successful palace coup. During the year, both Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-May 3, 762) and Suzong 肅宗 (711-May 19, 762) successively passed away. While Suzong was very ill, Empress Zhang 張 (d. 752) and some eunuchs attempted to replace Daizong with her own son, King Yue 越 (d. 752), to be the new emperor, but the eunuchs led by Li Fuguo executed Empress Zhang and exiled her supporters.<sup>126</sup> However, Daizong resented this eunuch tyrant so much that the emperor

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<sup>124</sup> Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (5<sup>th</sup> century-527), *Shuijing zhu shu* 水經注疏, commented by Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會貞, punctuated and annotated by 段熙仲 (NanjingL Jiangshu guji chubanshe, 1989), 30.2499.

<sup>125</sup> Anyang is listed under the entry of Runan Commandary of "Junguo er" 郡國二 (Commandaries and states II) in *Hou Han shu*, compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 (389-45) (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 20.3424.

<sup>126</sup> "In the fourth month of the first year of Baoyin, Suzong's illness was greatly aggravated. Empress [Zhang] intrigued with the eunuchs including Zhu Huiguang, Ma Yingjun, Dan Tingyao and Chen Xinfu to make King Yue [Li] Xi the successor. They fabricated an imperial edict and summoned the Heir Apparent to come in the name of taking care of the emperor's illness. The eunuchs Cheng Yuzhen and Li Fuguo were aware of Empress Zhang's conspiracy. When the heir came, the two informed him the coming calamity and requested the heir to hide in the Feilong (Flying Dragon) Stable. Yuzhen commanded the imperial guard armies to bring in King Yue as well as to arrest Zhu Huiguang and the others. After a while, Suzong passed away and the heir governed the nation on behalf of the emperor. Subsequently, the empress was moved to a different palace and she died in custody." 寶應元年四月，肅宗大漸，后與內官朱輝光、馬英俊、啖廷

arranged an assassination to kill Li in the same year.<sup>127</sup> Similar to Daizong, Wenzong was also enthroned by the eunuchs led by Wang Shoucheng after they defeated another powerful eunuch Liu Keming's 劉克明 clique in the second year of Baoli 寶曆 (826).<sup>128</sup> As what Daizong did to Li Fuguo, Wenzong arranged Wang Shoucheng's execution in 835 as well. Furthermore, the names of the two periods, Baoyin 寶應 and Baoli 寶曆, have the same first character and similar semantic meanings. Based on the above analysis, there is a strong assumption that Baoyin is an intricate pun of Baoli.

Therefore, none of the analogies between Cen Shun and Wenzong's biography should be simply attributed to mere coincidence. Instead, all these clues seem to be a deliberate attempt to connect both of them. Even when we examine the protagonist's name "Cen Shun" in the tale, we can find further clues regarding Wenzong's political ambition from it. According to *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字註 [Comments on Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters], his family name *cen* 岑 means "small but high hill" 山小而高

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瑤、陳仙甫等謀立越王係，矯詔召太子入侍疾。中官程元振、李輔國知其謀，及太子入，二人以難告，請太子在飛龍廡。元振率禁軍收越王，捕朱輝光等。俄而肅宗崩，太子監國，遂移后於別殿，幽崩。See the record in Empress Zhang's biography, *Jiu Tang shu*, 52.2185-2186.

<sup>127</sup> "At the night of *dingmou*, bandits killed Li Fuguo at his residence and stole his head when they left." 丁卯夜，盜殺李輔國於其第，竊首而去。 *Jiu Tang shu*, 11.270.

<sup>128</sup> "Keming, Zuoming and Dingguan murdered the emperor in a dressing room... 克明與佐明、定寬弒帝更衣室.....Palace Secretaries Wang Shoucheng and Yangchenghe (d. 835), Palace Commandant-protectors Liang Shouqian (779-827) and Wei Congjian, and Prime Minister Pei Du (765-839) greeted the King Jiang together. They dispatched both the Left and the Right Shen'ce Armies and the Feilong soldiers of the six brigades to attack Keming. He committed suicide by throwing himself into a well. They fished up his corpse from the well and executed it. 樞密使王守澄、楊承和、中尉梁守謙、魏從簡與宰相裴度共迎江王，發左、右神策及六軍飛龍兵討之，克明投井死，出其尸戮之。See Liu Keming's biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 208.5883-5884.

也, while *chong* 崇 means “big and high hill” 山大而高.<sup>129</sup> Both characters have different phonetic radicals, but they have the same semantic component “*san*” 山 as well as the same basic meaning “high” (*gao* 高):

岑 = 山 (semantic component) + 今 (phonetic radical) *meaning*: small but high hill

崇 = 山 (semantic component) + 宗 (phonetic radical) *meaning*: big and high hill

If *cen* is read as a suggestive pun of *chong*, we are able to interpret Cen Shun’s name as “崇順” which means “revere Shun.” Here “Shun” alludes to Shunzong, the strongest and the primary supporter of the Wang clique and their “Yongzhen Reform.” Likewise, Wenzong also supported the Li clique and their strategies for eradicating eunuchs. Dalby precisely summarized the connections and similarities between the two political battles: “After the failure of the Wang clique’s attempted coup, it was not until the Sweet Dew plot of 835 that bureaucrats again attempted to change the political structure by force.”<sup>130</sup> “We have seen what happened when Wang Shu-wen and his group tried to change the course of T’ang politics in 805. A most interesting and equally ill-fated sequel to that episode occurred during the 830s. This attempt was initiated by the emperor Wentsung.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58-ca. 147), *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, commented by Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815) (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2008), 9b.439-440.

<sup>130</sup> Michael T. Dalby, “Court politics in late T’ang times,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3 Sui and Tang China, 589-906, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 606-607.

<sup>131</sup> Dalby, “Court politics in late T’ang times,” 654.

## 2.2 Puns and Analogies on the Sweet Dew Incident

After Cen Shun moved into a residence in a mount which would be demolished, Cen Shun was invited by General Golden Elephant in his dreams to become a military

leader and support his army to fight against their enemies:

“General Golden Elephant sent me to tell Mr. Cen that in the city guarded by military, there were soldiers among the outpost at night who clamored and quarreled, but we still received you praise. How dare we not respectfully obey? You will have munificent official salary and I hope you have self-respect. Since you cherish great ambition, can you lower yourself to take regard for a small state?”

“金象將軍使我語岑君，軍城夜警，有喧諍者，蒙君見嘉，敢不敬命。君甚有厚祿，幸自愛也。既負壯志，能猥顧小國乎？”

Cen Shun accepted the offer without any hesitation. Then the General delivered a declaration of war. In the declaration, it says:

“Since our territory is connected with the area of the Huns, military activities have never stopped in the past several decades...Because the foes from the Northern Mountain of Tiannuo State allied together, we have agreed on a date to meet for a battle. The affair has been planned to happen at midnight. We don't know when they will be wiped out, but there is no need to be terrified and astonished.”

“地連獯虜，戎馬不息，向數十年。緣天那國北山賊合從，克日會戰，  
事圖子夜，否滅未期，良用惶駭。”

Responding to these words, “Shun thanked him, added more candles in the chamber, and sat to watch the changes” 順謝之，室中益燭，坐觀其變。

Many semantic and homophonic puns including *Cen jun* 岑君, *Tiannuo* 天那, *Beishan* 北山, *Jinxiang* 金象 and *qibian* 其變 are consciously deployed in these descriptions to create metaphorical representations as well as analogies of the emperor, the two armies involved in the political battle, and the incident. For instance, Cen Shun was addressed as *jun* 君 by the general repeatedly. In addition to a courtesy appellation for males, *jun* also refers to emperors and rulers. Besides, the phonetic component of *cen* 岑 is *jin* 今. If “*Cen jun*” is read as “*jin jun*” 今君, this address then implies “the present emperor.” Moreover, the “Military Treaties” in the *Xin Tang shu* documents that “the soldiers in the Southern Commands were merely all sorts of guards, while the soldiers of the Northern Offices were the imperial guard armies” 南衙，諸衛兵是也；北衙者，禁軍也。<sup>132</sup> In this sense, the invading army from the Northern Mountain of *Tiannuo* 天那 Kingdom becomes an indicative pun on the imperial (*tianzi* 天子) army, that is, the Imperial Divine Strategy (Shen’ce 神策) Army commanded by eunuchs in the Northern Offices, whereas the Golden Elephant (*Jinxiang* 金象) Army in the tale can be understood as a suggestive pun of the Imperial Insignia Guard (*Jinwugei* 金吾衛) Army which took orders from Prime Minister (*Zaixiang* 宰相) Li Xun during the Sweet Dew Incident. Since

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<sup>132</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 40.1330.

both *xiang* 相 and *xiang* 象 are still the symbolic pieces that symbolize the position of prime minister and distinguish the opposing sides in a modern Chinese chess set, it was not difficult for Tang readers to detect this delicate metaphor. As to Cen Shun's attitude, "set to watch the changes" also implies deep meaning, because *qibian* 其變 (the change) is another equivocal and can also be interpreted as "the incident," which alludes to the Sweet Dew Incident tactfully. If we follow this idea to rethink the declaration sent by General Golden Elephant, the above quoted verses can be further expounded as: The political battles with eunuchs had lasted for a long time. Now we (Wenzong and Li Xun) have agreed on a date to eradicate them. The affair has been planned to happen when all the eunuchs are invited to watch the auspicious sign, "sweet dew." We don't know when those eunuchs will be wiped out, but there is no need to be terrified and astonished.

After General Golden Elephant from the netherworld appeared, he commanded his army with Cen Shun's support to fight with their enemies. If we compare the description of the battles between the two armies in the tale with the details of the Sweet Dew plot recorded in historical documents, the former can also be understood as an analogy of the latter to a certain degree.

The one on the east wall was the Tiannuo Army, while the one on the west wall was the Golden Elephant Army ... In a moment, the Tiannuo Army had a crushing defeat and ran away. Their soldiers who were killed and injured spread over on the ground. The Chief of Tiannuo who rode a horse and galloped towards the south alone as well as the several hundreds of people who ran to the southwestern corner for shelter were the only ones able to

avoid [being killed or injured]. Formerly, there was a medicine mortar.<sup>133</sup>

The Chief dwelled within it and it transformed it into a castle. The Golden Elephant Army was greatly inspired and got back their armored soldiers. Carriages and bodies covered the ground. Shun lied prostrate to watch it...The two armies met for battles like this for several days.

其東壁下是天那軍。西壁下金象軍。……須臾之間。天那軍大敗奔潰。殺傷塗地。王單馬南馳。數百人投西南隅。僅而免焉。先是西南有藥臼，王栖臼中。化為城堡。金象軍大振。收其甲卒。輿尸橫地。順俯伏觀之。……如是數日會戰。

In the above battle, Tiannuo Army on the east wall was defeated by the Golden Elephant Army on the west wall first, but the Chief of Tiannuo Army and some of his soldiers survived after they ran back to a castle which was transfigured from a medicine mortar. When the Sweet Dew Incident took place, Li Xun and his army grasped the initiative of the situation, so some eunuchs were also killed in the chaotic situation at first: “Some eunuchs were bleeding and crying out grievances. Over ten of them were dead or injured”宦官流血呼冤，死傷者十餘人。<sup>134</sup> Because Qiu Shilang still managed to hold Wenzong as the eunuchs’ hostage, the rest of them rushed back into the inner palace through the gate of Xuanzhen 宣政 Hall. Once the eunuchs returned to their own territory, Qiu Shilang immediately summoned the Devine Strategy Army to battle against the Left

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<sup>133</sup> According to the Ming manuscript of *Taiping guangji*, there is character *yue* 臼 after character *yao* 藥, but it is very likely that it should be *jiu* 臼 instead of *ri*. *Guangyan yibian* doesn’t have this sentence. (See Cheng Yizhong’s note #10 of this text in *Xuanguai lu*, *Xu xuanguai lu*, 128.)

<sup>134</sup> See “Wenzong ji” 文宗紀 (Records of Wenzong) in *Zizi tongjian*, 245.7911-7913.



Imperial Insignia Guard Army led by Li and Zheng, and to slaughter court officials.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, both the east wall and west wall respectively symbolize the two political rivals, because Qiu Shiliang's position was the Left Palace Commandant-protector and his Shen'ce Army was stationed next to the east wall of the Daming (大明 Great Brilliance) Palace, whereas Li Xun was also well-known as an Academician of the Hanlin Academy (Hanlin yuan 翰林院) and the Academy was right under the west wall of the palace.<sup>136</sup>

### 2.3 The Historical Allusion of Shi Le and the Image of General Golden Elephant

When we read the main story carefully, more clues appear to support the above assumption. In the tale, after Cen Shun moved into the abandoned residence, he heard the sound of war drums from nowhere at midnight.

He then was secretly pleased and conceited, thinking that it was the same omen heard by Shi Le (r. 330-333). He prayed to it and said, "These must be soldiers from the netherworld to help me. If so, they should show me the predetermined time that I will be loaded with riches and honors."

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> As the most magnificent imperial palace of the Tang Empire, the Daming Palace was built during the reign of Gaozong and it served as the seat of imperial government and the royal residence of the Tang emperors until it was completely destroyed in 896. For the locations of the Shen'ce Army led by the Left Palace Commandant-protector and Hanlin Academy, please refer to the map of Daming Palace in Xiao Ailing 肖愛玲, "Lun Daminggong zhi lishi diwei" 論大明宮之歷史地位, *The Silk Road 絲綢之路* 24.193 (2010): 7.

[順] 而獨喜，自負之，以為石勒之祥也。祝之曰：“此必陰兵助我，若然，當示我以富貴期。”

She Le's biography in *Jin shu* recorded the story about the omen he had heard. His birth story was filled with spontaneous omens and unusual natural occurrences.<sup>137</sup> When he grew up, more extraordinarily omens appeared, “his appearance was peculiar, his ambition was extraordinary, and his potential could not be measured” 狀貌奇異，志度非常，其終不可量也。<sup>138</sup> One of those omens was that he often heard the sound of war drums and military bells while he was farming.<sup>139</sup> The history shows that Shi Le was the founding emperor Ming 明 of (Later) Zhao 趙, a powerful ruler who wiped out many autonomous states and controlled northern China. He is well-known for his military talent and extraordinary military achievements. On the surface, the allusion of Shi Le seems to further suggest Cen Shun's ambition of achieving military success and great triumph as well as his desire of obtaining the support of external force. Even if this was an invisible and uncertain power from the netherworld, he still yearned for a hero like Shi Le to assist him in his aspiration for success.

Nevertheless, history reminds us that Shi Le was also responsible for eventually overthrowing the imperial throne of the Western Jin 晉 (265-316). At the age of fourteen

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<sup>137</sup> “When [Shi] Le was born, red lights filled the chamber, and white clouds from Heaven gathered in the middle of the principal hall. Everyone who had seen him was surprised at him.” 勒生時赤光滿室，白氣自天屬于中庭，見者咸異之。See “Shi Le zhaji” 石勒載記 (Account on Shi Le) in *Jin shu*, 104.2707.

<sup>138</sup> *Jin shu*, 104.2707.

<sup>139</sup> “He often heard the sound of war drums and military bells. When he returned home and reported it to his mother, his mother said, ‘You are too exhausted so you heard the tinnitus sounds. This is not an inauspicious omen.’ 每聞鞞鐸之音，歸以告其母，母曰：“作勞耳鳴，非不祥也。”每聞鞞鐸之音，歸以告其母，母曰：“作勞耳鳴，非不祥也。” *Jin shu*, 104.2707.

when Shi Le was only a “barbarian lad” (*huchu* 胡雛), Wang Yan 王衍 (256-311), the most influential official of the Western Jin, heard the sound of Shi Le’s whistle and predicted that he might be “the huge mishap of the world under Heaven” (*tianxia dahuan* 天下大患).<sup>140</sup> This is why the *Jin shu* at the end of his biography refers to him as a *yaonie* 妖孽 (ominous evildoer) sent down from Heaven to punish the Jin with calamities and collapse:

Shi Le was from Qiangqu<sup>141</sup> and exposed his detestable ethnicity. When he heard a military drum in Shangdang,<sup>142</sup> Jizi recognized his extraordinary talent.<sup>143</sup> When he leaned against the gate of Luoyang, Yifu identified his ambition of rising in revolt. While the administration of the benevolent emperor was out of control and the country was collapsing and falling apart, Shi Le thereupon recruited and gathered gangsters like swarming ants, took this opportunity to instigate a rebellion, slaughtered our cities, and killed

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<sup>140</sup> “At the age of fourteen, he followed the people in the same village to do peddling in Luoyang. He leaned against the East Gate on the north side to make whistles. Wang Yan saw him and was astonished by him. He turned to tell the people on his both sides, “I observed the sound and the sight of the previous barbarian teenager, and [found out that] he has extraordinary ambition. I am afraid that he will be a huge calamity in the world under Heaven.” He dispatched people at full gallop to arrest him, but at that time, Le had already left. 年十四，隨邑人行販洛陽，倚嘯上東門，王衍見而異之，顧謂左右曰：“向者胡雛，吾觀其聲視有奇志，恐將為天下之患。”馳遣收之，會勒已去。 *Jin shu*, 104.2707.

<sup>141</sup> Refers to Kangju 康居, an ancient kingdom in Central Asia. Shi Le was the descendant of the Shi 石 Kingdom which was one of the collateral branches of Kangju. The race later became a side-tribe of Huns and was called *jie* 羯 when they migrated to China. Please see detailed discussion on Shi Le and his ethnicity in Wang Shengnan 萬繩楠, *Wei Jin Nan Bei chao shi lungao* 魏晉南北朝史論稿 (Taipei: Longyun chubanshe, 1994), 162-164.

<sup>142</sup> The capital of Shangdang prefecture was Lu 潞 county which was located at the northeast of modern city Lucheng 潞城 in Shanxi. See Tang Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集 (Shanghai: Ditu chubanshe, 1982-1987), 3:39-40.

<sup>143</sup> Refers to Guo Jing 郭敬. “At that time, people mostly teased at Shi Le. Only Guo Jing who was a native of Wu and Niu Qu who was a native of Yangqu believed that [Shi Le’s extraordinary talent] was true and succored him.” 時多嗤笑，唯鄆人郭敬、陽曲甯驅以為信然，並加資贍。 *Jin shu*, 107.2707.

our multitudes...Weren't they the consequences that Heaven had loathed the virtue of the Jin and depended on this ominous evildoer [to overthrow it]? ”<sup>144</sup>

石勒出自羌渠，見奇醜類。聞鞞上黨，季子鑒其非凡；倚嘯洛城，夷甫識其為亂。及惠皇失統，宇內崩離，遂乃招聚螳徒，乘間煽禍，虔劉我都邑，翦害我黎元。……豈天厭晉德而假茲妖孽者歟！

From this point of view, the political allusion might also hint that the dark power and the general trusted by Cen Shun in the future would be as dangerous and wicked as Shi Le, and Cen's destiny may also end with an inevitable failure. If Cen Shun is supposed to be an innuendo of Wenzong, the tragic end of Wenzong's ambition is also indicated here to some extent: Another “ominous evildoer” and his fellows were coming towards the emperor. The Tang Empire was in peril of falling to the same tragic destiny of the Jin regime caused by Shi Le, but unfortunately, the emperor was entirely unaware of this huge mishap.

Moreover, the image of General Golden Elephant was portrayed as a hideous ghost with dark power who was able to delude Cen Shun with his amazing appearance, grand feasts, and dazzling treasures along with the unfolding of the story. It seems that he was able to satisfy all the desires of Cen Shun. Because of his treacherous tricks and deceitful lusts, Shun even broke off all his connections with family members, relatives and friends. He became seriously ill after being isolated and poisoned by the evil influence from the netherworld:

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<sup>144</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 107.2798

The Chief's<sup>145</sup> appearance was extraordinary and magnificent, and his majestic posture could rarely be matched. He offered Shun banquets and delicacy, and presented him with treasures and shining pearls as gifts. Those pearls and gems were numerous. Consequently, Shun was dazzled by them, since everything he wanted was complete. Later, he gradually cut off his connection with his relatives and friends, and closed the door and refrained from going out. His family members were surprised, but they were not able to investigate his reason for doing so. Shun's complexion became wan and sallow, and he was hit by evil emanations.

王神貌偉然，雄姿罕儔。宴饌珍宴與順，致寶貝明珠珠璣無限。順遂榮於其中，所欲皆備焉。後遂與親朋稍絕，閑間不出。家人異之，莫究其由。而順顏色憔悴，為鬼氣所中。

In fact, the above portrayal of General Golden Elephant fully matches the criticism of Li Xun and Zheng Zhu in many historical works, particularly in both the *Xin Tang shu* and the *Jiu Tang shu*. For instance, Li also had an imposing appearance and was considered as extraordinary and matchless by Wenzong: “His figure was stalwart and sturdy; his expression was natural and carefree; his speech was intelligent and his mind was agile; he was adept at speculating people's intentions” 形貌魁梧，神情灑落，辭敏智捷，善揣人意。<sup>146</sup> After he bribed Zheng Zhu with “millions of gold, silk, pearls and treasures” 金帛珍寶數百萬, he was able to be recommended to Wenzong by the powerful eunuch Wang

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<sup>145</sup> It refers to General Golden Elephant.

<sup>146</sup> See “Li Xun liezhuan” 李訓列傳 (The memoir of Li Xun), in *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4395-4398.

Shoucheng.<sup>147</sup> Later, the emperor even viewed Li Xun as “a marvelous talent in the world under Heaven”天下奇才 that none of his prime ministers could match.<sup>148</sup> Even Zheng Xun was also praised as the one with “marvelous talent” 奇才 and a “marvelous master of esoteric” 奇士 by Li Su 李愬 (773-821) and Wang Shoucheng respectively.<sup>149</sup> Yet the disapproval of both Li and Zheng’s characters like the following remarks can also be found in official histories: “Li Xun, the person who was treacherous and sinister in various ways” 李訓者，狙詐百端，陰險萬狀。<sup>150</sup> “Zhu was crafty, persuasive, insidious, deceitful, and adept at detecting people’s intentions” 注詭辯陰狡，善探人意旨。<sup>151</sup> “Both Xun and Zhu were petty men. They were extremely deceitful and vicious. They obtained the positions of general and prime minister by force” 訓、註小人，窮奸究險，力取將相。<sup>152</sup> “Both Xun and Zhu were conceited and deceitful people. They know nothing about ruling and administration. The intrigue that they carried out was already wrong and it almost caused collapse and peril to the Tang regime” 訓、注狂狡之流，制御無術，矢謀既誤，幾致顛危。<sup>153</sup>

Just as Cen Shun who was entirely bewitched by General Golden Elephant, Wenzong also was deeply deluded by both Li and Zheng and even naively expected that

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 179.5326.

<sup>149</sup> For more information, please also refer to Li Xun’s biography in *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4399.

<sup>150</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 119.4411.

<sup>151</sup> See “Zheng Zhu liezhuan” 鄭注列傳, *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4399.

<sup>152</sup> *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, 245.7916.

<sup>153</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 17.580.

both Li and Zheng would support his eradication of the eunuchs to achieve a “peaceful society”:

At that time, Li Xun was already in the imperial court. The two persons were in harmony. Both of them attended upon the emperor daily to give lectures and instill ideas on how to achieve a peaceful society, and believed that a peaceful society could be achieved within a very short time. Because the two villains made an alliance, the emperor was even more deceived by their speeches.<sup>154</sup>

時李訓已在禁庭，二人相洽，日侍君側，講貫太平之術，以為朝夕可致昇平。兩姦合從，天子益惑其說。

Therefore, through comparing Wenzong with Duke Huan 桓 of Qi 齊 (d. B.C.E. 643) and the Emperor Wu 武 of Han 漢 (141-87 B.C.E.), the remarks by the historiographer in the *Jiu Tang shu* explicitly concluded that unlike the two ancient rulers who attained control of eunuchs, Wenzong “neglected the primary principle of an emperor, and was deceived by the vulgar scholars who were despicable and deceitful. Although he devoted all his heart to classics all day and constantly composed [lengthy and tedious] writings, he merely attained the reputation of being fond of literature. How could he be considered as a worthy predecessor who achieved peace and prosperity?” 忽君人之大體，惑纖狡之庸儒。雖終日橫經，連篇屬思，但得好文之譽，庸非致治之先。<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4400.

<sup>155</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4411.

The ghostly characteristics of General Golden Elephant echos the previous allusion of Shi Le whose image was painted as both extraordinary and baneful in the *Jin shu* as well. After the Sweet Dew Incident, the literary works of a few contemporaneous officials also expressed in a more or less subtle way their condemnation both of the Li clique and the eunuchs. Li Shangying 李商隱 was the one who applied many political allusions to elaborate his feelings and attitudes regarding the bloody political incident. A meaningful “coincidence” is that he also adopted the allusion to “the barbarian lad” to compare Li Xuan and Zheng Zhu to Shi Le in his poems, stating that all the dreadful consequences of the Sweet Dew Incident was due to Wenzong’s naïve trust in both of them:

Arrested were made on the evidence of secret letters;	證逮符書密
Lives were lost for guilt by association.	辭連性命俱
All this because the premier of Han was esteemed,	竟緣尊漢相
But the Barbarian Lad was not discovered in time!” <sup>156</sup>	不早辨胡雛

James Liu further explained the above allusions with a more detailed paraphrase: “People were arrested on the evidence of secret letters, and killed for their guilt by association. All this happened because Chief Minister Li Hsün (who, like Wang Shang of the Han Emperor, had an imposing appearance) was esteemed and trusted by the Emperor, whereas the dangerous opportunist Cheng Chu, who is comparable to Shih Le, the ‘Barbarian Lad,’ was not exposed for what he was.”<sup>157</sup> We might say that Li Shangyin also disapproved the

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<sup>156</sup> The four verses are quoted from the first one of “Yougan ershou (qiyi)”有感二首 (Two poems written when moved by a certain event). Here I adopted James Liu’s translation. Please see the translation and his annotations regarding the two poems in James J. Y. Liu, *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet* (Chicago: the university of Chicago press, 1969), 168-172.

<sup>157</sup> James J. Y. Liu, *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin*, 170. Although there are controversial opinions about whom the “Barbarian Lad” refers to, Li Xun or Zheng Zhu, there is a consensus among modern scholars that



violent confrontation executed by the Li clique through a series of allusions. General Golden Elephant is the literary character created in Niu Sengru's narrative work. Although both Niu and Li adopted different literary genres to deliver their political attitude towards the Sweet Dew Incident, they seemed to reach a tacit understanding in such a particular way. Moreover, it is very possible that their common consensus on drawing analogies of both Shi Le and the Li clique was shared by quite a number of contemporaneous scholar officials. This is why when the *Xin Tang shu* commented on the officials of the Li clique, Li Xun and his fellows were also regarded as "ominous evildoers" sent down from Heaven to undermine the country and destroy the Tang regime when Tang was deprived of its virtue:

*The Zhuo Commentary* says, "When a country will certainly perish, Heaven will send down people to undermine the country." When Xun and his clique held rotten logs to support the top of a great mansion, the whole world under Heaven because of this was bitterly disappointed and absolutely frightened,<sup>158</sup> but Wenzong just prostrated himself on the ground and depended on them to succeed, and eunuchs eventually took advantage of [such an opportunity]. Heaven had certainly loathed the virtue of Tang!"

傳曰：“國將亡，天與之亂人。”若訓等持腐株支大廈之顛，天下為寒心豎毛，文宗偃然倚之成功，卒為闖謁所乘，天果厭唐德哉！

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Li Shangyin considers both of them the cause of the disastrous consequences. James J. Y. Liu, *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin*, 170.

<sup>158</sup> The metaphor of Shumao 豎毛 literally means "one's hair standing on end," which is often used to describe fearful feelings.

When we study the concealed meanings behind the image of General Golden Elephant, another important detail we should not neglect is that after Cen Shun was captivated by the General, Cen became estranged from all the people who truly cared about him. This detail is also a skillful analogy of the historical reality, which not only suggests Wenzong's complicated attitude towards the senior political leaders including Niu Sengru, but also indicates the grave political persecution that befell court officials after both Li and Zheng attained Wenzong's deep trust. Besides the dictatorship of palace eunuchs, Wenzong also greatly resented the other infamous political phenomena, that is, the fierce conflict within the Chang'an bureaucracy conventionally known as Niu (Sengru)-Li (Deyu) factional strife. He was so disappointed with the factional leaders that he even compared the factions to the rebellious military tycoons in Hebei.<sup>159</sup> "In fact, he [Emperor Wen] tried to strike at the eunuchs and factions twice: first with the help of a chief minister in 830-1, and then with the Sweet Dew conspirators themselves in 835."<sup>160</sup> This is one of the reasons that Emperor Wen decided to mainly depend on both Li Xun and Zheng Zhu, the two "outsiders." The occurrence that Li Xun was promoted to the position of Prime Minister is one of the most evident signals that all the fraction leaders were estranged from the emperor. When Niu Sengru was still Wenzong's prime minister, he had already discerned the emperor's intentions and sensed the tremendous political risks that the Li's clique would lead to, so

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<sup>159</sup> "At that time, both [Li] Deyu and [Li] Zongmin had their own fractions in which officials squeezed out or assist each other. The Emperor worried about it and often signed with saying that, 'Getting rid of the outlaws in Hebei would be easier compared to getting rid of the factions at court'." 時德裕、宗閔各有朋黨，互相擠援。上患之，每歎曰：“去河北賊易，去朝廷朋黨難！”See *Zizhi tongjian*, 61.7899.

<sup>160</sup> Dalby, "Court politics in late T'ang times," 654.

he unhesitatingly resigned his position and left Chang'an before the Sweet Dew Incident took place:

The eunuch Wang Shoucheng happened to recommend the villains to secretly discuss the politics of the inner court. One day after that, the Emperor called in the Ministers and said, “Do you have a mind for a peaceful society? What is the way to achieve it?” Sengru responded, “I, Your humble subject, am a Minister who is not able to bring peace and comfort to the society, but the peaceful society does not have any particular atmosphere, either... Your Majesty would like to further pursue the peaceful society, which is not what your humble subject is capable of reaching.” After Sengru withdrew from the audience, he told other Ministers, “Your Majesty is urging us [to achieve the peaceful society] like this, how could I stay here any longer?” So he insisted on resigning from the position of Acting Minister, Left Supervisor and Jointly Manager of Affairs, and became the Vice Military Commissioner of Huainan. Because The Son of Heaven was anxious to achieve peace and prosperity, Li Xun and other [villains] took the opportunity and was able to carry out their absurdity, which almost led to the destruction of the empire.<sup>161</sup>

會中人王守澄引織人竊議朝政，它日延英召見宰相曰：“公等有意於太平乎？何道以致之？”僧孺曰：“臣待罪宰相，不能康濟，然太平亦無象。……而更求太平，非臣所及。”退謂它宰相曰：“上責成如

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<sup>161</sup> See this historical record in “Niu Sengru liezhuan” 牛僧孺列傳 (The memoir of Niu Sengru), *Xin Tang shu*, 174.5231.

是，吾可久處此耶？”固請罷，乃檢校尚書左僕射平章事，為淮南節度副大使。天子既急於治，故李訓等投隙得售其妄，幾至亡國。

The troublesome tension between the Li's clique and court officials became even more intense and inescapable afterwards, and the gap between Wenzong and the majority of his court officials developed so greatly that Wenzong was almost utterly isolated as well: “When the two treacherous subjects, both Li Xun and Zheng Zhu were in power, anyone who did not ally with them would be demoted or dismissed. The whole court was terrified and frightened. Everyone felt himself imperiled” 奸臣李訓、鄭注用事，不附己者，即時貶黜，朝廷悚震，人不自安<sup>162</sup>; “At that time, both Xun and Zhu were conspicuous for their power in the world under Heaven...Court officials were repelled and exiled in succession. The lines formed up by court officials were also almost empty due to this. Everyone stood in trembling with worries and feared like animals whose horns were falling from their heads” 是時，訓、注之權，赫於天下。……朝士相繼斥逐，班列為之一空，人人惴慄，若崩厥角。<sup>163</sup>

Along with the development of the story, the real identity of General Golden Elephant was revealed by Shun's family members at the end of the tale:

Shun's family members then secretly prepared spades and shovels, and isolated him while he went to the bathroom. Holding spades and working in a chaotic way, they started digging the chambers. When the excavation

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<sup>162</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 17.560.

<sup>163</sup> In *Shang shu* 尚書 [Book on Documents], “Baixing linlin, ruo beng juejue” 百姓凜凜，若崩厥角 (People stand in trembling like the animals whose horns were falling from their heads) is used to describe people's fear of King Zhou 紂 of Shang 商 (d. 46 B.C.E). *Jiu Tang shu*, 169.4400.

reached eight or nine feet deep, the ground suddenly collapsed, and that was a place of an ancient tomb... In the front of the hall, there was a golden couch and a Chinese chessboard. A display of horses all made of gold and copper filled up the whole checkerboard... Subsequently, people burned them, leveled the ground, and obtained many treasures which were all what collected in the tomb. After Shun checked them, he woke up all of a sudden, and then threw up a lot. Since then he became exuberant and cheerful, and the residence was not ominous anymore.

其親人僭備鍬鍤，因順如廁而隔之。荷鍤亂作，以掘室內，八九尺忽坎陷，是古墓也……前有金床戲局，列馬滿枰，皆金銅成形……既而焚之，遂平其地。多得寶貝，皆墓內所畜者。順閱之，恍然而醒，乃大吐，自此充悅，宅亦不復兇矣。

According to history, the Sweet Dew Incident plotted by Li and Zheng was defeated by the eunuchs and ended with a disastrous consequence: “In the government quarter alone, the soldiers reportedly killed more than a thousand people and destroyed many seals, documents and records. For weeks afterwards the troops rounded up not merely the chief conspirators and their underlings, but their entire families and many other people who were wholly innocent.”<sup>164</sup> But fortunately, both Tang regime and Wenzong survived such a terrible catastrophe. Because both Niu and Li factions were barred from the court dominated by Zheng Zhu and Li Xun, Niu Sengru himself avoided being slaughtered in

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<sup>164</sup> Dalby, “Court politics in late T’ang times,” 657.

the Incident. It seems that Niu adopted such a conventional “happy ending” to lower the tone of his criticism of Wenzong and to indicate that it was indeed a fortune out of misfortune.

The father-son metaphor in Chinese classical texts is often adopted to describe the complex emperor-subject relationship, which is also reflected in the above ending. In Niu Sengru’s opinion, Wenzong dreamed of relying on both Li Xun and Zheng Zhu, the two treacherous subjects, to lead the Southern Commands and to eradicate the political power of eunuchs, but this dream results into a formidable nightmare. Niu Sengru borrows the “family members” metaphor to imply that court officials like himself, rather than Li and Zheng, are the subjects that Wenzong should always trust and rely on. The renowned political admonition for rulers such as “Being close to worthy subjects and keeping distance from petty men” 親賢臣，遠小人<sup>165</sup> is subtly conveyed here. Both metaphoric allusions “woke up all of a sudden” and “the residence was not ominous anymore” echo Niu’s implicit wishes as well: The Emperor Wen finally awakened from the delusion of the Li’s clique and the Tang regime stabilized after surviving from the Sweet Dew Incident.

In summary, together with the historical allusion of Shi Le, the fictional character General Golden Elephant insinuates Li Xun, Zheng Zhu and their fellows. Niu Sengru intends to use this evil spirit to accuse Li’s clique of “deluding the emperor” (*huozhu* 惑主). Different literary genres and metaphors have been employed by literati to manifest

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<sup>165</sup> “Being close to worthy subjects and keeping distance from petty men, this is why the Former Han was prosperous; Being close to petty men and keeping distance from worthy subjects, this is why the Later Han was overthrown.” 親賢臣，遠小人，此先漢所以興隆也；親小人，遠賢臣，此後漢所以傾頽也。Quoted from Zhuge liang 諸葛亮 (181-24), “Qian chushi biao” 前出師表。Chen Shou, *San guo zhi*, 35.920.

this particular motif in the history. For instance, Qu Yuan attempted to use poetic verses to arouse the King Hui 懷 of Chu 楚 (r. 328-299 B.C.E.) from the delusion of crafty officials:

For the world is impure and envious of the able,	世溷濁而嫉賢兮，
Eager to hide men's good and make much of their ill.	好蔽美而稱惡
Deep in the palace, unapproachable,	閨中既以邃遠兮，
The wise king slumbers and will not be awakened.	哲王又不寤。 <sup>166</sup>

A variety of weeds and thorns are used as metaphors in Qu's poem to symbolize those treacherous officials:

Thorns, king-grass, curly-ear hold the place of power,	蕢蓂施以盈室
兮，	
But you must needs stand apart and not speak them fair.	判獨離而不服。 <sup>167</sup>

In his well-known piece “Wei Xu Jinye tao Wu Zhao xi” 為徐敬業討武曌檄 (Declaration on Xu Jingye's behalf against Wu Zhao), Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (640-684) sternly condemned Empress Dowager Wu 武 (r. 690-705) as the infamous Lady Zheng<sup>168</sup> and a salacious fox: “Just like Lady Zheng Xiu, she was good at slandering people, and she made use of her foxy charm to delude the emperor” 掩袖工讒，狐媚偏能惑主。<sup>169</sup> It is through

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<sup>166</sup> Please refer to the poem titled “Li sao” 離騷 (Encountering the sorrow), in *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and other Poets*, translated, annotated, and introduced by David Hawkes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1985), 67-95.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Refers to the Lady Zheng Xiu 鄭袖, the favorite concubine of the King Huai of Chu. She is infamous for being jealous of the King's other concubines.

<sup>169</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 67.2490-2491.

“Cen Shun” that Niu Sengru developed this specific motif with his narrative skills, fictional characters and intriguing plot.

## 2.4 The Foes from the Northern Mountain

The notorious clique of eunuchs was another political power that Niu Sengru pictures with resentment and condemnation in “Cen Shun”. In Niu’s ironic writing, these eunuchs are as filthy and malicious as the ghastly enemy army coming out from a mouse hole, although they attempt to disguise themselves with seemingly human grandeur:

Formerly, there was a mouse hole on the east wall. It transformed into city gates whose ramparts and parapets were lofty and majestic. After performing the gongs and drums three times, troops were dispatched from the four gates...”

先是東面壁下有鼠穴，化為城門。壘敵崔嵬。三奏金革，四門出兵，……

In addition to a pack of despicable rats, Niu Sengru also compares the eunuch clique to Xiongnu 匈奴.<sup>170</sup> As Barfield has written, “Most of the information about the Hsiung-nu comes from Chinese records, which were particularly detailed and often hostile, because the Hsiung-nu posed the most serious foreign threat to the stability of the former Han

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<sup>170</sup> Niu Sengru employed the term Xunnu 獯虜 to designate Xiongnu in “Cen Shun.”



dynasty.”<sup>171</sup> Xunnu is considered as a longtime enemy from a nomadic state which was infamous for invading China’s northern frontier and exploiting China’s economy in Chinese history. Consequently, the image of the eunuch clique is also directly connected with such a hostile threat which constantly destabilized China’s central government.

“Beishan zei” 北山賊 is another profound analogy that Niu Sengru applies to attack the eunuch clique. As we have analyzed before, “Beishan” 北山 (the Northern Mountain) actually hints at “Beisi” 北司 (the Northern Offices), while *zei* 賊, a highly derogatory term, has multiple meanings such as evildoer, traitor, thief, foe, calamity and even murderer, which reflects the different disgraced political roles the eunuch clique had played in the mid-to-late Tang periods. When *zei* is used as a curse word, a well-known allusion is that Sun Quan 孫權 (182-252) cursed at Cao Cao and announced: “Nowadays, several political states have perished, and only I still exists. The old villain and I will certainly be implacable” 今數雄已滅，惟孤尚存，孤與老賊，勢不兩立。<sup>172</sup> This allusion further demonstrates Niu Sengru’s political stance and principles after four prime ministers<sup>173</sup> and their families were executed by eunuchs after the Sweet Dew Incident.

The Sweet Dew Incident of 835 is one of the most important political events in the mid-to-late Tang eras, but the public comments and outcry on this important event were almost muted because of the dangerous political circumstance in which officials were at

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<sup>171</sup> See this quotation and further analysis on the military and political confrontations between Huns and China in Thomas J. Barfield, “The Hsiung-nu Imperial Confederacy: Organization and Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 41.1 (1981): 45-61.

<sup>172</sup> *San guo zhi*, 54.1262.

<sup>173</sup> Besides Li Xun, the other three prime minister were Wang Ya 王涯 (ca. 764-835), Jia Su 贾餗 (d. 835) and Shu Yuanyu 舒元與 (791-835).

high risk of being witness to or victims of execution and persecution. As a resilient political leader, Niu Sengru still sought to reflect actual history and express his genuine opinion in a relatively safe way. Only with the aid of literary texts and behind the veil of ghost stories that Niu was able to forcefully reproach his political enemies with different cursed images such as the evil spirits from the netherworld, sneaky rats, hostile barbarians and invaders, evildoers, and so forth.

## 2.5 Other Referential Allusions

All the fictional elements and rhetorical devices Niu Sengru applies in “Cen Shun” demonstrate his remarkable capability of creative writing. In Niu’s writing, the catastrophic incident that happened in the palace city is transformed into brutal battles played on a huge chessboard, the formidable political rivals are transformed into ghost armies exercising evil influence at midnight, the deluded emperor who initiated the incident is described as an obstinate man who insisted on staying in a haunted house, and those royal court officials like himself become the protagonist’s family members. Just as what Sa Mengwu 薩孟武 (1897 – 1984) has stressed on the connection between literature and history, literary imaginations are deeply rooted in social and historical contexts.<sup>174</sup> Meanwhile, certain

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<sup>174</sup> At the beginning of his work on *Xiyou ji*, Sa claims that “None of the ideas or even the of humanity can be separated from the real world or be created out of thin air. The thoughts on ethnics, religions, politics and laws are certainly like this, and the immortals and the ghosts imagined by humanity follow the same [principle]. The book *Xiyou ji* talks about immortals and Buddha, and refers to evil demons and malicious monsters. However, all the immortals, Buddha, demons and monsters are also influenced by the Chinese Society. In other words, after social phenomena comes into human’s mind, they are processed by imagination and reflected back [to the society], and then become immortals, Buddha, demons and monsters.” “人類的一切觀念，甚至一切幻想都不能離開現實社會，從空創造出來。倫理、宗教、政治、法律的思想固然如此，而人類所想像的神仙鬼怪也是一樣。《西遊記》一書談仙說佛，語及惡魔毒怪。

historical records shed light on how these literary analogies and metaphors might be called to Niu Sengru's mind, which help us further explore his creation process and authorial intention.

One of these thought-provoking examples is that both Wang Shuwen and Zheng Zhu who played crucial roles in those political confrontations were superior experts in chess games. Zheng Zhu's biography records that "Zhu excelled others in intelligence and extensively mastered classics and art. His expertise in chess, medicine and divination is particularly marvelous. Everyone who witnessed it was very joyful." 注敏悟過人，博通典藝，棋奕醫卜，尤臻於妙，人見之者，無不歡然。<sup>175</sup> *Shunzong shilu* also mentions that "the emperor studies calligraphy from Wang Pi and Pi was particularly favored by him. Wang Shuwen was recommended due to his expertise in chess game. [His post] was equivalent to the post of Academician Awaiting Orders" 上學書於王伾。頗有寵。王叔文以碁進。俱待詔翰林。<sup>176</sup> It was through displaying their talent in artistry or game skills rather than political capabilities that these clique leaders at first earned emperors' favor. Even in the Song dynasty, the Left Grand Master of Remonstrance 孔文仲 still coupled the Wangs' clique with the Li's clique and admonished Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1085-1100) who

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然其所描寫的仙佛魔怪，也是受了中國社會現象的影響。換言之，社會現象映入人類的腦髓之中，由幻想作用，反射出來，便成為仙佛魔怪。See Sa Mengwu, *Xiyou ji yu zhongguo gudai zhengzhi* 西遊記與中國古代政治 [Journey to the West and Chinese Ancient Politics] (Taipei Shi: San min shu ju, 1969), 1.

<sup>175</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 184.4769.

<sup>176</sup> See the information in *Qinding Quan Tang wen* 欽定全唐文, compiled by Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 560.5660b.

ascended the throne at nine to avoid being deceived by “petty men” (*xiaoren* 小人) like them:

Because the emperor’s virtue has not become addicted to anything yet, he should be constantly educated so that he will not seek for wine and women. Because the emperor’s intention has not trusted or preferred anything yet, he should be frequently instructed so that he will not appoint petty men...Pi became Expositor-in-waiting through classics and Shuwen became Awaiting Orders through chess games. The two villains arose one after another, and eventually launched the unrest. Zhu was appointed through medical skills and Xun was recommend through the *Book of Changes*. The two evils allied together, and finally caused the catastrophe of Ganlu.<sup>177</sup>

上德未有嗜好，而常啟以無近酒色；上意未有信嚮，而常開以勿用小人。……佞以詩、書侍講，叔文以棋待詔，二惡交踵，終兆永貞之亂；注以藥術用，訓以易義進，兩邪合縱，卒致甘露之禍。

Therefore, it is not surprising to notice that Niu Sengru employs a chess game and chessmen to symbolize political battles and rivals in his tale. His warning of staying away from treacherous subjects and their charming tricks is also ingeniously woven through the plot of the story.

Another example is that Wang Shuwen has already been ridiculed as both “city fox” and “mountain ghost” by his contemporary people:

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<sup>177</sup> Xu *Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編, compiled by Li Tao 李燾 (1115-1184) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 404.9829-9830.

When people had not detected his original face yet, they all trusted him as a marvelous talent. Once he was in charge of the important authority of the two commissions<sup>178</sup> and was employed at the outer court, everyone, no matter if he was foolish or wise, would say, ‘[Wang is just like] a city fox and a mountain devil, since both of them have to howl in caverns to bestow either calamity or fortune upon people at night, and even deities are afraid of them, but once they come out and gallop on the road in daytime, they would certainly be powerless.’”<sup>179</sup>

人未窺其本，信為奇才。及司兩使利柄，齒于外朝，愚智同曰：“城狐山鬼，必夜號窟居以禍福人，亦神而畏之；一旦晝出路馳，無能必矣。”

Using ghostly and demonized images to attack political enemies or to comment on historical events was not unusual in the Tang dynasty. For instance, Niu Sengru’s intimate political ally Li Zongmin 李宗閔 (d. 846) accused another Li faction leader Zheng Tang 鄭覃 (d. 842) of being “sinister emanation” (*yaoqi* 妖氣).<sup>180</sup> Even Liu Xu’s 劉昫 remarks on Wenzong also follows this conventional diction. In his conclusion, he uses “*kui xu*” 夔

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<sup>178</sup> Refer to the two important financial zones: Public Revenue Commission and the Salt and Iron Commission. Please refer to Denis Crispin Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty* (Cambridge: University press, 1963), 109-120.

<sup>179</sup> See Wang’s biography in *Jiu Tang shu*, 135.3735.

<sup>180</sup> “In the sixth month of the ninth year of Dahe period (835), Yang Yuqing committed an offence. Zongmin made his best efforts to explain for him and rescue him. Wenzong furiously rebuked him, “You have ever accused Zheng Tan of being sinister emanation. Now sinister emanation is arising. Who is the sinister emanation, you or him?” [大和] 九年六月，京兆尹楊虞卿得罪，宗閔極言救解，文宗怒叱之曰：“爾嘗謂鄭覃是妖氣，今作妖，覃耶、爾耶？” See this record in Li Zongmin’s biography in *Jiu Tang shu*, 176.4553.

魑<sup>181</sup> and “*gui yu*” 鬼蜮<sup>182</sup> to condemn eunuchs and the Li clique individually. Interestingly, the above two grotesque images on Wang Shuwen are not only taunts to him with sardonic wit, they also include several crucial elements which match the features of General Golden Elephant in “Cen Shun.” Firstly, they are evil spirits from the dark realm. Even though they seem to be marvelous and powerful at the beginning, their real identities are despicable ghosts instead of divine deities. Secondly, they excel at making a deceptive show of power and authority to deceive people. They are even able to manipulate people’s destinies temporarily. Thirdly, under their seemingly strong appearance, weakness and incompetence are concealed, because they are easily defeated once they are exposed in the sunlight. Last but not least, people should be alert to all sorts of bewitching evil spirits. It is from this perspective that Niu Sengru might have drawn inspiration from the two images to create his own fictional characters and attack his political opponents with acidic sarcasm.

In order to earn Cen Shun’s trust and favor, General Golden Elephant presented him with numerous gems and shining pearls as gifts. Ironically, all these treasures turned out to be the grave goods buried in a huge tomb beneath the chamber where Cen Shun lived. This detail undoubtedly adds interest to the tale. Meanwhile, a story on Wang Pi recorded in his biography might contribute to this satirical detail. When Wang clique was in power,

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<sup>181</sup> *Kui* 夔 and *xu* 魑 refer to two kinds of evil spirits. “*Kui* looks like a dragon with horns. Its scales are as bright as the sun and the moon. If people see it, their states will have a great drought” 如龍有角，鱗甲光如日月，見則其邑大旱。According to *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, *xu* will exhaust people’s wealth. See their annotations in Xiaotong 蕭統 (501-531) ed., *Wenxuan* 文選, annotated by Li Shan 李善 (630-689) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986)3.124.

<sup>182</sup> *Yu* 蜮 is a kind of ghost hiding in water to attack people. For further analysis and details, please refer to Chen Jue’s research on *yu*, 33-47. Jue Chen, “Poetics of Historical Referentiality Roman a Clef and Beyond” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1997), 15-16.

Wang Pi was bribed with numerous treasures as gifts. “Pi built a huge cabinet without doors and simply left one opening on the cabinet. The opening was big enough to accommodate stuff so as to hide treasures. His wife sometimes slept on the top of it” 室中為無門大櫃，唯開一竅，足以受物，以藏金寶，其妻或寢臥於上。<sup>183</sup> Wang Pi fell from the peak of his political career soon after he painstakingly collected and hid all the treasures. When his concealed cabinet was revealed to the public, it inevitably became the tomb of his political reputation as well as a notorious symbol of cupidity and seduction in Niu’s time. Accordingly, there is a possibility that Niu Sengru noticed this scandalous record and included it in his story by means of his superb narrative skills.

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<sup>183</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 135.3736.

### 3. “WANG GUOLIANG”: LEGAL PENALTIES TO THE EUNUCH CLIQUE

Unlike many other tales, “Wang Guoling” 王國良 is only preserved in the Ming editions of the *Xuanguai lu*.<sup>184</sup> Because the tale mentioned Li Fuyan three times and the narrative point of view of the whole tale is Li Fuyan himself, modern scholars have widely agreed on that this tale should belong to the *Xu Xuanguai lu* instead.

In the tale, Wang Guoliang was merely an inferior official, but by relying on eunuchs, he was able to wantonly humiliate and bully an official whose residence was located at the area under his jurisdiction. He suddenly died after he caught a serious illness. After seven days, Wang revived and told Li Fuyan what happened to him during his death. When his illness tended to make him sleepy, several robust men seized him and dragged him to the Office of the Lord Mount Tai 太, a judicial bureau in the netherworld. The Magistrate of the Office sentenced him to hell and he was severely punished by twenty blows with the heavy stick (*zhangxing* 杖刑)<sup>185</sup> due to his insolence (*wuli* 無禮). After he was released back to the mortal world, he became much more polite. He died after ten months because of his grave crimes. This tale is commonly interpreted as a retributive punishment towards villains or a condemnation towards brutal officials, but if we associate the real historical figures and events that lay behind the tale, we will be able to seek a deeper thinking and authorial intention beyond that otherwise apparent.

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<sup>184</sup> See this opinion in the preface of Cheng Yizhong’s *Xuanguai lu, Xu Xuanguai lu*, page 6; *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, 703.

<sup>185</sup> Regarding *zhangxing*, please refer to “Article 2 The five punishment with the heavy stick” in *The Tang Code*, Vol. I: *General Principles*, translated by Wallace S. Johnson, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University), 57-58.



