

Performing the Heavens:
Pacing the Void (*Buxu* 步虛) in Daoist Ritual and the Chinese Literary Tradition

by

Tyler Feezell

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved October 2022 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Stephen R. Bokenkamp, Chair
Stephen H. West
Xiaoqiao Ling
Nicholas Morrow Williams

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2022

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the concept of “Pacing the Void” (*buxu* 步虛) in Daoist scripture and ritual in relation to the Chinese literary tradition from early medieval China through the Tang dynasty. While the term generally connotes the act of ascending to the heavens, it took on varying layers of meaning throughout history, negotiated against the backdrop of new Daoist revelations, historical conditions, and the literary tradition. In part I, I examine early Daoist scriptures, both those of the Shangqing 上清 (Upper Clarity) and Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) traditions, to trace how the concept took shape in these works. The concept originated in Shangqing scriptures, which associate *buxu* with music and verse performed by the gods on momentous occasions. In Lingbao scriptures, *buxu* specifies the gods’ regular ritualized ascent up the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山). A distinct hymnal form, a series of ten verses, also emerged in Lingbao scriptures. Likely first intended for personal cultivation, these hymns were later adapted for communal ritual, in which priests embodied the scriptural doctrine in their performance, reenacting the heavenly precedent on the mundane stage. Part II explores how later writers adapted the Lingbao *buxu* hymnal form for various purposes and how they understood the idea of “Pacing the Void.” Yu Xin 庾信 composed a series of *buxu* poems in the Northern Zhou as a commentary on the religious and political scene of the period. Wu Yun 吳筠, writing in the mid 8th century, adapted the *buxu* hymn as part of his efforts to make Daoist cultivation and transcendence legible for a literati audience. Other Tang dynasty poets transformed *buxu* into a poetic trope, filtering their experience of Daoist ritual and music through more standard literary associations. By focusing on

these writings in their social and historical context, I demonstrate how the concept of *buxu*, as scriptural doctrine, ritual form, and literary trope, evolved over this time, became embedded in the literary tradition, and captured the imagination of poets and rulers for centuries after its origin.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Along the way to completing my PhD, I have been fortunate to cross paths with many wonderful people who I certainly owe a debt of gratitude. At my undergraduate institution, Trinity University, Randall Nadeau and Stephen Field opened my eyes to the fascinating areas of Chinese religion, language, and literature. Their suggestion to travel to Taiwan for further language study marked a turning point in my life and scholarly career. I am forever grateful to them for their guidance and instruction. Claudia Stokes was also a wonderful source of erudition and insight at Trinity, and my writing and thinking greatly improved under her tutelage. In Taiwan, Hsieh Shu-Wei was an excellent advisor, and I also learned much from Chang Chaoran and Lee Fong-Mao. Their passion for their work and breadth and depth of knowledge continues to amaze and inspire me. During my time at NCCU, Jonathan Pettit was a visiting scholar there. He has been a good friend and an incredible mentor since then, steering me in the right direction on graduate school and scholarly concerns on more than one occasion.

I feel tremendously lucky to have landed at Arizona State in a department and program filled with incredible classmates. Inside and outside class, they have offered insights, encouragement, and laughter. I am grateful to have shared in the graduate experience with all of them and for their camaraderie: Wu Yue, Zhao Luying, Frankie Chik, Wen Zuoting, Xuan Wang-Wolf, Xin Zhaokun, Sun Young Min, Chang Wenbo, Francesco Papani, Liang Shuo, Liu Mi, Lin I-Chin, and Zhang Xiaomeng. To my classmates pursuing research in Daoist studies—Lucas Wolfe, Wu Wei, Tim Swanger, Wu Yang, Jennifer Bussio, Xu Liying, and Pui-See Wong—thank you for teaching me so much. I am grateful to Sam Billing, Li Jiangnan, and Wu Wei for having read and

commented on translations and sections of this dissertation. Sam and I have grown into more than colleagues over many meals and drinks, as we celebrated graduate studies milestones or commiserated about challenges and setbacks. Many thanks to him and his family for being so warm and welcoming to mine.

At ASU, I have had the great fortune to study with excellent scholars, who have been nothing but generous and encouraging. Liu Qian, Joe Cutter, Hoyt Tillman, Young Oh, Chen Huaiyu, Liao Jianling, and Tomoko Shimamura have all helped shape me as a scholar and teacher, and for that I am grateful. I also want to thank others at ASU who I was able to work with in varying capacities: Zhang Xia, Will Hedberg, Robert Tuck, Joanne Tsao, Nina Berman, Isaac Joslin, Shannon Lujan, Elizabeth Grumbach, and George Justice.

I owe much to my dissertation committee members. Nicholas Morrow Williams came to my committee somewhat late, but he has been a generous reader and offered constructive feedback. Stephen West has taught me how to be an attentive reader, sensitive to all the possibilities and meanings of a text. One of my few regrets at ASU is not having taken more courses from him; nevertheless, he was immensely generous with his time and advice during my comprehensive exams, and he has pushed me to expand my research into other periods and issues of Daoist literature. Xiaoqiao Ling is a model reader, and she has offered incisive, meticulous feedback on every part of this dissertation. Her comments have helped to improve these pages tremendously. I could not have asked for a better advisor in Stephen Bokenkamp, a paragon of scholarly rigor and compassion. He has read nearly every word I have written, and my translations bear the marks of his insightful remarks. Always generous with his time, he has a capacity to offer

just the right critique or piece of encouragement, and I always came away from each meeting inspired and energized.

The seeds of this dissertation were planted at the Princeton Workshop on Religious Poetry in December 2016. Many thanks to the organizers Tom Mazanec and Jason Protass for inviting me to participate. Luo Yiyi and I were paired together as co-presenters, and it was her paper on Yu Xin's *buxu* poems that galvanized my interest on the topic and spurred me to dive into the Daoist materials. Since then, we have had a number of conversation on Yu Xin, which have helped shaped the chapter on his *buxu* poems. I thank her for her generosity. I have had the privilege to present parts of this research at several conferences (WBAOS, AAR, MLA, AAS). The wonderful scholars that I have had a chance to interact with at these events, who have offered their comments or support, are too numerous, but I do want to thank a few in particular: Gil Raz, Elena Valussi, Terry Kleeman, David Mozina, Mark Meulenbeld, Christopher Lupke, Anna Shields, and Jack Chen. My dissertation research has been financially supported by the Taiwan Ministry of Education, NCCU's Luo Chia-Luen International Sinology Scholarship, Taiwan's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Initiative, and Taiwan's National Central Library. I thank all of these organizations for their financial support

My parents' love and encouragement has sustained me throughout this long process. I am incredibly thankful to come home to my two "stinkers" —Addison and Corbin—every day. Their smiles and laughter are always a much needed respite from grappling with early Chinese texts. It is without a doubt a truism, but should be stated nevertheless—I could not have done this without Chieh-Yi, my partner, confidant, and anchor. I am forever grateful for her unwavering patience, support, and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION	1
Overview and Guiding Questions	3
Chapter Structure and Literature Review	10
1 THE MUSIC OF THE HEAVENS: FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN THE	
SHANGQING SCRIPTURES	31
Introduction	31
“Pacing the...”	33
The “Ode of the Golden Perfected” and Celestial Verse	43
Conclusion.....	65
2 HYMNS AND MYTHOLOGY: PACING THE VOID IN LINGBAO	
SCRIPTURE AND RITUAL.....	67
Introduction	67
Sources	68
Lingbao Hymns	73
Pacing the Void Mythology	90
Ritual Performance: The Lingbao <i>Zhai</i> 齋 and the <i>Buxu</i> Rite	99
The <i>Buxu</i> Rite in Lu Xiujing’s Transmission Ritual	118
Conclusion.....	129

CHAPTER	Page
3 CRITIQUE AND PROMOTION: YU XIN’S PACING THE VOID STANZAS AND STATE DAOISM IN THE NORTHERN ZHOU	131
Introduction	131
Court Religious Debates and Emperor Wu’s Daoist Inclinations	133
Yu Xin’s “Pacing the Void” Lyrics in Collections and Anthologies	141
The Queen Mother of the West and the Failures of Emperors	147
Rhetoric and Remonstrance	168
Daoist Synthesis	173
Daoist Messianism and a Unified State	185
Conclusion	194
4 RETURNING TO THE VOID: WU YUN’S POETIC PROGRAM OF CULTIVATION AND TRANSCENDENCE	199
Introduction	199
Worldly Preparations, Attitudes, and Moral Actions	204
Bodily Cultivation	221
The Experience of Celestial Ascent	233
Celestial Banquets and Foodstuffs	239
Cosmology	243
Conclusion	255
5 WRITING RITUAL: PACING THE VOID IN TANG POETIC DISCOURSE	260
Introduction	260
Ritual Encounters and Celestial Resonance	261

CHAPTER	Page
Ritual Encounters and Personal Cultivation.....	267
<i>Buxu</i> Sounds on the Wind	278
Conclusion.....	287
CONCLUSION	290
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	295

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Walking the Dao (<i>Xing Dao</i> 行道) in the <i>Jianlu jianwen</i> 金籙簡文	102
<i>Zhai</i> procedures in the <i>Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhaijie weiyi zhujing yaojue</i> 太極真人敷 靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 (CT 532).....	112

INTRODUCTION

Edward Schafer published his pioneering work, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* in 1977, thereby bringing attention to a term of great importance in both the Daoist ritual and Chinese literary traditions. He defined that term, *buxu* 步虛 (Pacing the Void), as “pacing the barren wastes of space, beyond even the stars, where subjective and objective are indistinguishable.”¹ In the work, he explored the ubiquitous use of stellar, lunar, solar, and planetary imagery in Tang poetry. He conceived of the work as a “modest achievement,” one not aimed at any grand, sweeping contributions, but rather as a set of “stepping stones to the now almost unimaginable shore where the imagery of the poets of T'ang will be clearly visible in all its cunning and fantastic workmanship.” Despite his modesty, the work remains foundational and an important reference point for the language and imagery of astronomy in Chinese literature. Nevertheless, very little space was devoted to an exploration of the critical term (*buxu*) that adorned the cover of the book in the title. This is not an indictment of his work, but a recognition, just as he offered, that more remains to be done concerning literary language, tropes, and imagery, in particular those grounded in the esoteric scriptures and ritual practices of early medieval Daoism.

This dissertation takes up that task, focusing on an exploration of the concept of *buxu* 步虛 in the Daoist and the Chinese literary traditions from early medieval China through the Tang Dynasty. First found in Daoist scriptures and ritual hymns in the fourth and fifth centuries, the term was later adopted by secular writers and became associated

¹ Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 1.

with a specific literary form, the “Lyric for Pacing the Void” (*buxu ci* 步虛詞), recognized as a distinct poetic category in the *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集.² The production of *buxu* writings continued throughout the Song, with emperors, such as Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) and Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126) composing their own sets of *buxu ci*,³ and into the Ming dynasty, when several of the princes of the dynastic ruling house took great interest in the poetic form and Daoism in general.⁴ The Tang period, when Daoist writings, teachings, and ritual performance were ubiquitous across society, bolstered by the imperial family’s support and close association with Laozi, offers a wealth of *buxu* materials to consider. As poets both composed *buxu ci* and engaged with Daoist ideas, represented in both texts and ritual performance, Daoist ritual specialists also continued to write new *buxu* hymns during this period.

Spanning centuries, the body of texts with mention of *buxu* or containing *buxu ci* is extensive. A cursory search for the term in almost any digital database of early Chinese texts (e.g. Academia Sinica’s *Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliao ku* 漢籍電子文獻資料庫) will return hundreds of references strewn across a variety of genres and periods. This wealth of Daoist and literary materials concerning *buxu* has been outlined in several early scholarly pieces. Chen Guofu 陳國符 first published his “Dao yue kaolue gao” 道樂考略

² See the *buxu ci* section in the work 78.4a–10a. The *buxu* lyrics of nine different authors are collected there—Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), Yang Guang 楊廣 (569–618) [Emperor Yang of the Sui 隋煬帝 (r. 604–618)], Chen Yu 陳羽 (fl. 806), Gu Kuang 顧況 (ca. 725–820), Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778), Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), Wei Qumou 韋渠牟 (749–801), Jiaoran 皎然 (720–ca. 795), and Gao Pian 高駢 (ca. 821–887). It also includes one piece by Chen Tao 陳陶 (fl. 841) titled “Buxu yin” 步虛引.

³ Their *buxu* stanzas are preserved in the *Jinlu zhai sandong zanyong yi* 金籙齋三洞讚詠儀 (DZ 310).

⁴ Richard Wang, *Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115–137.

稿 in 1963, in which he surveys many of the *buxu* ritual performance references, as well as other instances of *buxu* tunes and music in historical sources.⁵ Kristofer Schipper also considered a range of Daoist sources in his article “A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” coming to the conclusion that “An entire book could, and perhaps should, be written about *buxu*.”⁶ While these two works primarily offered synopses of extant Daoist *buxu* sources, Stephen Bokenkamp’s “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-pao Scriptures” went further in briefly examining the literary source material, focusing the discussion and analysis on the *buxu* lyrics compiled in the *Yuefu shiji*.⁷ Early scholars have long recognized the abundance of material to be explored in considering *buxu*, and this dissertation attempts to address some these materials together, in order to garner a better sense of the concept of *buxu* in both Daoist scripture and literature.

Overview and Guiding Questions

In tackling this project, the challenge at the outset was to zero in on specific works that might offer some insight into the historical imagination of the term and poetic form. Such an effort, of course, was guided by more practical concerns—time and space. But more importantly, the process was shaped by an understanding of what I consider to be watershed moments or pieces, those that reflect fascinating understandings of the term *buxu* and use of the *buxu* lyric. The chapters proceed roughly in chronological order, with

⁵ *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考, New Revised Edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 239–51.

⁶ Kristofer Schipper, “A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” in *Studies of Taoist Rituals and Music of Today*, ed. Tsao Pen-Yeh 曹本冶 and Daniel P. L. Law (Hong Kong: The Society for Ethnomusicological Research, 1989), 110–20.

⁷ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981).

the discussion focused on works from the fifth through the 10th centuries. Part I of the dissertation focuses on early Daoist scriptures. Chapter 1 explores the earliest sources of the term *buxu*, the Shangqing 上清 (Upper Clarity) scriptures, addressing the first mentions of *buxu* and several hymns that have been cited as precursors to later *buxu* hymns. I consider how the *buxu* concept took shape and became associated with other key Daoist ideas, as well as how Shangqing works set the stage for a more expansive definition and understanding developed in the Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) scriptures. Chapter 2 turns to Lingbao Daoist texts, which contain the fullest expression of *buxu* as a concept. Drawing on more recent work in Daoist studies, I examine both revealed scriptures and early ritual manuals to explore Daoist doctrine and mythology surrounding the concept of *buxu*. Within the Lingbao corpus, we find the first appearance of *buxu* ritual hymns and guidelines for their recitation in ritual and personal cultivation practice. I look at how the *buxu* hymns assumed their distinct form and the role they played within ritual complexes as an embodied practice of Lingbao doctrine and mythology.

Part II shifts the focus to *buxu* writings in the literary tradition. Chapters 3 and 4 address the *buxu* poems of two authors who took direct inspiration from the Lingbao *buxu* hymns, imitating their form, as well as the content in certain places. Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), writing at the Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581) court in the late sixth century, produced the first literary *buxu* lyrics, the subject of Chapter 3. His work marked a shift from religious hymns to a literary form that could be employed to express a range of sentiments, arguments, and ideas. In this chapter, I attempt to account for the possible

reasons Yu Xin turned to this Daoist hymnal form. Who was he writing for and under what historical circumstances? How did he engage with Daoist scriptural ideas and employ Daoist language and imagery?

Chapter 4 examines Wu Yun's 吳筠 (d. 778) *buxu* poems written in the mid eighth century, which epitomize the idea of "Pacing the Void" as defined by Schafer above. Wu writes of a celestial journey beyond the outer reaches of the heavens for a final triumphant union with the Dao. Wu's *buxu* poems may have also been quite influential during the Tang. Several other key authors of *buxu* poems, those whose works are cited in the *Yuefu shiji* alongside Wu's, are linked to him through either a shared social circle or through poetic language.⁸ What is Wu's vision of "Pacing the Void" and why might he have written these poems? What connections to Daoist scriptures do the poems exhibit and are they tied to a specific Daoist textual tradition? Wu Yun was a prolific writer, leaving behind a body of writings spanning a wide variety of genres, both poetry and prose. Are the *buxu* poems related to his other work and, if so, how?

While my dissertation remains centered on several key sets of *buxu* hymns and *buxu ci*, I also expand the category of "*buxu* writings" to include not just those poems that carry the explicit title of *buxu*, but also writings that simply reference the term. This serves as the subject of Chapter 5 that concentrates on the use of the *buxu* trope in Tang poetry. By expanding the scope of *buxu* works under consideration, I explore how poets employed the term *buxu* and for what purpose. How did they understand the idea and

⁸ Wei Qumou 韋渠牟, Jiaoran 皎然, and Wu Yun moved in the same social circle as evidenced by a piece of linked verse titled "Ascending Mount Xian to Observe the Stone Goblet of Li, Prime Minister of the Left" 登峴山觀李左相石尊聯句 (*QTS* 788.2b–4a). At the time of this composition, Wei Qumou was writing under his Buddhist title "Beyond the Dust" (*Chenwai* 塵外). On this piece, see De Meyer, "Linked Verse and Linked Faiths," 158–61.

reinterpret it through other intellectual, often more literary frameworks? Some of these pieces reflect an engagement with Daoist ritual performance, whether through direct observation or an imaginative rendering of a *buxu* rite or music. Why were poets drawn to the idea of *buxu*? Were they really interested in Daoist rites or pursuits or were there more personal considerations at play?

Before continuing any further, I should say something about the distinction between the “so-called” religious and literary in *buxu* writings that structures this dissertation. In all of the *buxu* works explored herein, the religious abounds—references to gods, heavenly topography, celestial bureaus, cultivation, ritual, and other aspects associated with religious traditions, practices, and doctrine. The distinction I wish to make, however, is quite simple. Part I deals with *buxu* as a concept found within revealed scripture, as well as hymns meant for ritual performance, be that individual or communal practices. Part II treats *buxu* writings that were never meant for ritual performance and were circulated to a wider secular audience in some form. The distinction is essentially based on the function of the various writings, which I explore in depth in the chapters.⁹ We should note, though, that the shift from scripture/ritual to the literary with Yu Xin in the fifth century was not a definitive break away from the former; Daoist liturgical specialists continued to write *buxu* hymns much later.

⁹ The distinction between ritual hymn or incantation and poetry can be rather blurry, as scholars have shown. For example, we know that some poems of the *Shijing* 詩經 were initially meant for ritualized performance; see Martin Kern, “‘Shi jing’ Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of ‘Chu Ci’ (Thorny Caltrop),” *Early China* 25 (2000): 49–111. Some early *fu* were also likely adapted from demonifugic incantations; on this, see Donald Harper, “Wang Yen-Shou’s Nightmare Poem,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 1 (June 1987): 239–83. However, for reasons which I attempt to make clear in the chapters, the functions of these *buxu* writings are more clear-cut.

In the following chapters, I am not concerned with defining whether *buxu* works qualify as “religious” or “Daoist” poetry.¹⁰ Nor do I deal with Daoist authorial identity, defined by either formal ordination or “belief.” The issue of ordination is an especially problematic question with Wu Yun; as for Yu Xin and many of the Tang poets that composed *buxu* writings, it is nigh impossible to find a conclusive answer to what they may have “believed.” What I am broadly concerned with is how *buxu* writings function rhetorically, how they are situated in a specific social context, and how writers understood the term *buxu*, as well as the lyric form, and associated it with other meanings and ideas.

My aims and arguments are informed by the way *buxu* writings have been treated in the Chinese literary tradition and addressed in contemporary scholarship. While the term *buxu* generally connotes the act of ascending to the heavens, it took on varying layers of meaning throughout history, both in Daoist scriptures and rituals, as well as in literary works. In this dissertation, I explore these understandings, arguing that we cannot simply connect these writings through some general connotation of celestial ascent, nor simply through reference to the term *buxu* or use of the title *buxu ci*. Perhaps that may not appear the most discerning insight, yet when we consider how both premodern compilers have tended to group together disparate *buxu* writings, such as in the *Yuefu shiji*, where Yu Xin’s *buxu* lyrics sit side by side Wu Yun’s, vastly different pieces, together with

¹⁰ On defining religious literature, see Thomas J. Mazanec, “The Invention of Chinese Buddhist Poetry: Poet-Monks in Late Medieval China (c. 760–960 CE),” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2017), 10–19. For discussions of Buddhist poetry, see *ibid.*; Jason Protass, *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way*, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 29 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021); and François Martin, “Buddhism and Literature,” in *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)*, Part 2, eds. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 929–51. For considerations of Daoist poetry, see Paul Kroll, “Daoist Verse and the Quest of the Divine,” in *ibid.*, 953–88.

other verse that was likely written to be matched to music and performed, it becomes clear that these writings have been diminished to their title rather than appreciated for their inherent complexities. One of the essential aims of this dissertation is to explore how these pieces are distinct, to not assume any likeness, but to ask how they differ and why, accounting for their historical and social context. In making sense of this messiness, I do not presume any a priori significance or understanding of the term *buxu*.

Literary scholars, in addressing *buxu* writings, also regularly attempt to situate *buxu ci* within the broader literary tradition, but in problematic ways. Often the endeavor involves general overviews of *buxu* materials, both in Daoist scriptures and literary works.¹¹ Inevitably, the surveys cite, in some shape or form, those works covered in the dissertation chapters that follow, such as Yu Xin's *buxu ci*; however, they rarely delve deeply into the content or context of the writings, which at times, I believe, leads to misguided assessments.¹² Moreover, like premodern compilers, they often assume a likeness between works labeled as *buxu ci* and then selectively highlight lines or couplets that they see as representative of this supposed similarity. Sun Changwu's survey,

¹¹ For similar surveys of *buxu* materials, see Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸, "Hokyoshi kō" 步虛詞考, in *Chūgoku ko dōkyōshi kenkyū* 中國古道教史研究, ed. Yoshikawa Tadao 吉川忠夫 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1992), 363–416. Kazuyuki surveys works up through the Song and, in comparison to other authors, provides more in depth analysis of certain pieces. See also, Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙, *You yu you: Liuchao Sui Tang youxian shi lunji* 憂與遊六朝隋唐遊仙論集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1996), 278–92; Sun Changwu 孫昌武, *Daojiao wenxue shijiang* 道教文學十講 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 165–93; idem., "Youxian yu buxu ci" 遊仙與步虛詞, in *Shige yu shenxian xinyang* 詩歌與神仙信仰 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019), 120–49; idem., *Daojiao yu Tangdai wenxue* 道教與唐代文學 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2017), 263–70; Zhan Shichuang 詹石窗, *Daojiao wenxue shi* 道教文學史 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 112–15; idem., *Daojiao wenhua shiwu yanjiang* 道教文化十五演講 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012), 318–19, 338; Meng Qingyang 盟慶陽, "Wei Jin nanbei chao buxu ci chutan" 魏晉南北朝步虛詞初探, *Shandong xingzheng xueyuan Shandong sheng jingji guanli ganbu xueyuan xuebao* 山東行政學院山東省經濟管理幹部學院學報 5 (Oct. 2005): 126–28.

¹² Zhan Shichuang, in particular, makes a number of curious statements based on an uncritical assessment of Daoist materials. See his *Daojiao wenxue shi*, 112–15.

“Youxian yu buxu ci” 遊仙與步虛詞, which moves from early Daoist materials of the 5th century to Qing poets, does at times seek to differentiate *buxu* pieces, underscoring some of the distinctive language and content found in them; however, his overall assessment of the form is that it is simply a specialized form of *youxian* poetry.¹³ Surveys also often draw connections to other forms of writing, whether within the literary tradition or Daoist materials,¹⁴ which tends to obscure the unique qualities and functions of some *buxu* writings, as I aim to examine here in the dissertation.

From the chapters that follow, I hope to make clear that authors employed both the form and the term *buxu* for different ends. When we begin to explore a range of materials that either employ the term, utilized the *buxu* hymnal form, or elaborated related ideas, we find that Schipper’s definition of *buxu*, cited at the outset, is in need of refinement. Early Shangqing scriptures employ the term *buxu* in a more general sense, as a way to simply indicate ascension to the heavens. The celestial locations to which the adepts travels are situated within the recognizable cosmos, not beyond the stars as Schafer has suggested. Other terms, such as “mounting the emptiness and riding the void” (*chengkong jiaxu* 乘空駕虛) carry similar meanings. In Lingbao scriptures, the term indicates not wandering the vastness of space, but as scaling the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) at the center of Grand Veil Heaven (*Daluo tian* 大羅天)

¹³ Sun Changwu, *Shige yu shenxian xinyang*, 129. Also reflected in Sun Changwu’s *Daojiao yu Tangdai wenxue* 道教與唐代文學, where he discusses Tang *buxu ci* specifically as a subsection of a broader category of literature that deals with “beliefs on divine transcendents” (*shenxian xinyang* 神仙信仰); see especially 267–70. Other scholars offer similar assessments—*buxu* as *shenxian* poetry; Zornika Kirkova, for example, categorizes Yu Xin’s *buxu* poems as “‘roaming into immortality’ poetry in the vein of the southern court poetry” (349); see her *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 344–49.

¹⁴ *Buxu* writings are sometimes categorized as a form of Daoist literature (*Daojiao wenxue* 道教文學); see for example Zhan, *Daojiao wenhua shiwu yanjiang*, 331.

to visit *Yuanshi tianzun*. Again, this definition does not correspond well with Schafer's. Yu Xin takes up the Lingbao hymnal form, but pays little attention to the connotations of the term. Instead, he transforms the content into an amalgamation of allusions that, as I argue in the chapter, was meant as political rhetoric as opposed to the depiction of a heavenly ascent. Perhaps only Wu Yun's vision of *buxu* accords with Schafer's explanation, which is to be expected given his extensive work on Schafer's poems on transcendence. For Wu, the adept, in the celestial journey, exits the cosmos and enters the void beyond before ultimately reuniting with the Dao. In Tang poetry, the term becomes associated more with Daoist ritual and music, rather than an adept's personal practice and experience of roaming the "barren wastes of space." Each chapter, dedicated to these different sets of materials, considers the ways that the definition of *buxu* continued to shift as scriptural authors and literary figures employed it in divergent socio-historical and literary contexts.

Chapter Structure and Literature Review

In chapter 1, I first distinguish between two terms that have been the source of some confusion: *buxu* (Pacing the Void) and *bugang* 步綱 (Pacing the Mainstay or Guideline). *Bugang* indicates a specific ascent to the Northern Dipper, whereas *buxu* serves as an imprecise term traversing the heavens. Several Shangqing scriptures outline *bugang* meditation practices, in which the adept envisions treading stars of the Dipper constellation. The two terms clearly denote different concepts; however, I examine a *bugang* text, the *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* 太上飛行九晨玉經 (CT 428), to ascertain whether any conceptual connections exist between *bugang* and *buxu* practices.

Next, I address a verse titled “Ode of the Golden Perfected” (*Jin zhen zhi shi* 金真之詩), meant to be sung to a “tune for Pacing the Void” (*buxu zhi qu* 步虛之曲), which is recorded in an early Shangqing scripture, the *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 (CT 1334).¹⁵ The content of the ode describes an ascent to the Shangqing heavens, and the ode is a narrative concerning the transmission of an apotropaic talisman known as the Perfected Talismans of the Golden Tiger (*Jinhu zhenfu* 金虎真符). Several scholars have suggested that this ode was the forerunner to later *buxu* hymns in the Lingbao scriptures.¹⁶ On the other hand, Luo Zhengming, who has done the most substantial work on this ode as well other related material, argues that this hymn is not necessarily a *buxu* lyric, rightly recognizing the futility of assigning labels.¹⁷ I agree with his assertion, for it is clear that however we define the characteristics of a *buxu* poem and its parameters, be that through content, title, language, or the like, allows for the placement of certain pieces in neat categories. Furthermore, he suggests that because of

¹⁵ *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 (CT 1334), 5b–7a. Studies of this scripture include Ishii Masako 石井昌子, “Kinko Shinfu, Shinko Gyokukyō Shinfu Kō 《金虎真符》《神虎玉經真符》考,” *Sōka daigaku inbun ronshū* 創價大學人文論集 8 (1995): 3–33; and Pui See Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans: The Translation and Close Reading of the Hidden Text of the Tiger Talismans 洞真太上神虎隱文” (Master’s thesis, University of Vanderbilt University, 2019). Schipper notes it is part of the original Shangqing revelations that date from from 364–375; see his, “A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” in *Studies of Taoist Rituals and Music of Today*, ed. Tsao Pen-Yeh 曹本冶 and Daniel P. L. Law (Hong Kong: The Society for Ethnomusicological Research, 1989), 111.

¹⁶ Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 9–10; Bokenkamp describes the hymn as the “direct antecedent to...the ‘Stanzas for Pacing the Void’ of the Lingbao scriptures. Kristofer Schipper follows Bokenkamp; see his “A Study of Buxu,” 111; Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, vol. 2 (Paris: Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient : Dépositaire, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1984), 183; Luo Zhengming 羅爭鳴, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi” 步虛詞釋義及其源頭與早期型態分析, in *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tian* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 232.

¹⁷ Luo Zhengming, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi,” 236.

the nature of the sources and issues with dating them, we should be less concerned with finding the earliest source of the term or idea. Instead, he attempts to find a range of possible antecedents, what he labels as “preparatory *buxu ci*” (*zhunbei* 準步虛詞).¹⁸ Luo’s sense is accurate—it is simply impossible to determine the earliest reference of the term *buxu* given available sources.

Chapter 1 seeks to reexamine the “Ode of the Golden Perfected,” but my approach diverges in part from Luo’s. Rather than looking for “preparatory *buxu ci*,” I attempt to explore the conceptual field of *buxu* in Shangqing scriptures: the term’s use, its connotations, and its relationship to other concepts and practices. Moreover, I refrain from reference to songs and hymns of later scriptures, a problematic aspect of Luo’s methodology in examining the same material. While we may not be able to determine the earliest reference of *buxu* within Daoist materials or any direct antecedents to the Lingbao *buxu* hymns, the Shangqing scriptures do provide a conceptual ground for later understandings of *buxu*; that is, celestial songs and music originating within the heavens. This thread runs throughout other Daoist materials and is also reflected in Tang poetic works that reference “Pacing the Void.”

Chapter 2 considers the more well-defined understanding of “Pacing the Void” found throughout several early Lingbao Daoism scriptures and ritual texts. The most important of these works likely dates to the latter part of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) and, in its extant version preserved in the *Daozang* 道藏, is titled *Scripture for Pacing the*

¹⁸ Ibid., 232. See also his “Buxu sheng, buxu ci yu bugang tadou—yi *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing wei zhongxin de kaocha*” 步虛聲、步虛詞與步罡躡斗—《太上飛行九晨玉經》為中心的考察, *Xueshu luntan* 學術論壇 5 (2013): 149–53.

Void to Jade Capitoline Mountain from the Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery

(*Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經) (CT 1439).¹⁹

However, the *Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目, written by Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406–477), suggests that this was not the original title.²⁰ Much of the work that has been done on this important Lingbao scripture concerns one of the tasks set out for historians of religion by Jonathan Z. Smith; that is, undertaking “preinterpretive labors,” the necessary dating of scripture and historical contextualization before any further exposition.²¹ Scholars in Daoist studies have been preoccupied with elucidating the origins and history of the scripture and attempting to determine when the scripture was altered and preserved in its

¹⁹ The *buxu* hymns at the center of the scripture may have existed prior to the formation of the scripture proper, as some have suggested. See Kazuyuki, “Hosorashi kō,” 363–387; and Liu Yi 劉屹, “Lun gu lingbao jing 'shengxuan buxu zhang' de yanbian” 論古靈寶經《昇玄步虛章》的演變, in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Weisbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2009), 189–205. The scripture was at least formulated by 437, when Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 notes the scripture in his catalogue of Lingbao scriptures (*Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目). Lu also incorporated the hymns into his rite of transmission, the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (CT 528), written around the same time. The discussion within Daoist studies on the formation of the scripture is extensive; see below.

²⁰ Though the catalogue of 437, along with Lu’s other catalogue presented to the Song Mingdi 宋明帝 (r. 465–472) in 471, are no longer extant, two Dunhuang manuscripts, P. 2256 and P. 2861, preserve the catalogue as it was written in Song Wenming’s 宋文明 (fl. 549–51) *Tongmen lun* 通門論. In Lu’s catalogue, the title of the scripture is noted as *Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章. See the preface to Lu’s catalogue in *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (CT 1032) 4.4a–6a. On the catalogue, see Ōfuchi Ninji, “On Ku Ling-pao Ching,” *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 33–56; Stephen Bokenkamp, “Buddhism, Lu Xiuqing, and the First Daoist Canon,” in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 181–99. Some have suggested that that the present title may have been an attempt to differentiate the *Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章 from another popular Tang scripture known as the *Shengxuan jing* 昇玄經. See for example, Wang Haoyue 王皓月, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiuqing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan* 析經求真：陸修靜與靈寶經關係新探 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 234–38.

²¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Unknown God: Myth in History,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago (Ill.) London: the University of Chicago press, 1982), 88.

present form.²² The general consensus, based upon a meticulous assessment of the various elements that comprise the scripture, is that it likely did not assume its current form until the late Sui or early Tang.²³ Discussions of the scripture regularly involve questions of authorship and perhaps one of the thorniest issues regarding Lingbao scriptures, the question of dividing the Lingbao scriptures into various periods.²⁴ While it is not my aim to add anything significant to these debates, I nevertheless try to account for this scholarship in sketching out the early origins of the *buxu* hymns and rites.

²² Kazuyuki traces the Shangqing elements of the scripture; see his “Hosorashi kō.” For the clearest interpretation of the development of the *Buxu jing*, see Cheng Tsan-Shan 鄭燦山, “Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng” 六朝道經《玉京山步虛經》經文年代考證, *Zhongguo xue yanjiu* 中國學研究 72 (2015): 221–66.

²³ Liu Yi 劉屹, “Lun gu lingbao jing *Shengxuan buxu zhang de yanbian*” 論古靈寶經《昇玄步虛章》的演變, in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter, 189–205 (Weisbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2009); idem., *Liuchao Daojiao gu Lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu* 六朝道教古靈寶經的歷史學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018), 432–48; Cheng, “Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng;” Wang Haoyue 王皓月, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan* 析經求真：陸修靜與靈寶經關係新探 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 234–63; Luo Zhengming, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi,” 220–240.

²⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the scripture’s authorship, see Wang Haoyue, *Xijing qiuzhen*, 226–30 and Liu Yi, “Lun gu lingbao jing *Shengxuan buxu zhang de yanbian*,” 197–98. The issue of “old scriptures” (*jiu jing* 舊經) versus “new scriptures” (*xinjing* 新經) originates with Lu Xiujing’s catalogue (see n. 19 above), in which scriptures are noted as having already been revealed (*yichu* 已出) or yet to be revealed (*weichu* 未出). On this issue, see Liu Yi, *Liuchao Daojiao gu Lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu*, 256–344. Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美 redefined the issue by postulating two alternative divisions, the “Primordial Commencement series” (*yuanshi* 元始系) associated with Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫 and the “Transcendent Duke series” (*xiangong xi* 仙公系) associated with the Celestial Masters; see his *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), 138–88. Kobayashi defines the scripture as part of the “Transcendent Duke series” (see page 84), but many have since rejected this claim. On the *Buxu jing*’s categorization, see especially Wang Chengwen 王承文, “Zhongguo Daojiao buxu yi de qi yuan yu gu Lingbao jing fenlei lunkao” 中古道教步虛儀的起源與古靈寶經分類論考, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 54, no. 4 (2014): 68–90; and Liu Yi, *Liuchao Daojiao gu Lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu*, 432–48. Bokenkamp has been critical of these debates; see his “Scriptures New and Old: Lu Xiujing and Mastery,” in *Xinyang, shijian yu wenhua tiaoshi: Di sijie guoji Hanxue huiyi lunwen ji* 信仰、實踐與文化調適—第四屆國際漢學會會議論文集, eds. Paul Katz 康豹 and Liu Shufen 劉淑芬 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan, 2013), 449–74.

Literary scholars working to survey the development of *buxu* writings or focusing on the various later versions rarely venture into this territory.²⁵

The *buxu* hymns (*buxu yin shishou* 步虛吟十首) contained within the *Buxu jing*, all in pentasyllabic verse, but with differing line lengths and end rhymes, were incorporated into ritual performance, both in ordination rites and large-scale communal rituals (*zhai* 齋). These hymns, several have argued, represent the earliest strata of the scripture itself,²⁶ and in some places in Taiwan, they continue to be performed within ritual complexes today.²⁷ Stephen Bokenkamp early on recognized their significance and provided a full translation and exposition of them, accompanied by a brief discussion of their impact on literary *buxu* compositions.²⁸ In the thesis, Bokenkamp outlines the characteristic features of the *buxu* hymns and raises the issue of Tang dynasty *buxu* lyrics, those preserved in the *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集. The hymns have been cited extensively in

²⁵ Timothy Chan's recent article on depictions of Yujing shan 玉京山 in *buxu* and *youxian* poetry is a promising move in the right direction; however he does rely on problematic scholarship to date the *Buxu jing*. See Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 "Yujing shan chaohui—cong liuchao buxu yi dao chu Tang youxian shi" 玉京山朝會——從六朝步虛儀到初唐遊仙詩, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* no. 72 (Jan. 2021): 1–25. Chan relies on the *Buxu jing* entry in the *The Taoist Canon* by Hans-Hermann Schmidt who dates the scripture to around 400; see Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* 道藏通考 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 219. More recent work in Daoist studies contradicts this (see n. 21 and 22 above). While incredibly accessible and helpful as a general reference work, we must recognize that Schipper and Verellen's work was preliminary, and as such, contains many issues in light of more recent scholarship that continues to build on and revise our understanding of the scriptures and issues therein.

²⁶ See Liu Yi, "Lun gu lingbao jing *Shengxuan buxu zhang de yanbian*," 195–99; and especially Cheng Tsan-Shan, "Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing jingwen niandai kaozheng*," 256 and *passim*.

²⁷ Schipper, "A Study of Buxu," 110; Li Chien-te 李建德 "Taiwan Daojiao zongpai yunyon zhi 'buxu ci' ji qi yihan tanxi" 臺灣道教宗派運用之〈步虛詞〉及其意涵探析, *Zhanghua shifan daxue xuezhì* 彰化師大國文學誌 27 (Dec. 2013): 207–36; Lü Chuikuan 呂錘寬 documents some of the musical notations for *buxu* ritual performance; see his *Taiwan de Daojiao yishi yu yinyue* 台灣的道教儀式與音樂 (Xueyi chubanshe): 195, 203, 226–30, 263, 283–86; John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillian, 1987), 112.

