

The Confessional Writing in Early Daoism:

A Survey of Medieval Daoist

Petition and Declaration Documents

by

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ABSTRACT

Since Ruth Benedict introduced the dual concepts of “shame culture” and “guilt culture,” far Eastern Asian societies have placed more emphasis on such “shame culture.” However, Wolfram Eberhard has indicated that Ruth’s dualism may be questionable, and he has pointed out that there are several documents composed by non-Confucian elites that are available to study. Furthermore, Paul Ricoeur claims that language, especially that in confession, is the best source to study to understand guilt and shame cultures. Thus, I would like to study confessional writings in early Daoism. These so-called confessional writings include the Personal Writs to the Three Officials, the zhang-petition in the Celestial Master tradition, and the ci-declaration in Lingbao rituals. If the Personal Writs documents a true practice in history, it should contain the most itemized and profound “feeling of guilt” according to the earlier texts. Most petitions recorded in Master Vermilion Pine’s Almanac only include some formula for confessional words rather than specific confessions. But, I have found some flexible sections, which may be reserved for specific confession, in these formulaic petitions. I also explore two anecdotes about specific confessions in the Six Dynasties to support my claims. I discuss the format, structure and functions of the ci-declaration, an ancient but new writ system in Lingbao retreats. By far the majority of confessions in Lingbao tradition are public and formulaic, but the Lingbao scripture also contains personal confession. Much like the petition, the ci-declaration is personal but contains formulaic writing.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmother Ms. Kunbao Zhang 張坤寶, my father Mr. Yuan Zhaolin 袁兆林, my dear mother Ms. Zhang Yueping 張月萍, and my Daoist Master Mr. Mingde Xue 薛明德.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
1 QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH MOTIVATION	1
2 INTRODUCTION	6
3 CONFESSIONAL WRITING IN THE EARLY CELESTIAL MASTER MOVEMENT	10
Personal Writs to the Three Officials.....	10
Research Materials.....	16
Introduction to the Petition	20
Description, Structure and Format.....	22
Confessional Section and Repentance	26
Chapter Conclusion	37
4 CONFESSIONAL WRITING IN LINGBAO TRADITION.....	44
Introduction	39
The <i>ci</i> -Declaration	42
The Confession in the Declaration	48
<i>Jie</i> in <i>ci</i> -Declaration.....	52
5 CONCLUSION.....	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	61

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure	Page
1. Guannu tie 官奴帖.....	28

CHAPTER 1:

Questions and Research Motivations

Many scholars have paid attention to confessional ritual and the supposed “culture of guilt” in early Daoism. In this, we find two contrary opinions. Ofūchi Ninji 大淵忍爾 points out that those confessional concepts and practices are deeply based in the practical and utilitarian ideas rather than a profound sense of guilt.¹ In contrast, Lai Chi-Tim 黎志添, in his research on Personal Writs to the Three Heavens, argues that a profound sense of guilt can be found in early the Celestial Master movement. He reveals that the Celestial Master used the characters *guo* 過 (misconduct), *e* 惡 (evil), and *zui* 罪 (sin) to refer to guilt.² He also draws the following model of interpretation of the sense of guilt in the early Celestial Masters:

sickness/disaster—guilt—punishment

疾病災禍—罪過—懲罰

In addition, Lai Chi-Tim points out that the “model of salvation” of the early Celestial Master can be simplified into the following steps:

dissipating and removing the disease—repentance—begging for forgiveness to dispel the torturing and punishment

消解疾病—首過—祈請赦罪、解除考謫

But we must realize, as Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) points out, that the degree of guilt involves immeasurable mental activity. Ricoeur believes that “the experience of which

¹ Ofūchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no dokyo* 初期の道教 (Early Taoism), (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1991), 87-93.

² Lai, Chi Tim 黎志添, “Tiandishui sangan xinyangyu zaoqi Tianshidao zhibingjiezui yishi” 天地水三官信仰與早期天師道治病解罪儀式, *Taiwan zongjiao yanjiu* 臺灣宗教研究 (Taiwan religious research) 2.1 (2002), 3-4.

the penitent makes confession is a blind experience, still embedded in the matrix of emotion, fear, and anguish.”³ Thus, the feeling of guilt “involved is not only blind in virtue of being emotional; it is also equivocal, laden with a multiplicity of meanings.”⁴

Finally, in his book *The Symbolism of Evil*. Ricoeur concludes that:

The experience of which the believer makes avowal in the confession of sins creates a language for itself by its very strangeness; the experience of being oneself but alienated from oneself gets transcribed immediately on the plane of language in the mode of interrogation. Sin as alienation from oneself, is an experience even more astonishing, disconcerting, and scandalous, perhaps, than the spectacle of nature, and for this reason it is the richest source of interrogative thought.⁵

Language, however, offers more detail on the “confession of sins” and is the most reasonable material to understand a person’s experience of guilt. Paul Ricoeur realizes that the feeling of guilt “constitutes” the experience, and the “confession of sins” can reflect one’s psychological and emotional activities of sins, which can partially convey the experience of guilt. He argues that the feeling of guilt or sins are only felt in the language of the confession. Furthermore, a “confession of sins” is believed to have the powerful ability to re-organize feelings of chaos, fears, sins and guilt. Ricoeur argues that if someone doesn’t avow his/her sins, his/her experiences of sins still remains in chaos and darkness; thus, a process of “confessing sins” can initially transfer feelings of guilt into an understandable expression.⁶

Studying the various kinds of Daoist confessional writing is an excellent avenue to understanding guilt and sin in the tradition because the documents are filled

³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Buchanan Emerson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 6.

⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵ Ibid, 6-8.

⁶ Ibid, 7-10.

with the kind of language that Ricouer finds so valuable. Daoist confessional writing is not only a confessional before the gods that creates a sense of sin but also a utilitarian request to cure disease or dispel disaster; sin and guilt are tied to personal physical pain and discomfort. They are also considered as different physical forms of “confession of sins,” which can reflect devotees’ experiences of guilt. Some Daoist confessional writings contain specific, or personal, confessions that may be announced during the ritual. The confessional writings can provide valuable resources for scholars to understand and analyze personal experiences of guilt. In addition, this research is helpful in revealing the “guilt culture” embedded in so-called Confucian “shame culture” to support Wolfram Eberhard’s criticism of Ruth Benedict’s dualism.⁷

My aim is to outline confessional writings in early Daoism and trace the formats, structures, and essential concerns of those early works. First, I explore prior clues in pre-Daoism cults and popular religious practices to find the continuities and differences between them and the Celestial Master movement. Second, I focus on the format and contents of the Personal Writs to the Three Heavens, which is proverbially believed to be the earliest specific and personal confessional writing that helped practitioners “confess all one’s sins” since a particular age.⁸ The third question I would like to try to resolve is regarding the *zhang*-petition that includes a section of

⁷ Ruth Benedict argues that most Asian states are “shame culture”, and European civilizations are viewed as “guilt culture”. See Ruth Benedict, *Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946). More recent researches, such as Elson Boles still writes topics surrounding Benedict’s findings of dualism. See Elson Boles, “Ruth Benedict’s Japan: The Benedictions of Imperialism,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 30(2006):27–70.

⁸ Lai Chi-Tim, “The Ideas of Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism” in Chan, Alan K. L.Lo, Yuet-Keung ed., *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 185-190.

personal and specific confession much like the Personal Writs. Fourth, I will trace the development of confessional writings in the Lingbao tradition. So far, the greatest majority of confessions recorded in the Lingbao scripts are not personal, but public and formulaic repentances embedded within rituals.⁹ The prevalence of these formulae may lead to the misconception that the Lingbao rituals exclude any specific and personal confessional work. Indeed, the formulaic repentances appear as fundamental elements of scheduled rituals, but the *ci* 詞 (declaration), a new Lingbao confessional writing, is a personal writing which should be pronounced during the ritual. Because both formulaic and personal confessional writings coexist in Lingbao rituals, I would like to explore the similarities and differences between previous writings and the *ci*-declaration system. Most importantly, I must address whether there are specific confessions in the *ci*-declaration system.

Because “Daoism” was a series religious movements with multiple origins, we cannot claim the Celestial Master and Lingbao movements as identical traditions. Previous popular cults, religious movements, related cultural activities, and ordinary understandings of those cults were all regarded as a “cultural database” for the later movements. The later movements could absorb ideas from such an existing “cultural database” and organize the fundamental elements into a new order, providing new meanings and serving new purposes.

⁹ Stephen Bokenkamp, “Zaoqi Lingbao jing zhong de dingxing chanhuiwen” 早期靈寶經中的定型懺悔文 (Confession Formulas in the Early Lingbao Scriptures), in Lee Fongmao and Liao Zhaoheng (ed.), *Fall, Penitence, and Salvation: A Collection of Essays on Confession in Chinese Culture* 沉淪、懺悔與救度：中國文化的懺悔書寫論集, (Taipei Nangang: Zhong yang yan jiu yuan Zhongguo wen zhe yan jiu suo, 2013), 129.

As a budding movement, the Lingbao tradition attempted to accomplish two missions: first, “the Lingbao scriptures were composed to replace all previous spiritual knowledge with higher and more enduring truths,”¹⁰ and it was particularly addressed to Celestial Master devotees to accept the new Lingbao revelations;¹¹ second, it revealed more attractive rituals called “retreats” to attract believers.¹² To discuss the cultural phenomena, Ann Swidler emphasizes the significance of agency or agent.¹³ As the agent, the Lingbao tradition forwardly absorbed ideas from the “cultural database” and syncretized new confessional writings, providing new functions, orders, and meanings; the ci-declaration was no exception. In this research, I treat priests and retreat patrons as agents in order to understand how priests and patrons cooperate to enrich Daoist ritual settings and confessional writings.

In terms of research resources, I borrow Robert Campany’s ideas concerning of internalist and externalist documents, concepts that refer to subjective doctrines and objective descriptions.¹⁴ In this study I cite both kinds of documents to address the central questions above.

¹⁰ See Stephen Bokenkamp, “The Silkworm and the Bodhi Tree: The Lingbao Attempt to Replace Buddhism in China and Our Attempt to Place Lingbao Daoism”, in John Lagerwey (ed.), *Religion and Chinese Society* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), vol.1, ‘Ancient and Medieval China’, 324.

¹¹ See Stephen Bokenkamp, “Zaoqi Lingbao jing zhong de dingxing chanhuiwen”, 130.

¹² Ibid, 130-31.

¹³ Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How culture Matters* (London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 104-6.

¹⁴ Robert Ford Campany, "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China." *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, 91, no. 1/3 (2005): 2-6.

CHAPTER 2:

Introduction

By the end of the 2nd century, the Celestial Master movement had established itself in modern day Sichuan 四川 and Hanzhong 漢中 (current Shanxi province). Lai Chi-Tim believes that this movement, however, was not a creational cult, but instead their practices agreed largely with Han dynasty commoners' beliefs that are known from pre-Han and Han tomb documents, land contracts, and the *Taiping* 太平 scripture.¹⁵ It was not only a continuation of pre-Han and Han commoners' cults, but also a new religious revolution, which included a series of organized churches and systematized worship practices.

Before this movement, in pre-Han and Han tomb documents, the idea of *shi* 適 or *zhe* 謫 (indictment) is mentioned as a negative influence on the living. Wu Rongzeng's 吳榮增 has pointed out that for most tomb documents the negative influence was believed to be meted by *tiandi* 天帝 (Celestial Thearch) or other heavenly deities through *huangshen* 黃神 (Yellow God) and other infernal officials in the underworld. The tomb documents were mainly targeted at declaring the property of the dead and releasing the *shi* or *zhe* from the dead. According to the statistical data of the tomb documents in the *Zhongguo lidai muquan luekao* 中國歷代墓券略考,¹⁶ over 60% of the documents attempt to release the *shi* from the dead and to remove the *yangkao* 殃考 (disastrous interrogation) from people the living.

¹⁵ See Lai Chi-Tim, "The Ideas of Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism", 1-2.

¹⁶ Ikeda On 溫池田, "Chūgoku redidai boken ryakkō" 中國歷代墓券考, *Sōritsu yonjūshūnen kinen ronshū, Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 86 (1981), 193-278.