### 3.1 The Real Historical Figures and Event behind the Tale

The Sweet Dew Incident of 835 was regarded as a tremendous political catastrophe for Emperor Wenzong and his court officials. The Southern Commands led by the prime minister was entirely defeated in this political battle. Almost none of the officials had the courage to challenge any decision made by eunuchs afterwards:

Since then, all the affairs in the country were decided by the Northern Offices. What a prime minister could do was merely to pass along official documents. The arrogance of eunuchs became increasingly prominent. They oppressed emperors, despised prime ministers, and bullied court officials as if they were merely stalks of grass. Whenever the court discussed business at the Yanying Hall, [Qiu] Shiliang and other eunuchs would often cite the instance of [Li] Xun and [Zheng] Zhu to put the prime ministers in subjection.<sup>186</sup>

自是天下事皆決於北司，宰相行文書而已。宦官氣益盛，迫脅天子，下視宰相，陵暴朝士如草芥。每延英議事，[仇]士良等動引[李]訓、[鄭]注折宰相。

The post of Metropolitan Governor (Jingzhaoyin 京兆尹) was the administrative head of the Tang capital Chang'an 長安, but since both the emperor and the central government had already fallen into eunuchs' hands, anyone who was in this position had to suffer considerable political dangers during that tumultuous period. Zhang Zhongfang's

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<sup>186</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7919.

biography 張仲方 (766-837) demonstrates the terrifying situation when he was appointed to this position:

Because of Li Xun's coup, all the senior officials were either executed or imprisoned. The next day, all the subjects called at Xuanzheng Hall, but the gate did not open. They had to randomly stand in the court hall. There were not any historiographers, servants, masters of ceremony or Reserve Guards there. It was only after a long time that half of the gate opened. A message came to summon Zhongfang, saying, "There is an imperial edict. You have been approved to be the Metropolitan Governor." After that, the gate then opened and the entourage was summoned.<sup>187</sup>

李訓之變，大臣或誅或繫。翌日，羣臣謁宣政，牙闔不啟。羣臣錯立朝堂，無史卒贊候，久乃半扉啟，使者傳召仲方曰：“有詔，可京兆尹。”然後門闢，喚仗。

Nevertheless, to everyone's surprise, a renowned judicial case on "insolence" took place at such a highly political sensitive moment, which directly challenged the tyranny of palace eunuchs represented by Qiu Shiliang. In the light of the historical event depicted as below, because the Metropolitan Governor Zhang Zhongfang was not tough enough to restrain the criminals conducted by Qiu Shiliang's armies, the Prime Minister Li Shi 李石 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century) replaced him with Xue Yuanshang 薛元賞 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century). Once, a general of

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<sup>187</sup> See this record in the "Collective biographies of Zhang Jiuling, [Zhang] Zheng and [Zhang] Zhongfang" ("Zhang Jiuling, zheng, Zhongfang liezhuan" 張九齡、拯、仲方列傳), *Xin Tang shu*, 126.4431.

Shen'ce army relied on his master Qiu Shiliang's political power to offend Li Shi with rude remarks in Li's residence. Yuanshang stepped forward bravely and executed this disrespectful general by blows with the heavy stick. When he faced Qiu's threat and fury, he reproached eunuchs' insolence and admonished Qiu to obey the law of the state.

At that time, the imperial guards were brutal and violent. The Metropolitan Governor Zhang Zhongfang was afraid to interrogate their criminals. The Prime Minister [Li Shi] sent him out to be the Prefect of Huazhou due to his incompetence and replaced him with the Chief Minister of the Court of the National Granaries Xue Yuanshang. Once, when Yuanshang visited Li Shi's official residence, he heard that Shi was arguing very loudly with a person in his office. Yuanshang sent someone to investigate. The person reported that a general of Shen'ce Army was making an accusation. Yuanshang ran into the office and blamed Shi: "You, the Prime Minister, [are responsible for] assisting the emperor as well as administrating and disciplining the four seas. But now you are not able to even put one military general under control and you allow him to be insolent like this. What do you rely on to pacify and subdue the four barbarians?" He then ran out of the office, mounted a horse, and ordered his attendants to capture the military general and wait for [his further orders] at Xiyama (Dismounting Horse) Bridge. When Yuanshang arrived there, the general's clothes had been taken off and the general himself had already knelt down. The general's adherents resorted to Qiu Shiliang. Shiliang dispatched a eunuch

to summon Yuanshang: “The Palace Commandant-protector would like to trouble you, the Metropolitan Governor.” Yuanshang responded, “I am on official business now. I will be there soon afterwards.” Unexpectedly, Yuanshang executed the general by blows with the heavy stick. He then wore white clothing to meet Shiliang. Shiliang said, “How dare an insane scholar execute a senior general by blows with the heavy stick?” Yuanshang said, “You, the Palace Commandant-protector, are a senior official, whereas the Prime Minister, is also a senior official. If the people of the Prime Minister treated you insolently, what are you going to do? Now your people treated the Prime Minister insolently, how could he be forgiven! ’ Since you and the country are one integral body, you should value legislations for the country. I have already come with prison clothing. Only you hold the power of life and death over me.” Shiliang knew that the army general had died and there was nothing he could do to Yuanshang, so he ended it by calling for wine and drinking it with Yuanshang in happiness.<sup>188</sup>

時禁軍暴橫，京兆尹張仲方不敢詰，宰相以其不勝任，出為華州刺史，以司農卿薛元賞代之。元賞常詣李石第，聞石方坐聽事與一人爭辯甚喧，元賞使覘之，云有神策軍將訴事。元賞趨入，責石曰：“相公輔佐天子，紀綱四海。今近不能制一軍將，使無禮如此，何以鎮服四夷！”即趨出上馬，命左右擒軍將，俟於下馬橋，元賞至，則已解衣跽之矣。其黨訴於仇士良，士良遣宦者召之曰：“中尉屈大

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<sup>188</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7922.

尹。”元賞曰：“屬有公事，行當繼至。”遂杖殺之。乃白服見士良，士良曰：“癡書生何敢杖殺禁軍大將！”元賞曰：“中尉大臣也，宰相亦大臣也，宰相之人若無禮於中尉，如之何？中尉之人無禮於宰相，庸可恕乎！中尉與國同體，當為國惜法，元賞已囚服而來，惟中尉死生之！”士良知軍將已死，無可如何，乃呼酒與元賞歡飲而罷。

The above event involves astonishing confrontations of two political powers and a bold law enforcement. The following analysis will focus on how this real judicial case is transformed into a supernatural story featured with castigation for insolence from the netherworld.

### 3.2 The Insolent Official Who Was Punished by Blows with the Heavy Stick

As the main character of the tale, Wang Guoliang' brutal nature is clearly sketched out at the beginning of the story:

“Wang Guoliang, an Inspector sent by the Commissioner for Estates and Residences, was an inferior official who was vicious and brutal. He relied on eunuchs and often insulted and bullied people by relying on eunuchs.”

莊宅使巡官王國良，下吏之兇暴者也，憑恃宦官，常以凌辱人為事。

This evil image, in fact, is a literary blend of two historical figures, Qiu Shiliang and his military general. The fictional name is an insinuation of Qiu Shiliang, because

[yǐwǎng] 王 and [mǐwǎng] 亡 are homophonic characters,<sup>189</sup> and 王國良 becomes a phonetic pun of 亡國 [仇士] 良 which literally means “Qiu Shiliang, the person who destroyed the country,”<sup>190</sup> whereas the whole sentence alludes to Qiu’s subordinate general who recklessly bullied people under his protection. The post of Commissioner for Estates and Residences assumed full charge of the estates and rentals of the country,<sup>191</sup> which was often held by eunuchs<sup>192</sup>. Li Fuyan intentionally uses this infamous position and its inspector to create an analogy of the two historical figures’ real identities. The description on Wang Guoliang that follows next further connects the fictional character with horrified verbal insults and filthy humiliations:

[Wang Guoliang]’s words and speech would then become cruel and vile and it was impossible for him to forgive Mr. Wu. All the guests who came to [visit Mr. Wu] would all tell Guoliang first, were fearful that they would also be slandered and they feared him like a poisonous snake... Guoliang came over every five days and his words became increasingly vile, and Fuyan always covered his ears and ran away... The whole Wu family feared his vulgar words, and went out to pray for [his forgiveness]...

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<sup>189</sup> Except for *pinyin* romanizations, all the phonetic notations in this dissertation are the reconstructed sounds of the Middle Chinese by Wang Li 王力 (1900-1986).

<sup>190</sup> In “Xue Wei,” a tale which is also attributed to Li Fuyan, the food service worker Wang Shiliang 王士良 is read as the phonetic pun of 亡士[仇士]良 (Qiu Shiliang, The person who eradicated scholars officials) as well. Please refer to further analysis in chapter three of this dissertation.

<sup>191</sup> See the information in Wang Ruoqin 王若欽 et al., comps., *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 491.5871b.

<sup>192</sup> “In the Tang dynasty, there were Commissioner for Imperial Music and Commissioner for Estates and Residences among the various eunuch commissioners. All these posts were held by eunuchs” 唐內諸司有教坊使、莊宅使，皆宦者為之。 See Hu Shanxing’s annotation in *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7925.

[王] 即言詞慘穢，不可和解。賓客到者，莫不先以國良告之，慮其謗及，畏如毒蛇。……國良五日一來，其言愈穢，未嘗不掩耳而走。……一家畏其惡辭，出而祈之……

Apparently, the phrase “*yanci canhui, buke hejie*” 言詞慘穢，不可和解 in the first sentence suggests the general’s despicable attitude towards Li Shi when he provoked the dispute. The other three sentences are a metaphoric picture of the reality that court officials feared and avoided Qiu Shiliang like a poisonous snake when he was in power. After Sweet Dew Incident, “Shiliang and the like were unscrupulous and imprudent at that time. All the court officials worried every day that their families would be ruined” 時士良等恣橫，朝臣日憂破家.<sup>193</sup> The *Xin Tang shu* also concludes Qiu’s crimes: “Shiliang murdered two princes, one empress and four prime ministers. He had been covert and brutal for over twenty years” 士良殺二王、一妃、四宰相，貪酷二十餘年.<sup>194</sup>

When Wang Guoliang recounted the punishments that he received in the netherworld, more real historical facts and fictional imagination were blended together. On the one hand, all the narrative details regarding his death and how he was sized by robust men, escorted to the Office of the Lord Mount Tai, sentenced by a magistrate, and punished by blows with the heavy stick due to insolence are the literary manifestation of the military general’s death and legal punishment in the reality. On the other hand, Qiu Shiliang, the general’s master and the chief offender, is also castigated severely by virtue of the netherworld, a dynamic and imaginary setting, in the tale. Not only does the other world

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<sup>193</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7924.

<sup>194</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 207.5875.

deprives the offender of all his privileges, it also attributes ultimate authority to its legal system and magistrate. Based on the stiff sentence imposed by the underworld magistrate, “Wang Guoliang’s crime is grave and he deserves to be thrown deep into Hell” 此人罪重，合沉地獄. Although it was impossible to impose any legal punishment that the eunuch tyrant Qiu Shiliang truly deserved, Li Fuyan adopts literary imagination to express his intense condemnation and relieve his suppressed rage. After experiencing the punishment by blows with the heavy stick, Wang Guoliang claimed that “from that I was suddenly enlightened” 從此忽悟. He also pleaded guilty and dramatically changed his attitude towards the Wu family:

Since I was little, I have been vicious and stubborn, not being able to distinguish the good from the evil. My words and speech were arrogant and audacious, my crimes and punishments were cumulative and numerous. From now on, I will abstain from these things and dare not to be furious again... Since then, whenever he came, he would certainly behave like a virtuous man.

自小兇頑，不識善惡，言詞狂諄，罪責積多，從此見戒，不敢復怒矣。……自是每到，必若仁者。

On the one hand, these consequences might imply that Li Fuyan still had faith in legislation and legal system. He hoped that even the most vicious people who deserved to be thrown deep into Hell could eventually awaken to the realization that they were steeped in crimes and “value the legislation for the country” after being impartially penalized, which can be viewed as an elaborate echo of Xue Yuanshang’s judicial admonition towards



Qiu Shiliang. On the other hand, a certain dramatic irony has been created here, since the chief offender in the real world never suffered from any law enforcement during his whole life. Moreover, Xue Yuanshang had remarked that Qiu's destiny was associated with the country so closely that they were like "one integral body," but Qiu never obeyed the legislation for the country, either. It is also in this sense that Li Fuyan gives the evil protagonist the fictional name 王 (亡) 國良 to indicate how her destroyed the country.

Additionally, Li Fuyan in the tale records that Wang Guoliang was penalized during the winter of the twelfth year of Yuanhe 元和 (817), whereas the real judicial case took place during the winter of the twelfth month of the ninth year of the Dahe 大和 (835). The twelfth month is replaced by the twelfth year and the Dahe (Great Harmony) period substitutes for the Yuanhe (Primary Harmony) period. The author purposely suggests the contemporary historical event which lies behind his literary work by means of creating a temporal setting with semantic, phonetic and numeric puns.

### 3.3 The Inexorable Magistrate in the Netherworld

The magistrate in the netherworld is another important character in the tale. His image not only symbolizes the authority of law enforcement in the netherworld, but also alludes to Xue Yuanshang, a Tang official who was well-known in history for firmly imposing rules over the execution of justice with undaunted courage. After the confrontation with Qiu Shiliang, based on his biography which is included in "The

collective biographies of gracious officials” (“xunli zhuan” 循吏傳) of the *Xin Tang shu*, Xue was appointed as the Metropolitan Governor once again to put down social disturbances with relentless law enforcement in the reign of Dezong:

The imperial garrison troops take advantage of their power to disturb nearby prefectures and counties. Yuanshang argued with them several times and never slightly appeased them. Because of this, the military bully was defeated and the multitudes obtained peace.<sup>195</sup>

禁屯怙勢擾府縣，元賞數與爭，不少縱，由是軍暴折戢，百姓賴安。

During the Huichang period, Deyu was in charge of central government. Xue Yuanshang was appointed as the Metropolitan Governor once again. The Chang’an city had many gallant lads who had their skin tattooed with dark ink, boasted their capabilities of deceit, and robbed workshops and villages. Within three days after Yuanshang arrived at his official residence, he brought in these evil lads, executed over thirty of them by blows with the heavy stick, and displayed their bodies in all the streets. Their remaining fellows were fearful and rushed off to remove their tattoos with fire.<sup>196</sup>

會昌中，德裕當國，復拜京兆尹。都市多俠少年，以黛墨鑱膚，夸詭力，剽奪坊間。元賞到府三日，收惡少，杖死三十餘輩，陳諸市，餘黨懼，爭以火滅其文。

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<sup>195</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 197.5633.

<sup>196</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 197.5633.

Li Fuyan uses this fearless and impartial administrator as his character archetype to create the image of the magistrate in the netherworld in his narrative piece “Wang Guoliang.” Xue Yuanshang played two roles in the real historical event, a judge of a criminal case and an admonisher of a eunuch tyrant. Similarly, after the magistrate punished Wang, he also forced Wang to drink a cup of water from the pool of the netherworld so that Wang could remember his judicial admonition.

Moreover, Li Fuyan also creates artful puns and analogies to indicate Xue’s deeds and speech. One of the examples is that “the official of the netherworld punished me by blows with the heavy stick due to my insolence and the wounds are still there” 冥官以無禮見譴，杖瘡見在。 If we replace “the official of the netherworld” with Xue, this sentence can be viewed as a very concise summary of the real judicial case. Another example is that when a clerk attempted to pursue Xue to release Wang quickly through telling him that Wang still had ten years left, Xue still turned down the clerk’s suggestion to drag Wang back, and in the end, Wang “was perversely sentenced to twenty blows with the heavy stick as a punishment” 拗坐決杖二十。 This surprising plot development reminds readers how Xue Yuanshang tactfully rejected Qiu Shiliang’s intervention and insisted on executing the insolent general. As to the reason why Wang Guoliang should be punished with an additional twenty blows, the magistrate explained: “This person’s words and speech are vicious and vile, and offend the common people. If I don’t not punish him severely, there will be nothing to use as an example” 此人言語慘穢，抵忤平人。若不痛懲，無以為誠。 The above verdict undoubtedly matches the military general’s offence, but if we think about the term *pinren* 平人 further, we will realize that it also alludes to the prime minister

Li Shi, the person who had the same status as Qiu Shiliang, which perfectly echoes Xue Yuanshang's question: "You, the Palace Commandant-protector, are a senior official, whereas the Prime Minister, is also a senior official. If the people of the Prime Minister treated you insolently, what are you going to do?"

### 3.4 The Image of Wu Quanyi

Wu Quanyi 武全益 is the character introduced by Li Fuyan as his relative who constantly suffered Wang Guoliang's vile words and bullying in the tale.

Wu Quanyi, the brother-in-law of Li Fuyan who shared the same great grandparents, resigned from his position as the Commander of Xian Mausoleum Terrace. The house he rented was in the area that Wang Guoliang was in charge of. Mr. Wu was poor, so he frequently failed to comply with the regulation of paying rents..."

李復言再從妹夫武全益，罷獻陵臺令，假城中之宅在其所管。武氏貧，往往納傭違約束……

If the image of Wang Guoliang is considered as the literary blend of Qiu Shiliang and his military general, the image of Wu Quanyi should be regarded as the combination of the other two historical figures, Li Shi and Zhang Fangzhong, as well. Zhang Zhongfang was the historical figure who was indirectly linked to the judicial case. All his biographies in standard histories introduce him as the grandnephew of Zhang Jiuling 張九齡: "Zhongfang's grand uncle was Zhang Jiuling, the Earl of Shixing, the Duke of Wenxian,

and the famous Prime Minister during the Kaiyuan (713-741) period” 仲方伯祖始興文獻公九齡，開元朝名相。<sup>197</sup> For this reason, the fictional position 獻陵臺令 is created by using Zhang Jiuling’s names to indicate Zhang Zhongfang: *xian* 獻 is the last character in Zhang Jiuling’s posthumous title *wenxian* 文獻, whereas 陵 (*ling*; [liəŋ]) is the phonetic pun of 齡 (*ling*; [liəŋ]), the last character of Zhang Jiuling’s personal name. Because Xianling is the mausoleum of the Tang Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626) and it had been under the jurisdiction of Jingzhao 京兆 Prefecture since the Dazu 大足 (Jan., 701 -Oct., 701) period, this official title is also a delicate indication of the post of Metropolitan Governor (Jingzhaoyin 京兆尹). Concerning the other two semantic puns *ba* 罷 and *nayong weiyueshu* 納傭違約束, the former can be read as “dismissing from office” (*baguan* 罷官), whereas the latter can be interpreted as “accepting those servants’ (eunuchs’) behavior of violating restrictions,” since eunuchs were always considered to be emperor’s “domestic servants” (*jianu* 家奴) who were in attendance. Therefore, the deep meaning of the first sentence is inevitably associated with the historical fact: Zhang Zhongfang was dismissed from his post of Metropolitan Governor by Li Shi because he was fearful of standing against the eunuch tyrants and their brutal armies with legal penalties.

Moreover, Li Shi’s official residence where the irreconcilable dispute occurred was correspondingly transformed into a rented house of Wu Quanyi, the spatial setting of the narrative story. Both the *Jiu Tang shu* and the *Xin Tang shu* have the biographies of Li Shi. The *Xin Tang shu* records his biography in “The collective biography of the prime ministers

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<sup>197</sup> See Zhang Fangzhong’s biography in *Jiu Tang Shu*, 171.4442-4446.

of the imperial clan” (“Zongshi zhaixiang” 宗室宰相). Li Shi is highly praised by the standard histories for struggling against eunuch tyrants to stabilize the Tang regime in the aftermaths of the Sweet Dew Incident:

At the beginning, Xun and Zhu caused unrest. [After that,] all powers belonged to eunuchs. The emperor was fearful of their oppression, almost not being able to have a foothold. Shi stood up to become the Prime Minister. He gave his life for the country, had no partiality for the intimate or the favorite, and reinforced the overarching principles of the central government. He intended to strengthen the imperial family and restore the mighty authority.<sup>198</sup>

始，訓、注亂，權歸閹豎，天子畏偪，幾不立。石起為相，以身徇國，不卹近倖，張權綱，欲彊王室，收威柄。

When the Sweet Dew Plot failed, the eunuch Tian Quancao 田全操 went to capital to slaughter court officials and scholars, which caused general panic. Zheng Tan 鄭覃 suggested to Li Shi that he should leave when Tian was approaching Chang'an, but he firmly rejected this suggestion. Finally, he stabilized the whole capital to avoid catastrophic unrest.<sup>199</sup> Li Shi also took enormous risk to rescue many innocent officials and their families who were involved in the Sweet Dew Incident plot.<sup>200</sup> Because of Li Shi's political attitude and stance, he was deeply

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<sup>198</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 131.4516.

<sup>199</sup> See the historical record on this deed in *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7921.

<sup>200</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7920.

resented by Qiu Shiliang. In the third year of Kaicheng 開成 (838), Qiu arranged assassins to try to murder Li Shi:

In the day of Jiazi, the Prime Minister Li Shi encountered bandits at Qinren Ward. He was wounded by a sword which also cut off his riding horse' tail first, and then he was hit by a stray arrow. [Fortunately,] he was not wounded very seriously. At that time, the capital was in great terror and the bandits were not captured. After a while, people knew that it was committed by Qiu Shiliang.<sup>201</sup>

甲子，宰臣李石遇盜於親仁里，中劍，斷其馬尾，又中流矢，不甚傷。  
是時，京城大恐，捕盜不獲，既而知仇士良所為。

Prior to this, another sensational assassination happened over twenty years earlier. During the tenth year of Yuanhe 元和 (815), when Prime Minister Wu Yuanheng 武元衡 (758-815) was in charge of the campaign against the warlord Wu Yuanji 吳元濟 (8<sup>th</sup> century-817), another warlord Li Shidao 劉師道 sent assassins to the capital and murdered Wu Yuanheng.<sup>202</sup> Because the above two assassinations of prime ministers were very similar and widely known to Tang readers, this is one of the possible reasons that Li Fuyan adopts Wu 武 as surname for this fictional character to hint at Li Shi and his most shocking experience. Meanwhile, in light of the interpretation by the King Zhuang 莊 of Chu 楚 (?-591 B.C.E.) recorded in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [Zuo Commentary], “*Wu* means repressing

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<sup>201</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 17b.572.

<sup>202</sup> For details, please refer to Wu Yuanheng's biography in *Jiu Tang Shu*, 158.4159-4162.

brutality, stopping warfare, protecting the ones with great virtue and high prestige, establishing merits, bringing peace to the people, harmonizing the multitudes, and increasing the general wealth.” 夫武，禁暴、戢兵、保大、定功、安民、和众、丰财者也。<sup>203</sup> Together with its first name Quanyi 全益 (preserving the beneficial), this fictional name matches the historical remarks on Li Shi’s heroic deeds.

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<sup>203</sup> Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (556- 451 B.C.E.) ed., *Chunqiu zuozhuan jijie* 春秋左傳集解, annotated by Du Yu 杜預 (222-285) (ShanghaiL Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1977), 11.590.



CHAPTER TWO:  
METAMORPHOSIS AND DISILLUSION

1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF “WANG HUANG” AND “XUE WEI”

Tang officials’ political submission and slavish adherence to powerful eunuchs is one of the social phenomena widely noticed by scholars. For instance, Wang Shouan 王壽南 uses the Censor-in-Chief Dou Huaizhen 竇懷貞 (7<sup>th</sup> century-713) as an example to explain that as early as the reign of Zhongzong 中宗 (Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 684-Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 684; Feb. 23<sup>th</sup>, 705-July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 710), a few court officials were already been awed by the political influence of eunuchs and even attempted to curry favour with eunuchs.<sup>204</sup> During the reign of Xuanzong, it was the omnicompetence of eunuchs as personal servants that a deeply trusted and quasi-familial relationship was established between the emperor and his eunuchs. After the emperor granted many noble titles to castrated men and entrusted the Chief eunuch Gao Lishi with the management of the state, the tradition of seeking influential eunuchs’ favors to obtain or maintain power and position among government officials and military commanders started.<sup>205</sup> The following records in both the *Xin Tang shu* and the *Jiu Tang shu* reflect this social custom:

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<sup>204</sup> Wang Shouan 王壽南, *Tangdai de huanguan* 唐代的宦官 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2004), 26.

<sup>205</sup> Henry Shih-shan Tsai, “Eunuchs Power in Imperial China,” in Shaun Tougher, ed., *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond* (London: The Classical Press of Wales and Duckworth, 2002), 225.

Yuwen Rong, Li Linfu, Li Shizhi, Gai Jiayun, Wei Jian, Yang Shenjin, Wang Hong, Yang Guozhong, Anlu Shan, An Sishun and Gao Xianzhi all relied on Gao to obtain the high official positions like general or prime minister. The other posts [obtained like this] were countless. When Suzong dwelt in the Spring Palace, he called Gao “the Second Brother,” all the princes and princesses alike called him “Grandpa,” and emperor’s sons-in-law alike called him “Grandfather.”<sup>206</sup>

宇文融、李林甫、李適之、蓋嘉運、韋堅、楊慎矜、王鉷、楊國忠、安祿山、安思順、高仙芝因之而取將相高位，其餘職不可勝紀。肅宗在春宮，呼為二兄，諸王公主皆呼“阿翁”，駙馬輩呼為“爺”。

At that time, Yuwen Rong...and the like were promoted because of their talents and emperor’s favors, but they all deeply associated with [Gao] Lishi, which was the reason that they were able to rapidly reach positions like general or prime minister. Since then, the number of people who inherited the custom to ingratiate themselves with [Gao] was countless. They all obtained what they desired.<sup>207</sup>

當是時，宇文融……等雖以才寵進，然皆厚結力士，故能躡至將相，自餘承風附會不可計，皆得所欲。

After the mid-eighth century, accompanied by the increasing political and military power of eunuchs, both the integrity and authority of chancellery were constantly

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<sup>206</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 184.4758.

<sup>207</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 207.5858.

undermined. Hence, such a relationship of dominance and dependence between eunuchs and officials became even more inseparable and pervasive. According to the *Jiu Tang shu*, “After Zhenyuan Period, the mighty power of eunuchs became more aggressive every day. All the military generals and officials were raised by them, and all the military governors and commanders-in-chief were appointed only by bribing them”自貞元之後，威權日熾，蘭錡將臣，率皆子蓄，藩方戎帥，必以賄成。<sup>208</sup> Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) criticized that bribery not only encouraged Tang officials to forfeit their righteousness and loyalty, but also allowed treacherous subjects to consolidate their positions and power.<sup>209</sup> He pointed out that such corruption led to the continuous turmoil of the Tang Empire.<sup>210</sup>

Many cases that officials obtained eminent posts through colluding with and bribing eunuchs are recorded in the Tang histories. For instance, Chen Shaoyou 陳少游 obtained his new post after he bribed eunuch Dong Xiu 董秀 (?-777), and his biography in the *Xin Tang shu* concluded that “[Shaoyou] was promoted several times though bribing the eunuchs who were powerful and favored by the emperors”賄謝權幸，以是數遷。<sup>211</sup> Another noted example is that Yuan Zhai 元載 (8<sup>th</sup> century-777) was promoted from the Metropolitan Governor to the Prime Minister the next day because of his close association

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<sup>208</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 184.4754.

<sup>209</sup> “Court officials tolerated traitors due to bribery, and treacherous subjects also consociated his power due to bribery”朝士以賄而容姦，逆臣亦以賄而自固. See Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian lun* 讀通鑑論 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 26.933.

<sup>210</sup> “The turmoil of Tang was caused by the situation that the world was filled with bribery crimes”唐之亂，賄賂充塞於天下為之耳. Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> See Chen’s biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 224a.6379-6381.

with Li Fuguo 李輔國 who was favored by Suzong.<sup>212</sup> Although Yuan Zhen is well-known for his literary achievements in the history, he is still despised by scholars due to his infamous connections with the eunuchs such as Cui Tanjun 崔譚峻 (8th century-9th century) and Wei Hongjian 魏弘簡 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>213</sup> Thus, Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814) in his *Nian er shi zha ji* 廿二史劄記 echoed Wang's criticism of Tang officials to a certain degree, in claiming that Tang officials completely lost their moral integrity (*qijie* 氣節) which had been highly valued by Chinese official scholars since the Han dynasty:

At that time, eunuchs were the most severe plague on the people. Everyone under the heavens wished to eat up their flesh. The official scholars of the Eastern Han revered moral integrity, so they strived with eunuchs until their death to uphold it. Even though their entire clans were exterminated, they would not give any thought to it. When it reached the Tang, there was only a strategic response by Liu Fen (?-848) to sincerely explain the plague.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> “[Yuan] Zai was friendly with Li Guofu who was favored by the emperor...At that time, Fuguo's power was unparalleled to any other in the state, and nobody disagreed with his recommendations. The court was just selecting officials for the post of Metropolitan Governor, Fuguo hence recommended Zai to hold a concurrent post of Metropolitan Governor. But what Zai desired was the authority of the state, so he visited Fuguo to decline Fuoguo's recommendation as the Metropolitan Governor. Fuguo knew his intention and agreed with him. The next day, Zai was appointed as the Jointly Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery, and Zai's position as the Revenue Section Transport Commissioner remained the same.” 載與倖臣李輔國善.....時輔國權傾海內，舉無違者，會選京尹，輔國乃以載兼京兆尹。載意屬國柄，詣輔國懇辭京尹，輔國識其意，然之。翌日拜載同中書門下平章事，度支轉運使如故。 *Jiu Tang shu*, 118.3410.

<sup>213</sup> See details in the biography of Yuan Zhen in *Jiu Tang shu*, 174.5228-5229.

<sup>214</sup> Zhao Yi, *Nian er shi zha ji jiao zheng* 廿二史劄記校證, collated by Wang Shumin 王樹民 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 5.114.

蓋其時宦官之為民害最烈，天下無不慾食其肉，而東漢士大夫以氣節相尚，故各奮死與之搘拄，雖湛宗滅族，有不顧焉。至唐則僅有一劉蕡對策，懇切言之。

When the Tang officials forfeited their moral integrity in seek of wealth and power, what they also discarded was their reputation and honour. Dou Huaizhen's biography is a good example which clearly underlines how a Tang official's "reputation and honour" (*mingyu* 名譽) was destroyed after he betrayed his political principles to ingratiate himself with the favourites of eunuchs and other political cliques in power. Before he became a high-ranking court official, he was famous for his good reputation, righteousness and governmental capabilities.<sup>215</sup> However, his image and destiny was completely changed after he bartered away his honour for self-advancement:

At that time, Commoner Wei (666-710) and Princess Anle (685-710) alike intervened in the central government. Huaizhen often gained their favour through flattering and groveling. He changed his name to Congyi so as to avoid the nominal taboo of Empress [Wei]'s father. Since then, his reputation was harmed every day. Eunuchs were in power, so Huaizhen was particularly awed by them. Whenever he inspected affairs or administered

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<sup>215</sup> "Huaizhen had good reputation and honour at his youth. At that time, all his relatives and family clans pursued extravagant life style, but Huaizhen mended his ways and cultivated himself alone. His clothing was thrifty and simple. During the Shengli (698-700) period, he was the Magistrate of Qinghe. He was excel at governing and had the reputation of being capable. After a short time, he took charge of the positions of Commander-in-Chief at Yuezhou and the Administrator of Superior Area Command at Yangzhou. He was well-known for being upright and competent in all the places where he stayed." 懷貞少有名譽，時兄弟宗族，並以輿馬為事，懷貞獨折節自修，衣服儉素。聖曆中為清河令，治有能名。俄歷越州都督、揚州大都督府長史，所在皆以清幹著稱。 *Jiu Tang shu*, 183.4724.

justice, if he saw anyone who did not have a beard, he would delay his work to reach out him.”

時韋庶人及安樂公主等干預朝政，懷貞每諂順委曲取容，改名從一，以避后父之諱，自是名稱日損。宦官用權，懷貞尤所畏敬，每視事聽訟，見無鬚者，誤以接之。

Both Dou's personal names, Huaizhen (possessing virtue for the lifetime) and Congyi (follow the lead of the same person for the lifetime), refer to loyalty and moral integrity. Ironically, his name change reflects his change of loyalty, which symbolizes that he stooped to side with the eunuchs, as well as Empress Wei and her followers. Hence this change is a pronounced political betrayal of Emperor Zhongzhong, as well as official colleagues and his own social stratum. The disgraceful end of Dou's political career makes this change to be even more ironically significant. His corpse was executed and his surname name was changed to Du 毒 (poison).<sup>216</sup> Not only were these penalties a public declaration of Dou's betrayal, but they were also severe warnings to other betrayers and renegades.

If we investigate Tang tales on the basis of the above historical context, we will find out that some of the stories which involve surprising metamorphosis and dreadful disillusion, exemplified by “Wang Huang” 王煌 and “Xue Wei” 薛偉, are the metaphoric accusation against the disloyal officials who betrayed the moral integrity and political stance of official scholars, abandoned their honour and reputation, and attached themselves to influential eunuchs. The allegorical interpretation that connects the fantastic courses of

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<sup>216</sup> “In the second year of Xiantian period (712-713), the overthrow conspiracy by Princess Taiping (665-713) was revealed. Huaizhen was frightened of his penalties, so he drowned himself in the water to commit suicide. His corpse was executed and his surname was changed to Du as remedies.”先天二年，太平公主逆謀事洩，懷貞懼罪，投水而死，追戮其屍，改姓毒氏。See *Jiu Tang shu*, 183.4725.

metamorphosis (*bianxing* 變形) and disillusion (*huanmie* 幻滅) narrated in the two literary tales with the real cases of betrayal (*bianjie* 變節) and destruction (*fumie* 覆滅) occurred in the Tang officialdom is discussed in the following sections.

## 2. “WANG HUANG”: A POIGNANT CURSE HIDDEN BEHIND THE BEWITCHED YOUNG OFFICIAL

Similar to “Cen Shun,” “Wang Huang” is also collected in Wu Dazhen’s *Guang yan yi bian*, but its author and source are not provided.<sup>217</sup> It was only until Ming editions of the *Xuanguai lu* were discovered that modern scholars started considering Niu Sengru as its author.<sup>218</sup> Another work that includes this tale is Zeng Cao’s 曾慥 (1091-1155) *Leishuo* 類說, but it is under the title of “Qu Naichong gui” 娶耐重鬼 (Marry the Naichong devil).<sup>219</sup>

### 2.1 Admonishment on Seductive Women in Daoist Literature

As the title of its *Leishuo*’s version suggests, the tale is about failing to resist the seduction of a ferocious devil who metamorphosed into a beautiful lady. At the beginning of the story, a young official named Wang Huang was attracted by a widow whose husband had just pass away, so he married the lady and took her home. When he met his friend, a Daoist priest, he was warned immediately that the real identity of his new wife was a devil of a mighty deity. The Daoist priest attempted to save him with a tally, but unfortunately, after the devil showed him her monstrous form, she snapped his backbone to kill him. If

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<sup>217</sup> Wu Dazhen, *Guang yan yi bian*, 32.1889-1992.

<sup>218</sup> In the preface of *Xuanguai lu*, *Xu xuanguai lu*, punctuated and collated by Cheng Yizhong, 5.

<sup>219</sup> Zeng Cao, *Leishuo*, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊, vol.62 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988), 11.17a-17b.



the young man had listened to the Daoist priest's warning to cut the connection with the devil at the beginning, he would not have suffered such a disastrous consequence. The whole plot of the story is developed through the following three main characters: a bewitched young man, a deceitful devil and a wise Daoist master.

Compared with the motif on Daoist learning and practices, the theme of the tale seems to fall into a well-known admonishment in *Zhengao* 真誥:

In the world there are evil and powerful devils of the lower earth. Many of them turn themselves into women in order to tempt and test people.<sup>220</sup>

世有下土，惡強之鬼，多作婦女，以惑試人。”

One of the important motifs in the tales of Daoist literature is how transcendent masters observed and tested their pupils to select “teachable” religious disciples. Different kinds of trials were set up to test Taoist pupils' sincerity and determination. It was only after the pupils passed all the trials that they were capable of attaining the Way of transcendence. Beautiful woman was one of these incredible trials. In the “Account of the Perfected Ma Mingsheng” (“Ma Mingsheng zhenren zhuan” 馬明生真人傳), a beautiful woman was arranged on Ma's bed to seduce him, but “[Ma's] mind was determined and his ambition was calm. He absolutely had not wicked thoughts” 心堅志靜，固無邪念. The Daoist account intends to demonstrate how to successfully resist sexual temptations and prove sincerity and truthfulness towards Taoist belief in a proper way.<sup>221</sup> Besides the

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<sup>220</sup> Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), *Zhen'gao*, 5.13b, in *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要, compiled by Peng Wenqin 彭文勤 and collated by He Longxiang 賀龍驤 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1995). See the translation in Stephen Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion* (New York: University of New York Press, 1998), 85.

<sup>221</sup> See Ma's account in *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤, 12.108a-112b, collected in *Daozang jiyao*.

tempting women sent from Daoist masters, demonic trials are also widely described in Taoist literature.<sup>222</sup> Various demons and devils disguised themselves as women, ancestors or deities and employed various clever tactics to test Daoist adepts. For instance, according to *Yuqing yinshu* 玉清隱書, Northern Monarch Great Demon King 北帝大魔王 and his demonic throngs lived on Mount Luofeng 羅酆.<sup>223</sup> The Great Demon King constantly fail adepts with his tactics in order to prevent them from becoming immortals.<sup>224</sup>

The tale introduces a Daoist priest as “the person who knew magic methods and had been a friend with Huang for a long time,” which indicates that Wang Huang had long-term connections with Daoism and harbored admiration for Daoist Masters. Moreover, the delusive devil that Wang Huang encountered resembled a tempting test of belief for Daoist adepts who were seeking transcendence. What leads readers to ponder is that unlike Daoist adepts who were filled with determination and followed their Masters’ teaching to defeat a variety of demonic trials, this young man failed the life-and-death test and was entirely deceived by the devil with her seductive beauty and false affection. The above analysis evinces that the motif of demonic trial in Daoist literature has been borrowed and developed by Niu Sengru to create such an admonitory story. As a result, Niu seems to use this tale to alert people of delusive women who are transformations of demons

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<sup>222</sup> Please see the discussion on demonic trials in “Evils in the Worldly Environment,” Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion*, 84-92.

<sup>223</sup> Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion*, 89.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

However, quite a few clues in “Wang Huang” suggest that a more significant purpose is hidden behind this seemingly Daoist story. One of these curial clues lies in the end of the tale. If a Daoist adept fails demonic trials, he cannot become a Perfected Man with the heavenly transcendent status, but he can still become an earthbound transcendent (*xianren* 仙人).<sup>225</sup> For instance, after Liu Fenglin 劉奉林 was defeated by wicked creatures who were disguised devils when he attempted to concoct a divine elixir three times, he was not able to ascend to Heaven, but he lived over one thousand years on the earth.<sup>226</sup> Wang Huang’s consequence is much more horrendous and devastating in Niu’s story. Not only was his flesh body in the mortal world destroyed in an extremely violent way, but his soul also had to suffer eternal humiliation and torture in the after life world. Consequently, a serious question is raised here: Why does Niu Sengru arrange such an incredibly terrifying punishment for a young official who did not commit any monstrous crimes and even had a respectable Daoist friend? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to emancipate readers from these metaphoric codes and reexamine the tale in its social-historical context.

## 2.2 The Noble Man Whose Backbone Was Snapped

In the story, the protagonist Wang Huang is described as a wealthy young official and a descendant of a northern aristocratic clan, the Wang family of Taiyuan 太原. He was

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<sup>225</sup> Eskildsen, *Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion*, 82.

<sup>226</sup> See Liu Fenglin’s story in *Zhengao*, 5.9b.

not the only victim who was bewitched by the deceitful devil. When he encountered the devil on his way home, her fake identity was a widow and her deceased husband also came from an eminent aristocratic clan, the Pei 裴 family of Hedong 河東<sup>227</sup>:

She married Pei Zhi when she was fifteen. In less than two years, Mr. Pei then traveled to Luo and did not return. The young lady was alarmed by this, so she came to Luo together with two of us, but Pei had already passed away [when we arrived here].

小娘子秦人，既笄適河東裴直，未二年，裴郎乃遊洛不復，小娘子訝焉，與某輩二人，偕來到洛，則裴已卒矣。

Therefore, the preys who fell into the ferocious devil's trap had some similar characteristics: They both were wealthy young men of elite families and marrying a beautiful wife was an irresistible temptation for them. If the metaphoric concept of “pursuing a beautiful wife through marrying a disguised devil” is decoded as “pursuing political power and high official positions through attaching himself to influential eunuchs,” and if the two fictional characters are connected with real historical figures, an entirely new interpretation on the tale which is imbued with delusion and terror will be revealed.

Many pieces of evidence reveal that similar to Dou Huanzhen, two high officials named Huangfu Bo 皇甫鏞 (?-820) and Pei Jun 裴均 (750-811) had notorious reputation of discarding moral integrity and selling themselves to eunuchs in return for self-

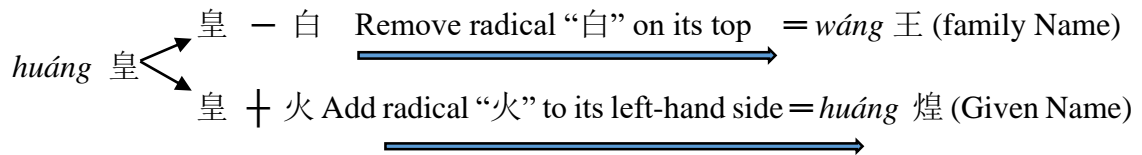
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<sup>227</sup> For detailed information on the aristocratic clans in the Tang, please refer to Denis Twitchett, “The composition of the T'ang ruling class: New evidence from Tunhuang,” in Denis Twitchett and Arthur F. Wright, eds., *Respective on the T'ang* (New York: Yale University Press, 1973), 47-86.

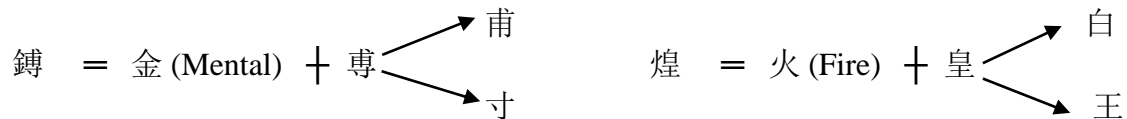
advancements. In order to allude to these two dishonorable colleagues in the tale, Niu Sengru adopts character rhetoric to tactfully hint at their names.<sup>228</sup>

A. 皇甫鏞 and 王煌:

1. The first character of Huangfu Bo's family name is *huáng* 皇, so Niu removes the radical *bái* 白 on its top and turns it to be the character *wáng* 王 which is the family name of the protagonist. He then adds radical *huǒ* 火 to its left-hand side and turns it to be the character *huáng* 煌 which is the given name of the protagonist.



2. Both given names 鏞 and 煌 are pictophonetic characters which are composed of three portions, and their semantic radicals, *jīn* 金 (metal) and *huǒ* 火 (fire), respectively signify two of the "Five phrases" (*wuxing* 五行).



3. Both surnames 甫 and 王 are included in the given names 鏞 and 煌 respectively.

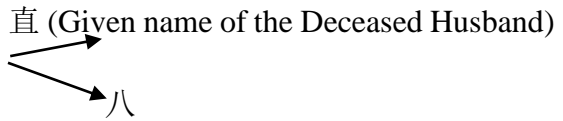
$$\text{甫 (family name)} + \text{金} + \text{寸} = \text{鏞 (Given Name)}$$

$$\text{王 (family name)} + \text{火} + \text{白} = \text{煌 (Given Name)}$$

B. 裴均 and 裴直:

<sup>228</sup> The major means of this unique Chinese rhetoric include character-form rhetoric, character-sound rhetoric and character-meaning rhetoric. One of the important work on the rhetoric is Cao Shizhu 曹石珠. *Hanzi xiuci yanjiu* 漢字修辭研究. Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2006.

1. The given name of Pei Jun’s father is Zhen 稹, so Niu Sengru uses the upper part of this character’s right side as the given name of the deceased husband in the tale to insinuate Pei Jun:

稹 (Given name of Pei Jun’s Father) = 禾 + 真 

2. Because both given names *jūn* 均 and *zhí* 直 have the meaning of “fair” (*gongping* 公平), it is a more discernable way to associate the fictional figure Pei Zhi with the historical figure Pei Jun.

Historical records also disclose that both Pei Jun and Huangfu Bo came from aristocratic families, but it was through depending on eunuchs that both of them climbed to the position of prime minister. For instance, the anecdote recorded in the *Xin Tang shu* demonstrates the intimate relationship between Pei Jun and his “adoptive father” Dou Wenchang 竇文場 (fl. 783-798), the influential eunuch during Dezong’s reign:

In the earlier time, both [Pei] Jun and Cui Taisu served the eunuch Dou Wenchang. Taisu had even visited Wenchang in the morning. He entered his bedroom directly and thought that Dou treated him very handsomely. But when he gently observed the person in the bed, [he found out that] it was Jun who frequently stretched himself there.<sup>229</sup>

初，均與崔太素俱事中人竇文場，太素嘗晨省文場，入臥內，自謂待己至厚，徐觀後榻有頻伸者，乃均也。

<sup>229</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 108.4091-4092.

In the third year of Yuanhe (808), Pei Jun grabbed the position of the prime minister with Dou's support. He was viewed by the history as an unscrupulous briber and climber: "[Pei Jun] used money to associate with the people who were in power or favoured by the emperor to be generals and prime minister for over ten years in total. He had been unscrupulous without moral standards" 以財交權倖，任將相凡十餘年，荒縱無法度。<sup>230</sup> The powerful eunuch to whom Huangfu Bo attached was Tutu Chengcui 吐突承瓘 (?-820): "The [emperor's] favour for the Palace Commandant-protector Tutu Chengcui was incomparable, so Bo bribed him handsomely to earn his favour, which is why he could reach the position of prime minister" 中尉吐突承瓘恩寵莫二，鑄厚賂結其歡心，故及相位<sup>231</sup>; "Bo and Cheng Yi (?-816) understood the emperor's intention, so they presented him tributes of surplus fortune several times, privately assisted him with what he desired, and bribed Tutu Chengcui as their secret supporter. As a result, the emperor prevailed over all the dissenting views and decided to appoint them [as prime ministers]" 鑄與程异知帝意，故數貢羨財，陰佐所欲，又賂吐突承瓘為奧援，故帝排眾論，決任之。<sup>232</sup>

Besides personal names, both place name and date are also elaborately selected by Niu Sengru in his narrative story to hint at the above two historical figures. For example, Niu claimed that the third year of Yuanhe (808) was the time when the story happened. In fact, it was in this year and ten years later, that is, the thirteenth year of Yuanhe (818), that Pei Jun and Huangfu Bo respectively became the Prime Minister with the support of

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<sup>230</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 108.4091-4092.

<sup>231</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 135.3471.

<sup>232</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 167.5113.

eunuchs. As to place name, when Wang Huang introduced himself to the devil, he mentioned that he resided in Goushi 緱氏 Manor<sup>233</sup>. On the surface, the place name is an allusion of a Daoist transcendent. According to the notable Daoist hagiography *Lie xian zhuan* 列仙傳, the Daoist transcendent Wang Ziqiao 王子喬 achieved immortality and ascended to Heaven at the Goushi Mount.<sup>234</sup> Li Bai 李白 (701-762) in his poem “Feng sheng pian” 鳳笙篇 even states that “the place for visiting Taoists should be Guoshi Mount” 訪道應尋緱氏山.<sup>235</sup> Thus, the Wang family of Taiyuan often claimed Wang Ziqiao as their legendary ancestor,<sup>236</sup> which perfectly echoed the protagonist Wang Huang’s family origin. On a deeper level, Niu Sengru offers the place name and its legend as an historical insinuation which is related to another infamous crime of Huangfu Bo. In order to cater to Xianzong’s desire for immortality, he recommended Liu Bi 柳泌 to the emperor and deluded him under the cloak of making elixir at Tiantai 天台 Mount. His crime of deception directly resulted in Xianzong’s death:

Liu Bi’s original name was Yang Renli. He practiced medical skills at his youth and most of his words were absurd and unreasonable. Li Daogu was treacherous and deceitful. He secretly conspired with Bi to plan for self-

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<sup>233</sup> Located at the south of modern Yanshi 偃師 city in Henan province. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 5:44-45.

<sup>234</sup> See Wang Ziqiao’s story in *Lie xian zhuan jiao jian* 列仙傳校箋, collated and annotated by Wang Shumin 王叔岷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 65-68.

<sup>235</sup> Li Bai, *Li Taibai quanji* 李太白全集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 283.

<sup>236</sup> See detailed explanation on this opinion in Wai Daifu 魏代富, “Taizi Jin yu Wang Ziqiao de ronghe: jianlun ‘Taixia Wangshi chu Taiyuan’ de xingcheng” 太子晉与王子喬的融合——兼論“天下王氏出太原”的形成, *Gansu kexue* 甘肅社會科學 3 (2013): 81-85.



advancement. They explained their plan to Huangfu Bo. As a result, they were summoned to the imperial place. Bi himself claimed that he could obtain numinous drugs...After Xianzong took Bi's drugs, he became increasingly anxious and fretful with capricious moods. Eunuchs were fearful of being executed without any guilt, so they committed regicide.<sup>237</sup>

柳泌本曰楊仁力，少習醫術，言多誕妄。李道古奸回巧宦，與泌密謀求進，言之於皇甫鏞，因徵入禁中。自云能致靈藥……憲宗服泌藥，日益煩躁，喜怒不常，內官懼非罪見戮，遂為弒逆。

Therefore, a noticeable irony is created between the legendary transcendent in Daoist literature and Huangfu Bo's manipulation of Xiaozong's longing for mortality in the official Tang history by means of the place name Goushi Mount.

More importantly, Niu Sengru employs the metaphors of a young official's pursuit of beautiful woman and his marriage with a devil to further insinuate the filthy trades between Huangfu Bo and eunuchs. Thus, when Wang Huang attempted to persuade the devil to marry him, what he emphasized was that both his official status and fortune were good enough to satisfy all her needs, which was also confirmed by the two maids of the devil.

Huang said with pleasure, "I not only have an official appointment, I am also young and without a wife. My manor is located at Goushi, and I am not too poor. Now I would like to exhaust all my trivial sincerity [for her]. Please try to explain it for me."

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<sup>237</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 150.3742-3743.

煌喜曰：“煌有正官，少而無婦。莊居緱氏，亦不甚貧，今願領微誠，試為咨達。”

Fortunately, this young man has an official position, and he is young and wifeless; he has a lot of luggage, so he is not pressed to provide food and clothing.

今此郎幸有正官而少年，行李且贍，固不急於衣食。

A more acute irony is created by the depictions on how proper the coupling and wedding were and how deep the young official and the devil were in love with each other before the devil's camouflage was stripped off:

Huang immediately ordered people to arrange everything and after they had eaten facing each other, they went into the bedroom to complete the ritual of the wedding ceremony. From that time on, the affection of love between them became deeper and more intimate.

煌遽令陳設，對食畢，入成結褵之禮，自是相歡之意，日愈殷勤。

The irony symbolized that the officials like Huangfu Bo and Pei Jun were entirely obsessed with their increasing political power seized through bribery and their intimate relationship with eunuchs, and disregarded the tremendous political risk and moral denouncement caused by such scandalous associations.

In the reality, Huangfu Bo and Pei Jun's associations with eunuchs were disdained and condemned by many righteous officials. They were considered as the renegades of chancellery who forfeited the moral integrity of the Tang official scholars, discarded their political reputation, bribed and associated with their political enemies, and became eunuchs' accomplices. When Dezong intended to appoint Pei Jun as the prime minister, Imperial

Censor Li Yue 李約 stopped him by stating that since Pei was Dou Wenchang's adopted son, the appointment would "contaminate the position of prime minister" 汙台輔.<sup>238</sup> After Pei Jun eventually climbed to the position, the Vice Censor-in-chief Lu Tan 盧坦 (748-817) bravely reproached Pei Jun for being immoral and unfaithful:

Jun always attached himself to eunuchs to obtain noble status and prominent positions. When he became the Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs, he was self-conceited and arrogant. Once, when he entered the court, he exceeded his place and stood there. Vice Censor-in-chief Lu Tan bowed to him and asked him to draw back, but Jun did not follow. Tan said, "In the past when Yao Nanzhong was the Vice Director, his place was here." Jun said, "Who is Nanzhong?" Tan said, "He is the person who upholds uprightness and does not associate with the people who are in power or favoured by the emperor."<sup>239</sup>

均素附宦官得貴顯，為僕射，自矜大。嘗入朝，踰位而立；中丞盧坦揖而退之，均不從。坦曰：“昔姚南仲為僕射，位在此。”均曰：“南仲何人？”坦曰：“是守正不交權倖者。”

Moreover, when Baiju Yi was the Left Reminder in the Chancellery, he had also impeached Pei Jun for associating with eunuchs and exploiting people many times.<sup>240</sup> Wei

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<sup>238</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 108.4091.