²⁸ Bokenkamp, "The 'Pacing the Void Stanzas' of the Ling-pao Scriptures."

literary scholarship, as they are the model on which Yu Xin and Wu Yun based their *buxu* poems, but as I argue in the chapters that address these authors' respective *buxu* works, the connections to these hymns is tentative at best, for each writer had their own rhetorical aims quite distinct from hymnody and ritual performance. Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸 has explored the connections between the Lingbao hymns and poems found within the *Zhen'gao* 真誥, suggesting that because of their shared content and rhyme patterns, both may be tied an earlier shared source. His astute insight into a possible relationship between the works is noteworthy, but his conclusion, admittedly tentative, is based on unsound understandings of the hymns and the *Buxu jing*, that more recent scholarship has addressed.²⁹

An examination of these early Lingbao Daoist materials reveals two key understandings—one a continuation of Shangqing ideas, one entirely new—which later writers come to associate with *buxu*. First is the perception that *buxu* tunes and music originated in the heavens. The spurious story about Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232) chance encounter with celestial sounds and chanting, which Daoists later transcribed and imitated to compose *buxu* music, suggests that writers were well-acquainted with this idea.³⁰ The idea of celestial music is not exclusive to Shangqing works, but carries over into Lingbao works. The worldly performance of the *buxu* rite, explored in great detail in chapter 2, by Daoist ritual priests was believed to be an imitation of ritual and song performed in the heavens. Second, the ten stanza Lingbao structure became for some the

²⁹ Kazuyuki, “Hosorashi kō,” 392–94.

³⁰ Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔, *Yiyuan* 異苑, 5.9b. I discuss this in more detail in Ch. 4.

ideal form to compose *buxu ci*. But while this was not the predominant form of later *buxu* writings as evidenced by most extant examples in the *Yuefu shiji*,³¹ we can draw a direct connection between the Lingbao hymns and Yu Xin and Wu Yun’s pieces. As I discuss in their respective chapters, both authors were likely aware of the *Buxu jing* and took inspiration from this work. In the following chapters, I call attention to such connections to Daoist materials, while also demonstrating the unique qualities of later *buxu* materials. In the third chapter, I address Yu Xin’s set of “Daoshi *buxu ci*” 道士步虛詞, the earliest extant *buxu* lyrics found outside of the Daoist canon. The stanzas are also the first pieces recorded in the *Yuefu shiji* in the *buxu* lyric category and have been cited extensively in other later collections.³² Yu Xin adopted the form of the Lingbao Daoist hymns, but wove a dense fabric of allusions and Daoist imagery into a complex piece that scholars, in my mind, have yet to examine sufficiently.³³ Though he was, to some extent, familiar with ritual practices and Daoist scriptures, his composition, in terms of content and aim, differs remarkably from the earlier hymns, shaped as it was by literary conventions and specific socio-historical concerns.

Scholars focusing on Yu Xin and his oeuvre are right to group his *buxu* poems with other works from his time in the north, for they clearly address circumstances of the

³¹ Among those recorded in the *Yuefu shiji*, only Yu Xin’s and Wu Yun’s poems appear to imitate the earlier Lingbao model of ten stanzas. However, there may have been other sets that took the Lingbao hymns as a model. For example, Bai Juyi (772–846) has one poem, whose title indicates “Sending Off Master of Refinement Xiao with Ten *buxu ci*” 送蕭煉師步虛詞十首; see *QTS* 440.17b.

³² *Yuefu shiji*, 78.4b–5b.

³³ I am aware of only one article that has been devoted exclusively to the pieces. See Chen Wenting 陳文婷, “Yu Xin ‘Daoshi *buxu ci* shishou’ Zhong de liuchao Daojiao gu Lingbao jing sixiang” 庾信《道士步虛詞十首》中的六朝道教故靈寶經思想, *Zhongguo Daojiao* 3 (2019): 16–21. This article, however, presents a number of problematic assertions (see below). The vast majority of the scholarship cites Yu Xin’s pieces in the context of broader discussions, most often related to *youxian* poetry.

Northern Zhou. Some, like Li Guoxi 李國熙 or Hu Zhongshan 胡中山, tend to interpret Yu Xin's writing of such material during his exile as a kind of therapeutic means employed in response to his dissatisfaction with real world circumstances and the pain of being cut off from his native place in the south.³⁴ Such an analysis proceeds from a well-formed caricature of the poet, that is, as one overwhelmed by grief and a longing to return to the south.³⁵ The assumption also seems to be that Yu Xin, as a good literati gentleman, would never have engaged or "believed" in such debased pursuits as Daoist ritual; he was simply adapting to the surrounding environment and utilizing his literary skills to his advantage.³⁶ But "true" belief is a moot question and calculating Yu Xin's frame of mind is merely speculative. The question of how he was employing language and allusion and possibly to what end drives my analysis of his *buxu* poems. In this, I find that Yu's *buxu* poems were part of broader discussions about the role of religion and Daoism in the formation of the state.

Several scholars have drawn connections between Yu Xin's *buxu* poems and other works more commonly cited as *youxian* poetry. Kirkova's discussion of Yu Xin's *buxu* poems is emblematic of this trend.³⁷ She presents a helpful polythetic definition of

³⁴ Li Guoxi 李國熙, *Yu Xin houqi wenxue zhong xiangguan zhi si yanjiu* 庾信後期文學中鄉關之思研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe yinhang, 1994), 327–28; Hu Zhongshan 胡中山, "Yu Xin qiren ji qi xiandao shige" 庾信其人及其仙道詩歌, *Xuzhou shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 徐州師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 34, no. 6 (Nov. 2008): 7–11.

³⁵ On this depiction of Yu Xin, see Luo Yiyi, "Yu Xin (513–581 CE) and the Sixth-Century Literary World," (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2019), 1–15.

³⁶ In discussing some of Li Bai's work, Paul Kroll has noted similar problematic assumptions for the famed poet; see his "Li Po's Transcendent Diction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1986): 99–117.

³⁷ See for example, Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 344–49.

youxian poetry in her book *Roaming into the Beyond*, with exhaustive examples that demonstrate the features of the genre—allusions to transcendent stories from various collections (e.g. *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳), vivid descriptions of celestial realms (e.g. Mount Kunlun 崑崙 or Penglai 蓬萊), the appearance of well-known immortals or gods/goddesses (e.g. Xiwang mu 西王母, Wang Ziqiao 王子喬, or Master Redpine 赤松子). However, she treats Yu Xin’s *buxu* poems as a mere extension of the *youxian* genre. As I read it, she draws the connection due to the poems’ substantial mention of figures of the *Shenxian zhuan*, a common repository of *youxian* poetic allusion. Yet despite the parallels to *youxian* verse, we need to also treat Yu’s *buxu* poems on their own terms. When we begin to delve more deeply into the web of allusions within the poems, we discover that the poems go far beyond the standard elements of *youxian* verse Kirkova describes. As I argue in this chapter, Yu’s synthesis of *Shenxian zhuan* and *Laozi* references into the Lingbao *buxu* hymn form served as both critical argument against the ruler’s pursuit of immortality, as well as support for state Daoist institutions. Several scholars have pointed to Yu Xin’s critical stance towards such pursuits, often citing the more clear references of critique within the poems.³⁸ However, I attempt to show that this attitude runs deeper throughout the work, where Yu Xin relies on more subtle uses of language and allusion to bolster his message. Moreover, I connect this to another aim of

³⁸ Fan Xin 樊昕, “Yu Xin ‘Buxu ci’ de zongjiao yuanyuan ji qi wenxue tedian” 庾信《步虛詞》的宗教淵源及其文學特點, *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxue yuan xuebao* 南京師範大學文學院學報 no. 2 (June 2007): 14–17; Wang Zhiqing 王志清, “Lun Yu Xin ‘Daoshi buxu ci’ de daoqu yuanyuan yu wenrenhua tedian” 論“道士步虛詞”的盜道曲淵源與文人化特點, *Shanxi shifanda xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 山西師範大學報 34, no. 3 (May 2007): 54–57.

the poems—the propagation of a state-sanctioned form of Daoism with Lingbao doctrine and ritual at the center.

While many focus on the *youxian* elements of poems, few have addressed the significance of Lingbao scriptural references within them, those that are so critical for an understanding of the poems. Chen Wenting 陳文婷 brings attention to the importance of Lingbao scriptures and ideas in Yu Xin’s *buxu* poems.³⁹ She notes, in particular, the centrality of the Lingbao scripture, the *Wupian zhenwen* 五篇真文 (CT 22), which promises transcendence to holders of the text and the Perfected Writs (*zhenwen* 真文), writings that originate in the formation of the cosmos. However, I find several issues with the analysis. First, she stretches the interpretation of various lines, reading Daoist ideas into phrases and couplets with little evidence. Moreover, where she claims some resemblance between the Lingbao hymns and Yu’s poems, the connections are unlikely. The final conclusion of the article, that Yu’s poems could have been used in ritual as a hymn of prayer, is not tenable at all. As I aim to demonstrate, beyond the title and form of the *buxu* hymn, Lingbao ritual is inconsequential to the poems.⁴⁰ Chen is certainly correct in highlighting the notion of kalpas (*jie* 劫) in the poems, noting that possession of the writs guaranteed salvation and an ascent into transcendence at the end of the kalpa cycle.

³⁹ Chen Wenting 陳文婷, “Yu Xin ‘Daoshi buxu ci shishou’ Zhong de liuchao Daojiao gu Lingbao jing sixiang” 庾信《道士步虛詞十首》中的六朝道教故靈寶經思想, *Zhongguo Daojiao* 3 (2019): 16–21. Other authors briefly discuss the Lingbao scriptural references; see Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse*, 344–49; Luo “Yu Xin (513–581 CE) and the Sixth-Century Literary World,” 302–15; Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 “Yujing shan chaohui,” 8–13.

⁴⁰ This is contrary to several scholars’ suggestions. See for example, Lee Fong-mao, *You yu you*, 287–89; Fan Xin 樊昕, “Yu Xin ‘Buxu ci’ de zongjiao yuanyuan ji qi wenxue tedian,” 14–17; Luo Yiyi, “Yu Xin (513–581 CE) and the Sixth-Century Literary World,” 302–15.

The question remains though why Yu Xin may have chosen such a complex of ideas for exploration in these particular poems. I attempt to build on the insightful parts of her analysis and offer an answer, arguing that the associations and images of the Lingbao Perfected Writs functioned as a means to portray the emperor as a messianic figure.

Yu Xin's efforts were intimately tied to the historical circumstances of the Northern Zhou.⁴¹ As I lay out in the chapter, Yu Xin's *buxu* poems should be read in the context of the religious court debates of the time, in which Emperor Wu 周武帝 (r. 561–578) [Yuwen Yong 宇文邕 (543–578)] sought the religious and ideological foundation for a new regime that could serve to unite all of China. Yu Xin's choice of the Lingbao *buxu* form revolved around the court's deep interest in Lingbao Daoism. The poems, while discounting the aimless pursuit of transcendence and longevity, hold up a vision of state Daoism that could serve as a source of ruling authority and ritual stability. Yu Xin turned to the Lingbao scriptures, in particular the *Wupian zhenwen*, and other ideas concerning Daoist apocalyptic thought, to craft a compelling argument for the emperor, in which he painted the ruler as the savior of the state, ready to lead a unified China out of the period of division. In doing so, Yu Xin's *buxu* poems set the stage for other rhetorical uses of the form.

Chapter 4 delves into Wu Yun's set of *buxu* poems, reexamining them in light of more recent scholarship on this key Daoist figure of the Tang dynasty, as well as other significant works of his that address the pursuit of transcendence. Edward Schafer

⁴¹ Few have addressed this, though there are notable exceptions; see for example Wang Zhiqing, "Lun Yu Xin 'Daoshi buxu ci' de daoqu yuanyuan yu wenrenhua tedian," and Luo Yiyi, "Yu Xin (513–581 CE) and the Sixth-Century Literary World," 258–67; and Luo Yiyi, "Literary Responses to Religious Debates at the Northern Zhou Court," *Early Medieval China* 26 (2020): 67–87.

published an early translation of the poems, but impressive as his work is for uncovering, without the use of modern databases, some of the more abstruse references in the poetic series, the article offers no substantial interpretation of the materials.⁴² Instead, Schafer opts for “translations of passages culled from contemporary or near contemporary sources, leaving the reader free to interpret them as he will,” along with a brief outline of Wu Yun’s works, and quirky “mock heroic couplets.”⁴³ Aside from the translations, the most instructive section of the article is where Schafer attempts to differentiate the qualities of Wu Yun’s series from other writers’ *buxu* pieces. He finds that “[o]n the average then, ‘Pacing the Void’ cantos not written by Wu Yun are simpler in conception than his; they are more obviously liturgical or alchemical, and are directed towards priestly demonstrations and exhibitions—or else they are little more than rhymed versions of ancient fairy tales...Wu Yun’s poems are more private, more ecstatic, even to the point of incredibility and extravagance.”⁴⁴ Though he rightly notes, shortly thereafter, the central place of the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 and Shangqing cosmology in Wu Yun’s poems, Schafer leaves much to be explored. Wu’s *buxu* poems are in need of reconsideration for several reasons. First, Schafer’s translations of them, admirable though they are for bringing attention to and elucidating significant aspects of the fascinating poems, especially notable at the time they were written, fall short in placing the works in the context of Tang Daoism, Shangqing teachings, and Wu Yun’s own

⁴² Edward H Schafer, “Wu Yun’s Cantos on ‘Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (December 1981): 377–415.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 393.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 392.

works. In addition, he also addressed Wu's *youxian shi* in his article, "Wu Yun's 吳筠 Stanzas on 'Saunters in Sylphdom' 遊仙詩;" however, in the article, he relies on the *QTS* edition of the *youxian* series, which distorts the order of the poems and leads to several misunderstandings.⁴⁵ If we follow the order of the poems found in the *Daozang* edition and compare them with the *buxu* poems, a much clearer framework emerges, one that demonstrates the connections between almost all of Wu's significant works on transcendence.

Since Schafer's articles, scholars have continued to cite Wu Yun's *buxu* poems, but they rarely go into any depth, and, I would suggest, have contributed little to our understanding of the pieces in terms of both Wu as Daoist and writer or for *buxu ci* as a form or genre. Other scholarship, like Mugitani Kunio's 麥谷邦夫 recent piece that focuses on the life and literary works of Wu, relies on Schafer's earlier scholarship to a significant degree. Mugitani includes a brief discussion of Wu's *buxu* pieces, in which he highlights some of the more unique aspects of the poems, such as the focus on bodily cultivation.⁴⁶ He suggests that the poems reflect Wu's thinking on aspects of transcendence and the methods necessary to achieve it, as well as his commitment to a path of cultivation. This is undoubtedly true, but as I explore in the chapter, we can learn a great deal by turning to Wu's writings and other Daoist works to elucidate these aspects of the *buxu* poems. I disagree with Mugitani's contention that Wu wrote them to erase the

⁴⁵ Edward H. Schafer, "Wu Yun's 吳筠 Stanzas on 'Saunters in Sylphdom' 遊仙詩," *Monumenta Serica* 35 (83 1981): 309–45. This was first noted by Jan De Meyer in his book *Wu Yun's Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xi–xii [hereafter *WYW*].

⁴⁶ Mugitani Kunio "Wu Yun de shengping, sixiang ji wenxue" 吳筠的生平、思想及文學, in *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 70–99.

Buddhist content of the Lingbao hymns. Nevertheless, his attention to what may have motivated Wu to compose the poems is an important question that I consider in the chapter.

There are, though, several notable exceptions to the more general treatment of Wu Yun's work. Yan Jinxiong includes a discussion of Wu Yun and his *buxu ci* in a lengthy section on Wu Yun.⁴⁷ Yet, Yan's chapter is indicative of several tendencies in addressing Wu's *buxu* poems. First, scholars like Yan or Schafer regularly treat his *youxian* and *buxu* pieces together,⁴⁸ but few look at the broader connections to his body of work. In this chapter, I read the *buxu* poems in conjunction with his other writings, the *youxian* poems, as well as his "Dengzhen fu" 登真賦, the *Shenxian kexue lun* 神仙可學論, and the *Xuangang lun* 玄綱論. Second, many like Yan or Mugitani attempt to tie the poems more generally to other *youxian* or *buxu* works, which again misses the foundational importance that his own work or even other Daoist writings play in their composition.

To date, the most comprehensive work on Wu Yun's life and works is Jan de Meyer's book, *Wu Yun's Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master*, which pieces together poetry, anecdotes, fictional accounts, biography, dynastic histories, and many of Wu's writings.⁴⁹ Surprisingly, however, he leaves out a more thorough

⁴⁷ Yan Jinxiong 顏進雄, *Tangdai youxian shi yanjiu* 唐代遊仙詩研究 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1996), 225–47.

⁴⁸ We should note that Yan Jinxiong sees them as quite different, see *ibid.*, 243–44.

⁴⁹ De Meyer also has several articles concerning aspects of Wu Yun's life and writings. See his "A Daoist Master's Justification of Reclusion: Wu Yun's Poems on 'Investigating the Past,'" *Sanjiao wenxian: Matériaux pour l'étude de la religion chinoise* 2 (1998): 9–40; "Mountainhopping: The Life of Wu Yun," *Tang Studies* 17 (1999): 171–211; and "Linked Verse and Linked Faiths: An Inquiry into the Social Circle of an Eminent Tang Dynasty Taoist Master," in *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*, ed. Jan A.M. de Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 148–83.

consideration of the *buxu* poems in the lengthy study.⁵⁰ De Meyer describes Wu's transcendence poetry as "those writings that have been shown to betray the clearest influence of Shangqing mysticism."⁵¹ He clearly recognizes their importance and notes in the introduction:

A critical comparison of the different schemes of mystical ascent as found in the 'Wandering Immortal' poems, the 'Songs on Pacing the Void' and the hitherto unstudied 'Rhapsody on the Ascent to Perfection (Dengzhen fu 登真賦), which is highly akin in language and imagery to the 'Songs on Pacing the Void,' combined with a more profound analysis of the relevant data introduced in the pages to come, demands to be undertaken. Even if such an investigation were not to yield a single, consistent scenario transcending the boundaries of the individual works, it would nonetheless considerably enrich our knowledge of Tang dynasty Daoist mysticism.⁵²

De Meyer has since written that he wanted to focus on the bulk of works that, since Schafer's contributions, had gone unaddressed, and so chose to leave the transcendence poetry aside.⁵³ My sense though is that De Meyer sets aside these poems because they do not correspond to the broader argument that he seeks to make in the book, one concerning Wu Yun's Daoist identity, his connections to Celestial Master (*Tianshi* 天師) Daoism and the fact that he was never officially ordained as a Shangqing Daoist. The book is impressive for its depth and the scope of materials surveyed, and this chapter is indebted

⁵⁰ De Meyer does not deny the poetry's importance, nor is he blind to the connections between all of Wu Yun's work, he simply does not devote significant space to addressing them. See especially his comments in *WYW*, 421. In his discussions of Wu's various works, he notes the overlap between poetry and prose writings at points throughout the book. In my examination of the poems, I try to cite where he notes aspects of the *buxu* poems.

⁵¹ De Meyer, *WYW*, XI.

⁵² *Ibid.*, XII.

⁵³ Jan De Meyer, "Review of Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages. Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiie siècle*," *T'oung Pao* 108 (2022): 544.

to his work, but in not attending to the transcendence poetry in any great detail, De Meyer leaves a critical aspect of Wu's writing untouched. I read the poetry as a creative expression of Wu's system of thought, crafted to entice readers to the brilliant possibilities of transcendent pursuit and existence. In my examination of the poems, I consider them in light of De Meyer's astute discussions on Wu's prose works, though my readings and translations of certain passages differ from his in significant ways at times.

Olivier Boutonnet's book, the most recent work on Wu Yun's life and writings, has been a welcome addition to scholarship on this important Daoist figure.⁵⁴ He traces the broader outlines of poetry that touches on celestial journeys, situating Wu Yun's work in the context of such a tradition. In contrast with De Meyer, Boutonnet draws our attention back to Wu's Shangqing leanings, examining his *buxu* poems in concert with his other poems on transcendence, the *youxian* series and the "Dengzhen fu," and more significantly early Shangqing works. Moreover, he pushes back against certain interpretations put forth by Schafer.⁵⁵ His characterization of Wu as an ordained Shangqing priest has recently drawn criticism from De Meyer, who remains adamant that Wu was not formally invested with such authority.⁵⁶ Based on historical materials, it seems evident that Wu was never fully ordained into Shangqing texts and practices. But

⁵⁴ Olivier Boutonnet, *Le char de nuages: érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du VIII^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2021) (Kindle edition).

⁵⁵ Schafer describes the two sets of poems (i.e. *buxu* and *youxian*) in the following manner: "In both visions, the initiate becomes, in effect a space pilot—but not one who follows a definable flight plan, or travels measurable distances. His excursions are shaped by literary imagery, often dazzling, which gives a vivid impression of incredible galactic adventures. It is verbal magic, intended to transport the reader into realms which his own feeble imagination can hardly adumbrate." See his Schafer, "Wu Yun's 吳筠 Stanzas on 'Saunters in Sylphdom,'" 345. For Boutonnet's criticism see, *Le Char de nuages*, 305–06.

⁵⁶ Jan De Meyer, "Review of Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages*," 544–48.

based on a reading of his poems on transcendence, it is hard to deny that he did not have some understanding of the cultivation practices ostensibly reserved for the highest levels of ordination. Numerous Daoist works from the Tang detail the varying levels of ordination,⁵⁷ with each correlated with a body of knowledge and practice (texts, talismans, rituals, etc.) to be passed to disciples upon obtaining each rank. Wu Yun offers, I think, an excellent example of how prescriptive ordination methods may have had less normative authority than we tend to ascribe to them. Modern scholars pay much attention to schools, sects, and scriptural traditions, but such considerations seem to have been less important during the Tang, as Daoist knowledge circulated among communities of practitioners and interested literati outside of formal initiation circles. The poems offer a great deal of insight into Wu Yun's Daoist leanings and potentially suggest a range of Shangqing texts to which he might have had access.

While my exploration of the *buxu* poems coincides with Boutonnet's foregrounding of Shangqing works and Wu's other writings on transcendence,⁵⁸ I do not understand them as significant for cultivation practice itself or renditions of personal visions of transcendence. Furthermore, I believe Boutonnet's analysis places an inordinate emphasis on Shangqing works in reading the poems and not enough on the

⁵⁷ A number of Daoist texts outline the various ranks of ordination; for a list of these works and a sound introduction to the issue of Daoist ordination see, Charles Benn, "Daoist Ordinations and *Zhai* Rituals in Medieval China," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 322–337. For scholarship on Tang Daoist ordinations, see Kristofer Schipper, "Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, eds. Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Polz, and Hans Hermann-Schmidt (Würzburg: Köningshausen + Neumann, 1985), 127–48; and Lü Pengzhi, "Ordination Ranks in Medieval Daoism and the Classification of Daoist Rituals," in *Affiliation and Transmission in Daoist: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012): 81–107.

⁵⁸ To the best of my knowledge, he is the only author that explores the "Dengzhen fu" in concert with these other two series of poems. Schafer did recognize the relationship between the *fu* and the *buxu* poems; see his "Wu Yun's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void,'" 386.

relationship to Wu's own corpus of writings.⁵⁹ When read alongside his other works, the *buxu* poems should be seen as part of a much broader religio-intellectual project to promote the pursuit of transcendence and advance Daoism among literati. They are not private as several scholars have suggested,⁶⁰ but one form of Wu's ambitious efforts to make Daoist cultivation legible to a wider audience. While my understanding of the poems is certainly informed by much of this earlier work, as with Yu Xin's *buxu* poems, I aim to offer a new reading of Wu's poetic works.

Compared with Wu Yun's *buxu* pieces, other Tang *buxu* poems have received much less scholarly consideration. Some of the pieces are cited in general overviews, which, more often than not, simply note that there were number of authors, some of them Daoists, that were composing *buxu ci*. But this lack of attention is likely warranted by the fact that the Tang *buxu ci* collected in the *Yuefu shiji* prevent us from drawing any meaningful conclusions about the poetic form. The poems display such disparate features—regulated/unregulated prosody, line lengths, number of verses—that it is impossible to glean an idea of what poets conceived of as representative of the form; many appear to have merely adopted the title of *buxu ci* as marker of general connotations of Daoist ideas or transcendence. The poems exhibit little connection to either the Lingbao hymns or Daoist scriptures, which stand at the forefront of Yu Xin's and Wu Yun's pieces; rather, they appear to coincide with *youxian* poems in their imagery,

⁵⁹ For example, see Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages*, 309–311 in which he discusses the absorption of sun/moon essences and related Shangqing texts, such as the *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經 (CT 33), the *Dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi ri yue huanggua jue* 洞真太上八素真經服食日月黃掛訣 (CT 1323), or the *Dongzhen shangqing qingyao zishu jing'gen zhongjing* 洞真上清清藥紫書金根中經 (CT 1315).

⁶⁰ Schafer, "Wu Yun's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void,'" 392; Yan Jinxiong, *Tangdai youxian shi yanjiu*, 246–47; and Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages*, 303–04.

tropes, and figures and are concerned more with terrestrial ritual.⁶¹ In light of these considerations, chapter five turns to examine *buxu* writings beyond the *Yuefu shiji*.

In Chapter 5, we pan out to explore how Daoist ritual performance influenced the literary culture at large. The pieces examined in this chapter are not titled “Lyrics for Pacing the Void,” but employ the term *buxu* in various ways to express a range of sentiments and ideas. Sun Changwu’s survey of *buxu* cites several of these poems that comment on ritual performance, referred to as *buxu*, but he offers little substantial discussion.⁶² Cheng Tsan-Shan has studied some of these later *buxu* pieces, but his chapter is largely devoted to early Daoist materials on which he has written more extensively.⁶³ Two articles have helped to formulate the questions and issues of this chapter. Li Cheng 李程 suggests that *buxu ci* became more mundane (*fansu* 凡俗), while writers demonstrated greater artistic skill in terms of their expression and craft.⁶⁴ I attempt to elucidate some of the greater complexity found within these Tang *buxu*

⁶¹ Schafer, “Wu Yun’s Cantos,” 389–90. Schafer notes the abundance of inner alchemy language as a unique quality of Wei Qumou’s poems. Two articles examine the *buxu* lyrics of specific authors. Harry Kaplan briefly explores Xu Xuan’s 徐鉉 (916–991) five lyrics in his “Lyrics on Pacing the Void,” *Phi Theta Papers* (Berkeley, CA) 14 (1977): 51–60. In a more recent article Luo Zhengming 羅爭鳴 attends to Wei Qumou’s 韋渠牟 (749–801) series of nineteen *buxu* lyrics preserved in the *Yuefu shiji*; see his “Wei Qumou ji qi ‘Xin buxu ci’ shijiu shou kaolun” 韋渠牟及其十九首考論, *Tangdai wenxue yanjiu* 唐代文學研究 19 (June 2020): 58–71. The connections between the *buxu* lyrics of these two authors and Wu Yun’s pieces are deserving of further study; see note 7 above.

⁶² Sun Changwu, *Shige yu shenxian xinyang*, 135–40.

⁶³ Cheng Tsan-Shan 鄭燦山 “Liuchao Daojiao buxu ci de yuanxin ji qi nizuo: xinyang yu wenxue zhi duibi” 六朝道教步虛詞的原型及其擬作：信仰與文學之對比, in *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 241–260. I take issue with his emphasis on “imitation” (*nizuo* 擬作) in the article. Through the Tang, only Yu Xin and Wu Yun imitate the form of the early Lingbao hymns, but in terms of content, they diverge substantially. As noted above, other *buxu ci* follow different forms and abandon any semblance of imitation.

⁶⁴ Li Cheng 李程, “Tangdai wenren de buxu ci chuanguo” 唐代文人的步虛詞創作, *Wuhan daxue xuebao* (*renwen kexue ban*) 武漢大學學報 (人文科學版) 66, no. 6 (Nov. 2013): 114–18.

writings. For example, my understanding diverges from Li Cheng's in part, where I find a number of writers expressing their own personal interests and ambitions for transcendence. Their experiences of Daoist ritual or music, often conveyed with a brief reference to "Pacing the Void," sparks reflection on their condition and mundane status. The weight of the literary tradition, however, does prompt them to express such concerns in characteristic fashion as they turn to more familiar tropes and ideas. Han Wentao and Ding Fang have provided the most extensive discussion of Tang *buxu* materials.⁶⁵ Like Li, they recognize the ubiquity of Daoist ritual and music during the Tang as one of the reasons for increased interest in writing *buxu ci* and commenting on ritual Daoist activities. Han and Ding provide an excellent overview of some of the issues at stake—observation of ritual and music, authorial identities, and some of the changes in the *buxu ci* form during the Tang. My chapter builds on this to try and understand how poets turned to well-established and more familiar literary tropes and images as they commented on experiences of Daoist ritual and music. In doing so, I examine some of the poems raised by Han and Ding in more, as well as others, in an attempt to clarify how *buxu* language became entrenched in the poetic discourse.

⁶⁵ Han Wentao 韓文濤 and Ding Fang 丁放, "Lun *buxu* yu Tangshi" 論步虛與唐詩, *Wenzhang, wenben yu wenxin—gudai wenxue lilun yanjiu* 文章、文本與溫馨—古代文學理論研究 44 (2017): 317–43.

CHAPTER 1

THE MUSIC OF THE HEAVENS:

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN THE SHANGQING SCRIPTURES

Introduction

The term *buxu* 步虛, can be found across a wide range of Daoist scriptures that emerged in the 4th and 5th centuries, belonging to both the Shangqing 上清 (Upper Clarity) and Lingbao 靈寶 (Numinous Treasure) scriptural traditions, though it was in the latter corpus that the term and its connotations come to take on an even greater significance in both the teachings and ritual practices therein.¹ This chapter considers several key instances of the concept in Shangqing works in an attempt to highlight some principal understandings and associations of the term. I focus specifically on early Shangqing scriptures in order to better understand the conceptual foundation of *buxu* in this corpus, outside of its more specific definitions in the Lingbao scriptures, the subject of the following chapter. First, in differentiating the Shangqing practice of *bugang* 步綱 or 步罡 (pacing the mainstay or pacing the guideline) and *buxu*, I examine stanzas found within the *Jade Scripture for Flying and Traversing the Nine Asterisms of the Most High* (*Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* 太上飛行九晨玉經) (CT 428) [hereafter *Jiuchen yujing*], which have sparked some debate over their relationship to later *buxu* practices

¹ Luo Zhengming 羅爭鳴 cites two instances of the term or related ideas in Buddhist scriptures, one in *Foshuo pumen pin jing* 佛說普門品經 from the Western Jin 西晉 (266–316) and in Sheng Jian's 聖堅 translation of the *Gandhavyūha Sūtra* 羅摩伽經 from the Western Qin 西秦 (385–431). The latter text and its usage of the term, he notes, demonstrates a wider familiarity with the concept at a time when the Daoist *buxu* rite had already matured. This issue certainly deserves further consideration. See his “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi” 步虛詞釋義及其源頭與早期型態分析, in *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 228–29.

and hymns. I argue that these verses, intoned over the course of a visualized ascent to the Dipper, contain key ideas found within later Lingbao understandings of *buxu*, and thus should not be overlooked because of their connection to *bugang* practices. Second, I address a hymn, titled “Ode of the Golden Perfected” (*jinzhen zhi shi* 金真之詩) said to have been sung by celestial beings to a “tune for Pacing the Void” (*buxu zhi qu* 步虛之曲), that some have suggested was the forerunner of the Lingbao *buxu* verses.² In my exploration of these materials, I ask: How is the term *buxu* being used? What are its connotations? How is it related to other terms, ideas, and practices? Such questions allow us to see connections between diverse sources, which after all are using the same term. In casting a wider net, I look at several other related works—the *Hidden Writings of Jade Clarity* (*Yuqing yinshu* 玉清隱書) and the *Esoteric Biography of Emperor of the Han* (*Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳) (CT 292)—to elucidate several principles that were taken up in the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas and other later *buxu* pieces.³

² The hymn is preserved in the *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 (CT 1334), 5b–7a. Stephen R. Bokenkamp first raised the issue of this hymn in his, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures” (MA Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 9–10; Bokenkamp describes the hymn as the “direct antecedent to...the ‘Stanzas for Pacing the Void’ of the Lingbao scriptures. See also Kristofer Schipper, “A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance,” in *Studies of Taoist Rituals and Music of Today*, ed. Tsao Pen-Yeh 曹本冶 and Daniel P. L. Law (Hong Kong: The Society for Ethnomusicological Research, 1989), 111; Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, vol. 2 (Paris: Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient : Dépositaire, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1984), 183; Luo Zhengming, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi,” 232.

³ The *Yuqing yinshu* was originally one work, but has been split into four in the *Daozang* 道藏: *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經 (CT 1355); *Shangqing taishang miemo yudi shenhui yuqing yinshu* 上清高上滅魔玉帝神慧玉清隱書 (CT 1356); *Shangqing gaoshang miemo dongjing jinyuan yuqing yinshu* 上清高上滅魔洞景金元玉清隱書經 (CT 1357); and *Shangqing gaoshang jinyuan yuzhang yuqing yinshu* 上清高上金元羽章玉清隱書經 (CT 1358).

From the examination of these key sources, alongside other related songs and hymns, I find that the term *buxu* was part of a broader constellation of ideas associated with ascending to the heavens and stars, which entailed intricate procedures of visualization, actualization, and the externalization of corporeal spirits. *Buxu* seems not to have denoted any singular practice in Shangqing sources; rather it indicated, in a general sense, an ascent to the Shangqing heavens that was predicated upon personal cultivation practices. Once undertaken and practiced for a lengthy period of the time, the methods allowed the adept to enjoy longevity and return to the void. Expressions of such celestial voyages and practices were expressed in poetic meter, in lyrics and songs conveyed through divine communication and intended for the training of committed adepts. The songs and hymns were accompanied by the transmission of talismans and cultivation methods that would aid in “Pacing the Void”—ascending to the heavens and merging with the Dao. The language, imagery, and concepts used to express these ideas in Shangqing scriptures serve as the foundation for the fuller expression of *buxu* in the Lingbao scriptures, but also as a fount of inspiration for other writers composing *buxu* related writings in the Tang, in particular Wu Yun.⁴

“Pacing the...”

Before exploring early Shangqing usages of the term *buxu* in more detail, it is necessary to address its relationship to another term, *bugang*.⁵ In early Shangqing texts,

⁴ I address these connections in more depth in chapters 4 and 5.

⁵ Luo Zhengming lays out the issue of *buxu* versus *bugang* nicely in his “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi” 229–32. The discussion that follows draws on his work.

the latter, closely related to the Steps of Yu (*Yubu* 禹步), which finds traces in works discovered at Mawangdui, primarily denotes a Daoist cultivation practice dealing with the Northern Dipper.⁶ The phrase used with some frequency in Daoist texts, *bugang tadou* 步罡踏斗 (Pacing the Guideline and Treading the Dipper), more clearly demonstrates the practice's association with the Dipper.⁷ *Bugang* practice involved the precise visualization, retentive actualization (*cunsi* 存思) in Daoist parlance, of an ascension to the Northern Dipper in which one treads from star to star along the constellation. Adepts were to proceed along the seven visible stars and then to two hidden stars, Fu 輔 and Bi 弼, along the way amassing the power and energy of the asterism for either exorcistic purposes or further ascension.⁸ Specific scriptures, such as the *Upper Scripture in Jade Characters on Golden Tablets for Pacing the Celestial Mainstays and Flying on the Terrestrial Strands of the Thearch Lord of Grand Tenuity, from the Upper Clarity of Cavern Perfection* (*Dongzhen shangqing taiwei dijun bu tiangang fei diji*

⁶ On the history, conceptual grounding, and Daoist practice of *bugang*, see Poul Anderson, “The Practice of *Bugang*,” *Cahiers d'Extreme Asie* 5, no. 1 (1989): 15–53; he addresses the Shangqing tradition practices on pages 37–39, but only in a cursory fashion. See also Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-Shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Giradot, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 205–24; and also her “Visualization and Ecstatic Flight in Shangqing Taoism,” in Livia Kohn, ed., *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989), 172–84. Edward Schafer touches on the practice briefly in his *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 238–42. Anderson is quite critical of Schafer's understanding of the practice; see his article noted above, 26, n. 23.

⁷ The Dipper was also known quite early on as the “mainstay of the heavens” (*tian zhi gang* 天之綱); see Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), ed. *Hanshu* 漢書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1986), 965.

⁸ As Paul Anderson has demonstrated, there are variations on the practice, all with their inherent complexities and textual references, and the practice gets integrated into communal liturgy and exorcistic practices of the Song. For a broad survey of these practices, see his “The Practice of *Bugang*.” The understanding of *bugang* I highlight here is pertinent for the discussion at hand because it is that which is highlighted in those early Shangqing scriptures with some relationship to *buxu* (see the following discussion).

jinjian yuzi shangjing 洞真上清太微帝君步天綱飛地紀金簡玉字上經) (CT 1316)

[hereafter *Bugang jing*], as well as other sections of Shangqing works like the *Jiuchen yujing* describe these cultivation practices in detail.⁹ With its emphasis on the Dipper, *bugang* practice can be plainly distinguished from other practices aimed at ecstatic visions of celestial ascent. The issue, however, is that even in verses found within scriptures clearly tied to *bugang* practices, we find similarities in language and framing with later *buxu* practices, a fact that has led to scholarly disagreement over the categorization of verses. Luo Zhengming notes the disagreement over three stanzas from the *Jiuchen yujing*,¹⁰ with different scholars designating the verses as either *youxian* or *buxu*. Luo remains adamant that the stanzas are meant for *bugang* practice, and he is not mistaken. Nevertheless, the matter, I think, is more complex in that some features of the Shangqing verse anticipate later *buxu* verse and practice.

The three stanzas at the center of this discussion, referred to as the “Plumed Stanzas for Roaming Back and Forth and Traversing the Nine Asterisms” 徘徊遊行九晨羽章, read:

Stanza #1

雲綱落天紀，
九斗翠玉虛。

The cloudy mainstay lets fall the celestial strands;
The nine [stars of the] dipper halcyon against the
jade void.¹¹

紫蓋重霄嶺，

Purple canopy tiered like ridges of the empyrean;

⁹ For a discussion of these texts and others related to *bugang* and astral flight, see Isabelle Robinet, “Randonnees Extatiques des Taoistes dans les astres,” *Monumenta Serica* 32 (1976): 227–37 and 263–66. On the *Jiuchen yujing* and *buxu*, see Luo Zhengming, “‘Buxu’ sheng, buxu ci bugang tadou, 148–54.

¹⁰ The *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 (CT 1138), 12.1a–b notes that the three hymns are from the *Dongzhen huiyuan jiudao jing* 洞真迴元九道經, which is no longer extant.

¹¹ According to Daoist teachings, the Dipper consists of nine stars, seven visible and two invisible; see Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, 202–205.

玄精朗八嵎。	Mystic essence bright in the eight directions.
上有九晨賓，	Above, the guests of the nine asterisms; ¹²
吟詠隱與書。	Chant and sing, secretly granting texts.
飛步遨北漢，	With flying paces, I shall roam the northern Han River; ¹³
長齡天地居。	Living long in the residences of heaven and earth.

Stanza #2

抗轡玄羽臺，	I take the reins, [ascending] to the terraces of mystic plumes; ¹⁴
飛行九元所。	Flying and traversing the locations of the nine primordials.
洞靈深幽邃，	Cavern spirits deep within the darkest recesses;
雲綱乘空舉。	On the cloudy mainstay, I mount the emptiness and rise.
下有採真士，	Below, the gentleman selected for perfection;
仰招玉晨旅。	Looking up, I summon the travelers within the Jade Asterisms.
三周陽明上，	Three circuits, then atop the <i>Yang Brightness</i> ; ¹⁵
九迴入洞野。	Nine revolutions and enter the cavern wilderness. ¹⁶
高步登帝尊，	Loftily pacing, ascending to the thearch venerable;
長歌龍飛語。	Singing long in the language of dragon flight. ¹⁷

¹² Each of the nine stars of the Dipper is inhabited by a deity; thus, the meditations associated with the Dipper often involved envisioning the deities and reciting their hidden names. See for example, *Shangqing huaxing yinjing dengsheng baoxian shangjing* 上清化形隱景登昇保仙上經 (CT 1369), which lists their titles and taboo names (*hui* 諱), as well as their appearance.