Some key phrases from these documents include:

- 1.) In order to remove the misfortune from the people living, and in order to release the blames from the dead.¹⁷

爲生人除殃，爲死人解適。

- 2.) I sincerely present the lead doll and golds and jades, in order to release the blames and to eliminate the sin for the people living.¹⁸

謹以鉛人金玉，爲死者解適，生人除罪過。

- 3.) Thus I made the cinnabar document and iron contract, in order to release the blames. For a thousand falls and then thousand years, [the dead] cannot make a request for it.¹⁹

故爲丹書鐵券，手及解適，千秋萬歲，莫相來索。

Shi 適 is very like a phonetic loan characters of *zhe* 謫, which means indictment, culpability, blame, fault, crime, and punishment²⁰, and may even indicate the punishment meted by celestial beings. Scholars widely agree that both *shi* and *zhe* are triggered by the violence of the soil taboos or the *chengfu* 承負 (inherited evil) from dead ancestors.²¹ The term *jieshi* 解適 (dispensing indictments) literally means to remove or eliminate the punishments and crime records. Before the Celestial Master Movement, shamans or ritual specialists tended to rely on the land contracts, the

¹⁷ Ikeda On 濶池田, “Chūgoku redidai boken ryakkō”中國歷代墓券考, *Sōritsu yonjūshūnen kinen ronshū, Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 86 (1981), 210.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See Eberhard Wolfram, *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 13-15; Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾, *Zhengmu zhong suo jiandao de Dong Han dao wu guanxi* 〈鎮墓中所見到的東漢道巫關係〉 (Daoist and Shaman Relationships in Tomb Documents of the Eastern Han), 364.

²¹ Feng Shaorong 馮紹聰, *Lun Donghan muquan wen de sihou zongjiao shijie* 論東漢墓券文的死後宗教世界 (Study of the Afterlife Religious World of Eastern Han Funeral Texts), MA thesis (1999), CUHK Electronic Theses & Dissertations Collection 香港中文大學博碩士論文庫, 29-33.

magic minerals,²² and the talisman to remove the blames of *guizhu* 鬼注 (emanations from the ghost).

Zhang Xunliao 張勳燎 and Anna Seidel believe that first- and second-century tomb documents and the *jie zhu qi* 解注器 (the bottle of acquittal from indictments) attempt to *jie* 解 (release), thus remitting the dead and rescuing them from tortures and punishments. The documents also release the imprisoned dead from the chthonic deities.²³ Anna Seidel, furthermore, reveals that the *Petition of Confession, Redemption, and Acquittal on Behalf of a Deceased*,²⁴ a linguistic petition that implores the Three Heavens to repeal the conviction of litigant dead, is likely to have the analogical idea of “dispelling the influence.” In his study of Eastern Han archaeological evidence, Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維 suggests that such evidence reveals the idea that the dead’s behaviors form “sin” or “guilt;” moreover, the dead would receive punishment and torment in the netherworld because of those sins. But, there is less evidence to support the claim that ideas about repentance or confession existed for the dead, in contrast, the Eastern Han people prefer to offer lead dolls to instead of the suffering dead.²⁵

²² The magic minerals refer to the *wushi* 五石 (five stones) found in some tomb bottles. See Ikeda On, “Chūgoku redidai boken ryakkō” 中國歷代墓券考, 195-200. Also see Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾, *Zhengmu zhong suo jian dao de Dong Han dao wu guanxi* 〈鎮墓中所見到的東漢道巫關係〉, 368-70.

²³ Zhang Xunliao 張勳燎 and Bai Bing 白彬, *Zhongguo dao jiao kaogu* 《中國道教考古》 (Chinese Daoism Archeology), (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2006), 107-116. Anna Seidel, “Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs,” in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化 (Daoism and Religious Culture), ed. Akitsuki Kan’ei (Tōkyō: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987), 21-57.

²⁴ See “Wei wangren shouhui shuzui jiezhe zhang 為亡人首悔贖罪解謫章,” See CT 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 6.1 la- 12b. Cf. Also see Seidel Anna, “Post-mortem immortality or the Taoist resurrection of the body,” in *Gilgul: Essays on transformation, revolution and permanence in the history of religions*, (Leiden: EJ. Brill, 1987), 232-34.

²⁵ Shu-Wei Hsieh, “Shouguo yu chanhui, zhonggu shiqi zuigan wenhua zhi tantao 首過與懺悔：中古時期罪感文化之探討 (Repentance and Confession: A Study of the Concept of Guilt in Medieval

The Celestial Masters were committed to resolving punishments and torments in the netherworld; however, the precondition to release one's punishment was to confess one's misdeeds and evil deeds. We find similar religious-moral concerns and religious-ethical principles in the Taiping Scriptures, which aimed to resolve the "inherit evils" for everyone so as to greet the Great Peace.²⁶ The practices of Taiping scripture also require devotees to repent their sins orally, a core religious practice called *shouguo* 首過 (confess) to dismiss their misfortune. Yet, it was only the Celestial Masters that required devotees to repent not only orally, but also through written means. The well-known written confessions in early Celestial Master are the Personal Writs to the Three Officials and the petition which will be introduced in the following chapters.

China)", *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報, 40(4), 738.

²⁶ Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 277–80. About the idea of "inherited guilt", also see Kamitsuka Yoshiko 神塚淑子, "Taihei kin no shqfu to Taihei no riron ni tsuite" 太平經の承負と太平の理論について, *Nagoya daigaku kyogyubu kiyq* A 32 (1988): 41–75; Barbara Hendrischke, "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the Taiping jing," *East Asian History* 2 (1991): 1–29.

CHAPTER 3:

Confessional Writing in Early Celestial Master Movement

3.1 Personal Writs to the Three Officials

Like the third-century *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms), the text of the “Personal Writ to the Three Officials” quotes an early third-century *dianlue* 典略 (Classic Statement) to explain a therapeutic repentance method. This document was considered as an early practice of *shouguo* and was the very first written statement of religious confession and was created by Zhang Xiu 張脩. It states:

The method of invitation and orison includes writing down patient’s name, along with the confession of one’s transgressions. The triplicate statements: one should submit to the heaven, which should be placed on the mountain; one should be buried in the earth; and one should be sunk in water. It is so called *sanguan shoushu* (“Personal Writs to the Three Officials”, also translated as “Handwritten Documents”)²⁷

請禱之法,書病人姓名,說服罪之意。作三通,其一上之天,著山上,其一埋之地,其一沉之水,謂之三官手書。

Ofuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾 and Lai Chi-Tim 黎志添 find that the term *shoushu* 手書 (personal writ) referred to important documents that had to be written personally. In the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), the declarative report of income tax and property tax had to be personally written by each householder to ensure authenticity and credibility. Lai Chi-Tim believes that the early Celestial Masters “must have followed the statutory filing requirements of the Han dynasty.”²⁸ To confess one’s

²⁷ See Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451), *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 8.264.

²⁸ Lai Chi-Tim, ‘Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism’ in Alan K. L. Chan,

sins personally is regarded as the essential part of the “Personal Writs to the Three Officials,” a practice that follows Han dynasty government rules aimed at ensure the document’s authenticity.

Although the “Personal Writs to the Three Officials” was lost for a long period, Lai suggests that the petition titled “*Daoshi tiandishui sanguan shoushu lu zhuangzhang*: 道士天地水三官手書籙狀章 (The Daoist Master’s Personal Writs Petition to the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth, and Water [Containing] a Record [of Sins Committed by the Supplicants])” collected in a late Tang ritual manual compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850 – 933) named the *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang* 太上宣慈助化章 (*Most High Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Assist in Propagandizing Benevolence*), is quite similar. Kristofer Schipper agrees that this petition, which requires the practitioner to record in writing a confession of one’s sin to request the pardon from the Three Officials, goes back to the original practice of the “Personal Writs to the Three Officials.”²⁹ In this light, we can understand why the book of *Lu xiansheng daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略 (*Master Lu’s Code of Daoists*) emphasizes the confession of one’s sin, suggesting that the patients should “confess all their transgressions from their first year after birth” 首生年以來所犯罪過.³⁰ Likewise, another Celestial Master scripture, the *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (*Explanations of the Essentials of the Three Heavens*), emphasizes: “Patients afflicted with illness who are above the age of seven—that is, the age of cognition—should

Yuet-Keung Lo, eds. *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 191.

²⁹ See Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 482.

³⁰ See CT 1127 *Luxiansheng daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略, 2a.8a.

personally seek forgiveness for their sins and misdeeds” 疾病者，但令從年七歲有識以來，首謝所犯罪過。³¹ Furthermore, the original text of the “Lu zhaungzhang” emphasizes that the daoshi 道士 (Daoist) had to establish buzhuang 簿狀 (note-records) to write down “all his or her transgressions since the age of seven sui.”³² It records:

[I] respectfully write the handwritten personal writ, in which I give a record of all my transgressions on the left. The method of *note-record*, in that it enumerated [my] transgressions one by one, avoiding any embellishments or negligent record, without hiding the severe felonies and only stating [my] venial [transgressions].³³

謹條手書，首罪簿狀如左。簿狀之法，一事一條，不得華辭文過，藏重出輕。

In addition, the text also state:

Today [I] visit my parish, to announce the confession of all my transgressions, which includes all the misconducts I did since seven sui. All the severe and venial misconducts are listed as the record.³⁴
今來詣治，告臣首寫身中前後罪過，從年七歲以來所犯善惡好醜，輕重條列如牒。

As this passage suggests, the adept should theoretically write down all her transgressions, which implies a specific form confessional writing of the Personal Writs. This also raises the questions of how the gods measure confession, and what is the standard for judging transgressions. Based on Master Lu Xiuqing’ s 陸修靜 (406-477) interpretation, each entry of confession should be first evaluated by one’ s own master, the so-called *jijiu* 祭酒 (libationer) in accordance with the *kefa* 科法

³¹ See *Santian neijie jing*, 1.6b. The translation is cited from Lai Chi-Tim, ‘Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism’, 185.

³² See Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 482.

³³ See CT 1012 *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang*, 2.12a-12b.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.14a.

(regulation):

(I) People like this, who urgently request for the way of master. The Daoist priest should investigate them thoroughly according to the list of protocols to assess their guilt.³⁵

如此之徒，有急師道，道士皆當以科法折卻，考劾罪崇。

(II) However, some benighted and fake Daoist priests, who lack the list of protocols on which to base a decision, have no way to benefit the truth of confessions.³⁶

而愚偽道士，既無科戒可據，無以辯劾虛實。

It is clear that (1.) the lay men or Daoists should record their transgressions and misconducts in detail, which could be judged according to discipline and regulations one by one; (2.) the specific confession, which fully itemizes one's transgressions, should be composed into a note-record. Then, the note-record would be submitted to the Host High to announce his attendants to report to the Three Officials to remit the writer's punishments. On the other hand, the petition within the 'note-record' is not only a confession, but also an affidavit or oath with the Three Officials. It says that one should "respectfully write the handwritten writ and sign the 'one' to take an oath" 謹自手書，畫一為信。³⁷

According to fifth-century *Master Lu's Code*, the parish gives a chance for those revolting members to confess their transgressions:

If [he/she] can surrender meekly, return to the goodness and eradicate transgressions, take an oath to the Three Officials. And, [he/she] should sign the 'one' to confirm the oath.³⁸

³⁵ See CT 1127 *Luxiansheng daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略, 9a.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See CT1012 *Taishang xuanzi zhuhua zhang* 太上宣慈助化章, 2.13b.

³⁸ See CT 1127 *Luxiansheng daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略, 9a.

若能柔伏，反善吐罪，投誓三官，畫一為信。

Lai Chi-Tim explains the practice of “sign the ‘one’ to confirm the oath,” or in his translation “taking an oath with the Three Officials” as “making a covenant with the Three Officials.”³⁹ This covenant also confirmed by the “hagiography of Zhang Daoling” in *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (Hagiography of Divine Transcendent):

[Zhang Daoling] asks the ill to compose a list to record their transgressions since their birth. The ill write the note-record and sink it into the water to take a covenant together with deities that [the patients] would not violate the discipline again, pledging their death as assurance of the covenant.⁴⁰

使有疾病者，皆疏記生身已來所犯之臬，乃手書投水中，與神明共盟約，不得復犯法，當以身死為約。

In some situations, the person who already submitted the covenant with the Three Officials accidentally violated regulations again. According to this petition, “once he has violated [the oath in] the Personal Writs, he must submit his body and family members to offer an apology to the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water. Thus, He dares not blame anyone” 一旦違負手書，以身口數，謝天地水三官，不敢自怨。⁴¹ It is clear that Celestial Masters emphasized moral self-discipline, a kind of personal “guilt culture,” taking covenant with supreme beings and practicing repentance rather than magical methods or practices in other pre-Han and Han religious movements. The act of making a covenant or taking an oath with the supreme beings, such as the Most High and his vicars the Three Officials, thus

³⁹ See Lai Chi-Tim, ‘Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism’, 191.

⁴⁰ See *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, *juan* 8 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1961), 56; translation from Robert Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 351, with modification.

⁴¹ See CT 1012 *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang* 太上宣慈助化章, 2.13a.

ensuring religious healing effects is regarded as a creational pioneering reformation of the Chinese indigenous religious practice. Lai Chi-Tim again believes that the personal writs which a covenant with supreme beings could interpret the term *mengwei* 盟威 (Covenant with the Powers), which was emphasized by the fifth-century Celestial Master scriptures, *Explanations of the Essentials of the Three Heavens* and *Master Lu's Code*.⁴²

Both internalist and externalist evidence alludes to the fact that the early Celestial Masters had a practice of specific confession, and they attempted to submit writs to the otherworld, an act similar to other pre-Han and Han popular religious practices such as placing tomb documents in the grave to submit to the nether officials and spirits. On the other hand, the Celestial Masters might follow the statutory requirement of Han dynasty to ask devotees to write the Personal Writs by hand. Based on the materials above, it is reasonable to hypothesize that Zhang Xiu might have been inspired by the Han dynasty handwritten income tax and property tax reports to create the bureaucratic writ to Three Officials.