<sup>239</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 237.7650.

<sup>240</sup> See the opinion and discussion in Jian Changchun 蹇長春, *Bai Juyi lungao* 白居易論稿 (Lanzhou: Duhuang wenyi chubanshe, 2005), 161-162.

Guanzhi 韋貫之 (760-821) had been the Prime Minister in 814 and he was well-known for upholding his moral integrity and reputation. When Pei Jun died and his son requested Wei to write an epitaph for Jun at the cost of ten thousands bolts of fine silk, Wei's rejection was extremely resolute: "I would rather be starved to death. How could I do this!" 吾寧餓死，豈能為是哉！<sup>241</sup> Huangfu Bo's appointment of prime minister also caused profound impression: "All the people who were in or out of government were astonished, and even the peddlers on the streets also sneered at the appointment" 朝野駭愕，至於市井負販者亦嗤之。<sup>242</sup> The Prime Minister Pei Du 裴度 even risked death by appealing to Xianzong, and claiming that "all the people in the world harbor an intense hatred for Huangfu Bo which has penetrated their bones" 如皇甫鎛，天下之人，怨入骨髓，and "all the gentlemen want to sweep sorrowfully" 凡百君子，皆欲慟哭。<sup>243</sup> Huangfu Bo himself was condemned as "being a bark beetle of the nation" 為國蠹蟲。<sup>244</sup>

Unlike his official colleagues who reprimanded the two infamous betrayers of the nation and the chancellery, Niu Sengru did not criticize them publicly. Instead, he employs his tale "Wang Huang" to curse them and to express his extreme abhorrence towards their depravity. Not only does he compares them to the young men who married a crafty devil, he also designs a striking penalty for both their bodies and souls at the end of the story:

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<sup>241</sup> See Wei Guanzhi's biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 169.5152-5155.

<sup>242</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 135.3740.

<sup>243</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 135.3740.

<sup>244</sup> Bark beetles are common pests of trees and can cause tree mortality. This metaphor suggests what serious damage that Huangfu Bo had caused to the nation. *Ibid.*

Wang Huang's backbone was snapped by the devil with a single stamp of her feet. Because he died in a prone position rather than in a sitting position, his soul will replace the devil to be tortured under the foot of his master eternally:

If Huang had died in a sitting position, he could have also asked for a replacement after he fulfills the three thousand years of service. But, now he had died in a prone position and he will never be able to find anyone to replace him.

煌得坐死，滿三千年亦當求替。今既臥亡，終天不復得替矣。

He walked forward to look at Huang's body and found out that his backbone was snapped.

前睹煌屍，脊骨已折。

The metaphor of “backbone” (*jigu* 脊骨) was often associated with the moral integrity of Chinese official scholars. Confucius uses the image of “evergreen pine and cypress” to promote upholding a gentlemen's righteousness.<sup>245</sup> Mencius recommends nourishing “vast and overflowing valor” (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣) as the way of pursuing rightness.<sup>246</sup> An important moral principle for a great man (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫) proclaimed by him is that he should be able to “stand in the correct position of the world” 立天下之正位, and “wealth and noble status cannot delude him, poverty and humble status cannot swerve him, and power and force cannot bend him” 富貴不能淫，貧賤不能移，威武不

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<sup>245</sup> “It's only till cold winter that the pine and cypress are known to be the last to lose their leaves.” 歲寒，然後知松柏之後彫也。 *Lunyu zhushu* 論語註疏, 9.28, in *Congkan songben shishanjin zhushu*.

<sup>246</sup> *Mencius*, 2b.2.

能屈。<sup>247</sup> The moral norm of “upholding uprightness” (*shou zheng* 守正) highly respected by Li Yue and other Tang righteous officials is consistent with Confucius and Mencius’ ethical principles. In the later generations, the metaphor of *jigu* was more frequently used to further elaborate these principles. For instance, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) often uses “making your backbone strong and straight” (*yingzhe jiliang gu* 硬著脊梁骨) to encourage his disciples to cultivate their bravery, integrity and fidelity in their pursuit of “the vast and overflowing valor”:

When [Huang] Daofu bid farewell and returned to serve [his parents], the Master [Zhu] said, “Making your backbone even stronger and straighter!”<sup>248</sup>

道夫辭拜還侍，先生曰：“更硬著脊梁骨！”

The Master [Zhu] quoted Master Cheng’s phrase and said, “The only way of being able to carry heavy responsibility is to make your backbone stronger and straighter!”<sup>249</sup>

先生舉程先生語曰：“重擔子，須是硬著脊梁骨，方擔荷得去！”

You can achieve [the valor] only if you consolidate your spirit and pursue it through making your backbone strong and straight.<sup>250</sup>

要須整頓精神，硬著脊骨與他做將去，始得。

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<sup>247</sup> Mencius, 6b.7.

<sup>248</sup> Li Jingde 黎靖德 (13<sup>th</sup> century), comp., *Zhuzi yulei* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 115.2776.

<sup>249</sup> Li Jingde, *Zhuzi yulei*, 35.930.

<sup>250</sup> Li Jingde, *Zhuzi yulei*, 52.1252.

The identities of Wang Huang in the tale include “a person who has an official appointment” (*zhangguan* 正官), “gentleman” (*junzi* 君子) and “husband” (*zhangfu* 丈夫) in terms of Wang Huang himself and the devil. If they are considered from the perspective of the ethics and morality of Confucianism, these identities can also be respectively interpreted as “righteous official”, “the morally superior man” and “manly man.” Ironically, after the Daoist Priest revealed that in fact, the real identity of the creature that Wang Huang aspired to and married was a hideous devil, all the above roles were dissolved as well. When Wang Huang threw a tally towards the devil, she immediately exposed her original form. Accordingly, Wang Huang’s delusion of the seemingly romantic relationship with the devil was entirely disillusioned, which indicates the coming destruction of the renegades and the end of their political career. The irony of the tale reaches its peak when Wang Hang “died in a prone position,” “his backbone was snapped,” and his soul without salvation was stepped under the foot of a frightening deity. All the details of this metaphoric ending symbolize that the protagonist had entirely lost his moral integrity and spirit of righteousness, yet without any remorse, and so was beyond redemption. Like the disguised devil, once his mask was stripped off, the image of Wang Huang also experienced a demonic “metamorphosis,” changing into the opposite of his previous portrait: a treacherous subject (*jianchen* 奸臣), a petty man (*xiaoren* 小人) who was morally inferior, and a renegade (*bianjie zhe* 變節者) who betrayed his official colleagues and sided with their political enemies.

### 2.3 The Devil under the Right Foot of the North Celestial King

The image of Wang Hang's reversal in the tale is closely interrelated with the devil's dramatic changes in identities, physical appearances and personal characters. The devil's fabricated life experience could easily arouse people's sympathy, because this experience was composed of multiple fake identities, including abandoned woman, sorrowful widow, forlorn orphan, and young beautiful lady. Wang Huang appeared as a noble man, but his two brief reactions, "clandestinely peeked at her" (*weichan* 微覘) and "being pleasant" (*xi* 喜), betrayed that he was only concerned about the lady's beauty and availability. Once Wang Huang fell into the trap and started pursuing her, pretending to be extremely chaste, virtuous and sincere was the scheme employed by the lady to increase his desire. Thus, the storyline is characterized by a significant amount of descriptions on her seeming respect for rites, graceful bearings and eternal love for her deceased husband and the protagonist:

They lodged in an Inn at Pengpo<sup>251</sup> together, where Huang arranged a separate bed as ritual dictated. Whenever the lady heard Huang speak, she would have to weep and sob, so Huang felt it was necessary to treat her with courtesy.

偕宿彭婆店，禮設別榻。每聞煌言，必嗚咽而泣，不敢不以禮待之。”

Even if my body is destroyed to dust and my bones are teared to powder, I still cannot to repay Pei's love.

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<sup>251</sup> Located at the Northeast of modern Yichuan 伊川 city in Henan province. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 4:44-45.



碎身粉骨，無謝裴恩。

Huang observed that her appearance and demeanor were graceful, her words and speech were elegant, and her needlework was so exquisite that it was unsurpassed at that time. The sincerity of her promise could be broken only by death.

觀其容容婉婉，言詞閑雅，工容之妙，卓絕當時。信誓之誠，惟死而已。

The purpose of these descriptions is to lead readers to believe the beautiful lady's chastity and loyalty towards her husbands and to foreshadow the climax of the story by virtue of a flagrant contrast. After the Daoist priest exposed the lady's true identities, not only did her body metamorphose into an evil spirit with a gruesome face, but her natural character also converted to be violent and vicious. The final target of her conspiracy turned out to be the protagonist's soul. The devil's true identities are in marked contrast to her fake ones. The Daoist Priest used different phrases to describe them, such as “a devil of a might deity” (*weishen zhi gui* 威神之鬼), “the Naichong devil under the right foot of the North Celestial King” (Bei Tianwang *youjiao xia* Naichong 北天王右腳下耐重), and “an evil spirit from Zhitian” (*Zhitian yao* 芝田妖). In addition, a thick layer of satire was further added when the Daoist priest used “your virtuous beloved” (*xianchong* 賢寵) to address the devil.

Considering the allegorical meaning behind the image of Wang Huang and Pei Zhi, it is not surprising to discover that all these dramatic changes and identities of the devil subtly imply the influential eunuchs in the author's time in virtue of puns and metaphors.

One of the examples is that some scholars have already discovered that Bei Tianwang refer to the Northern Vaisravasa Celestial King 北方毗沙门天王.<sup>252</sup> However, the examination of the tale's historical and sociopolitical context support us to further decode it. At the northeast corner of Daming Palace, there was a Buddhist temple of the deity titled “the State-protector, Celestial King” (Huguo Tianwang 護國天王) and it was located right to the north of the Left Shen'ce Army's station.<sup>253</sup> The record in *Ru Tang qiufa xunli xingji* 入唐求法尋禮行記 confirms that this temple was charged by the Palace Commandant-protector who was also the Commissioner of Merits and Virtue (Gongde shi 功德使).<sup>254</sup> Thus, if the symbolic meaning of the Northern Celestial King is considered, readers will notice the connection between a mighty deity and those unscrupulous eunuch cliques who were also called “protectors” of the imperial palace in the Northern Offices. In the tale “Cen Shun,” Niu Sengru employs “Beishan zei” 北山賊 to show contempt for eunuch cliques. In the tale “Wang Huang,” “Bei Tianwang” 北天王 is another well-crafted pun adopted by Niu Sengru to insinuate the political enemies of Chancellery. Moreover, because Shen'ce Army was led by both Right and Left Palace Commandant-protectors, even the word “right foot” can also be deemed as a tactful pun of eunuchs' official positions. As to the phrase “weishen zhi gui”, both *wei* 威 and *shen* 神 suggest the atrocious armies

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<sup>252</sup> See the details on this finding in Shen Ruiwen 沈睿文, “Tang zhenmu Tianwang yong yu pishamen xinyang tuilun ” 唐镇墓天王俑与毗沙门信仰推论, in Vol. 5, Fan Yingfeng 樊英峰, *Qianling wenhua yanjiu* 乾陵文化研究 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2005), 138-152.

<sup>253</sup> See the entry on Huguo tianwang Temple in Du Wenyu 杜文玉, *Daming gong yanjiu* 大明宫研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexuechubanshe, 2005), 209-210.

<sup>254</sup> Du, *Daming gong yanjiu*, 209-210.

controlled by eunuchs such as Tianwei 天威, Shenwei 神威, Shen'ce 神策 and Shenwu 神武. In this regard, the phrase can be understood as a more direct disdain of eunuchs and their armies. The sarcastic address of “*xianchong*” also matches the author’s satire for the powerful eunuchs who were viewed as “virtuous servants” by the emperor. Zhitian (Lichen Fields) is an allusion coming from Cao Zhi’s 曹植 (192-232) “Luoshen fu” 洛神赋 (Rhapsody of the Luo River nymph), which is associated with the legend of the beautiful and affectionate Goddess of the River Luo.<sup>255</sup> Similar to the address “*xianchong*”, “Zhitian yao” is also an acid irony towards eunuchs, which suggests their villainous face hidden behind their fake identities and appearances.

Because of the disreputable historical connection between Huangfu Bo and Tutu Chengcui, we can even discover in the tale some clues alluding to the eunuch tyrant during Xianzong’s reign. The analogies between the devil’s fabricated life experience and the historical biography of Tutu Chengcui are noticeable. The devil in the tale came on the stage as a widow in white (*baiyi ji* 白衣姬), a native of Qin 秦, a woman who “was orphaned without family when she was young” (*shaogu wujia* 少孤無家), and a graceful lady who was chaste, virtuous and faithful. Based on the *Xin Tang shu*, Tutu Chengcui was one of the castrated boys who were taken away from their family at young age and presented to the imperial court as tributes by local governments:

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<sup>255</sup> “So I halted my rig in the spikenard marshes, grazed my team of four at Lichen Fields” 尔迺税驾乎蘅皋，秣驷乎芝田。 See the translation in Burton Watson, ed. and trans., *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 117.

At that time, all the prefectures presented castrated boys called “*sibai*” as tributes every year. The number of the castrated boys who came from Min<sup>256</sup> and Ling[nan]<sup>257</sup> was the most. Later, they all assumed certain offices. At that time, Min was considered as the area where many eunuchs gathered.<sup>258</sup>

是時，諸道歲進鬮兒，號‘私白’，閩、嶺最多，後皆任事，當時謂閩為中官區藪。

Besides ‘*sibai*,’ the terms like “*baishen*” 白身, “*sibaishen*” 私白身 were also used to designate eunuchs.<sup>259</sup> Like Gao Lishi, the Chief eunuch of the Xuanzong reign, Tutu Chengcui was also a native of Min.<sup>260</sup> Both Min and Lingnan were viewed as “the areas of barbarians” (*manyi zhi di* 蠻夷之地) and it was not until the Qin dynasty that these areas were included as part of China.<sup>261</sup> Plundering and selling children as slaves prevailed in the areas of Minzhong commandery during the Tang dynasty.<sup>262</sup> Although the central

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<sup>256</sup> Minzhong 閩中 commandery was established in the Qin dynasty, mainly including modern Fujian province and the areas of Wenzhou 溫州, Taizhou 臺州 and Chuzhou 處州 of Zhejiang province. Li Zubi 李祖弼, “Minzhong jiangyu kao” 閩中疆域考, *Xiamen daxue xuebao* 廈門大學學報 1981, no. 1: 63.

<sup>257</sup> Refers to Lingnan 嶺南, which included all the modern southern area of Nanling 南嶺. Ma Lei 馬雷, “‘Nanling’, ‘Wuling’ kao” “南嶺”、“五嶺”考, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 4.120 (2015): 350.

<sup>258</sup> See Tutu Chengcui’s biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 172.5869-5870.

<sup>259</sup> Cheng Dengwu 陳登武 and Gao Mingshi 高明士, *Cong renjianshi dao youmingjie: Tangdai de fazhi, shehui yu guojia* 從人間世到幽冥界: 唐代的法制, 社會與國家 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2007), 122.

<sup>260</sup> “At the beginning of Shengli period (698-700), the Bandit-suppression Commissioner Li Qianli of Lingnan presented two castrated boys. One was named Jingang, the other one was named Lishi” 聖曆初, 嶺南討擊使李千里上二鬮兒, 曰金剛, 曰力士. *Xin Tang shu*, 207.5858.

<sup>261</sup> Ma, “*Zhonghua wenshi luncong*,” 350.

<sup>262</sup> Du Wenyu 杜文玉, “Tangdai huangguan de jiguan fenbu” 唐代宦官的籍貫分佈, *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢, no. 1 (1998): 169.

government issued imperial edicts to prohibit the crimes which caused “breaking up of parents and children” 骨肉離析,<sup>263</sup> it was difficult to eliminate those crimes. The poem “Jian” 圜 by Guo Kuang 顧況 (passed Presented-scholar Examination in 757) is the description of the tragic circumstance:

A boy was born in the place of Min. The officials of Min captured him, and then castrated him. Through making him a slave, they obtained money that filled their house...The boy bid farewell to his father. His heart was broken and his blood was shedding. Being separated by Heaven and being cut off by the earth, even when he reaches the Yellow Spring<sup>264</sup>, he will not be able to appear in front of his father.<sup>265</sup>

圜生閩方，閩吏得之，乃絕其陽。為臧為獲，致金滿屋。……圜別郎罷，心摧血下。隔天絕地，及至黃泉，不得在郎罷前。

Meanwhile, a big irony lies in that Tutu Chengcui’s courtesy name is Renzhen 仁真 which literally means “being benevolent and virtuous”, although he was infamous for his abuse of power and political corruptions in the history. Therefore, neither the devil’s white clothing nor her wretched background was randomly chosen by the author to create the tale. Instead, all the similarities between the image of the deceptive devil and Tutu Chengcui’s biographical information create a subtle innuendo, which reminds readers of

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<sup>263</sup> See such an edict issued in the eighth year of Yuanhe (813) in *Jiu Tang shu*, 15.447.

<sup>264</sup> Ancient Chinese believe that Yellow Spring is the underworld where the dead people live.

<sup>265</sup> See this poem in *Gu Kuang shiji* 顧況詩集, collated and compiled by Zhang Changping 趙昌平 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1983), 7.

the eunuch tyrant's miserable origin and later dramatic changes during his tumultuous political downfall.

#### 2.4 The Daoist Friend Encountered at the Southern Market

The Daoist Priest Ren Xuanyan 任玄言 serves as an exorcist, admonisher and commenter in the story. It was him that penetrated the devil's disguise and scheme, alerted the incoming dangers, conducted a Daoist technique to protect the protagonist, and explained the protagonist's terrifying consequences. Furthermore, he plays the crucial roles in triggering the devil's unescapable metamorphosis and reversal. Hence, he was deeply resented by the vicious devil. When she was about to kill Wang Huang, although herself was the real evil one, she complained, "How could you listen to that evil Taoist priest's words and make me reveal my true form!" 奈何取妖道士言，令吾形見！

If we decode the marriage between Wang Huang and the devil as the association between dishonorable officials and eunuch cliques, the image of the Daoist priest can be interpreted as a symbol of the Tang officials who strived for preserving moral integrity and stopping the renegades of scholar officials colluding with eunuchs for self-interests. Consequently, the Southern Market (*nanshi* 南市) where the protagonist encountered him symbolizes the Southern Commands of chancellery. The last name of the Daoist Priest Rén 任 [ŋzǐěŋ] is a homophonic pun of [ŋzǐěŋ] *rén* 人 (human), which presents an acute contrast to the devil's non-human identities of *gui* 鬼 (devil) and *yao* 妖 (evil spirit). This is another example of how Niu Sengru implicitly expresses his denunciation and scorn

towards eunuch cliques. Ren Xuanyan's long-time friendship with the protagonist stands for the past connections between the renegades and their colleges, friends, or family members. All the alerts and comments for the bewitched protagonist signify the unavoidable destruction that resulted from political betrayals and collusions:

If you cut the connection with her now you can still save your life. After another ten or twenty days, the path of your life will be terminated. Even I do not have the capabilities to save you.

令能速絕，尚可生全。更一二十日，生路即斷矣，玄言亦無能奉救也。

Your appearance shows that you will absolutely die. You did not believe my words, so you wound up like this.

郎之容色決死矣，不信吾言，乃至如是。

In the real history, Huangfu Bo's younger brother Huangfu Yong 皇甫鏞 (788-863) was a righteous official. Huangfu Yong attempted to persuade him to cut connections with eunuchs, but as the protagonist's response in the tale that "Huang became unhappy" 惶心不悅, Huangfu Bo also "became unhappy" and ignored his brother's urgent warnings:

When Bo was the Prime Minister, [Yong] was the Vice Governor of Henan. He observed that the arrogance of powerful eunuchs became increasingly prominent, so he often discussed it anxiously, but Bo became unhappy [because of it]... [Yong] was sparing of words with a severe countenance. Both his clothing and hat were magnificent. He disdained secular affairs. All the people that he associated with were celebrated scholars.

鑄為相時，[鏞] 任河南少尹，見權寵太盛，每極言之，鑄不悅，……

為人寡言正色，衣冠甚偉，不屑世務，所交皆知名士。

The history also demonstrated that after he rejected all the admonishments, Huangfu Bo's end was despicable and deplorable. In the fifteenth year of Yuanhe (820), because Tutu Chengcui supported Li Yun 李愔, the King of Li 澧 to be the crown prince, when Muzong ascended the throne, he “harbored the resentment that Chengcui did not assist him, so the emperor executed him” 銜承瓘不佑己，誅之。<sup>266</sup> Due to the close collusion with Tutu Chengcui, Huangfu Bo was also exiled to Yazhou 崖州<sup>267</sup> and died there in the same year.<sup>268</sup> Just as Wang Huang who died of his marriage with a devil in the tale, Huangfu Bo in the history died of his association with the influential eunuch. Another important historical coincidence is that on the same date, the *yichou* 己丑 day of the twelfth month, Niu Sengru was prompted by Muzong as the Censor-in-Chief, the local government of Lingnan also reported to the court that Huangfu Bo died.<sup>269</sup> After three years, Niu Sengru became the Prime Minister, the highest position of chancellery. Standing as a victor on the political stage, he intended to use the pre-modern horror story “Wang Huang” to warn his official colleagues and successors what catastrophic consequences they will face if they prostitute their soul to eunuch tyrants for the sake of snatching this highest position.

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<sup>266</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 184.4769.

<sup>267</sup> Located at the southeast of modern Qiongzhan 琼山 county, Hainan province. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, 5:32-33.

<sup>268</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 167.5114.

<sup>269</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 16.484.



### 3. “XUE WEI”: A STINGING SATIRE ON DISHONORABLE OFFICIALS AND THE TANG OFFICIALDOM

“Xue Wei” is generally categorized as a story of the *Xu Xuanguai lu* in terms of the *Taiping Guangji*.<sup>270</sup> It is also included in the *Yishi souqi* 逸史搜奇.<sup>271</sup> In the story, a county official named Xu Wei metamorphosed into a red carp of the East Lake in his dream. Later, he was caught by a fisherman, because when he felt hungry, he could not resist the temptation of fish bait. He kept calling for help, but none of his colleagues paid any attention. It was only when Xue Wei’s fish head was chopped off by a food service worker that he was awakened up from the nightmare.

Different opinions from the religious perspective have been presented concerning the theme of this tale. For instance, Cheng Guobin 程國斌 posits that this tale reflects the Buddhist concept of retribution and the purpose of the tale is to “encourage people to do good deeds and punish evil-doers” 勸善懲惡.<sup>272</sup> Scholars including Wang Meng’ou, Wang Pijiang 汪辟疆 and Shi Changyu 石昌渝, also think that this tale was influenced by the Buddhist belief of reincarnation, and promoting the Buddhist belief is the tale’s authorial intention.<sup>273</sup> Based on the image of the carefree red carp in this tale, Gao Chengxiao 高成

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<sup>270</sup> This story is recorded under the category of “ren hua shuizu” 人化水族 (humans transformed into aquatic animals) in *Taiping guangji*, 471.3881-3883.

<sup>271</sup> In the first *juan* of *geng* 庚 section, 汪云程 (ca. 1506-ca.1576), *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 edition.

<sup>272</sup> Cheng Guofu, *Tang Wudai xiaoshuo de wenhua chanshi* 唐五代小說的文化闡釋 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2002), 128.

<sup>273</sup> Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi* 唐人小說校釋 (Taibei: Zhongzheng shuju, 1985), vol. 2, 226; Wang Pijiang, *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 227;

效 conjectures that this tale is the reflection of the Daoist thought that “both subject and object are dissolved” 物我兩忘.<sup>274</sup> However, if we adopt the transdisciplinary approach which combines the study of literature and history to further probe into the possible thoughts and intent involved in this literary piece, it might be easier for us to feel the resonance of history and to achieve more meaningful readings.

### 3.1 The Metaphorical Meanings of *yufu*

The protagonist’s transformation from a human being into a fish is the most crucial scene of the story. The dramatic shapeshifting is highlighted by the term *yufu* 魚服 in the tale:

In just a bit, a person who was several feet long and had a fish head rode on a giant salamander with dozens of fish to lead him away. He preannounced the River God’s edict..... After [Xue Wei] heard what the person said, I looked at myself and found out that I had already been covered with fish scales.

未頃，有魚頭人長數尺，騎鮪來導，從數十魚。宣河伯詔曰.....聽而自顧，即已魚服矣。

I am an official who put on these fish scales for fun.

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Shi Changyu, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun* 中國小說源流論 (1995 reprint; Beijing: Sanliang shudian, 1994), 181.

<sup>274</sup> Gao Chengxiao, “‘Bianxingren’ de wenhua zheshi: ‘Jinlü ji’ yu ‘Xue Wei’ deng renhua dongwu xiaoshuo bijiao” “變形人”的文化哲思—“金驢記”與“薛偉”等人化動物小說比較, *Chongqing jiaotong daxue xuebao* 重慶交通大學學報 6.3 (2006): 83.

我是官人，戲而魚服。

This is also the main reason why the story is entitled “Yufu ji” 魚服記 (The record of putting on fish scales) in *Gujin shuohai* 古今說海 [Collections of Ancient and Modern Talks].<sup>275</sup> The investigation on the “Yufu zhi” 與服志 (Treatise on Chariots and Robes) during the Tang dynasty suggests an interesting factor: The metaphor of *yufu* 魚服 [ŋjō bīuk] is a literary and phonetic pun of *yufu* 與服 [jō bīuk] which records the cultural, historical and symbolic meanings of official attire system including *yufu* 魚符 [ŋjō bīu] (fish-shaped tally), *yufu* 魚袋 (fish-decorated pouch) and *zhangfu* 章服 (court robes). According to historical records, fish-shaped tallies are one of the official symbols of identification credentials of Tang bureaucrats and officials. Tang emperors bestowed bronze fish tallies to officials at the time of appointment. Only the officials who had the status of the fifth rank and above would receive a carry-on fish-shaped tally.<sup>276</sup> Carp (*liyu* 鯉魚) is the specific kind of fish which was chosen to be the auspicious omen of the Tang court and officialdom in the early Tang.<sup>277</sup> Besides fish-shaped tallies made by different

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<sup>275</sup> See “Shuoyuan” 說淵 (“Talks on deep pool”) Section, in Lu Ji 陸楫 (1515—1552), *Gujin shuohai* (Reprint of 1909; Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1989), 35.1-3.

<sup>276</sup> “In September, the first year of Wude reign of Gaozu (618), silver rabbit-shaped tallies were changed to be silver fish-shaped tally. In May, the second year of Yonghui reign of Gaozong (651), carry-on fish-shaped tallies were bestowed to the Commander Unequaled in Honor as well as both the civil and military officials in the court who had the status of the fourth or the fifth rank.” 高祖武德元年九月，改銀菟符為銀魚符。高宗永徽二年五月，開府儀同三司及京官文武職事四品、五品，並給隨身魚。See “Yufu zhi” in *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1954.

<sup>277</sup> “Bronze tiger-shaped tallies were used to dispatch armies in the Han. When it reached the early Tang, they became silver rabbit-shaped tallies, because rabbit was considered as an auspicious omen. Later, carp was used to be auspicious omen. Consequently, bronze fish-shaped tallies were made for officials to wear it.” 漢發兵用銅虎符。及唐初，為銀兔符，以兔子為符瑞故也。又以鯉魚為符瑞，遂為銅魚符以佩之。This text recorded in *Chao ye qian zai* 朝野僉載. See Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368.), *Shuo fu* 說郛 (Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu yinshuguan, 1927), 2.12a. Some scholars suggest that because *li* 鯉 is

kinds of materials, fish-decorated pouches made by different colors of thread were also used to strictly “distinguish official statuses” (*ming gui jian* 明貴賤) and to “respond to summons and commands” (*ying zhaoming* 應召命) during the Tang.<sup>278</sup> Starting from the ninth year of Kaiyuan 開元 (721), Tang officials were allowed to wear fish-decorated pouches even after leaving their posts. Afterwards, fish-decorated pouches were made and bestowed together with official robes in symbolic colors including scarlet, purple or vermilion to further represent their honorable statuses:

When it reached the ninth year of Kaiyuan period, Zhang Zhenjia (665-729) was the Secretariat Director. He presented a memorial to the emperor, which allowed all the officials who had resigned from their positions to wear fish-decorated pouches for a lifelong time as a kind of imperial honor. If officials left their posts according to convention, they were still allowed to wear it. Afterwards, when emperors bestowed official robes in scarlet or purple, fish-decorated pouches were also included according to ordinances, which were called formal court robes. Because of this, there were many officials

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the synonym of *li* 李, the surname of the Tang loyal family, carp was chosen to replace rabbit as the Tang’s symbolic animal. See this opinion in Wu Shanshan 吳珊珊 and Liu Lingqing 劉玲清, “Tang yufu kaolun” 唐魚符考論, *Heilongjiang shizhi* 黑龍江史志 19.332 (1994): 28.

<sup>278</sup> “Carry-on fish-shaped tallies were used to distinguish official status and to respond to summons and commands [from the emperor]..... Crown princes were summoned by jade tallies. After examining if both pieces of a tally matched each other, they would go to the palace. Other princes were summoned with gold tallies. Officials were summoned with bronze ones. Their names were written on it. If an official had two tallies, they would be put on his both sides. All the tallies were contained in fish-decorated pouches. The third-ranking officials and the above were decorated with golden-thread ones. The fifth-ranking officials and the above were decorated with silver-thread ones.” 隨身魚符者，以明貴賤，應召命，..... 皇太子以玉契召，勘合乃赴。親王以金，庶官以銅，皆題某位姓名。官有貳者加左右，皆盛以魚袋，三品以上飾以金，五品以上飾以銀。 *Xin Tang shu*, 24.525.

who wore fish-decorated pouches and dressed with court robes in vermillion or purple.”<sup>279</sup>

至開元九年，張嘉貞為中書令，奏諸致仕許終身佩魚，以為榮寵，以理去任，亦聽佩魚袋。自後恩制賜賞緋紫，例兼魚袋，謂之章服，因之佩魚袋、服朱紫者眾矣。

The above examination on the strictly defined official attire system which includes fish-shaped tallies, fish-decorated pouches and court robes helps us interpret the tale differently. The whole story turns out to be an allegory of Tang officialdom: Xue Wei's metamorphosis—putting on fish scales to transform into a fish—can be read as a literary metaphor of undergoing a complete life change and starting an official career.

In just a bit, a person who was several feet long and had a fish head rode on a giant salamander with dozens of fish to lead him away. He preannounced the River God's edict, "...Please comply with me and temporarily make a transformation to be covered with scales rather than immediately turn your body into a fish. For the time being, you can be a red carp in the East River..." After Xue Wei heard what the person said, he looked at himself and found out that he had already been covered with fish scales. Therefore, he set himself free to swim, reaching everywhere he wanted to go. He was always carefree and leisurely no matter if he were skimming the waves or diving to the depths. He leapt and jumped in many rivers and lakes.

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<sup>279</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1954.

未頃，有魚頭人長數尺，騎鯢來導，從數十魚。宣河伯詔曰：‘……暫從鱗化，非遽成身。可權充東潭赤鯉。……’聽而自顧，即已魚服矣。於是放身而遊，意往斯到，波上潭底，莫不從容。三江五湖，騰躍將遍。

In the above description, the images of both the river and the lake can be understood as the metaphor of “the sea of officialdom” (*huanhai* 宦海). The actions of “leaping and jumping” *tengyue* 騰躍 represent getting rapid promotion in the officialdom. In this sense, the fish-headed person (*yutou ren* 魚頭人), his giant salamander steed (*ni* 鯢), and the dozens of fish who followed him (*cong shu shi yu* 從數十魚) in the story are all elaborate puns to symbolize the Tang officials in different ranks. By means of using Chinese character rhetoric, *yutou ren* can also be understood as “a person who is the head of all fish”; words like *nifu* 鯢鮒 and *niqu* 鯢鯪 remind us that the other meaning of *ni* is “little fish” (*xiaoyu* 小魚); terms like *shicong* 侍從, *pucong* 僕從, *suicong* 隨從 indicate the inferior status of the other fish. If these metaphors and puns are used to describe officialdom, we might be able to respectively construe them as a senior official<sup>280</sup>, clerks and inferior officials. Moreover, the fish that Xue Wei transformed into is a “red and giant carp” (*chi li* 赤鯉; *ju li* 巨鯉), which implies that he became one of the high-ranking officials “who wore fish-decorated pouches and dressed with court robes in vermilion or purple.”

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<sup>280</sup> This figure can even be viewed as the Prime Minister (*zhaixiang* 宰相), since traditionally, this position is defined as “The head of all the officials” (*baiguan zhi zhang* 百官之長). For instance, *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 records that “The Prime Minister is the head of all the officials.” 相也者，百官之長也。 See Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (291 -235 B.C.E), *Lüshi chunqiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 19.1310.

The tale begins with the description of Xue Wei's eagerness to dive into the river and become a fish in his dream:

At the beginning, I was ill and tired, and I felt so hot that I almost could not bear it. Suddenly, I felt so strangled that I forgot the illness, and I hated the heat so much that I looked for coolness.

吾初疾困，為熱所逼，殆不可堪。

So I took off my clothes on the bank and dove straight in and under the water immediately.

遂脫衣於岸，跳身便入。

To come across such a relaxed and comfortable occasion just suited my long held desire. I further said [to myself], "Swimming like human is not as happy as swimming like fish. How can I take the place of a fish and briskly swim around?"

人浮不如魚快也。安得攝魚而健遊乎。

In the light of the previous analysis, we tend to read the above experience and confession as the protagonist's "long held desire" for throwing himself into officialdom. Through drawing a parallel between Xue Wei's illness and his feverish pursuit of official positions, the author also seasons the story with acid sarcasm and irony.

During the process of Xue Xei's metamorphosis, the person who had a fish head announced two ordinances to alarm him that "overthrowing boats" and "being greedy for bait" would cause disastrous consequences:

Alas! If you rely on great waves to overthrow boats, you will commit crime in the netherworld; if you are ignorant of slender hooks and crave for bait,

you will be killed in the mortal world. Do not lose your loyalty to bring shame upon your own group. Exert yourself!

恃長波而傾舟，得罪於晦。昧纖鉤而貪餌。見傷於明。無或失身，以羞其黨，爾其勉之。

When these two violations are casted in the context of the real world's officialdom, they are the hints of two shameful betrayals. The former refers to betraying the emperor and overthrowing the Tang court via rebellions. The latter indicates the betrayal of an official's moral standards, which prostitutes one's soul and honor for self-advancement due to cupidity. Apparently, the author attempts to utter the following expostulations to officials herein: Both betrayals will cause officials to lose their loyalty to the court and their moral integrity and bring great shame upon the Tang stratum of official scholars.

After Xue Wei completed his shapeshifting, he enjoyed swimming around the river. However, when he was tempted by Zhao Gan's 趙幹 fish bait which smelled wonderful, he coveted the delicious food so much that his greediness and disregard drove him to approach the bait:

The bait Zhao Gan used smelled wonderful. While he knew the warnings, he could not help but draw near the bait.

其餌芳香，心亦知戒，不覺近口。

Although he had struggles before he swallowed the hook, his neglect of the ordinances and lucky mentality of escaping from punishments still impelled him to betray his commitment. This failure can be viewed as a direct psychology portrait of the despicable officials who are not able to resist the temptation of higher position and greater wealth.



Another important narration in the tale is how Zhang Gan and Xue Wei's colleagues reacted to his fatal offense. None of them listened to his call for help, but they were instead very pleased with Xue's capture and urged the food service worker to cook him for their dinner.

Wei called to him over and over again, but Gan did not hear him. Instead, he passed a string through my gills and then bound me in the reeds.

偉連呼之，幹不聽，而以繩貫我腮，乃繫于葦間。

Bi paid no attention, but carried me off.

弼不聽，提之而行。

When we went into the county offices, I saw some county clerks playing chess, and I shouted out to them too. But nobody responded at all, they only laughed and said, "What a big fish! It must be three or four catties."...All of them were pleased that the fish was so big, and pressed Bi to give it to the kitchen.

入縣門。見縣吏坐者弈碁。皆大聲呼之，略無應者，唯笑曰。“可畏魚，直三四斤餘。”……皆喜魚大，促命付廚。

If these reactions are associated with the reality of officialdom, it is interesting to discover that the author intends to create an analogy and display that endless strife, conflicts and rivalries were such an integral part of life in the Tang court, even in the whole bureaucratic system. The following analysis will show that the image of "county clerk playing chess" can be interpreted as a metaphor of the political strife and fighting among Tang officials. One of the clues of such a interpretation is that the names of all the Xue's

colleagues in the tale imply this political phenomenon by puns. Zou Pang 鄒滂, Lei Ji 雷濟 and Pei Lao 裴寮 were the three important colleagues of Xue Wei in the tale. These three characters' names are composed of phono-semantic compounds. If we replace them with homophonic characters which have different semantic signs, the hidden meanings of these names will be revealed.

*zōu* 鄒 → 𠂔 + 言 = *zōu* 謔 (talk nonsense)

*páng* 滂 → 旁 + 言 = *bàng* 謗 (defame; slander)

*léi* 雷 → 雷 + 扌 = *léi* 搥 (beat)

*jì* 濟 → 齊 + 扌 = *jǐ* 擠 (expel)

*fěi* 裴 → 非 + 糸 = *fěi* 緋 (scarlet)

*liáo* 寮 → 寮 + 亻 = *liáo* 僚 (colleagues)<sup>281</sup>

The beginning of the tale then turns into the following sentence:

Xue Wei...was a contemporary of the District Aide Zou Pang, the District Defender Lei Ji, and Pei Liao.

薛偉者，……與丞鄒（謔）滂（謗）、尉雷（搥）濟（擠）裴（緋）寮（僚）同時。

Once again, Li Fuyan skillfully uses the characteristics of Chinese character rhetoric to create a unique rhetorical effect and to enhance the deep meaning of puns. He criticizes his “high-ranking colleagues with court robes in scarlet” (*feiliao* 緋僚) for constantly

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<sup>281</sup> Starting from the eight month of the first year of Shangyuan 上元 (674), the fourth-ranking officials' court robes in dark scarlet, while the fifth-ranking officials' court robes in light scarlet. See *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1953.

attempting to attack and supplant each other through “talking nonsense” (*zou* 譟), “slandering” (*bang* 謗), “beating” (*lei* 擗) and “expelling” (*ji* 擠). Xue Wei’s suffering complaints and indignation in the tale echo the criticism:

I cried out to all of you, “I am your colleague. I was caught. To not let me go and press someone to kill me, this is no form of benevolence!” I cried out loudly and started weeping, but you three just ignored me and turned me over to the fish mincer.

我叫諸公曰：‘我是公同官，而今見擒，竟不相捨，促殺之，仁乎哉！’大叫而泣，三君不顧而付鱸手。

If we recognize the same character rhetoric applied in the following sentence, the above interpretation will become even more obvious:

After a while, we reached the stairs, Zuo and Lei were gambling, and Pei was eating a peach. All of them were pleased that the fish was so big, and pressed Bi to give it to the kitchen.

既而入階，鄒、雷方博（搏），裴啗（陷）桃（逃）實，皆喜魚大。促命付廚。

博 → 尊 + 才 = *bo* 搏 (fight)

啗 → 啗 + 卩 = *xian* 陷 (frame up)

桃 → 兆 + 辵 = *tao* 逃 (hide)

As a result, the text’s next layer of meaning is clarified here:

“When Xue Wei was bound and sent to the imperial court to determine his charges, many officials were merely focusing on their strifes through slanders and personal attacks.

As to the higher-ranking officials, they just framed him through hiding the truth. They didn't express any sympathy to Xue Wei. On the contrary, all were pleased that such a senior official got arrested. They even hoped that he would be executed as soon as possible so they could quickly benefit from this case.”

Taking into the above analysis, the investigation on the history and facts of the Tang official attire system has helped us uncover the tale's literary techniques and motif. Based on the above literary analysis and the elaboration of a variety of literary devices including Chinese character rhetorics, analogies, puns and metaphors, it seems that the author's criticism towards the Tang officialdom and their internal strifes have been disclosed through reading between the lines of the literary text. However, is this the only intended meaning or purpose of the author? Discovering the deeper thoughts and motivation involved in literary texts is able to lead us to further inspect historical events and even partially reconstruct some pieces of the past in our own view.

### 3.2 The Real Historical Figures and Event behind the Tale

In the search of the entwinement of historicity and fictionality in Tang tales, a historical event during the mid-Tang has drawn our attention.

Shou was the descendant of an influential family and he had good strategies for governing, but he was so aggressive in power and profits that he did not possess any reputation and integrity. Because of this, scholar officials

despised him. Once, when food was prepared for court officials,<sup>282</sup> the Emperor ordered the Imperial Commissioner Ma Jiangchao to bestow cherries to them. Shou was the head of both military and civil court officials. He got to know Jiangchao when he served at the military province [of Hedong]. During the conversation, Shou could not help but kneel down to kowtow. The Censor-in-Chief Gao Cheng (740-811) also followed him to kowtow. On that day, he was impeached by the Censor-in-Chief. Shou waited for punishment at the court. [Later], the Emperor commanded people to release him. The next day, the Emperor reproached Jiangchao, and demoted him one rank of his official position. In a short time, he was removed from the court to be the Governor of Jinnan and was conferred as the Duke of Zheng.

綬雖名家子，為吏有方略，然銳於勢利，不存名節，士人以此薄之。嘗預百僚廊下食，上令中使馬江朝賜櫻桃。綬居兩班之首，在方鎮時識江朝，敍語次，不覺屈膝而拜，御史大夫高郢亦從而拜。是日，為御史所劾，綬待罪于朝，命釋之。翌日，責江朝，降官一等。尋出鎮荊南，進封鄭國公。

The historical comment that “he was so aggressive in power and profits that he did not possess any reputation and integrity” is a final verdict on Yan Shou’s conduct and character. Obviously, Li Fuyan joined his official colleagues to hold this immoral man in contempt by virtue of his literary work. Yan Shou was the Prime Minister, the most

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<sup>282</sup> *Langxia shi* 廊下食 is also called *lang can* 廊餐. The food was prepared by the Tang court and dining room was located in front of the place hall.

honorable official in the court and the representative of chancellery, but he still unexpectedly paid respect to an influential eunuch in a very inappropriate way to gain his favour. Thereby, he not only debased his official status, but also severely violated the ordinance of the imperial court. Interestingly, because the incident occurred when Mao Jiangchao sent cherries to the officials led by Yan Shou, we might say that similar to what happened in the tale, this incident was also initiated by food. Moreover, just as Xue Wei who “could not help but draw near the bait” set up by Zhao Gan, Yan Shou “could not help but kneel down to kowtow” so as to please Ma Jiangchao who delivered cherries under Dezong’s command. In the literary text, Zhang Bi found Xue Wei who was tied up in the reeds and took him to the county office for further decision on how to cook him. The historical record also exhibits that after being impeached by the Censor-in-Chief Gao Cheng, Yan Shou was bound and taken to the court to wait for his punishment. Both Xue Wei and Zhao Gan were seriously punished in the story: The head of Xue Wei’s fish incarnation was chopped off; Zhao Gan suffered five whips. In the reality, as the head of all the officials, Yan was demoted from the Prime Minister to a Military Governor; Ma was also demoted one rank of his official position.

Yan Shou’s biography in the standard histories further confirms very similar life experiences as the ones of Xue Wei; thus, these similarities imply the analogies between the protagonist in the tale and the real historical figure. The *Jiu Tang shu* records:

Yan Shou (ca. 746-822), a native of Shu...passed the Presented-scholar (*jinshi*) Examination during the Dali period (766-779). He consecutively served as an assistant official in the government. During the Zhenyuan period (785-805), he was promoted from the Attending Censor to the Vice-

Chief Military Training Commissioner in Xuanshe. He was trusted and well-treated by the Military Governor Liu Zan (727-796) very much. Liu often consulted him on political affairs. In the twelfth year of Zhenyuan (796), Zan passed away and Shou was in charge of the affairs left by Zan in Xunshe. He exhausted all the items in the treasure vault to present [to the court]. It was because of this that he was summoned to be the Vice Director of the Ministry of the Justice Headed by an Imperial Secretary. The custom of presenting tributes to the court among the assistant officials within the country originated from Shou.<sup>283</sup>

嚴綬，蜀人。……綬，大曆中登進士第，累佐使府。貞元中，由侍御史充宣歙團練副使，深為其使劉贊委遇，政事多所咨訪。十二年，贊卒，綬掌宣歙留務，傾府藏以進獻，由是有恩，召為尚書刑部員外郎。天下賓佐進獻，自綬始也。

When Dezong (r. 779-805) was selecting an official to take the place of [Zheng] Dan (8<sup>th</sup> century-801) to be the Army Commander from the court, because Shou just presented tributes two days before and the Emperor was greatly impressed, he commanded the Inspecting Director of the Bureau of Honors to promote him as the Army Commander of Hedong.<sup>284</sup>

德宗選朝士可以代儻為行軍司馬者，因綬前日進獻，上頗記之，故命檢校司封郎中，充河東行軍司馬。

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<sup>283</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 146.3959-3960.

<sup>284</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 146. 3960.

First of all, the above biographical information clearly shows that both of them were natives of Shu 蜀. More interestingly, the collective biography of Yan family in the *Xin Tang shu* further records that Yan Shou's native place was Huoying 華陰,<sup>285</sup> and the ending of the tale claims that Xue Wei was promoted to be the Assistant Magistrate of Huayang 華陽 and then died there. Although the author replaces *yin* 陰 with its opposite concept *yang* 陽 here, the hint is still evident enough for readers to trace it and perceive the analogy between Yan Shou and Xue Wei.

Moreover, like Xue whose craving for official positions had become almost a perversion, Yan was always in the pursuit of promotion through grabbing every opportunity to win the emperor's favor with numerous tributes. Moreover, besides *yufu* (put on fish scales), another term used for metamorphosis in the tale is *sheyu* 攝魚 (take the place of a fish) which is a pun of *sheguan* 攝官 (take the place of an official). Similarly, Yan greatly benefited from at least two chances of taking the place of an official: The first chance was that Shou took the place of Liu Zan to be in charge of the affairs in Xuanshe. The second chance was that he was selected by Dezhong to take the place of Zheng Dan as the Army Commander of Hedong.

Additionally, after Xue Wei transformed into a red carp, he was assigned to stay in "East Lake", which also matches Hedong (literary means "East River"), the province that Yan had been in charge of as the Military Governor for many years.

The referential connection between the historical biography and the literary text also encourages us to rethink about the four major characters in the tale: Xue Wei 薛偉,

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<sup>285</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 149.4482.



Zhao Gan 趙幹, Wang Shiliang 王士良 and Zhang Bi 張弼. Just like those names of Xue Wei's colleagues, the four names are also skillful puns created by the means of Chinese character rhetoric. 薛 and 褻, 趙 and 肇, 王 and 亡 were homophones respectively during the Tang and Song periods. 幹 is a hint of 朝 which is the last character of Ma Jiangchao's given name. Accordingly, the first three names can be respectively read as 薛偉 (褻違), 趙幹 (肇朝) and 王士良 (亡士良).

[sǐɛt] 薛 → [sǐɛt] 褻 (debase; defile)

[dʒ̥ɛu] 趙 → [dʒ̥ɛu] 肇 (cause [trouble/an incident])

[yǐwan] 王 → [mǐwan] 亡 (ruin; destroy)

偉 → 韋 + 亻 = *wei* 違 (violate)

幹 → 卓 + 月 = *chao* 朝 (the last character of “馬江朝”)

In other words, Xue Wei is the allusion to Yan Shou who “defiled” (*xiè* 褻) the reputation of scholar gentry and “violated” (*wěi* 違) the court's ordinance; the name of Zhao Gan alludes Ma Jiangchao (*cháo* 朝) who “caused” (*zhào* 肇) this incident; Wang Shiliang refers to the eunuch tyrants Qiu Shiliang who was notorious for brutally slaughtering scholar officials in the history. The tale titled “Wang Guoliang” by Li Fuyan has denounced him as the “the person who has ruined the country”. Through adopting the metaphor of a fish mincer and the pun of “[Qiu Shi] liang, The person who has ruined scholar officials” (*wáng shì liáng* 亡士良) in this tale, Li Fuyan expresses his strong condemnation and opposition towards the eunuch tyrants and cliques at his era once again.

The name of Zhang Bi is also an elaborate allusion, which alludes to the Censor-in-Chief Gao Cheng whose “character was upright and righteous” 性剛正.<sup>286</sup> 弼 is composed of two semantic signs, “*tiǎn* 𠂔” and “*gōng* 弓”. Xu Kai’s 徐鍇 (920-974) annotation in *Shuowen jiezi* clarifies that: “The character *tiǎn* refers to tongue, not a phonetic sign. A tongue is soft, while a bow is hard. Using a soft object to comply with a hard object means ‘assisting and correcting’” 𠂔, 舌也, 非聲。舌柔而弼剛, 以柔從剛, 輔弼之意。<sup>287</sup> An annotation in *Guoyu* 國語 agrees with Xu’s interpretation: “Assisting the *Dao* is called *fu*; correcting faults is called *bi*” 相道爲輔, 矯過爲弼。<sup>288</sup> Both annotations on 弼 match the responsibilities of Censor-in-Chief very well:

Censor-in-chief, head of the Censorate (yu-shih t'ai) and one of the most eminent officials of the central government, in administrative charge of Censors (yǔ-shih) of many sorts who maintained disciplinary surveillance over the officialdom, freely impeaching any official for public or private misconduct.<sup>289</sup>

Furthermore, three semantic signs of *gōng* “弓” which literally means “bending the knee or body to bow” are included in the name of Zhang Bi. A more direct hint of Gao

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<sup>286</sup> See Gao Cheng’s biography in *Jiu Tang shu*, 147.3976.

<sup>287</sup> Xushen, *Shuowen jiezi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 12b.428.

<sup>288</sup> *Guoyu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 21.649.

<sup>289</sup> See Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), 593.

Cheng and the historical incident in the tale was given through Xue Wei commanding Zhang Bi to bow to him:

Then I also spoke to Bi, “I am the District Recorder for your county, but I transformed into the shape of a fish and swim around in the river. Why aren’t you bowing to me?”

又謂弼曰：“我是汝縣主簿，化形為魚遊江，何得不拜我？”

In addition, when Wang Shiliang threw Xue Wei on the table and intended to kill him, Xue cried out loudly, “Wang Shiliang, you are the fish mincer I use all the time. Why are you killing me” 王士良，汝是我之常使鱸手也，因何殺我. In this sense, Xue’s reaction towards Wang Shiliang insinuates the collusive relationship between Yan Shou and the eunuch cliques at his time. According to *Zizhi tongjian*, when he was the Military Governor of Xiangyang 襄陽, Yan Shou “bribed eunuchs handsomely to gather their support” 厚賂宦官以結聲援.<sup>290</sup> He had been the Military Governor of Hedong for nine years, but “all the military affairs, supplies and official bureau were charged by the Military Commissioners Li Fuguang (8<sup>th</sup> century-815), and Xun merely gave away them with both hands” 軍政補署一出監軍李輔光，綏拱手而已。<sup>291</sup> However, the fictional scene that Xue Wei’s fish head was chopped off and he woke up to the reality ceased Xue’s metamorphosis and shattered his delusion of Wang Shiliang. This nightmare-style disillusion not only symbolizes the destruction of moral integrity and political reputation, it also serves as a critical warning to those impudent officials who were indulged in such a

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<sup>290</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 239.7717.

<sup>291</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 237.7656.

collusive relationship. Like Wang Huang's disgraceful death which permanently destroyed both his flesh body and soul, the destruction of Xue Wei's fish incarnation is also a political admonishment by Li Fuyan that the end of losing mortal integrity to associate with eunuchs in the pursuit of prominent positions and power is doomed to be dreadful and lethal.

CHAPTER THREE:  
STRANGE ENCOUNTERS AFTER BEING LOST IN THE DARK

1. “GUO DAIGONG”: “PIG CALAMITY” AND THE REBELLIOUS MILITARY  
GOVERNORS

Besides the Ming editions of the *Xuanguai lu*, the tale titled “Guo Daigong” 郭代公 (Guo [Yuanzhen], The Duke of Dai) is also collected in many compiled works, such as the the *Shuofu* 說郭,<sup>292</sup> the *Guijin shuohai*,<sup>293</sup> the *Yan yi bian* 艷異編<sup>294</sup> and the *Yishi souqi* 逸史搜奇.<sup>295</sup> It is respectively retitled as “Wu Jiangjun ji” 烏將軍 (The General Ebony) and “Guo Yuanzhen” 郭元振 in the *Yanyi bian* and the *Yishi souqi*.