¹³ Han River (*Hanhe* 漢河) is term that indicates the Milky Way. See Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, 257–62.

¹⁴ This celestial location is unattested in other sources beyond citations of this same line and stanza in later collections.

¹⁵ Yang Brightness (*Yangming* 陽明) is the name of one of the stars in the four of the bowl in the Dipper. For a description, see *Jiuchen yujing* (CT 428), 13b–14a. The instructions that precede the stanzas under discussion direct the adept to visualize treading the seven stars three times, singing one stanza for each trip. Then to “Ascend the mainstay atop the Yang Brightness, [then] proceed upward flying and pacing” 登綱上陽明星，上行飛步也 (12a).

¹⁶ The stanza appears to be narrating the ritual steps of the *bugang* practice that require making nine revolutions of the stars. See the instructions contained in the *Yunji qiqian* 雲集七籤 (CT 1032), 20.24a.

¹⁷ The reference to “language of dragon flight” appears to be drawing some equivalence to external celestial animals, but the line may also be alluding to an internal bodily change. A verse preserved in the *Taishang*

Stanza #3

玉霄映北朔，
瓊條翠隱阿。
空生九靈臺，

煥精曜太霞。

天關運重冥，

劫會屢經過。

乘我羽行駕，
飛步織女河。
保靈空常化，

永忘天地多。

The jade empyrean refulgent in the north;¹⁸
Garnet boughs green against the hidden slopes.
The emptiness gave birth to the terraces of the nine
spirits;¹⁹

With their radiant essence shining in the grand
aurora.

The barrier of heaven connects to the tiered
darkness;²⁰

Where the conjunction of kalpas frequently
transpire.

Riding my chariot of plumed procession;

I fly and pace about the river of the Weaver Maiden.

I preserve my spirits for the transformation of
Emptiness Enduring;²¹

Forever forgetting the multitudes of heaven and
earth.

suling dongxuan dayou miaojing 太上素靈洞玄大有妙經 (CT 1314) [hereafter *Dayou miaojing*] alludes to such a change:

龍吟絕宅府，
鳳嘯太霄館。
虛唱無留味，
哀音乘風散。
誰能究此章，
精誦素靈讚。

Dragons [now] intone in my Removed Residence Bureaus,
Phoenixes warble atop the Grand Empyrean Lodge.
Their vacuous singing feels like it will not linger,
Sad tones trickle everywhere atop the gust of wind.
Whoever has the ability to study these stanzas,
Should chant the litanies of the Immaculate Numen with zeal. (68a)

Translation from J. E. E. Pettit and Chao-jan Chang, *A Library of Clouds: The Scripture of the Immaculate Numen and the Rewriting of Daoist Texts*, New Daoist Studies (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), 278.

¹⁸ Shuo 朔 can indicate the north, but also the conjunction of the sun and moon on the first day of the lunar month.

¹⁹ Each of the nine stars of the dipper houses a separate spirit. On their titles and duties, see *Jiuchen yujing* (CT 428), 13b–24a.

²⁰ “Barrier of heaven” follows Paul Kroll’s translation of *tianguan* 天關 in his “Spreading Open the Barrier of Heaven,” *Asiatische Studien Études Asiatiques* 40 (1986): 22–39; as he explains, the term refers to both the seventh star of the Dipper (Alkaid) and an astral location that separates the known lower heavens with the upper reaches of the heavens. See pages 24–25. Poul Anderson translates it as “Threshold of Heaven;” see his “The Practice of Bugang,” 36.

²¹ *Kongchang* 空常 refers to the two invisible stars of the Dipper, *Fu* 輔 and *Bi* 弼; see Kristofer M. Schipper, and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 170 [hereafter *HCD*] It is also the title of a specific cultivation method; see the related *Taishang wuxing qi yuan kongchang jue* 太上五星七元空常訣 (CT 876).

The following notes to the stanzas cite their origin in the “upper palaces of the Jade Clarity Heaven” (*Yuqing shanggong* 玉清上官), where they are sung by jade lads and maidens for the “unimpeded intertwining of harmonizing form and cloud-souls, and announcing the numinous perfected of the shrouded pass” 以和形魂之交暢，啓靈真於幽關. The notes shed light on the intimate connection between celestial verse as a way to activate constituent parts of the body—the *hun* souls and spirits that inhabit certain locations, here those of the “shrouded pass” (*youguan* 幽關).²² The passage that follows the three verses also warns of the necessity of the stanzas to the practice: “For all those cultivating the way of flying and pacing the seven primordials and traversing the nine stars, without these song stanzas, you will not be able to freely ascend heaven’s guideline and tread upon the mystic dipper” 凡修飛步七元行九星之道，無此歌章，皆不得妄上天綱足躡玄斗. The statement, as well as the entirety of the scripture, affirms Luo Zhengming’s statement about the nature or category of the stanzas as related to *bugang*. The scripture revolves around the practice of pacing the stars of the dipper, detailing the visualizations and incantations in relation to each of the nine stars.

In the strict sense, the *Jiuchen yujing* has nothing to do with Lingbao *buxu* ritual practice and mythology as it later comes to be defined. In the Lingbao scriptures, *buxu* indicates an ascent to the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) and the ritual reenactment of the gods’ regular ascent to pay homage before the Celestial Worthy of

²² Pettit and Chang note that the *youguan* 幽關 is a passage within the body where *qi* previously did not flow and was thus “dark and unknown” (*Library of Clouds*, 307; note to page 155). Numerous examples can be found in Shangqing practice, both in descriptions of cultivation methods as well as the incantations (*zhou* 咒) that accompany them. See for example, *Dongzhen shangqing qingyao zishu jingen zhongjing* 洞真上清青要紫書金根衆經 (CT 1315), 1.3a–4b.

Primordial Commencement (*Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊) (see the following chapter). The term takes on an unquestionably different character, a departure from *bugang* and its relationship with the Dipper. Nevertheless, the practice enumerated within the *Jiuchen yujing* foreshadows Lingbao *buxu* practices and hymns, as evidence by some key similarities. For example, the visualization practice of the *Jiuchen yujing* calls for three circuits of the seven stars of the dipper before “returning to stand atop the Celestial Pivot star and facing toward the Yang Brightness star to sing” 還立天樞星上向陽明星而歌誦.²³ Ritual performance of the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas calls for three circumambulations of the censer as the head priest sings the verses.²⁴ It is also the case that the Lingbao *buxu* hymns utilize language reminiscent of these verses and other Shangqing practices and visualizations.²⁵ For example, we might compare the opening lines of the second Lingbao stanza from the *Scripture for Pacing the Void to Jade Capitoline Mountain from the Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery* (*Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經) (CT 1439):

旋行躡雲綱，	In our circumambulations, we tread the cloudy mainstays;
乘虛步玄紀。	Mounting the void, we pace the mystic filaments.
吟詠帝一尊，	Intoning an ode to the Thearchical One, the revered one;

²³ *Jiuchen yujing* (CT 428), 12a

²⁴ Anderson draws a very clear distinction between the two practices, “But it seems clear that these circumambulations [those of *buxu* practice] should be interpreted as dances symbolic of the blissful state of affairs in heaven, rather than as forms of *bugang*” (“The Practice of Bugang,” 39). While I agree with his general assessment that they are essentially different practices, my suggestion here, though, is that this is one of several connections between them.

²⁵ Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸, “Hokyoshi kō” 步虛詞考, in *Chūgoku ko dōkyōshi kenkyū* 中國古道教史研究, ed. Yoshikawa Tadao 吉川忠夫 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1992), 389–93.

百關自調理。 Our hundred junctions put in order of themselves.²⁶

The same language of treading and pacing the cloudy mainstays and mystic filaments that is found in the *Jiuchen yujing* stands at the head of the second Lingbao stanza here.²⁷ Moreover, the reference to Thearchical One and the hundred junctions hints at a more direct correlation with Shangqing cultivation practices.²⁸ One other aspect of the three stanzas is also revealing of the connection between the *Jiuchen yujing* stanzas and those of the *Lingbao* scriptures: the narration of a progressive ascent to the heaven from one verse to the next. The adept first surveys the heavens above, looking forward to the next step in the journey. The second stanza describes the actual departure as the adept takes the reins and rises to various celestial locations. Lines in the second stanza also direct our gaze both upward and downward, signaling the intermediate status of the journey. In the last stanza, the adept breaks through the barrier of heaven, which leads to the unknown reaches beyond, where time—the frequent passing of kalpas—speeds past unlike that of the mundane world. The final destination, the void beyond the known heavens, becomes a reality for the adept. The Lingbao stanzas reveal a similar narrative from preparation to initial ascent to arrival in the highest heavens, and finally union with the Dao.²⁹

²⁶ *Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經 (CT 1439), 3b. Translation from Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 63–64.

²⁷ Fukazawa noted this in her article, “Hosorashi kō,” 371. She discusses the stanza in relation to the *Taishang feixing jiushen yujing* 太上飛行九神玉經.

²⁸ The Thearchical One (*diyi* 帝一) is a bodily deity, one of several critical to the cultivation practices related to the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經. Before reciting the scripture, the deity is externalized to sit in front of the practitioner and listen to the recitation. See *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經 (CT 6), 1.19b. For a description of the deity, see also *Dadong jinhua yujing* 大洞金華玉經 (CT 254), 10b–11a.

²⁹ See Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 25.

Early Lingbao scriptures also bear the marks of Shangqing verse and practice. For instance, a reference in a Lingbao work titled *Precious Instructions on the Jade Scripture with Secret Commentary from Grand Culmen of Upper Clarity* (*Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣) (CT 425) [hereafter *Yujing baojue*] suggests a possible association between two sets of verse, the “Jade Stanzas for Pacing the Void” (*Buxu zhi yuzhang* 步虛之玉章) and the “Plumed Writings for Flying and Traversing” (*Feixing yushu* 飛行羽書), meant to be recited during individual cultivation practice.³⁰ The “Plumed Writings for Flying and Traversing” to which the *Yujing baojue* refers may be the stanzas of the *Jiuchen yujing* on account of their similar titles, though this remains speculative.³¹ These “Plumed Writings” are more than likely verses found within Shangqing scriptures, though it remains difficult to pinpoint their exact source.³² The *Yujing baojue*, in referencing the “Jade Stanzas for Pacing the Void” and the “Plumed

³⁰ The passage in question reads: “If a Daoist enters a chamber for a *zhai* and reads the Jade Stanzas for Pacing the Void to the Most High, as well as the Plumed Writings for Flying and Traversing, then he will be able to gallop upon the nine dragons, and the cloud carriage will come to greet him. As for these two matters, one ought to keep them secret” 太上玉經隱注曰：道士入室齋，讀太上步虛之玉章，及飛行羽書，則能馳騁九龍，雲駕來迎。此兩事，宜秘之矣；*Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (CT 425), 7b.

³¹ Recall that stanzas from the *Jiuchen yujing* are known as the “Plumed Stanzas for Roaming Back and Forth and Traversing the Nine Asterisms” 徘徊遊行九晨羽章；see *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* (CT 428), 12a.

³² Bokenkamp has suggested that the *Bugang jing* (CT 1316), another Shangqing work, may have been the scripture to which the *Yujing baojue* refers. Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 63. The *Jiuchen yujing* exhibits significant overlap with the *Bugang jing* in the descriptions and methods of practice. Another work, the *Dongzhen tai feixing yujing jiuzhen shengxuan shangji* 洞真太飛行玉經昇玄上記 (CT 1351), also describes similar practices. See Robinet’s entry on the *Jiuchen yujing* in *HCD*, vol. 1, 170. On Shangqing texts related to *bugang* practice, see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, vol. 2, 59–65. However, the three stanzas of the *Jiuchen yujing*, with apparent connections to the *buxu* stanzas, do not appear in this group of related scriptures. The verses preserved in the *Shangqing gaoshang jinyuan yuzhang yuqing yinshu* 上清高上金元羽章玉清隱書經 (CT 1358) may be another candidate given the use of “jade stanzas” (*yuzhang* 玉章) in the title.

Writings for Flying and Traversing,” suggests a correlation between ideas, namely rising to the heavens and traversing and pacing the various locales through the recitation of verse coupled with visualization and bodily practices. It also suggests a correspondence in form—heptasyllabic verse—more conducive to recitation. As we saw above, the three stanzas of the *Jiuchen yujing* are compassed in heptasyllabic verse. *Bugang* related works, like other early Daoist scriptures, often reserve tetrasyllabic verse for incantations (*zhou* 咒) meant to activate bodily gods or accomplish other specific ends during practice—they are not simply read or recited (*du* 讀).

As I have suggested here, the stanzas of the *Jiuchen yujing* exhibit features and ideas of the *Lingbao buxu* stanzas, and thus, we cannot altogether dismiss them as *mere bugang* pieces. That is not to say that the Shangqing scriptures do not differentiate the terms *buxu* and *bugang*—they very clearly do.³³ The distinction is the destination of ascent—to “Pace the Mainstay” is to walk the stars of the Dipper; to “Pace the Void” is to ascend to the Shangqing heavens, and often specifically, to its highest reaches in Jade Clarity. This distinction notwithstanding, we should recognize some of the shared aspects between passages pertaining to the *buxu* and *bugang* practices. The *Jiuchen jing* stanzas are also connected to other *buxu* references in Shangqing scriptures in a more general manner through their narrative framing. As the text notes, the three stanzas originated in the heavens and were performed by celestial beings. Shangqing scriptures weave together

³³ For instance, a series of five talismans, one for each of the four cardinal directions plus the center, known as the Upper Talismans of the Five Bells for Preserving Transcendence, Pacing the Void, and Ascending to the Emptiness (*Wuling dengkong buxu baoxian shangfu* 五鈴登空步虛保仙上符), is said to protect the wearer from demons and malignant forces, while also allowing the adept to ascend to the Palaces of the Golden Gatetowers of Jade Clarity” (*Jinque yuqing zhi gong* 金闕玉清之宮). See *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* 洞真太微金虎真符 (CT 1337), 7a–8a.

vivid narratives of heavenly proceedings with poetic song and verse, which are meant to be intoned by adepts in ritualized cultivation settings. A hymn titled “Ode of the Golden Perfected” (*jinzhen zhi shi* 金真之詩) and sung by celestial beings to a “tune for Pacing the Void” (*buxu zhi qu* 步虛之曲) has been noted by several scholars as the forerunner of the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas.³⁴ We now turn to consider this piece and its understanding of *buxu*.

The “Ode of the Golden Perfected” and Celestial Verse

Yang Xi 楊羲 (330–386?), spirit medium and advisor to the Xu 許 family received a series of revelations from 364–370 CE that became the core of the Shangqing scriptural corpus. One of the defining features of the scriptures is the predominance of poetry and songs, transmitted from goddesses of the Shangqing heavens. The vivid language and imagery of these poetic verses stirred the interest of writers for centuries after their revelation.³⁵ Much of this poetry has been preserved in the *Declarations of the Perfected* (*Zhen’gao* 真誥) (CT 1016) thanks to the scholarly collection and editing

³⁴ See note 2 above.

³⁵ Paul W. Kroll and Stephen R. Bokenkamp have done extensive work on the poems of the *Zhen’gao*. For Kroll, see his “Seduction Songs of One the Perfected,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Jr Lopez (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 180–87; “The Divine Songs of the Lady of Purple Tenuity,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History in Honor of Richard B. Mather & Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003); and “A Poetry Debate of the Perfected of Highest Clarity,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 4 (December 2012): 577–86. For Bokenkamp, see his “Declarations of the Perfected,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 166–79; and *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family: The Zhen’gao or Declarations of the Perfected* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 98–107 and 129–140.

efforts of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536).³⁶ Other Shangqing texts contain a number of hymns or divine songs (*shenge* 神歌), and later Tang works collect these pieces from across a variety of scriptures, often alongside selections, such as the *buxu* hymns, from Lingbao scriptures.³⁷

Sung by heavenly attendants to a “tune for Pacing the Void” (*buxu zhi qu* 步虛之曲), the “Ode of the Golden Perfected” (*jinzhen zhi shi* 金真之詩) has been preserved in the *Hidden Texts of the Divine Tiger of the Most High of Cavern Perfected* (*Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文) (CT 1334) [hereafter *Shenhu yinwen*],³⁸ alongside another hymn titled “Ode of Commanding Spirits” (*huishen zhi shi* 揮神之詩) to the “tune of Extinguishing Sprites and Dispersing Numina” (*miejing sanling zhi qu* 滅精散靈之曲). A tetrasyllabic section, akin to the numerous incantations (*zhou* 咒) found throughout the Shangqing corpus, follows the main body of each ode, composed in pentasyllabic verse. The hymns are framed by a narrative relating the story of the transmission of two talismans—the Perfected Talisman of the Divine Tiger (*Shenhu zhenfu* 神虎真符) and the Perfected Talisman of the Golden Tiger (*Jinhu zhenfu* 金虎真

³⁶ The *Zhen’gao* also contains poetic revelations to other mediums of the Xu family besides Yang Xi; see Bokenkamp, *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family*, 98–107.

³⁷ See for example *Shangqing zhuzhen zhang song* 上清諸真章頌 (CT 608), *Zhongxian zansong lingzhang* 眾仙讚頌靈章 (CT 613), *Zhuzhen gesong* 諸真歌頌 (CT 980), *Shangqing zhu zhenren shoujing shi song jinzhen zhang* 上清諸真人授經時頌金真章 (CT 1374). On the collections and their contents, see *HCD*, vol. 1, 625–27.

³⁸ See *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 (CT 1334), 5b–7a. The *Shenhu yinwen* is also reproduced in *juan 2* of the *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真經 (CT 1344), with some added details to the narrative. Scholars have suggested that this latter text originated much later, likely compiled in the Tang; however, the first two *juan* are early Shangqing works; see *HCD*, vol 1., 590–91. The editors of the *ZHDZ* date the *Zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* to the latter part of the Northern-Southern Dynasties period; *ZHDZ*, vol. 2, 468. The elaboration of the narrative aligns with these scholars’ suggestions of a later production.

符)——to Li Shanyuan 李山淵. The scripture recounts the story of Li Shanyuan, better known as Li Hong 李弘 or as the Sage Lord of the Latter Heavens 後聖帝君, who receives the talismans so that he may fulfill his duties as messianic savior in the coming *renchen* 壬辰 year.³⁹

The history of the *Shenhu yinwen*, its contents, and its relationship to other Shangqing works and practices are complex issues with which several scholars have grappled.⁴⁰ Such issues, though, are critical to our understanding of the *buxu* reference; thus, I attempt to provide here some of this important context. When we examine the scripture more closely, it becomes evident that the “Ode of the Golden Perfected” is quite distinct from later *buxu* hymns and lyrics, functioning as an apotropaic device alongside

³⁹ On this deity, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 281–83, 339–62 [hereafter *EDS*]. Li Hong’s hagiography notes that he was granted the Divine Tiger Talisman; see *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖列記 (CT 442), 2b and 5b. The literature on talismans in the Daoist tradition is quite extensive. For a brief overview, see Catherine Despeaux, “Talismans and Diagrams,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 498–540; for the historical and political background of Daoist talismans, see Anna Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, vol. 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 291–371; on the talismans of the Lingbao tradition, see Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 127–76. On talismans in a Buddho-Daoist context, see James Robson, “Signs of Power: Talismanic Writing in Chinese Buddhism,” *History of Religions* 48, no. 2: 130–69; on the development of talismans and related practices in early Chinese and Daoist history, see Stephan Peter Bumbacher, *Empowered Writing: Exorcistic and Apotropaic Rituals in Medieval China* (St. Petersburg, FL: Three Pines Press, 2012), 13–80; for an excellent treatment of the underlying connotations of Daoist talismans and the *Sanhuang* 三皇 traditions, see Dominic Steavu, *The Writ of the Three Sovereigns: From Local Lore to Institutional Daoism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019), 49–82. On a related technique, ensigillation, and its apotropaic use against demons and malevolent forces, see Michel Strickmann and Bernard Faure, *Chinese Magical Medicine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 123–92. On the Divine Tiger talisman and related texts, see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, vol. 2, 179–86.

⁴⁰ Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, vol. 2, 247–49; Ishii Masako 石井昌子, “Kinko Shinfu, Shinko Gyokukyō Shinfu Kō” 《金虎真符》 《神虎玉經真符》考, *Sōka Daigaku Inbun Ronshū* 創價大學人文論集 8 (1995): 3–33; Shawn Eichmann, “Converging Paths: A Study of Daoism during the Six Dynasties, with Emphasis on the Celestial Master Movement and the Scriptures of Highest Clarity,” (PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1999), 264–78; Pui See Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans: The Translation and Close Reading of the Hidden Text of the Tiger Talismans 洞真太上神虎隱文,” (MA thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2019).

the talismans tied to the scripture. Beyond referring broadly to a heavenly ascent, the term *buxu* here, I suggest, should be understood more as a narrative device, one intended to provide authority and power for the concrete practices outlined in the work.

Many of the issues surrounding the *Shenhu yinwen* hinge on its emergence in the world, whether through original revelation or later forgery. Shangqing scriptures were not always revealed in full at a single time; instead, transmission regularly occurred piecemeal with some portions said to be preserved in the heavens and the gods awaiting the appropriate time for their transmission. Such ideas stirred interest in the mystery of the scriptures and cultivation methods that remained hidden away in the heavens. This situation often spurred individuals to fabricate works and claim that they were the complementary revelations.⁴¹ The notion of incomplete transmission underlies the *Shenhu yinwen* and the complex of related works. The colophon to the *Shenhu yinwen* attributes the “Ode of the Golden Perfected” to Consort An 安妃,⁴² the celestial maiden betrothed to Yang Xi, during a revelation on the sixth day of the eleventh month during the fifth watch.⁴³ Based on this reference, Robinet suggests that the scripture is incomplete, that further material was meant to be appended later.⁴⁴ While I disagree with

⁴¹ On these dynamics, see Michel Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy,” *T’oung Pao* 63, no. 1 (1977): 1–64. Pettit and Chang have offered a more nuanced argument, suggesting that the scholarly efforts to uncover the “original” or “authentic” Shangqing scriptures has been detrimental to our understanding of scriptural production in the Daoist tradition. Instead, they explore the processes by which later writers altered and expanded scriptures. See their *A Library of Clouds*, esp. 3–9, 127–30.

⁴² Her full name is Consort An of the Ninefold Floriate of the Upper Palaces of Purple Clarity (*Ziqing shangong jiu hua anfei* 紫清上宮九華安妃). On Consort An’s relationship to Yang Xi and her appearances before him, see Bokenkamp, “Declarations of the Perfected,” 166–79.

⁴³ It is unclear what year this refers to, and this particular revelation is not mentioned elsewhere; thus it is impossible to determine the precise date that it was said to have occurred.

⁴⁴ The colophon reads: “The latter of these poems was written by Consort An of the Ninefold Floriate. On the sixth day of the eleventh month during the fifth watch towards dawn, Consort An of the Ninefold

her interpretation of the phrase “*qihou yipian shi*” 其後一篇詩,⁴⁵ her suggestion that the scripture may be incomplete, I believe, is correct. The end of the colophon records that the poem is “found within the fascicles of the Hidden Texts of the Divine Tiger, the Wisdom for Extinguishing Demons, and the Eight Arts of the Most High” 在太上八術智慧滅魔神虎隱文卷中.⁴⁶ The note connects several texts together—the *Shenhu yinwen*, the *Zhihui xiaomo jing*, and another work pertaining to a set of eight methods—under what appears to be a singular title.⁴⁷ The colophon suggests that the *Shenhu yinwen* is incomplete, not in the sense Robinet noted, but incomplete as in separated from a text of considerable size, which was still preserved in the heavens.⁴⁸ One of several works that describes the Golden Tiger Talisman, the *Golden Tiger Perfected Talisman of [the Lord] of Grand Tenuity of the Cavern Perfected (Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu 洞真太微金虎*

Floriante of Purple Clarity came to transmit this [poem], ordering [someone] to record it, but it was not yet finished at dawn” 其後一篇詩，九華安妃書出。十一月六日五鼓向曉，紫清九華安妃來授此，令書未旦畢 (7b) *Shenhu yinwen*, 7b. See vol. 2, 184. Like Wong, I disagree with Robinet’s interpretation of the colophon. See Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans,” 12 n25.

⁴⁵ I take this to indicate the latter of the two odes in the scripture, not that “later on [in the scripture]” there would be an additional poem.

⁴⁶ The colophon is absent from the second *juan* of the extant *Zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* (CT 1344), which reproduces almost the entirety of this scripture.

⁴⁷ The “Eight Techniques” (*bashu* 八術) are likely tied to the *Shangqing danjing daoqing yindi bashu jing* 上清丹景道精隱地八術經 [hereafter *Bashu jing*] (CT 1359), another early Shangqing scripture on cultivation techniques. See Robinet’s entry in *HCD*, vol. 1, 157–58. Other passages connect these three works. The *Bashu jing* notes that when preparing to undertake the eight arts described therein, the adept must bathe and burn incense. After entering the meditation chamber, the adept should “first recite the *Xiaomo* in order to control the myriad spirits, and do this according to the methods” 先詠消魔，以制萬靈，案法為之 (*Bashu jing* 上清丹景道精隱地八術經, 1.10a). Robinet first noted this connection, in her *La révélation du Shangqing*, vol. 2, 186. The second *juan* of the *Zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 智慧消魔真經, which reproduces the *Shenhu yinwen*, bears a distinct opening passage citing the same celestial work as the colophon.

⁴⁸ Eichmann discusses this aspect of the series of scriptures in his consideration of the two talismans, the Golden Tiger and the Divine Tiger. See his “Converging Paths,” 264–69.

真符) (CT 1337),⁴⁹ clarifies that the *fu* is “inscribed in the Wisdom Tablets and Jade Slats of the Upper Clarity heavens, which has 70000 words” 簡刻於上清玉篇智慧，篇中有七萬言。The passage continues, explaining that “some [passages of the collection] reveal the hidden taboo names of demons, others display the esoteric names of the myriad deities, while others elucidate the uncertain formulas of the shrouded obstructions in rose-gem tones” 或著天魔隱諱，或表萬神內名，或釋幽喻疑訣于瓊音也。⁵⁰ A deity known as Lord Wang of Lesser Existence 小有王君 was said to have only transcribed the talisman along with the “[ritual] method of daunting spirits with esoteric texts” (*weishen neiwen zhi fa* 威神內文之法) in a mere hundred characters.⁵¹ According to the scripture, the Golden Tiger talisman and its ritual methods were singled out for terrestrial transmission from the immense body of scriptures in the heavens.

The two talismans at the heart of the *Shenhu yinwen*—Golden Tiger and Divine Tiger—may not have always been related.⁵² Passages of the *Zhen'gao* only cite the latter talisman,⁵³ in several instances as being donned by a perfected beings who also wore or carried “bells of flowing gold” (*liujin zhi ling* 流金之鈴), a ritual implement that when

⁴⁹ The others are the *Dongzhen taishang jinpian hufu zhenwen jing* 洞真太上金篇虎符真文經 (CT 1336) and the *Yujing jiutian jinxiao weishen wang zhu taiyuan shangjing* 玉景九天金霄威神王祝太元上經 (CT 256), 7a–10b. See also *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (CT 1032), 9.6b–8a.

⁵⁰ *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* 洞真太微金虎真符 (CT 1337), 1a. Passage also translated in Eichmann, “Converging Paths,” 268–69.

⁵¹ The transmission history of the *fu* is also recorded in *Yujing jiutian jinxiao wangzhu taiyuan shangjing* 玉景九天金霄威神王祝太元上經 (CT 156), 7a–8a.

⁵² Eichmann, “Converging Paths,” 270–71.

⁵³ Ishii Masako notes 11 possible references to the talisman, which include notations of a *Shenhu jing* 神虎經; see “Kinko Shinfu, Shinko Gyokukyō Shinfu Kō,” 18–21. Robinet only notes the clearer, more specific references to the talisman, three in total; see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, vol. 2, 180.

shaken would emit rays of light to scatter malevolent spirits and forces.⁵⁴ While there are no specific mentions of the Golden Tiger talisman in the *Zhen'gao*, Tao Hongjing, does reference the *Shenhu yinwen* in his critical notes to elucidate several lines of text that he suggests originate in the “Ode of the Commanding Spirits” (*huishen shi* 揮神詩), the first of the *Shenhu yinwen*.⁵⁵ Strickmann has argued that the *Taishang shenhu yujing* 太上神虎玉經, which contains the incantatory formulae and further instructions for the Divine Tiger talisman, was a production of Wang Lingqi 王靈期, who sought to garner influence and attention by producing forgeries of Shangqing works in the early fifth century.⁵⁶ Such evidence suggests two developments: 1) the Divine Tiger talisman was not part of the original Shangqing revelations to Yang Xi and the Xu family; 2) at some point before Tao Hongjing’s collected Shangqing manuscripts, the *Shenhu yinwen* was composed, as Tao had access to it. From Tao’s notes, we also understand that the *Shenhu yinwen* stood on its own, and was not appended to another text.⁵⁷ As for the Golden Tiger talisman, its

⁵⁴ *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (CT 1016), 3.1a and 5.1b; the Divine Tiger talisman and the Bells of Flowing Gold are also mentioned together at 5.4a. The talisman is also referenced alone in a passage on 8.13b.

⁵⁵ *Zhen'gao*, 13.16a–b; 17.1a–b.

⁵⁶ Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations,” 25–26. He cites both the colophon that notes Xu Mai 許邁 (300–348) received the scripture from Wang Ziqiao 王子喬 in 365, but more importantly, the clear reference to increased transmission fees and a blatant defense of them. All these aspects of the scripture were hallmarks of Wang Lingqi’s forgeries. Similarly, Ishii Masako suggests that the Golden Tiger talisman was not part of the original body of texts transmitted by Wei Huacun 魏華存. Based on the several citations that connect the Divine Tiger talisman and the “Bells of Flowing Gold” (*Liu jin zhi ling* 流金之鈴), she suggests the latter might have been an earlier title for the Golden Tiger talisman (pages 13–14), but this seems unlikely.

⁵⁷ The *Shenhu yinwen* survives on its own (CT 1334), and as the second *juan* of a pastiche of texts collected under the title *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真經 (CT 1344), which was likely put together in the Tang. Robinet suggests that this connects the scripture under the title *Shangqing shenhu shangfu xiaomo zhihui* 上清神虎上符消魔智慧, the 22nd scripture listed in the *Dadong zhenjing mu* 大洞真經目; see her *La révélation du Shangqing*, vol. 2, 179–86.

earliest reference appears to be in the first *juan* of *Zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 智慧消魔真經, a part of the early Shangqing corpus, cited alongside the Divine Tiger talismans.⁵⁸

Other texts and collections list the talismans and methods under separate scripture titles, but categorized under the same headings. In the *Perfected Scripture of the Eight Simplicities of the Most High of Upper Clarity* (*Shangqing taishang basu zhenjing* 上清太上八素真經) (CT 426),⁵⁹ the two talismans are grouped together with the *Hidden Writings of Jade Clarity* (*Yuqing yinshu* 玉清隱書), as the “ways of the most high” (*taishang zhi dao* 太上之道). According to the scripture, these three works (the two talismans and the *Yuqing yinshu*) are subordinate to the seven “ways of the upper perfected” (*shangzhen zhi dao* 上真之道), differentiated by the level of cultivation and the status of the adept, as well as the level of heavens and celestial position to which the methods grant access.⁶⁰ The same grouping of three works is also reflected in the earliest received list of Shangqing scriptures, the “Catalogue of the Perfected Scriptures of the Great Cavern” (*Dadong zhenjing mu* 大洞真經目), preserved in the early Tang collection *Regulations for the Codes and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao of the Three Caverns, from the Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery* (*Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie*

⁵⁸ The two talismans are also tied together in the *Dayou miaojing* (CT 1314) (53b); translated in Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 246, though the two scholars appear to treat it as one talisman.

⁵⁹ On this scripture, see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, vol. 1, 51–57.

⁶⁰ *Shangqing taishang basu zhenjing* 上清太上八素真經 (CT 426), 4a–4b. The “ways of the most high” fall in the second tier of practices, but the title of the category is different than the other three, that are listed as those of the upper, middle, and lower perfected (*shang zhong xia zhenren* 上中下真人). The Divine Tiger talisman may have been perceived as the more important of the two talismans; for example, the celestial position noted for the Divine Tiger talisman is higher, see *Basu zhenjing*, 7b–8a.

yingshi 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始) (CT 1125).⁶¹ The catalogue notes that the three works were scriptures that Wei Huacun received while she was alive (*zaishi shoujing* 在世受經).⁶² By the northern Zhou, the talismans were evidently preserved as distinct scriptures.⁶³ Why is all of this relevant to the discussion of the “Ode of the Golden Perfected,” the poem cited as a forerunner of later *buxu* pieces? From these extant citations, we find that the talismans became closely associated with two works—*Xiaomo zhihui jing* and *Yuqing yinshu*—both with obvious apotropaic and exorcistic functions.⁶⁴ The talismans of the *Shenhu yinwen* and both odes, the “Ode of the Commanding Spirits” and the “Ode of the Golden Perfected,” served similar purposes. As such, we can clearly differentiate the odes from later *buxu* hymns.

Descriptions of both talismans pronounce their effectiveness against demons, sprites, and malignant forces. The Thearch Lord of Grand Tenuity (*Taiwei dijun* 太微帝君), in a scene of the *Shenhu yinwen*, describes the Golden Tiger talisman:

Now, among those things the Lord of Grand Tenuity treasures, there is the Perfected Talisman of the Golden Tiger. With it, you can control the spirits and numina of the heavens and earth. Call to it in order to enact it, and then you shall be able to destroy and behead the thousands of sprites; wear it at your belt and travel about, then the myriad ghosts shall be eradicated in all their forms. If hosts of demons carelessly encroach upon you, then they shall promptly die; if hordes of bewitching spirits catch a glimpse of it, then they will voluntarily return to the dark world.

⁶¹ *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (CT 1125), 5.1a–4a.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.2a.

⁶³ See *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 27.1a.

⁶⁴ Several citations affirm the connections between the two talismans and these two texts; for instance, the *Xiaomo zhihui jing* (CT 1344) advocates for the combined methods of the *Yuqing yinshu* and the two talismans (1.11a).

且太微帝君所寶，有金虎真符，以制天地神靈，叱之以行，便得摧斬千精，佩之而往，則萬鬼滅形，眾魔妄侵而即死，群妖窺之而自冥。

65

As the passage indicates, the Golden Tiger talisman wards off and controls malevolent spirits for those who wear it.⁶⁶ The Divine Tiger talisman functioned in a similar fashion.⁶⁷ But the talismans could not be wielded alone—they needed to be activated, accompanied by verses and incantations to become effective. Without these, they were essentially useless objects, as another Shangqing text plainly suggests:

Any adept possessing scriptures without talismans will be subject to the punishment by the heavenly demons. If a person possesses talismans but has no scriptures, he will meditate in vain, as the divine Perfected will not descend to his side. The *Code* states, “These scriptures and talismans cannot be transmitted separate from one another. If they are transmitted separately, this will be treated as a transgression.” The *Code*, scriptures, and talismans all emerged from the qi of spontaneity; their [content] mirrors the directives of Barren Nullity. This is why you cannot practice them independent of one another.

有經无符，則天魔害人；有符无經，則思念无感，神真不降。科云：皆不得單行，單行罪亦如之。科、經及符本同出於自然之炁，虛无之章旨，故不可得獨修也。⁶⁸

The title of the work, *yinwen* 隱文 (hidden texts), given to the scripture containing both odes indicates that the oral formula were not meant to be freely transmitted in the

⁶⁵ *Shenhu yinwen*, 5a. Translation adapted from Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans,” 59. Compare the description of the talisman in *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* 洞真太微金虎真符 (CT 1337), 1b.

⁶⁶ For descriptions of its powers, see also *Dongzhen taishang jinpian hufu zhenwen jing* 洞真太上金篇虎符真文經 (CT 1336), 1a–2b; and *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* 洞真太微金虎真符 (CT 1337), 1a–3b. These two texts are addressed in Robinet, vol. 2, 247–49.

⁶⁷ See *Shenhu yinwen*, 5a; *Wushang miyao*, 27.1a.

⁶⁸ The passage is from the *Jiuzhen mingke* 九真明科, preserved in the *Dayou miaojing*, 8a. Translation from Pettit and Chang, 246. The full passage also lists the two talismans of the *Shenhu yinwen* alongside other notable Shangqing talismans.

mundane world, for they were to be concealed from those unworthy and uninitiated. Though the talismans might circulate in separate form, without the requisite oral formulas transcribed in the *Shenhu yinwen*, they would remain ineffective.

The titles of the odes also imply that they were imagined as powerful apotropaic devices. The title of the first, “Ode of Commanding Spirits” (*huishen zhi shi* 揮神之詩), makes this idea rather clear; pronouncing the formula allows the wielder to “command the spirits.” However, the second title, “Ode of the Golden Perfected” (*Jinzhen zhi shi* 金真之詩), is less straightforward. Descriptions of the Golden Tiger talisman suggest that the Golden Perfected are protective deities summoned by the talisman’s incantations: “Once the rose-gem sounds resound, then attendants of the Jade Floriate shall stand at your side; soldiers of Golden Perfection shall guard you; thousands of demons shall lose their backbones; and myriad ghosts will be extinguished in their forms” 瓊音既震，則玉華侍側，金真衛兵，千妖喪脰，萬鬼滅形。⁶⁹ The phrase “Golden Perfected” is also found with frequent reference to other apotropaic talismans.⁷⁰ In the *Shenhu yinwen*, *Taiwei dijun* is described as “grasping [the talisman] of Golden Perfection” (*shouzhi Jinzhen* 手執金真).⁷¹ The *Zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* (CT 1344) notes that a deity “wears the Divine Tiger on the left side of the belt, and hangs the Golden Perfected on the right side” 左帶神虎右佩金真 (1.6a), which suggests that perhaps the Golden Tiger talisman

⁶⁹ *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* (CT 1337), 1b–2a.

⁷⁰ For example, some deities carry the talisman of Jade Radiance of Golden Perfection (*Jinzhen yuguang* 金真玉光) at their belt. See *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* (CT 426), 7b.

⁷¹ *Shenhu yinwen*, 4a.

was also known as the Golden Perfected Talisman. Both titles are evidently tied to the function of the talismans and the power of recitation.

Not only do the titles of the odes build on the associations of exorcism and protection, but so does the content.⁷² Towards the end of their pentasyllabic lines, the verses shift from a narration of celestial ascent to explanations of the results of the adept's practices. For example, the closing section of the "Ode to the Golden Perfected" notes its exorcistic power:

消魔滅萬鋒，	To eradicate demons and reduce their myriad weapons;
揮詩以逐穢。	I brandish this ode to dispel their filth.
金虎承天威，	The [Talisman of the] Golden Tiger carries the authority of the heavens;
摧神以匿炁。	[Thus,] I compel deities to conceal their qi.
掃妖千萬傾，	I sweep away evil spirits, toppling them in countless numbers;
萬里無邪芥。	For myriad li, there will not even be a speck of deviance. ⁷³

As the lines point out, the odes and talismans of the *Shenhu yinwen* were envisioned as complimentary; each played a role in extirpating malicious and noxious forces.⁷⁴ We find similar indications in other related works like the *Yuqing yinshu*, one text among this

⁷² See the "Stanzas for Golden Perfected in the Grand Emptiness" (*Jinzhen taikong zhi zhang* 金真太空之章), which also couples an apotropaic ode with a talisman; *Shangqing jinzhen yuguang bajing feijing* 上清金真玉光八景飛經 (CT 1378), 14a–b.