Therefore, the 'Personal Writs of Three Officials' should be regarded as a combination of repentance (confession) and affidavit (oath). First, it includes the itemized confession of one's misdeeds and transgressions as a note-record. Second, the one seeking forgiveness from the Three Officials must make some sacred oaths as the credit pledge. Third, the individual should sign the 'one' as a verification to confirm the repentance. Again, the "Personal Writs to the Three Officials", the kind of

⁴² See Lai Chi-Tim, "The Ideas of Illness, Healing, and Morality in Early Heavenly Master Daoism", 185.

language discussed by Paul Ricoeur, can be viewed as evidence of “guilt culture” to refute Ruth Benedict’s dualism of “shame culture” and “guilt culture.” The “Personal Writs” is intrinsically a healing method; an idea that may support Li Fengmao 李豐楙 and Lin Fushi’s 林富士 idea about the causal link between healing methods and concepts of disease of late Han dynasty and the Celestial Master Movement.⁴³

3.2 The Research Materials

The *zhang* 章 (petition) is another type of ancient liturgy⁴⁴ of early Celestial Master Movement and the consequent development of the ‘Personal Writs to the Three Officials’.⁴⁵

Most ancient petitions have been lost. One surviving text, the *Chisongzi zhangli* 赤松子章歷 (Master Vermilion Pine’s Almanac of Petitions) [hereafter *Almanac of Petitions*], proclaims that there were three hundred petitions in the beginning of the Way of Celestial Masters. Now, a late Tang collected work, the *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang* 太上宣慈助化章 (*Most High Petitions that Proclaim*

⁴³Li Fengmao 李豐楙, “Daozang suoshou zaoqi daoshu de wenyi guan— yi Nvqing guilv yiji Dongyuan shenzhoujing weizhu 《道藏》所收早期道書的瘟疫觀--以《女青鬼律》及《洞淵神呪經》系為主”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy* 中國文哲研究集刊, vol.3.(1993), 417-454. Lin Fushi’s 林富士, “Shilun Taiping jing de jibing guannian 〈试论《太平经》的疾病观念〉”, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica* 《中央研究院历史语言研究所集刊》62.2 (1993), 225-263.

⁴⁴ There was a long history for ancient Chinese to write writs to the spirit world. However, it is hard to determine the initial time of the Daoism petition, nevertheless, it was definite that submission of petition was a tradition since the Northman carried-over to the southern side of the Yangtze River around early fourth-century. For instance, Xu Mi’s 許謐 father and his old brother Mai 邁 employed one Libationer Li Dong 李東, an adept in submission the petition. Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 asserted that the petition was an immemorial practice since the Hanzhong 漢中 age, which also agreed by many scholars.

⁴⁵ See Lai Chi-Tim, 174. Lai says that “Most scholars consider the healing ritual of sending “Personal Writs to the Three Officials” (also translated as “Handwritten Documents”) as practiced in the early Heavenly Master community to be a prototype of the later Daoist ritual of the presentation of petitions (*shangzhang* 上章).”

Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence) is regarded as the oldest and most reliable resource for petition research. *Master Vermilion Pine's Almanac of Petitions* has already been studied in depth by Kristofer Schipper, Franciscus Verellen⁴⁶, Terry F. Kleeman⁴⁷ and Maruyama Hiroshi 丸山宏.⁴⁸ Schipper asserts that it was a Six Dynasties (220-589) work with some later additions.⁴⁹ Franciscus Verellen indicates that most petition texts were considered as the initial passage of their unvarnished format, and the work is “a normative manual of petition models that was collected and transmitted for use by generations of priests.”⁵⁰ Franciscus Verellen also asserts that “the priest searches the main body of the manual for a suitable model petition, perhaps using the inventory as an index.” However, as an example of an “internalist” work, the almanac is in fact an instruction manual for actual ritual practice rather than a dogmatic description. In its time, the almanac was criticized by Master Lu. According to Master Lu's Code, the *qingyue* 清约 (pure-covenant)⁵¹ seemed to theoretically abandon divination. Six Dynasties archaeological evidence also supports Master Lu's idea.⁵² According to *Master Lu's Code*, it asserts that:

⁴⁶ Franciscus Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac”, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14:291-343.

⁴⁷ See Terry Kleeman, *Celestial Master*, 353-73.

⁴⁸ Maruyama Hiroshi 丸山宏. “Shoitsu dokyo no joshu girei ni tsuite: Choshosho o chushin to shite” 正一道教の上章儀禮について—「冢訟章」を中心として [On the Zhengyi Taoist rite of submitting petitions, with special reference to the Zhongsong zhang]. TS 68: 44-64.

⁴⁹ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Canon*, 134.

⁵⁰ Franciscus Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac”, 291-2.

⁵¹ “When people build a house and establish a tomb, all of their activities and behaviors should not ask diviner to select the day and time. People should follow their heart without any taboo constraint, which is considered as the ‘Bond’” 居宅安塚，移徙動止，百事不卜日問時，任心而行，無所避就，謂約。 See CT 1127 *Lu xiansheng daomen kelue*, 9a.

⁵² By 1977, a land contract for a fifty-nine-year-old man named Xu Fu 徐副 was excavated in Changsha, Hunan. The excavated document also confirmed that to avoid the divination was a prevalent agreement at least around the Six Dynasties: “In accordance with the methods of various lords, Great Elders of Most High, I did not dare to select the time or a day, and did nothing to avoid the stygian

Again, there is some almanacs which are reserved to select the day and time. The ignorant men lead to a broadly spread distribution. As the right codes make clear: the devotees should not follow [these methods]. It is forbidden by the ritual practice. Still they competitively use [the almanacs]. They turn their backs on the truth and toward the fake, which is named ‘perversion’.⁵³

乃復有曆，揀日擇時，愚僻轉甚，正科所明，永不肯從，法之所禁，而競尊用，背真向偽，謂之倒也。

In contrast, the title and the first two *juan* 卷 (roll) of the *Almanac of Petitions* are divine methods for selection, which is criticized as a kind of widespread distribution of cult activities for ignorant followers.⁵⁴ The first two rolls were considered as a kind of petition instruction manual for actual practice. In addition, some petitions overlapped in their titles, contents, and functions. Two of them even present identical titles of ordination.⁵⁵ This evidence seems to reveal that the *Almanac of Petitions* is a collected work rather than an alleged complete re-evaluation of the petition ritual.

Three points are important to keep in mind about the *Almanac of Petitions*: 1.

prohibitions or taboos. Because the Tao circulates the correct pneumas, I won't consult the pyromantic tortoise or milfoil-divination.”遵奉太上諸君丈人道法，不敢擇時擇日，不避地下禁忌。道行正氣，不問龜筮。See Bai Bing 白彬, Zhang Xunliao 张勋燎 ed., “Wu Jin Nanchao maidiquan mingci he yiwushu de daojiao kaoguyanjiu” 吳晉南朝買地券、名刺和衣物疏的道教考古研究 (The archaeological research of the tomb contracts, name splits and the list of cloth of Southern Dynasties of Wu and Jin) in *Zhongguo daojiao kaogu* 中國道教考古 (Chinese Archaeology of Daoism), (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2005), 805-997.

⁵³ See CT 1127 *Luxiansheng daomen kelue*, 8a.

⁵⁴ *Chisong zi* or Master of Crimson Pine is a mythical transcendent. He was a model for poets to chasing his footprints and for fangshi seeking to emulate his achievements. In *Chuci* 楚辭 (Song of Chu), Qu Yuan 屈原 described Crimson Pine as a figure of expert in the distance place for him to seek. According to *Chisong zi*'s hagiography in *Liexian zhuan*, he was the master of rain during the age of mythical Emperor Shennong 神農 (Divine Husbandman) and the master of the daughter of another mythical Emperor Yandi 炎帝 (Fiery Emperor). In *Huainan zi* 淮南子, Master of Crimson Pine was described as an adept in circulation of breath and other breath methods. According to the *Shiji* (Records of the Historian), the chief military strategist and political adviser to Han Gaozu (r. 202–195 bce), Zhang Liang expressed the desire to “roam with *Chisong zi*” to Han Gaozu. He subsequently stops having grains and begins practicing method of circulation of *qi*.

⁵⁵ See *Jue Taishan siji yangong zhang* 絕泰山死籍言功章 (Statement of Merit Petition for Deletion from the Death Registers of Mt. Taishan) *Chisong zi zhangli* 4.23b-24b. The analogical petition named *Chu Taishan siji zhang* 除泰山死籍章 (Petition for Deletion from the Death Registers of Mt. Taishan) *Chisong zi zhangli* 5.5a-5b.

Although the text asserts in its preface that there were Three Hundred Great Petitions, it is a collected work of prevalent (or remaining) petitions at the time; 2. It is an instruction manual for actual petition practice; 3. It is regarded as a Six Dynasties work with some later additions. Schipper believes that the Daoist Canon edition is probably not earlier than the late Tang dynasty (618-907),⁵⁶ which was close to Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850-933) time.

The text *Most High Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence*, attributed to Du Guangting, is another important source of petition material. This late Tang petition collection includes twenty-three petitions used for various purposes and mainly concerns personal illness and catastrophe. Based on evidence in the *Shangqing wuyuan yuce jiuling feibu zhangzou bifa* 上清五元玉冊九靈飛步章奏祕法 (*Secret Rites for Submitting Petitions and the Soaring Pace of the Nine Numina, from the Jade Fascicles of the Five Primordials in the Highest Clarity Tradition*), Kristofer Schipper believes that Du Guangting's edition may attempt to reconstruct a lost work with an identical title, the *Xuanci zhang* 宣慈章, by an adept named Master Yu 虞先生 of the Tang Dynasty.⁵⁷

This work is important for this research for two reasons: first, it is a collection for actual practice rather than an imaginary construction for other religious purposes; second, in the next chapter, I will survey abundant evidence from *Guangcheng ji* 廣成集 (*Collected Works of Guangcheng*) by the same editor Du Guangting. Because these two works were completed by Du in the Tang Dynasty, I can compare the

⁵⁶ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Canon*, 135.

⁵⁷ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Canon*, 482.

similarities and differences of two types of confessional writings, the *zhang* 章 and the *ci* 詞, in the Secret Rites for Submitting Petitions and the Collected Works of Guangcheng. The primary discussion of the work Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence will be undertaken in the following chapter.

3.3 Introduction to the Petition

The so-called *zhang* is an official writ to the throne from the minister in the pre-Han/Han bureaucratic system. Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-192) explained the four types of writ from the minister to the emperor in Han Dynasty, (1.) *zhang* 章 (2.) *zou* 奏 (3.) *biao* 表 and (4.) *boyi* 駁議. Liu Xie 劉勰 (d. 522) interpreted that the *zhang* is used to express gratitude for grace, *zou* is the impeachment, *biao* is the statement, and *yi* is the refutation.

According to my analysis, although the Celestial Masters may have borrowed the title and a partial format from secular, government bureaucracy, the *zhang* in the Celestial Master tradition had its own meaning, which referred to writing confession, liturgy, and statement of merit to be presented to the Most High rather than a memorial which expressed gratitude for grace. The petition was submitted by a priest of a certain ordination rank with the help of internal bodily deities, which he could control based on the register of ordination. Finally, the recipients of the petitions were located in the pantheon of the celestial perfected. Both of *Almanac* and *Explanations of the Essentials of the Three Heavens* record the receiver title that:

Infinitely Great Dao of the Three Supreme Heavens-the Great Clarity,
the Mysterious, and the Primordial; Most High Lord Lao, the Most High

Great Elder, Lord Emperor of Heaven; the Nine Old Lords of the Capital of the Transcendent; the Nine Great Men of the Nine Qi; and so on. [All this diversified] into the myriad layers of Qi of Dao, [and formed] Their Excellencies of the Great Clarity Heaven, the Twelve Hundred Officials! All your majesties of the Great Clarity Heaven!⁵⁸

太清玄元、無上三天、無極大道、太上老君、太上丈人、天帝君、九老仙都君、九氣丈人、百千萬重道氣，千二百官君，太清玉陛下。

The full name of the pantheon is entitled as the *taiqing xian* 太清銜 (Title of Great Clarity),⁵⁹ a term which in later ritual manuals covers the essential concepts and deities of the Celestial Master Movement. In fifth-century organized Daoism, the Dao and the Three Heavens became central doctrine and shared identical meanings and authority. Celestial Master devotees assert that the Dao generated three kinds of qi: *xuan* 玄 (Mysterious), *yuan* 元 (Primal) and *shi* 始 (Inaugural). The Title of Great Clarity produced the *taiwu* 太無 (Great Void), then the Great Void transformed into the three qi which generated the *xuanmiao yunü* 玄妙玉女 (Jade Lady of Numinous Wonder) the mother of Laozi 老子. Laozi is regarded as the origin of the whole universe and the power of production. Moreover, he is the sacred revealer for the Celestial Masters and other human beings.⁶⁰

The Laozi of the Three Heavens conferred the authorization on Celestial Master Zhang Daoling to establish a benevolent governance to abolish the evil Six Heavens. According to the *Scripture of the Inner Explication of the Three Heavens*, the Celestial Master allied with the Three Officials of Heaven,

⁵⁸ The translation refers to Schipper, Kristofer. "THE TAOIST BODY." *History of Religions* 17, no. 3 (Feb 01, 1978): 362. Also see CT 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (Scripture of the Inner Explication of the Three Heavens), 2a-b.