This tale describes a story in which Guo Yuanzhen, a famous Tang military commander, lost his way because of the gloomy darkness, and then he encountered and slew a fierce pig demon called “General Ebony” to save an innocent village girl who had been offered to him by villagers as a sacrificed bride. Many modern scholars interpret this story as a eulogy for the traditional chivalrous spirit and as a typical didactic story of a hero breaking down fetishes and superstitions to emancipate people’s mind from the deadly

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<sup>292</sup> Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368), ed., *Shuo fu sanzong* 說郭三種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 15.2a-3c.

<sup>293</sup> In the “Shuoyuan” Section of *Guijin shuohai*, 49.1-3.

<sup>294</sup> Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590), *Yan yi bian* 艷異編 (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 448-450.

<sup>295</sup> Wang Yuncheng 汪雲程 (ca.1506–ca.1576), comp., *Yishi souqi, wu* 戊 juan, 6.1a-5b, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, vol. 249, (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1997).

influence of demons in the subtle world. The main representative of this opinion is Hou Zhongyi 侯忠义. He claims that the story condemns feudal superstitions and it is the reflection of atheism and chivalrous spirit.<sup>296</sup> Zhu Xiuxia, Li Zongwei and Cheng Yizhong are among the scholars who have the similar opinion to Hou Zhongyi. For instance, Zhu remarks that this tale “is good enough to be a deterrent example for people to break down fetishes and superstitions” 足以破除世人對迷信的鑒戒.<sup>297</sup> Both Li and Chen think that it exalts Guo Yuanzhen’s chivalrous spirit.<sup>298</sup> Assuming that Niu Sengru miswrote the date when Guo Yuanzhen failed his Presented-scholar Examination, some scholars even go further to view the tale as part of the authentic record on Guo’s chivalrous spirit according to his biography in the *Xin Tang shu*.<sup>299</sup> Additionally, some studies suggest that General Ebony, the lascivious pig demon in the tale, should be considered as the prototype of “Zhu

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<sup>296</sup>“This story praises Guo Yuanzhen’s moral characters of carrying out chivalrous deeds as well as the spirit of being brave to struggle and being good at struggle, and reflects the theory of atheism that man’s will is able to conquer Heaven and man’s will is able to conquer demons... Those muddle-headed villagers testified how seriously feudal superstition had fooled people. Therefore, this kind of description has the meaning of condemning feudal superstitions. Obviously, Guo Yuanzhen’s self-sacrificing spirit of taking delight in helping people as well as ridding the people of a scourge was influenced by the chivalrous spirit that was popular at that time.” 這個故事，歌頌了郭元振行俠仗義的品質和敢于鬥爭、善於鬥爭的精神，表現了人可勝天、人可勝怪的無神論思想。…… [鄉民]的糊塗，正說明迷信思想對人民愚弄的嚴重，因而這種描寫具有控訴封建迷信思想的意義。郭元振助人為樂、為民除害的獻身精神，顯然是受到了當時比較流行的豪俠思想的影響。See Hou Zhongyi, *Sui Tang Wudai xiaoshuoshi* 隋唐五代小說史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe), 110.

<sup>297</sup>Zhu Xiuxia, *Tangdai chuanqi yanjiu*, 93.

<sup>298</sup>Li Zongwei, *Tangren chuanqi*, 99; Chen Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shi* 唐代小說史 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe), 188.

<sup>299</sup>See details in Che Baoren 車寶任, “Tang *chuanqi* xin kaozheng” 唐傳奇新考證, *Xibei daxue xuebao* 西北大学学报 26.4 (1996): 12.

Bajie” 豬八戒 (Pig who Obeys Eight Restraints) in the *Xi you ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the West], one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature.<sup>300</sup>

An innovative view provided by Deng Yusheng 鄧郁生 connects the protagonist’s heroic deeds in the tale with the admonishment towards the lawless military governs of provincial autonomies at the author’s contemporary time, so Deng posits that there are two authorial intentions: one is to express Niu Sengru’s criticism to these warlords, the other one is to “hope the [rulers of] the provincial autonomies can emulate the virtuous ones to develop the country in a peaceful condition” 希冀藩鎮能見賢思齊，讓國家在安定中求進步。<sup>301</sup>

Obviously, most the above interpretations are either from the point of view of modern ideology, namely *militant proletarian atheism*, or from the perspective of Chinese traditional chivalrous spirit, to portray Guo Yuanzhen as a marvelous *youxia* 遊俠 (wandering knight-errant) or a *haoxia* 豪俠 (heroic knight-errant). However, if we follow the interdisciplinary research method to study this story’s sociopolitical milieu and explore its authorial intention, it is not difficult to discover more possible significance behind the literary text.

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<sup>300</sup>A typical example of this opinion is Ma Yue’s 馬躍 article “Zhu Bajie xingxiang de wenhua yiyun ji lixing sisuo” 豬八戒的形象的文化意蘊及理性思考 published in *Heilongjiang shehui kexue* 黑龍江社會科學 6 (2006): 133-135.

<sup>301</sup>Deng Yusheng, “Shi fanzhen yi zhengui: Lun ‘Xuanguailu, Guodaigong’ de zhengzhi jiaoxun” 示藩鎮以箴規：論《玄怪錄·郭代公》的政治教訓, *Dongwu zhongwen xuebao* 東吳中文學報 24.11(2012): 59-90.

## 1.1 The Symbolic Interpretations of Pig Demons in Standard Histories

From the Han, many accounts on pig demons were recorded under the category of “pig calamities” in the “Wuxing zhi” 五行志 (Treaties of Five Phases) or “Lingzheng zhi” 靈徵志 (Treaties of proved omens) of standard histories. Both the actions and physical appearance of pig demons were given certain conventional symbolic meanings: A great disaster would befall the host whose house was invaded or destroyed by a pig demon; a pig demon having a human head but a pig body was a dangerous premonition of a country in turmoil; in the interpretations concerning military activities, pig demons often represented the non-Han ethnicities living in northern and western China during ancient time. Hence, Jing Fang concluded that pig demons “were unscrupulous and evil” 任邪 and “a pig demon with a human head and a pig’s body heralded that the state would be in disorder and destroyed” 妖曰豕生人頭豕身者，邑且亂亡。<sup>302</sup> In other words, pig demons were often associated with coming misfortunes, and “pig calamity” (*shihuo* 豕禍) gradually became a significant metaphor of political or military calamities such as rebellion, disorder and the overthrow of a throne.

One of the early accounts on pig demons can be found in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [Zuo Commentary]. In this account, Duke Xiang 襄 of Qi 齊 (r. 697-686 B.C.E.) was murdered by rebels soon after he met a huge pig demon known as Peng Sheng 彭生:

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<sup>302</sup>Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572), *Wei shu* 魏書 (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 112.2365.



In the twelfth month of winter, Marquis Qi<sup>303</sup> traveled to Gufen,<sup>304</sup> and then he went hunting at Beiqiu.<sup>305</sup> A large pig appeared, and an attendant said, “This is the Noble Scion Peng Sheng.” The Duke was enraged and said, “How dare Peng Sheng appear!” [When he] shot it, the pig stood up like a human being and howled. The Duke was startled, and fell down from his carriage, injuring a foot, and losing a shoe<sup>306</sup>.... Consequently, [the rebels] entered, and killed Meng Yang in his bed. They said, “This is not the lord. It does not resemble him.” Seeing the Duke’s feet beneath the door, they then murdered him, and enthroned Wuzhi.<sup>307</sup>

冬十二月，齊侯游于姑棼，遂田于貝丘。見大豕，從者曰：“公子彭生也。”公怒曰：“彭生敢見！”射之，豕人立而啼。公懼，墜于車，傷足喪屨。……遂入，杀孟陽于床。曰：“非君也，不類。”見公之足于戶下，遂弑之，而立無知。

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<sup>303</sup>This event happened in the eighth year of Duke Zhuang 莊 (686 B.C.E.). The ruler normally referred to Duke Xiang of Qi. See his biography in *Shi ji* 史記 (The Grand Scribe’s Records). Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1970), 32.1483.

<sup>304</sup>Gufen was also called Pugu 蒲姑 which was located about five miles southeast of modern Boxing 博興 city in Shandong province. See Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, 1:26.

<sup>305</sup>Located about eight miles southeast of Boxing. Ibid.

<sup>306</sup>In the account, it is unclear if Duke Xiang injured his both feet, but it is very possible that he only injured one foot in terms of the context and common sense.

<sup>307</sup> See Zhuang 7, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zheng yi* 春秋左傳正義 [Rectified Interpretations of the *Chunqiu* and *Zuo zhuan*], 8.17a, in *Chong kan Songben Shisanjing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏 [Re-engraved Song Edition of the Commentaries and Subcommentaries to the Thirteen Classics], edited by Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) (1816; reprint, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1960).

According to the record of the eighteenth year of Duke Huan 桓 (693 B.C.E.), Duke Xiang had illicit sexual relations with Lady Jiang 姜, the principle wife of Duke Huan. Noble Scion Peng Sheng is the person who helped Duke Xiang murder Duke Huan. Later, Duke Xiang appeased the angry people of Lu 魯 by executing him as a scapegoat.<sup>308</sup> This pig demon, in fact, is the metamorphosis of the evil spirit of Peng Sheng who attempted to exact vengeance on his lord. This is why Duke Xiang was so dreadfully frightened and injured his foot when the pig demon “stood up like a human being and howled.” Moreover, because Duke Xiang could not run on his injured foot, the rebels finally found and murdered him. The theme of this account seems to be a wrathful but just vengeance of a horrible pig demon.

During the Han dynasty, a synoptic of this story was recorded in the “Wuxing zhi” of the *Han shu* 漢書. The interpretation of Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77-ca. 6 B.C.E.) was that when Duke Xiang saw the pig demon and injured his own foot, he “was verging on a pig calamity” 近豕禍.<sup>309</sup> Therefore, in Liu Xiang’s view, the pig demon was not merely an evil ghost who waited for his chance to take vengeance, but was meant to serve as a warning to Duke Xiang and to point to the coming of a lethal calamity. Liu Xiang stated that this calamity was directly connected with all the moral and political misconduct of Duke Xiang, and all the unfortunate occurrences that happened after he encountered the pig demon were the portent of this calamity.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> See details in *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zheng yi*, 7.25a-b.

<sup>309</sup> Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 27b.1436.

<sup>310</sup> “That [Duke Xiang] injured his foot, lost a shoe, and finally died from (the injuring to) his foot was the demonstration of disasters and dangers” 傷足喪屨，卒死於足，虐急之效也. *Han shu*, 27b.1436.

The “Five Phases” is one of the basic theories of classical Chinese philosophy. Some important scholars of the Han, especially Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.E.), integrated the theory of Five Phases with that of “*tian ren gan ying*” 天人感應 (stimulus and response between Heaven and human beings). They believed that there was a relationship of correspondence in which all political and social activities resonated in harmony with Heaven and Five Phases. If any improper activities of the human domain disturbed the way of Heaven or regular movements of Five Phases, calamities would appear to warn the state and rulers.

For example, in *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 [Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals], Dong Zhongshu elaborates the notion of Five Phases and Five Functions to describe the correspondence. He respectively sets out that the five important functions of a ruler—*mao* 貌 (appearance), *yan* 言 (speech), *shi* 視 (sight), *ting* 聽 (listening), and *si* 思 (thought)—correspond to the five phases—*mu* 木 (wood), *jin* 金 (metal), *huo* 火 (fire), *shui* 水 (water), *yu* 雨 (rain).<sup>311</sup> If a ruler acted inappropriately in any one of the Five Functions, his actions would provoke Heaven and cause a calamity related to each Phase to befall the ruler.<sup>312</sup> We can also find a detailed explication on the significance of these calamities in *Chunqiu fanlu*:

If the things of Heaven and the earth have irregular changes, they are called abnormal phenomena. The smaller changes are called disasters. Disasters

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<sup>311</sup> See “Wuxing wushi” 五行五事 (Five Phases and Five Functions), in *Chunqiu fanlu*, 14.11b-12a, (Sbby ed.).

<sup>312</sup> *Chunqiu fanlu*, 14.11b-12a.

often arrive first, and abnormal phenomena then follow them...Every root of disaster and abnormal phenomenon entirely rises from the faults of state. When the faults of state just begin to sprout, Heaven shows disasters and misfortunes to condemn and accuse him. If Heaven has condemned and accused him, but he does not realize to change, Heaven shows grotesques and abnormal phenomena to frighten him. If Heaven has frightened him, and he still does not realize to be fearful and scared of them, the catastrophes then arrive. By means of this, it shows that the will of Heaven is benevolent, and does not intend to entrap people.<sup>313</sup>

天地之物，有不常之變者，謂之異，小者謂之災，災常先至，而異乃隨之……凡災異之本，盡生於國家之失，國家之失乃始萌芽，而天出災害以譴告之；譴告之，而不知變，乃見怪異以驚駭之；驚駭之，尚不知畏恐，其殃咎乃至。以此見天意之仁，而不欲陷人也。

This passage suggests that the baneful responses include various disasters, misfortunes, monsters and abnormal phenomena, so people, especially rulers and officials, should seriously be concerned about their conduct in order to avoid ruining their countries and themselves. In this sense, the earliest account on pig demon in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* should be considered as a reliable historical evidence which proved the close relationship between these ominous phenomena and the overthrow of rulership. It was under the influence of the same theory that Ban Gu recorded various ominous phenomena and their interpretations by Han scholars in his “Treaties of Five Phases” of *Han shu*. Moreover, the

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<sup>313</sup> In “Bi ren qiu zhi” 必仁且智 (Certainly Being Benevolent and Sage), *Chunqiu fanlu*, 8.11b.

calamities of pig were caused by the rulers “whose hearing was not astute” (*ting bu cong* 聽不聰). Regarding this misbehavior, Ban Gu further explained: “It refers to the rulers who are not intelligent due to only listening to one side. Since the public opinions are blocked, the rulers are not able to consider gains or losses with strategic thinking, and his faults are being impetuous and impatient” 言上偏聽不聰，下情隔塞，則不能謀慮利害，失在嚴急。<sup>314</sup>

Under the category of “pig calamities,” many other accounts on pig demons were considered to be the ill omens of political calamities, especially rebellions. One of these accounts of a pig demon occurred during the reign of Emperor Zhao 昭 (86-74 B.C.E.).<sup>315</sup> Both Liu Xiang and Jing Fang 京房 (77-37 B.C.E.) connected the appearance of a pig demon in the account with the political rebellion of King of Yan 燕 (r. 117-80 B.C.E.). In the view of Liu Xiang, each object had a symbolic meaning: The stove and cauldron represented the residence of King of Yan; the pig demon is the sign of the rebellion; the destruction of stove and displayed cauldrons symbolized that the collapse of the royal residence and the failure of King of Yan. Jing Fang comments, “the multitude were not

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<sup>314</sup> *Han shu*, 27b. 1421.

<sup>315</sup> “At the first year of Yuanfeng of Emperor Zhao (80 B.C.), in Eternal Residence of the Palace of King of Yan (r. 117 B.C.-80 B.C.), a pig went out from a pigpen, broke the stove of the capital, held six or seven cauldrons in its mouth, and put them in front of the hall. Liu Xiang considers that it verged on pig calamities. At that time, King of Yan, [Liu] Dan, conspired with the Senior Princess (?-80 B.C.) and the Left General to make a revolt. He executed and killed the people who admonished [him], and was brutal, rash and unprincipled. The stove is the source of living and fostering. A pig ruined the stove, and displayed cauldrons at the court. The cauldrons and stove could not be used, [which was to show that] the palace and the house would be abandoned and disgraced. King of Yan did not change, and finally admitted his crime.” 昭帝元鳳元年，燕王宮永巷中豕出園，壞都竈，銜其鬪六七枚置殿前。劉向以為近豕禍也。時燕王旦與長公主、左將軍謀為大逆，誅殺諫者，暴急無道。竈者，生養之本，豕而敗竈，陳鬪於庭，鬪竈將不用，宮室將廢辱也。燕王不改，卒伏其辜。 *Han shu*, 278.1436-7.

content with the emperor's government, so a pig demon entered into the residence and house" 眾心不安君政，厥妖豕入居室。<sup>316</sup>

During the early Western Han, there is a notorious rebellion called the "Rebellion of Seven States." The King of Zhao 趙, Liu Sui 遂 (?-154 B.C.E.),<sup>317</sup> one of the rebellious kings, intended to ally with the Xiongnu to attack the Han.<sup>318</sup> When the rebellion was pacified, the King of Zhao had to commit suicide because of his crime. The "Monograph of Five Phases" also recorded an account on a pig demon in relation to this historical event, and remarks that "the pig is the symbol of Xiongnu from the north" 豕，北方匈奴之象。

Many accounts on pig calamities can also be found in the section of "[Emperor's] hearing was not astute" in the *Jin shu* 晉書 which was compiled during the early Tang. The monstrosity of pig demons in those records also presages political and social calamities. The purpose of the section is to demonstrate what severe consequences would occur if a ruler or leader did not listen to Heaven's warnings. Besides rebellions and overthrows, these accounts also connect pig demons with barbarians (*hu* 胡)<sup>319</sup> and even with corrupt chief ministers and the court. For instance, during the reign of Emperor Xiaowu 孝武 (r. 383-

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<sup>316</sup> *Han shu*, 278.1436-7.

<sup>317</sup> See the biographical information of Liu Sui in *Han shu*, 14.405, 38.1989-90.

<sup>318</sup> "On the second month of the third year of Emperor Jing (154 B.C.), in Handan, a dog and a pig copulated. The *qi* of rebellion and chaos verged on the calamities of dog and pig. At that time, the King of Zhao, Liu Sui, rebelled and made chaos, conspiring with the King of Wu (216-154 B.C.E.) and the King of Chu (174-153 B.C.E.) to make a revolt. He sent a messenger to Hans to ask for relief troops. Finally, he admitted his crime." 景帝三年二月，邯鄲狗與彘交。悖亂之氣，近犬豕之禍也。是時趙王遂悖亂，與吳、楚謀為逆，遣使匈奴求助兵，卒伏其辜。 See details in *Han shu*, 35.1899-1918.

<sup>319</sup> Pulleyblank remarks that "in the T'ang period *hu* almost always refers to the Western, Indo-European speaking peoples of Central Asia and more often than not specifically to the Sogdians who were the most prominent and widely distributed of them". See Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955; 1966 Reprint), 10.

396), after a pig demon appeared, “the Chief Minister<sup>320</sup> still indulged in drinking excessively and did not worry about the politics of the court, and emperor’s favorites controlled the central government all gradually undermined the principle of the state and led to great damage” 宰相沈酗，不恤朝政，近習用事，漸亂國綱，至於大壞也。<sup>321</sup> In another case of pig demons, a boar gave birth to two piglets “who had human faces and looked like barbarians” 而皆人面，如胡人狀。<sup>322</sup>

The above analysis shows that all the records regarding “pig calamities” in standard histories serve as historical evidences to prove the close relations between the evil omens sent from Heaven and the political mishaps of human domain. A variety of pig demon omens are associated with revolt, overthrow, death, corrupted central government or military invasions of barbarians. It is not surprising that Niu Sengru, the author of “Guo Daigong,” might assign the same symbolic meaning to the pig demon that brought calamities to the whole village.

## 1.2 Pre-Tang Stories Concerning Pig Demons and Demon Slayers

In some Pre-Tang texts, pig demons are the source of evil that causes sufferings, destructions, or even death, while their protagonists are often portrayed as heroes who slay these pig demons and deliver human beings from calamities. These texts might have

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<sup>320</sup>The Chief Minister refers to the younger brother of Emperor Xiaowu, Sima Daozi 司馬道子 (364-402). See his biography in *Jinshu*, 64.1732-38.

<sup>321</sup> Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648) et al., *Jin shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 29.881.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

provided a heroic theme, a basic narrative frame, settings and even some intriguing plot details for the composition of “Guo Yuanzhen”. One of these texts comes from *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and is a legendary story describing how the mythological archer Houyi 后羿 eliminated misfortunes in remote antiquity. One of these misfortunes is called Fengxi 封豨 (Big Pig):

When it reached the time of Yao, ten suns came out at the same time. They scorched the crops and grains, killed the grass and trees, and people had nothing to eat. Yayu, Chisel Teeth, Nine Sufferings, Great Wind, Big Pig, and Long Snake were all the misfortunes to the people.<sup>323</sup> Yao thus sent Yi to execute Chisel Teeth at the fields of Chouhua swamp, to kill Nine Sufferings at the side of Xiong River, to capture Great Wind at the marsh of Blue Mound, to shoot the ten suns above, to kill Xieyu on the earth, to cut off Long Snake at Dongting Lake, and to catch Big Pig at the mulberry woods. The myriad people were all pleased, and established Yao as the Son of Heaven.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> An explanation on these misfortunes is provided by Kao You’s 高誘 (2<sup>nd</sup> century-3<sup>rd</sup> century) annotations: “Yayu is a beast’s name. Its shape is like the head of a dragon. Someone said that it is like a leopard cat. It is good at running, eats people, and lives in the west. Chisel Teeth is also a beast’s name. Its teeth are three *chi* long, chisel-shaped, and penetrate its chin. It holds a spear and a shield. Nine Sufferings is the grotesque of water and fire, bring misfortunes to people. Great Wind is the Wind Spirit, being able to damage people’s houses. Fengxi is a big pig.... Long snake, a big snake, the specie that swallows an elephant and then spills out its bones after three years.” 猘猶，獸名也。狀若龍首，或曰似狸，善走而食人，在西方也。鑿齒，獸名，齒長三尺，其狀如鑿，下徹頷下，而持戈盾。九嬰，水火之怪，為人害。大風，風伯也，能壞人屋舍。封豨，大豕。..... 修蛇，大蛇，吞象三年而出其骨之類。 See *Huainanzi*, 8.6a, (Sbby ed.).

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.



逮至堯之時十日並出，焦禾稼，殺草木，而民無所食。獬豸、鑿齒、九嬰、大風、封豨、修蛇皆為民害。堯乃使羿誅鑿齒於疇華之野，殺九嬰於兇水之上，繳大風於青邱之澤，上射十日，而下殺契俞，斷修蛇於洞庭，擒封豨於桑林。萬民皆喜，置堯以為天子。

The pig demon in this tale is also a big boar which brings catastrophe to the ancient people. When the whole world was in a distressing situation, the legendary ruler Yao sent Houyi to slay all the demons, including the pig demon, to save people from various disasters. Because of the accomplishment of this heroic mission, Houyi successfully assisted Yao to secure his leadership and become the ruler of the world. In this sense, the theme of the whole tale is that “a hero with extraordinary power stands up for his lord to eradicate misfortunes and save helpless people”; this theme is further developed with narrative skills and deep meanings in Niu Sengru’s literary text “Guo Daigong.”

Aside from the theme of heroic deeds, some other early texts on pig demon stories which were familiar to Tang readers might also contribute a basic narrative frame, settings and plot details to the composition of “Guo Daigong”. For example, the *Taiping guangji* records two stories about vicious pig demons, “Anyang shusheng” 安陽書生 (A Young Scholar of Anyang)<sup>325</sup> and “Tang Ying” 湯應.<sup>326</sup> According to the *Taiping guangji*, both tales are from the *Sou shen ji*. Hu Haichen 胡懷琛 posits that “Anyang shusheng” and the

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<sup>325</sup> Li Fang 李昉 (925-966) et al., *Taiping guangji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961; 1995 Reprint), 439.3579. Hu Haichen 胡懷琛 posits that “Anyang shusheng” and the other two stories of *Sou shen ji* recorded in *Taiping guangji*, “Xie Fei” 谢非 and “He Wen” 何文, are derived from a same folklore, since they have very similar narrative frame and plot details. The major difference among the three stories lies in their demons’ real identities.

<sup>326</sup> Li Fang, *Taiping guangji*, 439.3578-3579.

other two stories of the *Sou shen ji* recorded in the *Taiping guanji*, “Xie Fei” 谢非<sup>327</sup> and “He Wen” 何文<sup>328</sup>, are derived from the same folklore,<sup>329</sup> since they have the same narrative frame and plot details and the major difference among the three stories only lies in those demons’ true identities.<sup>330</sup>

#### “A Young Scholar of Anyang”

In the south of Anyang City, there was an inn where people were not able to lodge. If anyone lodged there, it would kill him. Unexpectedly, a young scholar visited it and lodged there. The inn clerk said, “You cannot lodge here. Among the people who lodged here sooner or later, no one is alive.” The young scholar said, “Do not worry. I will stay here by myself.” Consequently, he went to the official residence. He then sat straight and recited books. Only after a long time did he stop. After midnight, there was a person wearing black clothes who came and went outside the door, and called the innkeeper. The innkeeper answered, “Yes.” “Is there any person in the inn?” [The innkeeper] answered, “There was a young scholar reading books here before. He just stopped. It seems that he has not slept yet.” Thus, the person in black became silent, sighed, and left. In a moment, there was a person again wearing a red hood, who came and called the innkeeper. Both

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<sup>327</sup> *Taiping guangji*, 468.3858.

<sup>328</sup> *Taiping guangji*, 400.3213-3214.

<sup>329</sup> See “Biaodian *Sou shen ji xu*” 標點搜神記序, in Gan Bao, *Xinjiao Sou shen ji* 新校搜神記, punctuated by Hu Huaichen (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1957), 2.

<sup>330</sup> In the story of “Xie Fei”, there are turtle and tortoise demons, whereas the demons slayed in the story of “He Wen” are the demons of gold, silver and pestle.

the person in red and the innkeeper asked and answered like before. After he had already left, it was quiet. The young scholar knew that there was no one coming. He stood up at once, and went to the place where the two persons had asked; he imitated them in calling the innkeeper. The innkeeper also answered, “Yes.” [The young scholar] said again, “Is there any person in the inn?” The innkeeper answered like before. Then he asked, “Who is the person in black clothes that came before?” [The innkeeper] said, “It is the sow on the north of the residence.” He said again, “who is the person that wore red hood and came?” [The innkeeper] said, “It is the old rooster on the west of the neighborhood.” [He asked], “Who are you then?” [The innkeeper] said, “I am an old scorpion.” For this reason, the young scholar secretly recited books until dawn, and did not dare sleep. At dawn, the inn clerk came to see him. He asked in astonishment, “How could you alone get to live?” The young scholar said, “Find a sword promptly. I will take the bewitched spirits for the village.” Thus, he held a sword and went to the place where [the innkeeper] answered the previous night. As expected, he caught an old scorpion. It was as big as a drum and its poison antenna was several *chi* long. On the west of the house, he caught an old rooster; on the north of the residence, he caught an old sow. After he killed all the three things, the inn consequently became peaceful and quiet.

安陽城南有一亭不可宿,宿輒殺人。書生乃過宿之,亭民曰:  
“此不可宿。前後宿此,未有活者。”書生曰:“無苦也。吾自住此。”  
遂往廡舍。乃端坐誦書。良久乃休。夜半後,有一人著皂衣,來往戶

外，呼亭主。亭主應曰：“諾。”“見亭中有人耶？”答曰：“向有書生在此讀書，適休，似未寢。”乃喑嗟而去。既而又有冠赤幘者，來呼亭主。問答如前。既去寂然。書生知無來者，即起詣問處，效呼亭主。亭主亦應諾。復云：“亭中有人耶？”亭主答如前。乃問：“向者黑衣來誰？”曰：“北舍母豬也。”又曰：“冠赤幘來者誰？”曰：“西鄰老雄雞也。”“汝復誰耶？”“我是老蝎也。”於是書生密便誦書至明，不敢寐。天明，亭民來視，驚曰：“君何得獨活？”書生曰：“促索劍來，吾與鄉取魅。”乃握劍至昨夜應處，果得老蠍，大如鞞，毒長數尺。西舍得老雄雞；北舍得老母豬。凡殺三物，亭中遂安靜也。

#### “Tang Ying”

During the time of Wu [State] (222-280), in the deep house of the inn of Luling Comradery, there were often evil things. If anyone lodged there, he would die. After that, none of the messengers dared to enter the inn or stop to lodge. Tang Ying, a native of Danyang, had great courage and military abilities. He sent as a messenger and arrived at Luling. Consequently, he entered into the inn and lodged there. A petty official informed him that it would not do. Ying did not listen to him. He made all his attendants go back outside. Only holding a broadsword, he stayed in the inn alone. When the third *geng* finished,<sup>331</sup> he suddenly heard someone knock at the chamber. Ying distantly asked who it was. [A person] answered,

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<sup>331</sup> Refers to midnight at 12:00 pm.

“The Divisional Administrator was asking after you.” Ying let him come in. He delivered the message and left. In a short while, there was a person who knocked at the chamber like before, and said, “The Prefectural Magistrate is asking after you.” Ying let the gentleman come in again. He did not doubt them at all. Soon, there was a person again who knocked at the chamber, and said, “The Divisional Administrator and the Prefectural Magistrate are visiting you.” Ying then suspected that they were evil beings. Accordingly, he held a sword to welcome them. He saw the two people, both wearing splendid attire, come in together and sit down. The one who was called the Prefectural Magistrate talked with Ying, but the Divisional Administrator suddenly stood up. Ying thus turned around. Accordingly, Ying hacked it with the sword. The Prefectural magistrate left his seat and ran away at once. Ying chased him and arrived under a wall behind the inn. When Ying reached him, Ying hacked him several times. Ying then returned and lay down. When it was dawn, he led people to seek the evil things. People found that there was a blood trail, and both of evil things were obtained. The one called the Prefectural magistrate was an old pig; the one called the Divisional Administrator was an old fox. From then on, the evil things were consequently eradicated.<sup>332</sup>

吳時，廬陵郡都亭重屋中，每有鬼物，宿者輒死。自後使人，莫敢入亭止宿。丹陽人湯應者，大有膽武，使至廬陵，遂入止亭宿焉。

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<sup>332</sup>See *Taiping guangji*, 439.3579.

吏啟不可，應不聽，悉屏從者還外，唯持一大刀獨處亭中。至三更竟，忽聞有叩閣者。應遙問是誰，答云：“部郡相聞。”應使進。致詞而去。頃復有叩閣者云：“府君相聞。”應復使進。身著皂衣。去後應謂是人，了無疑也。旋又有叩閣者，云：“部郡府君相詣。”應乃疑是鬼物，因持刀迎之。見二人皆盛服，齊進坐之。稱府君者，便與應談。而部郡者忽起。應乃迴顧，因以刀砍之。府君者即下座走焉。追至亭後牆下，及之，砍幾刀焉。應乃還臥。達曙，方將人尋之，見有血跡，皆得之。稱府君者，是一老獠；部郡者，是一老狸也。自此其妖遂絕。

If we compare the above two stories with “Guo Daigong” carefully, we can discover many similarities between their narrative frames. Firstly, in the immediate exposition, the spatial setting of these stories is often set in an abandoned place in which nobody dared to visit. In “Guo Daigong”, the abandoned inn in the early texts is replaced with a splendid but deserted mansion. Secondly, there is another character who acts as a foil to inform the protagonist about the coming calamity. This character is respectively played by either an inn clerk or a petty official in “Anyang shusheng” and “Tang Ying,” whereas Niu Sengrun arranges a village girl to play this role. Moreover, as the antagonists, pig demons are intruders into the human world and bring calamities to innocent people. They do not appear with their real demonic faces, but metamorphose themselves into human beings who do harm to people at night. The protagonists in these tales must be able to discern the various guises of pig demons and display many outstanding heroic qualities, such as courageousness, selflessness, and tactfulness. Furthermore, at the end of the tales, the protagonists slay all the demons and completely reveal their true identities and evil

intentions. In sum, the narration of these tales includes the warning, the approach, and the elimination of the calamity.

Many similar plot details can also be identified for comparison. For instance, none of the three protagonists took further action immediately after he discerned the demon's guise, but waited until dawn to slay them. The protagonist in "Anyang shusheng" is merely a young scholar without an actual name, but in "Tang Ying", the protagonist has evolved to be a man with a real name and "greatly had courage and military abilities". In "Guo Daigong", its protagonist further developed to be a real historical figure who is well-known for his political and military achievements. Moreover, the pig demon and fox demon in "Tang Ying" not only transformed into human beings, but also dressed in splendid attire in order to pretend to be two high-ranking officials with some attendants, which made them to be even more deceptive and unpredictable. The pig demon in "Guo Daigong" also disguised as a general with many armed attendants to display his mock majesty and solemnity. Another similar detail in both "Tang Ying" and "Guo Daigong" is that after the protagonist injured the two demons, he led people to find the hidden place of the pig demon through tracing its blood trails.

In addition, although the demon slayed by Xie Kun 謝鯤 (281-324) in the story, "Xie Kun"<sup>333</sup> of the *Sou shen ji*, was a deer, it is very possible that Niu Sengru still adopted some compelling plot details from this pre-Tang story. As a renowned Eastern *Jin* literatus who was aloof and uninhibited, Xie Kun was portrayed as a fearless and shrewd demon slayer in the story. He exposed the deer demon's original form through tricking the demon to put his arm in the window first, and then pulled it off.

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<sup>333</sup> Gan Bao, *Xinjiao Sou shen ji*, 18.142.

## “Xie Kun”

Xie Kun, a native of Chen commandery, resigned his position with the excuse of illness and attempted to run away from calamities at Yuzhang. Once, he went by an empty inn and lodged there at night. In the past, this inn often killed people. When the fourth *geng* finished,<sup>334</sup> a person in yellow called out the courtesy name of Kun and said, “Youyu! You should open the door.” Kun was composed without presenting any scared appearance, and ordered him to put his arm in the window. Therefore, the person gave Kun his wrist. Kun came over and exhausted his strength to pull it. Accordingly, it was only when the arm was pulled off that the person could leave. When Kun looked at the arm the next day, it turned out to be a deer leg. Kun traced its blood trails to catch it. Since then, the inn never had any evil spirits.

陳郡謝鯤，謝病去職，避地於豫章，嘗行經空亭中，夜宿。此亭，舊每殺人，夜四更，有一黃衣人呼鯤字云：“幼輿！可開戶。”鯤澹然無懼色，令申臂於窗中。於是授腕。鯤即極力而牽之。其臂遂脫。乃還去。明日看，乃鹿臂也。尋血取獲。爾後此亭無復妖怪。

Similar strategy was employed by the protagonist in “Guo Daigong”. Guo Yuanzhen induced the pig demon to relax his vigilance and defensiveness through presenting deer jerky first. Once the demon “reached out with his hand to take it” 引手取

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<sup>334</sup> The time range are from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.



之, Guo “caught him by the wrist and chopped it off” 捉其腕而斷之. “Just as the sky brightened, the Duke unwrapped [the robe], looked at the [severed] hand, and it turned out to be a pig foot” 天方曙, 開視其手, 則豬蹄也. A major modification in Niu’s tale is that “a deer leg” becomes “a pig foot” and a deer demon is replaced with deer jerky and a pig demon.

### 1.3 Allegorical Reading of “Guo Daigong”

The temporal setting of the tale “Guo Daigong” is the Kaiyuan 開元 period (713-741), the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. The pig demon in the story has a human name called “Wu Jiangjun”. Both “ebony gold” (*wujin* 烏金) and “black-faced man” (*heimian lang* 黑面郎) were the alternative terms of pigs in the Tang dynasty.<sup>335</sup> However, it is more worth noting that the surname *wū* 烏 [ʔuo] is a homophonic character of *hú* 胡 [ɣuo]<sup>336</sup>. As a result, it is possible that the name “General Ebony” is a suggestive pun of “barbarian general” (*hu jiangjun* 胡將軍). Moreover, when the heroic protagonist referred to the general in the tale, he always used derogatory terms to describe him, such as “lecherous ghost” (*yingui* 淫鬼), “beast of lecherous demon” (*yin yao zhi shou* 淫妖之獸, (evil

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<sup>335</sup>*Lei shuo* 类说 quotes *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載 [A Complete Record of the Court and the Outlying Areas] by Zhang Zhe 張鷟 (657-730): “The people of Gong province in the Tang became rich by raising pigs, so called them black gold.” 唐拱州人畜豬致富, 號豬為烏金。See Ceng Cao 曾糙 (ca.1136-1193), *Lei shuo* (Shanghai: Wenxue guji kanxingshe, 1955), 51:3. In the story of *Yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記 [Miscellaneous Records of the Immortals in Clouds] quoted from *Chengping jiuzuan* 承平旧纂 [Old Compilation of the Peaceful Periods], it explains that “black-faced man refers to pig” 黑面郎, 謂豬也。See Feng Zhi 馮贇 (fl. 904), *Yunxian zaji* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960), 8:7.

<sup>336</sup> Both reconstruction sounds of Middle Chinese are from Bernhard Karlgren.

creature) *yao chu* 妖畜, (criminal creature) *zhui chu* 罪畜, and (evil beast) *yao shou* 妖兽. Besides meaning “lecherous,” *yin* 淫 also means “unscrupulous,” “evil,” “chaotic,” and even “invade.” If we integrate the symbolic meanings of pig demons and the connotations of the above terms, we will discover that in the Tang history, An Lushan 安祿山 (703-757), a notorious barbarian general perfectly matches the image of this evil creature, because he was also viewed by his contemporaneous people as a criminal and treacherous demon who started rising to power during the Kaiyuan period, launched the devastating rebellion and brought a tremendous calamity to the Tang people during the Tianbao period (742-756). A good example is Yuan Jie’s 元結 (719-772) “Da Tang zhongxing song” 大唐中興頌 (Eulogy on the Resurgence of the Great Tang). In his descriptions, when An Lushan was alive, he “was a wicked subject and a treacherous swagger, causing chaos and committing evil deeds” 孽臣奸矯，為昏為妖, whereas the elimination of An Lushan is similar to the heroic mission accomplished by Houyi: “the earth was broken up and the sky was opened up, and the evil calamity was eliminated” 地辟天開，蠲除妖災.<sup>337</sup> More substantially, An Lushan has been portrayed and recorded as a black pig demon in the history. The Tang official Yao Runeng 姚汝能<sup>338</sup> in his *An Lushan shiji* 安祿山事跡 includes the folklore regarding An Lushan’s demonic birth and metamorphosis:

An Lushan, was a mixed barbarian from Ying Prefecture. His childhood name was Yaluoshan. His mother, of the Ashide clan, was a Turkish shaman.

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<sup>337</sup> See *Yuan Cishan ji* 元次山集 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1960) 4:21.

<sup>338</sup> The only biographical information on Yao Runeng is that according to “Treaties of bibliographies” in *Xin Tang shu*, Yao Runeng had been the Commandant of Huayin 華陰. See *Xin Tang shu*, 58.1468.

She had no son, so she prayed to the Yalu Mountain. The deity responded and she gave birth to him. On that night, red lights shone by his side, and all the wild animals howled round about. Astrologers saw the beam of a star of evil magic fall on the tent... There were innumerable omens and marvels. His mother thought he was divine and so called his Yaluoshan.<sup>339</sup>

安祿山，營州雜胡也，小名軋犖山。母阿史德氏，為突厥巫，無子，禱軋犖山，神應而生焉。是夜赤光傍照，羣獸四鳴，望氣者見妖星芒熾落其穹廬。……怪兆奇異不可悉數，其母以為神，遂命名軋犖山焉。

[Tang Xuanzong] (r.712-756) once held a banquet for Lushan at night. Lushan was drunk and fell asleep, and then transformed into a black pig with a dragon head. All the people around the Emperor talked about it with fear, but Xuanzong said, “A dragon-headed pig is incapable to [launch a rebellion].”<sup>340</sup>

[唐玄宗] 嘗夜宴祿山，祿山醉臥，化為一黑豬而龍首。左右遽言之，玄宗曰：“豬龍也，無能為者。”

The above two mythical stories confirm the sinister and demonized image of An Lushan during the Tang dynasty. As a “mixed barbarian”, An Lushan has a non-Han racial origin. His birth omens such as the red lights and the beam of a star of evil magic match the interpretations of An Lushan’s original name which means “light” or “bright” as

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<sup>339</sup> The translation is from Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, 7. See the Chinese text in Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shi ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 73.

<sup>340</sup> Yao, *An Lushan shi ji*, 77.

suggested by W. B. Henning<sup>341</sup> and his posthumous title “Guanglie” 光烈 (literally, “bright and brilliant”), which was given by his successor Shi Siming 史思明 (703-761)<sup>342</sup>. It seems likely that Niu Sengru attempts to use the images of “light” and “brightness” to allude to An Lushan in his tale as well. “The light of lamps” (denghuo 燈火) is the signal that triggers the protagonist to approach the deserted mansion and encounter the pig demon there. After the protagonist entered the mansion, the settings of the place is described as “lamps and candles luminous and resplendent” (*dengzhu huihuang* 燈燭輝煌). When the pig demon arrives, an important signal is still that “fire light glowed and shone” (*huoguang zhaoyao* 火光照耀). Once the pig demon’s hiding place was found, it was illuminated by firewood so that people could clearly observe the pig demon’s original form.

Meanwhile, the two stories also reflect the deceptive and crafty nature of An Lushan. Because of the innumerable omens and marvels occurred on An Lushan’s mythical birthday, even his mother did not realize that the true identity of An Lushan was a demon rather than a deity. And more critically, when An Lu-shan’s demonic form was revealed after he got drunk, Xuanzong still ignored the fact and firmly believed that he had no capability to launch a rebellion. Their attitudes remind us of the dispute, between the villagers and Guo Yuanzhen in the story, regarding whether to treat General Ebony as a *zhenshen* 鎮神 (protective deity) or as an “evil creature.” After Guo Yuanzhen successfully

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<sup>341</sup> “Professor W. B. Henning has very kindly pointed out to me that all three forms are good transcriptions of Sogdian *roxšan-* (*rwxsšn-*, *rwγšn-* ‘light’, ‘bright’), an Iranian word best known in the firm *‘Pwžávnē* the name of the princess of Bactria who became the wife of Alexander the Great.” See Henning’s above opinion and detailed discussions in Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, 15-16.

<sup>342</sup> Yao, *An Lushan shi ji*, 110.

defeated and injured the pig demon in the tale, the reaction of village elders is unexpectedly ridiculous:

The elders got angry at him for injuring their deity. They said: ‘General Ebony is the protective deity of this village. Villagers have worshipped him for a long time...Why would you, a stranger who lost his way, harm our bright deity and bring violence to our people? Whom can this village rely on? We should kill you and offer you as a sacrifice to General Ebony. If not, we should tie you up and hand you over to the local government office.’ They signaled the young men to seize the Duke.

鄉老共怒殘其神，曰：“烏將軍，此鄉鎮神，鄉人奉之久矣，……奈何失路之客，而傷我明神，致暴於人，此鄉何負？當殺公以祭烏將軍，不爾，亦縛送本縣。”揮少年將令執公。

Given the possibility that General Ebony alludes to barbarian general An Lushan, village elders’ reaction towards the pig demon can be read as a historical innuendo of Xuanzong’s attitude towards An Lushan. According to historical documents, Xuanzong revered and trusted An Lushan to the degree that if someone dared to question An Lushan’s loyalty, he would be tied up and handed over to An Lushan himself:

After Lushan had already arrived at Fanyang, he was so anxious that he could not calm down. He had his decision made to rebel against the imperial court. Since that time, if someone said that Lushan would rebel, Xuanzong would tie him up and send him to Lushan. Because of this, none of the

people dared to speak out, but only exchanged their ideas with their eyes.

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祿山既至范陽，憂不自安，始決計稱兵向闕。自是，或言祿山反者，玄宗縛送祿山，以是道路相目，無敢言者。

There were people who returned [from Fanyang] and reported that Lu Shan would rebel, but they were imprisoned in Shang Prefecture. When they were about to be sent to An Lushan, it happened to be the time that Lushan rose in rebellion, so they were released.<sup>344</sup>

奏還者告祿山反，乃囚於商州。將送之，遇祿山起兵，乃放之。

There were many opportunities that Xuanzong could listen to people's advice to eliminate Lushan. When still a general of Zhang Shougui 張守珪 (684-740), An Lushan was sentenced to death penalty. Zhang Jiuling, the Chief Minister at that time, insisted on An Lushan's execution, but unfortunately, Xuanzong did not follow Zhang's advice and pardoned him.<sup>345</sup> Despite of An Lushan's non-Chinese racial background, the favour and trust he received from Xuanzong was remarkable and unparalleled afterwards. He even became the "adopted son" of Imperial Consort Yang 楊貴妃 (719-756).<sup>346</sup> As early as the tenth year of Tianbao period (751), he had "reached a dizzying pinnacle of glory and power

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<sup>343</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shi ji*, 91.

<sup>344</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shi ji*, 91.

<sup>345</sup> Pulleyblank has a thorough study on this historical event. See Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, 116-121.

<sup>346</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shiji*, 82.

with command of the whole eastern half of the northern frontier of China proper.”<sup>347</sup>  
During that period, many people including Suzong had perceived An Lushan’s conspiracy to revolt and suggested to Xuanzong to eliminate him, but Xuanzong also entirely ignored their advice:

At that time, Suzong observed that the evidence of An’s viciousness and rebelliousness was revealed and explained to Xuanzong, but Xuanzong did not accept his advice.<sup>348</sup>

時肅宗覩其兇逆之狀已露，言於玄宗，玄宗不納。

At that time, Yan Guozhong claimed that Lushan would certainly rebel, and said, “If Your Majesty summon him as a test, he would certainly not come.” The Emperor sent people to summon him, Lushan immediately arrived once he heard the order. In the day of *gengzi*, An Lushan visited the Emperor at Huaqing Palace. He wept and said, “Originally, I was a barbarian, but Your Majesty favoured and promoted me to such a point. Now I am resented by Guozhong and I am on the brink of death!” The Emperor had pity on him and granted him numerous money. Because of this, the Emperor was more intimate with and increasing trusted Lushan. Guozhong’s words could not be accepted. The Crown Prince also knew that Lushan would certainly rebel, and explained it to the emperor, but the emperor did not listen, either.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan*, 97.

<sup>348</sup> Yao, *An Lushan shiji*, 90.

<sup>349</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 217.6692.

是時楊國忠言祿山必反，且曰：“陛下試召之，必不來。”上使召之，祿山聞命即至。庚子，見上於華清宮，泣曰：“臣本胡人，陛下寵擢至此，為國忠所疾，臣死無日矣！”上憐之，賞賜巨萬，由是益親信祿山，國忠之言不能入矣。太子亦知祿山必反，言於上，上不聽。

Just as the *Han shu* states that a “pig calamity” is caused by a ruler who only listens to one side and loses his capability to make the right decision, Xuanzong merely listened to “the pig demon” An Lushan’s deceiving words, so the disastrous consequences became unavoidable. Accordingly, the An Lushan rebellion is an unprecedented “pig calamity.” Considering the allegorical meanings of General Ebony and the village elders, Niu Sengru subtly expresses his criticism of Xuanzong and blames the emperor for responsibility for such a tremendous political blunder.

When the protagonist refuted the village elders’ accusation, he also condemned the village people including the village girl’s parents and brother:

You people have no righteous men and you cause your young girls to annually suffer a violent death at the hands of the evil creature. Your accumulated crimes have shaken Heaven.

爾曹無正人，使爾少女年年橫死於妖畜，積罪動天。

This condemnation echoes the incredible crime conducted by the village girl’s father who sold the girl in order to profit five hundred *min* of cash. The village girl might be viewed as the symbol of the great number of miserable victims of the An Lushan rebellion, particularly the female members of both royal and official families. The most horrifying and humiliating slaughter, which happened during the An Lushan rebellion, was that over



one hundred royal family members, mostly females, were slaughtered and their hearts were even taken out as sacrifices to An Lushan's eldest son:

Lushan harbored resentment against [Xuanzong] because of Qingzong's (?-755) death, so as sacrifices for his son Qingzhong, he murdered over one hundred of the emperor's intimate relatives, including Eldest Prince of Huo State, all the prince consorts, grandsons and prince husbands.<sup>350</sup>

祿山怨慶宗死，乃取帝近屬自霍國長公主、諸王妃妾、子孫姻嬙等百餘人害之，以祭慶宗。

An Lushan assigned Sun Xiaozhe to kill and take out the hearts of Eldest Prince of Huo State, prince consorts, princess husbands at Chongren Lane so as to make sacrifices to An Qingzong.<sup>351</sup>

安祿山使孫孝哲殺霍國長公主及王妃、駙馬等於崇仁坊，剗其心，以祭安慶宗。

The rebellious barbarians murdered over eighty people at the street of Chongren, including Eldest Prince of Huo State; Mochen, Prince Consort of King Yong; Yan, Prince Consort of King Yi; Wei, Prince Consort of King Chen; Ren, Prince Consort of King Xin and Princess Husband Yang Fei.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shiji*, 132.

<sup>351</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 218.6984.

<sup>352</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 10.243

逆胡害霍國長公主、永王妃侯莫陳氏、義王妃閻氏、陳王妃韋氏、信王妃任氏、駙馬楊肅等八十餘人於崇仁之街。

Many court officials and their whole family members also died violently:

For the officials who followed the Emperor, [An Lushan] eliminated their whole clans.

群臣從天子者，誅滅其宗。

All the clique members of Yang Guozhong and Guo Lishi and all the people who were hated by Lushan were killed. There were eighty-three people in total. Someone used metal frail to open their skulls.<sup>353</sup>

凡楊國忠、高力士之黨及祿山素所惡者皆殺之，凡八十三人，或以鐵棊揭其腦蓋。

In the light of the symbolic meaning of the village girl, it is very likely that the villagers allude to the Tang court officials and the Emperor who had greatly accommodated and indulged An Lushan. Furthermore, the victim girl also sternly reproached her parents who made her marry the pig demon due to their cupidity and inhumanity:

The girl who had escaped her fate bid farewell to her parents and relatives, saying, “I was blessed to be a human being who entrusted my very substance to blood relatives. I was still an unmarried daughter and certainly had no offense for which I deserved to be killed. Now you coveted a half million cash and made me marry this evil beast. You could bear to leave after locking me up there. How could any real human bear to do that?”

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<sup>353</sup> Yao, *An Lushan shiji*, 132.

得免之女，辭其父母親族曰：“多幸為人，託質血屬，閨闈未出，固無可殺之罪。今者貪錢五十萬，以嫁妖獸，忍鎖而去，豈人所宜！”

Apparently, if the story is read allegorically, the girl's accusation against her despicable father can be read as denouncing towards the important court officials who associated with An Lushan and accepted his bribes to deceive the Emperor. They were the evildoers who sold the country for their own profit:

At that time, the Censor-in-Chief Zhang Lizhen, the Investigation Commissioner of Hebei, went to Pinglu. Lushan was good at flattering and observing other people's feelings. He ingratiated himself to with the favourite of Lizhen and sent gold and silk as gifts to his attendants. After Lizhen returned to the court, he highly appraised Lushan...Xuanzong started being intimate with and trust him.<sup>354</sup>

時御史中丞張利貞為河北採訪使，至平盧。祿山諂佞，善伺人情，曲事利貞，復以金帛遺其左右。利貞歸朝，盛稱祿山之美，玄宗始親信之。

When the Chief Minister of the Ministry of Personnel Xi Jianhou was the Personnel Evaluation Commissioner of Hebei, he presented a memorial to recommend Lushan, [claiming that] he was upright, selfless, solemn and law-abiding.<sup>355</sup>

吏部尚書席建侯為河北黜陟使，表薦祿山公直、無私，嚴正、奉法。

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<sup>354</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shiji*, 74.

<sup>355</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shiji*, 75.

The Right Chief Minister Li Linfu always associated with Lushan and repeatedly recommended him to Xuanzong. Because of this, [the Emperor] particularly favoured him.<sup>356</sup>

右相李林甫素與祿山交通，復屢言於玄宗，由是特加寵遇。

As a heroic and loyal general, Guo Yuanzhen had accomplished great military achievements during the campaigns with the barbarian armies of Tibetan and Turk.<sup>357</sup> He also successfully assisted Xuanzong to pacify the rebellion led by Princess Taiping 太平 (?-713).<sup>358</sup> Meanwhile, there are many anecdotes and folklore about Guo Yuanzhen's chivalrous spirit, fearless mettle, pre-determined destiny.<sup>359</sup> Hence, there are many possible reasons why this military marvel is chosen by Niu Sengru as the protagonist of the tale. However, there are so many discrepancies between the protagonist in the tale and Guo Yuanzhen's historical biographies. One of the examples is that Guo Yuanzhen had already passed away in the first year of Kaiyuan, which completely mismatches the temporal setting presented at the beginning of the tale. Moreover, Guo Yuanzhen passed the Present-scholar Examination when he was only eighteen,<sup>360</sup> whereas the identity of the protagonist is a young scholar who just failed the examination. In contrast with the protagonist's happy ending, Guo's biography shows that Yuanzhen was almost executed by Xuanzong before

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<sup>356</sup> Yao Runeng, *An Lushan shiji*, 75-76.