⁷³ See also *Xiaomo zhenjing* (2.6b–7a) that notes the odes and their functions.

⁷⁴ I use the term "envision" because the spells in the *Shenhu yinwen* do not match those contained in the standalone scriptures concerning the two talismans. Moreover, the two odes do not exist outside of the *Shenhu yinwen* and its reproduction in the *Xiaomo zhihui zhenjing*. This relationship between the *Shenhu yinwen* and the many related texts on the two talismans deserves further research beyond the limited remarks in Robinet's survey of Shangqing materials. My initial sense is that the *Shenhu yinwen* is a scripture composed after the Yang Xi's revelations, and it was meant to tie the two talismans together. Tao Hongjing's references in the *Zhen'gao* to the work remain problematic, though do not erase the possibility.

complex of Shangqing apotropaic scriptures and methods to which the *Shenhu yinwen* belongs. The *Yuqing yinshu* contains a verse titled “Lofty Mysterious Scripts of the Most Exalted” (*Gaoshang gaoxuan wen* 高上高玄文), which also narrates the outcomes of practice:

明誦高上文，	I clearly intone the scripts of the most exalted;
密求反華頰。	To secretly overturn the decline of beauty. ⁷⁵
轉詩以招真，	I repeatedly recite the ode to summon the perfected;
神慧變天威。	[So that] divine wisdom will transform into heaven’s might.
制命合玄符，	Controlling orders merge with the mystic talismans; ⁷⁶
握節徵太微。	And I wield the insignia to mobilize [the forces] of Grand Tenuity.
妙覺無凝堞，	With wondrous awakening, nothing in the concentrated silence; ⁷⁷
廓然靈闕開。	In the infinite expanse, the numinous gates shall open.
併景反寂轅，	With conjoined effulgences, I return upon the silent thills; ⁷⁸

⁷⁵ The phrase (*fan huitui* 反華頰) is also found in the “Ode of the Golden Perfected”: “Phoenix brain solidifies an age calculated in kalpas; / Stamen ale reverts the decline of beauty” 鳳腦固劫齡，藥醴反華頰. *Shenhu yinwen*, 6a. *Tui* 頰 may be a scribal error for *yan* 顏 which is used in a related term *fan huiyan* 反華顏 or *fan tonyang* 反童顏. In Shangqing works, *fan* 反 is used to describe the overturning of old age and the reversion to youth. The term *huitui* is also used to describe the youthful appearance of deities, as in the *Jiuchen yujing* (CT 428), who have “hair of flying clouds and floriate whirlwind” 飛雲華頰之髻 (5b).

⁷⁶ *Zhiming* 制命 here refers to controlling the fates of demons and ghosts, and not being able to regulate one’s own fate as in the more famous saying: “Fate resides with me, not in heaven” 命在我，不在天 (*Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, 16.7a).

⁷⁷ Reading 凝堞 as 凝默. Morahashi notes the meaning of this rare character *mo* 堞 as dust, which may be applicable here as well. The line then may read: With wondrous awakening, nothing shall congeal in the dust.” See Morahashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次, ed., *Dai kanwan jiten* 大漢和辭典, vol. 3 (Tokoyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1955), 242. The phrase *ningmo* 凝堞 occurs nowhere else in Daoist sources.

⁷⁸ *Yuan* 轅 (thill) is used as a synecdoche for the entire carriage that ferries the adept into the heavens.

高超絕嶺飛。	Rising high to surpass the sheer mountain ridges in flight.
玄栖重虛館，	At my mystic perch in the lodges of the tiered void;
靜想高神迴。	I still my thoughts as the lofty deities return.

As the second couplet indicates, the power of the ode comes alive with repeated recitation. Divine wisdom, encapsulated in the words and phrases, transforms into a commanding, awe-inspiring force, once uttered by the adept.⁷⁹ The following couplet underscores the importance of both physical object (talismán) and voice, the recitation of the ode, alluded to here as a “controlling order,” while the closing lines outline what awaits the adept beyond.⁸⁰ These kinds of odes, which function as apotropaic incantation, are clearly different from later Lingbao *buxu* stanzas and their use in ritual.⁸¹

Nevertheless, odes such as this anticipate an important feature of the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas, that is as performative utterance—the practitioner incants lines and thereby enacts internal corporeal transformations. For example, a portion of the “Ode of the Golden Perfected” reads:

⁷⁹ On the notion of divine wisdom as category of Daoist scripture and the *Duren jing* 度人經 as emblematic of the category, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 391–92.

⁸⁰ The two odes of the *Shenhu yinwen* are somewhat unique in that they append an additional passage of tetrasyllabic verse, which may be an additional incantation, though it is unclear how it is meant to be enacted. The scripture appears to include this tetrasyllabic portion in the song, for after the passage, the narrative notes “when the songs ended” (*ge bi* 歌畢). The inclusion of verses in different meters, perhaps, an interesting parallel with Jin dynasty poetry meetings when participants would compose both a tetrasyllabic and pentasyllabic piece for the occasion. See Wendy Swartz, “Revisiting the Scene of a Party: A Study of the Lanting Collection,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 2 (2012): 277.

⁸¹ Bokenkamp suggests some connection between the function of the Ode of the Golden Perfected as demon-quelling device and the recitation of the *mingmo zhou* 命魔咒, which in ritual, preceded the recitation and performance of the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas. See his entry on *buxu* in *EOT*, 242. On the *mingmo* 命魔 segment in Daoist ritual, see Wang Haoyue 王皓月, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan* 析經求真：陸修靜與靈寶經關係新探 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 197–224.

玄歸反寂轅，	With “Dark Refuge,” ⁸² I return upon the silent thills; ⁸³
上嚮乘天龍。	I turn upwards riding the celestial dragon.
冥攄飛景輿，	In the tenebrity spread before, I fly in the carriage of effulgences; ⁸⁴
揮鈴七道遊。	Brandishing bells, as [the carriage] rambles along the sevenfold path. ⁸⁵
輕浪雲塵津，	[Treading] lightly upon waves in the channels of cloud and dust;
歛已造玉州。	Swiftly stopping, arriving at the Jade Isle. ⁸⁶

While the passage appears rather straightforward in its description of an adept riding upon a celestial carriage and rising to a heavenly locale, it also operates on a conceptual level related to bodily cultivation practices. The section of the poem reproduces a passage

⁸² Translating *gui* 歸 as “refuge” to differentiate it from *fan* 反 (return) in the same line; however, the two characters carry the same connotation; that is, returning or retreating to the origin, the Dao. See the discussion below.

⁸³ See a similar line in *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經 (CT 1355), 3b: “Joined effulgences to return upon the silent carriage; soaring aloft and transcending, flying to the ends of the mountain ridges”. 併景反寂轅，高超絕嶺飛。

⁸⁴ The “carriage of effulgences” refers to the adept’s externalized bodily spirits from the three cinnabar fields (*dantian* 丹田). Each *dantian* holds eight effulgences, all of which gather to form the carriage in which the adept ascends. *Shangqing* scriptures are rife with this imagery. See for example *Shangqing jinzhen yuguang bajing feijing* 上清金真玉光八景飛經 (CT 1378). Edward Schafer has written much on this phenomenon; see his “Empyrean Powers and Cthonic Edens: Two Notes on T’ang Taoist Literature,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 671–77.

⁸⁵ The bells at the forefront of the carriage sweep away malevolent forces in the path before the retinue. The reference here may be to the more specific term, Eight Daunters (*bawei* 八威), which serve a similar function. For an excellent discussion of the Eight Daunters, see Schafer, “Empyrean Powers and Cthonic Edens,” 675–77. The “sevenfold path” refers to the seven stars of the Northern Dipper. For another example, see *Shangqing taishang huiyuan yindao chuzui jiejing* 上清太上迴元隱道除罪籍經 (CT 1362), 5b-6a. This scripture provides a method for visualizing and internalizing the stars of the dipper and their resident deities.

⁸⁶ The line is lifted almost verbatim from the second stanza of the *Dadong zhenjing*: “Swiftly stopping, feasting at Jade Isle” 歛已駕玉洲; the interlinear commentary explains that “Jade Isle” is the *Ciyi* deity 雌一神; *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* (CT 6), 2.4b. A full translation and explication of the odes is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a more thorough analysis of the language, allusions, and scriptural connections found in the poem; see Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans;” 60–72; however, she also leaves parts of the poem untranslated due to considerations of space.

of the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經, utilizing the same imagery and text. The *Dadong zhenjing* was one of the core *Shangqing* scriptures revealed to Yang Xi and was meant for recitation, which involved a lengthy repertoire of bodily preparations, visualizations, incantations, and talismans.⁸⁷ It enjoyed popularity up through the Song and Yuan and now only survives in recensions from those periods.⁸⁸ The commentaries to the *Dadong zhenjing* offer varying interpretations of “Dark Refuge.” Several suggest that is a corporeal deity, albeit interpreted differently, which is generated through cultivation practice.⁸⁹ However, the *Yunji qiqian* commentary writes: “Dark Refuge,” in the language of the nine heavens refers to the Muddy Pellet” 玄歸者，於九天之音曰泥丸也。⁹⁰ The Muddy Pellet, one of the nine palaces (*jiugong* 九宮) located in the forehead, resonates with sound, allowing the adept to then ascend in the “silent cart” to return to void above, which is also absent of sound. The juxtaposition sound/soundlessness is characteristic of the Daoist meditative experience, as the adept first experiences the resonant sounds of

⁸⁷ First noted by Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du Taoïsme*, vol. 2, 186. The connections between the two odes and the *Dadong zhenjing* are the focus of Wong, “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans;” see especially Appendix B and C, 107–113 for a meticulous line by line comparison.

⁸⁸ Several works in the Daoist Canon preserve versions or portions of the scripture; additional commentaries can be found in the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要. All these have been dated to the Song and Yuan based on pieces of the text, such as prefaces and postfaces. See Isabelle Robinet, “Le Ta-tung chen-ching: Son authenticité et sa place dans les textes du Shang-ch'ing ching,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, vol. 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 394–433.

⁸⁹ Xuanguì 玄歸 refers to the “quintessential *hun* soul of Grand Unity” (*Taiyi jinghun* 太一精魂) and is also known as the Lad of Dark Refuge (*Xuanguì zi* 玄歸子); see *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經 (CT 1355), 27b. It appears to be associated with the liver; see *ibid.*, 11a. The *Dadong zhenjing* interlinear commentary notes that Xuanguì refers to the name of the embryo spirit (*taishen* 胎神); see *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經 (CT 6), 2.10a.

⁹⁰ *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), 8.2b.

heaven within the body before then transcending beyond to a state of silence reminiscent of the Dao. Other lines in the ode suggest a conceptual affinity with the second chapter of the *Dadong zhenjing*:

黃策遏德刃，	Without yellow slips one shall be restrained from
	the Terrace of the Blade of Virtue;
豈干真人暉。	How dare one encroach upon the brilliance of
	perfected beings?

The *Dadong zhenjing* reads:

黃錄保德刃，	Yellow ledgers protect the Blade of Virtue;
披錦入神丘。	Draped in brocade, I enter the divine mound.

Both note the necessity of a type of yellow document, a symbol of authority—yellow ledgers or slips—to enter the Blade of Virtue, which commentators to the scripture note, is the name of a terrace in the nine heavens.⁹¹ In writing both odes in the *Shenhu yinwen*, the author reproduced sections of the *Dadong zhenjing*, sometimes through shared references to the body and heavens, sometimes through near verbatim replication of lines. Language of the macrocosm (heavens) and microcosm (body) is a characteristic feature of Daoist incantations and hymns, indicative of the performative nature of the verse. In this sense, verse had a profound transformative effect on both the internal and external world. Though they may diverge in terms of function, the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas continue this linguistic and performative feature from the odes of the *Shenhu yinwen* and *Yuqing yinshu*.

But what is the significance of the tune title, “Tune of Pacing the Void” 步虛之曲 noted in the *Shenhu yinwen*? What does the use of the term *buxu* imply in the title and

⁹¹ Ibid. The *Yuanshi dadong yujing* 元始大洞玉經 (CT 7) has the same note; see 2.34b.

does it connect in any meaningful way to later conceptions? As the *Shenhu yinwen* relates, after receiving Taishang daojun's 太上道君 directive to transmit the two talismans to Li Shanyuan, Taiwei dijun orders several of his attendant maidens (*dainü* 侍女), Ji Linhua 紀林華, Yan Caiyun 嚴採雲, Zhu Tiaoyan 朱條煙, and Han Fangyao 韓放要, to sing the “Ode of the Golden Perfected” to the “Tune of Pacing the Void” 步虛之曲. Similar narrative devices, that is, a lofty deity summoning subordinates to perform, can be found in other Shangqing scriptures, but the framework functions differently depending on the aims of the scripture. In the *Shenhu yinwen*, the musical performance marks the transmission of ritual methods and implements.

The *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳, an early work of notable significance in the longue durée development of narrative fiction in Chinese literary history, contains a comparable scene of musical performance and transmission. Like other more well-known Ming dynasty novels such as the *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記) and *Investiture of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義), religious aspects feature prominently in the narrative. The author of the *Han Wudi neizhuan* borrowed heavily from Shangqing works, alluding in particular to transcendent drugs, talismans, ritual techniques, and cultivation methods found in the corpus.⁹² The scene in question reads:

Lady Shangyuan herself plucked the *ao* of the Cloud Forest, and the sounding strings spurred the melody.⁹³ The clear tones were numinous and

⁹² See Kristofer M. Schipper, *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste: Han Wou-ti nei-tchouan* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1965), 1–64.

⁹³ *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 has “mingxian haidong” 鳴絃駭洞; Li Fang 李昉 (925–966), ed., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan 臺灣商務印書館, 1975), 2715a.

resonant. A mysterious wind was emitted from the four directions, and then she sang lyrics to the Tune for Pacing the Darkness.⁹⁴

上元夫人自彈雲林之漱，鳴絃駭調，清音靈朗，玄風四發，迺歌步玄之曲。

After the first song comes to a close, the “Queen Mother then orders her attendant maiden Tian Sifei to respond [in song]” 王母又命侍女田四飛答. The tune title, “Tune for Pacing the Darkness,” closely resembles that of the *Shenhu yinwen*, and, in fact, in later collections the title is changed to “Tune for Pacing the Void.”⁹⁵ The performances in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* conclude a lengthy ceremony of transmission, in which Lady Shangyuan grants Emperor Wu twelve techniques and talismans and instructs him in their use. The lyrics of Lady Shangyuan’s song recount her ascent to the heavens, “long ago as she traversed the path of the mystic perfected” 昔涉玄真道. The song closes:

搥景練仙骸，	I draw in the effulgences to refine my transcendent bones; ⁹⁶
萬劫方童牙。	Even after ten thousand kalpas I shall be youthful. ⁹⁷
誰言壽有終，	Who said that life has an end;

⁹⁴ First noted in Wang Xiaodun 王小盾, “Daojiao ‘Buxu wu’—jian lun Daojiao gewu he wuwu zai zongjiao gongneng shang de lianxi yu qubie 道教《步虛舞》—兼論道教歌舞和巫舞在宗教功能上的聯繫與區別, in *Dao Fo Ru sixiang yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* 道佛儒思想與中國傳統文化, ed. Zhang Rongming 張榮明 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1994), 75. More thoroughly discussed in Luo Zhengming, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi,” 232–34. See also Sun Changwu 孫昌武, “Daojiao de xiange” 道教的仙歌 part 1, 道教的仙歌上, *Shi Dao yiwen* 釋道藝文 3 (2019): 88–92. The scene and the lyrics are translated in Thomas Smith, “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative: The Legend of the Han Emperor Wu” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1992), 526–27; and Schipper, *L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 123–24.

⁹⁵ *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032) (96.7a) alters the tune title to “*buxu zhi qu*” 步虛之曲, as does the *Zhuzhen gesong* 諸真歌頌 (CT 980) (7a) when citing the lyric.

⁹⁶ Imbibing the essences of the sun and moon, which was meant to replace actual food as nourishment, was central to Shangqing cultivation practices; on these practices see Bokenkamp *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 314–21.

⁹⁷ *Tongya* 童牙 literally “child’s teeth.”

扶桑不爲查。Can Fusang not serve as a raft there?⁹⁸

Tian Sifei's song follows, reporting her celestial jaunt and sojourns along the way, with similar reference to Shangqing practices of imbibing astral essences in order to achieve longevity:

吐納挹景雲	Exhaling and inhaling, I draw in the effulgent clouds;
味之當一餐	Tasting these amounts to a singular meal.

The song concludes, emphasizing the distinctions between those who pursue transcendence and those who choose a mundane existence:

二儀設猶存	Two principles established and still remain;
奚疑億萬椿	Why doubt the myriad myriads of cedrelas?
莫與世人說	Do not talk with people of the world;
行尸言此難	It is difficult to speak of this with walking corpses!

The *Han Wudi neizhuan*'s adoption of a scene of transmission and celebratory verse from earlier Shangqing works like the *Shenhu yinwen* might be another instance of borrowing from that particular corpus.⁹⁹ The significance of the tune titles, both with connotations of traversing the emptiness beyond the limits of the known cosmos, though, is negligible; more significant is the event being celebrated.

⁹⁸ Tang poets often envisioned rafts carrying them to the stars. See Edward Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 262–69. The image of a raft here is similar in that Fusang should serve as the vehicle to achieve immortality. Fusang's association with the sun may indicate, in this specific context, the Shangqing cultivation practice of imbibing the essence of the sun. On this practice, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 283–89 and 314–18.

⁹⁹ Another instance of this narrative device in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* (3b) is the mention of a “tune of the mystic numina” (*xuanling zhi qu* 玄靈之曲). Debate exists over the dating of the *Han Wudi neizhuan*, but most place it in the late fifth century or early 6th century, well after the original Shangqing revelations of 364–370 and postdating the extensive proliferation of Shangqing works. Schipper dates the text to the 6th century; see his entry in *HCD*, vol. 1, 115–16; Smith dates it to the fifth century; see his “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative,” 196; Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙 dates it to the Eastern Jin 東晉, during the final years of the Taiyuan 太元 period (373–396) of Emperor Xiaowu's 孝武帝 reign or during the Long'an period 隆安 (397–401) of Emperor Andi 安帝; see his “Han Wudi neizhuan yanjiu,” in *Xianjing yu youli: shenxian shijie de xiangxiang* 仙境與遊歷：神仙世界的想像 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 233.

We might also consider the first section of the *Yuqing yinshu*, which contains an analogous scene of musical performance and ritual. Yuqing dijun 玉清帝君 gathers celestial beings to hold a pure retreat (*qingzhai* 清齋) and recite the “Lofty Mysterious Scripts of the Most Exalted” 高上高玄文. Thereafter, the deity plays the “Cloudy *Ao* of Refulgent Dragons” (*jinglong yun’ao* 景龍雲漱) and sings before the gathered crowd, the wondrous sounds resonating throughout the heavens and inciting numinous responses. Once finished, he “orders the Dragon Floriate Jade Maidens of the Golden Terraces of the Northern Cold Expanse, Yu Xiaoming, Ding Yunfu, An Yanchang, Fei Siqu, and others to sing together the Ode of Cavern Spirits of the Most Exalted to the Tune of Extinguishing Demons and Summoning the Perfected” 命北寒金臺龍華玉女，鬱蕭明、定雲敷、安延昌、飛四渠等，合歌高上洞神之詩，滅魔招真之曲。¹⁰⁰ The lengthy lyric that follows narrates an adept’s travels throughout the Shangqing heavens. Sights and sounds—the celestial carriage and implements, divine beasts, radiant scenery, and transcendent beings—are described in the vivid poetic language characteristic of other Shangqing works. At times, lines reference the highest heaven in Shangqing doctrine, Jade Clarity (*Yuqing* 玉清), but there is no discernable path—the adept wanders about, visiting various locations, those seemingly of the heavens, but also of the body, such as the “Chambers of the Three [Ladies of] Simplicity” (*Sansu fang* 三素房).¹⁰¹ After the song ends, the Yuqing dijun has the scripture stored away in a heavenly palace, under

¹⁰⁰ *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經 (CT 1355), 2a.

¹⁰¹ The Three Ladies of Simplicity are bodily gods that reside in the chambers of the brain.

celestial seal and guard. Rather than describing a scene of transmission as in the *Shenhu yinwen* or *Han Wudi neizhuan*, with the narrative functioning as an introduction to a practical apotropaic implement and incantation, the episode relates a ritual gathering in the heavens, where song and verse punctuate the event. The titles of the odes and tunes are irrelevant as specific indicators of *buxu* lyrics. Titles, such as “Ode to the Golden Perfected” or “Tune for Pacing the Void,” generally point to the contents or ideas associated with the verse. *Buxu* in the tune title of the *Shenhu yinwen* and *buxuan* in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* should therefore be understood as general terms for ascending to the heavens and traveling about, two instances among similar terms and phrases employed in Shangqing scriptures.¹⁰² However, one of the fundamental elements of later Lingbao *buxu* mythology is represented in the narrative framework shared by these three scriptures: the observance of momentous celestial rituals, be they transmission or retreat, that occasion the gathering of divine beings who partake musical performance and verse.

Yet despite this shared narrative framework among the three scriptures, we should recognize the differences between them in terms of the use of verse. On the one hand, the songs of the *Han Wudi neizhuan* are celebratory, a parting performance marking the conclusion of the transmission to Emperor Wu. Though they may contain ideas associated with heavenly ascent and the experience of transcendence, they are essentially an aesthetic feature of the narrative. The *Shenhu yinwen* and *Yuqing yinshu*, on the other hand, contain verse intended for recitation during in an adept’s practice. That the *Shenhu*

¹⁰² Other terms include “mounting the emptiness and riding the void” (*chengkong jiaxu* 乘空駕虛); “flying and pacing” (*feibu* 飛步); “flying and bounding about the grand emptiness” (*feiteng taikong* 飛騰太空); “rising on high to the dark void” (*shangdeng xuanxu* 上登玄虛); “flying and traversing the grand emptiness” (*feixing taikong* 飛行太空); “flying in the emptiness and mounting the void” (*feikong chengxu* 飛空乘虛).

yinwen and *Yuqing yinshu* odes originated in heavenly performance imbues them with authority and power; as adepts intone them, they reenact the original performance of the gods described in the scripture—another idea critical in the formation of later *buxu* Lingbao mythology and ritual performance, as we shall see.

Conclusion

While it is impossible to point to a singular work found within the Shangqing corpus that we might define as the “direct antecedent” of the Lingbao *buxu* hymns, we can identify several key concepts that prefigure the maturation of the *buxu* concept in Lingbao scriptures. First, as we saw with the *Jiuchen yujing*, is the progressive narrative of celestial ascent over the course of a series of stanzas, which figures prominently in the *Lingbao buxu* hymns. Second is the idea of celestial song and music tied to momentous ritual occasions in the heavens. With the gods gathered together, song and performance were used to celebrate events such as ritual transmission or cultivation retreat. In the case of the *Shenhu yinwen* and the *Yuqing yinshu*, scriptural narrative provides the context for the revelation of concrete practices, apotropaic talismans and related incantations.

Constituted in heaven, verse and ritual method could then be transmitted to the world for practitioners to exercise themselves in cultivation. For adepts, intonation of the verses reenacted the celestial performance and recaptured the power and efficacy of the heavens. Lingbao *buxu* mythology takes a similar form: as the gods gather together, winding their way up the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) for a ritual celebration before *Yuanshi tianzun*, they sing and perform the *buxu* stanzas. Daoist priests intone the stanzas in ritual and reenact the performance of the heavens. Tang poets also seized upon this

idea of celestial verse and music in their writings, alluding to heavenly music drifting into the mundane world upon the wind as the “sounds of Pacing the Void” (*buxu sheng* 步虛聲). Last is the close connection between verse and the body. As adepts recite the stanzas, their words intimate what has transpired within the body according to precise visualization practices. Bodily transformation then allows them to ascend to the heavens. In the next chapter, we explore the Lingbao stanzas, the mythology surrounding them, and their place in ritual performance.

CHAPTER 2

HYMNS AND MYTHOLOGY:

PACING THE VOID IN LINGBAO SCRIPTURE AND RITUAL

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined several verses found in Shangqing scriptures tied to the central focus of this chapter, the Lingbao *buxu* hymns. While these Shangqing verses diverge considerably, particularly in their function and aims, as I have argued, they nevertheless anticipate of the Lingbao *buxu* verses. Shangqing works employ the term *buxu*, one roughly equivalent to other phrases, to broadly refer to celestial ascent to the Shangqing heavens. However, in the Lingbao scriptures, the *buxu* concept becomes more well-defined, a specific term for the ritualized ascent of the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) to pay a visit before the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement (*Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊). Lingbao practices called on individual adepts to recite a series of hymns describing this heavenly journey. Later, the hymns were adapted to communal ritual performance, in which Daoist priests intone the verses and embody the religious mythology of celestial ascent through deliberate gesture and movement. This chapter lays out the development of the *buxu* concept in Lingbao works, both in terms of the religious and ideological foundations, as well as the recitation and ritual practices associated with the hymns.

Sources

The chief source of Lingbao *buxu* ideology is preserved in the Daoist Canon as the *Scripture for Pacing the Void to Jade Capitoline Mountain from the Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery* (*Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經) (CT 1439) [hereafter *Buxu jing*]; however, this was not always the title by which it was known. Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406–477) composed a catalogue of Lingbao scriptures in 437, which now survives in two separate Dunhuang manuscripts (P. 2256 and P. 2861). The catalogue consists of two sections: 1) works already revealed (*yichu* 已出) in prior kalpa cycles and several still hidden away in the heavens and not yet revealed (*weichu* 未出); and 2) works attributed to the Transcendent Duke (*Xiangong* 仙公) Ge Xuan 葛玄, uncle to Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), famed chronicler of the southern occult religious traditions of 4th and 5th centuries.¹ The first section lists a work titled *Stanzas on Ascending to the Mystery and Pacing the Void* (*Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章) among 18 other revealed works and five unrevealed, altogether 24 texts, which are said to total 36 *juan* in ten sections (*pian* 篇).² Lu's catalogue and preface have sparked

¹ The Dunhuang manuscripts are preserved in Song Wenming's 宋文明 (fl. 549–51) *Tongmen lun* 通門論. Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾 has reconstructed the catalogue based on the two Dunhuang manuscripts; see his "On Ku Ling-Pao Ching," *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 33–56; and his *Tonkō dōkyō* 敦煌道經, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1978), 1: 365–68; 2: 725–26, 726–34; and his *Dōkyō to sono kyōten* 道教とその經典 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1997), 75–88, 100–121. Lu presented an additional catalogue of all Daoist scriptures to Song Mingdi 宋明帝 (r. 465–472) in 471, which is also no longer extant; on this, see Stephen Bokenkamp, "Buddhism, Lu Xiuqing, and the First Daoist Canon," in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 181–99.

² For a careful analysis of the two different titles and the issues surrounding them, see Cheng Tsan-Shan 鄭燦山. "Liuchao daoqing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng" 六朝道經《玉京山步虛經》經文年代考證, *Zhongguo xue yanjiu* 中國學研究 72 (2015): 238–41.

protracted debates in the field of Daoist studies about the formation and development of the Lingbao corpus,³ and the *Buxu jing* has been at the center of these. Scholarship on the scripture has demonstrated that it underwent a lengthy process of accretion and editing before assuming its present form in the *Daozang*; thus, as scholars debate its formation and development, it is inevitably drawn into discussions concerning periodization and categorization: What parts may have been original revelations from *Yuanshi tianzun*? Were portions added by Ge Chaofu?⁴ More recent scholarship has attempted to move away from questions of categorization, while also advancing our understanding of the scripture's formulation.⁵

The scripture, as it exists today, is comprised of the following sections:⁶

1. Mythological narrative
2. Instructions for reciting and performing the *buxu* hymns 步虛吟
3. Ten *Buxu* stanzas 洞玄步虛吟十首
4. Eight encomiums for the *Scripture of Wisdom of the Most High* 太上智慧經讚八首

³ Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美 redefined the issue by postulating two alternative divisions, the “Primordial Commencement series” (*yuanshi* 元始系) associated with Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫 (fl. 402) and the “Transcendent Duke series” (*xiangong xi* 仙公系) associated with the Celestial Masters; see his *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), 138–88. Liu Yi 劉屹 has been especially concerned with questions surrounding Lu Xiujing's catalogue and the formation of the Lingbao corpus; see his *Liuchao dao jiao gu lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu* 六朝道教古靈寶經的歷史學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018), 167–344.

⁴ See especially Wang Chengwen 王承文, “Zhonggu dao jiao bu xu yi de qi yuan yu gu lingbao jing fen lei lun kao” 中古道教步虛儀的起源與古靈寶經分類論考, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 54, no. 4 (2014): 68–90; and Liu Yi, *Liuchao dao jiao gu lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu*, 432–48.

⁵ Cheng Tsan-Shan, “Liuchao Dao jing Yujing shan bu xu jing jingwen niandai kaozheng” 221–66, esp. 259; as well as his “Liuchao dao jiao bu xu yu lingbao zhai yi de fazhan xipu” 六朝道教步虛與靈寶齋儀的發展系譜, *Zhongguo xue luncong* 中國學論叢 48 (2015): 1–29.

⁶ On each of these segments and a more detailed discussion of issues concerning dating and potential origins, see Wang Haoyue 王皓月, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan* 析經求真：陸修靜與靈寶經關係新探 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017), 238–62.

5. Three acroama for the *Scripture of the Jade Capitoline Mountain of the Mystic Scriptures of the Grand Cavern* 太洞玄經玉京山經訣⁷
6. Lauds for the Five Perfected Beings 五真人頌⁸
7. Three stanzas for the paying obeisance to the scriptures 禮經三首
8. Transmission lineage for the Lingbao scriptures

As scholars have established through meticulous intertextual analysis, sections four through eight, as well as section two, were likely later additions to the scripture.⁹ While scholars disagree somewhat on the precise date that these portions were appended, the general consensus is that the scripture did not assume its current form until the late Sui or early Tang.¹⁰ Cheng Tsan-Shan has suggested that some of the sections were added in an effort to make the work more practically oriented, that is, more useful for the

⁷ These are not acroama (*jue* 訣), but are actually poems transmitted from goddesses to either Yang Xi (330–386) or Xu Hui 許翮 (341–ca. 370). They have been copied into the *Buxu jing* from the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (CT 1016): poem 1, see 4.8a; poem 2, see 3.10a–b; poem 3 see 4.6b.

⁸ One hymn is dedicated to each of the following deities: *Taishang taiji zhenren* 太上太極真人, *Taishang xuanyi di zhenren* 太上玄一第一真人, *Taishang xuanyi dier zhenren* 太上玄一第二真人, *Taishang xuan disan zhenren* 太上玄一第三真人, and *Zhengyi zhenren wushang santian fashi zhang tianshi* 正一真人無上三天法師張天師. On these hymns and their ritual use, see Hsieh Shih-wei 謝世維, *Tianjie zhi wen: Wei Jin nanbeichao lingbao jingdain yanjiu* 天界之文：魏晉南北朝靈寶經典研究 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2010), 167–212, especially 207–208 on the hymns in the *Buxu jing*. See also his “Chuanshou yu ronghe: taiji wuzhenren song yanjiu 傳授與融合：太極五真人頌研究, *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu suo jikan* 中央研究院中國文哲研究所集刊 34 (Mar. 2009): 249–85.

⁹ See Cheng Tsan-shan, “Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng” and “Liuchao dao jiao buxu yu lingbao zhayiyi de fazhan xipu;” Wang “Zhongguo dao jiao buxu yi de qiyuan yu gu Lingbao jing fenlei lunkao; and Liu Yi 劉屹, “Lun gu lingbao jing 'shengxuan buxu zhang' de yanbian” 論古靈寶經《昇玄步虛章》的演變, in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter, (Weisbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2009), 189–205.

¹⁰ Liu Yi, “Lun gu lingbao jing *Shengxuan buxu zhang* de yanbian” and *Liuchao dao jiao gu Lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu*, 432–48; Cheng, “Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng;” Wang Haoyue, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 234–63; Luo Zhengming 羅爭鳴, “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi” 步虛詞釋義及其源頭與早期型態分析, in *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 220–40.

performance of ritual.¹¹ Indeed, the appearance of sections six and seven would suggest such a conclusion, as these are found in other ritual protocols outside of the *Buxu jing*.¹² Section two offers instructions for retentive actualization (*cunsi* 存思), a more elaborate version of those found in the Lingbao scripture *Precious Instructions on the Jade Scripture with Secret Commentary from Grand Culmen of Upper Clarity* (*Shangqing taiji yinzhū yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣) (CT 425) (hereafter *Yujing baojue*). Later collections cite this latter scripture, rather than the *Buxu jing*, suggesting also that the *cunsi* instructions were not part of the original scripture.¹³

The ten *buxu* stanzas, the core of the work, likely existed prior to the formation of any formal scripture, and date to the latter part of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420).¹⁴ The scripture was formulated by at least 437, when Lu Xiuqing notes its existence in his catalogue of Lingbao scriptures as the *Upper Scripture of the Grand Mystic Metropolis on the Jade Capitoline [Mountain], Pronounced by the Most High* (*Taishang shuo taixuan du yujingshan jing* 太上說太玄都玉京上經), also referred to by a shortened title,

¹¹ See Cheng, “Liuchao dao jiao buxu yu lingbao zhayiyi de fazhan xipu,” 253; Wang Haoyue objects to this conclusion; see his *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiuqing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 238n1.

¹² For example, the *lijing* 禮經 verses are incanted during a regular morning audience ritual (*chang chaoyi* 常朝儀); see *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (CT 1125), 6.2b–3a. Many of these elements would have been used in scripture recitation (*zhuanjing* 轉經) rituals as well; see *juan 21* of the *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋靈立成儀 (CT 508), which was originally compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933).

¹³ Wang Haoyue, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiuqing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 240–42.

¹⁴ See Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸, “Hokyoshi kō,” 363–387; Wang Haoyue, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiuqing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 229; Liu Yi, “Lun gu lingbao jing Shengxuan buxu zhang de yanbian,” 195–99; and especially Cheng Tsan-Shan, “Liuchao Dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng,” 256 and passim. Cheng argues that the myth was added after the composition of the hymns, sometime between the formation of the *Shangqing taiji yinzhū yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (CT 425) and Lu Xiuqing’s catalogue.

Stanzas for Pacing the Void and Ascending to the Mystery (*Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章) (Lingbao #4).¹⁵ The catalogue groups the *Shengxuan buxu zhang*, in one of the ten sections (*pian* 篇), with two other works, the *Numinous Stanzas of the Empty Cavern of Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery of the Most High* (*Taishang dongxuan lingbao kongdong lingzhang* 太上洞玄靈寶空洞靈章) and the *Divine Stanzas Generated in the Nine Heavens by the Utmost Perfected of Thus-So of Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery of the Most High* (*Taishang dongxuan lingbao ziran zhizhen jiutian shengshen zhang* 太上洞玄靈寶自然至真九天生神章).¹⁶ The following note is appended to the group of three texts: “The section to the right has three *juan*, which comprises the third section. [The three works] are all on golden slips with transcribed text. Song, Master of Ritual,¹⁷ states that collectively, these three *juan* clarify the extensive reach of celestial achievements” 右一部三卷，第三篇目。皆金簡書文。宋法師云。合三卷，明天功之廣被。¹⁸ All three works center on verses, which originated in the heavens with celestial performances, meant to be recited in ritual cultivation settings to bring tangible benefits to the individual adept. In addition, the scriptures may have shared a general structure, consisting of two central sections: a narrative of the origin and transmission of

¹⁵ In another Lingbao scripture, the hymns are referred to as Cavern Stanzas for Pacing the Void, Treading Nothingness, and the Numinous Stanzas of the Void Cavern 步虛躡無披空洞章; see *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 (CT 532), 6b. Some have suggested that the current title may have been an attempt to differentiate the *Shengxuan buxu zhang* 昇玄步虛章 from another scripture popular Tang scripture known as the *Shengxuan jing* 昇玄經. See for example, Wang Haoyue, *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 234–38.

¹⁶ Shortened titles are *Kongdong lingzhang* 空洞靈章 and the *Jiutian shengshen zhang* 九天生神章.

¹⁷ Referring to Song Wenming 宋文明 (fl. 549–51), whose *Tongmen lun* 通門論 preserves the catalogue.

¹⁸ Ōfuchi Ninji, “On Ku Ling-pao jing,” *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 36–37.

the verse alongside the hymns; the *Kongdong lingzhang* and *Jiutian shengshen zhang* follow such an outline, albeit with some elaboration and additional information.¹⁹ To introduce the stanzas, the *Kongdong lingzhang*, in fact, uses the same narrative device, a celestial musical performance used to celebrate a ritual event, that we explored in the previous chapter to introduce the stanzas.²⁰ A shared structural logic between the three texts would also suggest that the *Shengxuan buxu zhang* consisted of only two sections (#1 and #3 above). In the discussion that follows, I only address the hymns and the narrative that appear to have comprised the original scripture, for these were most central to the development of the concept of *buxu* in the Lingbao scriptures.

Lingbao Hymns

Lingbao practice foregrounded oral performance, both as scripture recitation and the singing of hymns.²¹ The voice was conceived as a powerful tool to both move the gods and enact profound transformations in the body and cosmos. Scripture recitation in Lingbao Daoism, as in Buddhist teachings, allowed practitioners to accumulate merit, which could then be transferred to others—ancestors, rulers, and all living beings—to

¹⁹ The *Kongdong lingzhang* is preserved in three Dunhuang manuscripts, primarily P. 2399, and citations in the *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 (CT 1138). It has been reprinted in the *ZHDZ*, vol. 3, 63–69. A team of Taiwanese scholars has reconstructed the text and produced a commentary; see Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維, et al. eds., *Taishang dongxuan lingbao kongdong lingzhang jing jiaojian* 太上洞玄靈寶空洞靈章經校箋 (Taipei: Zhengda chubanshe, 2013). The *Jiutian shengshen zhang* is preserved in the Daozang as *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhang jing* 洞玄靈寶自然九天生神章經 (CT 318).

²⁰ See *ZHDZ*, vol. 3, 63ab. See also Hsieh, et al. eds., *Taishang dongxuan lingbao kongdong lingzhang jing jiaojian*, 52–58.

²¹ Lagerwey has noted the “oralizing influence of Buddhism” in this development in Daoist practice. See his “Daoist Ritual from the Second through the Sixth Centuries,” in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 148.

assure their salvation. The recitation of hymns also took on a greater significance in Lingbao liturgies. In ritual, priests intoned various kinds of hymns (often noted as *zan* 贊, *song* 頌, or *zhang* 章 in Lingbao works) to sing the praises of the gods and heavens, to mark ritual transition, to express repentance, to protect the body and ritual space, and to effect bodily transformation. The latter two aims were often accomplished through incantations (*zhou* 咒), another powerful form of ritual orality, though these effects were not their exclusive domain. Some hymns, like the *buxu* stanzas explored below, were meant to achieve physical transformation; as the practitioner incants the line, the episode being described transpires within the body at the very same time. The power and efficacy of the oral performance of hymns derived from the verse's origins in the heavens, both as text and performance.²² As noted above, entire scriptures, like the *Buxu jing*, recount the origins of heavenly verses and their performance.