⁵⁹ See CT 615 *Chisong zi zhangli*, 4.9a.

⁶⁰ See CT 1205 *Santian neijie jing*, 1.2a-2b.

Earth, and Water, the minister from the Han court and the *taisui jiangjun* 太歲將軍 (General of the Great Year) to comply with the *santian zhengfa* 三天正法 (Orthodox Law of the Three Heavens). The Celestial Master also established twenty-four parishes to humanize the Daoist citizens. The ethically-based healing methods required the Daoist citizens to:

Expect the Orthodox Law of the Three Heavens and the myriad true ways, others will be regarded as the ‘stale pneumas’. For those afflicted with illness, they should seek confession and repentance of all their transgressions, since one’s seven years old. They also have to present the proper pledges, protocols, petitions, and talismans. For even pertinacious diseases or severe maladies that physicians can’t cure, one need only take refuge in the Dao and confess one’s guilt to be immediately cured.⁶¹

自非三天正法，諸天真道，皆為故氣。疾病者，但令從年七歲有識以來，首謝所犯罪過，立諸跪儀章符，救療久病困疾，醫所不能治者，歸首則差。

Thus, the Celestial Master devotees firmly believed that the Celestial Master Zhang Daoling made up ten thousand petitions and codes to transmit to his descendent to become the Master of the State.⁶² The essential function of *zhang*-petition is healing disease and dispelling misfortunes, which is much like its prototype “Personal Writs to the Three Officials.”⁶³

3.4 The Description, Structure and Format

Franciscus Verellen divides petitions into five different types: 1. those for the

⁶¹ See CT 1205 *Santian neijie jing*, 1.6a-6b.

⁶² Ibid, 3b. [The Celestial Master Zhang Daoling] made up ten thousand petitions and codes to transmit to his descendent to become the Master of the State for ever 制作科條章文萬通，付子孫傳世為國師。

⁶³ See Franciscus Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac”, 339. It asserts that “According to the introduction to Master Red Pine's almanac, Lord Lao revealed his original petition models and other holy writings to Zhang Daoling as a ‘saving remedy for mankind’ 救治人物”

community: farming and sericulture, public safety and moral, protection on military campaigns, etc; 2. those for personal destiny: personal repentance, disease, other baleful binds, etc; 3. those for the household: domestic misfortunes, women and children, etc; 4. those for the living and the dead: absolving the dead, rites of passage, etc; 5. those for healing or redemption.⁶⁴

As Terry Kleeman has also suggested, petitions varied depending on the problem to be resolved.⁶⁵ He argues that based on their religious purposes, petitions can be classified into three categories: 1. petitions to resolve problems; 2. petition for repentance; 3. petitions as statements of merit. The last two categories are not as prominent in the *Almanac of Petitions* and *Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence*; both occupy a relatively small proportion of two ritual manuals. The first category, petitions to resolve problems, is the dominant category, and might also be divided into two sub-categories—petitions to solve a past problem versus petitions to solve future problems. Both of two sub-categories can address public or private affairs.⁶⁶

The first petition is considered as the standard because it includes the maximum number of elements for the process. The last two petitions are regarded as the irregular because of some missing sections. The structure of the standard petition

⁶⁴ See Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong Zi's Petition Almanac," 291-343.

⁶⁵ See Terry Kleeman, *Celestial Master*, 369.

⁶⁶ For instance, the Drought Petition, the *Petition for Ending Excessive Rain After Praying for Rain*, the *Petition for Controlling Rat Plagues* and many petition dealing with diseases are considered a remedial method to deal with the issues already happen in the past, which the petition aim an accomplished fact. Another kind of petition aims the adversity or misfortune in the future, which mainly rely on the ancient astrological conjecture. For instance, the *Petition for Announcing Repentance in View of Personal Destiny*.

can be simplified as:

(I.) *Ju fawei* 具法位 (declaration of ritual title and rank): the title always starts with “The Capital of Great Mystery” 泰玄都, “The Even Qi of Orthodox One” 正一平炁, and “I belong to (name of parish) (parish (position) minister (Libationer’s name))” 炁係天師某治某職臣某.

(II.) *Shangyan jinan wenshu* 上言謹按文書 (statement of information on the person offering the petition to the Most High): it is always simplified with the phrase “and so on” 云云. For most cases, it states the petitioner’s location, name, current age, and reserves space for petitioner to state his situation. Some petitions list a formula for “personally listing the oral declaration” 口辭自列; in other cases, the priest will state: “Now, in accordance with (person’s) statement, he would like to kowtow and itemize the records” 今據某云，即日叩頭列狀; or in others: “[the petitioner] delivers the declaration to list the entries” 投辭列款, “[the petitioner] personally lists the declaration for himself” 自列詞狀. The *kouci* 口辭 (oral declaration) or *cizhuang* 詞狀 (declaration record) may refer to the essential confession of one’s guilt, which is regarded as the core value of the confessional writing in the petition.

(III.) *Zhengwen* 正文 (main statement of the petition): the Libationer states the problem to be solved. It always follows the stereotypes or models in petition books like the *Almanac of Petitions* and *Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence*.

Although there are slight variations, most cases begin with the devotee's carnal nature 肉人. For instance, the standard prologue states: “[I] was born from a womb with my carnal nature” 胎素肉人; or “[I’m] the descendent from the withered skeleton” 枯骨子孫, and so on. Even among these models, there are flexible options for several conditions. In the “Da zhongsong zhang” 大塚訟章 (“Great Petition of Tomb Plaints”), there are options for repentance, prayer, confession, as well as one model that allows the petitioner to “state everything you want” 任於此入語.

(IV.) *Qingguan* 請官 (Invitation of the Officials): the Libationer asks the Most High and his celestial bureau to dispatch the celestial officials. This portion correlates to the Protocol of the Twelve Hundred Officials, who descend to the mundane world to solve the problem.

(V.) *Yiwei xiaoxin* 以為效信 (proof of result): the Libationer states the pledges of the petitions; however, in most cases, the Libationer will declare the result of submission, such as illness being cured or an evil spirit being exorcized.

(VI.) *Enwei taishang fenbie, aiqiu* 恩惟太上分別，求哀 (statement seeking mercy): the Libationer seeks the Most High, full of grace, to use his discernment, and begs for compassion; this is a formulaic conclusion of petition to beg mercy from the Most High.

(VII.) *Jin* 謹 (deities relied upon deliver the petition): in most cases, the Libationer dispatches the emissaries and messengers of the day (based on the date) to carry the petition and deliver it into the different bureaus of Upper High (based on the month).

(VIII.) Libationer's information, Libationer have to write down his/her monastery and name .臣某屬某宮焚修

(IX.) *Taiqing xian* 太清銜 (Title of Great Clarity): this portion contains fifty-five characters in total and is the entire title of Great Clarity, the receiver of the petition.

(X.) Date of petition: it lists the *taisui* 太歲 (Great Year) and month and day.

3.5 Confessional Section and Repentance

The phrase indicating that a petitioner may “state everything you want” 任於此入語 reveals that petitions in these manuals are reserved as reference guides.⁶⁷ reveals that the petitions in those manuals are reserved as reference. Lu Xiuqing claims that:

[They] had wrong and obsolete petitions and fallacious talismans with the fallacy of inconsistency that [those petitions and talismans] cannot be use any more. But [those priests are still] imprudently fabricate, adding and deleting things and making all sorts of fallacious changes.⁶⁸

唯有誤敗故章、謬脫之符，頭尾不應，不可承奉，而率思臆裁，妄加改易。

He criticized the obsolete petitions, alluding to the idea that a priest should compose a

⁶⁷ See *Chisong zi zhangli*, 5.17a.

⁶⁸ See *Luxiansheng daomen kelue*, 9a.

comparatively “new petition” for different confessions and situations rather than simply making slight changes to the personal information, thus creating an absurd petition. Those priests who compose “new petitions” rely on the stereotypical models and the petitioner’s declaration known as *ci* 辭/詞.

The earliest *ci*-declaration is best exemplified by Wang Xizhi’s “Guannu tie” 官奴帖, which was written sometime between 359 and 361,⁶⁹ that is, just prior to the Maoshan revelations. As part of the Celestial Master tradition, the declaration reveals the important ideas regarding the fourth-century Celestial Master Movement. Guannu was the nickname of Chi Daomao 郗道茂 (343-379), the daughter-in-law of Wang Xizhi and the first wife of Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–388) who had a young daughter named Yurun 玉潤. Yunrun had chronic sickness which could not be cured, so Xizhi wrote this letter to Master Xu Mai 許邁 (300–349) for help. As Lai Chi-Tim has pointed out, this letter is not a *zhang*-petition, but a letter to request the Master to compose a petition to cure her disease.⁷⁰ In the “Guannu tie,” Wang Xizhi describes Yurun’s symptoms and blames his transgressions and misconducts. Finally, Wang Xizhi confesses his guilt to Master Xu and begs forgiveness. In the text, he uses the character *ci* 辭 (declaration) twice, with the second stating, “presenting the declaration to [Master Xu Mai]” 辭以具, a phrase that also alludes to the healing ritual. The “Guannu tie” declares:

⁶⁹ Shu-Wei Hsieh, “Shouguo yu chanhui, zhonggu shiqi zuigan wenhua zhi tantao 首過與懺悔：中古時期罪感文化之探討(Repentance and Confession: A Study of the Concept of Guilt in Medieval China)”, 744.

⁷⁰ Hsieh Shu-Wei agreed with Lai Chi-Tim’s idea to support that it was a declaration for the petition composing. See Lai Chi-Tim, 182-183; See Hsieh Shu-Wei, Shu-Wei Hsieh, “Shouguo yu chanhui,” 743-4.

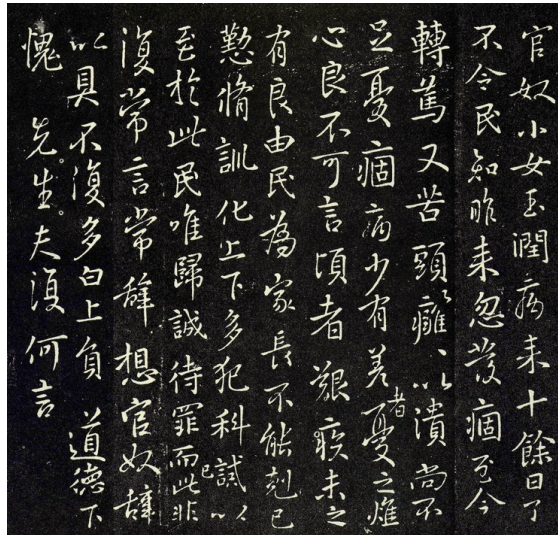


Figure1. Guannu tie 官奴帖⁷¹

The young daughter of Guannu, Yurun, has been sick over ten days. But, I didn't know about this at all. Yesterday, her long-standing disease suddenly attacked and became worse. Furthermore, she was also suffering from the head abscess. The head abscess was festered, but I didn't worry about it too much. Her affliction is slightly better but I am extremely worried about it in ways that I cannot express. Recently, there was no disease [in our family]. Because, as the householder of this clan, I could not restrain myself to cultivate the [Dao] diligently, and I also failed to teach the elder and young [of myfamily] and even I violated the precepts repeatedly incurring this [disease]. I, as [Daoist] citizen, can only rely on honest [confession of my guilt] and wait for penalty. These words are not common speech or a common declaration. I'm thinking about Guannu's [sorrow] to present this declaration in full. I have no more to confess but that above I have betrayed the Dao and its powers and below I have brought the Master shame. What further can I say?⁷²

官奴小女玉潤病來十餘日，了不令民知。昨來忽發癩，至今轉篤，又苦頭癰，頭癰以潰，尚不足憂，癩疾少有差者，憂之焦心，良不可言。頃者艱疾未之有，良由民為家長，不能克己勤修，訓化上下，多犯科誡，以至於此。民唯歸誠待罪而已。此非復常言常辭。想官奴辭以具，不復多白。上負道德，下愧先生，夫復何言。

Obviously, Wang Xizhi was surprised by his ignorance of his young granddaughter's

⁷¹ See "Fashu yaolu" 法書要錄, juan 3, in *Xuejin daoyuan* 學津討原, vol. 11. Also see *Baojin zhai fatie* 寶晉齋法帖, (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, 2013), vol3.