<sup>357</sup> See Guo Yuanzhen's biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 122.4360-4366.

<sup>358</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 122.4365.

<sup>359</sup> See the detailed argument on this opinion in Deng Yusheng, "Shi fanzhen yi zhengui," 69-74.

<sup>360</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 122.4361.

being exiled to Xinzhou 新州 due to an accidental blunder, and soon passed away in a melancholy mood.<sup>361</sup> Obviously, since Guo Yuanzhen is a celebrated historical figure, these discrepancies should not be explained as merely negligence. If so, why does Niu Sengru intentionally employ so many big discrepancies to suggest that this tale is not about Guo Yuanzhen's true story?

Robert Joe Cutter has discussed the historical inaccuracies in another well-known Tang tale titled “Dongcheng laofu zhuan” 東城老父傳 (The old man of the Eastern Wall). His persuasive analysis suggests that one of the purposes of those inaccuracies is to “rhetorically emphasizes the social or political criticisms”, and the more important function of the historical settings in this tale “is to reflect the decline of dynasty” rather than to create “credibility and verisimilitude”,<sup>362</sup> which offers new perspectives to study the interrelationship of historicity and fictionality in Tang tales. In the light of this viewpoint, we need to further investigate the actual function as well as the reasons behind these historical settings and discrepancies in Tang tales.

When we attempt to seek for a reasonable explanation for the above question, another renowned “Guo, the Duke of Dai” in the Tang dynasty appears, that is, Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697-781), who is most noted for his military strategies and successful fight against An Lushan. On the one hand, the similarities between Guo Yuanzhen and Guo Ziyi in military achievements and historical reputation are striking. Guo Yuanzhen received his

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<sup>361</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 122.4366.

<sup>362</sup> Robert Joe Cutter, “History and ‘The Old man and the Eastern Wall,’” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106.3 (1986): 503-528.

honorable title “the Duke of Dai” after he pacified Prince Taiping’s rebellion in the second year of Xiantian 先天 (713),<sup>363</sup> and Guo Ziyi accepted his in 757 after he regained the two capitals Chang’an and Luoyang from the rebellious armies of An Lushan.<sup>364</sup> Both of them had respectively served as the Chief Minister during the reigns of Xuanzong and Suzong.<sup>365</sup> The history also demonstrates that both generals defeated numerous rebellions and invasions launched by barbarian military commanders. On the other hand, there are many significant differences between their life experiences. One example is that Guo Ziyi never passed any Presented-scholar Examination. Instead, he started as an inferior military official “Left Guard of the Senior Scribe” after he passed the Military-officer Examination and served a variety of military positions in frontier regions during the Kaiyuan and Tianbao period.<sup>366</sup> More substantially, many clues in the tale direct us to further associate the protagonist’s adventurous encounter in the literary work with Guo Ziyi’s life experiences and historical achievements.

The encounter of the tale occurred when the protagonist traveled from Jin 晉 to Fen 汾. On the surface, both places name can be respectively read as Jin Prefecture<sup>367</sup> and Fen

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<sup>363</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 122.4365.

<sup>364</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 120.3452.

<sup>365</sup> See “Zhaixiang biao” 宰相表 (Treaties on Chief Minister) in *Xin Tang shu*, 62.1683, 62.1693.

<sup>366</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 120.3449.

<sup>367</sup> The capital of Jin Prefecture was Linfen 臨汾, located about 20 miles northeast of modern Linyi city in Shanxi. It covered the area of the modern cities including Fenxi 汾西, Hongdong 洪洞, Fushan 浮山, Anze 安澤, and Hoxian 霍縣. Tang Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 5:46-47.

Prefecture.<sup>368</sup> An interesting finding is that both place names also hint at Jinyang 晉陽<sup>369</sup> and Fenyang 汾陽<sup>370</sup>, which are connected to Guo Ziyi's ancestral home and enfeoffed title. Based on the epitaph of Guo Ziyi's father Guo Jingzhi 郭敬之 (667-774), the Guo clan originated from Guoshu 虢叔 of the Zhou dynasty (1046-56 B.C.E.) and it was a celebrated clan in Taiyuan 太原 commandery<sup>371</sup> that was first established by the King of Zhuangxiang 莊襄 (281-247 B.C.E.) of the Qin in 247 B.C.E.<sup>372</sup> The capital of Taiyuan commandery was Jinyang during the Qin dynasty.<sup>373</sup> In addition, the enfeoffed title of Guo Ziyi is “the King of Fenyang” (Fenyang *junwang* 汾陽郡王). Many scholars even consider this title as related to his ancestral home because Tang scholar Li Fu's remark that “all the enfeoffed titles are certainly from the place where people obtained their clan name” 凡所封邑，必取得姓之地。<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> The capital of Fen Prefecture was Fenzhou 汾州, located about 40 miles northwest of modern Fenyang 汾陽 City in Shanxi. It covered the area of the modern cities including Linshi 靈石, Jiexiu 介休 and Pingyao 平遙. Tang Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 5:46-47.

<sup>369</sup> Located at modern Taiyuan 太原 city. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 2:9-10.

<sup>370</sup> Located at modern Jingle 靜樂 county. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 2:9-10.

<sup>371</sup> Please refer to “You Tang gu zhong dafu shi chijie Shouzhou zhu junshi Shouzhou cishi shangzhuguo zeng taobao Guogong miaobei ming” 有唐故中大夫使持節壽州諸軍事壽州刺史上柱國贈太保郭公廟碑銘, in Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818) eds., et al., *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 339.3437b.

<sup>372</sup> See “Qin benji” 秦本紀 (the Annals of Qin) in *Shiji zhengyi*, 5.219.

<sup>373</sup> Tian, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 2:9-10.

<sup>374</sup> See details of this popular opinion among Chinese scholars in Li Yumin 李裕民, “Guo Ziyi zuji kao” 郭子儀祖籍考, *Changshi yanjiu* 城市研究, no. 1, 1994: 62-64; Zhang Zhirong 張志榮 and Jiang Guomin 姜國民, “Guo Ziyi zuji zaitan” 郭子儀祖籍再探, *Cangshang* 滄桑, no. 3, 2002: 37-39; Wu Huimin 武慧民 and Bai Kaiwen 白凱文, “Taiyuan Guosi yuanyuan liuchang” 太原郭氏源遠流長, *Wenwu shijie* 文武世界, no. 5, 2015.

After the protagonist slayed the pig demon and saved the village girl, she insisted on marrying him and highly praised him as the savior who gave back her life:

“If not for the benevolence and bravery of the Duke Guo, would I still be alive today? So I died by my parents’ hands, and was given back to life by Duke Guo. I request to follow the lead of the Duke Guo, and never again give a thought to my hometown.” She wept and did obeisance to them and then followed the Duke.

“若非郭公之仁勇，寧有今日。是妾死於父母而生於郭公也。請從郭公，不復以舊鄉為念矣。”泣拜而從公。

Based on the above reading, it is reasonable to further interpret the condemnation of the girl’s father and the appreciation for Guo Yuanzhen as a remarkable contrast between the evil court officials represented by Li Linfu who were bribed by An Lushan and the upright Duke Guo. In the meantime, similar to the protagonist who was viewed by the victim girl as her rescuer, Guo Ziyi is valued by the history as the salvation of the country, especially the Tang regime. Both standard histories of Tang comment that he “reestablished the imperial family” 再造王室.<sup>375</sup> Suzong appreciated his military achievements so deeply that he stated “although it is my court and country, it is certainly reestablished by you” 雖吾之家國，實由卿再造。<sup>376</sup> When Dezong ascended the throne, he also paid respect and gratitude to Guo Ziyi by granting him the honorable title “The Venerated Father” (*shangfu*

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<sup>375</sup> See *Jiu Tang shu*, 130.3474; *Xin Tang shu*, 137.4614.

<sup>376</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 120.3452.



尚父).<sup>377</sup> More interestingly, several princesses were married to Guo Ziyi's decedents by Tang emperors to display their appreciation and favoritism towards the Guo family.<sup>378</sup> In addition to the royal marriages, his decedents also inherited his honorable title "The Duke of Dai".<sup>379</sup>

At the happy ending of the tale, the protagonist married the village girl, having several sons, and enjoyed noble status, longevity and peaceful life:

Consequently, he accepted her as his concubine, and she later gave birth to several children. The Duke also achieved such noble status that all the positions to which he was appointed were high ranking. It is manifestly clear that every affair is predetermined, and even though one is born far away and is casted aside, no demon or deity can harm one.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 120.3465.

<sup>378</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 137.4611-4612.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> This is an allusion referring to the Guo clan's ancestor Hou Ji 后稷 (The Lord of Agriculture), the legendary god of farming and cultivation in Chinese mythology. Hou Ji is the earliest ancestor of the Zhou dynasty with the *cognomen* Ji 姬 and his original name was *qi* 棄 (The Discarded) which was associated with his miracle birth: "The Hou Chi of the Zhou [state] had the *praenomen* Ch'i. His mother was a daughter of the Yu-t'ai Clan, called Chiang Yüan. Chiang Yüan was the primary wife of Emperor K'u. Once Chiang Yüan went to the wilderness and saw a giant footprint. She happily rejoiced and had the desire to step in it. When she stepped in it her abdomen moved as if she were carrying a baby inside. When she reached term, she gave birth to a son. She regarded him as inauspicious, so she discarded him in a narrow alley. The livestock which passed by all avoided him and would not step on him. So she removed him and put in a forest, but it happened that there were a lot of people in the forest. So she moved him again and discarded him on the ice in a ditch, [but] a flock of birds used their wings to cover and cushion him. Chiang Yüan then regarded him as divine; subsequently she took him back and raised him. Because she wanted to discard him at first, she called him Ch'i... Emperor Shun enfeoffed him at T'ai, called him the Hou Chi, and distinguished him with the *cognomen*, Chi" 周后稷，名弃。其母有郤氏女，曰姜原。姜原為帝嚳元妃。姜原出野，見巨人跡，心忻然說，欲踐之，踐之而身動如孕者。居期而生子，以為不祥，弃之隘巷，馬牛過者皆辟不踐；徙置之林中，適會山林多人，遷之；而弃渠中冰上，飛鳥以其翼覆薦之。姜原以為神，遂收養長之。初欲弃之，因名曰弃。.....[帝舜]封弃於郤，號曰后稷，別姓姬氏。 See the original text in "Zhou benji" 周本紀 (The basic annals of the Zhou) of the *Shiji*, 4.111-112. See the translation in *The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China*, vol.1, in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, edited by William Nienhauser, Jr.

遂納為側室，生子數人。公之貴也，皆任大官之位。事已前定，雖生遠地而棄焉，鬼神終不能害，明矣。

In terms of Guo Ziyi's historical biographies, he had eight sons, and everyone was famous for achieving noble status with high rankings: "All of [Guo Ziyi's] eight sons including Yao, Gan, Xi, Po, Wu, Ai, Shu, Ying, and seven sons-in-law are prominent officials of the court" 子曜、盱、晞、咄、晤、曖、曙、映等八人，壻七人，皆朝廷重官。<sup>381</sup> In addition, he also enjoyed longevity and was considered as "a person who were supported by gods" 神明扶持者, "had eternal fortune and prominent positions" 福祿永終, and even Duke Huan 桓 of Qi 齊 (685-643 B.C.E.) and the Duke Wen 文 of Jin 晉 (697-628 B.C.E.)<sup>382</sup> could not compare with him.<sup>383</sup>

Taking into account the above analysis, the historical significance of An Lushan rebellion and its major suppressor Guo Ziyi is deliberately embedded in "Guo Daigong", a Tang tale on a pig demon and its slayer. Given the historical and political context of its author's time, other deeper meanings are also blended into the tale. In the history, both *fanzhen* 藩鎮 (defense commands) and their administrators called *Jiedu shi* 节度使 (Military Governors) were established in Tang Ruizong's 睿宗 (r. 684-710) reign.<sup>384</sup> By

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(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 55. Meanwhile, according to the *Xin Tang shu*, the Guo clan originated from Ji 姬 family and the clan name Guo 郭 was transformed from the phonetic sound of the surname of Guo Shu 虢叔, the brother of King Wen 文 of the Zhou. See *Xin Tang shu*, 74a.3114.

<sup>381</sup> See *Jiu Tang shu*, 120.3466; also see *Xin Tang shu*, 137.4614.

<sup>382</sup> Both Dukes were overlords of the Central plain during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.E.). See their biographies in Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 32.1485-1487; 39.1656-1669.

<sup>383</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 137.4614.

<sup>384</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 210.6656.

the late stage of Xuanzong's 玄宗 (r. 712-756) reign, ten more defense commands were set up along the frontier to defend against attacks from foreign tribes.<sup>385</sup> Before An Lushan started his rebellion, he had become "the unchallenged Governor of all north-eastern China".<sup>386</sup> After the rebellion was pacified, these areas were still mostly dominated by barbarian military generals.<sup>387</sup> In 782, Military Governor of Huaixi 淮西, Li Xilie 李希烈 (?-786) allied with the other four military governors to institute a revolt resulting in the establishment of semi-autonomous areas in north China during the mid-to-late Tang period.<sup>388</sup> Since that time, a series of rebellions made an already enfeebled imperial court fall into a more dangerous state. Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819) in his "Fengjian lun" 封建論 (Essay on feudalism) penetratingly analyzes the origin and abuses of provincial militarism in his time:

The defense commands of Tang, at the beginning, were not based on the feudal system. Only after the Tianbao [period], when the An [Lushan] and Shi [Shiming] rebellion was pacified, the Emperor and the ministers hoped to live in peace, so they divided the land of Hebei like a melon to give it to former rebel generals. The policy protected and cultivated the roots of

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<sup>385</sup> Du You 杜佑 (735-812), *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 32.894-896

<sup>386</sup> C. A. Peterson, "Court and province in mid- and late T'ang," in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3 Sui and Tang China, 589-906, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 469.

<sup>387</sup> Fu Lecheng 傅樂成, *Han Tang shi lunji* 漢唐史論集 (Lianjing chuban gongsi, 1977), 398.

<sup>388</sup> Please refer to C. A. Peterson, "Court and province in mid- and late T'ang," 497-510.

misfortune, and resulted in the source of calamities. The rebellious ones took advantage of this, and then appointed officials without imperial permission, used taxes as their private property, and did not contribute anything to the court, which was the same as the catastrophe recorded in *The Spring and Autumn* that the feudal lords were strong while the loyal family was weak.<sup>389</sup>

按唐之藩鎮，初非有取于封建之制。特自天寶之後，安 [祿山] 史 [思明] 亂定，君臣幸安，瓜分河北地以授叛將。護養孽萌，以成禍根。亂人乘之，遂擅署吏，以賦稅自私，不朝獻於庭，其與《春秋》所謂諸侯強而王室弱之患等。

Niu Sengru was only seven years junior to Liu Zongyüan and served as the Chief Minister during the reigns of three emperors including Muzong, Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 824-826) and Wenzong. He also witnessed the intolerable pressure on the imperial court imposed by the rebellious military governors throughout the time. Thus, it is not surprising that he indirectly manifest his political attitude towards his contemporary provincial militarism in his pieces of Tang tales. In “Guo Daigong”, he uses both characters *zhen* 鎮 and *shi* 使 in the phrases like “*zhenshen*” 鎮神, “*cheng tian wei zhen*” 承天為鎮 and “*tian qi shi yin yao zhi shou hu*” 天豈使淫妖之獸乎 to respectively allude to *fanzhen* and *jiedu shi*. More importantly, he also compares military governors to feudal lords and forcibly claims the obligation and determination of exerting the utmost endeavours to bringing the

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<sup>389</sup>See Liu Zongyüan, *Liu Hedong ji* 柳河東集 (Taibei: Shijie shuju, 1961), 31.

lawless generals and rebellious military governors to justice through the protagonist's expression:

You fellows are seasoned in years, but not in affairs. I am a person who thoroughly understands reason in this world, so you all should listen to what I say. Deities receive the will of Heaven to protect their area. Isn't this the same as feudal lords who accept the mandate from the Son of Heaven to administer the world under Heaven?

爾徒老於年，未老於事。我天下之達理者，爾衆聽吾言。夫神，承天而為鎮也，不若諸侯受命於天子而疆理天下乎？

If feudal lords fished for beauties in the Central States, wouldn't the Son of Heaven be angry? If they wounded or killed people, wouldn't the Son of Heaven launch an expedition?

使諸侯漁色於中國，天子不怒乎？殘虐於人，天子不伐乎？

Moreover, such a beast of lecherous demon is a creature condemned by Heaven and earth. I bear the righteousness in executing him. How can that be improper?

且淫妖之獸，天地之罪畜也，吾執正以誅之，豈不可乎！

How do you know that Heaven did not send me to avenge it?

安知天不使吾雪焉？

In other words, Niu Sengru hopes that just as the An Lushan rebellion was crushed in 757, so would the provincial rebellions of his time be pacified by the heroic military commanders like Guo Ziyi and Guo Yuanzhen. He believes that all the outlaws and rebels

should be brought to justice without any mercy or indulgence. This attitude also matches the political advocacy and administrative ambition he harbors in the history. The *Jiu Tang shu* records that in the first year of Changqin 長慶 (821), the Regional Chief Li Zhichen 李直臣 committed corruption offence and should be sentenced to death, but Li bribed influential eunuchs to appeal for him. Liu Sengru was the Vice Censor-in-chief at that time. When he was personally requested by Muzong to pardon Li Zhichen from judicial charge because of his talents, not only did he firmly reject the emperor's request, he also used An Lushan as an example to explicate the importance of strictly enforcing laws and judicial justice: "It is just because of the talented ones that emperors established laws to restrict arch-careerists. Both [An] Lushan and Zhu Ci (742-784) were superior to other people due to their talents, but they caused the world to be turbulent and chaotic. Zhichen is merely a man of small talent, why should we treat him leniently" 帝王立法，束縛奸雄，正為才多者。祿山、朱泚以才過人，濁亂天下，況直臣小才，又何屈法哉。<sup>390</sup> In this regard, the protagonist's dispute with the villagers in the tale is not merely a severe criticism of Xuanzong and his court officials. The condemnations of the pig demon are not limited to delivering Niu's indignation and castigation against An Lushan and the rebellion, either. Beside the historical meanings, Niu Sengru also attempts to entrust "Guo Daigong" with profound realistic concerns, including biased emperors, dastardly officials, revolting military governors and unruly barbarian generals.

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<sup>390</sup> See the record in Niu Sengru's biography, *Jiu Tang shu*, 172.4469-4470.

## 2. “LI WEIGONG JING”: A CATASTROPHIC FLOOD AND THE NIU-LI FACTIONAL STRIFE

According to the *Taiping guangji*, “Li Weigong Jing” 李衛公靖 (Li Jing, the Duke of Wei) is from Li Fuyan’s *Xu Xuanguai lu*.<sup>391</sup> This tale is also collected in the *Guojin shuohai*<sup>392</sup> and the *Yishi souqi*.<sup>393</sup> In this story, the protagonist Li Jing 李靖 (571-649) also experienced supernatural occurrence after he lost his way in the darkness, but what he encountered was not a ferocious demon, but a stately deity, Dragon Lady. Under the suggestion of a young maid, she requested him to deliver rain for her absent sons, but unfortunately, Li disobeyed her instruction and the village that he owed a debt of great gratitude was completely drowned by a catastrophic flood. Many modern scholars focus on the tragedy and pay attention to this tale’s notable connection with the story titled “Yingyang Lizheng” 潁陽里正 (A village headman in Yingyang) from the *Guang yi ji* 廣異記 [Great Book of Marvels] composed by Dai Fu 戴孚 (fl. 757).<sup>394</sup> Some of them even consider it the expanded version of “Yingyang Lizheng” with more characters and literary descriptions.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Li Fang, *Taiping guangji*, 418.3407-3409.

<sup>392</sup> In the “Shuoyuan” Section of *Gujin shuohai*, 33.1-3.

<sup>393</sup> Wang Yuncheng, *Yishi souqi*, ren 壬 juan, 8.1a-5a, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu*.

<sup>394</sup> For this opinion, please refer to Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, 702.

<sup>395</sup> These scholars are represented by Chen Wenxin (*Zhongguo chuanqi xiaoshuo shihua*, 292-295) and Cheng Yizhong (*Tangdai xiaoshuo shi*, 190-191).

## 2.1 Basic Story Plot and “Yingyang Lizheng”

### “Yingyang Lizheng”<sup>396</sup>

A Village Headman in Yingyang<sup>397</sup> told [me] that a villager whose name was unknown once went back to the village while he was still drunk. When he arrived at the Temple of the Younger Aunt,<sup>398</sup> he was so drunk that he tied his horse and sprawled under the gate of the Temple. Gradually he began to wake up. However, though he could turn his head, he still could not get up. Then he heard someone knocking at the Temple’s gate, and the voice was very severe. In a moment, he heard a voice in the temple ask, “Who is there?” The visitor responded, “The official who is in charge issued an ordered to find a person to deliver rain.” The person in the Temple said, “The whole family went to the Mount [Song] Temple to visit. Now there is nobody here.” The visitor said, “Just use the person who is lying under the gate. This is also suitable.” The person in the Temple said, “This is a passing traveler. How could we use him?” After painstakingly argued with [the visitor], the person [in the Temple] still could not be excused from the duty.

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<sup>396</sup> This translation is based on the text in the *Taiping guang ji*, 304.2413.

<sup>397</sup> Located at the west of modern Dengfeng 登封 county in Henan province. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 4:44-45.

<sup>398</sup> According to Dudbridge’s research, “婦” should be read as “姨” here and Shaoyi 少姨 Temple is located at Shaoshi 少室 Mount. See Glen Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T’ang China: A Reading of Tai Fu’s ‘Kuang-i chi’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 157.



Accordingly, he called the villager and ordered him to get up. The villager followed him to a place that was replete with floating clouds, misty and steaming. There was also a creature like a camel. The person [in the Temple] carried the villager to the back of the camel, gave him a jar, and warned him, “Just carry this jar upright, and do not let it tip over.” Accordingly, the creature walked on, and the water in the jar continuously became raindrops and dripped down. At that time, there was a drought for a long time. When he looked down and saw the place he resided in, he was afraid that the rain was not enough, so he tipped the jar. After he delivered the rain, the official who was in charge released him and allowed him to return. When he reached the gate of the Temple, he saw his own body was in the water. As soon as he walked forward and entered his body, he came back to life again. He then rode his horse and returned home. But because he tipped the jar, his residence had been swept away by the water, and his whole household had died. Since then, the villager was insane. After several months, he also passed away.

潁陽里正說某不得名，曾乘醉還村，至少婦祠醉，因繫馬臥祠門下。久之欲醒，頭向轉，未能起。聞有人擊廟門，其聲甚厲。俄聞中間是何人，答云：“所由令覓一人行雨。”廟中云：“舉家往[嵩]嶽廟作客，今更無人。”其人云：“只將門下臥者亦得。”廟中人云：“此過客，那得使他。”苦爭不免，遂呼某令起。隨至一處。濛濛悉是雲氣。有物如駱駝。其人抱某上駝背，以一瓶授之，誠云：“但正抱瓶，

無令傾側。”其物遂行，瓶中水紛紛然作點而下。時天久旱，下視見其居處，恐雨不足，因爾傾瓶。行雨既畢，所由放還。至廟門，見已屍在水中，乃前入便活，乘馬還家。以傾瓶之故，其宅為水所漂，人家盡死。某自此發狂，數月亦卒。

The *Guang yi ji* is a collection of supernatural tales in twenty scrolls composed in the eighth-century. Dudbridge has done painstaking study on this work. His research reveals that Dai Fu often moved around in the country, acquainted himself with the local inferior officials, selected tales widely circulated in local social meetings, and wrote them down.<sup>399</sup> In a modern reader's mind, these tales are full of fantasy, imagination and even absurdity, but Dudbridge remarks that actually, they are “part of a more general pattern which marries typical phenomena of Chinese religious experience to actual provincial situations”.<sup>400</sup> In other words, like many stories which are categorized with *zhiguai* generic label, historicity is presented in a form of fantasy. Of course, the story introduced above is not an exception. The beginning of the tale clearly states that this is a gossipy record of a Village Headman in Yingyang, which not only enhances the authenticity of the story, but also indirectly claims who should be responsible for the story's factuality. If we borrow Dudbridge's terms, the tale's “inner story”<sup>401</sup> lies in a drunken villager's peculiar but tragic adventure at the Temple of the Younger Aunt. At the beginning of the story, the villager

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<sup>399</sup> Dudbridge, “Tang Tales and Tang Cults,” in *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 114.

<sup>400</sup> Dudbridge, “Tang Tales and Tang Cults,” 115.

<sup>401</sup> For Dudbridge's definition on “inner story” and “outer story”, please refer to “A sequence of voices”, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China*, 14-15.

appeared as an imprudent “intruder” who invaded a goddess’s territory unconsciously because of his excessive drinking. This offense and neglect triggered his later misfortune. Moreover, in most *zhiguai* stories, it was in “a dream, trance or vision of a kind that separates the subject from his surroundings”<sup>402</sup>, while the villager in the story was in an intoxicated situation: “He could turn his head, but he still could not get up.” This dilemma is more similar to a nightmarish sense of bewildered helplessness against a mysterious goddess’s power and will. The disastrous destiny which is out of his own control is also suggested here. When he was recruited to deliver rain for the deity, he neglected the instruction again due to his personal motives, which finally brought the dreadful flood to all his family members. The tale’s “outer story” focuses on the local people’s worship of the goddess of the Younger Aunt. Dudbridge explains that according to Yang Jiong’s 楊炯 (650-?) “Shaoshi shan Shaoyi miao bei” 少室山少姨廟碑 (Inscription of the Younger Aunt Temple in the Shaoshi Mount), the Goddess of the Younger Aunt in Mount Song is the younger sister to Yü the Great’s wife and therefore younger aunt to his son Qi 啟.<sup>403</sup> Because of their relationships with Yü, both sisters were worshiped by the people in the Mount Song area. After Emperor Wu 武 (r. 624-705) conducted Feng 封 and Shan 禪 rites on Song Mount in 696, the holy status of the Temple of the Younger Aunt was further highly promoted.<sup>404</sup> The tale is the reflection of such a sacred and inviolable status. The

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<sup>402</sup> Dudbridge, “Tang Tales and Tang Cults,” 116.

<sup>403</sup> Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China* 157. See Yang Jiong’s inscription in Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) et al., eds., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 878.4531b-4634a.

<sup>404</sup> *Zhizi tongjian*, 205.6503.

Tang people who worshiped the Goddess of the Younger Aunt believed that because she is the sister-in-law of Yǔ, she also possesses the divine power to control floods, and if anyone has the audacity to offend her or neglect her divine edicts, he and even his family will be absolutely punished by flood. Therefore, these type of stories were widely circulated as authentic historical records to demonstrate and enhance the religious belief of the goddess at the local level during the Tang period.

On one hand, as modern scholars have pointed out, the account on Li Jing draws on the basic plot of “Yingyang Lizheng”: A person from a mortal world unconsciously entered a female deity’s territory. Because the deity who was responsible for delivering rain was unavailable at that time, the person was hastily recruited to carry out the essential task. However, the person did not follow the deity’s instruction due to his private motives, he caused a catastrophic flood and all the people that he cared about were drowned.

On the other hand, the differences between the two stories are prominent. In terms of the Chinese traditional belief of Dragon King (*longwang* 龙王), dragons are often associated with delivering rain to end a drought. The sacred local Goddess of the Younger Aunt is in charge of rain and flood in “Yingyang Lizheng”, so Li Fuyan uses a female deity Dragon Lady rather than Dragon King to replace her in his tale. We must notice, however, that once this important replacement happens, the original religious worship and admonishment have been entirely dissolved. The main interest of the account has also been shifted from the failure to deliver rain for deity to an anecdote regarding why during his entire life, Li Jing was not qualified for the post of prime minister.

## 2.2 Allegorical Reading of “Li Weigong Jing”

One consensus has been achieved among many modern scholars that Tang tales in *chuanqi* style mainly evolved from the *shizhuan* 史傳 (historical biography) tradition in China, both the official and unofficial biographies of the previous dynasties respectively influenced the source, structure and style of Tang tales.<sup>405</sup> This account also follows the narrative style of historical biography: The verifiable historical figure Li Jing replaces the unknown villager and becomes the protagonist of the story. The approximate time when the event occurred and the milieu where Li Jing lived are briefly explained at the beginning of the tale. Many narrative details including the description of characters, dialogues, mental activities, and so forth are also presented. Similar to traditional official biographies, the account ends with a “justification” which states the author’s personal comment on the event. In *Guojin shuohai* 古今說海, it is even categorized, due to its historical settings, under supplemental biography with the title “Li Weigong biezhuan” 李衛公別傳 (The supplemental biography of the Duke Wei, Li [Jing]). At the first glance, the historical credibility and verisimilitude seemly have been greatly enhanced here in comparison with “Yingyang Lizheng.”

Nevertheless, similar to the tale “Guo Daigong”, the discrepancies between the depiction of the protagonist in the tale and the historical records on Li Jing are so evident that it is impossible to ignore. As a successful commanding general who is famous for

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<sup>405</sup>For detailed explanations on this point view, please refer to William H. Nienhauser, Jr., “Tang tales,” chapter 33 in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, edited by Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 578-94; Cheng Yizhong, Cheng Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shihua* 唐代小說史話 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1990), 9-13.

military strategies, Li Jing was highly respected by the people of Tang and later generations. The appreciation for his strategy and wisdom has been recorded in various historical texts. Meanwhile, because of his wisdom and talents, he was also appointed as the chief minister during the reign of Emperor Taizong. The position “the Jointly Manager of Affairs with the Secretariat-Chancellery” (*tong zhongshu menxia pingzhangshi* 同中書門下平章事) which equals the position of chief minister was first particularly set up for him in the eighth year of Zhenyuan 貞元 (643).<sup>406</sup> Thus, another contemporaneous Minister Wang Gui 王珪 (570-639) commented: “[Li Jing] has both capabilities of cultural edification and military cultivation. When he is out of court, he is able to be a commanding general; when he is in the court, he is able to be a minister”兼資文武，出將入相。<sup>407</sup> Yet in the account, Li Jing acted just like a muddleheaded villager, completely neglected the essential principle as instructed by Dragon Lady, and finally committed such a foolish blunder with an irrevocable consequence because of his personal gratitude to the village. When Li Jing was facing how to choose the retainers, his thoughts were still very insensitive and unwise. Because he choose the wrong retainer, the closing comment even wipes out his glorious history as a great minister:

Thereafter, he wound up settling many invasions through clever military strategies, and his achievements covered the empire, that he never reached the position of minister— was that because he did not obtain the delighted

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<sup>406</sup> Zhang Zhuangxin 張創新, *Zhongguo zhengzhi zhidu shi* 中國政治制度史 (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2009), 134.

<sup>407</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 98.3889.

lackey? ... If he had chosen both lackeys at that time, then he would have surely attained both positions of minister and general.

其後竟以兵權靜寇難，功蓋天下。而終不及于相。豈非取奴之不得乎？……向使二奴皆取，即極將相矣。

If we follow Cutter's thinking on historical inaccuracies once again to study this apparent anecdote, it will be reconfirmed that the function of historical settings in Li Fuyan's tale is far from creating credibility and verisimilitude. More to the point, just as the protagonist the Duke of Dai, [Sir] Guo alludes to Guo Ziyi in "Guo Daigong," The Duke of Wei, [Sir] Li described in "Li Weigong Jing" also hints at Li Deyu, a significant political figure with the same honorable title and surname during Li Fuyan's time.

Before we discuss the above assumption further, it is necessary to examine the tale's historical and political context. Beginning from the reign of Xianzong to the reign of Xuanzong, there was an over forty-year long political struggle conventionally known as the "Niu-Li factional strife" in the Tang history. The focus of the struggle was in pursuit of the political power and prime ministership of the Tang central government. McMullen states his conclusion about competition among Tang scholars: "The main feature of the milieu in which T'ang scholars lived was the intense competition to gain entry to the bureaucracy at Ch'ang-an and to rise high in the hierarchy. Competition of political influence and ambition for the rewards of high office lay behind many T'ang attitudes."<sup>408</sup> Niu Sengru and Li Deyu are considered by the majority of modern historians as the

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<sup>408</sup> David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 251.

protagonists who led and contributed to this lengthy strife.<sup>409</sup> *Zizhi tongjian* and Tang standard histories record how they retaliated against each other and the major clashes on prime ministership between the two political factions. When Niu Sengru's faction was in charge of central government, Li Deyu and followers were purged from the court relentlessly, whereas once Li was in power, he would make every effort to expel the core members of Niu's faction from the center of Tang political stage:

[Li Fengji] intended to ally with Sengru to further establish his faction, so he drove out Deyu from the court to be the Surveillance Commissioner of Zhexi. Soon after this, Sengru became the Prime Minister. Because of this, Li and Niu started breeding enmity against each other.<sup>410</sup>

[李逢吉] 欲引僧孺益樹黨，乃出德裕為浙西觀察使。俄而僧孺入相，由是牛、李之憾結矣。

[In the first month of the fourth year of Taihe (830),] Li Zongmin recommended Niu Sengru. In the day of *xinmou*, Sengru was appointed as the Vice Minister of the Ministry of War and the Prime Minister. As a result, the two persons squeezed out Li Denyu's faction and gradually expelled them.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> For detailed discussion on the formation and development of Niu-Li fractional strife, please refer to "Court politics in Late T'ang times", *The Cambridge History of China*, 639-654.

<sup>410</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 105.5328.

<sup>411</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 244.7869.



[太和四年正月] 李宗閔引薦牛僧孺；辛卯，以僧孺為兵部尚書、同平章事。於是二人相與排擯李德裕之黨，稍稍逐之。

[In the fourth year of Huichang (844),] Li Deyu harboured resentment against the Grand Mentor of the Heir Apparent of the Regency in the Eastern Capital Niu Sengru and the Regional Chief of Huzhou Li Zongmin... The emperor was furious, so he demoted Sengru to be the Junior Guardian of the Heir of Branch Office and demoted Zongmin to be the Regional Chief of Zhangzhou. In the *wuzi* day, he further demoted Sengru and Zongmin to be the Regional Chief of Dingzhou and the Chief Clerk of Zhangzhou. In the eleventh month, once again, he demoted Niu Sengru to be the Chief Clerk of Xunzhou and permanently exiled Zhongmin to Fengzhou.<sup>412</sup>

[會昌四年] 李德裕怨太子太傅東都留守牛僧孺、湖州刺史李宗閔……上大怒，以僧孺為太子少保分司，宗閔為漳州刺史；戊子，再貶僧孺汀州刺史，宗閔漳州長史。十一月，復貶牛僧孺循州長史，宗閔長流封州。

Beside the inner and outer courts, another important arena for factional struggle is the literary world, which has been expounded by many scholars and their works.<sup>413</sup> The

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<sup>412</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 248.8012-8013.

<sup>413</sup> There are many good examples of this opinion, such as Fu Xiren, *Niu Li dangzheng yu tangdai wenxue*, 233-249; Cheng Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shi*, 192-197; Bian Xiaoxuan, *Tang chuanqi xintan*, 67-87; Wang Mengou, “‘Zhou Qin xing ji’ yu ‘Zhou Qin xing ji lun’ de zhuzhe wenti” 周秦行紀與周秦行紀論的作者問題, *Zhongwai wenxue* 中外文學 1.2 (1972): 22-28; Li Zongwei, *Tangren chuanqi*, 100-101; Chen Wenxin, *Zhongguo chuanqi xiaoshuo shihua*, 283-285.

Tang tales represented by “Zhou Qin xing ji”, “Niu Yang ri li” and “Xu Niu Yang ri li” 續牛羊日曆 are widely considered as political attacks on Niu Sengru launched by Li Deyu’s faction. As to the article titled “Zhou Qin xing ji lun” 周秦行紀論 which was included in Li Deyu’s collection, Bian Xiaoxuan comments: “The false charge against Niu Sengru was further intensified in the article. With a tense and murderous atmosphere, [the author] intends to deliver him up to death” 此文對牛僧孺的誣陷，變本加厲，殺氣騰騰，欲滅其族。<sup>414</sup> Bian also posits that the Tang collection titled *Yuquanzi* 玉泉子 by an anonymous author are reflections on Niu-Li factional strife, because they intentionally defame Niu Sengru and his family members with fabricated stories.<sup>415</sup> One of these stories entitled “Huanlong zhe” 豢龍者 (The person who was able to cultivate dragons) is about how Niu Sengru caused a catastrophic flood due to his ignorance and bigotry:

When Niu Sengru was the Military Governor of Xiangyang, because of an extended drought, he prayed [to Heaven], but there was no response. There was a hermit and everyone said he was the person who was able to cultivate dragons. The Master asked him to deliver rain, but the hermit answered, “There was no dragon among the Yangtze River and Han River. Only in a low-lying lake there is one. But it is a black dragon, if we drive it out by force, it will certainly cause a disaster and [the situation will be] difficult to

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<sup>414</sup> Bian Xiaoxuan, “Niu Li dangzheng shi de sipian zuopin kaocha” 牛李黨爭時的四篇作品考察, *Wenshi zhishi* 文史知識, no. 6, 2001, 16.

<sup>415</sup> Bian Xiaoxuan, “Tang xiaoshuo ji Yuquanzi de zhengzhi qinxiang” 唐小說玉泉子的政治傾向, *Nantong shifan xueyuan xuebao* 南通师范学院学报 16.3 (2000): 10-14.

control.” [Niu Sengru] firmly ordered him to do it. As expected, there was a heavy rain, but Han River flooded, and thousands of households were drowned. In order to escape from any criminal charge, the hermit secretly ran away. After then years, he was still alive and someone saw him in another place.<sup>416</sup>

牛僧孺鎮襄州日，以久旱，祈禱無應，有處士，眾云豢龍者，公請致雨。處士曰：“江漢間無龍，獨一湫泊中有之。黑龍也，強驅之，必慮為災難制。”固命之，果有大雨，漢水泛濫，漂溺萬戶。處士避罪亦潛去。十年，有人於他處見猶在。

In the first year of Huichang (841), Niu Sengru was demoted by Li Deyu from a military governor with real political power to an official with an idle post due to the disastrous flood in Xiangyang:

In the first year of Huichang, the Han River flooded and damaged city walls. [Niu Sengru] was punished for not taking preventive precautions and demoted to be the Junior Guardian of the Heir.<sup>417</sup>

會昌元年，漢水溢，壞城郭，坐不謹防，下遷太子少保。

Formerly, the Han River flooded and damaged people’s residencies in Xiangzhou, so Li Deyu considered it Sengru’s fault and ousted him from his post.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Anonymous, *Yuquanzi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 10.

<sup>417</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 246.7955.

<sup>418</sup> *Xin tang shu*, 174.5232.

先是漢水溢，壞襄州民居。故李德裕以為僧孺罪而廢之。

Hu Shanxing quotes historians comments to add an annotation on this historical incident, and suggested: “Li Deyu ousted Niu Sengru from his post because of private malice” 李德裕以私怨廢牛僧孺.<sup>419</sup> Apparently, the supernatural story is associated with the historical incident of Niu Sengru. Bian cites many historical documents, including the above ones to demonstrate that factional enmity and personal grudge were embedded in this unjust penalty, i.e., quite a few officials experienced the same catastrophic flood at Xiangyang, but none of them was punished or even blamed.<sup>420</sup> Moreover, in the epitaphs for Niu Sengru written by Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852) and Li Yu 李珣 (785-853) respectively, this punishment is also viewed as Li Deyu’s political retaliation and frame-up.<sup>421</sup> Thus, Bian concludes that Li Deyu successfully made use of the flood at Xiangyang to defeat Niu Sengru, while the *Yuquanzi* “attacks Niu Sengru from another perspective, teases Niu Sengru that he used superstitious methods to combat drought and beg for rain and caused an extraordinary flood, and thus insinuating asks how could such a stupid person be a talented person capable of being prime minister” 則從另一方面對牛僧孺進行攻擊，嘲笑牛僧孺用迷信方法抗旱求雨，導致一場特大水災，暗示這樣的蠢人豈是宰相之才。

<sup>422</sup> In addition to “Huanglong zhe” in the *Yuquanzi*, “Dashui bian” 大水辯 (Dispute on the flood) mentioned in the *Tang zhiyan* 唐摭言 is another literary work about Niu Sengru and

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<sup>419</sup> *Xin tang shu*, 174.5232.

<sup>420</sup> Bian Xiaoxuan, “Tang xiaoshuo ji Yuquanzi de zhengzhi qinxiang,” 10-11.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> Bian Xiaoxuan, “Tang xiaoshuo ji Yuquanzi de zhengzhi qinxiang,” 10-11.

the flood in Xiangyang, in which Niu was defamed as a corrupted official who caused the flood due to his infatuation with his beautiful concubine.<sup>423</sup>

The political background of Niu-Li factional strife and its reflection in the above stories can be regarded as a noticeable support for the assumption that we already introduced, i.e., the Duke of Wei, [Sir] Li is a deliberate insinuation against Li Deyu in “Li Weigong Jing.” If we compare this tale with “Huanlong zhe” carefully, the following differences are revealed: the wrongdoer is changed from Niu Sengru to the Duke of Wei; the supernatural creature is transformed from an intractable black dragon into a gracious Dragon Lady; and the multitude who proposed how to deliver rain to end a drought are replaced by a young maid. However, we must perceive that the main theme of the tale “Li Weigong jing” still focuses on criticizing the protagonist’s ignorance and incompetence which caused catastrophic consequence to people and disqualified him from prime ministership. In contrast to the Tang tales, stories and other literary works that bitterly slander Niu Sengru, this tale is disparaging and even vindictive in its counterattack against Li Deyu. Considering Li Fuyan’s significant appreciation for Niu Sengru’s literary creation, we should not be surprised by his considerable favor for Niu Sengru and the real intention of this account.

Many allusions and metaphors are also employed in the tale to further enhance the political attack on, and insinuations directed toward Li Deyu. For example, the protagonist

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

appears as a hunter who often hunted on Mount Huo 霍.<sup>424</sup> He lost his way when he was pursuing a herd of deer:

[When he was hunting one day], he suddenly encountered a herd of deer, so he pursued them. Just as it grew dark, he wanted to take off, but he could not. Unexpectedly, he lost his way because of the gloomy darkness, and everything was confused, he didn't know what to do next, so he kept going in a disheartened way and was feeling increasingly exhausted and worried.

忽遇群鹿，乃遂之。會暮，欲捨之不能。俄而陰晦迷路，茫然不知所歸，悵悵而行，因悶益極。

The image of “pursuing a herd of deer” leads us to think about the conventional allusion “pursuing deer China’s Central Plain” (*zhulu zhongyuan* 逐鹿中原) which originates from the biography of Han Xin 韓信 (230-196 B.C.E.) in the *Shiji*<sup>425</sup> and often refers to the pursuit of great political power. When the protagonist couldn't obtain what he eagerly pursued, he felt very disappointed and worried. Such a metaphoric description on the Duke of Wei's immense desire for power reminds us of the allusive depiction on the protagonist's extreme thirst for fame and high official positions in Li Fuyan's other tale titled “Xue Wei.” Moreover, since “deer” even symbolizes regime and throne, the author paints a layer of ominous color on the protagonist's portrait with the historical allusion, and implies that similar to Han Xin (who was famous for his military achievements, but

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<sup>424</sup> It is also called Mount Huotai 霍太. Located at the modern Huoshan 霍山 county in Shanxi. Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 4:46-47.

<sup>425</sup> “Qin lost its deer and the people under the world pursued it together” 秦失其鹿，天下共逐之. See “Huaiyin hou liezhuan” 淮陰侯列傳 in *Shiji*, 96.2609-2630.

was still executed as the traitor of the Han dynasty), Li Deyu also harbored strong political ambition which might bring ruin and mishaps upon himself in the end. Unfortunately, history does show that Li's political career ended in a miserable way.<sup>426</sup>

Moreover, it seems that the spatial setting of the tale on Mount Huo echoes the allusion, because in the legendary stories, Han Xin's head was buried in Han Xin Peak (Han Xin ling 韓信嶺) after he was executed by Empress Lü 呂. This peak is close to Mount Huo and belonged to Mount Huo commandery in the Sui dynasty.<sup>427</sup> Many ancient literati and scholars had visited this legendary place and composed literary works. For instance, “He Wan Gongyi guo Hanhou ling”和王公济过韩侯岭 is the poem written by Ming literati Chang Lun 常倫 (1492-1525). During the Qing dynasty, Shen Quan 沈荃 (1624-1684) has a poem titled “Shang Hanhou ling wang Huoshan” 上韓侯嶺望霍山, and Qi Yunshi 祁韻士 (1751-1815) in his poem titled “Han Xin ling huaigu changju” 韓信嶺懷古長句 remarks: “The Duke of Huaiyin risked his life for the King of Han and was close

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<sup>426</sup> The next day after Xuanzong ascended the throne, Li Deyu not only lost his post of prime minister, he was also exiled to Yazhou 崖州 (Modern Hannan Island) and passed away there, which signifies the final political defeat of the Li faction. Please refer to Li's biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 180.5341.

<sup>427</sup> According to *Qianlong fu Tingzhou xian tuzhi* 乾隆府廳州縣圖志 by Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746-1809) published in 1897, under the entry of “Lingshi 靈石 county”, it records that “Gaobi Peak is also called Han Xin Peak, which is located at twenty-five *li* south of [Lingshi] county” 高壁嶺一名韓信嶺, 在 [靈石] 縣南二十五里 and “in the first year of Yining (617), the administrative region that [Lingshi county] belonged to was changed to be Mount Huo commandery” 義寧元年, 改屬霍山郡. (See *Qianlong fu Tingzhou xian tuzhi*, 13.10a.) In addition, “Lingshi xianzhi” 靈石縣志 by 路一麟 (passed *jinshi* exam in 1578) published in the twenty-ninth year of Wangli 萬曆 (1601) records that “Han Xin Peak located at the twenty *li* south of the county. When Emperor Gaozu of Han (r. 206-195 B.C.E.) was on an expedition, Empress Lü (ca. 241-180 B.C.E.) executed Xin at Weiyang Palace, and then dispatched people to send his head in a box to the Emperor. The Emperor and his troop happened to return to this place, so they buried his head at the peak. Later generations built a temple next to his tomb to offer sacrifice to him” 韓信嶺在縣南二十裏。漢高帝遠征, 呂後殺信未央, 乃遣人函首送帝, 值帝還兵此處, 葬其首級於嶺上, 後人即其墓立廟祀之. See Li Chun 李淳, “Han Xin ling huaigu” 韓信嶺懷古, *Huanghe* 黃河, no. 7, 2007: 158.

to Weiyang Palace,<sup>428</sup> but he was still buried with stalks next to Mount Huo without a just cause” 淮陰死漢近未央，無端藁葬霍山旁。<sup>429</sup> If we deem that the above interpretation creates an analogy between the destiny of Han Xin and the one of Li Deyu, another historical allusion related to Mount Huo might engender a strong contrast between the deity of Mount Huo’s great contribution to the founding of Tang and the protagonist’s catastrophic failure in the story. According to the “Ji Huoshan chi” 祭霍山敕 by Daizong, the deity of Mount Huo possesses the supernatural power of controlling rain. At the beginning of establishing the dynasty, Gaozu and his troops experienced a prolonged battle at Huoyi 霍邑。<sup>430</sup> Because of the excessive rain, they could not obtain enough provisions. The deity of Mount Huo then appeared to stop the rain and assist Gaozu to defeat his enemy:

Suddenly, there was a senior man in white who visited the military gate. He claimed that the deity of Mount Huo would like to pay respect to the emperor of the Great Tang and informed him to take the path in the southeast direction [to attack the city]. The excessive rain stopped after eight days, which assisted the emperor to defeat enemy. What happened was completely as what he said. Towering and precipitous is the Mount Huo, the chief mountain of China. With the power of raising clouds and delivering rain, his meritorious deed is more extensive than living persons.

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<sup>428</sup> The King of Han and the Weiyang Palace refer to Emperor of Gaozu and Empress Lü respectively.

<sup>429</sup> See the poem in Liu Xujun 劉學軍 and Xu Yelong 徐業龍, *Guotu wushuang: Lidai shiren yong Han Xin* 國土無雙—历代诗人咏韩信 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2009), 363.

<sup>430</sup> Modern Huo 霍 county in Shanxi province.



Though being close to The Way and assisting the virtuous people, his influence is more widely spread than the royal family.<sup>431</sup>

有白衣老父忽詣軍門，稱霍山之神謁大唐皇帝，云東南取路，八日雨止，助帝破敵，盡如其言。巖巖霍山，九州之鎮，興雲致雨，功已洽於生人；親道輔德，力更宣於王室。

Different from the deity of Mount Huo who was eulogized and appreciated by the Tang emperors, the Duke of Li in the tale claimed himself to be “a traveler in the world” 俗客 and “not someone who can ride on the clouds” 非乘雲者, and questioned himself regarding, “how can I deliver any rain” 奈何能行雨. When the young maid recommended the protagonist to the Dragon Lady, she describes him as “an extraordinary man” 非常人, but after he delivered excessive rain, brought the calamity of being drowned to the whole village, and caused the dragon family to be severely punished by the Heaven, the Dragon Lady also concluded that he was “a man of the mortal world who do not recognize the transformation changes of clouds and rain” 世間人，不識雲雨之變, and demanded, “how could you do so much harm” 何相誤之甚. The author even uses the description, “she was just like [one of those ladies] from the families of scholar-gentry” 宛若士大夫家 to hint her identity and symbolic meaning. Apparently, compared with the mighty deity of Mount Huo who had the magic power of “raising clouds and delivering rain,” all the diametrically opposite judgements about the protagonist further underlined his incompetence and disqualification. When such a contrast and conclusions are connected to the allegorical

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<sup>431</sup> Dong Gao 董誥 (1740-1818), *Quan Tang wen* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 48.529a

reading of the tale, they can be interpreted as indirect disapproval of Li Deyu's administrative and political capabilities as well as an implied condemnation of the political disasters that Li Deyu had inflicted on the people, scholar officials, emperor and central government of the Tang .

Two philosophical allusions contained in the protagonist's self-claims also merit our further attention and analysis. One allusion is related to the excuse that the protagonist used to reject the request of delivering rain:

Jing is a traveler in the world, not someone who can ride on the clouds.

靖俗客，非乘雲者。

In the chapter “Nan shi” 難勢 (A critique of *shi*), a critic adopts the metaphor of “flying dragon riding on the clouds” to expound the essentialness of personal talent or virtue for attaining political order.<sup>432</sup> He points out that a flying dragon needs the clouds to fly, but an earthworm remains an earthworm even with the clouds; similarly, people need *shi* (power/authority 勢)<sup>433</sup> to bring order to the world, but even with authority, an unworthy person is incapable:

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<sup>432</sup> Moody's interpretation for *shi* is that “given the book's political thrust, it refers most prominently to the power or authority inherent in an institutional office”. See Peter R. Moody, Jr., “Rational choice analysis in classical Chinese political thought: The ‘Han Feizi’,” *Polity* 40.1 (2008): 107-108.

<sup>433</sup> For more detailed analysis on the chapter “Nan shi”, please refer to Moody's article, “Rational choice analysis in classical Chinese political thought,” 107-111.

True, the flying dragon rides on the clouds and the rising serpent strolls through the mists. The dependence of the dragon and the serpent on the circumstances of the clouds and the mists I never deny. However, if you cast worthiness aside and trust to position entirely, is it sufficient to attain political order? No such instance have I ever been able to witness. Indeed, if the dragon and the serpent, when having the circumstances of clouds and mists, can ride on and stroll through them, it is because their talents are excellent...Indeed, if the earthworm and the ant, when having the circumstances of thick clouds and deep mists, cannot ride on and stroll through them, it is because their talents are feeble. Now, while Chieh and Chow were facing the south and ruling All-under-Heaven with the authority of the Son of Heaven as the circumstances of clouds and mists, All-under-Heaven could not evade chaos, although the talents of Chieh and Chow were feeble.<sup>434</sup>

飛龍乘雲，騰蛇遊霧，吾不以龍蛇為不託於雲霧之勢也。雖然，夫釋賢而專任勢，足以為治乎？則吾未得見也。夫有雲霧之勢，而能乘遊之者，龍蛇之材美也。今雲盛而螾弗能乘也，霧醜而螳不能遊也，夫有盛雲醜霧之勢而不能乘遊者，螾螳之材薄也。今桀、紂南面而王天下，以天子之威為之雲霧，而天下不免乎大亂者，桀、紂之材薄也。

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<sup>434</sup> See the translation in *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu: A Classic of Chinese Political Science*, translated by Wen-Kuei Liao (London: A. Probsthain, 1959), 200; also see the following Chinese text in Han Fei (d. 233 B.C.E.), *Han Feizi*, collated and annotated by Chen Qiqiu 陳奇猷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 886-887.