Section three in the *Buxu jing* is comprised of ten *buxu* stanzas (*buxu yin shishou* 步虛吟十首), all in pentasyllabic verse, but differing in terms of their line lengths and end rhymes. Stephen Bokenkamp early on recognized the significance of these hymns and provided a full translation and exposition of them.²³ Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸 has also provided a rough translation and notes to each stanza, but relies heavily on a later commentary,²⁴ the *Dongxuan lingbao shengxuan buxu zhang xushu* 洞玄靈寶昇玄

²² See for example *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jieye benxing shangpin miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶誡業本行上品妙經 (CT 345), 8a–b, which describes the texts of hymns being hidden away in a celestial palace, but also the singing of the hymns by various celestial beings.

²³ Stephen Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-pao Scriptures” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981).

²⁴ Fukazawa Kazuyuki, “Hokyoshi kō,” 368–87.

步虛章序疏 (HY 614).²⁵ This work was certainly composed after than the stanzas themselves, and as Lagerwey suggests, offers a somewhat unique interpretation of the lines focused on transforming the adept's body.²⁶ Fukuzawa does explore the connections between the Lingbao *buxu* hymns and poems found within one of the most significant Shangqing works, the *Zhen'gao* 真誥.²⁷ Citing several poems, those transmitted to Yang Xi and the Hsu family from various goddesses, Fukuzawa suggests that these poems share a body of language and imagery of flying about the heavens and describing the beauty of celestial scenery with the Lingbao *buxu* hymns. While there may be some correlation between the two groups of verse in a general sense—they are all describing celestial rambling—we must be careful to not overlook the very features that make the Lingbao *buxu* verses so distinct in a search for some sort of continuity between verse of the two Daoist scriptural traditions. The Shangqing scriptures served as one source of the Lingbao scriptures,²⁸ and traces of Shangqing verbiage still exist in the *buxu* stanzas, as

²⁵ There appears to be another commentary which was lost at some point, as indicated by a citation in the *Shangqing daolei shixiang* 上清道類事相 (CT 1132), 3.1b.

²⁶ Various dates have been proposed for the commentary. Lagerwey suggests sometime around 430; see his entry on the text in Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 257–58. Liu Yi suggests the mid Northern-Southern dynasties; see his, “Lun gu lingbao jing *Shengxuan buxu zhang de yanbian*,” 199. More recent scholarship, the most thorough on the *Buxu jing* puts forward a much later date in the Sui or early Tang. Cheng Tsan-Shan suggests the Sui-Tang; see his “Liuchao dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing jingwen niandai kaozheng*,” 232–33. He takes a unique approach to determining the date, looking at the commentarial structure and methodology popular in the Tang. Wang Haoyue suggests the Sui; see his *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiu jing yu Lingbao jing guanxi xintan*, 231. Scholars have noted that the commentary does not contain any reference to the latter parts of the extant *Buxu jing* (sections 4–8 above), which suggests the commentary was produced before the extant *Buxu jing* took shape.

²⁷ See Fukuzawa Kazuyuki, “Hokyoshi kō,” 389–94.

²⁸ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickman, vol. 2 (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 434–86.

in the majority of Six Dynasties Daoist scripture.²⁹ Nevertheless, the Lingbao *buxu* poems are decidedly associated with Lingbao doctrine and cosmology, and offer a novel, and more specific understanding of *buxu*.³⁰

The Lingbao scriptures developed a thorough cosmography, introducing even more magnificent heavens and cosmological developments that surpassed anything within Shangqing doctrine. According to Lingbao teachings, the Grand Veil Heaven (*Daluo tian* 大羅天) crowned the Three Shangqing heavens (Shangqing, Taiqing, Yuqing) as the highest region of the known cosmos. A great peak, the Jade Capitoline Mountain (玉京山), rose at the center of Grand Veil Heaven, topped by the Mystic Capital (*Xuandu* 玄都), where the foremost deity of the Lingbao pantheon, the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement (*Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊) resides. Wondrous terraces and palaces occupy the mountainous landscape, but the celestial environment also comes to life with sound and light due to the conspicuous presence of gem-laden trees whose branches stretch across the eight directions to form the “Grand Veil.” Heavenly winds blow through the grove, shaking the boughs and producing a divine music, unlike anything of the mundane world, while the gems shimmer with light reflected from other celestial bodies. All of this is intimated in the opening couplets of stanza three:³¹

²⁹ Cheng Tsan-Shan criticizes Fukazawa’s arguments as well, noting the significance of Lingbao ideas in the hymns; however, I believe his claim that the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas have nothing to do with Shangqing is an overstatement; see his “Liuchao daojing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng,” 244 n64.

³⁰ For a full explication of the stanzas, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 43–120; and Fukuzawa, “Hokyoshi kō,” though the latter scholar’s notations should be approached with increased scrutiny because of the reliance on the *Buxu jing xushu* 洞玄靈寶昇玄步虛章序疏 (CT 614).

³¹ My translations are not taken verbatim from Bokenkamp, “Pacing the Void,” but do heavily rely on those translations as well as the notes. Below, in my attempt to explicate the lines, I offer less detailed footnotes

嵯峨玄都山，	Jutting and jagged, the Mystic Capital mountain;
十方宗皇一。	Where the ten directions revere the August One. ³²
岌岌天寶臺，	Toweringly tall, the Terrace of Celestial
	Treasures; ³³
光明爛流日。	Ablaze with the radiant light of the drifting sun.
煒燁玉華林，	Shimmering and shining, the Grove of Jade
	Florescence; ³⁴
蒨璨耀朱實。	Striking and sparkling, the fruits of Resplendent
	Vermillion. ³⁵

Whereas other Daoist verse, such as we saw in the first chapter, recounts celestial travels across the starry plane, where gods often pause at identifiable astronomical locations, Pacing the Void in the Lingbao sense involves ascending the Jade Capitoline Mountain. The Mystic Terrace of Seven Treasures (*Qibao xuantai* 七寶玄臺) appears several times in the stanzas, described by different appellations here; in stanza three as the Terrace of Celestial Treasures, and also in stanza five as the Terrace of Kalpa Fathoms (*Jieren tai* 劫仞臺). This grand edifice, located in the Upper Palace of Purple Tenuity (*Ziwei shangong* 紫微上宮), houses the precious texts formed of the ethers of the cosmos and

than Bokenkamp, while at times, citing alternative sources. For more a more comprehensive explanation of the stanzas, see his translations.

³² The ten directions refers to the four cardinal and four ordinal directions on the horizontal plane, as well as up and down on the vertical axis. To the best of my knowledge, this is the singular instance of *huangyi* 皇一 in the Lingbao scriptures. I read it as an alternative title for *Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊. In *Shangqing* scriptures, the title most often refers to one of the gods of the *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經 (CT 6), but such an interpretation does not pertain to this context.

³³ This is likely another term for the Mystic Terrace of Seven Treasures (*Qibao xuantai* 七寶玄臺) as a lost commentary suggests; see *Shangqing daolei shixiang* 上清道類事相 (CT 1132), 3.1b. The terrace is part of the Upper Palace of Purple Tenuity (*Ziwei shangong* 紫微上宮), where the Lingbao writs are stored; see *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing* 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 (CT 22), 1.1a.

³⁴ The Grove of Jade Florescence is a feature of the landscape in the Grand Veil heaven. See *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (CT 425), 18b.

³⁵ The gemmed fruit of the Seven-Treasure Trees; see *Buxu jing*, 1b.

refined by *Yuanshi tianzun*. Descriptions of the journey up the mountain allude to the distinctive geographical features of Grand Veil Heaven and not to the broader astronomical landscape of our world-system.

Almost the entirety of stanza seven describes the celestial landscape, providing even greater detail. The first couplet reiterates the gemmed vegetation of the Grand Veil Heaven:

騫樹玄景園，	Soaring trees in the Garden of Mystic Effulgences; ³⁶
煥爛七寶林。	Dazzlingly scintillant, the Grove of Seven Treasures.

As Bokenkamp has demonstrated, the Trees of Seven Treasures (*qibao shu* 七寶樹), alluded to here in this couplet, have been modeled on the Buddhist western paradise of Sukhāvātī, the seven treasures, various minerals and precious stones, equivalent to those of the Buddhist descriptions.³⁷ The following couplets describe the divine creatures that populate the Grand Veil Heaven:

天獸三百名，	Celestial beasts—three hundred varieties;
獅子巨萬尋。	Lions immense as ten thousand furlongs.
飛龍躑躅鳴，	Flying dragons cry out in measured rhythm;
神鳳應節吟。	Divine phoenixes respond with cadenced intonations.

³⁶ *Xuanjing yuan* 玄景園 does not appear elsewhere but is certainly a location upon the Jade Capitoline Mountain as a line from stanza five suggests:

控轡適十方，	Drawing up the reins, I proceed through the ten directions;
旋憩玄景阿。	Halting my circumambulations at the banks of the Mystic Effulgences.

Xuanjing 玄景 can also refer to the lights of the celestial carriage the adept ascends in, such as in a line from *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhangjing* (CT 318), 3.14a.

玄景曜雲衢，	Mystic effulgences illuminate the cloudy thoroughfare;
跡超神方外。	As my traces transcend beyond the divine quarters.

³⁷ The seven treasures include gold (*jin* 金), silver (*yin* 銀), coral (*shanhu* 珊瑚), beryl (*liuli* 琉璃), carnelian (*manao* 瑪瑙), nacre (*chequ* 碑磬), and crystal (*shuijing* 水晶); see Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 472–73; and *ibid.*, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 102.

The creatures guard the eight gates of the Grand Veil Heaven, their cries adding to the mellifluous sonic landscape.³⁸ Arising from the ten directions, the winds of the Grand Veil Heaven shake the boughs of the gemmed trees:

靈風扇奇花，	A numinous wind fans the remarkable flowers;
清香散人衿。	Dispersing a pure fragrance upon one's lapels. ³⁹
自無高僊才，	If I did not possess such lofty transcendent
	capacities;
焉能耽此心。	How could I indulge my heart in this manner?

The “numinous wind,” another feature of the Sukhāvātī heaven, stirs a fragrance from the flowers of Seven Treasure Trees, which permeates the air and falls upon the ranks of perfected and transcendents that occupy the heaven. Throughout the Lingbao scriptures, descriptions of heavens contain similar features—divine creatures, numinous music and sound, and celestial vegetation.⁴⁰ Two of these features—wind and sound—become a fixture of the ideology surrounding Pacing the Void in later poetic works of the Tang. The stanza closes with a reminder that experiencing such wondrous sights and sounds only stems from heavenly endowments, which render one worthy of entering the ranks of the perfected and transcendents.

³⁸ Compare the description in *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 5b.

³⁹ A line from one of the eight “Lauds for the Wisdom Scriptures of the Most High” (*Taishang zhihui jing zan* 太上智慧經讚) cited in the *Shangqing taiji yinzhū yujing baojue* (CT 425) reads: “A numinous wind fans the fragrant flowers, / Sparkling and scintillant, they unfurl [their brilliance] upon the profusion of lapels” 靈風扇香花， 璨爛開繁衿 (18b). These eight verses were also added to the *Buxu jing*, see 5b–7b.

⁴⁰ See the descriptions of the five paradisaical realms illuminated by the appearance of the Lingbao Perfected writs (*Lingbao zhenwen* 靈寶真文). *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhutian lingshu duming miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶諸天靈書度命妙經 (CT 23), 1a–9b.

The description of the ascent does draw on language and imagery that would be quite familiar to the *youxian* poetry reader, such as in stanza five:

控轡適十方，	Drawing up the reins, I proceed through the ten directions;
旋憩玄景阿。	Halting my circumambulations at the banks of the Mystic Effulgences.
仰觀劫仞臺，	Looking up, I observe the Terrace of Kalpa Fathoms; ⁴¹
俯盼紫雲羅。	Looking down, I glimpse the veil of purple clouds.
逍遙太上京，	Roaming free and easy at the Capital of the Most High;
相與坐蓮花。	Facing one another, we sit upon lotus flowers. ⁴²

The language of this passage calls to mind *youxian* verse in which the protagonist takes control of the reins, directing the carriage as it takes off for another destination. Stanza eight of the Lingbao series also makes reference to the adept's "nine dragon carriage" (*jiu long jia* 九龍駕). *Youxian* poems likewise direct the gaze of the reader through the use of *yang* 仰 and *fu* 俯. And, of course, the phrase *xiaoyao* 逍遙, frequently used in *youxian* verse, harks back to descriptions of rambling about the heavens found in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. There is, however, a decided difference, as the locations cited in the second and third lines place the adept firmly in the Lingbao heavens. Moreover, the adept roams about in the "Capital of the Most High," another appellation for the Jade Capitoline Mountain, the residence of *Taishang daojun* 太上道君, who, according to Lingbao teachings, receives

⁴¹ Yan Dong 嚴東, fifth-century commentator on the Lingbao scripture *Duren jing* 度人經, cites this line from the *Buxu* stanzas, noting that the Mystic Terrace of Seven Treasures (*Qibao xuantai* 七寶玄臺) is also referred to as *Jieren tai* 劫仞臺 because of its unfathomable height. See *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* 元始無量度人上品妙經四註 (CT 87), 2.11b.

⁴² A line from one of the eight "Lauds for the Wisdom Scriptures of the Most High" (*Taishang zhihui jing zan* 太上智慧經讚) cited in the *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* (CT 425) reads: "That which is so of itself generated the [Mystic Terrace or Trees] of Seven Treasures, / Where all sit upon lotus flowers" 自然生七寶， 人人坐蓮花 (18b). See also *Buxu jing*, 6a.

the scriptures from *Yuanshi tianzun* and transmits them to the mundane world. The final line reminds us that the adept enjoys not a solitary experience, but a collective journey amongst figures of equal standing.⁴³ While *youxian* language may be present, other features make clear the distinctive religious framework of the hymns.

Stanzas eight and nine narrate the culmination of the journey, where the adept enjoys the chanting and musical performances of the celestial beings that populate the mountain:

衆仙誦洞經，	Multitudes of transcendents chant the Cavern Scriptures; ⁴⁴
太上唱清謠。	The Most High sings pure ballads. ⁴⁵
香花隨風散，	Fragrant flowers scattered on the wind;
玉音成紫霄。	Jade tones form the Purple Empyrean. ⁴⁶

⁴³ The idea that one became a transcendent and joined with equals is a central idea throughout the stanzas; we see something similar in the final couplet of *buxu* stanza four:

飛行凌太虛，	In flight, I ascend to the Grand Void,
提携高上人。	Led by figures of the lofty upper reaches of heavens.

And also in stanza six:

頭腦禮金闕，	In my head, I pay obeisance before the Golden Porte;
攜手遨玉京。	Clasping hands to ramble about the Jade Capital

Such companions are either higher level transcendents or perfected, such as described in stanza one:

齊馨無上德，	Equal reputation, there is no greater virtue;
下僊不與儔。	Lower transcendents are not my companions.

⁴⁴ The term “Cavern scriptures” refers to the Lingbao scriptures themselves, which originated in the “vacuous grotto” (*kongdong* 空洞) during cosmogenesis. See also *Taishang lingbao zhutian neiyin ziran yuzi* 太上靈寶諸天內音自然玉字 (CT 97), 4.2b. Lu Xiuqing in his *Taishang Dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (CT 528) changes the line to “Multitudes of Transcendents chant [scriptures] of the Cavern of Mystery” 衆仙誦洞玄 (42b) to underscore the meaning of the Lingbao corpus; that is, the term *dongxuan* 洞玄 is the appellation for the Lingbao scriptures in the three cavern (*Sandong* 三洞) division, which divides the traditions of early Daoist scriptures: *Dongzhen* 洞真 (Shangqing), *Dongxuan* 洞玄 (Lingbao), and *Dongshen* 洞神 (Sanhuang).

⁴⁵ “Most High” refers to *Taishang xuhuang daojun* 太上虛皇大道君, the premier god of the Lingbao pantheon that sits atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain; in later Lingbao scriptures, this god takes on the appellation of *Yuanshi tianzun*.

⁴⁶ Compare the description of “jade sounds” in the *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22): “Heaven’s potter presents its banners and canopy, / As jade sounds surge forth in the cloud halls” 天鈞奏其旒蓋，玉音激乎雲庭 (1.5b). The “Purple Empyrean” refers to a distant realm of the heavens where adepts aimed to travel and

五苦一時迸，	The five sufferings dispelled at one time; ⁴⁷
八難順經寥。	The eight difficulties made empty in accord with the scriptures. ⁴⁸
妙哉靈寶園，	How wondrous!—the garden of Numinous Treasure; ⁴⁹
興此大法橋。	That gives rise to this Bridge of the Great Law. ⁵⁰

Initially intoned by celestial beings, the Lingbao scriptures were regarded as capable of bringing about the wondrous benefits of salvation and ameliorating the sufferings of the multitudes. The adept marvels at the scene and notes the location as the origin of the “Bridge of the Great Law,” a term that resonates with the Buddhist “Bridge of the Law” (*faqiao* 法橋).⁵¹ The last couplet emphasizes that the Lingbao scriptures emerged upon the Jade Capitoline Mountain, which were first made available for the hosts of transcendents and perfected through their explication by *Yuanshi tianzun*. Prior to this,

visit the residences of deities; see Edward H. Schafer, “The Grand Aurora,” *Chinese Science* 6 (Nov. 1983): 25–26.

⁴⁷ Five sufferings has several iterations in Buddhist texts, but in the Lingbao scriptures it refers more specifically to the suffering of those in hell. When adepts accumulated enough merit through Lingbao practice, they could extend this to the dead and release them from the various types of suffering. See for example, *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 3.11b.

⁴⁸ In Buddhist scriptures, the eight difficulties (*banan* 八難) refer to the conditions under which it would be difficult to encounter a Buddha or hear the Buddha’s teachings. A passage of the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138) cites the *Dongxuan ziran jingjue* 洞玄自然經訣 describing the eight difficulties according to Lingbao teachings (7.4b–5b). Paralleling the Buddhist ideas of *banan*, the Lingbao conditions include those difficult to obtain in order to progress on the path to the Dao. For example, it is difficult to encounter transcendents, sages, and perfected beings who will elucidate the teachings and guide one on the path to enlightenment.

⁴⁹ The Garden of Numinous Treasure likely refers this region where the celestial vegetation grows upon the jade Capitoline Mountain.

⁵⁰ Another line in *buxu* stanza six notes:

香花若飛雪，	Fragrant flowers like flying snow;
氛靄茂玄梁。	Vaporous mists proliferate at the Mystic Bridge.

The “Mystic Bridge” was a passage on the path to return to the Dao. See for example, *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhang jing* (CT 318): “Refine the fetus to return to the root origin, / An enduring ride, flying to the Mystic Bridge” 練胎返本初，長乘飛玄梁(12b).

⁵¹ Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 100.

the scriptures were incomprehensible, mere graphs comprised of the very *qi* which emanated from the Dao itself, and completely inaccessible, hidden away in the caverns of the mountain. *Yuanshi tianzun* made the scriptures manifest and intelligible for divine beings through an initial act of recitation and elucidation, who in turn intoned them in celebration upon the Jade Capitoline Mountain. But they remained hidden from the human world; only after *Taishang daojun*, as intermediary between the heavens and the world, revealed the scriptures to worthy human beings were they made manifest on earth. The Lingbao scriptures conceptualize the formulation as a series of revelatory acts. The actions of the gods—*Yuanshi tianzun*'s initial recitation and explication and the gods' continued performance of the scriptures and song—serves as the model for human practice. Just as the scriptures and song are regularly intoned upon the divine mountain, human beings can do the same, their sounds and the merit accrued through the act may lead to both personal and universal salvation.

The following stanza, number nine in the series, takes the adept to the highest reaches of the Grand Veil Heaven and beyond:

流煥法輪綱，	Flowing iridescence from the mainstays of the Wheel of the Law.
旋空入無形。	We circle in the emptiness and enter non-form.
虛皇撫雲璈，	The Sovereign of the Void strums his cloud ao; ⁵²
衆真誦洞經。	As the masses of perfected recite the Cavern Scriptures.
高僊拱手讚，	Lofty transcendents clasp their hands together as they sing praises;

⁵² The Sovereign of the Void is a lofty god that appears in the Shangqing scriptures, such as in the first line of the *Huangting neijing* 黃庭內經; see *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (CT 1032), 11.10b. In Shangqing accounts, the deity resides in the Shangqing heavens, but that is clearly not the case in the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas and scriptures. In early Lingbao scriptures the deity takes a different guise as *Taishang xuhuang daojun* 太上虛皇道君, see for example, *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhihui benyuan dajie shangpin jing* 太上洞玄靈寶智慧本願大戒上品經 (CT 344), 1b. Later, this deity becomes synonymous with *Yuanshi tianzun*.

彌劫保利貞。

For everlastings kalpas, may favor and uprightness
be preserved.

Joining the perfected and transcendents, the adept enters the realm where form and duality fall away, the void itself. There, the retinue pays court before the Sovereign of the Void, playing a celestial instrument and accompanied by the recitation of the scriptures.

Wu Yun, in his *buxu* stanzas, describes a similar scene as the pinnacle of the ascent.

A hallmark of Daoist *buxu* hymns and verse is the attention to corporeal transformation, and the Lingbao stanzas exemplify such a tendency. Daoist teachings consider the body to be host to an array of gods and spirits that have their counterparts in the heavens.⁵³ In ritual, Daoist priests manipulate the connections between the microcosm (body) and the macrocosm (heavens) to accomplish certain ends. At several points in the stanzas, the lines suggest the internal transformations taking place within the priest's body. Indeed, incanting such lines brings about precisely what the words describe. In the language of linguistics, à la J. L. Austin, such statements are performatives, as opposed to constatives.

For example, a couplet in stanza two reads:

吟詠帝一尊，

Intoning odes to the Thearchic Monad, the revered
one;

百關自調理。

My hundred junctions thereby adjusted and
regulated.⁵⁴

As the adept sings the words, the hundred junctions are thereby transformed into the proper state for the ritual to proceed. The Thearchic Monad (*Diyi* 帝一) refers to a vital

⁵³ For an excellent introduction to these ideas, see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* 100–12.

⁵⁴ The hundred junctions refers to points where the bones are believed to meet. The concept is alluded to in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 in a description of the body, which notes the existence of a “hundred bones” (*baihai* 百骸). See *Zhuangzi jishi* Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 55.

corporeal deity that resides in the upper cinnabar field (*shang dantian* 上丹田), also known as the Muddy Pellet (*niwan* 泥丸), located just inside the forehead. The *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經, a critical Shangqing work on meditative cultivation, instructs the adept to externalize this deity to sit in front of the practitioner and listen to the recitation of the scripture;⁵⁵ moreover, the deity is the last of 39 invoked and actualized over the course of the *Dadong zhenjing* meditations.⁵⁶ The curious appearance of the deity in the *buxu* stanzas might be resolved through a consideration of the act of recitation. In other words, the adept calls forth the Thearchic Monad to watch over the recitation of texts just as in the *Dadong zhenjing*.⁵⁷ But the deity not only resides within the body, it also has its parallel within the heavens, as another line of verse in the Lingbao scriptures relates: “Floating and fluttering in the territories of Upper Clarity; / Great and grand is the Thearchic Monad, the revered one” 飄飄上清畿，奕奕帝一尊。⁵⁸ In stanza nine, we find a clearer reference to the celestial god, after the adept has finally ascended to the heavens:

天真帝一宮，	The celestial perfected within the palace of the
	Thearchic Monad;
靄靄冠耀靈。	Thin mists crown his scintillating numina.

The adept directs the intonation of the *buxu* stanzas to both the cosmic and corporeal manifestations of the deity. The allusions to the Thearchic Monad encompass both the cosmic and corporeal, playing on two levels. While the lines of the couplet above surely

⁵⁵ *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* (CT 6), 1.19b.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.13a–16a.

⁵⁷ This occurs in not only the practices associated with the *Shangqing Dadong zhenjing* (CT 6), but also in other instances; see for example, *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經 (CT 1355), 35a.

⁵⁸ *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhang jing* (CT 318), 8a.

suggest a celestial location, the perfected noted in the first line simultaneously populate the palace of the Thearchic Monad within the body, the Muddy Pellet. In other words, the adept has effectively merged body and heavens at the climax of the ritual.

Stanza four is an excellent illustration of the complex internal processes at play during the recitation of the stanzas, those brought about through the intonation of the lines:

冲虚太和氣， 吐納流霞津。	Surging through the Void, the qi of Grand Harmony; Expelling and imbibing the fluids of flowing auroras.
胎息靜百關， 寥寥究三便。	Embryonic breathing has stilled the hundred junctions; ⁵⁹ In the empty stillness, I penetrate the three [gates] of ease. ⁶⁰
泥丸洞明景， 遂成金華仙。	My Muddy Pellet transfused with bright effulgences; Subsequently, I shall become a transcendent of the [Palace] of Golden Florescence. ⁶¹
魔王敬受事， 故能朝諸天。	Demon kings will respectfully accept their duties; And thus, I will be able to go in audience in all the heavens.

In this particular passage, the adept first prepares the body through a series of physical practices involving the breath and the ingestion of astral essences. Bokenkamp has rightly

⁵⁹ According to an early Daoist work, embryonic breathing involved a complex sequence of saliva ingestion, breath inhalations, and incantations. This practice was known as the “path of consuming that which is so of itself through fetal breathing” 飲食自然胎息之道; see *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序 (CT 388), 3.16a.

⁶⁰ The Three Gates of Ease (*Sanbian zhi men* 三便之門) refers to the gates that the adept passes through from the three realms (*sanjie* 三界) to the Grand Veil Heaven (*Daluotian* 大羅天). See for example, *Taishang Lingbao zhutian neiyin ziran yuzi* 太上靈寶諸天内音自然玉字 (CT 97), 1.17a.

⁶¹ The Jade Floriate Palace (*Jinhua gong* 金華宮), according to the visualizations associated with the recitation of the *buxu* stanzas, appears to indicate a palace within the adept’s head. See *Shangqing taiji yinzhū yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 (CT 425), 5b-6a. I address the cultivation practices in more depth below. The point of the line is indicate that the adept has transformed the body into a luminescent form, a kind of divine state similar to that of other divine beings, such as those referred to as “transcendent figures of the golden floriate” (*Jinhua xianren* 金華仙人) described in *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (CT 1339), 8.5b–6a. These transcendents imbibe auroras causing their entire form to radiate with light.

suggested the correlation between the processes and transformations alluded to stanza four and another part of the *Buxu jing*, the section, as I have noted before, pertaining to as mythological narrative. The section extols the Dao before describing the sublime effects of Lingbao practices:

The nothingness of nothing is called the Dao, its principles the culmination of the abstruse mysteries. A wondrous awakening to the Dao brings great salvation that spans kalpas and stretches across years. The Dao has simplified the obscure language and conveyed two *pian*.⁶² If you are able to hold a long *zhai* and reflect at great lengths, recite the cavern scriptures, knock the teeth and swallow saliva, expel and inhale Grand Harmony, then your body will become a golden efflorescent hue, and the nape of the neck will bear a circle of light—it is as if head has been pinned with mystic effulgences of the sun flowers and moon blossoms. The hands hold the numinous talisman and pennant of ten striations. This is to become a Perfected of the Most High, one whose virtue is toweringly majestic, one of the Most Honored of the Dao, who can in a calm and composed manner conduct the mystic transformations. You shall move Grand Nothingness, stir the Celestial Elders, bring forth the flying dragons, and cause celestial transcendentals to descend. In the nine regions of the three realms, for the cycles of the great kalpa, the revolutions of *yang* nine and the 106,⁶³ the disasters of water and fire (flood and drought) shall all be eliminated and transformed into the Dao of Jade Clarity.

⁶² *Pian* 篇 is often translated as tablet, indicating something wooden that carries writing, or a shorter subsection of a longer writing. Both senses seem feasible here—the Dao has entrusted writings to the world to clarify the abstruse mysteries. However, *pian* 篇 in the *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22) carries a more specific meaning, referring to a range of felicitous events that originate from the heavens. The Purple Tenuity Palace of the Mystic Capitol (*Xuandu ziwei gong* 玄都紫微宮) has three chambers (upper, middle, and lower) from which two *pian* flow forth from each. For example, “two *pian* of virtue and blessings, in 28 *tiao*” 二篇德福二十八條 come from the upper chamber (14 from each category). As the passage clarifies, these are not writings, but various forms that virtue and blessing might take; for the middle chamber, the two *pian* refer to thoughts (*nian* 念) and retribution (*bao* 報); for the lower chamber, beneficence (*en* 恩) and merit (*gong* 功). See *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 3.12a–15a.

⁶³ The concept of the “*yang* nine and the 106” is related to the calculation and prediction of astronomical events and dynastic history, which was more fully developed by Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE) with the production of his Triple Dispensation calendar (*Santong li* 三統歷). The calendar also sought to calculate the regularity of flood and drought disasters, with the *yang* nine referring to nine-year periods of disaster. See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Time after Time: Taoist Apocalyptic History and the Founding of the T’ang Dynasty,” *Asia Major* 1, no. 7 (1994): 61–67.

無無曰道，義極玄玄。妙覺大度，彌劫歷年。道素冥語，而寄二篇。兆能長齋久思，諷誦洞經，叩齒咽液，吐納太和，身作金華色，項負圓光，頭簪日華月英玄景，手把靈符十絕之旛，斯德巍巍，道之至尊，愔愔玄化，太上之真人矣。將感太無，動天老，致飛龍，降天仙也。三界九地，大劫之周，陽九百六之運，水火之災，亦皆消化玉清上道。⁶⁴

Stanza four notes the “qi of Grand Harmony,” which the passage instructs the adept to inhale and exhale. Stanza four seems to go further in describing other preliminary steps such as embryonic breathing, which denotes a practice of stilling the breath to a point where intake becomes unnoticeable. In doing so, the adept also quiets the body, here intimated by the allusion to the “hundred junctions.” Moreover, from the language, it would seem that all the productive energies of the body have been channeled to the Muddy Pellet, through the Three Gates of Ease, in order to open the chamber to the heavens beyond. Reciting the *Buxu* stanzas, one of the “Cavern Scriptures” as indicated in the prose passage, brings about a similar result—a golden efflorescence (*Jinhua* 金華). Once finished with the preparations, the adept’s body shines with luminous light like the transcendents and perfected beyond, so that the adept can now surge forth into the heavens. At several points in the stanzas, we find mention of the radiance of the adept, such as in the first lines of stanza four:

俯仰存太上，	Looking upward and downward, I actualize the
	Most High;
華景秀丹田。	Floriolate effulences mature in the cinnabar fields.

The eight effulgences of each of the three cinnabar fields, twenty-four in total, shine forth from the three regions of the body. These effulgences comprise the very carriage that will

⁶⁴ *Buxu jing* (2a–b); partially translated in Bokenkamp “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 83–84.

ferry the adept into heavens. Stanza six relates this transformative golden radiance in a fashion consistent with other Lingbao practices:

舍利曜金姿，	As śarīras illumine my golden figure; ⁶⁵
龍駕歛來迎。	A dragon carriage suddenly comes to welcome me.
天尊盼雲輿，	Celestial worthies regard the cloud chariot;
飄飄乘虛翔。	Swirling and whirling, as we mount the void in flight.

A meditation contained in the Lingbao scripture *Taishang wuji dadao ziran yiyi wuchengfu shangjing* 太上無極大道自然宜一五稱符上經 (CT 671) [hereafter *Wuchengfu shangjing*], at one point, involves the ingestion of five talismans, one each for the five directions. Once the talisman has been consumed, a śarīa 舍利 shines forth from the body in the corresponding color of the direction according to the five phases (*wuxing* 五行).⁶⁶ The *Wuchengfu shangjing* promises that, with sustained earnest practice of the method and due reverence of the scripture, the adept may achieve a host of abilities, foremost among them the freedom to roam about the heavens. A note attributed to the Transcendent Duke (*Xiangong* 仙公), Ge Xuan 葛玄, the mythological recipient of the Lingbao revelations, promises: “Those people who uphold this scripture and wholeheartedly make offerings to it, will have their names entered at the Golden Gatetowers and they shall be known as a perfected being of the transcendent perfected” 人能奉是經，一心供養之者，名入太上金闕，號曰仙真真人。⁶⁷ The Golden

Gatetowers are where *Yuanshi tianzun* resides atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain, while

⁶⁵ The *Taishang wuji dadao ziran xuanyi wuchengfu shangjing* 太上無極大道自然宜一五稱符上經 (CT 671), describes the adept’s śarīa shining in five colors associated with the five phases; see 2.7b–8a.

⁶⁶ See Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 468–69.

⁶⁷ *Taishang wuji dadao ziran xuanyi wuchengfu shangjing* (CT 671), 1.2a.

the status achieved would situate the practitioner among the highest ranks of celestial beings; thus, the reference to “śarīras” and golden light may suggest that the adept has undertaken the five talisman practice outlined in the *Wuchengfu shangjing*. However, the use of the Buddhist term “śarīra” may also be simply a way to indicate that the body has been altered to a state of divinity, emitting a radiance from the inner most recesses of the body. As discussed above, the act of recitating of scriptures could effect such a transformation. To be sure, both methods—ingesting the five talismans and reciting the *buxu* stanzas—would allow the practitioner to ascend to Jade Capitoline mountain, in the same fashion as the throngs of divine beings that do so regularly to pay homage to the Lingbao writs and *Yuanshi tianzun*.

Pacing the Void Mythology

The *Buxu jing* and other Lingbao works develop an entire mythos around the term *buxu*, complete with a distinct celestial landscape and ritual performances. Before addressing the mythological narrative in the *Buxu jing* itself, we should explore how other Lingbao scriptures understand “Pacing the Void.” Cheng Tsan-shan has written on the conceptual development of *buxu* within the Lingbao corpus,⁶⁸ suggesting that even within this body of texts, the term took on new resonances. He argues that the earliest Lingbao texts envisioned “Pacing the Void” as an audience before the Lingbao Perfected Writs (*zhenwen* 真文), those described in the *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen*

⁶⁸ This section draws heavily on Cheng Tsan-Shan’s work concerning the *Buxu jing*, which, in my mind, offers the most persuasive and deepest understanding of how both the *buxu* concept and the rite developed in the Lingbao corpus. See both “Liuchao daoqing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng” and “Liuchao daoqiao buxu yu lingbao zhayiyi de fazhan xipu.”

tianshu jing 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 (CT 22) [hereafter *Wupian zhenwen*]. The

opening passages recount the formation of the writs and the regular celebration of them:

[The Celestial Worthy] of Primordial Commencement refined them in the Lodge of Cavernous Yang, cast them in the Halls of Flowing Fire, vivified their correct text, polishing and transmitting their luster afar. The qi of the Lodge of Cavernous Yang is scarlet, thus they are called scarlet writs. Once the Numinous Charts shimmer, the myriad thearchs pay court before the Perfected [Writs], soaring in the emptiness and pacing the void. They circle the upper palace, burning incense, scattering flowers, and chanting the numinous stanzas.

元始鍊之於洞陽之館，冶之於流火之庭，鮮其正文，瑩發光芒。洞陽氣赤，故號赤書。靈圖既煥，萬帝朝真，飛空步虛，旋行上宮，燒香散華，口詠靈章。⁶⁹

The phrase “soaring in the emptiness and pacing the void” (*feikong buxu* 飛空步虛) is reminiscent of other terms used to describe celestial ascents in Shangqing scriptures.

However, in this passage, it describes the gods’ movement upward to the Jade Capitoline Mountain and not roaming about the heavens. The second *juan* of the *Wupian zhenwen* contains an additional account of the scene:

The Jade Mountain of the Mystical Capital of Numinous Treasure is situated within the Upper Heavens. [There], trees of seven treasures hang down to cover the eight directions. Revered Deities, the Utmost Perfected of the Ten Directions and the Perfected Beings of Wondrous Conduct go in audience and protect the Numinous Writs upon the Jade Mountain. They fly in the emptiness and pace the void, singing the Cavern Stanzas. Each time they circumambulate the Jade Mountain, all the heavens proclaim their excellence. On the Day of the Great Lingbao *zhai*, none among the 55,555,500,000,000 [deities that] esteem the Dao and the 555,555,000,000,000,000 unbridled numbers of Perfected and Great Deities fail to bow their heads, roving and singing the jade sounds. The dancers and musicians of all the heavens, numbering 1,000,000,000, join with them in the cloudy halls. What perfected music!⁷⁰

⁶⁹ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.1b.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.8a-b. The last four-character phrase could also be interpreted according to the alternate reading of the character *yue* 樂. If so, it would be translated as “What perfect/true joy!”

靈寶玄都玉山，處於上天之中，七寶之樹，垂覆八方。有十方至真尊神、妙行真人，朝衛靈文於玉山之中，飛空步虛，誦詠洞章，旋行玉山一匝，諸天稱善。五億五萬五千五百五十五億重道，五億五萬五千五百五十五億萬，無鞅數至真大神，當靈寶大齋之日，莫不稽首，遙唱玉音。諸天伎樂，百千萬種，同會雲庭。當此之時，真樂乎哉！

The “Cavern Stanzas” refer to the *buxu* stanzas, which the gods sing as they circle the heavenly mountain. The events described here and in the *Buxu jing* become the basis for the formulation of the *buxu* rite performed by Daoist priests in which priests perform similar movements and gestures. The *Buxu jing* provides a more elaborate scene, one that ties together some of the vivid details of the celestial setting found in the stanzas with the description of the *Wupian zhenwen*.⁷¹

The mythological narrative, which stands at the head of the *Buxu jing*, postdates the stanzas.⁷² Indeed, its addition may have led to a different title for the scripture,

⁷¹ Compare also *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jieye benxing shangpin miaojing* (CT 345): These unbridled masses [of gods] shortly thereafter rode together, mounting the emptiness to arrive. As they ascended to pay a visit at the Jade Capital, their celestial light shone throughout the four directions. Their purple canopies revolved in the heavens, awe-inspiring in its manifold multiplicity. As they flowed and surged in the ten directions, they spread their radiance throughout all the heavens. They burned incense and scattered flowers, soaring to the mysteries and pacing the void. They made three circles and again took up their positions before kowtowing and paying audience to the perfected. Together they ascended to the various locations of the Dharma Wheel of the Golden Perfected, looking upward to oversee the sounds of the law. None among them were not overjoyed, and all similarly proclaimed their approval.

無鞅之衆，一時同駕，乘空而來，上詣玉都，天光四朗，紫蓋廻天，威靈濟濟，流激十方，敷明諸天，燒香散華，飛玄步虛，三帀復位，稽首朝真，同登金眞法輪諸場，仰觀法音，莫不歡悅，咸同稱善 (2a–2b).

This work is neither part of the original Lingbao corpus, nor is it mentioned in the 6th century Daoist collection *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138). It is likely a later composite work, thus I have excluded it from further discussion. I cite it here to note that the understanding of *buxu* as an ascent up the Jade Capitoline Mountain was well-formulated in Lingbao scriptures and found across a body of scriptures.