⁷² See *Fashu yaolu* 法書要錄, juan 3, in *Xuejin daoyuan* 學津討原, vol. 11.

sickness. We see that Wang Xizhi feels a need to confess as he interrogates his past actions, believing that his own misconduct has brought suffering on his granddaughter. The passage reveals that a household's guilt or sin might bring harm or increase the "disturbance of order," an idea which is also described by Lai Chi-Tim in his "model of interpretation of the sense of guilt"⁷³ that one's guilt incurs the punishment.

While Wang Xizhi may have had specific events in mind, in the writing he blames himself for general transgressions rather than itemized misdeeds of the kind that could be listed in the "Personal Writs to the Three Officials." Hsieh Shu-Wei points out that guilt is flexible among the family members. Punishments not only target one person but are also aimed at other relatives in the same clan.⁷⁴ and language is the light of emotions. He writes: "Through confession the consciousness of faults is brought into the light of speech; through confession man remains speech, even in the experience of his own absurdity, suffering, and anguish."⁷⁵ On the other hand, we should also recall that the threshold of confession is the age of seven, and Yurun's age was inadequate to do so. Wang Xizhi's assertion of "waiting for the penalty" 待罪而已 is not only an "interrogation" of himself, but might also be regarded as a phenomenon of "self-sacrifice" to cure his young granddaughter's sickness, similar to the following story about the Xu Clan.

After Wang Xizhi's petition-declaration, during the period of 364-370, a

⁷³ See Lai Chi-Tim, "*Tiandishui sangan xinyangyu zaoqi Tianshidao zhibingjiezui yishi*" 天地水三官信仰與早期天師道治病解罪儀式, 3-4.

⁷⁴ Hsieh Shu-Wei, "Shouguo yu chanhui, zhonggu shiqi zuigan wenhua zhi tantao 首過與懺悔: 中古時期罪感文化之探討 (Repentance and Confession: A Study of the Concept of Guilt in Medieval China)", 746.

⁷⁵ Paul Ricoure, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 7.

Daoist-medium named Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-386?) and his patron Xu clan received revelations from their celestial guests. In the early period of this revelation movement, Xu Mi' s 許謐 wife passed away, and most family members had fallen ill, especially Mi' s son Xu Lian 許聯. Yang Xi revealed that because of the felony murder of Mi' s uncle, Xu Mi' s wife was involved a lawsuit in the netherworld. As a result, she could not bear the torturing, and asked one of the younger members of the Xu clan to replace her.⁷⁶ Xu Hui 許翮 (341-ca 370) presented a declaration to his Perfected Master, Lady of Southern March Mountain Wei Huacun 魏華存. The declaration was entitled “*Nansheng Xu Yufu ci*” 男生許玉斧辭 (“Declaration by Male student, Xu Yufu”). It reads:

I, Yufu, a man with carnal nature, have received the compassion and salvation of the Sages. Each time [the Sages] descend their commands and instructions, which is indeed benefit us, the descendent of Xu clan, who will always receive numinous grace and forever rely on celestial protection. However, I am so incompetent and obtuse, by nature hard to tame. Although I encourage myself on day and night, I am afraid of my transgressions and misconducts. Current night, I was enlightened by a dream. Following this clue to think about its meaning, I understood that this is all retribution for my misconducts, therefore I feel ashamed and guilty simultaneously and there is no place for me to hide. Because the numinous way is exalted and void, the carnal men have not yet experienced the true methods, but can only hold their hearts, maintain reverence, cultivate those treasured secrets. Sometimes, I fear that the numinous principles are too profound and the instructions are too subtle. I was ignorance about [those principles and instructions], thus I could not be enlightened. Misconducts like these, increasingly accumulating over months and days, violate the disciplines and precepts and must by now number in the thousands and myriads. Her Holiness, the divine mother, provides compassion and forgiveness to remit [my transgressions].

Therefore today, with profound and intense apprehension, my liver and gallbladder churning, I would like to break my born to confess my

⁷⁶ Stephen Bokenkamp, “Zaoqi Lingbao jing zhong de dingxing chanhuiwen” 早期靈寶經中的定型懺悔文 (Confession Formulas in the Early Lingbao Scriptures), 126.

transgressions. [I know that] there was no way to repair my transgressions, which were extremely numerous. I wish you will allow me to do that, with my shame and apprehension.

I, Yufu, with my sincerity request to make an oath with [my divine mother]: from today, I will make a new start. I should clean my heart, with sincerity I make a covenant with Heaven and Earth. I should keep in quiet and preserve my form, and obediently receive reprimands. I beg that [my divine mother] dispel the interrogation of my father Mu and elder brother Huya. I, Yufu, did not cultivate myself too much, but I would like to beg that [my divine mother] transfer the interrogation to me to remit my father and brother.

If my divine mother accordingly provides her compassion [to us], I would like to confess all my misconducts to repair my faults so that our family might equally receive your grace. This is so-called gazing the three luminaries forever, and it also provide us a chance to renew our destiny to transform our life. Sincerely submitted.⁷⁷

玉斧以尸濁肉人。受聖愍濟拔。每賜敕誠。實恩隆子孫。常仰銜靈澤。永賴天廕。玉斧以驚鈍頑下。質性難訓。雖夙夜自厲。患於愆失。此夕夢悟。尋思此意。皆玉斧罪責。慙懼屏營。無地自厝。靈道高虛。肉人未達真法。唯執心守敬。脩行寶祕而已。或恐靈旨高遠。誠喻幾微。玉斧頑闇。不能該悟。如此之罪。日月臻積。違法犯誠。亦當千萬。神母仁宥。輒復原赦。故今日憂惶深重。肝膽破碎。唯〔哲〕（謂應作折字）骨思愆。無補往過。連陳啓煩多。希請非所。兼以愧怖。玉斧歸誠乞誓。以今日更始。當洗濯心誠。盟於天地。靜守形骸。軌承訓誨。乞原父穆兄虎牙小大罪考。玉斧不修。乞身自受責。原赦大小。若神母遂見哀愍。許玉斧 思愆補過。舉家端等受恩。是永覩三光。受命更生。謹辭。

There is an annotation to Xu Hui' s declaration in the *Zhengao* 真誥 (*Declarations of the Perfected*). The documents report the declaration to an affiliated master to confess guilt, just like the Celestial Master devotees, but here Yang Xi has slightly changed the recipient. The Celestial Master devotees could only submit it to their master in the mortal world, but the Xu clan and

⁷⁷ CT 1016 *Zhengao* 真誥 7.12b-13a.

other Upper Clarity members have changed this and are able to submit their confessional writings directly to the petitioner's own master or lord in the numinous world. Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (456-536) annotation explains:

It also recommends that to present declarations to Lady of Southern Peak to beg for healing the diseases. It also recommends that to present declaration to the Lord of Preserving Destiny and Lord of Settling Register, and the declaration should be alike the one submitted to Lady of Southern Peak. The patients should declare one's situation to the numinous master. If they did not do that, they won't be cured.⁷⁸

亦宜有辭詣南嶽夫人，乞疾病得愈之意。又宜辭詣保命、定錄二君，辭旨當令如南嶽夫人，疾者自當告乞於玄師，不爾不差。

We realize that, though the Upper Clarity tradition changed the recipient of the declaration, the text remains a general confession. The author uses some generalized terms like *qianshi* 愆失 (iniquity) and *zuize* 罪責 (guilt) to reveal his transgressions. According to his words, we can understand his urgent desire to sacrifice himself to cure his father and elder brother's sickness. He may have had specific events in mind just like Wang Xizhi, but, in writing, he simply presents the requirements of declaration rather than an itemized confession. These confessional sections in the declaration are just alike those in contemporaneous petition collections.

Indeed, there is less explicit confession statement in those two petition manuals. In the *Almanac of Petitions*, the "Petition for Eliminating Disaster and Evil and Protection from Prolonged Disease and the Deletion of Life" (疾病困重收滅災邪拔命保護章) is reserved for long-standing sickness. In the beginning section, the priest asserts that:

⁷⁸ See CT 1016 *Zhengao*, 7.12a-12b.

To present and so on. Because one's illness twining his/her body, he/she tells me urgently to request the submission of petition. Due to his/her severe entanglement in culpabilities, he/she should rely on our Great Dao to beg that he/she receives compassion and protection from [the Great Dao], a prolongation of life span and let his/her disease be cured.⁷⁹

上言：云云。緣身疾病困重，告急於臣，求乞章奏。為某所犯罪結尤重，依憑大道，如蒙哀祐，乞賜進算，令疾病即日痊。

In another healing petition named “Petition for Healing the Diseases” 疾病醫治章, it also generally describes the motivation behind the petition:

To present and (something is left out). [He/she] has already infected the disease for days, thus [he/she] is afraid of the falling from the road of life. The petitioner visits me and begs for the submission of petition to the Three Heavens Bureaus to beg forgiveness. Since more than ten days, because of the unbalance of cold and hot, and the grain of skin and the texture of the subcutaneous flesh lost control. Or perhaps, the petitioner slept on the cold place in the wind. Or perhaps, for some situations, because of the punishment of Five Tortures and Three Disasters⁸⁰ to [the petitioner]. Because of our fatuous nature, we do not understand that how to deal with it. We would like to invite the viable *qi* from five directions to cure it.⁸¹

上言：云云。頃日已來染疾，恐沒溺生路，詣臣求乞章奏三天曹，願為拔贖。比旬日已來，寒暑不節，腠理失所，或當風卧冷，致招此疾，或五刑三災謫罰。但以愚塞，不知將何省理。上請五方生氣，以濟醫治。

The stereotypical models in the Almanac of Petitions do not present many formulaic confession words. The text does not allude to any specific crimes or misconduct to be confessed, but the phrase “and so on” leaves space for more specific, personal confession.

⁷⁹ See CT 615 *Chisong zi zhangli*, 3.22a.

⁸⁰ Three disasters may refer to thunder-strike as the disaster from heaven, conflagration as the disaster from earth, and drowning as the disaster from water. 雷嗔為天災,火焚為地災,覆溺為水災. See *Taishang xuanling beidou benming yansheng zhenjing zhu* 太上玄靈北斗本命延生真經註(Annotation of Perfected Scripture of Most High on Extending Life with the Help of the Birth Destiny and the Northern Dipper), 2.1b.

⁸¹ See CT 615 *Chisong zi zhangli*, 3.21a.

Another proof is drawn from the Most High Petitions that Proclaim Mercy and Are Helpful in Propagandizing Benevolence. In the star section of the “Petition of Dispelling the Fatal Acquittal of the Three Officials” 疾病卻三官死解章, it records an important passage for our consideration:

[The petitioner X] worships the Dao but lost his/her balance, thus he/she is regarded as betrayer of the Prime Commencement. It leads that he/she is punished and interrogated by the Three Officials. On Y month and Z day, the petitioner X felt so hurt that could not have any food. The petitioner lists a declaration to me to beg investigation to his/her case, so that I completely obey the master methods to interrogate the petitioner’s transgressions. The petitioner kowtows and writes [the criminal records] to sincerely take the refugee [of the Dao], and begs for nourishment of one’s destiny.⁸²

某奉道失和，違負元始，身被三官重考，以某月日得病苦，某處痛不下飲食，列辭訴臣求乞平省，臣輒具以師法，譴問某身何所犯坐，某比首寫歸誠，乞丐生命。

We realize that both of these declarations and petitions prefer to use characters like *wei* 違 (violate) and *fan* 犯 (commit), which refer to some obscure standards and regulations. It is possible to hypothesize again that the petitioner had a specific confession in mind, and even they interrogate their transgressions in accordance with the religious regulations but choose to conceal details for some reason.

This passage cited from the petition not only relates to *Master Lu’s Code* in that the petitioner’s confession should be firstly interrogated by the master, but also confirms that there are specific crimes to be confessed. It also helps explain that the confession is not simply a mental activity or oral report, but a handwritten document. Based on the evidence, I cannot claim that all petitions contain the specific, personal

⁸² See CT 1012 *Taishang xuanci zhuhua zhang*, 2.22b

confession, but some of them must contain specific confession as an important part of the resolution to the problem. Stephen Bokenkamp has commented on a negative example in the Lingbao scriptures. A transgression that both students of the Dao and ordinary men might commit is to peek at the text of a *shu*, the original statement of purpose for a ritual 學者及百姓子窺人書疏，察微之罪。⁸³ Therefore, petitioners must, at least on occasion, have submitted lists of transgressions that were to be kept private between them and the Master.