Through the above subtle allusion, Li Fuyan indirectly expressed his severe contempt and sarcastic satire towards Li Deyu once again. Similar to an earthworm or an ant, the Duke of Wei was never able to ride on the clouds like a flying dragon. More seriously, just like the tyrants Jie and Zhou, even though Li Deyu had grabbed great power and authority as the Prime Minister, he was still not able to attain political order due to his unworthiness and feeble talents.

The other philosophical allusion is associated with the reason why the protagonist only chose “the angry lackey” (*nunu* 怒奴) and lost his qualification to be a prime minister forever.

Then, [the Dragon Lady] ordered the two lackeys to come out. One lackey came out from the east hall, whose manner and appearance were pleasant and agreeable, while one lackey who came out from the west hall looked indignant and agitated, and stood resentfully. The Duke thought privately, “I am a hunter, and make my living by fighting the ferocious. If I take the one who looks agreeable, won’t people consider me timid?” Accordingly, the Duke said, “I do not dare to take both, but since Your Matriarch has bestowed on me [this opportunity], I would like to take the angry one.

于是，[夫人]命二奴出來。一奴從東廊出，儀貌和悅，怡怡然；一奴從西廊出，憤氣勃然，拗怒而立。公曰：“我獵徒，以斗猛為事。一旦取奴而取悅者，人以我為怯乎。”因曰：“兩人皆取則不敢。夫人既賜，欲取怒者。”

In the fragments of Hufeizi's 胡非子<sup>435</sup> philosophical work, it records his well-known speech on “five levels of courage”, which categorizes warriors into different classes. Among the five levels of courage, “the courage of hunters” (*lietu zhi yong* 獵徒之勇) which encourages warriors to fight with ferocious beasts is merely the lowest, whereas the highest level is “the courage of gentlemen” (*junzi zhi yong* 君子之勇) which is rarely displayed as fury, but can relieve their lords of worries and save their countries from military invasions or rebellions:

A person named Qu Jiangzi was fond of pursuing courage. When he heard that Mohist practitioners disapproved fighting, he carried a sword and wore a high hat to meet with Hufeizi. He seized Hufeizi and asked him, “I heard that Your Master disapproved fighting, but I am fond of pursuing courage. If you can pursued me, you will be fine, but if you cannot, you will die.” Hufeizi said, “I heard that there are five levels of courage. Holding a long sword, marching up to the wildness, dispatching rhinoceros and leopards, and combating with large bears, these [deeds show] the courage of hunters. Holding a long sward, marching up to deep springs, killing dragons, combating with large turtles, these [deeds show] the courage of fishermen. Ascending up to high places, standing loftily like a crane and gazing around, but not changing facial expression, these [deeds show] the courage of earthenware.<sup>436</sup> [The crimes of] robbery are certainly punished with

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<sup>435</sup> The only thing we know about Fufeizi is that he was a disciple of Mozi 墨子 (fl. 4<sup>th</sup> B.C.E.).

<sup>436</sup> This allusion refers to that Lin Xingru 藺相如 (ca. 315-ca. 260 B.C.E.), the politician of the Zhao 趙, forced Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259-210 B.C.E.) to play music by hitting an earthenware so as to uphold

execution, and [the crimes of] violating the laws are also certainly punished with death penalty, these [deeds show] the courage of five penalties... Cao Gui (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) was merely an ordinary man who marched up [to Qi] on foot and an commoner with soft shoes. He usually did not get angry, but his one-time fury forced a country with ten thousands of chariots to yield and save a country with only one thousand chariots. His [deed shows] the courage of gentlemen, the most precious courage. Yan Ying (d. 500)<sup>437</sup> was also an ordinary man, but his one-time fury stopped Cuizi's rebellion, which also shows the courage of gentlemen.”<sup>438</sup>

有屈將子好勇，聞墨者非鬥，帶劍危冠往見胡非子，劫而問之曰：  
“將聞先生非鬥，而將好勇，有說則可，無說則死。”胡非子曰：  
“吾聞勇有五等。夫負長劍，赴榛薄，析兕豹，搏熊羆，此獵徒之勇也。負長劍，赴深泉，斬蛟龍，搏鼃鼉，此漁人之勇也。登高陟危，鵠立四望，顏色不變，此陶缶之勇也；剽必刺，[若连]視必殺，此五刑之勇也。……夫曹劌，匹夫徒步之士，布衣柔履之人也，唯無怒，一怒而劫萬乘之師，存千乘之國。此謂君子之勇，勇之貴者也。晏嬰疋夫，一怒而沮崔子之亂，亦君子之勇也。”

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the King of Zhao's dignity. See the historical story in “Lian Po, Lin Xiangru liezhuan” 廉頗藺相如列傳 in Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 81.2442.

<sup>437</sup> A prominent minister (*qing* 卿) of the state of Qi during the Spring and Autumn period. He was also called Yanzi 晏子 (Master Yan). He served three dukes of Qi for half a century.

<sup>438</sup> See “Hufeizi yiwen” 胡非子佚文 *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁, edited by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848-1908), collated and annotated by 孫以楷 (1938-2007) (Taipei: Huanzheng shuju, 1987), 704-705.

Since the protagonist considered himself a hunter who engaged in fighting the ferocious beasts and displayed his courage only through choosing the angry lackey, he should be classified as the warrior with the lowest level of courage. Compared with the historic heroic strategists like Cao Gui and Yan Ying, the protagonist is merely another Qu Jiangzi, an ignorant person with physical force and brute courage. In this sense, it is not surprising to discover that pungent sarcasm and depreciation of Li Deyu's prime ministership, administrative capabilities and political ambition are elaborately expressed once again through this allusion, which inevitably imprints Niu-Li factional strife as recounted in the tale.

## CHAPTER 4:

### “HOUTU FUREN ZHUAN”: A MORAL PARAGON OF WOMANHOOD

#### 1. AUTHORSHIP AND COMPOSITION DATE

“Houtu furen zhuan” 后土夫人傳 (The account of Lady Houtu) is collected in the *Taiping guangji* with the title “Wei Andao.”<sup>439</sup> According to the *Taiping guangji*, the tale was taken from the *Yiwen lu* 異聞錄. However, because there is no such a collection in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 (Bibliographic treaties) of the *Song shi* 宋史, modern scholars agree that it should be the *Yiwen ji* 異聞集 instead.<sup>440</sup>

Based on its *Taiping guangji* text, the *Yuchu zhi* 虞初志 retitled the tale as “Wei Andao zhuan” 韋安道傳 (The account of Wei Andao). A note in the collection alleges that it was written by Zhang Bi 張泌 of the Southern Tang (937-975).<sup>441</sup> Based on the information, many modern scholars think that it was named after the poet of the Southern Tang who had the same name and its real author’s name is unknown. For instance, Wang Meng’ou remarks that because the story of this piece had been widely spread at the end of the Tang dynasty, it would have been too late for Zhang Bi to write it in the Southern Tang.<sup>442</sup> Moreover, most of the works collected in the *Yinwen ji* were composed during the Zhenyuan and Yuanhe periods (785-820) and the *Yiwen ji* was compiled during the

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<sup>439</sup> Li Fang, et al., eds. *Taiping guangji*, 299.2375-2379.

<sup>440</sup> See this opinion in Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, vol.2, 143.

<sup>441</sup> Lu Chai 陸采 (1497-1537), comp., *Yuchu zhi*, (Shanghai: Shaoye shanfang, 1920), 2.13.

<sup>442</sup> Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, vol.2, 144.



Dazhong 大中 and Xiantong 咸通 periods (847-873), so Wang further suggests that the composition date of the tale should be no later than the Mid-Tang.<sup>443</sup> Li Jianguo also thinks that Zhang Bi is impossible to be the author of “Houtu furen zhuan,” since as the author of Southern Tang, he came after much later than Chen Han 陳翰 (fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century), the compiler of “Yiwen ji.”<sup>444</sup> Through referring to the opinions of Hu Shi 胡適, Chen Shangjun 陳尚君 and Fang Jianxin 方建新, Li Dingguang 劉定廣 argues that the correct last name of the poet of southern Tang should be *bi* 泌 rather than 泌.<sup>445</sup> More to the point, Liu concludes that there was a late Tang poet named Zhang Bi 張泌 who composed “Houtu furen zhuan” and both his birth and death dates are similar to the ones of Han Wo 韓偓 (842-914).<sup>446</sup> Because Chen Han was appointed as the Vice Director of Storehouse Section (*kubuyuanwailang* 庫部員外郎) during the Qianfu 乾符 (874-880) period, he should also be considered as Chen’s contemporary.<sup>447</sup> Although the authorship of the tale is still controversial, most modern scholars believe that it is a tale composed during the mid- or late Tang and it was collected in the *Yiwen ji* during the ninth century.

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<sup>443</sup> Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, vol.2, 144-145.

<sup>444</sup> Li Jianguo, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, 569.

<sup>445</sup> Liu Dingguang, *Tangmo Wudai luanshi wenxue yanjiu* 唐末五代亂世文學研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue yanjiu chubanshe, 2006), 289-291.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2. ALLEGORICAL READING OF “HOUTU FURENZHUAN”

Compared with other romantic Tang tales, such as “Li Wa zhuan” 李娃傳 (Tale of Li Wa) and “Yingying zhuan” 鶯鶯傳 (Tale of Yingying), “Houtu furen zhuan” is not so well known. The tale describes that a goddess, Lady Houtu, who married a mortal man named Wei Andao, but Wei’s parents were afraid of her unknown identity and reported her to the court. Although the goddess possessed incredible supernatural power and her magic techniques defeated all the masters sent by Empress Wu, she still in the end had to leave Wei Andao due to his parent’s request. Before her departure, she asked Empress Wu to offer Wei Andao an official position and fortune. As a romance about the marriage between a goddess and a mortal man, the tale has been studied by many scholars; yet, the significance hidden behind its figures and plots merits further interpretation and discussion.

### 2.1 Previous interpretations

As early as the Song dynasty that scholars had started exploring its authorial intention and allegorical meanings. For instance, Yan Youyi 嚴有翼 in *Yiyuan cihuang* 藝苑雌黃 quotes Chen Shidao’s 陳師道 (1053-1102) opinion to discuss the purpose of the tale:

It was a Tang author who composed “the accounts of Lady Houtu.” When I first read it, I loathe its blasphemy and sacrilege. According to Chen Wuji’s [*Houshan*] *Shihua*, “Song Yu (fl. 290-223 B.C.) composed “Gaotang fu,” and recorded that the Goddess of Wu Mount encountered

King Xiang 襄 of Chu 楚 (298 B.C.-263 B.C.). Presumably, it satirizes something. Many literati imitated it and composed biographies to verify it. None of the spirits of the earth and the heavens can avoid it. I think that all spirits in the realm of desire<sup>448</sup> should have a spouse. If any of them do not have a spouse, they do not have desires. The people of the Tang recorded the anecdote of Houtu to satirize Empress Wu and that is it.” I think it is worthless to satirize Empress Wu, and to ascribe satire to Houtu is also a great profanation.<sup>449</sup>

唐人作《後土夫人傳》，予始讀之，惡其瀆慢而且誣也；比觀陳無己《詩話》云：“宋玉為《高唐賦》，載巫山神女遇楚襄王，蓋有所諷也；而文士多效之，又為傳記以實之，而天地百神，舉無免者。予謂欲界諸大，當有配偶，有無偶者，則無欲者也。唐人記後土事，以譏武后耳。”予謂武后，何足譏也，而託之后土，亦大褻矣。

Chen Shidao’s analysis confirms that it was a Tang author who personified Houtu as a goddess and made up an account in which she had a husband. Chen also suggests that just as Song Yu composed “Gaotang fu” to satirize King Xiang of Chu, so did the author of “Houtu furen” compose the story to criticize Empress Wu Zetian. However, Yan Youyi clearly expresses his doubts about this interpretation. As one of the many modern scholars

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<sup>448</sup> The realms of desire for food, sleep, and sex, consisting of soul of purgatory, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, men, and the six heavens of desires, so called because the beings in these states are dominated by desire. See William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London: Hertford, 1937) p.356.

<sup>449</sup> See Hu Zai 胡仔, *Yuyin conghua houji* 漁隱叢話後集, in *SKQS*, 18.1480-490a.

who agree with Yan's opinion and question Chen's assumption, Wang Mengou argues that in contrast with Empress Wu who is famous in her licentious anecdotes, Lady Houtu is very chaste and obedient.<sup>450</sup> As a foil for the power and influence of Lady Houtu, the description of Empress Wu merely lends dramatic interests to the tale rather than satirizing her.<sup>451</sup> Cheng Yizhong comments that this story is just a fantasy of a frustrated scholar who imaged to abstain unexpected romantic affair and fortune.<sup>452</sup> Cheng Guofu considers it a reflection of the noble women's adulteries and affairs during the Tang.<sup>453</sup> Some scholars do not think that the purpose of this tale is to criticize Empress Wu, but they believe that it is sarcasm directed against something else. For example, Zhu Xiuxia posits that this is a sarcasm of his contemporary people who could not do better than supernatural creatures.<sup>454</sup> In Wang Rutao's allegorical reading, the parents-in-law's disapproval of Lady Houtu in the tale alludes to Empress Wu's situation in which she was forced to give back the throne to the Li royal family, but still hoped to retain her status as Emperor Gaozong's 高宗 (r. 649-683) wife.<sup>455</sup> As for Chen Wenxin, he thinks that Chen Shidao's assumption is possible, but he does not provide further explanation.

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<sup>450</sup> Wang Meng'ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, vol.2, 146-147.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Cheng Yizhong, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shi*, 238-239.

<sup>453</sup> Cheng Guofu, *Tang Wudai xisoshuo de wenhua chanshi*, 155-157.

<sup>454</sup> Zhu Xiuxiao, *Tangdai chuanqi yanjiu*, 82-83.

<sup>455</sup> Wang Rutao, *Tangdai xiaoshuo yu Tangdai zhengzhi*, 54-55.

## 2.2 The Provenance of Houtu furen and the Satire Hidden behind It

Before we go further to investigate the possible purpose of this tale, it is necessary to examine the provenance of the literary image Houtu furen. In *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhua kao* 中國古代宗教与神話考 [Studies on Ancient Chinese Religions and Myths], Ding Shan 丁山 argues that the worship of *houtu* 后土 (the sovereign earth) originated from the worship of *dimu shen* 地母神 (The Goddess of the Earth Mother) during the Chinese matriarchal society. He claims that because the earth produces various cereals and females are the originators of primitive agriculture, the original deity of agriculture was a female figure called *dimu* 地母 (the earth mother). It is very possible that *houtu* is the honorific title of *dimu* during the Xia 夏 period (ca. 21<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.-17<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.).<sup>456</sup> Li Li 李立 agrees with this opinion and supports it from a linguistic perspective, explaining that both characters *mu* 母 and *hou* 后 not only have similar original meanings which are related to the power of fertility and nurture, but also their forms in a variety of oracle-bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions are also very similar.<sup>457</sup> He concludes that in fact, *houtu* was namely *mutu* 母土.<sup>458</sup> In Wang Guowei's 王國維 opinion, *hou* has the similar meaning of “*nü*” 女 or “*mu*” and “is similar to the form of giving birth

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<sup>456</sup>See Ding Shan, *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhua kao* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 12, 30.

<sup>457</sup>Li Li, *Wenhua zhenghe yu xianQin ziran shenhua yanbian* 文化整合與先秦自然神話演變 [The Intergration of Culture and the Development of the Natural Myths of Pre-Qin], (Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2002), 291.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

to a child” 像產子之形。<sup>459</sup> Obviously, this view also suggests the close connection between *hou* and *mu*.

In the Yin and Zhou dynasties, *dimu shen* was anthropomorphized to be female primogenitors to bear the ancestors of Yin and Zhou. Jiandi 簡狄 and Jiang Yuan 姜嫄, thus, are viewed by some modern scholars as the Goddess Earth Mother who were respectively worshiped by the people of Yin and Zhou.<sup>460</sup> The earliest accounts on them we can trace are in *Shi jing* 詩經 [The Classic of Poetry]. At the beginning of the poem “Xuan nian” 玄鳥 (Black bird) under the “Shang song” 商頌 (Eulogies of Shang) section, it refers to the legend that under the mandate of Heaven, the ancestor of Shang was born with the help of a black bird:<sup>461</sup>

Heaven mandated the black bird	天命玄鳥
To descend and bear [the ancestor of] Shang	降而生商
[He] resided in the land of Yin, and became great	宅殷土芒芒

Another record on the legend is in “Chang fa” 長發:<sup>462</sup>

The You Song Clan began to be great	有城方將
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<sup>459</sup>See details in *Yin buci suo jian xian wang xian gong xukao* 殷卜辭所見先王先公續考 [The Sequel of the Studies on Ancient Kings and Ancient Dukes in the Oracle-bone Inscriptions of Yin], vol. 2, in *Wang Guowei yishu* 王國維遺書 [The Posthumous Manuscripts of Wang Guowei] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian, 1983), 9.17a.

<sup>460</sup>See Ding Shan, *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhua kao*, 7-12. Also please refer to Li Li, *Wenhua zhenghe yu xianqin ziran shenhua yanbian*, 271.

<sup>461</sup>*Maoshi* #309. Also see *Maoshi zhushu* 毛詩註疏, in *Chong kan Song ben Shisan jing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏, edited by Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) (1816; reprint, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1960), 20.793b. This translation is based on the translation of James Legge's. See James Legge, *The She King*, vol. 5, in *The Chinese Classics* (Hongkong: Hongkong Univeristy Press, 1960), 636.

<sup>462</sup>*Maoshi* #310. Also see James Legge's translation, *The She King*, 638.

And God raised up the son [of its daughter], and begot Shang	帝立子生商
The black king exercised an effective sway	玄王桓撥
Charged with a small State, he commanded success	受小國是達
Charged with a large State, he commanded success	受大國是達

Based on the above two poems, we know that since the ancestor of Shang was born with the help of a black bird, he was called “*xuan wang*” 玄王 (the black king). His father was the God of Heaven, while his mother was a woman on the earth who was the daughter of the You Song Clan. Moreover, as a seed will sprout, grow and propagate after it is planted on the earth, the black king grew up, had descendants, “commanded success,” and “became great” with the support of “the land of Yin.” With its expanding territories, the state of Shang was established and strengthened. The mother earth was the unexhausted source that nurtured the tribes of Shang. In this sense, the people of Shang viewed the earth as their real matrix. Unlike the God of Heaven whose figure was holy but vague in the two poems, the Goddess of the Earth was anthropomorphized to be a human mother who endowed the ancestor of Shang with a human body and life. As the incarnation of the earth mother, the human mother was glorified by her descendants with eulogies in the ancestral temple of Yin. In “Tian wen” 天問 (Heavenly questions) of *Chu ci* 楚辭 [The Songs of Chu], the name of this human mother, Jiandi, was first mentioned:<sup>463</sup>

When Jiandi was in the tower,	簡狄在臺，
How could Ku favor her?	譽何宜？

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<sup>463</sup>See Tang Bingzheng 湯炳正 et al., comm., *Chu ci jin zhu* 楚辭今注 [Modern Annotations of The Songs of Chu] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 105.

When the black bird brought the present,

玄鳥致詒，

Why was the maiden happy?

女何嘉？

Both *Lü shi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 [The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü] and *Huainanzi* 淮南子 recorded part of the myth how Jiandi bore the ancestor of Shang. In *Shi Ji*, the fragments of the myth were organized to be a complete tale:

As for Qi of Yin, his mother was called Jiandi, the daughter of the You Song Clan. She was the secondary wife of Emperor Ku. When the three people went out to bathe, they saw a black bird lay its egg. Jiandi took it and swallowed it, thus she became pregnant and gave birth to Qi.<sup>464</sup>

殷契，母曰簡狄，有娥氏之女，為帝嚳次妃。三人行浴，見玄鳥墮其卵，簡狄取吞之，因孕生契。

Although the myth about Jiandi was further historicized in later accounts, her maternal figure and peculiar experience of pregnancy were retained.

As Jiandi was the embodiment of the mother earth and had the supernatural ability of fertility in the primitive legend, she was also worshiped as the *gaomei shen* 高禘神 (The Goddess of Grand Intermediary) who was in charge of marriage and fertility during the Yin and the Zhou. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) in his annotation of *Li Ji* 禮記 [The Book of Rites] explains the origin of the Goddess of Grand Intermediary:

During the time of Gaoxin Clan, a black bird left an egg. Jiandi swallowed it, and gave birth to Qi. Later kings thought that the official of matchmaker

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<sup>464</sup>Sima Qian, *Shi ji*, 3.91. Also cf. William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 41.



was lucky and auspicious, and then founded her shrine there. [The reason for] changing *mei*<sup>1</sup> to *mei*<sup>2</sup> was to deify her.<sup>465</sup>

高辛氏之時，玄鳥遺卵。簡狄吞之而生契。后王以爲媒官嘉祥，而立其祠焉。變媒為禖，神之也。

In *Li Ji*, it also records that the emperors of Zhou continued to worship the Goddess of Grand Intermediary. In spring, they should solemnly sacrifice to her to supplicate for more male offspring:

In the second month of spring, a black bird arrives. On the day of its arrival, [people] sacrifice to the Grand Intermediary with a great sacrifice. The Son of Heaven attends [the occasion] personally. The queen and secondary wives lead nine ladies of honor there. Then the imperial women who serve the Son of Heaven are treated with a ceremony. They are adorned with bows and cases, and given arrows in front of [the altar of] the Grand Intermediary.<sup>466</sup>

仲春，玄鳥至。至之日，以太牢祠于高禖。天子親往，后妃帥九嬪御。乃禮天子所御，帶以弓韉，授以弓矢，于高禖前。

For the common people, they believed that the goddess was the highest authority who decided the matching of males and females. People should comply with her orders to

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<sup>465</sup> Zheng Xuan, comm., *Li ji Zheng zhu* 禮記鄭注 [The Book of Rites Annotated by Zheng] (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1977), 5.5a.

<sup>466</sup> Zheng Xuan, comm., *Li ji Zheng zhu*, 5.5a.

fulfill the duty of marriage. Under her protection, women sometimes could get married without the permission of their parents and preliminary formalities:

The matchmaker official is in charge of the judgment of myriad people....

She orders men in their thirties to marry and women in their twenties to get married...In the second month of spring, she orders the gathering of men and women. At this time, running off was not prohibited. For those who did not obey the order without a good reason, she would punish them.<sup>467</sup>

媒氏掌万民之判。令男三十而娶，女二十而嫁。仲春之月，令会男女。

于是时也，奔者不禁。若无故而不用令者，罚之。

Therefore, the legendary figure of *houtu* began as a goddess in terms of the culture of the Chinese primitive society. During the Yin and the Zhou dynasties, this goddess was endowed with human forms to bear great offspring and take charge of marriage. Because of the tradition of worshiping the Goddess of Mother Earth and the Goddess of Grand Intermediary, the literary figure of the female goddess, Lady Houtu, in “Houtu furen zhuan” is culturally invested with femininity, holiness, fortune and authority. It is also natural for readers of the tale to expect a blessed and productive marriage with a happy ending. However, even the most holy and mighty goddess could neither control her own destiny nor dominate her own marriage. Instead, she was forced to divorce from her humble mortal husband after she was pressured by her parents-in-law in the story. The concept of “destiny of the dark” (*mingshu* 冥數)<sup>468</sup> is also used as a slender and banal excuse to save her

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<sup>467</sup>See *Zhou li zhushu* 周禮注疏, 14.7a-8b, in *Chong kan Song ben Shisan jing zhushu*.

<sup>468</sup>*Minshu* 冥數 means the aspects of human destiny that cannot be understood through human wisdom. In “Wuhuan xianbei zhuanlun” 烏桓鮮卑論傳, *Hou Han shu* 后漢書, “Does it mean that because

prestige and to explain the legitimacy of the unsuitable marriage which never got permission from the bridegroom's side: "Because of the calculations of fate in the underworld, I should become the matching spouse of a person of your section who is named Wei Andao. Now, the calculations of fate in the underworld have run out. It is natural that I should divorce him" 某以有冥數，當與天后內部一人韋安道者為匹配，今冥數已盡，自當離異。 Obviously, such remarkable surprise and contrast lay great emphasis on male superiority and the supreme status of a husband's family in the patriarchal society.

When the above interpretation is associated with Empress Wu, the satire about the female emperor becomes even more noticeable. As the title of Houtu furen, the title of Daluo tiannü 大羅天女 was created by the author of "Houtu furen zhuan" and used to honor Empress Wu, which endows supernatural power to the Empress. Daluo 大羅 means Daluo tian 大羅天 (The Grand Veil Heaven), "the residence of the Celestial Worthy high above all other celestial realms."<sup>469</sup> *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 [Seven tablets in a cloudy satchel] also records: "*Scripture on Origin* says, 'The realm of the Grand Veil Heaven does not have universal dominator anymore, but the pneumas of the Great Brahma, which covers the top of various kinds of heavens and the universe'" 元始經云: "大羅之境，無復真宰，惟大梵之氣，包羅諸天太空之上。 Tianü 天女 refers to the celestial goddess coming from the heavens.<sup>470</sup> This Daoist title reminds us that Empress Wu also proclaimed herself

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of destiny of the dark of the heaven, [they] became like this?" 將天之冥數以至於乎 See *Hou Han shu* (Tokyo: Jigu shuyuan, 1984), 80.1588.

<sup>469</sup> Please refer to "Scripture of salvation" in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 382-383.

<sup>470</sup> *Wei shu* records a romance on Emperor Wu Cao Cao of the Wei and Tiannü: "[Emperor Wu] suddenly saw a covered carriage went down from Heaven. When it arrived on [the ground], he saw a beautiful

a “Golden Wheel Cakravartin August Divine Emperor” 金輪聖神皇帝 (Jinlun shengshen huangdi) with Buddhist significance to apotheosize herself and decorate the legitimacy of her imperial authority in history.<sup>471</sup> This title on the surface endows divinity to the Empress Wu; however, compared with Lady Houtu, her status is much inferior and her supernatural power is much weaker in the deity system designed by the author of “Houtu furen zhuan”. The satirical depiction of the magic tournaments between the goddess and the empress also dramatically demonstrates that the empress was completely defeated. More ironically, the empress had to pay audience to the sovereign goddess submissively and follow orders to bestow money and official position to Wei Andao in the end. As a result, the most authoritative command is neither from Lady Houtu nor from Empress Wu, but from Wei Andao’s parents who represent the dominant power of paternity and the supreme authority of husband’s family in patriarchal society. In other words, parents-in-law become the sole arbitrator of marriage. Therefore, all the majestic glory and atmosphere associated with the provenance of the goddess and the rich descriptions of the paramount divine status of the goddess herself greatly highlight the humble identity of Empress Wu. Thus, all this is a subtle, but strong, disapproval and sarcasm about the political power and social status of the female emperor of the Tang.

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woman. Her attendants and bodyguard were very magnificent. The Emperor was surprised and asked her about it. She responded, “I am a celestial goddess. I received an order to be your couple.” [武帝] 欵見輜駟自天而下。既至，見美婦人，侍衛甚盛。帝異而問之，對曰：“我天女也，受命相偶。” See Yao Cha 姚察 (533-606), *Liangshu* (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 1.2-3. Some narrative works in the Song dynasty, such as “Lianggong jiu jian” 梁公九諫 (Nine admonitions from Master Liang) and “Nü xian waishi” 女仙外史 (Unofficial history of female immortals) also adopted the title of Daluo tiannü and connected it with Wu Zetian.

<sup>471</sup> See details in her biography of *Jiu Tang shu*, 76.3476.

### 2.3 The Unique Virtues of Houtu furen and the Admonitions to the Loyal Women in the Tang

The comparison between the character of Houtu furen and the female deities who also married mortal men in many other tales can help us discover the unique features of the goddess and further understand the possible allegorical meanings hidden behind the romance in the tale. Besides incredible magic power and incomparable divine status, Lady Houtu was also characterized with many features which clearly distinguish her from other goddess in Tang tales. For instance, when Wei Andao married her, she was still a virgin. The author intends to employ this unusual detail to show the goddess's chastity:

And then at that night, [Ando] married her and she was still a virgin.

則以其夕偶之，尚處子也。

As the most important principle for her, observing *li* 禮 (rules of rites) of being a daughter-in-law was repeatedly reflected in her speech and deportment. Although she had incomparable status, she still requested to fulfill the propriety of paying respect to her parents-in-law after she condescended to marry him. She even regarded fulfilling the propriety of being daughter-in-law as a fortune:

Accordingly, the Lady spoke to Andao, saying, "I have become your wife; you have parents; taking me in marriage without informing them cannot be called proper ritual. I would like to follow your lead to return home as a proper bride. I would be fortunate to be able to pay respect to your venerable

parents in the ancestral shrine in order to complete the ritual of becoming daughter-in-law.”

夫人因謂安道曰：“某為子之妻，子有父母，不告而娶，不可謂禮。願從子而歸，廟見尊舅姑，得成婦之禮，幸也。”

Such a brief request by the Lady is imbued with Confucian teachings and traditional rites on how to be a proper daughter-in-law. Every word implies that the female persona is willing to strictly observe the traditional rites and instructions of mortal world, in her desire to establish a harmonious relationship with Wei Andao's parents. The poem titled “Nan shan” 南山 of the *Shijing* proclaims: “How to proceed in taking a wife? One must inform parents” 娶妻如之何？必告父母。<sup>472</sup> Mencius uses the legendary story of the ancient sage Shun 舜 as a paradigm to further foreground the idea that informing parents to obtain their consent is a crucial way of satisfying *daxiao* 大孝 (great filial piety) and an exception happened only if a son would have no posterity due to the disapproval of his marriage by his parents: “There are three things that are unfilial, and having no posterity is the greatest of them. The reason that Shun did not inform his parents but married was to avoid having no posterity. Gentlemen consider that it was the same as if he had informed them” 不孝有三，無後為大。舜不告而娶，為無後也，君子以為猶告也。<sup>473</sup> Here *gui* 歸 especially refers to women getting married with proper rites. The poem “Tao yao” 桃夭 in the *Shijing* is a classical blessing for brides: “That peach tree, so delicate and elegant! How

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<sup>472</sup> *Maoshi* #101.

<sup>473</sup> See Mengzi *zhengyi* 孟子正義 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1957), 7a.33.

luxuriant is its foliage! This girl is going to her husband's house. She will keep his family harmonious and amicable” 桃之夭夭，其葉蓁蓁；之子于歸，宜其家人。<sup>474</sup>

As for *cong* 從, the *Liji* says: “Women are the ones who follow the lead of men. When she is young (unmarried), she follows the lead of her father and elder brother; after she gets married, she follows the lead of her husband; if her husband is dead, she follows the lead of her adult son” 婦人，從人者也：幼從父兄，嫁從夫，夫死從子。<sup>475</sup>

*Miaojian* 廟見 is an important ancient wedding ceremony which further establishes the legitimacy of the bride and emphasizes the supreme status of parents-in-law in a household. In ancient time, after a woman married and lived in her husband’s family for three months, she should go to the ancestral shrine to pay homage to the spirit tablets of her parents-in-law if they had passed away. *Yili* 儀禮 records that: “After three months, [the bride] is presented in the ancestral temple and announced as the newly arrived wife. Choosing a date and offering sacrifice to the spirit tablet of her father-in-law is the ceremony for the established wife” 三月而廟見稱來婦也。擇日而祭於禰，成婦之義也。<sup>476</sup> Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) gave an annotation: “this [terms] refers to the women whose parents-in-law have passed away. After a daughter-in-law joins [her husband’s family] for three months, at ancestral temple with ceremony she pays homage to parents-in-law” 此謂舅姑亡者。婦入三月之後而於廟中以禮見于舅姑. In the later

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<sup>474</sup> *Maoshi* #6.

<sup>475</sup> See *Liji zhangju* 禮記章句 (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1987), 11.35.

<sup>476</sup> *Yili zhushu*, 6.59a.

eras, even if a husband's parents were still alive, the ceremony was still called *miaojian*. Thus, *Guoyu* explains that: “In ancient time, a woman who married but could not see parents-in-law was called unfortunate” 古之嫁者，不及舅、姑，謂之不幸。<sup>477</sup>

In order to further display Lady Houtu's modesty and observance of the rules of rites, the author also presents the scenes that she paid respect to Wei Andao's parents and siblings in great detail:

Attendants set up a fine-string bed, requesting the parents-in-law to sit there side by side. Then, from the outside of the main door, they arranged two brocade windbreaks. Wearing ceremonial dress and hanging girdle-gems pendants, the Lady entered into the door. After she finished performing the ritual of daughter-in-law, her attendants presented about more than ten cases of emeralds, gold, precious jades, gauze and silk to stand as the congratulating gifts used in the human world. They placed these gifts in front of the parents-in-law. From brothers and sisters-in-law to the servants of household all received the favor of her gifts.

左右施細繩床一，請舅姑對坐。遂自門外，設二錦步幃，夫人衣禮服，垂珮而入。修婦禮畢，奉翠玉金瑤羅綺，蓋十數箱，為人間賀遺之禮，置於舅姑之前。爰及叔伯諸姑家人，皆蒙其禮。

From the speech of Wei Zhen's wife, we also know that she observed the proper courtesy of women and attempted to establish a harmonious relationship with her husband after she entered into his family: “Now I have observed that the Way of couples between

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<sup>477</sup> *Guoyu*, 5.201.



her and Andao is also satisfying to both” 今觀其與安道夫婦之道，亦甚相得。 Because there was great disparity of status between them, it was her modesty that helped them get along with each other very well. When the parents of Andao requested Empress Wu to send people with magic methods to control her, she only treated them with propriety and tolerance. Her modesty is illustrated when she complies with Andao’s parents’ request to leave. She obeyed their order immediately without any complaint and even claimed, “As for the right way of being a daughter-in-law, what is proper is to observe the order of parents-in-law. Now, since the parents-in-law have an order, how dare I not respectfully obey it” 夫為婦之道，所宜奉舅姑之命。今舅姑既有命，敢不敬從。 At that time, the divine goddess with supernatural power and incomparable status disappeared; only a virtuous and obedient daughter-in-law of the mortal world remained.

When the goddess was expelled from Andao’s house permanently, she still conducted the ritual of announcing her departure at the principal hall and requested, “The new wife [of your son] is now only an unmarried daughter and dare not return home alone. I hope that I am able to leave with my husband Wei together.” 新婦女子也，不敢獨歸，願得與韋郎同去。 Here *nüzi* 女子 is also used to suggest that being obedient to parents and following all of the society’s regulations is the most important duty of a daughter. The poem “Si gan” 斯干 in *Shijing* explicates the duties of an unmarried daughter: “When he begets Daughters, put them to sleep on the ground; dress them with wrappers; give them tiles to play with. They should have neither literary talent nor dignified manner. Only about

the wines and the food will they have to think, and to cause no sorrow to their parents” 乃生女子，載寢之地，載衣之裊，載弄之瓦。無非無儀，唯酒食是議，父母詒懼。<sup>478</sup>

All the above unique virtues of the goddess such as chastity, modesty, obedience and observance of rituals are deeply associated with Confucian doctrine on women which relies heavily on rules of rites to define and regulate the relationships between women and their husband's family. As early as the Han dynasty, female historian and Confucian scholar Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 45-116 CE) in her well-known rhapsody “Nü jie” 女誡 (Admonitions to women) had explicated these doctrines. Not only did she underline the unshakeable authority of husband and the unconditional obedience to parents-in-law, she also emphasizes the importance of educating women about the rules and rites:

They only know that wives must be controlled, and that the husband's rules of conduct manifesting his authority must be established. They therefore teach their boys to read books and study histories. But they do not in the least understand that husbands must be served, and that the proper relationship and the rites should be maintained. Yet only to teach men and not to teach women, – is that not ignoring the essential relation between them? According to the “Rites,” it is the rule to begin to teach children to read at the age of eight years, and by the age of fifteen years they ought then to be ready for cultural training. Only why should it not be (that girls' education as well as boys' be) according to this principle? <sup>479</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> *Maoshi* #195.

<sup>479</sup> See the following Chinese texts in Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 84.2788, 2790-2791. The translation is based on Nancy Lee Swann, trans., *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China* (New York: Century Co., 1932), 84, 88.

察今之君子，徒知妻婦之不可不禦，威儀之不可不整，故訓其男，檢以書傳。殊不知夫主之不可不事，禮義之不可不存也。但教男而不教女，不亦蔽於彼此之數乎！《禮》，八歲始教之書，十五而至於學矣。獨不可依此以為則哉！

Whenever the mother-in-law says, “Do not do that,” and if what she says is right, unquestionably the daughter-in-law obeys. Whenever the mother-in-law says, “Do that,” even if what she says is wrong, still the daughter-in-law submits unflinchingly to the command. Let a woman not act contrary to the wishes and the opinions of parents-in-law about right and wrong; let her not dispute with them what is straight and what is crooked. Such docility may be called obedience which sacrifices personal opinion. Therefore the ancient book, *A Pattern for Women*, says: “If a daughter-in-law who follows the wishes of her parents-in-law is like and echo and shadow, how could she not be praised?”<sup>480</sup>

姑雲不爾而是，固宜從令；姑雲爾而非，猶宜順命。勿得違戾是非，爭分曲直。此則所謂曲從矣。故《女憲》曰：“婦如影響，焉不可賞！”

Additionally, Ban Zhao states that a woman ought to have four qualifications and the first one is “womanly virtue” (*fude* 婦德): “To guard carefully her chastity; to control circumspectly her behavior; in every motion to exhibit modesty; and to model each act on

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<sup>480</sup> *Hou Hanshu*, 84.2790. Swann, trans., *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*, 87-88.

the best usage, this is womanly virtue” 清閒貞靜，守節整齊，行己有恥，動靜有法，是謂婦德。<sup>481</sup> In the light of the Confucius doctrines on women interpreted by Ban Zhao, we discover that Lady Houtu is not a lofty and magnificent goddess coming from the immortal realm, but an ideal paragon of “womanly virtue” in the earthly world. Why did the author of “Houtu furen zhuan” endow her persona with such a womanly qualification and distinctive features? A clue to the interpretation of this question lies in the historical milieu and sociopolitical context of the tale.

First of all, if we compared the literary image of Lady Houtu and the historical records on Empress Wu Zetian, there is a remarkable contrast between the two extraordinary women. As the first and the only female emperor in the Chinese history, Empress Wu is the most unprecedented and powerful subversion of Confucian-supported patriarchy. Both contemporary and later historians often criticized her when they used the idiom from the *Shangshu*, “a female chicken crows at daybreak” (*pinji sichen* 牝雞司晨);<sup>482</sup> although Empress Wu painstakingly attempted to avoid such an accusation, she apparently failed. As the earliest extant book devoted to the education of women, Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (77-6 B.C.E.) *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 [Biographies of Exemplary Women] presents different opinions from Ban Zhao. A large number of biographies in the book suggest that an important virtue among worthy consorts and chaste wives is to “assist in the menfolk who, for a variety of reasons, fail to fulfill their duties to either family or ruler” and it is appropriate to set things right through correcting their fathers, husbands, or

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<sup>481</sup> *Hou Hanshu*, 84.2789. Swann, trans., *Pan Chao*, 86.

<sup>482</sup> One of the examples is in Empress Wu’s biography, *Jiu Tang shu*, 6.133.

rulers.<sup>483</sup> Wu Zetian not only adopted this view and summoned many contemporary official scholars to compose a new *Lienü zhuan*, she also strategically used it as an important document to legitimate her takeover of male-dominated sphere, which established a crucial step for her to ultimately surpass the patrilineal system and ascend the imperial throne:

During the late years of Emperor [Gaozong], he suffered more from the illness of epilepsy. All the affairs of the country were entrusted to the Empress. So the Empress employed the documents for achieving great peace to govern the central government. She gathered all the Confucius scholars at the internal court to compile *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, *Statutes of the Bureaucracy*, *New Admonitions to the Bureaucracy*, *The Book of Music* and so forth. The total number of the documents was over one thousand pieces.<sup>484</sup>

帝晚益病風不支，天下事一付后。后乃更為太平文治事，大集諸儒內禁殿，撰定《列女傳》、《臣軌》、《百僚新誠》、《樂書》等，大氏千餘篇。

In addition, the three magic masters and their defeat of the magic tournaments described in the tale make the contrast even more noteworthy. During the reign of Xuanzong 玄宗 (r.712-756), monk Huaisu 懷素 (725-785) was famous for his outstanding calligraphy. Except for his artistic achievement, Wang Yong in his eulogy for Huaisu,

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<sup>483</sup> Please refer this opinion in the introduction of *Exemplary Women of Early China*, edited by Anne Behnke Kinney (Columbia University Press, 2014), 25-27.

<sup>484</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 76.3476.

“Huaisu Shangren caoshu ge” 懷素上人草書歌 (Song for the cursive script of the Venerable Master Huaisu), also mentioned his ability in reciting incantation.<sup>485</sup> Because he was born over twenty years after Empress Wu had passed away, it is impossible that Empress Wu met him. Accordingly, it is very possible that Huaisu alludes to the notorious monk Huaiyi 懷義 (?-649) who was Empress Wu’s lover. His full name is Xue Huaiyi 薛懷義 and his original name was Feng Xiaobao 馮小寶. After he was recommended to Empress Wu as her lover, the Empress arranged for him to become a Buddhist monk with the name Huaiyi.<sup>486</sup> As for Jiushi 九思, it can be interpreted as a reference to Sansi 三思, namely, the Empress’s treacherous nephew, Wu Sansi 武三思 (?-707).<sup>487</sup> He also had sexual scandals with Empress Wei 韋 and imperial consort Shangguan Wan’er (664?-710).<sup>488</sup> According to the *Jiu Tang shu*, when Ming Chongyan (?-679) was young, he learned the magic methods of conjuring ghosts and spirits from an inferior official who served under his father. Ming became a high-ranking official for his sorcery after Gaozong heard of his fame and summoned him to the court. Later, he was deeply involved in political struggles of the Tang court and conducted a magic method of “praying for suppressing” (*yansheng fa* 厭勝法) in the palace for Wu Zetian.<sup>489</sup> On one hand, history shows that all

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<sup>485</sup> “Huaisu is five *ci* and four *cun* tall. [His dharma power of] spraying holy water and reciting incantation is awe-inspiring” 懷素身長五尺四，嚼湯誦咒吁可畏。See Li Fang, *Wenyuan yinghua*, 338.1752a.

<sup>486</sup> See his biographical information in *Xin Tang shu*, 76.3479-3484.

<sup>487</sup> See his biography in *Xin Tang shu*, 206.5840-5842.

<sup>488</sup> “Sansi not only had sexual relationship with Empress Wei, he was also sexually promiscuous with imperial consort Shangguan [wan’er]” 三思既私韋后，又與上官昭容亂。See *Xin Tang shu*, 206.5841.

<sup>489</sup> See his brief biography in *Jiu Tang shu*, 191.5097.

three historical figures were infamous for their unscrupulous crimes and evil deeds with Empress Wu's immoderate favor, trust and indulgence. On the other hand, each of them died a violent death due to assassination, coup d'état or execution. Their intimate connections with the Empress merely led them to ruin in historical accounts, whereas what the historical insinuations of the three evildoers and their disgraceful ending in the literary work brings to Empress Wu is merely shame and contempt.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, the image of Wu Zetian is portrayed as being immoral, unchaste, defiant, and even licentious in "Houtu furenzhuan," which is the completely inverse of the moral paragon, Lady Houtu. The comic defeats of Empress Wu and the wins of the goddess during the magic tournaments might be perceived as a symbolic judgement between the two poles of womanhood. It is through creating such a striking antithesis that the author of "Houtu furen zhuan" embeds his intense criticism, deprecation and taunts of Empress Wu in the story.

Furthermore, besides Empress Wu, many Tang princesses were also accused of having sexual scandals and being defiant of their husbands' families. In this regard, the divine goddess in the tale can also be perceived as an ideal moral paragon of womanhood which is in total contrast to those princesses.

For example, the daughter of Taizong, Princess Hepu 合浦 (?-653) married Fang Yiai 房遺愛 (?-653) but fornicated with a Buddhist monk named Bianji 辯機.<sup>490</sup> Another unfaithful Tang princess was Princess Anle 安樂 (684-710). While she married Wu

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<sup>490</sup> See the record and brief biography of Princess Hepu in *Xin Tang shu*, 83.3648.

Chongxun 武崇訓 (?-607), she still had an affair with his cousin, Wu Yanxiu 武廷秀.<sup>491</sup>

As to Princess Xiangyan 襄陽 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century), although she was not as historically infamous as Princess Anle, she too earned an evil reputation in the history because of having illicit relations during her marriage with Zhang Keli 張克禮 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century):

The princess was unbridled and wanton. She often traveled incognito to markets and wards. Xue Shu, Xue Hun and Li Yuanben all got to have sexual relationship with her. She particularly favored Hun. She even visited Hun's mother like a daughter-in-law.<sup>492</sup>

主縱恣，常微行市里。有薛樞、薛渾、李元本皆得私侍，而渾尤愛，至謁渾母如姑。

Besides the above immoral scandals recorded in the standard histories, there are some anecdotes recorded by Tang literati which further reveal the impropriety and arrogance of princesses at their times. Because of the lack of “womanly qualifications” held in esteem by Confucius society, even the emperors reflected why the families of scholar gentry were unwilling to make marriages with royal families:

[Zheng] Yi (9<sup>th</sup> century), the younger brother of the Prime Minister Zheng Hao (817-860) who was the emperor's son-in-law, once had a dangerous

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<sup>491</sup> “Chongxun died. Earlier on, the Princess had been sexually promiscuous with Wu Tingxiu. So she married Wu right after [Chongxun died]” 崇訓死，主素与武廷秀亂，即嫁之。 *Xin Tang Shu*, 83.3654-3656.

<sup>492</sup> See the record and biography of Princess Xingyang in *Xin Tang shu*, 83.3666.



illness. Emperor [Xuanzong] sent a messenger to inquire about him. After the messenger returned, the emperor asked, “Did the Princess [Wanshou] visit him due to his illness?” The messenger responded, “Did not.” The emperor then asked, “Where is she?” The messenger said, “She is watching plays in the auditorium of the Ci’en temple.” The emperor was furious and sighed, “I wondered why scholar gentry families were unwilling to make marriage alliances with me. It truly has its reasons.”<sup>493</sup>

駙馬鄭尚書（顥）弟顥嘗有疾，上使訊之。使回，上問公主視疾否，  
曰：“無。”“何在？”曰：“在慈恩寺看戲場。”上大怒，且嘆  
曰：“我怪士大夫不欲與我為親，良有以也。”

Moreover, when a Tang princess joined her husband’s family, her parents-in-law dared not to ask her to fulfill the ritual during the wedding ceremony. Instead, they had to pay respect to those imperial daughters, which was absolutely against the traditional courtesy and Confucian filial piety. Thus, when the son of the Prime Minister Wang Gui 王珪 (570-639) was going to marry Princess Nanping 南平, the daughter of Taizong, in the eleventh year of Zhenguan period (637), Wang particularly requested the princess to fulfill the traditional rite:

At that time, [Wang] Jingzhi, the son of Wang Gui married Princess Nanping. There was a ceremony of daughter-in-law paying respect to parents-in-law in *The Book of Rites*. Since recent generations, when princesses deign to marry, this ceremony has been completely abolished.

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<sup>493</sup> Pei Tingyu 裴庭裕 (fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century), *Dongguan zouji* 東觀奏記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 176.

Gui said, “Your Majesty is wise and always follows norms and rules. The reason that I was paid respect by the Princess is not to win honor for myself, but to achieve the virtue of the country by doing it.” ...It was after Gui that all the princesses who deigned to marry and had parents-in-law performed the rite.<sup>494</sup>

時珪子敬直尚南平公主。《禮》有婦見舅姑之儀，近代以來，公主出降，此禮皆廢。珪曰：“今主上欽明，動循法制。吾受公主謁見，豈為身榮，所以成國家之美耳。”……是後公主下降有舅姑者，皆備婦禮，自珪始也。”

As a famous advocator of Confucianism during the Emperor Taizong period, Wang Gui had been the Minister of the Ministry of Rites and led Confucius scholars to amend classics on rites.<sup>495</sup> Wechsler in *Offerings of Jade and Silk* explains the significance behind the great promotion of Confucius rites. He states “ritual, in particular, was a subject of intense interest because the Chinese considered the proper observance of ritual and, in its more mundane form, social etiquette to be the very hallmark of a civilized people. They believed, moreover, that a ruler’s performance of ritual coupled with correct moral behavior could actually influence the cosmos in a manner beneficial to mankind.”<sup>496</sup> Regarding the roles of Confucians, he further remarks: “Confucians served as experts in the field of ritual, discoursing on its proper forms and manipulating it for political ends,

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<sup>494</sup> *Jiu tang shu*, 150.2530.

<sup>495</sup> *Jiu tang shu*, 150.2529.

<sup>496</sup> Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T’ang Dynasty* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 9.

both on behalf of and against monarchical power. At the same time, in their roles as historians, ritualists, and scriptural exegetes, they served as the guardians of political legitimacy and as some of the most powerful manipulators of its symbols.”<sup>497</sup> Wechsler’s opinions on both topics help us understand why Wang Gui insisted on requiring Princess Nanping to perform the traditional ritual and why he considered this action as a great accomplishment that exhibited “the virtue of the country” rather than a trivial personal honor.

Many imperial ordinance were even issued on the traditional ritual on the account of its significant symbolic meanings and fundamental influence during the Tang. For instance, in the second year of Xianqing 顯慶 (657), since there were still many princesses who did not fulfill the propriety of paying respect to parents-in-law, but made their parents-in-law to kneel and bow their heads to them, Gaozong had to issue an ordinance to prohibit such an undesirable custom. In “The imperial edict on princesses and empresses not allowing parents-in-law and parents to pay reciprocal respect” (Gongzhu wangfei buxu jiugu fumu dapai zhao 公主王妃不許舅姑父母答拜詔), Gaozong announced:

If we hear that when a princess deigns to marry or an empress becomes consort,<sup>498</sup> her parents-in-law or parents deign to pay reciprocal respect, it

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> In “Hou fei shang” 后妃上, *Xin Tang shu*: “Under Queen, there are Guifei 貴妃, Shufei 淑妃, Defei 德妃, and Xianfei 賢妃, which is called *furen* 夫人. [As to] Zhaoyi 昭儀, Zhaorong 昭容, Zhaoyuan 昭媛, Xiuyi 脩儀, Xiurong 脩容, Xiuyuan 脩媛, Chongyi 充儀, Chongrong 充容, these are nine *pin* 嬪.” According to the ranks, the status of queen is the highest, and the status of *fei* is higher than *pin*. See *Xin Tang shu*, 76.2467.

[shows that] the way of being a son <sup>499</sup>declines and the virtues of woman are not complied with...From now on, [these situations] should be strictly prohibited and eliminated so as to make them to comply with rules of rites completely.<sup>500</sup>

比聞公主出適，王妃作嬪，舅姑父母皆降禮答拜。此乃子道云替，婦德不循……自今以後，可明加禁斷，使一依禮法。

Regardless of the fact that Gaozong paid attention to this issue, princesses did not obey his edict, because during the first year of Jianzhong 建中 (780), there was a similar ordinance recorded in the *Tang huiyao* 唐會要:

In the former examples, when imperial daughters deign to marry, parents-in-law paid respect to them instead and the daughter-in-law did not reciprocate it. Upon this, [Emperor Dezong] deleted this unorthodox ritual in order to follow traditional statutes and instructions.<sup>501</sup>

舊例，皇姬下嫁，舅姑反拜而婦不答，至是乃刊去慝禮，率由典訓。

At the eleventh year of Zhenyuan (795), when Princess Yiyang 義陽 (8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> century) deigned to marry the Vice Director of the Palace Library Shiping 王士平 (8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> *Zidao* 子道 refers to the moral standards that how sons and daughters treat their parents. In “Wu di benji” 五帝本紀, *Shiji*: “Shun’s father, the Venerable Blind One, was obstinate, his mother mean, and his younger brother, Xiang, presumptuous. They all had a desire to kill Shun. Shun was obedient and compliant and never strayed from the way of being a son, and he was fraternal to his younger brother and filial to parents.” 舜父瞽叟頑，弟象傲，母嚳，皆欲殺舜。舜順適不失子道，兄弟慈孝。 This translation is from Nienhauser, ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, 11-12.