⁷² Cheng Tsan-Shan dates the introduction after the *Shangqing taiji yinshu yujing baojue* (CT 425) but before Lu Xiujing’s writings in the early to mid-fifth century; see his *Liuchao daoqing Yujingshan buxu jing jingwen niandai kaozheng*, 242.

shifting it from *Shengxuan buxu zhang* to *Yujingshan buxu jing*.⁷³ The scriptural passage is worth quoting in full, for it provides, in my mind, the most striking account of the ritual scene in the heavens:

The Jade Capitoline Mountain of the Mystic Metropolis is located above the Three Clarity [Heavens], where there is neither form (se 色) nor dust (chen 塵). Atop the mountain, there is the Upper Palace of Purple Tenuity on Mystic Terrace of Seven Treasures at the Golden Gatetowers of the Jade Capitol, wherein the divine scriptures of the Three Treasures are stored. Across the mountain in the eight directions are the trees of seven treasures that naturally grow there. In each direction one tree has grown, and the eight spread fully throughout the eight directions, covering all the heavens, their forms spread like a net over the three realms, forming the Supreme Grand Veil Heaven. This is where the Celestial Worthy of the Void Thearch of the Most High Limitless rules. The registers of all the throngs of celestial sages are arrayed in the palace chambers within the forests of this mountain. The unbridled numbers of great sages, thearch kings, lofty transcendents, and perfected beings pay court three times a month atop the mountain. They burn numinous incense of natural sandalwood for rebirth, and flying transcendents scatter flowers, as they circumambulate the Mystic Terrace of Seven Treasures three times while chanting and singing the songs and stanzas of the empty caverns. At this time, music sounds throughout all the heavens, as the cloudy *aos* of innumerable performers resonate clear and penetrating. Perfected consorts sing in concert, quickening the tempo; transcendent lads wear solemn expressions, singing clearly. Jade maidens deliberately advance, whirling and swirling...remain delicate and demure, dancing fluidly.⁷⁴ All flutter and float in multitudes, as they gracefully glide about. The Splendid Forest of Seven Treasures sits atop the mountain, its radiant colors shimmering and shining, its vermilion fruits glittering and gleaming. All is gold, silver, pearled jade, crystal, beryl, nacre, and carnelian.⁷⁵ Numinous winds shake them, and their sounds naturally form the gong and shang [tones]—

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁷⁴ The text is evidently corrupt here, missing perhaps an entire line. The parallelism seems to demand a fourth group of deities, perhaps the golden lads (*jinlang* 金朗), a common auxiliary deity described in Daoist texts, coupled with a description of their actions. The next line would then read □放窈窕而流舞 to maintain the parallelism with the following line. The *Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經 (CT 1353) cites the line as 玉女窈窕而流舞 (3.22b), but that would not resolve the breach of parallelism and would also seem to break the logic behind the groups of celestial figures. There is one other instance of *fang yaotiao* 放窈窕 in the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138) that describes the actions of a female deity (12.13b).

⁷⁵ On the Seven Treasures (*qibao* 七寶) see note 37 above.

refined, wondrous, graceful, and superb they are!⁷⁶ The sounds can be heard throughout all the heavens, and even as the [divine beings] soar upward, they do not cease playing their stringed instrument or halt their singing. They praise and savor the supreme tones but are unable to describe them. Divine beasts—dragons, kirins, lions, white cranes, rare birds, and phoenixes—cry out with emotion and leap about. The Most High causes the dharma drums to tremble and resonate, inviting the guests to the Rose-Gem Hall, where he sits calmly upon a lotus flower. There, he elucidates the Dao and the perfection of stillness, clearly intones the cavern scriptures, expounds the mystic writings, extends their import great distances to the scattered foreign peoples, and delights and moves the masses of transcendents. At that time, the eight winds buffet the pennons, and incense and flowers mingle and scatter, as the drifting smoke forms thick clouds.⁷⁷

玄都玉京山在三清之上，無色無塵。上有玉京金闕七寶玄臺紫微上宮，中有三寶神經。山之八方自然生七寶之樹，一方各生一株，八株彌滿八方，覆蓋諸天，色羅三界，為無上大羅天。太上無極虛皇天尊之治也。其山林宮室皆列諸天聖眾名籍。諸大聖、帝王、高仙、真人無鞅數眾，一月三朝其上，燒自然旃檀反生靈香，飛仙散花，旋繞七寶玄臺三周匝，誦詠空洞歌章。是時諸天奏樂，百千萬妓，雲璈朗徹，真妃齊唱而激節，仙童凜顏而清歌，玉女徐進而跕躑。。。放窈窕而流舞，翩翩詵詵而容裔也。山上七寶華林，光色煒燁，朱實瓊爛，悉是金、銀、珠玉、水晶、琉璃、瑇瑁、碼瑙。靈風振之，其音自成宮商，雅妙宛絕。諸天聞聲而飛騰，勿輟絃止歌，嘆味至音，不能名狀。神獸、龍、麟、獅子、白鶴、奇禽、鳳凰、悲鳴踊躍。太上震響法鼓，延賓瓊堂，安坐蓮花，講道靜真，清詠洞經，敷釋玄文，遠味布夷，喜動群仙。其時八風颺旛，香花交散，流煙翳靄。

The passage relates the masses of divine beings traveling up the Jade Capitoline Mountain to pay audience before *Yuanshi tianzun*, elucidating in vivid detail the features of the cosmic landscape in the Grand Veil Heaven and its sonic environment. In the

⁷⁶ The *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22) describes twelve auspicious events that occurred with *Yuanshi tianzun*'s unfurling of the charts and writs. The sixth was the harmonization of the *gong* and *shang* tones that then formed the cavern stanzas (*dongzhang* 洞章), which may broadly refer to the hymns of the Lingbao scriptures (1.3a).

⁷⁷ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1a–2a. Compare *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhenwen yaojie shangjing* 太上洞玄靈寶真文要解上經 (CT 330), 2a and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jieye benxing shangpin miaojing* (CT 345), 2a–b.

previous chapter, we noted that divine beings offered hymns to celebrate momentous ritual events in the heavens. The singing of hymns likewise here is meant for that purpose; however, their performance takes place prior to the more significant ritual event, the exposition of teachings and scriptures, as opposed to the close of a ritual transmission. In the *Buxu jing* narrative here, the gods go in audience before *Yuanshi tianzun*, but the original version of the scripture may have contained reference to a different deity. Ōfuchi Ninji, in the process of reconstructing Lu Xiujing’s catalogue of 437, compared the citations of the *Buxu jing*, four in total, in the Northern Zhou Daoist collectanea *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 with the extant version of the scripture. He notes that several discrepancies exist between the excerpts in the collectanea and the first section as it survives, signalling that the section has been altered to some extent.⁷⁸ While some variations may be attributed to scribal issues, one of the primary differences is the appellation of the deity said to govern over the Jade Capitoline Mountain. Whereas the *Wushang miyao* notes the deity’s title as *Taishang wuji xuhuang dadao jun* 太上無極虛皇大道君, the extant version of the *Buxu jing* notes the title as *Taishang wuji xuhuang tianzun* 太上無極虛皇天尊. The discrepancy in titles likely reflects a later understanding of *Yuanshi tianzun* and the god’s status, consistent with other scholars’ detailed analysis of the revised and composite nature of the extant *Buxu jing*.

Cheng Tsan-Shan has argued that the *Buxu jing* shifts the emphasis of worship and celebration. In the *Wupian zhenwen*, gods Pledge the Void to pay homage to the

⁷⁸ See his “On Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” 47; also Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” 480. See for example, *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 4.8b–9b. The other passages can be found in *ibid.*, 4.11b; 23.1b–2a; and 43.8b. The last section is the *cunsi* 存思 methods from the *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* (CT 425), a later addition to the *Buxu jing*, on the recitation of the *buxu* stanzas.

Lingbao celestial writs, whereas in the *Buxu jing* narrative section, in its earliest version, they do so to go in audience before the loftiest Lingbao god, *Xuhuang da daojun*.⁷⁹ When the *Buxu jing* narrative was added later, this represented a divergence and development in the conception of *buxu* within the Lingbao scriptures. As evidence of an earlier understanding, he cites the two passages of the *Wupian zhenwen* translated above, in particular the lines that specifically reference the deities “flying in the emptiness and pacing the void, singing the Cavern Stanzas” 飛空步虛, 誦詠洞章 in order to pay homage to the Perfected Writs. To be sure, the *Wupian zhenwen* passages underscore the connection between the *buxu* act and the Lingbao writs. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook what the stanzas themselves articulate about the target of the ascent. As Cheng suggests, the stanzas were part of the earliest strata of Lingbao scriptures, roughly contemporary with the *Wupian zhenwen*. If we accept this dating of the scriptures (and I find no reason to not do so, as other scholars agree), then we should also consider the content of the stanzas. In them, we find no mention of the Perfected Writs, but several mentions of Most High (*Taishang* 太上) and Void Thearch (*Xuhuang* 虛皇), both abbreviated appellations of the grand Lingbao deity that resides in the Mystic Capital. The stanzas do not clarify the direct purpose of the celestial ritual procession, only noting in the final stanza (#10) that the gods assemble for a “lengthy *zhai*” (*changzhai* 長齋). Because the stanzas are contemporaneous, the conspicuous absence of any mention of the Lingbao writs as targets of ascension calls into question Cheng’s theory. We should also note that the ostensibly varying aims of the ritual procession, to do homage to the

⁷⁹ See Cheng Tsan-shan, “Liuchao daojiang buxu yu lingbao zhayiyi de fazhan xipu,” 17.

Perfected Writs or *Xuhuang da daojun*, are not mutually exclusive in light of Lingbao doctrine. The writs are housed atop the mountain in the Purple Tenuity Palace (*Ziweigong* 紫微宮), where the deity also reigns over the celestial landscape and all its inhabitants.⁸⁰

Moreover, it would be imprudent to draw too fine a distinction between the stanzas and the mythological narrative, despite its later inclusion in the scripture, for the basic elements of the Lingbao *buxu* doctrine appear within the stanzas themselves. We find several central ideas articulated in the last stanza:

至真無所待， 時或轡飛龍。	The utmost perfected rely on nothing; ⁸¹ Yet at times, some take the reins of the flying dragons.
長齋會玄都， 鳴玉扣瓊鍾。 十華諸僊集，	To gather in the Mystic Capital for a lengthy <i>zhai</i> ; Where they sound jade and strike the rose-gem bells. The transcendents of the ten floriate [regions] assemble; ⁸²
紫烟結成宮。 寶蓋羅太上， 真人把芙蓉。	Where purple mists cohere to form palaces. A canopy of treasured [gems] veils the Most High; ⁸³ As perfected beings hold lotus flowers.

⁸⁰ A passage in a work by Lu Xiujing, the *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhuo jiefa dengzhu yuan* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀 (524 CT), succinctly summarizes the idea of the two objectives of the celestial procession; see 11a. Cheng acknowledges the dual aim as non-exclusionary, but emphasizes a shift in emphasis to *Yuanshi tianzun*. See his “Liuchao daojiào buxu yu lingbao zhaiyi de fazhan xipu,” 17.

⁸¹ An allusion to “Xiaoyao you” 逍遙遊 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*: “Though this one was freed from walking, there was still something on which he had to depend” 此雖免乎行，猶有所待者也; *Zhuangzi jishi*, 17. Translation from Paul W. Kroll, “A Poetry Debate of the Perfected of Highest Clarity,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 4 (December 2012): 578. In this article, Kroll discusses a scene from the *Zhen’gao* 真誥 (CT 1016) in which Shangqing gods and goddesses debate, using poetic verse, whether they must rely on something to travel the heavens. On the poems, see also Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family: The Zhen’gao or Declarations of the Perfected* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 130–40; and Bokenkamp, “The Shangqing Poems on Dependence And Independence, Reconsidered,” unpublished paper.

⁸² The transcendents of the ten directions are those of the four cardinal and four ordinal directions on the horizontal plane, as well as up and down on the vertical axis.

⁸³ The line refers to the canopy of the Grove of Seven Treasure Trees (*Qibao shulin* 七寶樹林).

散華陳我願，	Scattering blossoms to present our vows; ⁸⁴
握節徵魔王。	Grasping a segmented [staff] to conscript demon kings. ⁸⁵
法鼓會群仙，	As dharma drums assemble masses of transcendents;
靈唱靡不同。	There are none who do not share in the numinous song.
無可無不可，	Nothing acceptable, nothing unacceptable; ⁸⁶
思與希微通。	Thought penetrates indiscernible and imperceptible. ⁸⁷

The final stanza foregrounds the final ritual scene before the Most High, *Xuhuang daojun*, where the perfected scatter lotus flowers, making known their commitments to moral

⁸⁴ On the concept of *yuan* 願 in Lingbao Daoism, see Stephen Bokenkamp, “The Silkworm and the Bodhi Tree: The Lingbao Attempt to Replace Buddhism in China and Our Attempt to Place Lingbao Taoism,” in *Religion and Chinese Society: Ancient and Medieval China*, ed. Lagerwey, John, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 317–39, esp. 326–31; and Lucas A. Wolf, “Ritual Refashioned: Buddhism, Lingbao, and the Adaptation of Vows (Yuan 願),” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 2 (2020): 182–200.

⁸⁵ This is likely an allusion to a Lingbao ritual implement known as the Divine Staff of Primordial Commencement (*Yuanshi shenzhang* 元始神仗), a seven-segmented staff that originates in the heavens and is employed against demons. See *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.39b; and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經, 1.23a–24a. For a discussion of these passages and more related to the staff, see Hsieh, *Tianjie zhi wen*, 254–93. The implement was one of the objects transmitted to newly ordained Lingbao disciples in Lu Xiuqing’s *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* (CT 528); see Hsieh’s book chapter, as well as Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Daoist Monasticism,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 104–106. The demon-kings could also be controlled through the recitation of the *Duren jing* 度人經; see Bokenkamp, *EDS*, 390–391.

⁸⁶ Alluding to “Qiwu lun” 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*: “What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable. A road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. Things all must have that which is so; things all must have that which is acceptable. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable.” 可乎可不可乎不可。道行之而成，物謂之而然。惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。物固有所然，物固有所可。無物不然，無物不可。 See *Zhuangzi jishi*, 69. Translation from Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 11

⁸⁷ Alluding to chapter 14 of the *Laozi*: “Because the eye gazes but can catch no glimpse of it, / It is called elusive. / Because the ear listens but cannot hear it, / It is called the rarified. / Because the hand feels for it but cannot find it, / It is called infinitesimal. / These three, because they cannot be further scrutinized, / Blend into one.” 視之不見，名曰夷；聽之不聞，名曰希；搏之不得，名曰微。此三者不可致詰，故混而為一。 See Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 52–53; translation from Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 159.

conduct and good deeds. According to Lingbao teachings, such vows (*yuan* 願) were central in the effort to establish merit (*gongde* 功德) and assure both personal and collective salvation. One of the primary vows one could make was to abide by ritual precepts and hold a *zhai* to accumulate merit. Pacing the Void, in the Lingbao sense, points to the acts of transcendents and perfected, who guide dragon chariots and celestial carriages up the mountain to finally converge in the Mystic Capital for a ritual event. Their journey, which entails wondrous music and reverential gesture, comes to life in both stanzas the narrative, albeit with greater detail in the latter. Such an understanding of *buxu* clearly diverges from earlier Shangqing ideas and uses of the term; however, we still find shared components, namely, ritual, song, and verse. The Lingbao mythology of *buxu* gets recast in mundane ritual performance, the subject of the next section, in an attempt to regularly reenact the celestial ritual gatherings.

Ritual Performance: The Lingbao *Zhai* 齋 and the *Buxu* Rite

The formation of the Lingbao *zhai* in the fifth century was a significant event in the development of Daoism, as it reestablished communal rituals at the center of Daoist practice, which had favored personal cultivation after the Shangqing revelations.⁸⁸ The Lingbao *zhai* was one of the key rituals introduced in the Lingbao scriptures, incorporating ideas from Buddhist liturgies, as well as *fangshi* 方士 and Celestial Master

⁸⁸ I have chosen to leave the term *zhai* untranslated, opting not to use some of the more standard translations: fast, retreat, or fête. As Charles Benn notes in his introduction to the Daoist *zhai*, none of these translations effectively capture the full meaning of this term in early Daoist ritual. See his “Daoist Ordination and *Zhai* Rituals,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 310. He offers a more idiosyncratic translation—levee—but I also find this unsatisfactory. The term *zhai* could refer to both a period of fasting and purification prior to ritual undertakings, individual cultivation undertakings, as well as a large-scale ceremonies performed before the gods and the community.

(*Tianshi* 天師) ritual traditions. As one early Lingbao scripture proclaims: “As for the greatness of the *zhai*, none stands before the Lingbao fast of the Most High” 夫齋法之大者，莫先太上靈寶齋。⁸⁹ Several works of the early Lingbao corpus contain prescriptions for the Lingbao *zhai*, which included a particular rite focused on the recitation and performance of the *buxu* stanzas.⁹⁰ We shall examine the *buxu* rite as it is outlined in these works, alongside other ritual programs composed by the Lingbao reformer Lu Xiuqing, whose efforts to standardize Lingbao ritual had a lasting impact on the shape and practice of Daoist ritual.⁹¹ Lu’s ritual reforms, undertaken in the mid-fifth century, continued to be cited for centuries after as the standard for communal liturgical practices. Even today, traces (structures, rites, hymns, etc.) of these early developments can be found in rituals performed across China and Taiwan. Within both the early Lingbao corpus and Lu Xiuqing’s works, *buxu* was developed into a full-fledged liturgical event, complete with movement, gesture, voice, and music.

⁸⁹ *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* (CT 532), 11a, which cites the *Jinlu jianwen* 金籙簡文, an early Lingbao work only extant in citations throughout texts found in the *Daozang* and fragments from Dunhuang.

⁹⁰ I differentiate between a ritual, the highest order of organization and the entirety of the performance, and rites, the distinct components or segments that comprise the ritual. Rites are often indicated in Daoist ritual texts by distinct headings. My thinking on this is influenced by Lagerwey’s structural reading of Lu Xiuqing’s transmission ritual, in which he offers a grammar of Daoist ritual; Lagerwey, “Lu Xiuqing’s *Shoudu yi* 授度儀: A Grammatical Reading,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 1 (2018): 50–65. We should note, however, that in his reading, the performance of the *buxu* hymns does not constitute a rite, but a smaller piece of the actual transmission (*chuandu* 傳度) rite. This is different from the Lingbao *zhai*, in which *buxu* is more clearly differentiated as a rite.

⁹¹ Lu Xiuqing composed a number of surviving texts on Lingbao ritual. These include the *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* 洞玄靈寶五感文 (DZ 1278), *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa deng zhuyuan yi* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀 (DZ 524), *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 太上洞玄靈寶法燭經 (DZ 349), *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhong jianwen* 太上洞玄靈寶重簡文 (DZ 410), and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (DZ 528). For a complete list, see Lü Pengzhi, “The Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual: A Critical Study of Lu Xiuqing’s (406–477) *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi*,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 1 (2018): 43 n. 3.

The earliest surviving source of the Lingbao *zhai* and its various iterations is the *Jinlu jianwen* 金籙簡文 that established the ritual framework, symmetry, and tripartite ritual structure.⁹² This work comprised the first section of three in a longer scripture of the early Lingbao corpus, the *Dongxuan lingbao yulu jianwen sanyu weiyi ziran zhenyi jing* 洞玄靈寶玉籙簡文三元威儀自然真一經 [hereafter *Ziran zhenyi jing*].⁹³ The rituals outlined within the three parts of the text were known as the “Awesome Observances of that Which is so of Itself” (*ziran weiyi* 自然威儀), emphasizing their spontaneous origin in the Dao.⁹⁴ Just as the Lingbao scriptures themselves, the rituals claimed to be of divine provenance. As we shall see, the *buxu* rite, perhaps more than any other portion of the *zhai* ritual, underscored this idea.

While the *Ziran zhenyi jing* as a whole is no longer extant, Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志 has painstakingly reconstructed roughly three quarters of it,⁹⁵ piecing together fragmentary citations scattered across various texts in the *Daozang* and several Dunhuang manuscripts.⁹⁶ According to Lü’s analysis, the text includes protocols for the three

⁹² Tripartite ritual structure consists of the Nocturnal Invocation (*Suqi* 宿啟), Walking the Dao (*Xingdao* 行道), and Dispersing the Altar and Announcing the Merit (*santan yangong* 散壇言功). On this structure, see Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志 *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang* 唐前道教儀式史綱 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 143.

⁹³ The three sections were titled *Shangyuan jinlu jianwen* 上元金籙簡文, *Zhongyuan yulu jianwen* 中元玉籙簡文, and *Xiayuan huanglu jianwen* 下元黃籙簡文. The second section survives in the *Daozang* as the *Dongxuan lingbao yulu jianwen sanyuan yi ziran zhenjing* 洞玄靈寶玉籙簡文三元威儀自然真經 (CT 530), and the final section partially in a Dunhuang manuscript (P. 3148); see *ZHDZ* vol. 3, 273–82.

⁹⁴ Lü, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 94.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143–59.

⁹⁶ See also Wang Chengwen’s 王乘文 collection of citations in his *Dunhuang gu lingbao jing yu Jin Tang daojiao* 敦煌古靈寶經與晉唐道教 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 591–609.

primary subsections of *zhai* rituals—Nocturnal Invocation (*suqi* 宿啟), Walking the Dao (*Xing Dao* 行道), and dispersing the altar and announcing the merit (*santan yangong* 散壇言功)—and guidelines for the recitation of scriptures. As such, the *Jianlu jianwen* stands as the precursor to the more elaborate *zhai* rituals of later periods. In Lü’s reconstruction of the work, the instructions for Pacing the Void appear at the end of the Walking the Dao subsection:

Walking the Dao ⁹⁷	<i>Xing Dao</i> 行道
1. Times for Walking the Dao	行道時間
2. Spells to enter the [altar] gates— morning and night	朝/夜入戶咒
3. Spells to exit the [altar] gates— morning and night	朝/夜出戶咒
4. Visualizing the spirits	思神
5. Proclaiming the ordination rank for each [officiant]	各稱法位
6. Pacing the Void	步虛

Table 1: Walking the Dao (*Xing Dao* 行道) in the *Jianlu jianwen* 金籙簡文

It is evident that we cannot read this section as a step-by-step guide to a complete ritual. First, part one merely lists the appropriate times throughout the day to perform the rite, ideally six separate occasions, with three also being sufficient. Three daily rituals would become standard in later *zhai* protocols, which indicate them as the three audiences (*chao* 朝) performed morning, midday, and night. Second, the ritual components in this section are not listed in the order they would be performed; the spells to exit the altar gates would be the final rite, with the priests reciting them as they departed the ritual space. Finally,

⁹⁷ The following table is based on the reconstruction in Lü, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 158. As he notes, these are not the actual titles of the sections. He assigns these labels based on the content of each section.

some instructions are apparently absent from the protocols; the *buxu* section is a good example of this issue.

Labeled as “Awesome Observances for Establishing a *Zhai* to Deliver from Transmigration” (*Badu shengsi jianzhai weiyi* 拔度生死建齋威儀), the *buxu* section reads:

Once finished paying obeisance to the ten directions, then at that moment, turn left to circle round the incense burner three times. The master chants the stanzas of Pacing the Void, and the disciples stand at the capital gates to announce their praise.⁹⁸ [Circling] three times is like the ritual methods of the Mystic Terrace. Seniors and juniors should take up their respective order according to rank. Calmly and in an unhurried manner take dignified steps. Harmonize your sounds and rectify your *qi* to sing the stanzas of the Cavern Grotto. Do not glance about or let your intentions and thoughts waver, move too slowly or too quickly, get out of proper order or push one another forward or backward. You must take the measurements of the altar seat, whether [it will be situated within a] broad or narrow [ritual space] as the criteria [for the performance]. For example, if the altar seat is narrow, circumambulate and disperse flowers for the second, fifth, and eighth verses. For the remaining verses, you can face the scripture and images.⁹⁹

禮十方畢，次一時左轉，繞香燈三周。師誦步虛之章，弟子都門讚祝。三周，如玄臺法。尊卑相次，安徐雅步，調聲正氣，誦詠空洞之章。勿得顧盼，意念不專，遲速越錯，更相進卻。要量壇席廣狹為則，如壇席狹處，第二、第五、第八首旋繞散花，餘面經像作可也。

100

⁹⁸ “Gates” refers to the four corners of the ritual space— earthly gate 地戶, heavenly gate 天門, sun 日, and moon 月. For a visual representation of the altar, see the layout diagram in *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 52.1a.

⁹⁹ As I read it, the practical consideration of altar space here is to assure that the officiants have ample room to complete the singing of the stanzas. Within a narrow or small ritual space, the priest would not have sufficient space; one circumambulation would be too short in distance to chant approximately three stanzas.

¹⁰⁰ Preserved in the *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀 (CT 508), 34.4a–7b; see also Lü, *Tangqian daoqiao yishi shigang*, 152.

As has been noted by several scholars, the rite was likely modeled on Buddhist ritual,¹⁰¹ a move that was part of a broader process by which Lingbao Daoists appropriated and adapted Buddhist doctrine and practice.¹⁰² The very pronunciation of *buxu* stanzas within liturgy appears to be based on Buddhist *fanbai* 梵唄 practice (Skt. dharmapāṭha), in which ritual officiants chant hymns or *jie* 偈 (Skt. gāthā), often in praise of the Buddha or other bodhisattvas.¹⁰³ The act of making multiple circuits around the incense burner also has roots in the Buddhist ritual practice of circling a central altar feature, such as a statue of the Buddha or a relic (*sheli* 舍利), though the Daoist method called for a counter-clockwise procession, opposite that of Buddhist procedures. Scattering flowers during the procession was also adapted from Buddhist ritual practices.¹⁰⁴

The opening of the passage on *buxu* performance mentions a preceding ritual act, paying obeisance to the ten directions (*li shifang* 禮十方), which is neither indicated

¹⁰¹ Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” 14-16; Lü, *Tangqian daojiang yishi shigang*, 161–62; John Lagerwey, “Daoist Ritual from the Second through the Sixth Centuries,” in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 146.

¹⁰² Early scholarship emphasizes the influence of Buddhism on Daoism, see for example Erik Zürcher, “Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence” *T’oung Pao* 66 (1980): 84–147; and “‘Prince Moonlight’: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism” *T’oung Pao* 68 (1982): 1–75. However, as more recent work has shown, Daoists were more active in this process of adapting and changing Buddhist doctrine and practice; see for example, Bokenkamp “The Silk worm and the Bodhi Tree; and *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁰³ On *fanbai* practice, see K.P. Whitaker, “Tsaun Jyr and the Introduction of Fannbay 梵唄 into China,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20, No. 1/3, (1957): 585–97; Stephen Teiser *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1994): 168–170; and Kelsey Seymour “The Buddha’s Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2018).

¹⁰⁴ Many scholars have noted the Buddhist character of these features in the *buxu* rite, but have not studied the connections in depth. The topic is certainly worthy of further consideration.

explicitly nor outlined in another section of “Walking the Dao” (chart above). According to other Daoist ritual tracts, this procedure involves thanking and paying homage to the gods of all ten directions.¹⁰⁵ The presence of such notation and the absence of the performance specifications here hints at the difficulty in reconstructing the Walking the Dao ritual from this text and understanding the place of the *buxu* rite within it. Vague instructions like this perhaps refer to other sections in the *Jinlu jianwen*. To give one demonstrative example, Chang Chaoran has suggested that the “Visualizing the Spirits” (*Sishen* 思神) segment, which briefly notes an initial act of presenting incense, must be understood through reference to an entirely different section of the *Jianlu jianwen* text.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, later Daoist ritual texts follow a similar pattern, simply noting a complex ritual procedure through a simple title or notation to perform such-and-such procedure “according to the ritual methods” (*rufa* 如法). That the *Jianlu jianwen* exhibits such ambiguities should come as no surprise.

The reconstruction process of the *Jianlu jianwen* should give us pause in reading too much into the structure of the Lingbao *zhai*. A fundamental component of later *zhai* rituals was a segment titled “Paying Obeisance to the Masters and Actualizing Visions”

¹⁰⁵ Lü Pengzhi notes that this likely takes Buddhist practice as a model; see his *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 161.

¹⁰⁶ The additional section of the *Jinlu jianwen* is titled “Awesome Observances for the Going in Audience to Pay Obeisance and Burning Incense” (*Chaoli shaoxiang weiyi* 朝禮燒香威儀). See Lü, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 145. In this rite, the priests enter the altar, and then each offers three sticks of incense in order, with the head officiant, doing so first. The rite also involves visualization of the gods of the five storehouses (*wuzang* 五臟), the five astral bodies (*wuxing* 五星), and five thearchs (*wudi* 五帝) to guard the body, as well as a golden light that suffuses the body until the entire figure becomes a golden hue and a circle of light emerges from the nape of the neck. Having performed the visualizations, the priests then offer the incense and the ritual performance can continue as outlined in the “Walking the Dao” section. See Chang Chaoran 張超然, “Tang Song daojiao zhanyi zhong de ‘lishi cunnian’ ji qi yuanliu kaolun—jian lun daojiao Zhaitan tuxiang de yunyong” 唐宋道教齋儀中的「禮師存念」及其源流考論——兼論道教齋壇圖像的運用, *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 45, no. 3 (Sept. 2015), 396.

(*lishi cunnian* 禮師存念). In this part of the ritual, performed as one of several preparatory steps before the core of the Walking the Dao ritual, officiants call forth and pay homage to their past masters, whose presence ensures the legitimacy and authority of the ritual proceedings. Thereafter, the head priest performs a series of visualizations that help to secure both the body and altar. Chang Chaoran has expressed some doubt about the existence of the “Paying Obeisance to the Masters” (*lishi* 禮師) segment in the *Jinlu jinwen*, noting that Lü Pengzhi’s reconstruction of the text at this point is based on a later Dunhuang manuscript the *Dongxuan lingbao ziran zhajie weiyi jing* 洞玄靈寶自然齋戒威儀經.¹⁰⁷ Whether the *lishi cunnian* segment existed in the original *Jinlu jinwen* composed in the 5th century remains questionable.¹⁰⁸ The issue cannot be resolved given the state of extant materials, though Chang Chaoran’s comments are worth underscoring. To put it more clearly, the reconstruction of the *Jianlu jianwen*, though informed by a profound knowledge of Daoist ritual, texts, and history, remains highly speculative, reliant upon citations from later Daoist collectanea and ritual manuscripts from Dunhuang and well-known Daoist ritual specialists such as Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933), who fixed protocols for several Daoist rituals in the late Tang and Five Dynasties period. Therefore, we cannot pinpoint the place and role of the *buxu* segment in the overall ritual structure, as it would have been performed in these early stages of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 392.

¹⁰⁸ Lü himself suggests a similar idea in his discussion of how the simpler ritual procedures of the *Jinlu jianwen* were later fleshed out and additional segments were added to the ritual framework; see his *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 164.

development, without reverting to assumptions and conjecture based on a knowledge of later *zhai* formulations.

Nevertheless, we can glean key ideas from the *Jinlu jianwen* passage on the *buxu* rite. First is the presumption that the ritual actions of the Daoist officiants mimic the gods' in the heavens. The head priest's movements round the central incense burner, performed in a calculated and focused manner, simulate the path of the deities upward and around the Jade Capitoline mountain as they travel to the Mystic Capital for a *zhai*. The *buxu* rite serves as a reenactment of the rituals performed in the heavens.¹⁰⁹ This intimate connection between celestial and worldly ritual is underscored in a surviving citation of the *Jinlu jianwen*:¹¹⁰

Three times a day, the utmost perfected of the ten directions, the multitudes of the great sages who have already obtained the Dao in the trichiliocosm, and the perfected beings of wondrous action from that which is so of itself, wind round the upper palace, knocking their heads and paying obeisance. They fly in the void and float in the emptiness, dispersing flowers and burning incense. In their hands, they carry banners of ten striations as they sing the cavern stanzas to praise the numinous profundity of the nine heavens and revere the wondrous importance of the mystic writs. When Daoist priests conduct a *zhai* today, the reason they circumambulate the high seat, singing the pacing the void [stanzas] is because it is precisely the time when the multitudes of sages and perfected beings of the Mystic Roots of the Upper Law¹¹¹ go in audience for a banquet at the Jade Capitoline [Mountain].

¹⁰⁹ Mircea Eliade's work on myth, ritual, and divine archetypes is especially pertinent here. See for example, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 1–48; and *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc., 1987), 91–113. Cheng Tsan-shan notes this connection to Eliade as well; see his “Liuchao daojiao buxu yu lingbao zhayiyi de fazan xipu,” 10–11.

¹¹⁰ *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefu dengzhu yuan* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀 (CT 524), 11b.

¹¹¹ Compare *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie wei yi zhujing yaojue* (CT 352), 6b–7a:

When the prostrations are complete, *zhai* officiants proceed in order clockwise, circumambulating the incense burner three times until finished. At the same time, they should also incant the Cavern Stanzas for Pacing the Void, Treading Nothingness, and the Numinous Stanzas of the Void Cavern. The reason one

十方至真，三千大千已得道大聖衆及自然妙行真人，皆一日三時，旋繞上官，稽首行禮。飛虛浮空，散花燒香，手把十絕，嘯詠洞章，讚九天之靈輿，尊玄文之妙重也。今道士齋時，所以巡繞高座、吟詠步虛者，正是上法玄根衆聖真人朝宴玉京時也。

The entirety of the *buxu* rite is modeled on a celestial ritual event. Moreover, the priests, in their various ritual gestures performed during the *buxu* rite, also emulate the divine beings as well. Just as the gods burn incense and disperse flowers during their procession, so do the priests, advancing solemnly and slowly round the incense burner. At their breast, the priests also carry a wooden tablet, a ritual object signifying their status as an officiant with the recognized authority to proceed forward, which parallels the banners that the gods unfurl before them.

The second key facet we can glean from the *Jinlu jianwen*'s limited statements on Pacing the Void is the solemnity of the rite, revealed in the admonitions to the priests regarding their conduct. The short *buxu* section in the Walking the Dao segment of the text exhorts officiants: "Seniors and juniors should take up their respective order according to rank. Calmly and in an unhurried manner take dignified steps. Harmonize your sounds and rectify your *qi* to sing the stanzas of the Cavern Grotto. Do not glance about or let your intentions and thoughts waver, move too slowly or too quickly, get out of proper order or push one another forward or backward." The Master of Ritual (*fashi* 法

circumambulates the incense is to imitate above, where in the heavens of Jade Cavern of Mystic Roots of the Upper Law, the Most High Lord of the Great Dao of the Upper Reaches of the Grand Veil Heaven, who rules at the terrace of Seven Treasures of That Which is So of Itself, the Perfected Beings of the Unsurpassed are holding a retreat and incanting as they circumambulate the Terrace of Seven Treasures of the Most High. Nowadays, we imitate this.

拜既竟，齋人以次左行，旋繞香鑪三匝畢。是時亦當口詠步虛躡無披空洞章。所以旋繞香者，上法玄根無上玉洞之天，大羅天上太上大道君，所治七寶自然之臺，無上諸真人持齋，誦詠旋繞太上七寶之臺，今法之焉。

師) stands at the head of the procession, which includes five other officiants, chief cantor (*dujiang* 都講), inspector of the *zhai* (*jianzhai* 監齋), and three attendants (*shi* 侍), one each for the scriptures, incense, and lamps (*jing xiang deng* 經香燈).¹¹² The head priest would set the pace of the procession, a deliberate amble that would allow the priests time enough to sing all ten stanzas over the course of three circumambulations. Inner thoughts had to be regulated, and any glances about threatened the intense focus that the rite required. Another surviving *Jinlu jianwen* passage elaborates on these directions, especially the visualizations that were meant to simultaneously transpire:

To walk the Dao and pay obeisance, you must all calmly and in an unhurried manner take dignified steps, examine and rectify [yourselves to remain] composed, lower and raise your heads together in accord, and you cannot [proceed] unevenly. As you make your circuits and pace the void, you should all hold your tablets to your chests; in the winter months, do not clasp your hands together, and in the summer months, do not hold a fan. You may only stand straight and face forward, casting your gaze inwards to actualize the appearance of the Most High upon the high seat. Concentrate your thoughts on the mystic perfected and make the heart and form similar to cinnabar. When the rites correspond to heaven's standards,¹¹³ then they become that which flying transcendents esteem and admire, the [inhabitants] of the three realms deem the model, and that which ghosts and deities altogether regard with respect. Do not look left and or right, push one another forward or backward, or laugh and banter. If there is something to be censured, then you will offend the awesome spirits. The four directorates will denounce your faults, and the five thearchs sentence you to punishment. The standards and protocols indicate what is prohibited—how can you not heed them!

¹¹² The priests' roles are outlined in an earlier section of the *Jinlu jianwen*. See Lü, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 149. See also *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* (CT 352), 20b–21a. On the roles, see also Wang Chengwen 王乘文, “Gu lingbao jing de zhaiguan zhidu yu tianshi dao ji fojiao de guanxi” 古靈寶敬的齋館制度與天師道及佛教的關係, *Dunhuang Tulufan* 敦煌吐魯番研究 6 (2002): 55–80.

¹¹³ My reading here is based on *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* (CT 352), which contains the same line with the addition of three characters at the beginning: “Cause the awesome rites to accord with heaven's standards” 令威儀合於天典 (6b).

行道禮拜，皆當安徐雅步，審整庠序，俯仰齊同，不得參差。巡行步虛，皆執板當心。冬月不得拱心，夏月不得把扇。唯正身前向，臨目內視，存見太上在高座上，注念玄真，使心形同丹。合於天典，則爲飛仙之所嗟歎，三界之所軌範，鬼神之所具瞻也。不得左顧右盼，更相前却，及言語笑謔，有所呵喚，則觸忤威靈。四司糾過，五帝結刑，則科所禁，可不慎哉。

In their visualizations, the priests transform the censer that stands at the center of the altar into the seat of the Most High, *Taishang xuhuang daojun* 太上虛皇道君, who, as we saw before, is the deity referenced several times in the stanzas themselves. The correct performance of the rites, undertaken with due sincerity, focus, and solemnity, aligns the ritual with the celestial standards and moves the gods. However, with the opposite, priests shall be subject to denunciation and punishment. The directions and prohibitions outlined in these short passages of the *Jinlu jianwen* paint a picture of a dignified performance, filled with symbolic movement, gesture, and song. Upon completion of the *buxu* rite, priests would undoubtedly proceed to the next portion of the ritual performance; however, based on the surviving text of the *Jinlu jianwen*, it is unclear what is meant to follow.

As Lü Pengzhi notes, the subsequent passage of the *Jianlu jianwen* concerns an important procedure called “igniting the burner” (*falu* 發爐),¹¹⁴ which involves the symbolic deification of the priest by means of incantation and gesture. The priest calls upon *Taishang laojun* 太上老君, the deified form of Laozi, to aid in two ways: first, to externalize bodily gods, in essence messengers, that will ferry the words and supplications of the priests to the heavens; and second, to infuse the body with celestial *qi* to fully transform the officiant into a divine officer as well. The ritual procedure is foundational to the performance of the *zhai* as it links the body of the officiant to the

¹¹⁴ Lü, *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang*, 152 and 158.

heavens, allowing him to communicate directly with the requisite celestial authorities. According to the structural logic of later Daoist ritual procedures, “igniting the burner” should take place at the outset of all three parts of the *zhai*—the Nocturnal Invocation, Walking the Dao, and the announcement of merit; once the ritual aims of these have been achieved, the priest then “extinguishes the burner” (*fulu* 復爐), returning the body to a mundane state, and thereafter exits the altar. Igniting and extinguishing the burner serve to bookend the most important ritual procedures. The addition of the *fulu* procedure directly after the *buxu* section in the *Jinlu jianwen*, does not accord with this basic structure, for the *buxu* rite, according to later *zhai* procedures, would be performed as part of the core ritual. Though these passages of the *Jinlu jianwen* contain important details about the early form of the *buxu* rite, because of the nature of the text and the reconstruction, which compel us to make suppositions about the structure of the Lingbao *zhai*, we can determine relatively few solid particulars about what role the *buxu* rite plays in the overall ritual, as well as any structural logic underlying the ritual.