Furthermore, we have two more anecdotes recorded in the standard history works, which support the idea of specific confession. The first story again relates to Wang clan. Wang Xianzhi, the father of Yunrun and the youngest son of Wang Xizhi, was dying due to the chronic disease. As a faithful devotee of the Dao, the Wang clan invited a Libationer to submit a petition to heal his pain. The *Jin shu* 晉書 (*Book of Jin*) recounts this story:

Immediately, Xianzhi was infected by an illness. His family beg a petition submission for him. In accordance with the Daoism method, he should confess his transgression. The priest asked him about his misconducts, and Xianzhi answered that I did not feel other affairs but the divorce to Xi clan. Xianzhi's ex-wife [Chi Daomao] was the daughter of Chi Tan (320-362).⁸⁴

未幾，獻之遇疾，家人為上章，道家法應首過，問其有何得失。對曰：「不覺餘事，惟憶與郗家離婚。」獻之前妻，郗曇女也。

Wang Xianzhi loved his ex-wife Chi Daoyun, but the Emperor Jianwen 簡文帝 of Jin, Sima Yu 司馬昱 (320-372), also admired his talent. At the same time,

⁸³ The original text see LB #18, HY 456, 26b. Also see Stephen Bokenkamp, “Zaoqi Lingbao jing zhong de dingxing chanhuiwen” 早期靈寶經中的定型懺悔文 (Confession Formulas in the Early Lingbao Scriptures), 127.

⁸⁴ Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., *Jinshu* 晉書 (Book of Jin), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 2106.

Emperor Jianwen' s daughter Sima Daofu 司馬道福 had just left Huan Chong 桓沖, the second son of Huan Wen 桓溫, having been exiled due to his murder attempt. Emperor Jianwen forced Wang Xianzhi to divorce and remarry his daughter Daofu. We should understand that divorce not only terminated the marriage contract, but also humiliated the Chi clan and his ex-wife. Wang Xianzhi felt so guilty about his fault, even though it was not carried out of his own volition. Before he was to die, he confessed his innermost guilt through the petition; in fact, we might regard his confession as a terminal self-redemption to heal his sickness.

Another story speaks of individual confession, in which an individual confesses specific transgressions that he has committed. A century later, by 513, Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513), a Buddhist and Daoist and Vice-President of Imperial Secretariat, was an intimate official of Xiao Yan 蕭衍, Emperor Wu 武 of Liang 梁 (502-557). Shen Yue was known for his homosexuality because of his *chanhui wen* 懺悔文 (confessional writing), which is collected in the *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集. When he was about to die, he attempted to submit a Daoist petition to confess his innermost secrets to the deities to beg for salvation, rather than submit a Buddhist confessional writing as he had before. When Emperor Wu usurped the throne in the third month of A.D. 502, he had made his predecessor, Emperor He of the Southern Qi 齊和帝 (488-502), a ruler in the far distant south area. Shen Yue asked Emperor Wu to force his predecessor to commit suicide. After that advance, Shen had become

dramatically unpopular in the court, and even Emperor Wu doubted his loyalty. When Shen Yue returned home, he collapsed in front of his door. Soon afterwards, he fell ill. Shen Yue had a similar experience as Xu Hui during his illness. He dreamed that Emperor He was cutting off his tongue with a sword. Shen Yue, distraught with fear, summoned a *wu* 巫 (medium) to seek the meaning of this terrible nightmare. The medium said nothing but rehearsed his dream content. The *Liang shu* 梁書 (*Books of Liang*) records:

[Shen Yue] invited the Daoist priest to submit a cinnabar petition to the Heaven, which professed that the affair of Emperor He abdicated and handed over the throne to Emperor Wu was not his own idea.⁸⁵

乃呼道士奏赤章於天，稱禪代之事，不由己出。

In accordance with his record, Shen Yue's sly statement could be regarded as a specific confession and an "internalist" proof to support the petition of specific confession.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

To correct the "disturbance of order," Daoist devotees confessed their transgressions specifically orally or in handwriting, testimonies seeking forgiveness. Theoretically, the confession section is the core value of the petition rather than the section of the invitation of officials. The confessional section could be both specific and formulaic. The prior descriptions and anecdotes suggest that there were specific crimes and transgressions included in the confessional documents, a tradition that was initiated and preserved in the "Personal Writs to the Three Officials." The petitions

⁸⁵ Yao Cha 姚察 (533-606), Xie Jiong 謝灵 (fl.598), Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643), Yao Silian 姚思廉 (557-637), *Liang shu* 梁書 (Book of Liang), (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1978), 243.

with specific confessions largely concern severe diseases and emergencies that afflict the petitioner. We should realize that the petition itself is not the healing method but a form, a mode of ritual. Healing accomplished through the confessional reports and declarations which are provided by petitioner. The petitioners liberate their feelings of guilt by organizing their language, an act reminiscent of Paul Ricoeur's theory. The petitioners construct a cause and effect relationship between actions and illness that fits their own case. This process is what Ricoeur calls "interrogation." The process of submitting the petition could intuitively transfer the feeling of guilt into an objective expression.

Even in petition manuals, there are abundant stereotypical models to be used as references to compose new petitions. Both specific petitions with detailed confession and formalized petitions without specific confession coexisted within the Celestial Master movement. The formulaic petitions also provide the flexible space for stating one's situations and itemizing one's transgressions. However, it is still hard for us to draw conclusions about the dualistic debate of "shame culture" or "guilt culture." The last two anecdotes explored above are focused on individuals who were forced by the emperors to commit a contemptible act; both include ideas that might be interpreted as both feelings of guilt and shame. Nevertheless, they both demonstrate strong social moral concerns. Based on these anecdotes, it appears that shame and guilt are not absolute contrary. Whether either is displayed or given precedence depends on the social or personal circumstances of the affair.

CHAPTER 4:

Confessional Writing in Lingbao Tradition

4.1 Introduction

Stephen Bokenkamp indicates that “Lingbao communities seem to have continued the Celestial Master practice of personal, private confession.” But, most scholars agree that the majority of confessions in Lingbao tradition are not personal and specific, but formulaic and public. In this chapter, I examine the personal confessions embedded within Lingbao rituals to argue that the personal confession still exists in Lingbao tradition.

First, we must look closely at Lingbao rituals, which fundamentally rely on the Lingbao scriptures. In ancient Lingbao scriptures catalogue compiled by Lu Xiujing, such as *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jinlu jianwen sanyuan weiyi ziran zhenjing* 太上洞玄靈寶金籙簡文三元威儀自然真經 (Bamboo Slips on the Golden Registers of the Three Primes), and *Taishang lingbao changye jiuyoufu yukui mingzhen ke* 太上靈寶長夜九幽府玉匱明真科 (Code of the Luminous Perfected). Lu Xiujing established the *Lingbao shoudu yi* 靈寶授度儀 (*Ordination Ritual of the Numinous Treasure*) relying on the Golden Registers and the *Huanglu jianwen* 黃籙簡文 (*Bamboo Slips on the Yellow Registers*). However, the ritualistic writ in the ordination ritual is a *biao* 表 (memorial) rather than a traditional petition in the Celestial Master mold. Master Lu also claims that the prior ordination ritual only included two memorials, thus he created the new ordination ritual. The ritual structure, a considerable *zhai* 齋 (retreat) ritual, adopts sequence and framework from prior

Daoism rites. The section of the submission of the memorial is nearly identical with the petition ritual. The framework of the petition ritual is as follows:

Lighting of the Incense Burner—Exteriorization of the Officials—Announcement of the Petition—Manipulation of the Petition—Bowing for the Presentation of the Petition—Interiorization of the Officials—Extinction of the Incense Burner⁸⁶

發爐—出官—讀章—操章—拜章—復官—復爐

In the *Ordination Ritual*, the basic structure of the submission of memorial section can be simplified into:

Lighting the Incense Burner—Exteriorization of the Officials—Announce the Memorial—Re-announce the Covenant—Interiorization of the Officials—Extinction of the Incense Burner.⁸⁷

發爐—出官—讀表—勅重約—復官—復爐

Lu Xiuqing reconstructed the writ submission ritual, and he made only slight changes, replacing the petition with the memorials. The memorial, although it shares similar ritual structure, it is not the same as the petition. As I introduced in the prior chapter, the petition includes the confession and the section of “Invitation of the Officials” to deal with the disasters and misfortunes. The memorial also includes some sort of formulaic confession, but it is an affair statement that lacks any specific confession and “Invitation of the Officials” segments. During the Song dynasty (960-1279), the history books record that people sought confession through the cinnabar petition rituals rather than any “memorial ritual.” The memorial seems to state the affair itself, but the question is whether there was a personal writ of confessional writing in

⁸⁶ Lv Pengzhi 呂鵬志, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang* 唐前道教儀式史綱 (A Historical Outline of Daoist Rituals before the Tang Dynasty), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 198.

⁸⁷ See CT 1065 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀, 3a-55a.

Lingbao tradition? In hopes of answering this question, I have sought out a series of documents in Du Guangting's collected works. Previous scholars have paid much attention to the literariness of Du's collected works but have ignored the confessional thought in his works, which is particularly concentrated on the *ci* 詞 (declaration).

The *ci* 詞 is a personal statement of one's intention, confession, repentance and supplication and shares the same function of *ci* 辭 in the Celestial Master petition tradition. It might be possible that these two characters are synonyms. It replaces the position of the memorial in the ritual. We can summarize the basic structure of Lingbao-based retreat based on *Taishang huanglu zhaiyi* 太上黃籙齋儀 (*Yellow Register Retreat Rites of Most High*):

Incantation for the Protective Spirits—Lighting the Incense Burner—Presentation of Rank—Recitation of the *ci*-Declaration—Burning Incense Three Times—Commanding the Demons—Supplications to the Ten-Directions—Pacing on the Void—Three Worships and Three Bows—Presentation of Rank Again—Issuing Vows—Extinction of the Incense Burner

衛靈咒—發爐—各稱法位（啟聖）—讀詞—三上香—禮方—命魔—步虛—三啟三禮—重稱法位（再啟聖）—發念—復爐

We do not find any clue of the *ci*-declaration in Lu Xiuqing's rites; however, the very first one is collected in a *Zhengyi* 正一 (Orthodox Unity) ritual named *Jiao sanding zhenwen wufa Zhengyi mengwei lu lichen yi* 醮三洞真文五法正一盟威籙立成儀 (*Liturgy for Establishing an Offering with the Authentic Scripts and the Five Methods of the Three Caverns, and the Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity*) which was a Lingbao-based ritual edited by Zhang Wanfu 張萬福 (fl.712-756).

Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762) replaced the *zhuban* 祝版 (incantation board) by the declaration in the Taiqing Gong 太清宮 (Great Clarity Palace),⁸⁸ the imperial Daoist monastery for the primogenitor Laozi of Tang royal family. The declaration seems to have replaced the memorial in that ritual, but the structure and framework of that ritual remained the same. Zhang Wanfu was a contemporary of Emperor Xuanzong, so at the very least, the declaration would have appeared in the Tang dynasty.

The ritual structure of Zhang Wanfu's Liturgy for Establishing an Offering is almost the same as Du Guangting's works such as Yellow Register Retreat Rites, a compilation of Lingbao Yellow Register Retreats in the later Tang dynasty.

4.2 The *ci*-Declaration

In this chapter, the materials are cited from *Guangcheng ji*, the collected work of Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933) whose by-name is *guangcheng* 廣成. Through this amazing anthological work of liturgy, I find that the *ci*-declarations dominated more than twenty *juan* in his twenty-three *juan* collected work. All of them are the archives of actual rituals in the history, which could be composed by *zhai* 齋主 (patron of retreat) but also could be composed by priests. No matter who composed the liturgies, those declarations were proclaimed in the ritual spaces. the *ci*-declaration could be proclaimed in a *zhai* 齋 (retreat) and also could be announced in a *jiao* 醮 (sacrifice), both of which belong to the Lingbao tradition.