<sup>500</sup> See Du You, *Tong dian*, 59.1669-1670.

<sup>501</sup> See Wang Bo 王溥 (922-982), *Tang huiyao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 6.70.

century-9<sup>th</sup> century). His father Wang Wujun 王武俊 (735-801) was a powerful military governor that Dezong relied on, so Dezong paid particular attention to the ritual again due to political concerns:

The emperor circumspectly handled the affair. Earlier, he ordered primary officials to seek advice from the Minister of Rites. He then ordered them to refer to the advice and establish the rites of paying respect to parents-in-law.<sup>502</sup>

上慎重其事，先時，令宰臣訪于禮官，令參定見舅姑之儀禮。

These historical documents demonstrate that many Tang princesses were denounced for ignoring Confucius rites, losing womanly qualifications and violating traditional moral norms. Similar to the image of Empress Wu Zetian, their reputations in the standard histories are entirely opposite to the moral paragon of womanhood described in the tale. Considering the significance of rites and the role of Confucian scholars in reality, it is very possible that the author of “Houtu furen zhuan” attempts to deliberately criticize and admonish those Tang princesses who neither cultivated womanly virtues nor obeyed the rules of rites by setting up an ideal moral paragon in his literary world. With this interpretation, it might also be easier for readers to further comprehend why the author painstakingly depicts all the rites and proprieties Lady Houtu obeyed.

Furthermore, if the story’s depiction of the virtuous goddess serves as a strong contrast of Empress Wu and those Tang princesses who were defiant of moral norms, then

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<sup>502</sup> See Wang Bo, *Tang huiyao*, 6.71.

the portrayal of the two protagonists, Wei Zhen 韋真 and Wei Andao 韋安道, acts as both dramatic satire and a reflection of social reality. For noble families, taking princess in marriage was undesirable during the Tang dynasty. When emperors wanted to find husbands for their daughters, many scholars preferred to decline the marriage offer with a variety of pretexts:

At that time, Princess Qiyang (799-837) was the beloved daughter of Emperor [Xianzong]... The emperor ordered the Prime Minister Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758-814) with an imperial edict to select a son of ministers to marry her, but they all declined by claiming illness.”<sup>503</sup>

時岐陽公主，帝愛女。……帝始詔宰相李吉甫擇大臣子，皆辭疾。

In the eleventh year of Dazong, Emperor Xuanzong wanted to select Wang Hui 王徽 (?-891) as his son-in-law, but when Wang heard it, “the expression of worry showed on his face” 聞之憂形於色。<sup>504</sup> In order to decline the marriage, he “visited the Prime Minister Liu Zhuan 劉瑒 (?-858) to sorrowfully plead with him and to explain in detail that because of his old age and constant illnesses, he was not worth having to humiliate the princess” 見宰相劉瑒哀祈，具陳年已高矣，居常多病，不足以塵污禁臠。<sup>505</sup> Compared with

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<sup>503</sup> See the record and brief biography of Princess Qiyang in *Xin Tang shu*, 83.3667.

<sup>504</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 178.4452.

<sup>505</sup> The allusion *jnluan* 禁臠 came from *Jin shu*. In “Xie Hu zhuan” 謝混傳, “Earlier, Emperor Yuan 元 (276-322) first governed Jianye 建業. Both the [property] of the court and the private were poor and exhausted. Every time when get a piglet, [they] regarded [it] as precious meal. The meat on the neck is especially delicious, and then offered it to the Emperor. All the subordinates dared not to eat. At that time, [it] was called ‘forbidden meat’” 初，元帝始鎮建業，公私窘罄，每得一豕，以為珍膳，項上一臠尤美，輒以薦帝，群下未敢食，于時呼為禁臠. In the later dynasties, it refers to the person regarded highly by emperor. Wang Hui adopted it to indicate princess here.

Wang Hui who had to “sorrowfully plead with” the Prime Minister, some noble families even regarded a marriage with the imperial family to be “a fearful thing.” When Empress Wu’s daughter Princess Taiping was going to marry Xueshao 薛绍 (663-689), his older brother Xue Yi 薛顛 (7<sup>th</sup> century-688) was very worried, so he visited the Director of Ministry of Education Xue Kegou 薛克構 (fl. 7<sup>th</sup> century) for help. Ke Gou compared marrying a princess to causing trouble with a government office out for nothing and agreed that “you have to be afraid of it” 不得不為之懼也.<sup>506</sup> Even when Xuanzong wanted to marry Princess Yüzheng 玉真 (690-762) to the celebrated Taoist Priest Zhang Guo 張果 (fl. 8<sup>th</sup> century), he also claimed that marrying a princess was as troublesome as dealing with a government office.<sup>507</sup>

Such attitudes and reactions are suggested in the descriptions of Wei Zhen and Wei Andao. When the parents of Andao asked him where he had been, his answer was, “I was forced into marriage by a family” 偶為一家迫以婚姻. His comment indicates that this kind of marriage was not the one he really wanted, but since the status of his bride was so high, he dared not to refuse the marriage offer directly. Beside, according to the text, this story happened during the Dading 大定 period and he died in the Tiance 天策 period, but there are no such imperial reign titles in the Tang. Therefore, Wang Meng’ou raised the question: even if Dading actually should be Dazu 大足 (701) and 天策 should be 天冊 (695), how could the story happen seven years after Andao died.<sup>508</sup> It is very possible that

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<sup>506</sup> See the record in *Zi zhi tongjian*, 202.6388.

<sup>507</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 191.5106.

<sup>508</sup> Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, vol.2, 137.

like many other authors of Tang tales, the author just intentionally uses Wei, one of the prominent clan of Chang'an area during the Tang, to indicate this fictional character's ruling-class status, which also matches the statuses of the social elites that Tang emperors sought for their daughters. In addition, his given name "Andao," which means "being contend with the Way" also seems to be an interesting irony of his attitude towards his marriage with the Taoist goddess in the tale.

Additionally, when Wei Ando dismissed the marriage and persuaded Lady Houtu to leave his family, his excuse is very similar to the one provided by Wang Hui who rejected marriages to princess:

Zhen immediately ordered Andao to bid farewell by saying, "We are just a humble family, but you are a divine and noble goddess. Now, it is our fortune that you formed a loving couple with our son, but he does not deserve a match like you."

真即命安道謝之曰：“某寒門，新婦靈貴之神，今幸與小子伉儷，不敢稱敵。”

This pretext emphasizes the great disparity between the status of the persona and that of Wei family. Meanwhile, it implies the worry and uneasiness of Wei family about this great disparity. It calls to mind what Wang Hui said to Liu Zhuan: I was not worthy enough to stain and defile the "forbidden meat." Both of the pretexts are so humble and tactful. In addition, after Lady Houtu entered into the family of Wei, what Wei Zhen felt was not happiness, but unquenchable fear. For them, Wei Ando taking the divine goddess in marriage was not a result of fortune, but an omen of calamity:



Both the parents-in-law were worried and frightened, not knowing where she came from.

父母相與憂懼，莫知所來

At that time, the Empress of Heaven held the court. Laws and decrees were strict and rigorous. [Wei Zhen] feared that calamity would befall them, thus he reported the whole affair to the throne in detail to ask for punishment.

是時，天后朝法令嚴峻，懼禍及之，乃具以事上奏請罪。

Zhen was astonished and frightened and not knowing how to deal with it, he reported the whole affair in detail again.

真怪懼，不知其所為計，又具以事告。

Wei Zhen was even more startled and frightened, and did not know what to do.

真又益驚懼，不知所為。

As far as the text is considered by itself, the fear of Wei Zhen came from the mysterious identity and supernatural qualities of Lady Houtu. Nevertheless, if we connect Wei Zhen's fear with the social reality of the Tang, it is easier to find out that it indirectly reflects the deep worry of noble families resulting from the notorious reputation of princesses. Similar to the historical figures like Wang Hui, Xue Yi and Ke Gou, neither Wei Ando nor Wei Zhen could decide their own fate when they were forced by supreme authorities. All they could do was merely to beg for help in deep fear. When this attitude is dramatized, much more comicial interest is extended to the tale. After Lady Houtu agreed to leave, the attitude of Wei Zhen and his wife immediately changed from “being frightened”

(*ju* 懼) to “being pleased” (*yue* 悅). This comic scene relieves the tension of the whole drama. As a result, the depictions of Wei Zhen and We Andao is a subtle and skillful tease of imperial marriages. In other words, the author expresses his deprecation of, and sarcasm about, the Tang princesses from an entertaining perspective.

## CONCLUSION

Through the application of a transdisciplinary methodology to study both history and literature, the above four chapters explored extended meanings inherent in seven mid-to-late Tang tales – meanings that are beyond their traditional interpretations. Except for “Houtu furen zhuan,” the rest six tales from *Xuanguai lu* and *Xu xuanguai lu* are often categorized as *zhiguai* rather than *chuanqi*; nevertheless, the present exploration demonstrates that pursuing the significance under the surface configurations of the text is more effective and meaningful than simply following its generic label, which has been stamped by modern scholars. Moreover, the new readings suggest that unlike previous writers, represented by Gan Bao, who take an historical attitude to their study of supernatural and mythical happenings, Tang narrative writers adopted these stories with remarkable literary skills to express their political and social concerns from different perspectives. For example, they sought to denounce eunuch tyrants and cliques, to attack political enemies, to condemn betraying colleagues, to endorse strict law enforcement against unscrupulous military governors, to comment on tabooed historical incidents, and to promote Confucian pronouncements about women.

Exploring the historical and social milieu of these tales, readers may discover a variety of rhetorical devices and strategies, including allusions, Chinese character rhetoric, puns, analogies, metaphors, contrasts and symbolism. Along with the decoding of the hidden meaning behind these devices, the significance of whole story plots, many historical or fictional characters and a variety of spatial or temporal settings in the seven tales are reconstructed to further understand authorial intentions and literary tradition of Tang tales.

For example, the metamorphosis of turning into a fish in “Xue Wei” stood for throwing yourself into the sea of officialdom, and the divine goddess in “Houtu furenzhuan” symbolized the author’s ideal moral paragon of womanhood. The two fictional characters, Wang Guoliang and Wang Shiliang, represented bitter hatred towards the eunuch tyrant Qiu Shiliang, whereas the two honorable titles, The Duke of Dai and The Duke of Wei, lead to an “other” prominent general and prime minister. The Northern Mountain hints at the Northern Office in “Cen Shun,” whereas the South Market suggested the Southern Command in “Wang Huang.” As to reign periods, such as Baoyin in “Cen Shun” and Yuanhe in “Wang Guoliang,” they also elaborately indicated the dates during which the actual historical events happened.

In these narrative works, not only are all the historical events referring to influential political powers and their far-reaching consequences, but also all the historical figures alluded to are also significant, e.g., from emperors to empresses and prime ministers to generals. For instance, in addition to the Sweet Dew Incident and An Lushan Rebellion, many Tang prime ministers are subtly reflected in Niu Sengru’s tales, including Li Xun, Guo Ziyi, Huangfu Bo, and Pei Jun. Therefore, the intended audience of these narrative works must be of particular interest. On the one hand, it is important for audience to hold certain political positions, and have a sense of social responsibilities or moral doctrine. On the other hand, both literature and history are densely and inevitably intertwined in these Tang tales. It is necessary for audience to share the same historical and sociopolitical background as well as to be familiar with literary styles. Otherwise, it would be impossible to pursue the authorial intentions hidden behind the stories by virtue of decoding plenty of allusions, analogies and puns. Writing with their intended audience in mind, these Tang

narrative writers painstakingly attempt to reach them in order to arouse their public concerns, engender their resonance, engage their thinking, and strengthen their convictions and common interests. Accordingly, their audience mainly consists of political allies, literati friends, and the official colleagues and scholars who were in the same historical and social context.

The new interpretations and allegorical readings of the six tales selected from the *Xuanguai lu* and the *Xu Xuanguai lu* also provide new perspective on the assumption of Li Fuyan's historical identity. In the tale "Wang Guoliang," the author claims that the persona Wu Quanyi and himself were close relatives, so he stayed in Wu's house and witnessed Wang Guoliang's incredible insults to the entire family: "Wu Quanyi, the brother-in-law of Li Fuyan who shared the same great grandparents" 李復言再從妹夫武全益; "During the winter of the twelfth year of Yuanhe, Fuyan stayed at Mr. Wu's house." 元和十二年冬，復言館於武氏. Given the analysis that Wu Quanyi alludes to Li Shi and the whole tale is a condemnation of the eunuch tyrant Qiu Shiliang, both the implied meanings of "Li Fuyan" and such an intimate relationship between Wu and Li should be carefully examined. Accordingly, the relationship of "sharing the same great grandparents" (*zaicong* 再從) might be understood as a deliberate hint that in fact, both Li Fuyan and Wu Quanyi share the same family name. Meanwhile, the relationship of "brother-in-law" (*meifu* 妹夫) is also called *lianjin* 連襟 which refers to intimate friendship as well. When we screen all the important political figures at Tang court after the Sweet Dew Incident, another Prime Minister named Li Guyan 李固言 (782-860) draws our attention. Li Guoyan's biographical information shows that he and Li Shi were appointed as prime ministers successively by

Emperor Wenzong in the seven month and the eleventh year of the ninth year of the Dahe period successively.<sup>509</sup> As Li Shi's political ally, he witnessed Qiu Shiliang's vile crimes and fought against eunuchs through strongly supporting Li Shi's proposal of restoring Song Shenxi's 宋申錫 (8<sup>th</sup> century-833) official title.<sup>510</sup>

Moreover, considering the various rhetorical devices applied to the character names of the tales, it is not surprising to notice that Li Guyan adopts "fuyan" as a pun to suggest his true surname. The allusive meanings of both first names focus on "how to faithfully fulfill one's ambition or promise": The allusion of "guyan" comes from *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書, which encourages people to fulfill their ambitions through not being swayed by words and states: "If your mind is easy to be changed by words, your determinations cannot be consolidated. The person not being able to make decisions is the one with weak ambitions" 易移以言，志不能固，已諾無決，曰弱志者也。<sup>511</sup> The allusion of "Fuyan" can be traced back to *Lunyu* in which Youzi 有子 claims that "if your trustworthiness accords with righteousness, your promise can be fulfilled" 信近於義，言可復也。<sup>512</sup>

Furthermore, the analysis of the tale "Li Weigong Jing" reveals that the author of *Xu Xuanguai lu* was an opponent of Li Deyu. Many historical records demonstrate that Li Guyan was demoted by Li Deyu and he had been actively involved in the Niu-Li

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<sup>509</sup> *Xin Tang shu*, 63.1722.

<sup>510</sup> *Zizhi tongjian*, 245.7923-7927.

<sup>511</sup> *Yi Zhou shu* (Taipei: Haijin wenhua, 1980), 7.1969b.

<sup>512</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*, 1.5b.

factional strifes.<sup>513</sup> His intimate political allies include many representative figures of Niu faction, such as Li Zongmin, Yang Sifu 楊嗣復 (783-848) and Li Jue 李珣 (785-853).<sup>514</sup> Li Guoyan's biography emphasizes that he successfully reached the most difficult level (*jiake* 甲科) of *jinshi* examination.<sup>515</sup> Both the anecdote titled "Li Guyan xiangguo wei Liu biao suo wu" 李固言相國為柳表所誤 in *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 and the story titled "Liu shen Jiulei jun" 柳神九烈君 in *Yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記 describes how Li Guyan achieved the highly esteemed title "Principle Graduate" (*zhuangyuan* 狀元) in *jinshi* examination, which also reflects Li Guyan's literary talent and reputation.<sup>516</sup> Hence, besides political motivations, Li Guyan also has the literary capability to intentionally imitate Niu Sengru's style and to create the narrative work like the *Xu Xuanguai lu*. Li Guyan was twelve years younger than Niu Sengru. Niu became the Prime Minister in the third year of Changqing 長慶 (823) and after eleven years, Li Guyan also achieved the highest buracratc position. Based on the above analysis, we might be able to conclude that Li Guyan not only consciously imitated Niu Sengru's narrative and literary skills to compose his tales, he also intended to inherit Niu's political stand and ambition in his literary works. In this sense, the *Xu Xuanguai lu* is both a literary and political "coninutation" of the *Xuanguai lu*.

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<sup>513</sup> For details, please refer to *Xin Tang shu*, 182.5360; *Jiu Tang shu*, 173.4492, 173.4506-4508; *Zizhi tongjian*, 246.7932-7933.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> *Jiu Tang shu*, 173.4506.

<sup>516</sup> See the first anecdote in Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (901-968), *Beimeng suoyan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 13. See the brief legendary story in Tao Zongyi, *Shuofu*, 27.2a.





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APPENDIX A  
TRANSLATION OF “CEN SHUN” 岑順

Cen Shun, a man of Runan 汝南<sup>517</sup>, *zi* Xiaobo 孝伯 (The Filial Elder Brother), was fond of study when young and had virtues. He particularly excelled in military ability in old age. When traveling around in Shan 陝 zhou, he was poor without any mansion. A relative on the side of his mother of the Lü clan<sup>518</sup> had a residence in mount which would be demolished, and invited him to stay there while passing through. There were people who tried to persuade him [not to accept the offer], but Shu responded, “The mandates of Heaven are consistent. What should I fear?” In the end, he stayed there. In the following year, Shun often sat alone in a book pavilion, and even his own family members were not allowed to enter it. At midnight, he heard the sound of war drums, but he didn’t know where the sound came from. As soon as he came out of the door, he didn’t hear it anymore. Thereupon, he was secretly pleased and conceited, thinking that it was the same omen heard by Shi Le 石勒 (274-333). He prayed and said, “These must be soldiers from the netherworld to help me. If so, they should show me the predetermined time that I will be loaded with riches and honors.” Several nights later, he dreamed that a person wearing armor came forward to report, saying, “The General Golden Elephant sent me to tell Mr. Cen that in the city guarded by military, there were soldiers among the outposts at night who clamored and quarreled, but we still heard you praise. How dare we not respectfully comply? You will have munificent official salary, and I hope you have self-respect. Since you cherish great ambition, can you lower yourself to take regard for a small state? Now,

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<sup>517</sup> In Tang dynasty, Runan was a place name of a small county located at about 30 miles west of modern Runan 汝南 City in Henan. (See Tan, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 5:44-45.)

<sup>518</sup> The Lü clan here might be an allusion of Lü Shang 呂尚 (fl. 11th century B.C.E.), commonly known as Jiang Ziya 姜子牙 and Jiang Shang 姜尚, was a famous ancient Chinese military strategist who assisted King Wen 文 and King Wu 武 of Zhou to overthrow the Shang dynasty.

an enemy state has invaded frontier fortress. We leave the seat of honor to entrust it to a worthy man, admire and think about your fragrant/glorious reputation, and would like to invite you to hold our military banners and battle-axes.” Shun thanked him and said: “The General’s natural bearing is wise and brilliant. He commands the military with discipline. He lowers and troubles himself to send me his virtuous instructions, and humbly take regard for the lowly, but I just want to employ my [humble] ambition like the dogs and horses do.” The messenger then returned to report on completion of mission. All of sudden, Shun woke up, felt bewildered, and seemed at a loss. He sat and thought about the signs in the dream. Suddenly, a wave of military drums and horns were all around, and the sound became increasingly fierce and impetuous. Shun organized his turban, got out of bed, made obeisance twice and prayed to it. In a moment, a wind arose from doors and windows; drapes and curtains flew upwards. Suddenly, several hundred armored horsemen who were several inches tall galloped at furious speed on both sides under the lamp. Wearing armor and holding weapons, they spread like stars all over the ground. In a wink, the battle arrays closed all around. Shun was startled and astounded, but then compose himself to watch it. In a moment, a foot soldier gave him a letter, saying, “The General delivered a declaration of war.” Sun accepted it, and it read: “Our territory borders the area of Huns, so military activities had never stopped in the past several decades. Our Generals are old and our soldiers are exhausted, trying to sustain their posture in frost, having a noble attitude and sleep wearing armor, but Heaven created such a powerful enemy, and its force cannot be stopped. You, the illustrious Sir, always cultivate your nature and cherish your virtues, and develop your achievements at the right time, and repeatedly receive good tidings. I would like to entrust you with spiritual friendship. However, you, the illustrious Sir, are an

official of the human world, and you will certainly enjoy generous salary in the holy era. Now, how dare this small state expect [to employ you]? Because the foes from the Northern Mountain of Tiannuo State allied together, we have agreed on a date to meet for a battle. The affair/thing has been planned to happen at midnight. We don't know when they will be wiped out, but there is no need to be terrified and astonished.” Shun thanked him and added more candles in the chamber. Then he sat to watch the changes.

After midnight, drums and horns sounded on all sides. Formerly, there had been a mouse hole on the east wall. It transformed into a city gate; the ramparts and parapets of which were lofty and majestic. Three times they played the gongs and drums, and troops came out of all four gates. The string of banners were counted by the ten-thousands,<sup>519</sup> and troops galloped like the wind and ran like the clouds. Both sides formed their battle arrays: The one on the east wall was the army of Tiannuo State, while the one on the west wall was the army of General Golden Elephant. After completing their formation, each side sat fast. A military counsellor offered strategies and said: “The celestial horse flies out aslant, passes three feet, then stops; the chief marshal walks sideways to restrain soldiers of four directions. Covered carriages go straight and do not hesitate; the six armored soldiers go forward in order, do not march back.” The King said, “Good!” As a result, they started drumming to attack. A horse from each army rode out from an angle for three feet and then stopped. They drummed again, and a foot soldier from each army marched horizontally one foot. Then they drummed again, and the carriages moved forward. In this way, the drumbeats became faster and each army moved out their bags of things, arrows and stones crossed by each other [in the sky]. In no time at all, the army of Tiannuo suffered a crushing

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<sup>519</sup> *Qi* 旗 was recorded as *qi* 騎 (horsemen) in *Guangyan yibian*.

defeat and fled. The dead and injured lay all over on the ground. The King of Tiannuo alone galloped towards the south, and several hundred people ran to the southwestern corner for shelter, and this was the only way they survived. Formerly, there was a medicine mortar.<sup>520</sup> The King dwelled inside and it transformed into a redoubt. The army of Golden Elephant was greatly inspired and got back its armored soldiers. Carriages and bodies covered the ground.

Shun lied prostrate to watch it. At that time, a horseman arrived at the restricted area, and issued an edict: “Both *ying* and *yang* have their [right] places. Whoever obtains them will be prosperous. With the awe-inspiring and dignified prestige of Heaven, like driving by wind and stimulating by thunder, we defeated our enemy with only one battle. You, the illustrious Sir, what do you think about it?” Shun responded: “Your General’s essence is as bright as the sun.”<sup>521</sup> By taking advantage of the order of nature and making use of current situation, you secretly peeped into the mysterious texts transformed by deities, which is extremely joyful and pleasant.” The two armies met for battles like this for several days. The outcomes of winning or losing a battle often varied. The King’s appearance was extraordinary and magnificent, and his majestic posture could rarely be matched. He offered Shun banquets and delicacy, and presented him with treasures and

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<sup>520</sup> According to the Ming manuscript of *Taiping guangji*, there is character *ri* 日 after character *yao* 葯, but it is very likely that it should be *jiu* 臼 instead of *ri*. *Guangyan yibian* doesn’t have this sentence. (See Cheng Yizhong’s note #10 of this text in *Xuanguai lu*, *Xu xuanguai lu*, 128.)

<sup>521</sup> A somewhat similar metaphor can be found in *Jin shu*. In the letter Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179-251) sent to Meng Da 孟達 (?-228) who was about to rebel, Sima Yi attempted to deceive and mislead him, saying, “In the past, Your General abandoned Liu Bei (161-223) and entrusted yourself to our state, so the state assigned you the responsibility of battleground, and appointed you to be in charge of seeking to conquer the Shu State. Your heart is as bright as the sun.” 將軍昔棄劉備，託身國家，國家委將軍以疆場之任，任將軍以圖蜀之事，可謂心貫白日。(See *Jin shu*, 1.5)



shinning pearls as gifts. Those pearls and gems were numerous. Consequently, Shun was bedazzled by them, since everything he wanted was complete.

Later, Shun gradually cut off his connection with his relatives and friends, and closed the door and refrained from going out. His family members were surprised, but they were not able to investigate its reason. Shun's complexion became wan and sallow, and he was hit by evil emanations. All his relatives suspected that something was strange, but when they questioned him, he refused to explain. Accordingly, they made him drink bold wines and investigated it when he was drunk until he divulged the truth. Shun's family members then secretly prepared spades and shovels, and isolated him while he went to bathroom. Holding spades and working in a chaotic way, they started digging the chambers. When the excavation reached eight or nine feet deep, the ground suddenly collapsed, and that was the place of an ancient tomb. In the tomb, there were a hall made of bricks, plenty of funerary objects, and several hundred pieces of armor. In the front of the hall, there were a golden couch and a Chinese chess board. Displayed horses which were all made by gold and silver filled up the whole checkerboard and the equipments for war were complete. People then realized that the words of the military counsellor were about the state of deploying horses in Chinese chess. Subsequently, people burned them, leveled the ground, and obtained many treasures, all of which were collected from the tomb. After Shun checked on them, he woke up all of a sudden, and then vomited a lot. Afterwards, he became exuberant and cheerful, and the residence was not ominous anymore. This happened in the first year of Baoying 寶應 period (April, 762-June, 763).

APPENDIX B  
TRANSLATION OF “WANG GUOLIANG” 王國良

Wang Guoliang, an Inspector sent by the Commissioner for Estates and Residences, was an inferior official who was vicious and brutal. He relied on eunuchs and often bullied and insulted people by relying on eunuchs. Wu Quanyi 武全益, the brother-in-law of Li Fuyan 李復言 who shared the same great grandparents, resigned from his position as the Commander of Xian 獻 Mausoleum Terrace<sup>522</sup>. The house he rented was in the area that Wang Guoliang was in charge of. Mr. Wu was poor, so he frequently failed to comply with the regulation of paying rents. Wang Guoliang's words and speech would then become cruel and vile and it was impossible for him to forgive Mr. Wu. All the guests who came to [visit Mr. Wu] would all tell Guoliang first, were fearful that they would also be slandered and they feared him like a poison snake.

During the winter of the twelfth year of Yuanhe 元和 (817), Fuyan stayed at Mr. Wu's house. Guoliang came over every five days and his words became increasingly vile, and Fuyan always covered his ears and ran away. Suddenly, Wang Guoliang stopped coming to the house for twenty days. [One day, people] all of a sudden heard a weak and soft voice. After Wu sent someone to look into it, and the one they found said slowly, "I am Guoliang." The whole Wu family feared his vulgar words, and went out to pray for [his forgiveness], but they were surprised by his emaciated form. [Guoliang] explained, "Right after I bid farewell to you last time, I caught a serious illness. I laid on bed for seven day and then died. After I was dead for seven days, I then revived. [During my death], the official of the netherworld punished me by blows with the heavy stick due to my insolence and the wounds are still there. For a long time, I have been unable to visit you."

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<sup>522</sup> Xianling 獻陵 is the mausoleum of the Tang Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626).

Fuyan called him over to take a seat, and asked him to explain the truth. Guoliang said, “When my illness tended to make me sleepy, there were suddenly several robust men who made a fist, and rolled their sleeves up, approaching my bed, to drag me out, then they covered my head with a cloth bag. I was dragged along for several *li*, and didn’t know we had reached the city. Suddenly, they took the bag off my head. I found out it was the gate of a local official government. The bureau was called ‘The Office of the Lord Mount Tai 太’. My panting had yet to calm, before I was forced into the hall. A person in scarlet occupied the main seat in the office, and told the clerk who was in charge of my case, ‘This person’s crime is grave and he deserves to be thrown deep into Hell. Even if he has one day left in his life, it is not allowed to chase after him. You can now check [his case] quickly.’ That clerk walked into the west corridor, and wandered around, and said, ‘From this day forward, Guoliang has ten years life left.’ The Magistrate ordered his people to drag me out and release me to return. I had already gone out the door when he became angry again, saying, ‘Drag him back! This person’s words and speech are vicious and vile, and offend the common people. If I don’t not punish him severely, there will be nothing to use as an example.’ Subsequently, I was perversely sentenced to a twenty blows with the heavy stick as a punishment. When I was dragged to stand up, I had been unconscious for a long time. The Magistrate then bestowed one cup of water from the pool in front of the hall, saying, ‘The people who drink it will not forget [what they have experienced here]. Pass on my words to the people of the human world. They should be cautious of their misdeeds caused by words. The faults provoked by words often make people hang themselves in a net. Once a word is loose, a four-horse team cannot even catch up with it.’ Guoliang spent several days crawling back. When I entered the gate, I fell over. From that

I was suddenly enlightened. My family was crying, expecting me to die and to be put in a coffin. [After I woke up] , I asked them about time and date, they told me, “Your body has been cold for seven days, only your heart seemed to be warm, so we could not bear to put you immediately into the coffin.” Now I have been out of bed for five or six days, but the wounds still hurt.”

Wang Guoliang then stripped himself naked to the waist and exposed his back to Fuyan’s view. His whole back was dark black, as if the skin was about to fester and burst. The edges of his wounds were slightly purple and seemed to be dispersing from his body. Moreover, he said, “Since I was little, I have been vicious and stubborn, not being able to distinguish the good from the evil. My words and speech were arrogant and audacious, my crimes and punishments were cumulative and numerous. From now on, I will abstain from these things and dare not to be furious again. Whenever if you have money, please meet the deadline, and do not offend my supervisor. ” Then he left. Since then, whenever he came, he would certainly behave like a virtuous man. On the ninth month of the next year, Fuyan suddenly heard the news of his death. If we start calculating from the time when he was sentenced to beating with the heavy stick as punishment, there were only ten months in total —was that because according to the bureaucratic duty of the netherworld, ten years are counted as ten months?

APPENDIX C  
TRANSLATION OF “WANG HUANG” 王煌

Wang Huang, a man of Taiyaun 太原. At the beginning of *shen* 申 watch<sup>523</sup> of the fifth month in the third year of Yuanhe 元和 (808), he traveled from Luo 洛 to the Goushi 緱氏 manor. After he came out from Jianchun 建春 Gate for twenty *li*, there was a new graveyard on the left side of the road, in front of which there was a lady in white who arranged a sacrifice and wept most sorrowfully. Huang clandestinely peeked at her, and discovered that she was just about eighteen or nineteen and her looks were peerless. She was accompanied by two maids, but her husband was not there.

One of the maids said, “Our young lady is a native of Qin 秦. She married Pei Zhi 裴直 when she was fifteen. In less than two years, Mr. Pei then traveled to Luo and did not return. The young lady was alarmed by this, so she came to Luo together with two of us, but Pei had already passed away [when we arrived here]. Since her husband was buried here, she came here to pay sacrifice and weep. Huang said, “Then where will she go back to?” The maid responded, “The young lady was orphaned without family when she was young. Where can she return? In the past, the people who attended her wedding ceremony were her maternal relatives, but [now] her mother’s brother has died. At present, we will just stay at Luo and she will certainly plan to marry someone.” Huang said with pleasure, “I not only have an official appointment, I am also young and without a wife. My manor is located at Goushi, and I am not too poor. Now I would like to exhaust all my trivial sincerity [for her]. Please try to explain it for me.” The maid smiled, walk slowly towards the lady, and explained it to her. After the lady heard it, her weeping was even more sorrowful. The maid gently pulled her jacket to stop her, and said, “Today, the sun is about to go down,

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<sup>523</sup> *Shen* watch is from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

but there is no place for us to dwell out the wilds, and if you return to Qin you have no way of making a living. Fortunately, this young man has an official position, and he is young and wifeless; he has a lot of luggage, so he is not pressed to provide food and clothing. If you must go to somewhere else, where can you go to if you give him up? If you cannot repress your feelings to make this change, you can still call it off when you return to Luo. So why not heed to his words?" The lady said, "From the time I bonding my hair, I have served Pei. Now he died at Luo this strange land. Our affections of deep passion are already separated into the human world and the nether- world. Even if my body is destroyed to dust and my bones are teared to powder, I still cannot to repay Pei's love. How could I bear to marry another when I have not finished either my sorrow or my sincerity? Do not discuss it anymore. I will return to Luo for the time being." The maid told Huang what she had said, and Huang tried again, "If she goes back to Luo, and if she does not have a place to live, she will have to be a guest anyway, so what's lost by being a guest at Gou?" The maid returned and told her. The lady noticed that the sun was going down and there would be no place to dwell if she returned to Luo, so she gathered in her grief and paid obeisance to Huang. When she wanted to express both her manners and the proper etiquette, but she was choked with grief for a long time.

Huang summoned his attendants riding on decorated horse [to take care of her], and she accompanied Huang for more than ten *li*, and they lodged in an Inn at Pengpo 彭婆 together, where Huang arranged a separate bed as ritual dictated. Whenever the lady heard Huang speak, she would have to weep and sob, so Huang felt it was necessary to treat her with courtesy. Before daybreak, they arrived at Zhitian 芝田 Villa. The Lady wept in the middle of the hall, and explained, "I am truly ugly and clumsy, and not fit to be the object



of your concern. Now I have no place to return to, and I have already been granted your deep concern. Please prepare a banquet for wedding ceremony in order to display the proper rituals for meeting [as a couple].” Huang immediately ordered people to arrange everything and after they had eaten facing each other, they went into the bedroom to complete the ritual of the wedding ceremony. From that time on, the affection of love between them became deeper and more intimate. Huang observed that her appearance and demeanor were graceful, her words and speech were elegant, and her needlework was so exquisite that it was unsurpassed at that time. The sincerity of her promise could be broken only by death.

After several months, Huang had to go to Luo to do some business. In Luo, there was a Taoist priest named Ren Xuanyan 任玄言<sup>524</sup> was the person who knew magic methods and had been a friend with Huang for a long time. When he saw Huang’s appearance, he was greatly surprised and asked, “Where did you get a spouse that could make your appearance and spirit like this?” Huang laughed and said, “I just married a wife and that’s it.” Xuanyan said, “What you married is not a wife, but a devil of a might deity. If you cut the connection with her now you can still save your life. After another ten or twenty days, the path of your life will be terminated. Even I do not have the capabilities to save you.” Huang became unhappy and did not carry out the business he originally planned to do. The lady in white then sent people to ask him to return. Her affection seemed to be particularly deep, and her longing for him was so touching that it was indescribable. After another ten days, Huang went to Luo again, and met Xuanyan in the South Market.

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<sup>524</sup> Ren Xuanyan might literarily mean “the person who is responsible for mysterious words.”

Xuanyan held his hands and explained to him, “Your appearance shows that you will absolutely die. You did not believe my words, so you wound up like this. Tomorrow at *wu* watch,<sup>525</sup> that person should come, and when she comes, you will die. What a pity! What a pity!” Accordingly, he cried and bid farewell with Huang. Huang became even more confused. Xuanyan said: “If you don’t believe me, please put this tally in your bosom. Tomorrow at the *wu* watch, your virtuous beloved will come. Please throw the tally at her and you should be able to see her original form.” Huang then took the tally and put it in his bosom. Xuanyan told Huang’s servant: “Tomorrow at the *wu* watch, the devil of Zhitian will certainly come. Your master will certainly throw the tally at her. You should look at her shape. If she is not a Naichong devil with green face, she must be the one with red face. If she gets in, instead she will punish your master and he will certainly die. Look at him closely when he dies. Did he die in a sitting position or in a prone position?” His servant secretly marked what Xuanyan had told. When the time came, Huang was sitting in the middle of the hall, and the devil of Zhitian came as expected. When she reached door, Huang threw the tally from his bosom at her, and she immediately turned into a Naichong devil. The devil grabbed Huang and said, “So it is like this. How could you listen to that evil Taoist priest’s words and make me reveal my true form!” As a response, she cursed Huang, forced him to lie on the bed, and squashed him with a single stamp of feet.

At dusk, when Xuanyan came to visit Huang, he was already dead. Xuanyan asked his servant: “What kind of form was she?” The servant then told him what he saw. Xuanyan said, “This is the Naichong devil under the right foot of the North Celestial King. They are

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<sup>525</sup> The period of the day from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

supposed to be replaced every three thousand years by rule. When the devil fulfills his service years, he personally selects a replacement. So he transforms into human being form to find the replacement. If Huang had died in a sitting position, he could have also asked for a replacement after he fulfills the three thousand years of service. But, now he had died in a prone position and he will never be able to find anyone to replace him.” He walked forward to look at Huang’s body and found out that his backbone was snapped. Xuanyan wept over Huang’s body and left. This related to me by the servant, so I record it in detail.

APPENDIX D  
TRANSLATION OF “XUE WEI” 薛偉

Xue Wei, the District Recorder of Qingcheng 青城 county<sup>526</sup> of Shu 蜀 prefecture<sup>527</sup> in the first year of Qianyuan 乾元 (758), was a contemporary of the District Aide Zou Pang 鄒滂, the District Defender Lei Ji 雷濟, and Pei Liao 裴寮. That autumn, Wei had been ill for seven days. Suddenly, his breath became as feeble as that of a dying man, and he would not respond to repeated summons [to come back to life], yet his heart was slightly warm. His family could not bear the ideal of putting him into the coffin straight away, so they sat around him to look for signs of life. After twenty days, he suddenly took a long breath, got out of bed, and asked his family, “How many days have it been in the human world.” His family responded, “Twenty days.” He said, “Do me a favor! Look at the group of officials right away. Are they eating minced fish? Tell them that I have revived. Something extraordinary happened. Please ask them to put down their chopsticks, come and listen to me.” A servant went there to check on the group of officials, and they were just about to eat minced fish. So, the servant told them what Xue said, and everyone stopped eating to come. Wei said, “Did you order the servant of Revenue Manager Zhang Bi 張弼 to look for fish?” They responded, “Yes.” Xue then asked Bi, “The fisherman Zhao Gan 趙幹 hid a big fish and responded to you with a smaller one. But you got the hidden one from reeds and brought it here. When You had just went into the county offices, some clerk of the Revenue Manager Office was sitting at the east side of the gate, and some clerk from

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<sup>526</sup> Located at the west of modern Dujiangyan 都江堰 city of Sichuan province. Qingcheng Mount, located at the southeast of Qingcheng county, is the one of the most famous Taoist mountains in China.

<sup>527</sup> Established in the second year of Chuigong 垂拱 (686). Include Jinyuan 晉原, Qingcheng 青城, Xinjin 新津, Tangxing 唐興 four counties. Its capital Jinyuan was located at the modern Chongzhou 崇州 city of Sichuan province.

the Unofficial Reference to the Adjutant for Household Records was sitting at the west side of the gate, and they were playing chess. When you reached the stairs, Zou and Lei were gambling, while Pei was eating a peach. Bi told them that Gan has hidden this big fish. They said, ‘Whip him five times.’ After that, you gave the fish to the food service worker Wang Shiliang 王士良. He was pleased and killed it. Is everything I said true?” The officials asked each other about what Xue said, and indeed it was true. Everyone asked, “How do you know about this?” Xue responded, “The carp that you had was me.” Everyone gasped, “We really want to hear this story.”

Xue said, “At the beginning, I was ill and tired, and I felt so hot that I almost could not bear it. Suddenly, I felt so strangled that I forgot the illness, and I hated the heat so much that I looked for coolness. So I, with the support of a cane, left not knowing that it was just a dream. Once I left from the city, my heart was so joyful that even a caged bird or a penned beast that had gained its freedom could not compare with what I felt. I gradually went into the mountain, but became more strangled as I walked through the mountain, so I went down to wandered by the riverside. I discovered that the river water was deep and clean, the autumn scenery was lovely, there were not even a small ripple, and the mirror of the river’s surface embraced the distant sky. Suddenly, I had a desire to take a bath. So I took off my clothes on the bank and dove straight in and under the water immediately. I have been used to the water since I was young, but I never played in it after I grew up. To come across such a relaxed and comfortable occasion just suited my long held desire. I further said [to myself], ‘Swimming like human is not as happy as fish. How can I take a fish and briskly swim around?’” A fish next to me said, “I thought you did not want to do it. To bestow this on you is such an easy thing, let alone taking a ride. I shall plan it for

you.” The fish went happily away. In just a bit, a person who was several feet long and had a fish head rode on a giant salamander with dozens of fish to lead him away. He preannounced the River God’s edict, “Living in cities versus swimming in the water, floating versus sinking, these are two different ways. If it is something you do not really like, then you are not going to understand crossing through the water. You thoughts go towards floating in the river<sup>528</sup>, and your pursuit thinks only of lighthearted freedom. You delighted in the realm of endless water and set your heart free in the clear river. You loathe the feelings of precipitous peaks and cast off your hairpin [of official hat]<sup>529</sup> in an unreal world. Please comply with me and temporarily make a transformation to be covered with scales rather than immediately turn your body into a fish. For the time being, you can be a red carp in the East River. Alas! If you rely on great waves to overthrow boats, you will commit crime in the netherworld; if you are ignorant of slender hook and greed for bait, you will be killed in the mortal world. Do not lose your loyalty to bring shame upon your own group. Exert yourself!” After Xue Wei heard what the person said, he looked at himself and found out that he had already been covered with fish scales. Therefore, he set himself free to swim, reaching everywhere he wanted to go. He was always carefree and leisurely no matter if he were skimming the waves or diving to the depths. He leapt and

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<sup>528</sup> In Chapter 16 “Huangbai” 黃白 (gold and silver), *Baopuzi neipian jinzhu jinyi* 抱樸子內篇今注今譯, the author criticizes the people who desire to have longevity, but still float in deep rivers and cross over steep mountains to pursue wealth: “When people desire to believe in Taoism, those who intend to pursue longevity are the ones who still do business concurrently, do not hold high esteem of integrity and modesty, float in deep rivers and cross over steep mountains, depend on good fortune to chase profits, do not cherish their lives, and never cultivate continence.” 及欲為道，志求長生者，復兼商賈，不敦信讓，浮深越險，乾沒逐利，不吝軀命，不修寡欲者耳。 See annotated and interpreted by Chen Feilong 陳飛龍 (Taipei: Taiwan shanwu yinshuguan, 2001), 643. Here it is a metaphor of floating in the officialdom to pursue fame and official positions.

<sup>529</sup> Compared with the above metaphor *fuyue*, this allusion is quite ironic, because it refers to resign from an official position.

jumped in many rivers and lakes. Because he was assigned to remain in the East Lake, however, he had to return there every evening. After a short while, he was extremely hungry, but he could not find anything to eat. He was trailing boats and suddenly he saw Zhao Gan fishing; the bait he used smelled wonderful. While he knew the warnings, he could not help but drew near the bait. He told himself, “I am a human, temporarily turned into a fish, should I swallow the hook just because I can’t find food?” He gave up the bait and left. In just a bit, he felt even hungrier, thinking, “I am an official who put on these fish scales for fun. Even if I swallowed the hook, would Zhao Gan dare to kill me? He certainly must dispatch me back to county office.” So, he swallowed the hook. Zhao Gan drew in the net to take him out from the water. Just as Gan’s hand was about to touch him, Wei called him over and over, but Gan did not hear him. Instead, he passed a string through my gills, and then bound me in the reeds. In a little while, Zhang Bi came and said, “The District Defender Pei wants to buy a fish; it has to be a big one.” Gan said, “I haven’t caught a big one yet, but I have more than ten catties of small ones.” Bi said, “I was ordered to get a big fish, how can I use these small ones?” He then found me from the reeds by himself and picked me up. Then I also spoke to Bi, “I am the District Recorder for your county, but I transformed into the shape of a fish and swim around in the river. Why aren’t you bowing to me?” Bi paid no attention, but carried him off. I kept cursing him, but Gan never paid any attention to me. When we went into the county offices, I saw some county clerks playing chess, and I shouted out to these too. But nobody responded at all, they only laughed and said, ‘What a big fish! It must be three or four catties.’<sup>530</sup> After a while, we

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<sup>530</sup> According to Chen Yinxiang’s edition, this sentence is read as “it must be three or four feet long.”



reached the stairs, Zuo and Lei were gambling, and Pei was eating a peach. All of them were pleased that the fish was so big, and pressed Bi to give it to the kitchen. Bi explained that Gan had hidden this huge fish and wanted to respond to the order with smaller ones. Pei was angry and whipped Gan. I cried out to all of you, ‘I am your colleague. I was caught. To not let me go and pressed someone to kill me, it is no form of benevolence!’ I cried out loudly and started weeping, but you three just ignored me and turned me over to the fish mincer. That way Wang Shiliang brought out his blade and pleasantly threw me on the table. I cried out loudly again, ‘Wang Shiliang, you are the fish mincer I use all the time. Why are you killing me? Why don’t you hold me go report it to the officials?’ Shiliang acted like he didn’t hear me, placed my neck on the block, and chopped my head off. Just as the head fell, I woke up to the reality. So I respectfully summoned you.” All of the officials were astonished and their hearts engendered feelings of tenderness and compassion. This may have been so, but when Zhao Gan caught him, Zhang Bi carried him back, the country clerks were playing chess, three officials reached stairs, and Wang Shiliang was about to kill him, they all saw Wei’s mouth moving, but none of them heard anything. Thereupon, the three officials all threw away the minced fish, refusing to have it for the rest of their life. Since then, Wei became peaceful and recovered. Later, he was consecutively promoted to be the Assistant Magistrate of Huayang 華陽<sup>531</sup> and then passed away.

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<sup>531</sup> The original name of Huayang county was 蜀 and it was the capital of Shu 蜀 commandery. (See *Xin Tang shu*, 42.1079.) Located at modern Chengdu 成都 city in Sichuan province. (See Tan, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, 4:65-66.)

APPENDIX E  
TRANSLATION OF “GUO DAIGONG” 郭代公

Guo Yuanzhen, the Duke of Dai, failed the [Presented-scholar] Examination during Kaiyuan reign period (713-741) and went from Jin 晉<sup>532</sup> to Fen 汾<sup>533</sup>. Traveling at night, he lost his way because of the gloomy darkness.

After walking for a long time, he saw the light of lamps far off in the distance. He thought that it was a human residence, so he went there straightway to find a shelter. After eight or nine *li*, there was a mansion in which gate and eaves were very grand. Having entered the gates, he saw lamps and candles luminous and resplendent, food and wine set out in the rooms and the principal hall, exactly like a family marrying off a daughter. But it was silent and deserted. The Duke tied his horse in front of the west corridor, went up the stairs, and wandered around in the principal hall, not knowing what this place was. Suddenly, he heard the sound of a girl weeping in the eastern gallery of the hall, sobbing was endless. The Duke asked, “You, there, weeping in the hall, are you human or a ghost? Why does everything set out like this, but there is nobody here and you are weeping alone?” The girl responded, “In the shrine of my village, there is a General Ebony who can visit either calamity or fortune upon people. Every year, he demands a spouse from the villagers. They have to select a beautiful virgin to give him a marriage. Although I am ugly and clumsy, my father secretly offered me up to be selected in order to profit five hundred *min*

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<sup>532</sup> The capital of Jin Prefecture was Linfen 臨汾, located about 20 miles northeast of modern Linyi City in Shanxi. It covered the area of the modern cities including Fenxi 汾西, Hongdong 洪洞, Fushan 浮山, Anze 安澤, and Hexian 霍縣. (See Tang Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, 5:46-7).

<sup>533</sup> The capital of Fen Prefecture was Fenzhou 汾州, located about 40 miles northwest of modern Fenyang 汾陽 City in Shanxi. It covered the area of the modern cities including Linshi 靈石, Jiexiu 介休 and Pingyao 平遙. (Ibid.)

of cash<sup>534</sup> from the villagers. Tonight, all the girls from the village came together to have entertainment and banquet, and then locked up both the drunk girl and this room in order to make me marry off to the General. Now my parents have abandoned me, and I am simply going to my death, which makes me tremble in grief and fear. Gentleman, you seem a sincere person. If you can save me from [this calamity], I will end my days as a good faithful wife<sup>535</sup> and carry out your every instruction.” The Duke was greatly indignant and said, “What time will he come?” The girl responded, “The second watch.”<sup>536</sup> The Duke said, “I may be undeservedly called a heroic man, but I will do my best to save you. If I don’t, I should kill myself in order to sacrifice my life for you.”<sup>537</sup> No matter what, I will not let you die unjustly at the hands of the lecherous ghost.” The girl stopped weeping for a moment. The Duke then sat on the top of the western stairs, moved his horse to the north of the principal hall, and ordered a servant to stand in front of him, as if there was a visitor waiting for the General. Before long, fire light glowed and shone, and carriages and horses arrived together. Two clerks in purple entered but then went out again, and said, “The Prime Minister is here.” In the blank of an eye, two clerks in yellow entered and then went

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<sup>534</sup> One *min* equals one thousand coins in ancient time.

<sup>535</sup> *Chusao zhi fu* 除掃之婦 (sweeping and brooming wife) originated from “Quli xia” 曲禮下 (Summary of the Rules of Propriety Part 2), *Liji* 禮記: “In offering an unmarried daughter to the Son of Heaven, it is said, ‘This is to complete the providers of sons for you’; for that of the ruler of a state, it is said, ‘This is to complete the providers of your wines and sauces’; for that of a Grand Master, it is said, ‘This is to complete the providers who sprinkle water and sweep the floor for you.’” 納女於天子，曰備百姓；於國君，曰備酒漿；於大夫，曰備婦灑。

<sup>536</sup> About 9:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.

<sup>537</sup> In “We Ling gong” 衛靈公 (The Duke Ling of Wei), *Lunyu*: “The Master said, ‘The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.’” 子曰：“志士仁人，無求生以害仁，有殺身以成仁。” *Lunyu zhushu*, 15.138b.

out, also saying, “The Prime Minister is here.” The Duke was secretly pleased in his heart, thinking, “I shall be a Prime Minister in the future, I can certainly overcome this ghost.”

After a while, the General slowly got off from his carriage, and the clerks who led his way once again reported to him. The General said, “Enter.” Flanks of dagger-axes, swords, bows and arrows led him in, and he went to the eastern stairs. The Duke commanded his servant to walk forward and say, “Cultivated Talent Guo requests to meet with you.”<sup>538</sup> Subsequently, the Duke bowed. The General asked, “How did you get here?” The Duke responded, “I heard that you were holding an auspicious ceremony tonight, and I would like to serve as the master of the ceremony.” The General was delighted and invited him to have a seat, and across from each other. They ate, talking and laughing in extreme happiness.

There was a sharp knife in the Duke’s sack. He thought of taking it out to stab the General, so he asked, “Have you ever eaten deer jerky?” The General responded, “It is rare to have such an opportunity in this place.” The Duke said, “I have small amount of this delicacy that I got from the imperial kitchen. I would like to pare some off and offer it to you.” The General was greatly pleased. The Duke then stood up, took out the deer jerky and the small knife, pared it, put it in a small container, and asked the General to help himself. The General was delighted, and reached out with his hand to take it, unrespecting of anything else. The Duke waited for him to be off guard, then threw aside the deer jerky, caught him by the wrist and chopped it off. The general shock into silence and ran away.

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<sup>538</sup> Originally one of several degrees awarded to men nominated for office by local authorizes who passed qualifying examinations given by *Shangshu sheng* 尚書省 (the Department of State Affairs); discontinued by 650, thereafter becoming a common unofficial reference to a Presented Scholar. See Charles Hucker, *Officials Titles in Imperial China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 248.

The clerks who had led him in and followed him were alarmed and fled at the same time. The Duke grasped [the severed] hand, took off his outer robe to wrap it, and asked his servants to go out to inspect the situation. It was quiet and they saw nothing. The Duke then opened the door, and told the girl who had been weeping, “The General’s wrist is right here. If we track the blood, we will find him dead in no time. Since you have avoided this calamity, you can come out and eat now.”