For a better understanding, we must turn to other ritual texts. The first of these, the *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 (CT 532) [hereafter *Zhujing yaojue*], another work of the early Lingbao corpus, though perhaps somewhat later than the *Jinlu jianwen* in that it contains instructions for the entire body of Lingbao scriptures,¹¹⁵ contains more complete directions for the

¹¹⁵ According to Lu Xiujing’s catalogue of 437, the work is part of the Transcendent Duke Series (*Xiangong xi* 仙公系), attributed to Ge Xuan. See Ōfuchi “On Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” 54. Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美 has dated it to around 430, see his “Reihō saishō no seiritsu no tenkai” 靈寶齋法の成立と展開 in *Dōkyō no saishōgirei no sisōshiteki kenkyū* 道教の齋法儀禮の思想史的研究, ed. Kobayashi Masayoshi (Tokyo: Chisen shokan, 2006), 72.

performance of the *zhai*.¹¹⁶ The work shows marked traces of Celestial Master (*tianshi* 天師) doctrine and social organization, but singles out Lingbao scriptures as paramount among all Daoist writings and teachings.¹¹⁷ Ofuchi Ninji has noted that the work is likely incomplete;¹¹⁸ however, the first portion of the work very clearly organizes the *zhai* procedures, which I have sketched out in the following table.

1. Entering the <i>zhai</i> hall	<i>Ru zhaitang</i> 入齋堂
2. Igniting the burner	<i>Falu</i> 發爐
3. Externalizing the officers to undertake matters	<i>Chuguan qishi</i> 出官啟事
4. Extinguishing the burner	<i>Fulu</i> 復爐
5. Proclaiming the ordination rank	<i>Cheng fawei</i> 稱法位
6. Threefold submission of incense and vows	<i>San shaoxiang san zhuyuan</i> 三燒香三祝願
7. Submission of vows to the ten directions	<i>Shifang yuannian</i> 十方願念
8. Paying obeisance to the ten directions	<i>Shifang li</i> 十方禮
9. Pacing the void	<i>Buxu</i> 步虛
10. Turning the scriptures	<i>Zhuanjing</i> 轉經

Table 2: *Zhai* procedures in the *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 (CT 532)

After entering the altar, the priest must undergo a kind of divinization through the “igniting the burner,” a rite that allows the officiant to thereafter convey messages to the gods. The rite is the crucial first step for the following “externalizing the officers.”

¹¹⁶ Lagerwey, “Daoist Ritual from the Second through Sixth Centuries,” 150–52.

¹¹⁷ Kobayashi, “Reihō saishō no seiritsu no tenkai” 73–75. See also *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* (CT 352), 9b and 12b.

¹¹⁸ Ōfuchi “On Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” 54. This assessment is based on several passages preserved in the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138) being absent from the extant version of the scripture in the *Daozang*. One significant passage is a list of 36 taboos or prohibitions that are cited in the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 48.7b–9b.

Through a series of visualizations and proclamations, the priest calls upon the corporeal gods known as merit officers (*gongcao* 功曹) and official emissaries (*guanshi* 官使) to come forth from the body and report the ritual events to the requisite divine offices. In this case, the officers will report the recitation of scripture, which occurs at the close of the ritual sequence, ensuring that the merit of the act will accrue to the ritual participants. After exteriorizing the officers, the priest calls them back to the palaces of the body and, with an additional incantation, reverts back to mundane form by extinguishing the burner. These three rites, derived from earlier Celestial Master petition rituals, comprise the core of the ritual.¹¹⁹ With the ensuing proclamation of ordination rank, the priest declares before heaven and earth that he has the authority to perform the offerings of incense and the proclamation of vows that follow. The three vows serve as an attestation to the priests' aims, that is, that the merit (*gongde* 功德) accrued through the recitation will flow to the seven generations of ancestors, the ruler, and all living beings. Thereafter, the priest takes refuge (*guiming* 歸命) in the celestial worthies of the ten directions and makes prostrations before each. Echoing passages we have already explored, the *Zhujing yaojue* includes a short section on the *buxu* rite, noting its heavenly precedent and providing guidelines for proper conduct during the performance.¹²⁰ The performance of the hymns leads into the final act of scripture recitation, a transition that appears to echo

¹¹⁹ On Celestial Master rites, see Terry F. Kleeman, *Celestial Masters: History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 285–88 and 353–54; Franciscus Verellen, “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong Zi’s Petition Almanac,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 291–343; idem, *Imperiled Destinies: The Daoist Quest for Deliverance in Medieval China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), 19–122.

¹²⁰ Lagerwey has partially translated the passage; see his “Daoist Ritual from the Second through Sixth Centuries,” 151–52.

the mythology inherent in the *buxu* stanzas themselves. Stanza nine notes the scene at the Golden Watchtowers (*jinque* 金闕):

虛皇撫雲璈， 衆真誦洞經。	The Void Thearch strums his cloud ao, As the masses of perfected recite the Cavern Scriptures.
高僊拱手讚， 彌劫保利貞。	Lofty transcendents clasps their hands together as they sing praises; For extensive kalpas, may favor and uprightness be preserved.

According to the stanza, the gods pace the void to the pinnacle of *Yujing shan*, where they then recite the Cavern Scriptures. Both forms of oral performance, singing hymns and reciting scripture, reproduced the acts of the gods. In this performance, the singing of the *buxu* stanzas serves neither an apotropaic nor a concluding celebratory function, two aspects of the various Shangqing hymns explored in the previous chapter. Instead, the performance of the hymns in the earliest formulations of the Lingbao *zhai* serves as a preliminary step to the more consequential act of scripture recitation, intended to accumulate merit to assist in the salvation of the living and dead. The performance is akin perhaps to the vibrant ceremony of music and movement involved in a bridal procession. In the creation of the Lingbao *zhai*, ritual and mythology become fused together,¹²¹ and priests embody that mythology through voice, gesture, and movement.

Scripture recitation could be carried out in larger communal ritual settings such as during Lingbao *zhai*, but it was also an individual cultivation practice. The *Zhujing*

¹²¹ As Cheng has argued, Ge Chaofu used the mythology to rationalize the formulation of the *zhai*; see his “Liuchao dao jiao bu xu yu lingbao zhai yi de fazhan xipu,” 7. Bokenkamp cites this as the “integration of myth and practice.” See his “The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Buddhist Monasticism,” 123. This is also loosely tied to Catherine Bell’s notion of the ritualization of texts; see her “Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy,” *History of Religions* 27.4 (1988): 386–89. Put simply, aspects of scripture and their ideas are integrated into ritual frameworks.

yaojue makes this distinction in the introductory passage to the ritual methods for scripture recitation:

If you wish to hold a lengthy *zhai* and long reflect on your pursuit of the transcendent path, then you should erect a separate *zhai* hall. You must then ensure the space is purified and in order. Set out a scripture table and incense burner and install a high seat in the middle [of the space].¹²²

若欲長齋，久思求仙道，當別立齋堂，必令靜潔肅整，羅列經案香鑪，施安高座於其中也。

The passage describes an individual ritual space devoted to the recitation of scripture, set apart from the quotidian spaces of mundane life. Known as oratories or quiet chambers (*jingshi* 靜室/靖室 or *qingshi* 清室), such spaces had long been part of Daoist practices.¹²³ The ritual referenced here, though also known as a *zhai*, was quite different in scope and aim than the communal *zhai* outlined above. A singular practitioner undertook certain practices, such as meditative visualizations and scripture recitation as a way to cultivate the self. The *buxu* stanzas were part of the body of hymns to be recited during these individual *zhai*. regular basis The *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣, another scripture of the early Lingbao corpus,¹²⁴ notes the expected outcome of their recitation:

If a Daoist enters a chamber for a *zhai* and reads the Jade Stanzas for Pacing the Void to the Most High, as well as the Feathered Writings for Flight, then he will be able to gallop upon the nine dragons, and the cloud carriage will come to greet him. As for these two matters, one ought to keep them secret.¹²⁵

¹²² *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie wei yi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 (CT 532), 7b.

¹²³ See Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 222–28.

¹²⁴ Cheng dates the mythology section of the *Buxu jing* to after this scripture; see his “Liuchao dao jing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng,” 243.

¹²⁵ *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* (CT 425), 7b.

道士入室齋，讀太上步虛之玉章，及飛行羽書，則能馳騁九龍，雲駕來迎。此兩事，宜秘之矣。

Reading the stanzas could help one to achieve transcendence and ascend to the heavens, but this could not be done haphazardly. The process involved a precise set of ritual procedures, one that mirrored earlier Shangqing practices of ingesting solar and astral pneumas:

When reciting the Scripture on Pacing the Void of the Cavern Mysteries of the Most High, first clack your teeth together three times and swallow saliva three times. In your mind, actualize a sun and moon above your face that then enters the Golden Floriate Palace of the Cavern Chambers through your nostrils. After the bright light emerges from the nape of your neck, it radiantly forms a circular image of nine colors that presses into the jade pillow.¹²⁶ [The image] fully illuminates the ten directions, following as you circumambulate the scripture, circling round and moving. The sun enters through left nostril, while the moon enters through the right. Once finished, again clack your teeth as you did initially according to the regulations.¹²⁷

誦太上洞玄步虛經時，先叩齒三下，咽液三過，心存日月在已面上，從鼻孔入洞房金華宮，光明出項後，煥然作九色圓象，薄入玉枕，徹照於十方，隨我遶經，旋迴而行矣。日從鼻左入，月從鼻右入，畢，又叩齒如初法。

Clacking the teeth together awakens the gods of the body, informing them that important ritualized transformations shall soon transpire. The second instance of clacking signals that the visualizations have concluded, so the body gods may return to their dormant state.

¹²⁶ The Jade pillow is located at the back of the head behind the brain and is one of three passes (*guan* 關) along the spinal column. The others are the caudal pass (*weilü* 尾閭), the base of the spinal column, and the spinal handle (*jiaji* 夾脊). See Catherine Despeaux, *Daoism and Self-Knowledge: The Chart for the Cultivation of Perfected (Xiuzhen tu)*, trans. Jonathan Pettit (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 117–18. Despeaux’s work focuses on much later cultivation texts, but the Jade Pillow, as a bodily location, is noted as early as the *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* (CT 6), 2.3b.

¹²⁷ *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* (CT 425), 5b–6a. These instructions are canonized in a later collections, such as the *Yaoxiu keyi jielu chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔 (CT 463), 2.5a.

Having performed the requisite visualizations, transforming the body into a kind of divine transmitter, the adept could proceed with the recitation. The use of such visualizations as described here harks back to Shangqing meditation practices for imbibing solar and lunar essences, meant to transform the adept into a transcendent being.¹²⁸ Lingbao practices add another layer to the development of Daoist cultivation practices by fusing the internal transformations with the external repetition of divine sounds, the recitation of scripture.¹²⁹ Cheng Tsan-Shan has suggested that these *buxu* visualization methods grew out of the stanzas, in particularly stanza four (explored above); however, he acknowledges that they may have emerged at the same time.¹³⁰ The instructions of the *Yujing baojue* also mirror those found in the mythology section of the *Buxu jing*:

If you are able to hold a long *zhai* and reflect at great lengths; recite the cavern scriptures; knock the teeth and swallow saliva; expel and inhale Grand Harmony, then your body will become a golden efflorescent hue, and the nape of the neck will bear a circle of light—your head will be pinned with mystic effulgences of the sun flowers and moon blossoms.

兆能長齋久思，諷誦洞經，叩齒咽液，吐納太和，身作金華色，項負圓光，頭簪日華月英玄景。

¹²⁸ See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 283–89 and 314–22.

¹²⁹ Shangqing cultivation practices focused on internal visualizations and transformations of the body, undertaken alone, which were meant to replace the Celestial Master practice of “merging pneumas” (*heqi* 合氣), a sexual union of male and female practitioners. On the practice of *heqi*, see Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, 158–74; and “The Performance and Significance of the Merging the Pneumas Rites (*Heqi*) Rite in Early Daoism,” *Daoism: Religion, History and Society*, no. 6 (2014), 85–112; Gil Raz, “The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism,” *NAN NÜ* 10, no. 1 (2008): 86–120; and *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 177–209; and Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 283–89.

¹³⁰ See Cheng “Liuchao daoqing *Yujingshan buxu jing* jingwen niandai kaozheng,” 250.

Cheng suggests that the chronological development of the associated visualization practices began within the *buxu stanzas* and was then fleshed out in the *Yujing baojue*, followed thereafter by the composition of the mythology section of the *Buxu jing*. Hypotheses aside, what is evident, however, is that the oral performance of the *Buxu stanzas* took on two forms in early Lingbao practice, both as individual cultivation and within communal ritual. Lu Xiuqing's Lingbao ritual reforms in the early fifth century also transformed the performance of the stanzas.

The *Buxu* Rite in Lu Xiuqing's Transmission Ritual

Lu Xiuqing's impact on the development of Daoist history and practice cannot be understated. Described by one scholar as a "radical innovator," Lu led a series of reforms in the mid-fifth century in light of several developments, both internal and external to Daoist communities.¹³¹ Celestial Master groups had become even more fragmented and were in decline, particularly after Sun En's 孫恩 Daoist rebellion, around the turn of the century, which was suppressed by Liu Yu 劉裕 (363–422), founder of the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty as Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 420–422). The revelation of both Shangqing and Lingbao scriptures, and their subsequent popularity, had led to a proliferation of forgeries and a scattering of textual materials. Beyond the Daoist community, Buddhism's stature had continued to rise in the south, following its maturation and expansion during the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420), supported by powerful members of the gentry and several rulers. Both the capital Jiankang 健康 and other southern locations, such as Mount Lu 廬

¹³¹ Verellen, *Imperiled Destinies*, 126. For an excellent discussion on Lu, his life, and Daoist endeavors, see *ibid.*, 126–48.

山, became centers of Buddhist activity, where influential Buddhist leaders guided growing communities of monks and lay practitioners.¹³² The measures Lu undertook—formulating the Daoist Canon, collecting and organizing Lingbao scriptures, standardizing Lingbao liturgy—had far-reaching consequences and shaped the direction of Daoist history and practice for centuries.¹³³

The impulse to build a community of like-minded practitioners served as one of the guiding principles for both Ge Chaofu, who composed the Lingbao scriptures, and Lu, in his efforts to reform and standardize Lingbao liturgy. Lu Xiuqing's ritual reforms, as Catherine Bell argues, invested ritual authority in the hands of liturgical specialists at the head of a community.¹³⁴ The knowledge of strict ritual protocols then became a prerequisite for becoming a Daoist ritual specialist. Ritual knowledge also necessitated teachers and processes to impart such ritual expertise, along with the requisite texts. Therefore, ordination rituals, in the context of this new idealized community, took on greater significance as the primary means by which such knowledge, in the form of texts, talismans, and ritual procedures, could be invested in new generations of ritual officiants. Lu Xiuqing's work, the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (CT

¹³² See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 81–159.

¹³³ On Lu's liturgical reforms see Lü, *Tangqian daoqiao yishi shigang*, 182–92; John Lagerwey, "Canonical Fasts According to Lu Xiuqing," in *Affiliation and Transmission: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 41–79; Verellen, *Imperiled Destinies*, 149–215. On Lu's efforts to formulate a canon, see Bokenkamp, "Buddhism, Lu Xiuqing, and the First Daoist Canon," 181–99.

¹³⁴ See Bell, "Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy."

528), was a critical point in the development of transmission rituals, for it came to serve as the model for ordination rites and its structure duplicated in later ritual protocols.¹³⁵

Reacting to the conditions of his time, during which ritual ordinations were regularly conducted in an unsystematic and arbitrary manner, Lu sought to create a standard for Daoist investiture into the various scriptural traditions—Shangqing, Lingbao, and Sanhuang 三皇. He did not devise the ritual out of sheer imagination, but instead relied on models and precedents of southern religious traditions and the Lingbao scriptures. One of the primary forerunners of Lu’s transmission ritual was the *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序, the earliest surviving account of a *jiao* 醮 ritual, and a synthesis of other earlier practices.¹³⁶ Gil Raz traces the development of ritual procedures in the *Wufu xu* to the *Lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 and then to Lu Xiuqing’s *Shoudu yi*. In the context of transmission rites, Raz understands this development as a move from blood sacrifice and oath to a Daoist covenant marked by pure offerings.¹³⁷ Lü Pengzhi has remarked on the tremendous influence of *fangshi* 方士 ritual traditions in the new Lingbao formulation of a transmission ritual, in which Lu clearly relies on oaths and

¹³⁵ Lü Pengzhi writes of the ritual’s influence: “From the Southern Dynasties onwards, in addition to the transmission ritual, other types of Daoist ritual (rituals of the fast 齋儀, petition 章儀, offering 醮儀 and audience 朝儀) also drew on or imitated the Lingbao fast order and rules, thus launching “Lingbaoization” in the history of Daoism. “Lingbaoization” is the basic tendency of Daoist ritual from the 5th century on. Lu Xiuqing’s *Shoudu yi* was, so to speak, the pioneer that blazed a trail to “Lingbaoization”; it has exerted profound and lasting influence on the history of Daoist ritual.” See Lü Pengzhi, “The Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual,” 24.

¹³⁶ On the rite’s relationship to other practices, see Gil Raz, “Imperial Efficacy: Debates on Imperial Ritual in Early Medieval China and the Emergence of Daoist Ritual Schemata, in *Purposes, Means, and Convictions in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007): 83–109.

¹³⁷ Raz, *Emergence of Daoism*, 111.

pledge offerings associated with the *fangshi* tradition.¹³⁸ Both Raz and Lü highlight the fundamental importance of the covenant at the heart of the *Shoudu yi*, which was based on similar *fangshi* practices. The disciples proclaimed their commitment, establishing a bond, with the gods as witness, between a master and themselves, pledging to uphold the Dao, carrying out the prescribed ritual duties, and continuing the proper transmission of knowledge. Scholars are indeed correct that earlier master-disciple precedents stand at the core of the transmission; however, Lu offered an incredibly innovative program, one that drew heavily on the Lingbao corpus and combined both ritual transmission and the Lingbao *zhai*.¹³⁹ Lu's approach to ritual standardization was one of synthesis and integration.¹⁴⁰ The *buxu* rite was one element of the Lingbao *zhai* that he integrated into the transmission ritual; yet, in doing so, he altered the intimate connection between mythology and rite that was at the forefront of *buxu*'s place within the Lingbao *zhai*.

The *Shoudu yi* has been studied at length by scholars of Daoist studies, outlined and analyzed from various perspectives. Thus, I neither wish to recapitulate the complexities of their analyses nor explicate every fine detail of the ritual proceedings, but simply to give a rough outline and note how the recitation and performance of the *buxu* hymns functioned within.¹⁴¹ The series of rituals involved in the transmission was meant

¹³⁸ Lü Pengzhi, "Daoist Rituals," in *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, eds. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1280–84.

¹³⁹ On the Lingbao scripture portions of the *Shoudu yi*, see Bokenkamp, "The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Buddhist Monasticism," 98–99.

¹⁴⁰ On this aspect of Lu's work with regard to the *Shoudu yi*, see Lü, "The Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual," 6–12; and Bokenkamp, "The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Daoist Monasticism," 98–100.

¹⁴¹ On the *Shoudu yi*, see especially Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten* 道教とその經典 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1997), 331–43; Yamada Toshiaki, "The Evolution of Taoist Ritual: K'ou Ch'ien-chih and Lu

to take place over three days and follows a similar tripartite structure as the Lingbao *zhai*.¹⁴² Whereas *zhai* protocols call for Nocturnal Invocation, Walking the Dao, and announcement of merit, the *Shoudu yi* replaces the second portion with the transmission of texts, registers, and ritual objects, maintaining the first and third portions. The first day is reserved for the Nocturnal Invocation, with the transmission taking place on the second day.

At the outset of the transmission ritual, the head officiant undertakes a series of preparatory steps to protect the ritual space and body, involving both retentive actualization (*cunsi* 存思) and two series of incantations, one titled “Stanzas of Grand Emptiness of the Golden Perfected” (*Jin zhen taikong zhang* 金真太空章) and the other the “Divine Incantations for Protecting the Spirits” (*Weiling zhenzhou* 衛靈神咒).¹⁴³ The first, later known as the “Incantation to Control Demons” (*Zhimo zhou* 制魔咒),¹⁴⁴ is an apotropaic verse meant to call on the support of divine troops to quell demonic forces. The second, pronounced after the officiant and disciples enter the inner altar, is intended to secure the ritual space in the five directions (four cardinal and center). Then, the

Hsiu-ching,” *Acta Asiatica* 68 (1995): 79–81; Lagerwey, “A Grammatical Reading;” Lü, “Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual;” Chang Chaoran 張超然, “Yuan fa ru dao: Nansong lingbao chuandu keyi yanjiu” 援法入道：南宋靈寶傳度科儀研究, in *Jingdian dao jiao yudifang zongjiao* 經典道教與地方宗教, ed. Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維 (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2014), 143–48; Hsieh, *Tianjie zhi wen*, 254–93; Bokenkamp, “The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Daoist Monasticism,” 95–124; and Gil Raz, “Daoist Ritual Theory in the Work of Lu Xiujing,” in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 125–29.

¹⁴² I follow the reconstructions in Lagerwey, “A Grammatical Reading,” 51–56; and Lü, “Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual,” 25–27.

¹⁴³ The first set is adopted from a Shangqing work titled, *Shangqing jin zhen yuguang bajing feijing* 上清金真玉光八景飛經 (CT 1378), 14a–15a; while the latter first appears in the Lingbao scriptures.

¹⁴⁴ *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 40.5b–6b

officialant can ignite the incense burner (*yalu* 發爐) and externalize the officers (*chuguan* 出官) to carry the text of the memorial (*biao* 表) to the heavens. Absent from the text of the *Shoudu yi*, the ritual document, the memorial, would ostensibly contain the names and information of the disciples set to be ordained. The purpose of reading and dispatching the memorial (*fabiao* 發表) was to inform the appropriate celestial offices that the disciples would thereby be invested with requisite knowledge and authority. The head priest then invites the gods to experience the transmission and establishment of the covenant. All participants thereafter make three presentations of incense to each of the five directions, followed by the singing of the Lauds for the Five Perfected (*Wuzhenren song* 五真人頌).

These proceedings set the stage for the actual transmission, which includes a series of texts, registers, and ritual implements.¹⁴⁵ For the disciples, the receipt of these materials signified their obtainment of the Lingbao ordination rank.¹⁴⁶ In the following procedures, the master and disciples make separate declarations to solidify the covenant between themselves and the gods. In the final section of the master's declaration, titled the "Cinnabar Water Writ" (*Danshui wen* 丹水文), he proclaims: "Today, I have established a yellow altar to form a covenant with the five thearchs and transmit the

¹⁴⁵ These included the *Wupian zhenwen* along with the Jade Taboo Names of the Five Demons (*Wumoyuhui* 五魔玉諱), the Register of the Eight Effulgences in Three Sections (*Sanbu bajing lu* 三部八景錄), the Register of the Esoteric Sounds of the Jade Characters (*Neiyin yuzi lu* 內音玉字錄), the Divine Tablets of the Eight Awesomes (*Bawei shence* 八威神策), and the Divine Staff of Primordial Commencement (*Yuanshi shenzhang* 元始神杖).

¹⁴⁶ Evidence suggests that the ordination outlined in the *Shoudu yi* was the highest of Lingbao ordination during this period. See the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhongjian wen* 太上洞玄靈寶眾簡文 (CT 410), 1b–2a. For a discussion, see Chang "Chuan fa ru dao," 143; and Lü, "Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual," 13–20.

precious writs and ten sections of wondrous scriptures. May all the heavens and five marchmounts inspect my conduct and attentive methods. May I continue to embrace [this covenant] within my heart, so that the time of my soaring transcendence can be stipulated, and in the end, I may become a perfected of the Dao” 今建立黃壇，闕盟五帝，付授寶文十部妙經。諸天五嶽，咸對盟文，檢行慎法。抱於中心，飛仙可期，終成道真。¹⁴⁷ The text of the disciples’ covenant describes the good fortune of having encountered the Dao and a master to guide their pursuit. They promise to never violate the covenant—indiscriminately transmitting scriptures and methods, treating their ritual duties without due reverence, breaking precepts, among other things—lest they suffer punishment “upon transmigration together, sinking into the earthly prisons of the five paths” 生死同淪地獄五道. In closing, they proclaim: “Above, we inform *Yuanshi* [*tianzun*], below we notify the five thearchs, that before our master, the treasured one,¹⁴⁸ we personally establish this covenant” 上告元始，下誓五帝，身對師寶，自立盟誓. Finally, the master proffers the texts and registers, with the disciples offering their “objects of pledge”(*xinwu* 信物) in exchange. The disciples make nine full prostrations before the master, before paying obeisance to the ten directions (*li shifang* 禮十) whilst carrying the texts and wearing the tablets and staff.

At that moment, the head priest rises and circumambulates (*xunxing* 巡行) the ritual space, singing all ten *buxu* stanzas. As he proceeds, “every time [the master]

¹⁴⁷ *Taishang lingbao shoudu yi* (CT 528), 39a.

¹⁴⁸ During rituals, Daoists often pay homage to the Three Treasures (*Sanbao*), the Dao 道, scriptures (*jing* 經), and lineage masters (*shi* 師).

finishes singing a *buxu* stanza, the disciples sing out “Excellent!”, scatter flowers, and make one prostration” 每誦步虛一首訖，弟子唱善，散花禮一拜。¹⁴⁹ The *buxu* performance is followed by the singing of another set of hymns, “Lauds for Paying Obeisance to the Scriptures” (*lijing song* 禮經頌),¹⁵⁰ as well as the three homages (*sanli* 三禮) to the Dao, scriptures, and lineage masters. Thereafter, the master discourses on the prohibitions and precepts (*shuo Yuanshi jinjie* 說元始禁戒). After each sentence of the master’s explanation, the disciples sing out their assent (*changnuo* 唱諾). The disciples then read six oath texts (*liu shiwen* 六誓文) which stipulate their commitment to refrain from improperly divulging the scriptures and to treat them with due reverence. Then, the master conveys to each disciple a tablet with the new ordination rank engraved upon it. Together the disciples kneel, performing countless repentant gestures of kowtowing (*koutou* 叩頭) and kneading the cheeks (*tuanjia* 搏頰), as the master reads a final grand confession (*daxie* 大謝) before the gods.¹⁵¹ Eight more hymns, the “Lyrics of the Three Paths and Five Sufferings” (*Santu wuku ci* 三徒五苦辭),¹⁵² sung by the head priest, punctuate the conclusion of the confession. To close the core of the ritual, the priest announces the merit of the event (*yangong* 言功) and calls back the celestial officials

¹⁴⁹ *Taishang lingbao shoudu yi* (CT 528), 43b.

¹⁵⁰ This set of hymns is adapted from the Lingbao work, *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhihui benyuan dajie shangping jing* (CT344), 7b.

¹⁵¹ Celestial Master rites contain similar repentant gestures performed together; see for example *Chisong zi zhangli* 赤松子章曆 (CT 615), 2.29a; and *Zhengyi fawen jing* 正一法文經 (CT 1204), 7b.

¹⁵² This set of hymns is adapted from the Lingbao work, *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhihui benyuan dajie shangping jing* (CT344), 16a–7a.

(*fuguan* 復官), the body gods sent forth in the opening of the ritual. Thereafter, he extinguishes the burner (*fulu* 復爐). Many of these ritual segments, as the text relates, are tied together by various movements and gestures performed by the master and disciples—rising, kneeling, prostrations, walking about the altar to face different directions—which Lu notes in the paratext; however, these are less consequential to a general understanding of the ritual proceedings, and so I have omitted them here.

With regard to the performance of the *buxu* hymns, it is necessary to note those aspects that have been altered from their earliest iteration in the Lingbao *zhai*. First and foremost, is the disconnect from the Lingbao mythology. Despite the vestigial remnants of the procession up the Jade Capitoline Mountain, suggested in the circulation of the altar and dispersal of flowers, the ritual structure itself no longer aligns with the mythology. Recall that the mythology centered on the audience before *Yuanshi tianzun* and the Lingbao writs. And, several points in the Lingbao text note the priests' imitation of the gods' performance. In the *zhai*, priests become perfected beings, simulate the ritual ascent, and then recite scriptures, just as recounted in both the mythology and the stanzas. This is almost wholly absent from the *Shoudu yi*. The singing of the hymns follows the conveyance of texts, registers, and ritual implements and the pronunciation of the covenant. In effect, their performance, followed by the singing of additional hymns, becomes a kind of celebratory, triumphant act, undertaken in culmination of the consequential ordination that transpired just before. We saw this important facet of hymnal singing in Shangqing works explored in the last preceding chapter. Lu Xiuqing also appears to have slightly modified the stanzas' performance. Within the *zhai*, the head priest leads the solemn procession of officiants, six in total, around the central altar seat.

In the transmission ritual, only the head priest sings the lines and moves about the altar, while the disciples stand aside, scattering flowers and proclaiming the stanzas' excellence. Clearly the circumstances of these two rituals are quite different. For one, the other participants in the *Shoudu yi*, the disciples, are not yet qualified to perform a more significant role within the ritual; second, the purposes of the rituals diverge. Yet, the decoupling of mythology and ritual is not insignificant and part of a broader tendency in the development of Daoist ritual.

The *buxu* rite, as a discrete ritual segment, serves as an excellent example of several aspects of Daoist ritual theory, implicit within Lu's writings and ritual formulations and underlying other works of Daoist rituals.¹⁵³ First, ritual segments could shift in meaning dependent upon the ritual structure. Above, I noted Lu's methodologies of synthesis and integration which Gil Raz nicely articulates in his discussion of ritual:

[M]edieval Daoists constructed their ritual schemes from diverse traditional sources. In creating their ritual syntheses Daoists incorporated originally discrete methods for specific, practical goals, such as apotropaic, healing, divination, or exorcistic techniques. In adapting such methods into complex ritual systems with overarching cosmological frameworks Daoists provided these methods with new purposes and explanations. The same practice would thus have different meanings in the different contexts.¹⁵⁴

With the creation of the Lingbao transmission ritual, Lu brought together a range of materials from various ritual traditions. From the Lingbao scriptures, he adopted the *buxu* hymns and their performance, integrating them into an entirely different context in a

¹⁵³ Here I draw on two articles by Gil Raz, "Daoist Ritual Theory in the Work of Lu Xiuqing" and "Ritual Theory in Medieval Daoism," in *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, ed. Gil Raz Lucia Dolce and Katja Triplett, Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, 2010), 407–24.

¹⁵⁴ Raz, "Ritual Theory in Medieval Daoism," 410.

newly comprised ritual structure. In doing so, he imbued them with a new significance and meaning as celebratory verse. Later uses of the *buxu* hymns reflect further shifts in meaning. For example, in Du Guangting's protocols for the Yellow Register *Zhai* (*Huanglu zhai* 黃籙齋),¹⁵⁵ the *buxu* hymns are performed in a similar ritual structure as the Lingbao *zhai* but broken apart into the separate audience rituals (*chao* 朝) throughout the day. Within one audience ritual only three of the stanzas are performed, thus diminishing the underlying meaning of the set as a whole. Disconnected from the entire set, which describes the gradual ascent of the gods up the Jade Capitoline Mountain, they become devoid of their collective meaning. Perhaps the significance, then, is that they remain a simple gesture to the cosmogonic mythology that underlies the formation of the ritual being performed. In contemporary southern Taiwan, *buxu* hymns serve as a kind of introit at the outset of the core ritual.¹⁵⁶ Across the history and development of Daoist ritual, the *buxu* hymns have taken on different meanings within various ritual contexts. The changing meanings of the performance of the hymns is related to the second aspect of Daoist ritual, that is, its modular character.¹⁵⁷ Daoist rituals are comprised of what Raz calls, symbolic modules, which he defines as “the clusters of meanings and practices associated with a specific term.” He adds, “On their own, the specific terms may have no more meaning than their linguistic content, but they take on symbolic meaning in the context of specific narratives and rituals as they are placed in combination with one

¹⁵⁵ See *Taishang huanglu zhai* 太上黃籙齋 (CT 507), 1.10a–11a.

¹⁵⁶ John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 111–12.

¹⁵⁷ Raz, “Daoist Ritual Theory in the Work of Lu Xiuqing,” 123 and 129–31.

another.”¹⁵⁸ The term “Pacing the Void” had no particular significance in Shangqing works, but within Lingbao scriptures it becomes pregnant with cosmological and ritual importance. Once established as an important part of the *zhai*, informed as it was by Lingbao mythology, the performance of the hymns served as a symbolic module in Raz’s terms, often indicated in a ritual manual by simply noting the term *buxu*. But as I have suggested here, despite their rich symbolic underpinnings, the performance of the hymns took on varying meanings based upon the surrounding ritual structure. Perhaps it is this flexibility as a symbolic module that has allowed for their continued use in Daoist ritual over the centuries.

Conclusion

In Lingbao scriptures and practice, “Pacing the Void” assumed a distinct meaning, grounded in a newly developed Daoist mythology foregrounding the idea of ritual performance, scriptural recitation, and hymnal performance in the heavens. In this conception, terrestrial performance—either the individual recitation of hymns and scripture or the more elaborate communal rituals known as *zhai*—were meant to imitate cosmic models, those recounted in foundational scriptures of the Lingbao corpus. First recited in individual cultivation practice, the performance of the Lingbao *buxu* hymns were transformed into a dynamic rite that underscored the mutual relationship between scripture and practice. As Daoist ritual developed, standardized by Lu Xiujing, the *buxu* rite became a distinct feature of various ritual formulations, however, at the same time, it was distanced from its foundational mythology in Lingbao scriptures. Two currents,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 129.

explored in the chapters that follow, grew out of these foundational developments of the Lingbao scriptures. On the one hand, some later writers composing *buxu ci*, such as Yu Xin 庾信 and Wu Yun 吳筠, were undoubtedly familiar with the Lingbao stanzas, modeling their own sets of *buxu ci* after them. On the other, Tang poets became enraptured with the sounds and performance of Daoist ritual, and would described their encounters with “Pacing the Void,” a shorthand for Daoist ritual and music, to reflect on their own personal circumstances. The subject of the next chapter, Yu Xin, though, paved the transition from ritual hymn to literary interest and endeavor in the development and understanding of *buxu*.

CHAPTER 3

CRITIQUE AND PROMOTION: YU XIN'S PACING THE VOID STANZAS AND STATE DAOISM IN THE NORTHERN ZHOU

Introduction

The first writings by literati titled “Lyrics for Pacing the Void” (*Buxu ci* 步虛詞) were penned by Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) in the mid- to late- sixth century during the Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581). Although his set of ten stanzas resembles the earlier Lingbao series in form (ten stanzas all in pentasyllabic verse) and evokes ideas from central Lingbao scriptures, their relationship to Daoist *buxu* ritual hymns remains tentative at best. Scholars that have explored this set of poems in greater depth tend to read Daoist ritual into them;¹ yet, outside of their title and form, Daoist ritual bears little on the content and potential meaning of the pieces. I argue that we should read them concomitantly as one, subtle criticism of a ruler’s pursuit of immortality; and two, perhaps more importantly, as the promotion of a politico-religious figure poised to become the primogenitor of a newly unified state. Both aspects of the poems can be situated within broader traditions, both the literary and Daoist. Read in this manner, we might appreciate the ways the poems exhibit ritualized and performative qualities.

¹ Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙, *You yu you: Liuchao Sui Tang youxianshi lunwenji* 憂與遊：六朝隋唐遊仙詩論文集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1996): 278–91; Luo Yiyi, “Yu Xin and the Sixth Century Literary World” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2019), 302–318; Zornica Kirkova, in her general assessment of the set of poems, concludes that their composition has little to do with ritual, instead playing on the texts, language, and imagery associated with *youxian* 遊仙 verse, fashioned by the norms and expectations of court poetry in the Qi and Liang; however, she does read ritual into the first poem; see her *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 340.

Yu Xin, a well-established literary figure and official in the Liang court,² made several diplomatic trips to the Northern Zhou. After having been detained in the north upon his second visit to the Western Wei 西魏 (535–556) in 554, he became one of the foremost literati at the Northern Zhou court. After the Liang 梁 (502–557) dynasty fell in 555, he assumed an active role in the court literary scene and never returned south. According to his biography in the *Zhoushu* 周書, Yu Xin was well-respected by Emperors Ming 周明帝 (Yuwen Yu 宇文毓 [534–560; r. 557–560]) and Wu 周武帝 (Yuwen Yong 宇文邕 [543–578; r. 561–578]), and supported by the Northern Zhou Princes Zhao 趙王 (Yuwen Zhao 宇文招 [?–580]) and Teng 滕王 (Yuwen You 宇文道 [556–581]).³ His surviving corpus, which contains a number of exchange poems with members of the royal family, as well as prose pieces written for other high-ranking officials, stands as a testament to his social standing and literary acclaim at the time.⁴ As a respected literary figure in the court, Yu Xin’s participation in the pressing political concerns of the day was expected, and, as I show in more detail later in this chapter, his *buxu* poems offer a commentary on Daoist ideas that were at the center of court debates.

² On Yu Xin’s career, see William T. Graham, *The Lament for the South’: Yü Hsin’s ‘Ai Chiang-Nan Fu’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 166–69. On Yu Xin’s contributions to Liang literary scene, see Xiaofei Tian’s excellent discussion in her *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 389–407 and *passim*.

³ See Yu’s *Zhoushu* 周書 biography; Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666) et al., comp., *Zhoushu* 周書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 733–45; partially translated and discussed in Luo Yiyi, “Yu Xin and the Sixth Century Literary World,” 23–30. A number of Yu Xin’s letters written to the two princes survive and are collected in Yan Kejun 嚴可均, comp. *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han sango liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文, *Quanhou Zhouwen* 全後周文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), *juan* 10, 3931b–33b.

⁴ Yu had already achieved a measure of recognition in the south among the circle writers at Emperor Xiaogang’s 蕭綱 court. The group that included Yu Xin, his father, Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (487?–551), Xu Ling 徐陵 (507–583), and Xu Ling’s father Xu Chi 徐摛 (474–551) were celebrated and known for their Xu-Yu style 徐庾體.

Court Religious Debates and Emperor Wu's Daoist Inclinations

The complex relationship between Emperor Wu's court and the “Three Teachings” (*sanjiao* 三教) bears upon our understanding of Yu Xin's *buxu* poems. A brief discussion of historical developments will help us elucidate the backdrop against which Yu Xin was writing, and perhaps to whom and for what purposes composed the poems.⁵ Before the Northern Zhou, emperors of the Northern Dynasties had supported Daoist efforts and pursued their own religious interests. In the Northern Wei, several emperors, beginning with Emperor Daowu 道武帝 (Tuoba Gui 拓拔珪 r. 386-409), invested significant state resources and made personal efforts in the pursuit of immortality. The Daoist reformer, Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448), who received a series of revelations in 415 and 423 from Lord Lao, became a fixture at Emperor Taiwu's 太武帝 (Tuoba Tao 拓拔燾 r. 423-452) court with the support of the official Cui Hao 崔浩 (381–450). Kou presented the texts of his revelations, which advocated for a new Daoist theocratic state, to the court in 424. Thereafter, Emperor Taiwu demonstrated his support for Kou and Cui and received ordination in 442.⁶ Kou died in 448, and Cui was executed

⁵ For an excellent discussion of the “text-in-context” approach to studying religious writings, see Catherine Bell, “Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy,” *History of Religions* 27, no. 4 (May 1988): 367–69. In part, my analysis here parallels hers in the article; that is, to examine “a dimension in which texts are seen not simply as expressions or reflections of changing social situations but as dynamic *agents of change*” [author's emphasis] (369).