The *ci*-declaration is different from the *zhang*-petition and memorial, which

⁸⁸ See Wang Pu 王溥 (922-982), *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 in *Qing-period Wuyingdian juzhen* 武英殿聚珍 edition, (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1968) *juan* 50, 1-1.

were often written in the first person of the priest. In contrast, the *ci*-declaration is written in the first person by the petitioner. In other words, the character *chen* 臣 (I) refers to the patron but not the priest in the declaration. According to *Guangcheng ji*, it is easy to summarize the syllogistic formula of the *ci*-declaration:

- (1.) Praise: This is regarded as a section of the eulogy that the author writes, using embellished language to display one's accomplishment in literature. At the same time, the author praises the Great Dao and the awesome power of the deities. Many of the documents begin with praise of the Dao, the origin of the world, the mother of the mankind, the creator of the universe, the supreme ruler. The following passage is reserved for those deities who control the numinous powers to cure one's sickness. The author admires the grace of deities to beg for salvation for patients or loved ones who have already died. Another segment of praise targets the numinous power of the sacred scriptures and retreat itself. As the Lingbao scriptures assert, the celestial writings are authoritative with the power to control the rhythm of the whole universe. The celestial writings can heal the crippled, blind, dumb and so on. The scriptures can also emancipate ghosts from chthonic prison.
- (2.) Statement: This is the core section, which represents the intention and confession of patrons. Most of the examples include a confession section. This section usually begins with the statement of one's embarrassment and bewilderment, such as diseases, dead relatives, the future misfortunes

judged by the divine methods; The second section is always the confession which allows one to repent transgressions of past lives and earlier years in the present life. Guilt seems to be flexible, that is inherited evil from one's ancestors, and cumulative, a Buddhist idea that karmic sins accumulate from previous lives. However, the confession is quite general rather than specific and itemized like the Personal Writs and petition. As Hsieh Shu-Wei claims, the "feeling of guilt" is always obscured and commonly depends on social moral standards, especially those Confucianism moral standards. Some confessions are profound and moving because those texts are begging for healing and salvation. These frequently appear with patients of chronic diseases or those who have just lost a relative, especially in a young child.

(3.) Supplication: The last section of the declaration, which summarizes and echoes the first and second, raises the consequence of the confession. It is largely used for expressing one's requests to deities. Most of them are rhythmical prose sections characterized by parallelism and ornateness with beautiful rhymes; some of them even sound like selections from verse. The authors beg deities to cure illness, to release hostility, and to rescue dead relatives.

We can clearly see the syllogistic formula in the following declaration, *Junrong anzhai jiaoci* 軍容安宅醮詞 (The Declaration of Pacification of the Mansion

Jiao-sacrifice).⁸⁹ *Junrong* is an abbreviation for *junrong shi* 軍容使, a military commander and inspector. Unfortunately, the declaration does not allude to any specific information about the patron, but we can still see his admiration for the natural world and earth deities. In the second section, he not only confesses his own misconducts but also confesses for his wife Lady Feng. The patron believed that his violation of the proscriptions and prohibitions of the earth incurred his wife's disease. To appease his violation of the prohibitions of the earth, he established the Pacification of the Mansion *Jiao*-sacrifice in order to cure his wife. It reads:

The two symbols of [yin and yang] were settled and the three numinous were matched their positions. The yin and yang were cast into shape and heaven and earth took their positions as bestower and bearer. The lord of nest dwelling and cave living neither irrigated or sprinkled; after the [appearance] of the constructing of ridgepole and beam, the constructions are increasing like the rising of clouds. After this they drew on the five phases and set the standards by the Six Principles. If one follows them, then fortune spreads and goodness is reached; if one goes against them misfortune arises and calamity is born. Seeking out the superintendence of it, it can only be the Five Thearchs. The residence I live was constructed for years that [I] unceasingly renew the earthy and wooden configurations and frequently labor the dustpans and shovels. Thus, I fear I disturbed above the Five Thearchs and, to the side, the myriad deities. This year, again, I repaired the house in the direction of the "circling of the year." Recently, [my wife] Lady Feng suddenly fell sick. I fear she was infected by the violation of the [taboo] [of the "circling of the year."] Thus, [I] follow the prime codes to sincerely prepare the sacrifice to apologize [our violation]. We prepare according to the ancient method of the Three Heavens and request the numinous talismans of the Five Thearchs, in order to beg the descending of the right deities to circle the true qi and to bless the safety. I wish [my family] can receive peace and harmony, and the evil perversities will not offend [us]. [I wish] both inside and outside [of my house] are healthy and safe, and the sickness and disaster will be cleaned out, and all of my family members are remain in peace. [I wish] the Azure Palace will add the record of good fortune and Black Slips will eliminate the ominous

⁸⁹ See CT 616 *Guangcheng ji*, 6.2a.

numbers. We will diligently cultivate ourselves and worship [the Dao] to reciprocate the [divine merits]. I can't bear.⁹⁰

伏以二象既陳。三靈配位。陰陽陶鑄。天地權輿。

巢居穴處之君。澆漓未作。

上棟下宇之制。締構云興。

由是取則五行。

定規六紀。

順之則福延善著。違之則禍起災生。

考其主張。實惟五帝。

臣所居之處。經始有年。

土木之用繼新。畚鍤之功累作。

竊恐上千五帝。

旁犯眾神。

又今歲興修。當行年之位。

近則馮氏忽嬰疾苦。

懼因犯觸所成。

輒按元科。虔伸醮謝。

備三天之舊法。請五帝之靈符。

乞降正神。俯流真氣。

永錫安鎮。俾獲乂寧。

凶邪不侵。內外康泰。

⁹⁰ See CT 616 *Guangcheng ji*, 6.2a-2b.

疾厄蠲蕩。眷屬咸和。

青宮增祿祚之文。黑簡息災蒙之數。

克勤修奉。以答神功。不任。

Just like petitions dealing with the soil proscriptions and prohibitions in the *Almanac of Petitions*, the taboos related to dwellings and house constructions have a long history in ancient China. The archaeological documents from *Shuihu di* 睡虎地 (third-century B.C.) reveals that there were some indigenous taboos regard in the soil and earth ever since the Warring States period.⁹¹ The Han dynasty scholar, Wang Chong 王充 (21-ca. 97), criticized the practice of propitiating earth deities and reconciling the violation of the earth taboos.⁹² The petition named “Petition for Propitiating the Soil” indicates that the inauspicious residences are invited from the essences of the earth and the spirits of the soil.⁹³ The petition also includes a series of “diagnosis of the causes for the disturbance is followed by a litany of potentially offended soil gods.”⁹⁴ Though Junrong’s *ci*-declaration does no clearly point out the pantheon of the soil deities and the roster of the soil taboos, the concern of soil taboos and the causality are very similar. The fundamental logics of the petition and declaration are considerably close that the householder should repent his offenses and violation then the inauspicious effects will be dismissed by the soil deities. The most

⁹¹ See the catalog in Marc Kalinowski, "Les traités de Shuihudi et L'hémérologie chinoise à la fin des Royaumes combattants," *T'oungPao* 72 (1986), 225.

⁹² See Peter Nickerson, "The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints," in *Early Daoist scriptures*, ed. Stephen Bokenkamp, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 242-3.

⁹³ Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac", 325.

⁹⁴ Franciscus Verellen, "The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda according to Chisong zi's Petition Almanac", 325.

significant difference is that the *ci*-declaration lacks the section for “Invitation of Officials,” the contributing section of the healing method in *zhang*-petition system.

In Junrong’s *ci*-declaration, he believes that his violation of the soil taboos incurs a “disturbance of order” to cause the culpability to his family. Following Paul Ricoeur’s argument, Junrong’s activities of his dwellings provide him a chance to apply “the mode of interrogation” to interrogate himself. In particular, Feng’s disease worsened during the construct of the dwellings; in this light, he attempts to interrogate his violation of soil taboos in the past, and he also plans to interrogate himself about potential violations of soil taboos. However, we can see that his confession is not specific like the Personal Writ that itemizes all the transgressions since one’s birth or seven sui. But, the content of *ci*-declaration remains in general, quite similar to the formulaic confession section in the petition system. The difference is that the *ci*-declaration provides a simpler, clearer, more direct and personal format to state one’s dilemmas and to submit one’s confessions.

4.3 The Confession in the Declaration

Most declarations in Du Guangting’s anthology are composed by or related to the bureaucratic class, that is, the royal family, nobles and social elites. The officials and ministers blame their executive obligations, which may lead to negative results in their life. For instance, “The Declaration of the Jiao-Sacrifice of the Southern Dipper”

南斗醮詞 of Ma shanghu 馬尚書 (Minister Ma) reads:

I reside in the mundane world. While my heart is enslaved by the profane [affairs], I control the authority to initiate [change]. I must send out the document of penalties and take charge of the punishment and reward. For it is difficult to follow the uses of that which dashes into harmony [the Dao],

fearing its condemnation of transgression. The repeated assembling of spirits of the otherworld belongs more to misfortune and disaster. How much the more at the conjunctions of time!⁹⁵

臣跡處人寰。心拘俗役。機權在握。須行懲勸之文。刑賞是司。難徇沖和之用。慮其過咎。累積陰曹。更屬災凶。便為厄會。

According to Confucian norms, to be an official is the greatest honor during one's lifetime. However, the contradiction is that taking charge of the penalty is regarded as a blasting fuse of "disturbance of order" to cause indictments to oneself and family. In Mo Tingyi's 莫庭乂 *ci*-declaration of density *jiao*-sacrifice for his Vice-Secretary Zhang 張 sincerely states:

I report that [my Vice Secretary] Zhang controlled the significant authority for a long time. [He] uniquely motivates his loyal heart to follow the sage strategies and to obey the imperial stratagems. He may command the [army] of pi and tiger to cleanse the border regions. [He] may restore the castle towns and moats to bring peace to the territory. He may exterminate the traitors and destroy the [local] despots. He may supervise the tax collecting and manage the army provisions. There are many affairs, and he cannot reject punishment. He shows deep hesitation to execute anyone, for if he misses by just a bit, it will bring about punishment [from the otherworld]. And, if he never repents or prays about it. I doubt that his Three destinies and Five Phases may encounter the adversities, which the bright stars and somber luminaries reflecting. The Way of Divine is ultimately distance, so that [our] mundane supplications may be delivered. If [we] don't hear [the name] of the ultimate sage, we are unable to clean our unforgivable iniquities. Thus, we dare to visit the numinous mountain to establish the great ceremony of *jiao*. We dare to expose our hearts to pray and repent to all the celestial bureaucracies of the Heaven, Earth, Yin and Yang and all the palaces of the sun, the moon and the stars. We wish that the numinous luminaries reflect on [our heart], eliminate our transgressions in the past, descend benefit to [this world], extinguish the disasters in the future, tacitly bestow the blessing and lastingly bless the fortune [to us]. I wish [the deities] will extend our life on the Cinnabar Sheets and take off your accusations on the Black Register, in order to enrich the realm of

⁹⁵ See CT 616 *Guangchen ji*, 6.6a.

Sichuan and to everlasting protect the myriad beings. I can't bear.⁹⁶

臣切以張某久持重柄。獨運赤心。上稟聖謀。仰遵廟略。或指蹤貔虎。清蕩邊陲。或恢復城池。削平疆土。或誅鋤姦猾。摧挫兇豪。或督課賦輿。經營軍食。以茲多事。詎可禁刑。深虞斬決之間。重輕有失。因成譴咎。曾未懺祈。又恐三命五行。或逢衰厄。明星暗曜。或值照臨。神道至幽。常情靡達。非聞至聖。難滌深瑕。是敢依詣靈山。修崇大醮。遍天地陰陽之府。周星辰日月之宮。瀝懇披心。祈恩悔過。伏願靈光迴鑒。除已往之愆違。惠澤下臨。息將來之災否。允垂嘉祐。永介福祥。延壽紀於丹篇。落罪名於黑籍。以康川境。永保群生。不任。

Mo affirms Zhang's loyalty and talent in military affairs, but in contrast, the execution seems to have become a potential reason to incur disease and misfortune. Those contradictions become anxieties for those who had an official career. Confucian social values forced the officials to obey the demands of loyalty, righteousness, and justice. But loyalty could potentially mean that the official had to order executions, assassinations, or castigations, even at times unjustified. Theoretically, those transgressions were to be confessed by the petitioner himself, but Mo Tingyi established a retreat ritual and wrote a *ci*-declaration for Zhang. It could be that Zhang was too sick for the ritual. In chapter one, we saw that both Wang Xizhi and Xu Hui wrote declarations to interrogate their own guilt and beg for grace from deities, but ghostwriting the confessional document for another was prevalent in *zhang*-petition and *ci*-declaration practices. The protagonists were neither too young or too sick, but the following protagonist needed a ghostwriter because he was near death.