The girl who had been weeping came out. She was about sixteen to seventeen years old, and was gorgeous. She bowed before the Duke, saying, “I swear to be your servant concubine.” The Duke tried his best to convince her [to give up this thought]. Just as the sky brightened, the Duke unwrapped [the robe], looked at the [severed] hand, and it turned out to be a pig foot. Suddenly, he heard the sound of weeping gradually draw nearer, and it was the girl’s parents and brothers, and the elders of the village, bearing a coffin to take her corpse away to prepare for her funeral and burial. Seeing that the Duke and the girl were alive, they were all startled and questioned them. The Duke reported the whole affair in detail to them. The elders got angry at him for injuring their deity. They said: “General Ebony is the protective deity of this village. Villagers have worshipped him for a long time. Every year we match a girl to him, and only then there will be no other worries. If this gift is offered only slightly late, then wind, rain, thunder and hail will cause disasters. Why would you, a stranger who lost his way, harm our bright deity and bring violence to our people? Whom can this village rely on? We should kill you and offer you as a sacrifice to General Ebony. If not, we should tie you up and hand you over to the local government office.” They signaled the young men to seize the Duke, but the Duke instructed, “You fellows are seasoned in years, but not in affairs. I am a person who thoroughly understands

reason in this world, so you all should listen to what I say. Deities receive the will of Heaven to protect their area. Isn't this the same as feudal lords who accept the mandate from the Son of Heaven to administer the world under Heaven? The people responded, "That is true." The Duke said, "If feudal lords fished for beauties in the Central States, wouldn't the Son of Heaven be angry? If they wounded or killed people, wouldn't the Son of Heaven launch an expedition? If the creature you call 'general' is indeed a brilliant deity, a deity surely does not have pig's feet, how could Heaven send such a beast of lecherous demon? Moreover, such a beast of lecherous demon is a creature condemned by Heaven and earth. I bear the righteousness in executing him. How can that be improper? You people have no righteous men and you cause your young girls to annually suffer a violent death at the hands of the evil creature. Your accumulated crimes have shaken Heaven. How do you know that Heaven did not send me to avenge it? If you follow my words, I should eliminate it for you, and there will be no more worry over offering the gift of a bride. What do you think?" The villagers were enlightened and happily replied, "We are willing to follow the leads of your commands."

The Duke then ordered several hundred of people to hold bows, arrows, sabers, spears, shovels, hoes and the like, to make a circle, and he followed them to look for bloodstains. In only twenty *li*, the trail of blood entered a grand burial mound. Accordingly, they surrounded it and started excavating it. With the hands [digging downward], the hole gradually became bigger just like an opening of an earthen jar. The Duke ordered the people to build up a bundle of firewood, set it on, and throw it into the burial mound to illuminate it. Inside of the mound was like a huge room and people saw a huge boar in it that was missing its left front foot, lying on the ground with blood covered his body. It ran out

through the smoke, and was killed in the encirclement. The villagers returned and celebrated together, assembling to give a farewell banquet<sup>539</sup> to gift the Duke. The Duke refused to accept it, saying, “I eliminate evils for people, and I am not a man who makes a living through hunting.” The girl who had escaped her fate bid farewell to her parents and relatives, saying, “I was blessed to be a human being who entrusted my very substance to blood relatives. I was still an unmarried daughter and certainly had no offense for which I deserved to be killed. Now you coveted a half million cash and made me marry this evil beast. You could bear to leave after locking me up there. How could any real human bear to do that? If not for the benevolence and bravery of the Duke Guo, would I still be alive today? So I died by my parents’ hands, and was given back to life by Duke Guo. I request to follow the lead of the Duke Guo, and never again give a thought to my hometown.” She wept and did obeisance to them and then followed the Duke. The Duke used many different strategies to try to stop her without success. Consequently, he accepted her as his concubine, and she later gave birth to several children. The Duke also achieved such noble status that all the positions he was appointed were high ranking. It is manifested clear that every affair is predetermined, and even though one is born far away and is casted aside, no demon or deity can harm one.

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<sup>539</sup> Based on Ming edition of *Shuo fu* 說郛, *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小说 recorded *huiqian* 會錢 (pool money) instead of *huijian* 會餞 (hold a farewell banquet together) here. As for *huiqian*, please see an example in *Xin Tang shu* as below: “People were poor and didn’t have bullocks, so they had to use human labor as a means cultivate land. [Wei] Yu established a [self-help] group for them, in which twenty families pooled certain amount of money together monthly, and whoever obtained it by drawing lots of names was allowed to purchase a bullock first. After making this as a rule for a long time, people were not short of bullock anymore.” 民貧無牛，以力耕，宙為置社，二十家月會錢若干，探名得者先市牛，以是為準，久之，牛不乏。 *Xin Tang shu*, 197.5631.



APPENDIX F  
TRANSLATION OF “LI WEIGONG JING” 李衛公靖

When Li Jing, the Duke of Wei, was still insignificant, he often hunted on Mount Huo 霍 where he lodged and ate in a mountain village. The old men in the village considered him an extraordinary man and often presented abundant amounts of food to him there. After many years, he had profound feelings for the village. [When he was hunting one day], he suddenly encountered a herd of deer, so he pursued them. Just as it grew dark, he wanted to leave off, but he could not. Unexpectedly, he lost his way because of the gloomy darkness, and everything was confused, he didn't know what to do next, so he kept going in a disheartened way, feeling increasingly exhausted and worried. He gazed as far away as he could, and saw the light of lamps. Accordingly, he spurred his horse there. Once he had arrived, he [found out that] it was a mansion with a vermilion gate the building of which was very grand.

Li Jing then knocked on the door, and after a while, a person came out to ask who it was. The Duke explained he was lost, and asked to stay overnight. The person responded, "The young gentlemen have all left already. Only the Matriarch is at home. Staying overnight should not be allowed." The Duke asked, "Please try to explain it for me." Subsequently, the person entered to report, and then emerged, saying, "At the beginning, the Matriarch did not want to allow it. But because it is dark, and the guest has claimed that he is lost, feels she must be your host." The Duke was invited into the hall. In a little while, a maid came out, saying, "The Matriarch is coming." She was around fifty, wearing a black skirt and a plain jacket, had a refined air, and was just like [one of those ladies] from the families of scholar-gentry. The Duke walked forward and paid obeisance to her. The Matriarch responded with an obeisance and said, "Since both of my sons are not at home, it is not proper for me to let you stay. But it is really dark today, and you have lost your

way back. If we do not allow you to stay here, where should we send you? But this is the residence in the mountains, and my sons are on their way home. If they make a lot of noise when they come tonight, please do not be frightened.” The Duke said, “I don’t deserve this.” Then, the Matriarch ordered food [for him], all of which was very delicious, but had too much fish. After the meal was done, the Matriarch went into her rooms, and two maids brought couches, mattresses, mats and quilts. All were fragrant, clean, and really showed off their wealth. Then they closed the door, locked it, and left.

When the Duke was alone, he thought: “What kind of creatures out there in the wilderness would come home at night and make a lot of noise?” He was so scared that he did not dare to go to bed but sat in a formal pose and listening for them. Just about midnight, he heard the sound of urgent knocking at the gate. He also heard one person answer the door, saying, “It is a tally from Heaven: passing on the message to the Elder Young Master of the House that he should deliver rain for seven hundred *li* around this mountain, and that enough rain should be delivered by the fifth watch. No delay! No urgent harm!” The person who answered the door accepted the tally and came in to present it to the Matriarch. The Matriarch said, “My two sons are not back yet, but the tally for delivering rain is here. It is certainly not possible to decline it, but if we miss the time, we will be punished. Even if I sent somebody to report to my sons, it would be already too late. Retainers like me should not have the right to appoint people [to carry this duty]. What should I do?” A young maid said, “In the hall I just noticed that the guest is no ordinary man. Why not ask him?” The Matriarch was pleased. So she personally knocked at the door of the Hall and asked, “Are you awake now? Please come out for a bit.” The Duke said, “Alright.” Subsequently, he went down the stairs to see her.

The Matriarch said, “This is not a human residence, but a dragon’s palace. My elder son went to the East Sea to attend a wedding ceremony for his younger sister; my younger son accompanied his sister. We just now received a tally from Heaven, and it is their turn to deliver rain, but even a cloud-path journey between the two places is over ten thousand *li*. We cannot report back on time, and it is hard to find a substitute. Might I humbly trouble you for a moment?” The Duke responded, “Jing is a traveler in the world, not someone who can ride on the clouds. How can I deliver any rain? If you have a method you can teach me, you have only to order.” The Matriarch said, “If you follow my words, anything is possible.”

Accordingly, she commended a young male servant, “Harness up the piebald horse.” Then she ordered people to bring the instrument for delivering rain, and it turned out to be just a small jar tied to the front of the saddle. She warned him, “When you ride the horse, do not use bit and the bridle. Instead, give him his head. Whenever the horse leaps from the ground and neighs, you just take a drop of water in the jar, and drip it on the horse’s mane. Be careful, not too much.”

At that point, the Duke mounted the horse, and went riding off, as if he was flying and soaring. The horse’s feet were gradually higher and higher rose from the ground, and Jing was surprised by its stability and speed, himself unaware that he was already above the clouds. The wind was as quick as arrows, and peals of thunders rose from the hooves of the horse. Then, whenever the horse leaped, he would drip water. Soon, while lightning was striking and the clouds opened up, and below he saw the village where he had been resting in. He thought, “I have eaten and drunk many times in this village. I was just thinking about how grateful I am to them and that I have no way to repay them. There is

now an extended drought, and the crops are about to wither and die. Now the rain is in my hands. How could I begrudge it?" He thought that one drop was not enough to soak the ground, so he dripped twenty-drops in a row. Suddenly, the rain stopped, and he rode the horse back.

The Matriarch was weeping in the hall, "How could you do so much harm? Originally, we agreed on one drop. How could you make it to be twenty on the basis of your private feelings? This one drop in Heaven is a foot of rain on earth. At the midnight, this village's plains were covered by twenty feet of water. How could anyone survive it? I have already been condemned and received eighty lashes." She exposed her back to Jing's view, and it was nothing but bloody scars. "My sons have also been punished with collective punishment. What do you think?" The Duke was shamed and terrified, and didn't know how to respond.

The Matriarch then said, "You Sir are a man of the mortal world, and do not recognize the transformation changes of clouds and rain. I sincerely do not dare to hold a grudge against you. I am afraid that the dragon Master will come to seek you out, and you really ought to be startled and scared about this. It is best if you leave quickly. However, I still have nothing to repay your trouble. I live in the mountain and have nothing. I only have two lackeys to present as gifts. Choose both or one of them as your own desertion." Then, she ordered the two lackeys to come out. One lackey came out from the east hall, whose manner and appearance were pleasant and agreeable, while one lackey who came out from the west hall looked indignant and agitated, and stood resentfully. The Duke thought privately, "I am a hunter, and make my living by fighting the ferocious. If I take the one who looks agreeable, won't people consider me timid?" Accordingly, the Duke

said, “I do not dare to take both, but since Your Matriarch has bestowed on me [this opportunity], I would like to take the angry one.” The Matriarch smiled, saying, “It is surprising to know what you want like this one.” The Duke then bowed to her and bid farewell. The retainer also followed him. After he a few steps out of the gate, turned to look, but the residence was gone. When he turned to ask the lackey, but the lackey had also disappeared. He found the way back by himself. When it turned light, the Duke gazed at the village where the water stretched beyond his vision. The tall trees only showed their tips, and there were no people anymore.

Thereafter, he wound up settling many invasions through clever military strategies, and his achievements covered the empire, that he never reached the position of minister—was that because he did not obtain the delighted lackey? The words say, “The east area of the [Tong 潼] Pass<sup>540</sup> often produces ministers, while the west area of the Pass often produces generals.” Is this not a metaphor of the east and west [halls]? The reason that they were called lackeys is to symbolize officials. If he had chosen both lackeys at that time, then he would have surely attained both positions of minister and general.

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<sup>540</sup> The pass 関 refers to Tangguan 潼関, the eastern portal of North China Plain (Guanzhong 關中 Plain). It located between the Qin Mountains and the Yellow River. During the Tang Dynasty, the safety of the national capital Chang'an was directly connected with the defense of Tongguan. The loss of Tongguan usually led directly to the fall of Chang'an.

APPENDIX G

TRANSLATION OF “HOUTU FUREN ZHUAN” 后土夫人傳<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> This translation is based on the text edited by Wang Meng'ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 2:131-48. Wang's text is mainly based on the text entitled “Wei Andao” 韋安道 in the *Taiping guangji*.

Wei Andao 韋安道 of Jingzhao 京兆,<sup>542</sup> was the son of the Imperial Diarist 起居舍人, [Wei] Zhen 真. He took the Presented-scholar (*jinsshi*) Examination, and for a long time did not pass it. During the Dading 大定 (great security) period of the Tang dynasty,<sup>543</sup> [one day], in Luoyang 洛陽,<sup>544</sup> he set out early, and arrived at the west gate of Cihui 慈惠 Ward.<sup>545</sup> When the morning drum first sounded,<sup>546</sup> he saw that in the main thoroughfare, there were military entourage which were similar to the emperor's personal guards: In front were more than ten companies of armored horsemen; next were officials holding great

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<sup>542</sup> Here Jingzhao should refer to Jiangzhao Fu 京兆府 (Metropolitan Prefecture), which is the official designation of the Tang's capital, including Chang'an and its environs. Chang'an was located about 40 miles northwest of modern Xi'an 西安 City in Shanxi. See Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, 5:41.

<sup>543</sup> *Dading* means "great security." In 684, Wu Zetian dethroned her son, Zhongzong 中宗, and decreed imperial orders herself. The period name is also changed to be Guangzhai 光宅. In the same year, Xu Jingye 徐敬業 (?-684) raised a rebellion to oppose Wu Zetian's usurpation. In the next year, the first year of Gongchui 拱垂 (685) period, Wu Zetian pacified the rebellion successfully and had a general pardon granted to people. It seems that this fictional period name suggests this historical event happened during Wu Zetian's reign.

<sup>544</sup> Near modern Luoyang City in Henan (Tan Qixiang, 5:44). In 684, Wu Zetian also changed the name of Luoyang, *dongdu* 東都 (Eastern Capital), into *shendu* 神都 (Divine Capital). Later, because Luoyang became the capital during Wu's imperial reign, she spent most of her time staying there.

<sup>545</sup> Cihui Ward was south of the Luoyang imperial palace, where Wei Andao encountered Lady Houtu later in the tale. The Luo River, which divided Luoyang into northern and southern sections, also divided the ward from the palace. The west gate of Cihui Ward opened onto the Tongli 通利 Ward. (See Wang, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 137). The ward name of *cihui* (being compassionate and virtuous) might imply some unique character traits that the main female protagonist possesses.

<sup>546</sup> In ancient times, a drum was sounded five times: at dawn, at main mealtime, at midday, at the afternoon meal, and at dusk. From at least the Tang onward, the official drum signaling the change of the hours was echoed in each ward. When the morning drum first sounded, it was *yinshi* 寅時, which began at about 3 A.M. See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 206, 211. Because dead people were buried in the earth, *Houtu*, the deity of earth was also in charge of the netherworld that is a realm shrouded in utter darkness. In order to suggesting the real identity of Lady Houtu, the tale's author arranged Wei Ando to run into her and her troops of followers during this time period. Meanwhile, many encounters of extraordinary events occurred in Tang tales often happened during the dawn or dusk when the boundary between day and night became blurred, which symbolizes the vague border between the mortal world and the transcendental world.



cudgels. Wearing embroidered trousers and jackets,<sup>547</sup> they spurred ahead along both sides of the road forward. There could also be counted by several tens of groups. Further, he saw a [carriage] with a yellow standard with a streamer on its left side.<sup>548</sup> There were moon banners, but were no sun banners.<sup>549</sup> Further, there were several dozens of attendants, Ladies of Talent, eunuchs, and the like. There were also several hundred people. In middle was a flying canopy.<sup>550</sup> Under its cover, he saw [a woman] wearing a dress with pearls and jades, and riding a great steed, all of which were like an empress's ornamentation.<sup>551</sup> The

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<sup>547</sup> *Yi hua ku ru* 衣畫袴裯. Since 裯 normally means “rags,” it is likely that 裯 is an error for *ru* 襦 here. 襦 means short jacket. *Ku* refers to a kind of crotchless trousers that is different from *kun* 禪. 袴襦 also can be 襦袴. In “*Nei ze*” 內則 (Inner Principles), *Liji* 禮記 [The Records of Rites], “for ten years, [pupil] cannot wear silk jackets and trousers” [童子生] 十年……衣不帛襦袴. (See *Liji zhangju* 禮記章句 [Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1987], 12.11).

<sup>548</sup> According to “*Yu fu zhi*”, *Jiu Tang shu*, there are six types of carriages for empress in the Tang. Because *anche* 安車 (Peaceful Carriage) is specifically used for an empress returning to her paternal home for a visit, it is very possible that the carriage mentioned here refers to *anche*. See *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1934.

<sup>549</sup> Sun and moon banners were often used together as part of the spectacular setting for imperial ceremonies, celebrations, and other significant events, but in this story only moon banners were present to signify the persona's female identity. As described in the extant texts of *Sun Zuozhi* 孫綽子 and *Huzi* 符子, for instance, it was Huangdi 黃帝 (Emperor Huang) who first adopted the moon banners and sun banners for his entourage. (See the texts in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960], 79.4.) Meanwhile, *Zhou li* 周禮 explained how the nine types of banners used by the emperor were maintained and displayed during the western Zhou: “The official *Sichang* is in charge of nine types of banners. Each name [of the banners] respectively belongs to a different category so as to be served in national events. The banner with sun and moon is named *chang* (constant); the banner with intertwined dragons is named *qi*” 司常掌九旗之物, 名各有屬, 以待國事。日月為常, 交龍為旗. (*Zhouli zhushu*, 27.420b, in *Congkan Songben shisanjing zhushu*.) Sun banner and moon banner were created to respectively represent emperor and empress in later dynasties: “Therefore, [the relationship] between the Son of Heaven and the Queen is similar to [the relationship] between the sun and the moon, or *ying* and *yang*, which are mutually necessary and then accomplish each other.” 故天子之與后, 猶日之與月、陰之與陽, 相須而后成者也. (*Liji zhushu*, 44.999b.)

<sup>550</sup> *Feisan* 飛傘 refers to *feigai* 飛蓋, which is a kind of canopy on a carriage that provides cover from the sun.

<sup>551</sup> In its Ming copied manuscript, *ru hou zhuren shi* 如后主人飾 was recorded as *ru hou zhi shi* 如后之飾. According to the context, it makes the meaning clearer. Wang Meng'ou suggests that the original text should be *ru houzhu zhi shi* 如后主之飾 and *houzhu* indicates the Empress, Wu Zetian (see Wang, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 138).

woman was beautiful and gorgeous and her looks could stir a person.<sup>552</sup> Further, there were horsemen in train, all of whom were female Select Soldiers<sup>553</sup>, holding ceremonial battle-axes, carrying bows and arrows, and riding horses in her train. There was another one thousand people. At that time, [because] the Empress of Heaven was in Luo,<sup>554</sup> Andao first thought that it was the Empress of Heaven making a formal visit.

That time was before daylight. Andao asked people who were traveling the same direction about her, but they all said that they did not see it. Furthermore, he also felt strange about why, in the thoroughfare, the Imperial Insignia Guards and the local street patrols did not clear the way for her. Gradually it become light. Andao saw a eunuch among the tracking

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<sup>552</sup> In the first year of Duke Huang 桓, *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [Commentary of Zuo], “Huafu Du of Song met the wife of Kong Fu on road, looking directly and gazing after her, said, ‘beautiful and captivating.’...In the spring of the second year, Du of Song attacked Kong family, killed Kong Fu, and seized his wife” 宋華父督見孔父妻于路目逆而送之曰美而艷.....二年春宋督攻孔氏殺孔父而取其妻 (see *Zuozhuan zhushu ji buzheng* 左傳註疏及補正 [Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1984], 5.29). In this record, the wife of Kong Fu who was beautiful and captivating was the cause of the calamity. In the tales of following dynasties, woman’s beauty was often connected with some potential calamities. This motif was also often adopted as exciting force. For example, in “Han Ping” 韓平 that was collected in *Sou shen ji* 搜神記 [Records of Searching for the Supernatural], the beauty of Han Ping’s wife caused King Kang 康 to do harm to her family. In the beginning of this tale, the author described his persona with *meili guanyan* 美麗光艷 to suggest possible calamities. In the following narration, through Wei Zhen worrying about the coming of calamities all the time, the author emphasized this possibility. At the end of the tale, it turned out to be a false alarm. With the above plot, the author enhanced the dramatic interests of the tale.

<sup>553</sup> The character *cai* 才 should be recorded as 材. Since Han dynasty, *Caiguan* 材官 had been one of the types of militiamen. “[Han] Gaozu (256 B.C.E-195 B.C.E) commanded all the commanderies and states in the country to select young men who were capable of drawing a hand-held bow full stretch and shooting a crossbow by stamping, and their skills and strength were powerful enough to serve as Soldiers of Light Chariots, Calvary men, Infantrymen and Soldiers of Towered Warships” [漢]高祖命天下郡國選能引關蹶張、材力武猛者，以為輕車、騎士、材官、樓船. (See Sun Yanxing 孫星衍 (1753-1818) comp., *Han guan liu zhong* 漢官六種 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990], 2.152.) It was during the Tang dynasty that a well-known female military leader was first recorded in the official history: Princess Pingyang 平陽 (ca. 590-623), the third daughter of Tang Gaozu (r. 618-626) created her own army called *naizi jun* 娘子軍 (Lady’s Army) and successfully assisted his father to overthrow the Sui dynasty (581-619). (See *Xin Tang shu*, 58.2315). Apparently, the description of these female Skilled Soldiers is used to suggest the persona’s female identity as well.

<sup>554</sup> Refers to the Luoyang Imperial Palace that is in the northeast of the Luoyang city.

horsemen ride up to him. Andao accordingly stopped and asked him, “Wasn’t the person who just passed the Monarch of the People?”<sup>555</sup> The eunuch said, “No.” When Andao asked about the affair, the eunuch simply pointed to the west gate of Cihui Ward, saying, “Just go from here, pass through the gate of the ward, follow the wall, and walk south for more than two hundred paces. There will be a leaf of vermilion door facing west. Knock on it, ask about it, [and then] you will find it out for yourself.” Andao knocked on the door as he said, and after a while, an official in vermilion clothes came out to answer the door, saying, “Aren’t you Wei Andao?” Andao said, “Yes.” The official said, “Lady Houtu has been waiting for you for a long time.” Consequently, [the official] invited him to enter. Andao then saw a great gate like a Halberd Gate.<sup>556</sup> The official entered the gate to report his arrival. In a bit, he was again invited to enter. There was a eunuch in purple clothes, who chatted with Andao at a courtyard, then invited him to a palace, and arranged a hot bath for him. In a bit, the eunuch presented a suit of beautiful clothes from a big case,

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<sup>555</sup> Here, *renzhu* 人主 clearly refers to Empress Wu.

<sup>556</sup> In ancient time, when emperors travelled out the palace, at the places they lodged halberds were set as a kind of temporary age. *Zhou li* 周禮 [The Rites of Zhou], it says, “The Manager of House... founds an altar and a low wall, and builds a halberd gate.” 掌舍.....為壇，壝宮，棘門。Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127-200) annotation for it says, “Halberd Gate [means] using halberds as a gate.” 棘門，以戟為門。(See *Zhouli zhushu ji buzheng* 周禮註疏及補正 [Taipei: shijie shuju, 1980], 6.8.) During the Tang halberd was used to decorate imperial ancestral shrine, palace halls and high-ranking government offices: “Tang established the system of halberd [gate]. The gates of imperial ancestral shrine, altar and palace halls have twenty-four [halberds]; the gate of Eastern Palace has eighteen; the gate of first-ranking civil official has sixteen... the gates of Junior Commissioner-in-Chief, Junior Protector General, Middle Prefecture and Small Prefecture have ten individually. Halberds were set at the gates, so it was called halberd gate.” 唐設戟之制，廟社宮殿之門二十有四，東宮之門一十有八，一品之門十六，.....下都督、下都護、中州、下州之門各十。設戟於門，故謂之戟門。(See Hu Shanxing’s 胡三省 (1230-1302) annotation in *Zizhi tongjian*, 257.8364.) In the story it signifies senior government office.

among which were a blue gown,<sup>557</sup> an ivory tablet, a silken belt,<sup>558</sup> a hood<sup>559</sup> and a pair of boots completely prepared and he ordered Andao to put them on. The eunuch said, “Now you can go in.” Finally, he provided a great steed for Andao to ride and there were several female riders to lead and follow him. The eunuch and Andao rode side by side and went out the west gate of Cihui [Ward]. They passed through the main street and headed to the southwest, going east on Tongli 通利 Street and out of the Jianchun 建春 Gate. Then they went more than twenty *li* to the northwest. Gradually, people guarded on both sides of streets came into view, who knelt before their horses, then left. They passed through several places before arriving at a great city guarded and defended very tightly by armored soldiers. It was just like an imperial city. After passing through several layers of wall, finally, they saw lofty buildings and connecting galleries, under which there was a huge gate. It was like the residence of the Son of Heaven and had many eunuchs. On horseback Andao passed through emerald buildings and vermilion palaces. Passing through another ten places, Andao finally entered into a gate. After walking about two hundred paces, there was another great palace in which a vast banquet and numerous instruments were arrayed and where goblets and vessels were set out and displayed. The nine rounds of music and

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<sup>557</sup> During Wu Zetian’s reign, officials of the eighth rank wore dark blue gown, and officials of the ninth rank wore light blue gown. (Cf: *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1953) Because Wei Andao did not pass the present-scholar examination, he did not get any official position, but he was granted a low official position here.

<sup>558</sup> All the official clothes of the Tang have *shoudai* 綬帶 (silk ribbon), which is used to tie official seal. *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1944.

<sup>559</sup> Since Wude [period], it began to have hood. Civil officials and celebrities had the hoods with flat top and small shape. In the reign of Zetian, the court bestowed high top hoods to the high rank subjects, which were called “the style of the various kings of Wu court.” 武德以來，始有巾子，文官名流，上平頭小樣者。則天朝，貴臣內賜高頭巾子，呼為武家諸王樣。See *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1953. Like Wu Zetian, Lady Houtu bestowed a hood to Wei Andao to show her favor.

wan dance were like the music of Leveling heavens.<sup>560</sup> More than ten beautiful women who looked like consorts or princesses were aligned at the banquet. The eunuch who had traveled together with Andao before, guided him to up to the palace hall from western stairs.<sup>561</sup> In a bit, he saw a eunuch in the palace hall who seemed to be a master of ceremonies, who ordered Andao to stand facing eastward in a west bay. In a bit, coming from the back door of the palace, Andao saw guards and attendants first arrange themselves in the hall. Then he vaguely heard the sounds of jade bracelets and girdle-gems pendants and a beautiful woman, outfitted in head ornamentations and a ritual robe decorated with pheasant patterns<sup>562</sup> as though dressed to pay homage at the ancestral shrine. After she reached the palace, she stood face to face with Andao, facing southwest.<sup>563</sup> She was the

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<sup>560</sup> *Juntian* 鈞天 is the residence of the God of Heaven and the central of Heaven. A type of ancient dance was called *wanwu* 萬舞. “Great and grand, [dancers] in all directions are about to perform *wan* dance.” 簡兮簡兮,方將萬舞 The *Mao Commentary* says, “[People] used weapons and feathers to perform *wan* dance, and applied it [when they were sacrifice to] ancestral temples, mountains, and rivers.” 以干羽為萬舞, 用之宗廟山川。Here *wanwu* means numerous dances. This description also indicates the divine status of Lady Houtu.

<sup>561</sup> Ascending from west stairs shows the respect for guests. In “Quli shang” 曲禮上 (Summary of the rules of propriety A), *The Records of Rites*, “hosts move towards eastern stairs, while guests move towards western stairs. If the guests lower their status, then their move towards the hosts’ stairs.” 主人就東階, 客就西階, 客若降等, 則就主人之階。 See *Liji zhangju*, 1.10.

<sup>562</sup> *Huiyi* 禕衣 was worn by the empresses of the Tang and this type of dress is in the highest rank: “Order of Wude: The dresses of Empress have *hui* dress, *ju* dress, and ceremonial dress with gold-encrusted hairpin, three ranks. *Hui* dress [is matched by] a headgear with flowers in twelve sprigs and two leaf ornaments of temple. The dress is woven and made by dark blue [silk]. Its patterns are the shapes of chrysolophus.... [When the empress] receives noble titles, assists sacrifice, offers a sacrifice, and does various great things, [she] would wear it.” 武德令: 皇后服有禕衣, 鞠衣, 鈿釵禮衣三等。禕衣, 首飾花十二樹並兩博鬢。其衣以深青織成為之, 文為翬翟之形。.....受冊, 助祭, 朝祭, 諸大事則服之。 See *Jiu Tang shu*, 45.1955.

<sup>563</sup> In “kun gua” 坤卦 (The Kun Hexagram), *Yi jing* 易經 [Book of Changes], “Gaining friends in the southwest, and losing friends in the northeast. Being peaceful and firm is auspicious.” 西南得朋, 東北喪朋, 安貞吉。 Cui Jing 崔憬 in his annotation for it says, “[The southwest is] the Way of being a wife. The west [belongs to hexagrams] *kun* and *dui*, and the south [belongs to hexagrams] *xun* and *li*. Both directions are *ying*, and belong to the same category as *kun*. Therefore, it says, ‘Gaining friends in the southwest’” 妻道也。西方坤兌, 南方巽離, 二方皆陰, 與坤同類。故曰: “西南得朋。” See Li

one whom he had seen under the flying canopy on the west street of Cihui Ward. The eunuch then announced, saying, “For Lady Houtu, according to the calculations of fate in the underworld, she should now be matched to mate.” He ordered Andao to kneel and do obeisance, and the Lady accepted it; then the Lady knelt and did obeisance, and Andao accepted it, just like the ceremony between guest and host in the human world. She then took off the ceremonial robes and sat side by side with Andao on the banquet mat. The ten or so beautiful women that he had seen before sat along on the left and right sides. They played music, ate and drank until it grew dark before they quit. That night, as Andao joined her, he discovered that she was still a virgin.

Things went on like this for more than ten days. What they wore, rode, drunk and ate were just like that of the imperial household. Accordingly, the Lady spoke to Andao, saying, “I have become your wife; you have parents; taking me in marriage without informing them cannot be called proper ritual. I would like to follow your lead to return home as a proper bride. I would be fortunate to be able to pay respect to your venerable parents in the ancestral shrine in order to complete the ritual of becoming daughter-in-law.” Andao said, “Certainly.” Accordingly, she issued a command to have the carriage harnessed and that very day, they were reported to be ready. The Lady rode in a carriage [pulled by] ochre bullocks. The carriage was decorated with gold, emeralds, and precious jades, which was presumably what the human world called a low carriage.<sup>564</sup> On its top,

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Dingzuo 李鼎祚, ed., *Zhou yi ji jie* 周易集解 [Collected Annotations of the Changes of the Zhou] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1967), 2.1a.

<sup>564</sup> *Kuche* 庫車 must be an error here, because it refers to the carriages which were used for carrying goods instead of persons in ancient time. *Tong zhi* 通志 [Comprehensive Records] recorded that after Feng Zizong 馮子琮 (d.571) was executed, his body was sent back home by eunuchs in *kuche*, a goods carriage. Therefore, when his son first saw the carriage, he didn't realize that it contained his father's body, but felt greatly pleased and thought that he was going to receive rewards from the court. (See *Tong zhi*, 170.5296).

there was a canopy shielding it. All the horsemen, attendants and retinue were like what Andao had seen in the Western Street of Cihui Ward. Andao followed the carriage on horseback. More than ten attendants were around Andao. All of them were of the sort like Select Soldiers and eunuchs. After they went more than ten *li*, there was a large tent made of vermilion curtains<sup>565</sup> and female officers were arranged behind it. This was the site in the temporary dwelling palace for supply and banquets. The Lady then entered into the large tent, and ordered Andao to stay with her. The food and drink presented was splendid and flavorful. After a short time, they departed again. The Lady issued a command, ordering a seventy to eighty percent reduction in the number of carriages and horsemen in train. After they went another three *li* or so, she again issued an order to dismiss most of the interim. Thus, when they near the vicinity of the Jianchun Gate, there were only twenty riders and horsemen left, just like an excursion of a prince. Once they had entered Luoyang, they were about to reach his house. Andao went in first, and the servants of the household marveled at his carriage and dress. Andao then met his parents. His parents were startled and astonished for a while, then spoke to him, saying, “We have not seen you for more than a month. Where did you go?” Andao knelt down, and explained to them transparently, saying, “I was forced into marriage by a family.” He explained that since the bride would arrive immediately, he had come first to report to them. The parents surprised questioning was still going on when the carriages and horses reached the door. Then, there were several

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Based on Wang Mengou’s annotation, *kuche* could be *biche* 庫車 here, a kind of low carriage often used by common people. As recorded in *Shiji*: “The people of Chu in their custom was fond of low carriages. The King [of Chu] considered that low carriages were inconvenient when using horses, intending to issue orders to make them higher.” 楚民俗好庫車。王以爲庫車不便馬，欲下令使高之。(See *Shiji*, 119.3100.) For this reason, the carriage was not pulled by horses, but by brown bullocks in the story. This detail also signifies that Lady of Houtu deliberately lowered her honorable status to pay respect to the parents of Andao.

<sup>565</sup> *Cheng* 城 should be recorded as *cheng* 成 here.

ten groups of maidservants and castrated servants who sent in embroidered mattresses and damask mats from the outer main door and spread them out on the courtyard. They took emerald-green screens and gaily-painted curtains to decorate the doors of the principal hall. Attendants set up a fine-string bed, requesting the parents-in-law to sit there side by side. Then, from the outside of the main door, they arranged two brocade windbreaks. Wearing ceremonial dress and hanging girdle-gems pendants, the Lady entered through the door. After she finished performing the ritual of daughter-in-law, her attendants presented about more than ten cases of emeralds, gold, precious jades, gauze and silk to stand as the congratulating gifts used in the human world. They placed these gifts in front of the parents-in-law. From brothers and sisters-in-law to the servants of household all received the favor of her gifts. Accordingly, the parents-in-law said, “Bride, please stay in the eastern courtyard.”<sup>566</sup> Then, there were also maidservants and castrated servants that carried the ornaments of bed-curtains and tents, and placed them in the eastern courtyard. They completely decorated the place. Eventually, she stayed there. Both the parents-in-law were worried and frightened, not knowing where she came from.

At that time, the Empress of Heaven held the court. Laws and decrees were strict and rigorous. [Wei Zhen] feared that calamity would befall them, thus he reported the

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<sup>566</sup> Besides bride, *xinfu* 新婦 also generally refers to daughter-in-law during the Tang. Hu Yinglin in *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* clarified: “The current custom is that the appellation for a newly married man is *xinlang* (groom) and the appellation for a newly married woman is *xinfu* (bride). The parents-in-law served by a daughter-in-law also call her *xinfu* as a rule. Noted that probably, the appellation of *xinfu* has already become a fact during the Six Dynasties period (220-589); and it is during the Tang that [the appellation] became the most prevalent. It is not able to enumerate all the examples of the appellation which have been seen in the small talks by minor officials. However, it was called from the concern of parents-in-law instead of a newly married woman.” 今俗以新娶男稱新郎，婦稱新婦。又婦之事公姑者例呼新婦。按新婦之稱，蓋六代已然，而唐最為通行，見諸小說稗官家不可舉。然自主翁姑言，非主新嫁也。See detailed discussion on this appellation in Zhang Minquan 張民權, “Xifu kaoyuan” 媳婦考源, *Zhongguo yuwen tongxun* 中國語文通訊 47 (1998): 46-54.



whole affair to the throne in detail to ask for punishment. The Empress of Heaven said, “This is bound to be a succubus.<sup>567</sup> It is not worth worrying about it. I have people who are skilled at the techniques of incantation. The two monks Jiusi 九思 and Huaisu 懷素, masters of Buddhism, are able to expel this succubus for you.” Accordingly, she ordered Jiusi and Huaisu to go there. The monks said, “This is nothing but the like of demonic spirits or foxes and it is very easy to exorcise it with our techniques. You should order the daughter-in-law to arrange food and set seats in the courtyard. Please set a time tomorrow for us to arrive.” Zhen went back and ordered everything set up according to the words of the two monks. The daughter-in-law obeyed the order, prepared food and set out seats, being afraid of nothing. The next day, the two monks arrived. After they had finished the meal and sat in a formal pose, they asked to meet with the bride and were about to apply their magic techniques. The bride arrived immediately and paid her respect to the two monks. The two monks suddenly acted as if they had been struck by something, and prostrated themselves and owned up their wrong, and blood seeped from the corner of their eyes, noses and mouths. Furthermore, they reported the whole affair to her Highness. The Empress of Heaven asked about it,<sup>568</sup> and the two monks replied, “The only things we can cast a spell on are demonic spirits, succubi, and ghostly beings. We don’t know where this came from, but we don’t think we can subdue it.” The Empress of Heaven said, “There is

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<sup>567</sup> In *Xunzi* 荀子, it says, “[Zhuang Shuliang] was foolish and easily frightened. Under the bright moon, he walked at night. When he bowed his head and saw his shadow, thinking it a crouching ghost. When he looked up and saw his hair, thinking it a standing demon.” [涓蜀梁] 愚而善畏，明日而宵行，俯視以影，以爲伏鬼也，仰視其髮，以爲立魅也。 See Xunkuang, *Xunzi* (Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1988), 497.

<sup>568</sup> According to the context, *yin ming* 因命 is likely to be an error here. Its Ming transcription recorded *yin ming* as *wen zhi* 問之 (asked about it), which it is more reasonable. See this note in Wang Mengou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 140.

the Grand Master of Remonstrance, Ming Chongyan 明崇儼 (?-679), who restricts and leads various deities of Heaven and earth by the extraordinary methods of the Great One. We can certainly use him.” Subsequently, The Empress of Heaven summoned Chongyan. Chongyan told Zhen, “Tonight, sir, in the hall you reside, you can sit very sincere attitude to watch above the chamber where the bride resides. You will see an extraordinary thing arrive; if you observe that I win, and then it is all over; if I do not win, then I shall change to another magic technique to subdue it.” Zhen did what he said. At the *shen* hour,<sup>569</sup> Zhen saw something like a flying cloud with a red radiance just like flashing lightning. It came soaring and leaping from the residence of Chongyan to come. When it reached to a place above the daughter-in-law’s chamber, suddenly it seemed to be struck and extinguished by something, and then it disappeared. Wei Zhen sent someone to ask after the daughter-in-law, but it turned out she was safe and sound as always. At the *yi* hour,<sup>570</sup> he saw something else that looked like a red dragon, stretching out its claws and, belching poison fire, riding on a black cloud that was radiating light. When it reached the place above the daughter-in-law’s chamber, it also seemed to be struck by something and it disappeared with mourning sound.<sup>571</sup> When Wei Zhen sent someone to ask after the daughter-in-law, she was just like

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<sup>569</sup>*Shen* 申 was written as *jia* 甲 in its Ming copied manuscript. In “Shu zheng” 書證 (The Confirmation of Books), *Yan shi jia xun* 顏氏家訓 [Family Instruction of the Yan Clan]: “Since the Han and Wei, [time] has been called the *jia* hour, the *yi* hour, the *bing* hour, the *ding* hour, and the *wu* hour. Moreover, [people] say “drum”: the first drum, the second drum, the third drum, the fourth drum, and the fifth drum. [People] also say the first watch, the second watch, the third watch, the fourth watch and the fifth watch. All of them used five as a period.” 漢魏以來，謂為甲夜、乙夜、丙夜、丁夜、戊夜，又雲鼓，一鼓、二鼓、三鼓、四鼓、五鼓，亦雲一更、二更、三更、四更、五更。皆以五為節。Because “hour” equals “watch,” the *jia* hour equals the first watch, about 7:00 P.M to 9:00 P.M.

<sup>570</sup> It equals the second watch, about 9:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M.

<sup>571</sup>The sound of *you* 呦 first was the cry of deer: “With the *youyou* sound the deer cry, eating the southernwood of the fields” 呦呦鹿鳴，食野之苹。(See poem “Luming” 鹿鳴 in *Maoshi* #161.) Later, *youyou* or *youran* 呦然 refers to the sound of weeping.

before. And then when it was *zi* hour,<sup>572</sup> Wei Zhen saw something with vermilion hair and serrated teeth, treading on iron wheels, riding on swift thunder, brandishing sharp weapons, shouting as he raced there.<sup>573</sup> When it reached her room, it also seemed to be killed by something.<sup>574</sup> It owned up its wrong and was extinguished. After a while, it became light. Zhen was astonished and frightened and not knowing how to deal with it, he reported the whole affair in detail again. Chongyan said, “The method I had just used is the Method of the Great Unity Incantation and Amulet, but it can only control and subdue fox demons. Now it has been proven useless, please let me change the method to track it down.<sup>575</sup>” Accordingly, he brought forward an amulet to be used at on the altar of Taoist ceremony, and make it summon all the subordinates who were in charge of ghosts and demonic spirits of the eight directions of the deep earth, of hills and mountains, streams and rivers, of hillocks and mounds, watercourses and woods, and their number was complete. Chongyan was marveled at it. On the next day, he further summoned all the divinities of the human world, of the sections and the realms of the upper above, and of the eight extremities, but

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<sup>572</sup> It equals the third watch, about 11:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M.

<sup>573</sup> Wang Mengou’s annotation suggests that this description is similar to the figure of *lei shen* 雷神 (The Spirit of Thunder) in Chinese folk paintings. For instance, in “Yufu zhi”, *Yuan shi* 元史 [History of the Yuan], it described: “The flag of the Spirit of Thunder has black background with red-flame shape end. A deity was painted [on the flag]. [He] has dog-like head, ghostly shape, white scarf, vermilion calf nose, and yellow belt. His right hand holds axe, and his left hand holds chisel. He beats connected drums in fire.” 雷公旗，青質，赤火焰脚，畫神人，犬首，鬼形，白擁項，朱犢鼻，黃帶，右手持斧，左手持鑿，運連鼓于火中。Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-1381), *Yuan shi* 元史 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 9.1962

<sup>574</sup> *Wei* 為 is omitted here. Based on the preceding context *you ruo wei wu suo pu* 又若為物所撲, this phrase should be recorded as *you ru wei wu suo sha* 又如為物所殺. (See note #31 in Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 141.)

<sup>575</sup> Based on the context and the following phrase *qing shi zi jian er ji zhi* 請試自見而蹟之, it is very possible that *ze* 蹟 should be *ji* 蹟 here. (See note #32 in Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 141.)

their number was complete. Chongyan then said, “I can subdue any divined spirits that becomes a succubus. Yet the situation like this is not one that I can understand. Please allow me try and see her by myself to track it down.” Accordingly, Wei Zhen ordered meal set up at the courtyard of the daughter-in-law to invite Chongyan. After Chongyan took his seat, he asked to see the daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law had just respectfully responded, and was about to pay obeisance to Chongyan, but Chongyan again suddenly acted as if he had been struck by something, and was reproached to fall down abruptly, and blood seeped from the corner of his eyes, nose and mouth on the ground.

Wei Zhen was even more startled and frightened, and did not know what to do. So, his wife told him “This is what Jiushi, Huaisu and Ming, the Grand Master of Remonstrance, cannot subdue. What can we do about it? I heard that earlier, when Andao first became a couple with her, it was said that she was Lady Houtu. This is precisely what cannot be subdued by the hundred techniques of the human world. Now I have observed that the Way of couples between her and Andao is also satisfying to both. If we try to command Andao to send our words and request to expel her, it might be possible.” Zhen immediately ordered Andao to bid farewell, saying, “We are just a humble family, but you are a divine and noble goddess. Now, it is our fortune that you formed a loving couple with our son, but he does not deserve a match like you. Moreover, the laws of the Empress of Heaven are strict and we feared that this may lead calamities to befall us. It will be our fortune if you return your home as an expedient measure as a way to be considered of your parents-in-law.” Before he finished talking the daughter-in-law started her rheumy weeping,<sup>576</sup> explaining, “It is my fortune

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<sup>576</sup> In “Bei hui feng” 悲回風 (Grieving at the Eddying Wind) of *Chu ci* 楚辭 [The Songs of Chu]: “The tears from my eyes and nose join in a sorry stream. Sleepless, I lie with my thoughts until the dawn.” 涕泣交而淒淒兮，思不眠以至曙。 See Tang Bingzheng 湯炳正 et al., comm., *Chu ci jin zhu* 楚辭今注

that I had been able to be matched to a gentleman, and be able to attend upon my parents-in-law. But in the Way of being a daughter-in-law, what is proper is to respectfully obey the orders of the parents-in-law. Now, since the parents-in-law have an order, how dare I not respectfully obey it?”<sup>577</sup> Accordingly, that very day, she issued a command to have the carriage harnessed and left. Subsequently, she conducted the ritual of announcing her departure at the principal hall,<sup>578</sup> and availed herself of the moment to request, “The new wife [of your son] is now only an unmarried daughter<sup>579</sup> and dare not return home alone. I hope that I am able to leave with my husband Wei together.” Zhen was pleased and heeded her request. Eventually, she and Andao left together and arrived the outside of Jianchun Gate. Her former carriages and followers all arrived, and the city in which she had resided, her servants, and personal guards were just as before.

The day after they arrived at the city, the Lady wore her stipulated dress, and sat in the middle of a grand palace hall, just like the atmosphere when the Son of Heaven holds

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[Modern Annotations of The Songs of Chu] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 170; Also see David Hawks, *Ch'u Tzu: The Songs of the South* (Oxford: CLarendon Press, 1959), 78.

<sup>577</sup> *Gan bu jing cong* 敢不敬從 is a typical term of respect often used between a host and a guest in rites. It implies that the female persona attached great importance to *li* 禮 (rites) and obeyed them strictly. In “Shi xiangjian li” 士相見禮 (rites attendant on the meeting of common officers with each other), *Yili* 儀禮 [Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial]: “The host replies, ‘I, have refused [your request] twice, but still cannot get [your] order of [permission]. So how dare [I] not respectfully obey [it]?’” 主人對曰: “某也, 固辭不得命, 敢不敬從。” See *Yili Zhushu ji buzheng* 儀禮註疏及補正 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1984), 7.13. In “Tou hu” 投壺 (The game of pitch-pot), *Liji*, it also recorded that: “The guest said, ‘I, have refused [your request] twice, but still cannot get [your] order of [permission], how dare [I] not respectfully obey [it]?’” 賓對曰: “某也, 固辭不得命, 敢不敬從。” See *Liji zhangju*, 40.2a..

<sup>578</sup> *Tangxia* 堂下 also implies *xia tang* 下堂, referring to abandoned or divorced women.

<sup>579</sup> In “Zaji shang” 雜記上 (Miscellaneous records I), the *Records of Rites* recorded “When [the tablet of] an unmarried son was placed in the shrine of his grandfather, it would be used at sacrifices; When [that] of an unmarried daughter was placed in the shrine of her grandmother, then it would not be used at sacrifices.” 男子附於王父則配; 女子附於王母則不配。Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127-200) annotation to this line remarks: “*Nüzi*, it refers to an unmarried daughter.” 女子, 謂未嫁者也。

audience. Subsequently, Andao saw strange guests and extraordinary people come to have audience with her: some of them were more than ten feet tall, wearing magnificent hats, carrying long swords, and dressed in vermillion and purple clothes. It was said that these were the divinities of mountains, rivers, streams and seas within the Four Seas.<sup>580</sup> Next, there were several thousands of people, and it was said that they were divinities of various hills, forests, trees and woods.<sup>581</sup> Further, she summoned the kings of various kingdoms under the world to come together. At that time, a small bench was set up for Andao at the side of the Lady's seat and he was ordered to observe them. Because at the last only one person was admitted, and it was said that it as the Celestial Goddess of the Great Canopy Heaven. Andao looked at her, and she turned out to be the Empress of Heaven. The Lady then smiled and told Andao, "This is your master of your earth. You should avoid meeting her for a little while." She ordered Andao to enter into a small room in the palace hall. Then, the Empress of Heaven knelt and did obeisance in the hall, and her acts and ritual were very fastidious. The Lady then invited the Empress of Heaven to come up. The Empress of Heaven first declined it several times, and then she ascended the palace hall, knelt and made obeisance twice, and then sat down. The Lady told the Empress of Heaven

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<sup>580</sup> Ancient Chinese believed that the boundaries of China were encircled by seas. As one of the concepts of border region, "the Four Seas" refers to four bodies of water located in each direction, including the Eastern Sea, the Southern Sea, the Western Sea and the Northern Sea. See *Shijing*, "The royal domain of a thousand *li*, Is where the people rest; But there commence the boundaries that reach to the Four Seas. From the Four Seas they come [to out sacrifices]; They come in multitudes." 邦畿千里，維民所止，肇域彼四海。四海來假，來假禘禘。(See "Xuan nian," *Maoshi* #309.) The extended meaning of "within the Four Seas" can be interpreted as the whole of country or the whole world.

<sup>581</sup> Since the Pre-Qin period, people had been worshipping *she* 社, the Deity of Earth, as a collective worship of five terrestrial deities: "The Deity of Earth is the general deity of the five types of earth. Since the earth [under the world] is too vast and extensive, it is not able to pay respect [to it] everywhere. Therefore, people heaped earth over mound to build a site for the Deity of Earth to offer sacrifices, which was for reciprocating its good deeds and merits." 社者，五土之總神。土地廣博不可遍敬，故封土為社而祀之，以報功也。(See *Liji zhushu*, 11.491a).

“Because of the calculations of fate in the underworld, I should become the matching spouse of a person of your section who is named Wei Andao. Now, the calculations of fate in the underworld have run out. It is natural that I should divorce him, but I cannot have no affection towards him. This person suffers not having a long life-span. I should stay in his family,<sup>582</sup> and originally I had hoped to offer to prolong his life by three hundred years and make his official position rise to the third rank. Because I was pressured by his venerable parents, I could not stay long in the human world. So, I could not realize completing this affair with him. Now it is fortunate that you have arrived. On my behalf, please offer him five million cash, and give him an official position up to the fifth rank. Do not make [the offer] more, because I fear that he could not handle it. Andao’s fate is slim.” Thus, she ordered Andao to come out and made him kneel to pay obeisance to the Empress of Heaven. The Lady told the Empress of Heaven, saying, “This person is one of your subordinates, so you should receive his obeisance.” The Empress of Heaven hesitated, accepting it but with a look like she was unworthy. Consequently, she said “yes” and left.

The Lady told Andao, “Because you are excel at painting, I would like to help you further improve this skill and achieve the fame for thousands of generations.” Accordingly, she arranged Andao to sit in a small palace hall, made [servants] to hang down curtains and set up screens/drapes, summoned all the well-known emperors and the officials with meritorious deeds since the ancient time to the front, and ordered Andao to portrait them. After more than a month in all, Andao entirely obtained their appearance and collected

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<sup>582</sup> *Moujia* 某家 should be *qijia* 其家. (See note #39 in Wang Meng’ou, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, 142.) This sentence is the echo of *mingshu* (the calculations of fate in the underworld) emphasized by Lady Houtu in her speech.

them to be twenty scrolls. Consequently, Andao asked to leave, so the Lady ordered to have the carriage harnessed at the west of the city in which she had resided, set up a large tent for sending him off and a farewell banquet, and parted forever with Andao. She swept and grasped the hands<sup>583</sup> of Andao as if she could not bear the feelings by herself. She also offered him gold, jades, pearls and gems as gifts. Andao left with a full-filled carriage, and once he reached the Eastern Capital and entered the Jiangchun Gate, he heard that the Imperial Insignia Guard had been transmitting orders from above to search for Wei Andao in Luoyang city for nearly one month. Once Andao had arrived, he called on the Empress of Heaven. She sat in a small palace hall to meet him, and talked about the former dream, which was the same as what Andao recounted. Subsequently, she appointed Andao as the Senior Notary of the Residence of Prince Wei 魏,<sup>584</sup> and granted him five million cash. She took the portraits of the emperors and officials with meritorious deeds painted by Andao and looked at them. These portraits were all verified by the old ones in the imperial library and up to now, they have been transmitted through generations. During the Tiance period, Andao passed away while he was on official duty in the end.

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<sup>583</sup> See *Maoshi* #81: “I go along the great road, I grasp your hand. Do not reject me, do not be brusque to a loving friend.” 遵大路兮，摯執子之手兮，無我隤兮，不寔好也。 This poem describes that an abandoned woman asked her lover not to leave.

<sup>584</sup> It is the chief executive official in an establishment of a prince or a princess: “[Senior Notary] administers the officials in an establishment, and manages duty and affairs. [He] is the official of a prince’s establishment, or a functionary of a princess’s fief. [His rank] is the first-rate of the fourth rank” [長史] 統領府僚，紀綱職務，王府官屬，公主邑司，從四品上。 See *Jiu Tang shu*, 44.1914. Thus, the rank of Wei Andao is higher than the fifth rank.