Wang Chengyan 王承鄜 composes *ci*-declaration for his dead father in a

⁹⁶ See CT 616 *Guangchen ji*, 6.9a-9b.

famous Lingbao retreat named *Mingzhen zhai* 明真齋 (Retreat of Luminous Perfected) to save his father's soul. He writes:

My father, may he rest in peace, was fated to undertake practice of the Dao and he repeatedly received the Treasure Registers. He celebrated the sage days and frequently attended the honor of official positions. However, as he was trapped in a profane web, it was hard to have no transgression. As he stepped in the dust universe, he could not avoid making misconducts. Moreover, he shamefully took charge of the kitchen, which forced him to slaughter [the fowl and livestock]. He supervised the troops, then took charge of the penalty and occupied the minister of the counties, which close to the crowd. He might suppress the tyrants and support the vulnerable groups, or he might give repeated orders and injunctions [to them]. Both actions might unjustly judge someone, which became the culpabilities. In addition, since we were separated from our hometown because of the chaos of the warfare, our ancestral graves might be destroyed and the sepulchral complaints could be extended to the descendent. At the same time, we divided our mansion and sold it. We moved doors and alleys that the construction of wood and mud might offend luminary deities. I'm worrying about [those misconducts], therefore I would like to repent and apologize [for our transgressions]. I dare to obey the codes and principles of Treasure Numinous to initiate the Ceremonial [Retreat] of the Luminous Perfected that I will meticulously prepare the incenses and lamps and enrich our pledge. I would like to pathetically exposure my heart and to request for your merit [in the future].⁹⁷

臣先考運偶道風。常參寶籙。身逢聖日。累踐官榮。處世網之中。寧無過悞。履塵寰之內。必有愆違。況職主庖羞。須行宰戮。旋司戎伍。每舉刑章。出領郡符。入居近密。或抑強扶弱。或三令五申。既爽重輕。即為釁咎。又自鄉關隔越。兵火亂離。故里墳塋。或有侵毀。塚訟延注。逮及子孫。兼割貨所居。移易門巷。土木修造。有觸明神。以此憂惶。皆祈懺謝。是敢遵靈寶科格。修明真道場。精潔香燈。豐嚴信幣。披心露懇。悔過希恩。

It is a personal confession, but the author attempts to “provide general statements of contrition meant to cover all, or at least the most important, eventualities.”⁹⁸ Wang

⁹⁷ See CT 616 *Guangcheng ji*, 5.11b-12a.

⁹⁸ See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Zaoqi Lingbao jing zhong de dingxing chanhuiwen”, 130-135.

Chengyan tries to confess his father's transgressions and the cumulative miasma of misdeeds stemming from their ancestors. But, the character *huo* 或 (perhaps) is not an affirmation; the entries he listed are regarded as possibilities, things that might have happened but "cannot be brought to mind or remembered," rather than certain acts of misconduct. We would assume Wang's statement to be made as complete as possible based on his dead father's experiences; therefore, he would have the greatest possible opportunity to confess for his father.

The *ci*-declaration surely contains personal, profound confessions and includes some sort of formula-like confessional writings to cover every conceivable transgression. The emotion and degree of confession could be increased when the petitioner encountered severe disease and death of a relative. The significant difference between formulaic confessions in Lingbao rituals and personal *ci*-declarations is that the formulas concentrate on the decedent but personal declarations concentrate on the living. Most formulas were not reserved for healing purposes, but were regarded as necessary confessions for the dead. The *ci*-declarations, in contrast, reflected a patron's personal confession and s

4.4 *Jie* in *ci*-Declaration

There are many similarities in *zhang*-petition and *ci*-declaration, but also some important differences. The most significant difference I have found is an additional function and meaning of *jie* 解 (dispelling) in *ci*-declaration. In the petition tradition, the target objects of *jie* are *zuzhou* 咒詛 (imprecation), *e* 厄 (misfortunes), *shangji* 上計 (criminal record), *tu* 土 (soil taboos), *kao* 考 or *zhe* 謫 (punishment), *siji* 死

籍 (dead register), *guo* 過 (fault), *fulian* 復連 (reconnection).

In *Guangcheng ji*, there are prayers, such as “Dismiss the crimes and punishments, bring absolution to the enemies” 罪咎蠲消，冤讎解釋; “some fated hostilities in the past life, but have not been resolved” 或往債宿冤，過尤未解 and so on. The idea of *yuan* 冤 (karmic creditors) does not appear in prior Celestial Master scriptures and Lingbao scriptures, but is recorded in Du Guangting’s *Daojiao lingyan ji* 道教靈驗記 (*Records of the Numinous Efficacy of the Taoist Teaching*). A story about a military general He Lianchong 赫連寵, His father Cong was also a military commander who executed over one thousand surrendered soldiers, but died in 619. Once, Lianchong had a trip with friends to Mt. Zhongnan 終南山 and met a Daoist Yang Jingtong 楊景通 who had settled a hut for three hundred years. Lianchong begged food from Yang; however, Yang had abandoned food for years, therefore he politely remained quiet with a smile. Lianchong was so enraged that he forced his attendant to burn down Yang’s hut. Yang answered that his father had murdered innocents, and he was being tortured in the hell. Lianchong was not convinced of Yang’s words, thus Yang summoned his father’s soul to appear in the black clouds and tell him the truth. His father appears and states:

I murdered the surrendered soldiers, thus I received lawsuits and punishments in the underworld prison. Why you want to destroy a perfected? It will increase my transgressions many fold!⁹⁹

吾殺降兵，被他冤訟，於地獄下受諸罪苦，汝何故更毀真人，令吾轉轉罪重？

Lianchong was so surprised about his dead father’s presence and begged Yang for

⁹⁹ See CT 1032 *Yunji qiqian*, 121.17b.

help. Yang suggested that he establish a Yellow Register Retreat for his father to release his soul. Lianchong immediately established a seven-day long retreat for his father, who was finally able to ascend to heaven thereafter. The story not only confirms the merit of the Yellow Register Retreat, but also emphasizes the efficacy of resolving the rancor from antagonists similar to the prayer in *ci*-declaration to “Dismiss the crimes and punishments, bring absolution to the enemies.”¹⁰⁰

There are several episodes about enmity. In the episode of Li Chengsi 李承嗣, his ugly wife and son are poisoned by one of his young concubines. Two birds peck Li and his concubine every afternoon because they had killed and buried his wife and son. Li invited all the shamans, Daoist priests, and monks, but no one could dispel the two angry birds. Soon after, Li Chengsi invited a famous Daoist adept named Luo Gongyuan 羅公遠 who was on his journey to the area of River Huai 淮 and River Si 泗. Luo told Li that the birds were his karmic creditors who had filed a lawsuit about your crimes. The hostility could not be resolved by any method or art, and the only way to solve the problem was to establish the Yellow Register Retreat to make merit for wraiths who had been murdered. Li Chengsi obeyed Luo’s instruction and held a retreat for them, helping the dead wife and son finally ascend to the heaven.¹⁰¹

Du Guangting seems to generalize the powerful merit-making function of the Yellow Register Retreat to deal with blood feuds, and he also generalizes the social moral concern of reciprocity. The episodes recorded in his anthology seem to be some tales particularly addressed to potential patrons who had negative experiences in the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 121.16b.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 121.19a-b.

past. It is interesting that most protagonists in the story are rich bureaucrats who we call “bad apples.” Du Guangting targets them to spread the retreat and provide salvation to mankind. The patrons of Lingbao retreats also accept and praise the effectiveness of retreats that can resolve the enmity. Both Daoist priests and retreat patrons act as agents to enrich the meanings and functions of the retreats and confessional writings.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

There was a tendency to eschew specific confessions in early Daoism. The petition could still include some sort of personal and specific confessional elements, itemized affairs or specific transgressions to be listed in the process of beseeching deities to absolve petitioner and his relatives for crimes and misconducts. But, we should recognize that these specific confessions are mostly related to petitions dealing with severe disease, when the petitioners, such as Wang Xianzhi and Shen Yue, were on the verge of death. The two petition collections, *Almanac of Petitions* and *Most High Petitions*, reveal that some petitions reserved a flexible section to write personal information, and in most cases, it was a formula of “listing the oral declaration by himself or herself.” We do know that the priest composed new petitions according to the petitioner’s oral declaration, but this of course is which obscured. No instructions explain the detail of the oral declaration, and we don’t have any examples to affirm the content of the oral declaration.

If we look at the episodes of Wang Xizhi and Shen Yue, we find that they confessed their secret transgression to the priest to compose petitions to cure their diseases rather than the using the theoretical confession in the *Scripture of the Inner Explication of the Three Heavens*, which urged Daoists to repent all acts of misconduct since the age of seven sui. Again, while Wang Xizhi and other petitioners may have had very specific events in mind, in writing, he blames himself for very general transgressions rather than the itemized misconduct which were listed in the

Personal Writs to the Three Officials.

Paul Ricoeur argues that “the experience of being oneself but alienated from oneself gets transcribed immediately on the plane of language in the mode of interrogation.”¹⁰² The petitioners interrogate their misconduct and transgressions to eliminate their “feeling of guilt” through the very act of interrogation and avowal. Based on the evidence above, I may hypothesize that the petition system assimilated the personal practice of itemized confession from earlier Personal Writ tradition. The specific confession was largely reserved for some irregular situations, in the most severe occurrences of disease or advancing death. The basic logic of healing largely confirms Paul Ricoeur’s arguments about the experience of language (confession) and the “mode of interrogation.”

On the other hand, we fortunately see that there are two surviving declarations, regarded as the original manuscripts for libationers to compose petitions, one from Wang and Xu families respectively. The doctrinal records, such as those in the Scripture of the Inner Explication of the Three Heavens, suggest declarations should be personal, specific, and itemized; yet, the examples from Wang and Xu, in contrast, are personal but not specific and itemized as we might expect. Xu Hui’s declaration is more likely a self-accusation and redemptive sacrifice for Hui himself seeks to bear punishments for his father and elder brother. The “Guannu tie” written by Wang Xizhi is also a personal but general statement of confession. Because Xizhi was ignorant of his young granddaughter’s sickness, his remorse might have inspired him to write a

¹⁰² Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 6-8.

declaration to Master Xu Mai for petition submission. However, we still cannot find detailed specific confessional writing in Xizhi's work. Compared with Xu Hui's piece, Wang Xizhi's seems to list more general transgressions in accordance with his own experience as a householder.

The petition seems to have inherited parts of the Personal Writs tradition. But, as we can see, most stereotypical models recorded in these significant early manuals only come with formulaic confessional words. Petitions with specific confession represent a fraction of the complete number. Furthermore, the "feelings of guilt" and "feelings of shame" are not incompatible, but there are the personal experiments in personal and social aspects. In other words, based on my reading of Daoist petitions, I doubt that Ruth Benedict's dualist notion of "shame culture" and "guilt culture" was important in early Daoist movements. Instead, these cultures might be distinguished in specific situations.

The largest majority of confessions in Lingbao scriptures are public and formulaic rather than personal and specific. This is the "confession formula" in Lingbao tradition. However, Stephen Bokenkamp also indicates that the earliest Lingbao corpus also confirms the significance of personal and specific confession. Before Emperor Xuanzong's period, there is less evidence to support any confessional writing within the Lingbao tradition. Since the time of Zhang Wanfu, who edited a large ritual collection, the *ci*-declaration seems to have become the dominant writ in Lingbao retreats and other *jiao*-sacrifices. The *ci*-declarations collected in Du Guangting's anthology are personal confession, but, as we saw before, those amazing literary works are both personal and general confessional writings. With the

“confession formulae” in other Lingbao instructions, retreat patrons were required to compose the *ci*-declaration. Some authors from the bureaucratic class might tactfully mention their official experience which could incur excessive punishment and injustice. The contradictions of loyalty, benevolence, justice always brought anxieties for the retreat patron from bureaucratic class who were often asked to commit heinous, unjustified acts. In their confessions, any of these bureaucrats attempt to cover every conceivable transgression and causation, such as the “lawsuits from beyond the grave” and “miasmas.” The transgressions include both personal karmic sins from pervious lives and the “inherited evil” from one’s ancestors. Authors of *ci*-declarations attempt to make the list of transgressions as complete as possible to absolve even potential issues.

The *ci*-declaration in Lingbao tradition should be regarded as a development out of the declarations and petitions in the Celestial Master movement. Again, *ci*-declarations provide a more simple, clear, direct and personal formula to state one’s dilemmas and to submit one’s confession. The new confessional system became quite prevalent after its appearance. The *ci*-declaration had increased in the popular Lingbao retreat; Zhang Wanfu’s comments, where he criticizes the petition as a small and inferior method that can’t compare with the *sandong shangfa* 三洞上法 (Upper Method of Three Caves) included in the Lingbao retreats, help us to understand this trend.¹⁰³ As a Daoist priest, Du Guangting collects many episodes of “Numinous Efficacy” to spread the acceptance and use of retreats. He introduces several stories about how people absolve karmic creditors and chronic hostility through his

¹⁰³ See CT 1240 *Daoshi shou sandong jingjie falu zhairi li* 道士受三洞經誡法籙擇日曆 (*Calendar for Selecting the Days on which Taoist Priests should Receive Scriptures, Precepts, and Liturgical Registers of the Three Caverns*), 7b and 8a.

anthology of “Numinous Efficacy.” Retreat patrons accepted Du’s ideas and wrote *ci*-declaration in order to resolve their karmic enemies. Both priests and patrons were “agents,” cooperating to enrich and give new efficacy and meaning to the early Daoism confessional writings.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

CT This bibliography lists titles of *Daozang* 道藏 texts cited in the entries of the present book. It provides: (1) Full titles of texts cited in abbreviated form. (2) References to three catalogues of the *Daozang*: *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages* (Kristofer Schipper 1975, abbreviated as CT).

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1016 *Zhengao* 真誥

1032 *Yunji qiqian* 云笈七籤

1065 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀

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