⁶ The history of the interactions between rulers and Daoism is recounted in much greater detail in Li Gang, “State Religious Policy,” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589)*, vol. 1, eds. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 193–274. Terry Kleeman also addresses some of these issues, with a greater focus on Kou Qianzhi and the Celestial Masters in his *Celestial Masters: History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 194–209. On the Northern Celestial Masters, see also Kohn, “Northern Celestial Masters,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 283–308; Richard B. Mather, “K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy at the Northern Wei Court 425–451,” in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, eds. Holmes Welch and Anna K. Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press), 425–51.

shortly after in 450, a date that marked a turning in the state relations with Daoism. Later Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534) rulers turned their attention to Buddhism, and the Northern Qi 北齊 (550–577) state demonstrated its ardent support for the same religion, along with the suppression of Daoism. Nevertheless, Daoist institutions and communities continued to flourish across the territories of the Northern Dynasties.⁷

Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou was also keenly interested in Daoism, and despite the proscription of both Buddhism and Daoism in 574, there are indications that he was indeed invested in supporting Daoist ideas and institutions. In 567, prompted by Daoist priest Zhang Bin 張賓, he received Daoist ordination.⁸ Lagerwey suggests that the Daoist priest Wei Jingsi 韋精思 (given name Jie 節, byname Chuxuan 處玄) conducted the ordination rituals, as one record notes the emperor's observation of Wei's ritual performances and consultations with him.⁹ Wei's biography in the Daoist collection *Lishi zhenxian ti Dao tongjian* 歷史真仙體道通鑒 also notes that Emperor Wu “once requested to receive the *Five Talismans of Numinous Treasure and Perfected Writs in Red Script*,” 嘗請受靈寶五符赤書真文, referring to the first text of the Lingbao corpus and the Daoist work, outside of the Laozi, that is alluded to most frequently in Yu Xin's *buxu* poems. The biography continues:

⁷ On Daoist stelae from this time period, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “The Yao Boduo Stelae as Evidence for ‘Dao-Buddhism’ of the Early Lingbao Scriptures,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9 (1997): 54–67; Zhang Xunliao, “Daoist Stelae of the Northern Dynasties” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two*, vol. 1, 437–544.

⁸ The *Suishu* 隋書 notes that “After the Zhou succeeded the Wei, they venerated the methods of the Dao, and every emperor received registers” 後周承魏, 崇奉道法, 每帝受籙. See Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) comp., *Suishu*, ed. Yang Jialuo 楊家駱 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 1094.

⁹ John Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VIe siècle* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981), 19; see also *Zhongnan shan shuo jingtai lidai zhenxian beiji* 終南山說經臺歷代真仙碑記 (CT 956), 13a–b.

The emperor praised him, regularly conferring gifts upon him. He would repeatedly summon Wei to compose tunes of cultivating perfection. [Wei] then composed the “methods on refining thoughts.” His Highness exclaimed his admiration again and again, and thus bestowed upon Wei the title “Ritual Master of Refining Thoughts.”

帝嘉之，屢有錫賜。復詔為修真之曲，遂撰精思法。上嘆仰再四，因賜號精思法師。¹⁰

Buddhist sources corroborate Emperor Wu’s initiation and also lay blame at the foot of the “deceitful” Zhang Bin, who advocated that “Black[-robed] Buddhists be taken as the dread of the state, and Huang-Lao as the auspiciousness of the state” 以黑釋為國忌。以黃老為國祥。The text then makes clear that the emperor “took his words to heart, putting faith in the Dao and making light of the Buddha” 帝納其言。信道輕佛。¹¹

Wei Yuansong’s 韋元嵩 (fl. 567) memorial to the emperor that same year in 567 sparked a series of court debates between the leaders of each religion. Wei, a member of the Buddhist community, traveled to the capital from his native place of Sichuan and in his memorial presented the argument that, in order to fulfill the compassionate aims of Buddhism, a universal community should be created, one without the divisions of laity and common people, all under the auspices of the Zhou ruler, who would serve as the great Buddha himself.¹² Despite such a utopian vision, the memorial was effectively an attack on the sangha, for there would be no need for Buddhist monks and the status of

¹⁰ *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑 (CT 296), 30.4a–5b.

¹¹ *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, T52, 8.136a; see also *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記, T2035, 38.358a.

¹² Memorial translated in Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China* (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2008), 177–78; partial translations in Kenneth Ch’en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 189–90; and April Hughes, *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021), 68; see also Li Gang, “State Religious Policy,” 198.

monasteries would also be diminished. Buddhist leaders responded as expected with vehement criticism. Emperor Wu granted Wei the office of Duke of Shu 蜀郡公, and Wei abandoned his Buddhist commitments.

Emperor Wu, however, did not take any decisive action after Wei's memorial, instead calling for court debates between religious leaders that would help him to decide further religious policy. Following the example of his father, emperor Wu aimed to unify the north and south and sought an ideology that would assist in the grand task. Confucian ideals, especially those espoused in the *Zhouli* 周禮, a text also championed by his father were central to his geopolitical aims; thus, the most vehement rhetoric came from the Buddhists and Daoists, as their status within the state was more tentative. Three debates took place in 569. The second was most critical for it was determined that while Confucianism and Daoism were relatively on par, having always been esteemed in the state (essentially the native teachings), Buddhism certainly came second.

After the third debate, the emperor called upon Zhen Luan 甄鸞 (535–566), who was serving as metropolitan commandant (*sili daifu* 司隸大夫) at the time, responsible for overseeing officials to offer a response to the earlier debates.¹³ Zhen's work, the *Xiao Dao lun* 笑道論, presented to the court in 570, rails against the inconsistencies, outlandish claims, and forgeries found among Daoist texts, and its express aim, in Kohn's words, was "to demolish the emperor's visions of unified orthodoxy built with Chinese

¹³ Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 451; for a longer discussion of Zhen Luan, see Kohn, *Laughing at the Dao*, 33–34.

indigenous means.”¹⁴ At that point, the prominent monk Dao’an 釋道安 (fl. ca. 570) submitted his *Erjiao lun* 二教論, a more dispassionate appeal to the emperor, critiquing certain aspects of Daoism—immortality practices, ritual, ideas concerning merit, the Celestial Master tradition, among others—while acknowledging the significance of the *Daode jing* 道德經 and Zhuangzi 莊子 texts.¹⁵ Like other officials and literati, the two authors agreed upon the centrality of the *Daode jing*, deeming it acceptable to the sovereign and the rule of the state. However, neither work was well-received by the Emperor.¹⁶ Zhen’s work prompted another public discussion on the tenth of the fifth month of 570 over the claims found therein, and according to Buddhist sources, the emperor, because of his proclivities for Daoism and the opinions of some of the gathered officials, had it burned forthwith. Dao’an’s work was met with a much more neutral response, but did not prompt any imperial decisions.¹⁷

Early in 574 (Jan. 11), another debate occurred, one that pitted the Daoist Zhang Bin against the Buddhist Zhi Xuan 知玄.¹⁸ Buddhist sources claim a victory in this debate, in which Zhi Xuan was able to stem the malicious attacks of Zhang, who was supposedly already supported by a biased emperor. The *Zhoushu* notes, however, that

¹⁴ Kohn, *Laughing at the Dao*, 32. The *Xiao Dao lun* is translated in its entirety in *ibid.*, 47–155.

¹⁵ The work is preserved in the T52, 8.52.136b–143c. For a discussion of the work and a French translation, see Catherine Despeux, “La culture lettrée au service d’un plaidoyer pour le bouddhisme : le ‘Traité des deux doctrines’ (‘Erjiao lun’) de Dao’an, in *Bouddhisme et lettrés dans la Chine médiévale*, ed. Catherine Despeux (Paris, Louvain, 2002), 145–227.

¹⁶ Lagerwey, *Wushang miyao*, 21–28.

¹⁷ T52, 8.136a–b.

¹⁸ T2035, 38.358c; translated in Thomas Jülch, *Zhipan’s Account of the History of Buddhism in China* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 286.

Buddhism was placed in the last position behind Daoism and Confucianism, which occupied the foremost position.¹⁹ A few months thereafter in the fifth lunar month, the Emperor issued a decree proscribing both Buddhism and Daoism. Priests and monks were forced to return to the laity, scriptures and statues were destroyed, and “excessive shrines” 淫祠, those that did not accord with Confucian canonical works, were prohibited.²⁰

Both the emperor and members of the royal family were, at this time, heavily invested in Daoism. Lagerwey suggests that it was in the last ten years of his life that Emperor Wu expressed a preference for Daoism.²¹ Indeed, the emperor’s pursuit of further Daoist projects at this time lends credence to the argument. The collection and compilation of Daoist books began at least by 569, when Daoists at the *Xuandu guan* 玄都觀 in the capital Chang’an 長安 submitted a catalogue known as the *Xuandu jingmu* 玄都經目.²² Emperor Wu also ordered Daoist Wang Yan 王延 (529–604), along with a team of his disciples, to compile an additional catalogue, known as the *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊, which was to be stored at the *Tongdao guan* 通道觀, located near Mount

¹⁹ *Zhoushu*, 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

²¹ Lagerwey, *Wushang miyao*, 20.

²² The catalogue is mentioned in the 31st and 36th section of Zhen Luan’s *Xiao Dao lun*. He criticizes the inconsistencies between Lu Xiujing’s 陸修靜 (406–477) earlier catalogue and the one submitted in 569. In the 36th section, Zhen notes the date of its presentation to the throne. See T 52, 9.152b–c. On the catalogue, see Kohn, *Laughing at the Dao*, 218–19. On these developments during Emperor Wu’s reign, see Wang Chengwen, “The Revelation and Classification of Daoist Scriptures,” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two*, vol. 1, 866–72.

Zhongnan 終南山 in Shaanxi.²³ According to Wang Yan’s biography in the *Yunji qiqian*, the catalogue was not completed until after Emperor Wu’s death.²⁴ Prince Teng (Yuwen You), Yu Xin’s patron and interlocutor, was also interested in Daoist writings and practices as evidenced by a short preface he wrote to the *True Flowers of the Teachings of the Dao* (*Daojiao shihua xu* 道教實花序), a work no longer extant.²⁵ In the preface, Prince Teng seeks to distinguish later Daoist scriptures of the Shangqing and Lingbao schools from earlier, ostensibly philosophical works, labeled as “Daoist” in the *Hanshu*.²⁶ These earlier works, in his words, “merely summarize and preface the venerable course; they are not profound investigations into the abstruse” 斯止略序宗塗。匪奧探蹟。They only confuse readers, who after viewing such works, remain deluded, believing they have glimpsed some understanding of the Dao. Only the newer revelations found in the Shangqing and Lingbao corpora offer a much deeper understanding of the Dao and its workings in the world. He notes, “Muddled and murky, how can one thoroughly inquire into its (the Dao) images and forms?” 恍兮惚兮，安可窮其象物。One method, though imperfect, he suggests was to devote oneself to the study of specific scriptures, among them several Lingbao works that Yu Xin also draws upon in his *buxu* poems. The

²³ This catalogue is lost now and is different from the work preserved under the same title in the extant *Daozang* 道藏. On Wang Yan, see Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 3 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 1280. He also has biographies in *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (CT 1032), 85.18b–20a; *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* (CT 296), 31.7b–9a; and *Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄 (CT 1248), 6.10a-b.

²⁴ *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), 85.19b.

²⁵ *Quan shanggu sandai qin han sanguo liuchao wen*, 3903a.

²⁶ Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), ed. *Hanshu* 漢書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1986), 1731.

projects and writings of the imperial family demonstrate that the Northern Zhou court was heavily invested in the propagation and institutional support of Daoism.

Shortly after the proscription of 574, Emperor Wu also ordered the establishment of a different Tongdao guan 通道觀 (Chang'an), which was ostensibly a scholarly institution that brought together leading minds of the three teachings.²⁷ Despite the ecumenical façade, the state institution expended the bulk of its efforts on Daoist projects. The most significant was the compilation of the *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 (CT 1138), an early Daoist *leishu* 類書, with a pronounced emphasis on the rituals and cosmology of the Lingbao canon.²⁸ This work, whose compilation began in 574, along with Zhen Luan's *Xiao Dao lun*, suggest the fact that a large body of Daoist knowledge and texts were circulating at the time.²⁹

In this environment, Yu Xin was exposed to a great deal of debate and discussion surrounding Daoism. He wrote several pieces that were likely part of this ongoing conversation surrounding religion and Daoism's role in the state. But true to his style, he couched his ideas in ambiguous allusion.³⁰ It is in the context of these debates, the

²⁷ *Zhoushu*, 85; the temple was later renamed the Xuandu guan 玄都觀 in the Sui. The proscription was rescinded in the summer of 580 by Yang Jian 楊堅, founding emperor of the Sui, followed by a series of edicts and policies, as well as temple building efforts, that restored Buddhism's place in society. See Arthur F. Wright, *The Sui Dynasty* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 126–36.

²⁸ Celestial Master Daoism is noticeably absent from the collection, a fact that Lagerwey has pointed out and attributes to the political vision of Emperor Wu. Lingbao ideology was particularly suited to the emperor's aims, Lagerwey suggests, because it effectively incorporated Buddhist ideology, offering a more complete religious vision. See his *Wushang biyao*, 29–33.

²⁹ See Kohn, "Taoist Scriptures as Mirrored in the *Xiaodao lun*," *Taoist Resources* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 1993): 47–69; and idem. *Laughing at the Dao*.

³⁰ See Luo Yiyi, "Literary Responses to Religious Debates at the Northern Zhou Court," *Early Medieval China* 26 (2020): 67–87. In the article, she carefully analyzes two of Yu Xin's poems, "Upon Imperial Command, Respectfully Matching 'Advancing the Two Teachings'" 奉和闡弘二教應詔, and "Upon

religious projects of Emperor Wu and other court members, and an imperial Daoist ideology with Lingbao teachings at its core that we should consider Yu Xin's *buxu* poems. But before we do so, it is critical to examine the textual history of these poems and how they were anthologized.

Yu Xin's "Pacing the Void" Lyrics in Collections and Anthologies

Yu Xin's *buxu* lyrics have an extensive, but complicated textual history, only first appearing in the full ten stanza version in the 12th century collection, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集. Although I am not overly concerned with anthology selection procedures, a brief consideration of how Yu Xin's set of ten *buxu* poems were excerpted, I think, demonstrates to some degree how they may have been misunderstood as mere extensions of *youxian* poetry or grouped with similar titles.³¹ The earliest record of his *buxu* poems is found in Ouyang Xun's 歐陽詢 (557–641) *Yiwen lei ju* 藝文類聚 in the section titled "Transcendent Path" (*xian dao* 仙道). Six of the ten stanzas are recorded with another of his poems, "Respectfully Matching Prince Zhao's Poem on Roaming in Transcendence" 奉和趙王遊仙. Nevertheless, we should not assume that Yu's *buxu* poems did not exist as a set at this time. The exclusion of the other four appears to be a logical editorial decision based both on both the content of the collectanea section as well as the stanzas

Imperial Command, Respectfully Matching "Dharma Assembly" 奉和法筵應詔, that were part of contemporary discussions on religion.

³¹ On collections and anthologizing procedures and standards, see Knechtges, *WXI*, 1–51; and Anna Shields, Anna M. Shields, *Crafting a Collection: The Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian Ji (Collection From Among the Flowers)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), esp. 17–158.

themselves. The closing lines of stanza two are a good example of the imagery akin to that in *youxian* pieces:

栖心浴日館， Rest the heart in the Lodge of Bathing in Sunlight;³²
行樂止雲墟。 Make merry at the Hill of Halting in the Clouds.³³

Here Yu Xin paints a more general picture of rambling in the heavens. With images such as this, it is easy to understand the editorial decision to associate certain stanzas with other *youxian* poems in anthologies. Those stanzas that are excluded, the first four in the series, in several collections,³⁴ treat Daoist conceptions of cosmological formation. They are among the most abstruse, for they allude to specific Daoist scriptures that were popular at that time. For example, stanza one opens:

渾成空教立， When the inchoate formed, the teachings of the
 void were established;
元始正圖開。 At the primordial beginning, the true charts
 unfolded.
赤玉靈文下， In scarlet jade, the numinous texts descended;
朱陵真氣來。 At the Vermillion Mounds, perfected qi arrived.³⁵

³² I have found no reference to this specific location, though the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 notes that Xi He 羲和, wife of Emperor Jun 帝俊 and mother of ten suns, would bathe the suns at Sweet Abyss (*Ganyuan* 甘淵); See Yuan Kejiao 袁珂校, ed., *Shanhai jing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 381. Xi He is also associated with heavenly jaunts as the sun charioteer, such as in the *Li Sao* 離騷: “I ordered Xi He to stay the sun-steed’s gallop, / To stand over Yanzi mountain and not go in” 吾令羲和弭節兮，望崦嵫而勿迫; Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1070–1135), ed. *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 27. Translation from David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (London: Penguin, 1985), 73.

³³ I have found no reference to this specific location. Ni Fan 倪璠 (fl. ca. 1705), in his commentary, appears quite perplexed by the line as well. He points to general citations in the *Muzi tianzhuan* 穆子天傳 and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 on clouds and the heavens; see *Yu Zishan jizhu* 庾子山集注, coll. by Xu Yimin 許逸民 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 393–94. However, “halting in the clouds” is certainly associated with the ability of a transcendent. See for example Wang Ming 王明, comp., (1904–1974), *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 553–54.

³⁴ Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041–1099), comp., *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Beijing: Beijing zhonghua shuju, 1998), 1099–1100; Ni Fan, *Yu Zishan jizhu*, 392–403.

³⁵ For a more in depth discussion of these lines, see below.

The two couplets describe the formation of the cosmos and the celestial script that, once translated and refined by divine beings would descend into the world and become scripture.³⁶ The process, encapsulated in Yu Xin's lines here, is most fully described in one of the central texts of the Lingbao corpus, the *Yuanshi wulao chishu wupian zhenwen tianshu jing* 元始五老赤書五篇真文天書經 (CT 22) [hereafter *Wupian zhenwen*].³⁷ That Ouyang Xun would exclude this stanza from a section on the “Transcendent Path” which contains primarily poems explicitly titled “Youxian” 遊仙, should not be surprising.³⁸ Yu's poems that are included in the *Yiwen leiju* are replete with more conventional literary references to the stories of transcendents and depictions of heavenly ascent. Two stanzas are cited in in the *Chuxue ji* 初學記, a *leishu* compiled by Xu Jian 徐堅 (659–729) and others over a period of time in the early 8th century and presented to Tang Emperor Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756) in 725. Stanzas number six and eight are cited in the “Transcendent” section, as well as Yu's “Respectfully Matching Prince Zhao's Poem on Roaming in Transcendence.” All three pieces offer excellent examples of

³⁶ Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維, *Tianjie zhi wen: Wei Jin Nanbeichao lingbao jingdian yanjiu* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 2010), 99–115.

³⁷ The work, the first in the Lingbao corpus revealed in the early fifth century, is preserved in the Daoist Canon as *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing* 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經 (CT 22). On the Lingbao corpus, see both Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾 “On Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 33–56; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickman, vol. 2 (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), 434–86.

³⁸ Modern scholars also tend to see Yu Xin's *buxu* poems as intimately related to the *Youxian* genre; see for example, Edward H Schafer, “Wu Yun's Cantos on ‘Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (December 1981): 389; Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙, *You yu you: Liuchao Sui Tang youxian shi lunji* 憂與遊六朝隋唐遊仙論集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1996), 284; and Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 348–49. but this, I would suggest, is an oversimplification. Though they contain elements of popular *youxian* imagery, language, and allusions, his series is much more complex. The first two couplets here are a testament to this fact.

釋皎然, Gu Kuang 顧況 and Su Yu 蘇俞, as well as two by Chen Yu 陳羽, are titled “Lyrics to the Tune of Daoists Pacing the Void.” The *Yuding peiwen zhai yongwu shixuan* 御定佩文齋詠物詩選, a collection submitted to Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1661–1722) in 1707, also preserves three stanzas alongside many of the other *buxu ci* selections by Tang authors.⁴⁴ The editor’s decision to only include specific selections from lengthier series of poems is not exclusively applied to Yu Xin’s work. For example, the section also excludes the majority of Wu Yun’s 吳筠 (d. 778) *buxu* series, including only two of ten. Out of the nineteen *buxu* poems written by Wei Qumou 韋渠牟 (749–801) that survive in the *Yuefu shiji*, only two are included.

The 12th century *Collection of Music Bureau Poetry* (*Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集) compiled by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041–1099) records all ten stanzas and describes the title “Buxu ci” as a “Daoist tune that meticulously describes the beauty of throngs of transcendents rising lightly like vaporous mists” 道家曲也，備言衆仙縹緲輕舉之美。⁴⁵ This collection likely served as the basis for future anthologies. After the Song, other collections, such as the Ming work *Garden of Ancient Music* (*Guyue yuan* 古樂苑) compiled by Mei Dingzuo 梅鼎祚 (1549–1615) and the *Records of Ancient Poetry* (*Gushi ji* 古詩紀) compiled by Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (1513–1572) include all ten stanzas in the same order, with the former work citing verbatim the description of the title from

⁴⁴ See *juan* 240 of Zhang Yushu 張玉書 (1642–1711), et. al., comps., *Yuding peiwen zhai yongwu shixuan* 御定佩文齋詠物詩, *Siku quanshu* edition, 1707.

⁴⁵ Guo, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, 1099–1100.

the *Yuefu shiji*.⁴⁶ The two critical annotated editions of Yu Xin's collected works, both likely from the 17th century, the *Yu zishan jizhu* 庾子山集注 by Ni Fan 倪璠 (fl. ca. 1705) and the *Yu Kaifu ji qianzhu* 庾開府集淺註 by Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 (fl. ca. 1672) register the same series of ten stanzas.⁴⁷ The relatively few variants found in the series across these various collections, I think, suggests the *Yuefu shiji* as a source text for later anthologies.

Even with brief appraisal of the anthologizing of Yu Xin's poems, we find several issues. First, to group certain stanzas with other *youxian* pieces, based on a selective or biased understanding of the writing, is certainly problematic, for such choice ignores the Lingbao Daoist pedigree. Moreover, despite the apparent *youxian* language, Yu Xin was, as we shall see, clearly not writing to celebrate these celestial jaunts or reflect on his own status; his was a critical stance that involved imperial concerns and a quite specific Daoist framework for the state, one informed by *Daode jing* principles and Lingbao Daoist ritual. To simply group these pieces with other *youxian* poetry diminishes their intricacies, the historical background, and their possible import. The other assumption involved in these editorial decisions, especially with the *Yuefu shiji* and the later collections that follow, seems to be that the title "Buxu ci" implies some sort of similitude and a relationship to music. While this may be the case for other Tang *buxu ci*, Yu Xin's *buxu* poems do not

⁴⁶ Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (1513–1572), comp., *Gushi ji* 古詩紀, *Siku quanshu* edition, 1557, 124.2b–4b.

⁴⁷ Ni, *Yu zishan jizhu*, 392–402; Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 (fl. ca. 1672), comp., *Yu Kaifu ji qianzhu* 庾開府集淺註, *Siku quanshu* edition, 1782, 3.41b–49a. See also Zhang Pu 張溥 (1602–1641), comp., *Han Wei liuchao bai sanjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三家集, *Siku quanshu* edition, 112.36a–37b.

adhere to such criteria, and their content, language, and context are poorly correlated with any of the other selections.

While taking into account these earlier collections, especially Ni Fan and Wu Zhaoyi's, I have relied on the more recent *A Concordance to Yu Xin's Works*, a more reliable edition of the poems than other contemporary collections.⁴⁸ The scholar Lu Qinli has reordered the set of poems for reasons he left unclear, despite several editions that accord with one another.⁴⁹ He appears to have relied on the *Wenyuan yinghua*, first listing the five verses recorded there, followed by the others; but, again there is no intelligible logic behind his editorial decisions. Perhaps, he saw them as singular poems, rather than an interconnected series. There is some merit to that position, given that the sequence as recorded in the *Yuefu shiji* also lacks any well-defined links between the various stanzas or a coherent narrative. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the original Lingbao *buxu* hymns articulate a gradual ascent to the heavens throughout the series. Each stanza moves from one stage to the next. But given the substantial agreement among later editions regarding the sequence of the stanzas, Lu's decisions remain questionable.

The Queen Mother of the West and the Failures of Emperors

Allusion is one of the primary means by which Yu Xin's poems operate on a reader, not just in his *buxu* poems, but across his body of work. His ability to weave them

⁴⁸ D.C. Lau, Chen Fong Ching, and Ho Che Wah, eds. *A Concordance to the Works of Yu Xin* (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press: 2000), 24–26.

⁴⁹ See Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 2349–51 [hereafter Lu Qinli]. Tian Xiaofei has noted several instances of Lu Qinli's dubious editorial decisions; see the chapter, "Mapping the Cultural World (II)" in *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star*, passim. She writes, "Lu Qinli's influential editorial decisions derive from a belief in a certain kind of literary historical narrative and have in turn reinforced that narrative" (149).

almost seamlessly into couplet after couplet stands as one of his greatest skills as a writer. Informed readers faced with a particular reference to a story of the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 or *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 would be familiar with its entirety and possible connotations. Thus, we should not simply dismiss their profusion as meaningless lists or unrelated in some sense,⁵⁰ but instead probe the potential reasons for their inclusion in the poems.

The complex of stories associated with the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwang mu* 西王母), who holds a prominent place in early poetry on transcendents, is one of the significant sources of allusions in the Yu's set of poems.⁵¹ In several places, Yu Xin turns to images and locales associated with *Xiwang mu*, dwelling on her association with rulers who fail in their pursuit of transcendence. In the second *buxu* stanza, Yu alludes to a legendary meeting between *Xiwang mu* and King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (r. 1001–946 BCE). Their encounter, recounted in several works such as the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年), the *Liezi* 列子, and the *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳, and its associated ideas were popular among writers. Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427) famously marveled at the *Mu tianzi zhuan*, in his series of poems titled “Reading the Scripture of Mountains and Seas” 讀山海經. Buddhists even reinterpreted the story of King Mu for their own ends.⁵² The *Liezi* and *Mu tianzi zhuan* renderings of the meeting, the two which place the

⁵⁰ Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 325–27, 345, 348–49.

⁵¹ On *Xiwang mu* in early medieval poetry, see Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond* 43–51. On her relationship to emperors, see Suzanne E. Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 143–90.

⁵² Thomas Julch has surveyed several Buddhist works that replace *Xiwang mu* with the Buddha; the impetus for the king's travels westward becomes a meeting with the Buddha. He suggests that the Buddhist reinterpretation of the story, was one strategy to demonstrate Buddhism's ancient roots in China. See his

banquet specifically at the Chalcedony Pond, are significant for their attention to the shortcomings of the King and his failure to attain transcendence. Yu Xin writes in the third stanza:

停鸞讌瑤水，	Halting the simurgh to feast at the Chalcedony Waters;
歸路上鴻天。	Returning to the road to ascend to the vast heavens. ⁵³

“Chalcedony Waters,” also known as the “Chalcedony Pool” (*yaochi* 瑤池), was the location upon Mount Kunlun where the Xiwang mu hosted King Mu during his travels. On the surface, the reference appears rather meaningless, a simple allusion to a celestial locale. But for Yu Xin, in this series of poems, as well as in other pieces, allusions carry a broader context, and often it is the subtle associations that provide greater depth and meaning.⁵⁴ To understand this, we must often examine the entirety of a story or anecdote.

The *Liezi* describes the encounter between the two figures:

Then King Mu was a guest of the Queen Mother of the West, and they toasted each other on the banks of the Turquoise Pond. The Queen Mother of the West sang a song for the king, and he matched hers. His words were sad. Then he looked toward where the sun entered. In a single day, it went a myriad *li*. The king then sighed and said, “Alas, I, the one man, am not

“The Buddhist Re-interpretation of the Legends Surrounding King Mu of Zhou,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 2010): 625–27.

⁵³ Yu Xin used the image of the Chalcedony Waters in another of his poems, “Matching Metropolitan Superintendent of the Capital City Yuwen’s Poem while Accompanying Him a Ride to Mount Zhongnan” 陪駕幸終南山和宇文內史詩: “At Jade Mountain we mount four carriages, / At the Chalcedony Waters we shall revel with the eight dragons” 玉山乘四載，瑤池宴八龍。(Lu Qinli, 2354).

⁵⁴ Tian Xiaofei has noted this aspect of Yu Xin’s poetry. In one analysis, she urges us to pay attention to the subtext of an allusion (403); while in another, she describes a quatrain of his as a “‘Chinese box,’ with one layer containing another containing another” (407). See the entire section on Yu Xin in Tian, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star*, 389–407.

filled with virtue, but discriminating in terms of pleasure. Later generations will look back and number my transgressions.”⁵⁵

遂賓于西王母觴于瑤池之上。西王母為王謠，王和之，其辭哀焉。迺觀日之所入，一日行萬里。王乃歎曰：「於乎！予一人不盈于德而諧於樂，後世其追數吾過乎！」

Here, King Mu laments his conditions, chastising himself for his worldly transgression that make him unsuitable for transcendence. The commentary that follows directly after this passage underscores his inability to achieve transcendence: “King Mu was almost a divine person! If he had only been able to exhaust the pleasures impeding his body, then he would have still reached it in a hundred years” 穆王幾神人哉！能窮當身之樂，猶百年乃徂。⁵⁶ “Heavenly Questions” of the *Chuci* also articulates such doubts about King Mu’s character and his motivations:

穆王巧梅，	King Mu was crafty and greedy—
夫何為周流。	Why did he make a complete circuit?
環理天下，	Making his circular tour and ordering all under
	heaven;
夫何索求。 ⁵⁷	What was he seeking? ⁵⁸

The *Mu tianzi zhuan* elaborates on the exchange of songs between the two figures, the details of which underscore the proper role of an emperor. Xiwang mu sings:

白雲在天，	White clouds are in the heavens;
山隄自出。	Mountains and mounds emerge of their own accord.

⁵⁵ Translation adapted from Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 48.

⁵⁶ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 97–99.

⁵⁷ Hong, *Chuci buzhu*, 110.

⁵⁸ Translation adapted from Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 47. Hawkes also translates the lines in his *Songs of the South*, 132, though his translation for the first line is questionable. Compare Mair’s translation in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 384.

道里悠遠，	Our ways and byways are distant and far-off;
山川間之。	Mountains and rivers intersperse them.
將子無死，	If I take you and make you deathless,
尚能復來。	Perhaps you'll be able to come again.

Her generous offer, though, is met not with jubilation at the opportunity, but a sober acceptance of his responsibilities as a ruler that must come first:

予歸東土，	I return home to the eastern land,
和治諸夏。	To harmonize and set in order the various Xia tribes.
萬民平均，	When the myriad people are peaceful and equitable,
吾顧見汝。	I will turn my head back to see you
比及三年，	Three years from now,
將復而野。	I will return to rusticate here. ⁵⁹

In the end, though, King Mu never returns to see her and never attains immortality.

Yu's line in stanza three intimates a visit with the Queen Mother at the

Chalcedony Pond, before returning to ascend to the “vast heavens” (*hongtian* 鴻

天). Indeed, we may read this couplet merely as a description of heavenly jaunts,

but we cannot discount the full weight of allusions, particularly when Yu Xin and

readers, well-versed as they were in a range of texts, would certainly be aware of

the full field of implications of the location Chalcedony Pond. The associated

tradition provides several potential readings and different criticisms—one, he is

not worthy of such transcendent success because of his character and behavior

and will ultimately fail if he indeed attempts such a pursuit; two, he has more

pressing matters of governance to attend to and has no time for such frivolous

pursuits—all of these implications may come into play through this single

⁵⁹ Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), ed. *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989), 23–24; translated in Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 50.

reference to the Chalcedony waters. King Mu's story of flaws and failure endured throughout the Tang, when poets continued to employ elements of the tale as poetic tropes.⁶⁰

Yu Xin also deploys allusions to the *Han Wudi* narrative complex throughout the series of poems, and even directly indicates the story at other times. In these, Yu Xin refers to the failure of an emperor to obtain transcendence, as well as the foolishness with which Han Wudi disregarded instructions from the Xiwang mu and the Lady of the Upper Primordial (*Shangyuan furen* 上元夫人). The final couplet of stanza six serves as an excellent example of the necessity of reading the underlying associations of each allusion:

絳河應遠別	Across the Crimson River, a response to a distant
	separation;
黃鵠來相迎	Yellow swans shall come to meet one another. ⁶¹

In the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳, the Xiwang mu sends a message to Shangyuan furen requesting her presence in the human world and explaining her current undertaking, the transmission of esoteric transcendent arts to the Emperor. Shangyuan furen's response illuminates the context of Yu Xin's couplet: "I, Ahuan, again pay my obeisances to you and inquire, your reverence, about your well-doing. We have been distant, separated by the Crimson River. I have been troubled by official matters, and my complexion has changed colors as a consequence" 阿環再拜，上問起居。遠隔絳河，擾以官事，遂替顏色。 The broader context of this discussion concerns the emperor and his present

⁶⁰ Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 122–142.

⁶¹ The image of yellow swans was used to highlight separation between loved ones, such as after the death of a husband in "Song of the Yellow Swans" (*Huanghu ge* 黃鵠歌); see Lu Qinli, 9–10. Other poems specifically reference "a pair of yellow swans" (*Shuang huanghu* 雙黃鵠), such as in several "Old-Style Poems" (*Gushi* 古詩) of the Han 漢; see Lu Qinli, 336 and 338.

condition. Xiwang mu's initial dispatch to summon Shangyuan furen bemoans the emperor's condition at length:

I, the Venerable Mother of the Nine Lights, respectfully offer my apologies, for we have not seen one another for more than four thousand years. Heavenly matters have so strained me that it now shows upon my face. Liu Che is fond of the Dao, so I have come to see him. Now that I have, it seems that he may be able to have some success and progress. However, his form is indolent and his spirits polluted; his brain blood leaks excessively;⁶² his five viscera are impure; his passes and stomach are tangled and seething; his bones have no fluids; his pulse is inconstant, repeatedly rising;⁶³ his flesh is abundant but essence lacking; his pupils are not even; his three corpses deviously rebel; and his black and white have lost regularity. I have spoken to him of the Supreme Dao, but I fear that he is not one of transcendent endowment.

王九光母敬謝，但不相見四千餘年。天事勞我，致以愆面。劉徹好道，適來視之，見徹了了，似可成進。然形慢神穢，腦血淫漏，五藏不淳，關胃彭勃，骨無津液，脈浮反升，肉多精少，瞳子不夷，三尸狡亂，玄白失時，語之至道，殆恐非仙才。

The question of an adept's transcendent endowment was a critical issue, centered upon what practices and texts were available to an adept. The ensuing discussions between the two goddesses center on precisely this issue as it pertains to the emperor. *Shangyuan furen* speaks directly to the emperor about not only his physical endowment, but his behavior as well, chastising him to rectify his conduct. Later during the encounter, she

⁶² Insufficient brain blood seems to have been recognized by some Shangqing Daoist practitioners as a deficiency that must first be replenished. For example, within a lengthy list of herbal and medicinal supplements listed in the *Shangqing taishang dijun jiuzhen zhongjing* 上清太上帝君九真中經 (CT 1376), one medicinal supplement was said to “harmonize the hundred marrows and fill brain blood” 和百髓，滿腦血 (2.20a). Another method in the same scripture promises to do much the same, “replenish and fill the brain blood” (*buman naoxue* 補滿腦血) (2.23a).

⁶³ I follow the *Taiping guangji* edition that includes the phrase 脈浮反升; see Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al., comp., *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 15. *Shangyuan furen*'s hagiography in the *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壩城集仙錄 (CT 783,2.1b) also includes the phrase. The *Daozang* edition has “frivolously reverses inner and outer” 浮反外內; both Kristofer Schipper and Thomas Smith note the obscurity of the *Daozang* phrase; see Kristofer M. Schipper, *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste: Han Wou-ti nei-tchouan* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1965), 99; and Thomas Smith, “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative: The Legend of the Han Emperor Wu” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1992), 499.

objects to the transmission of specific practices and texts on the grounds that the emperor is unfit to attain them. And though Xiwang mu expresses significant doubts in this passage about the emperor, she nevertheless supports the transmission of esoteric practices and scriptures to him in the end, which in fact, turns out to be the wrong decision because of his subsequent behavior.

The sixth stanza of Yu's series contains several elements alluding to the Han Wudi narrative, but the question of transmission arises in the final couplet. It reads:

東明九芝蓋，	In Eastern Brilliance, ⁶⁴ a Nine Mushroom Canopy [carriage]; ⁶⁵
北燭五雲車。	In Northern Illumination, ⁶⁶ a Five Cloud chariot.
飄颻入倒景，	Soaring off into Inverted Luminescence; ⁶⁷

⁶⁴ In Daoist works, Eastern Brilliance refers to a region of the Jade Clarity (*Yuqing* 玉清) heavens. Lu Xiuqing's 陸修靜 (406–477) *Dongxuan lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 洞玄靈寶真靈位業圖 (CT 167) lists two deities that come from the region: Lofty Upper Void Thearch of Eastern Brilliance, Lord of the Dao 東明高上虛皇道君 and the Duke of Eastern Brilliance (*Dongming gong* 東明公); see 3a and 27a respectively.

⁶⁵ A “Nine Mushroom Canopy [carriage]” (*jiuzhi gai* 九芝蓋) is a rather obscure phrase. Its earliest use is likely Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) “Rhapsody on the Western Capital” (*Xijing fu* 西京賦): “The hanli, mouth gaping, / Changed into a sylph's chariot, / Which was harnessed to a four-deer team, / And carried a nine-petal mushroom canopy” 含利颯颯。化為仙車。驪駕四鹿。芝蓋九葩; Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), comp., *Wenxuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 76; translation from Knechtges, *WXL*, 231. Wang Sengru's 王僧孺 (465–522) poem “Ode to Spring” (*Yongchun shi* 詠春詩) compares walking along a forest path beside a stream to the marvels of returning to the Cavern Halls (*dongting* 洞庭), a transcendent abode, riding a Nine Mushroom Canopy chariot; see Lu Qinlin, 1770.

⁶⁶ Northern Illumination (*beizhuo* 北燭) appears once in an early Shangqing work, *Shangqing gaosheng taishang dadao jun dongzhen jinyuan bajing yulu* 上清高聖太上大道君洞真金元八景玉籙 (CT 1389) as a general term describing space and illumination; see 8b. However, in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* it is a location associated with a particular transcendent figure (*Beizhuo xianren* 北燭仙人), who is said to have been matched with one of Queen Mother of the West's maidens, Wang Zideng 王子登. See *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (CT 292), 1b; and *Taiping guangji*, 14.

⁶⁷ In discussing Li Bai's 李白 (701–762) use of the term *daojing* 倒景, Kroll describes this region of space as “the farthest realms of the heavens, out beyond the stars, where the light of the heavenly luminaries is seen reversed.” See Paul W. Kroll, “Verses from On High: The Ascent of T'ai Shan,” *T'oung Pao* 69 (1983): 256. I follow his translation. It is a term used much earlier than the Tang. For example Yang Xiong, 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), in his “Ganquan fu” 甘泉賦, uses it to describe the heights of a towering platform on which the sacrifices to Taiyi 太一 at Sweet Springs in 11 BCE were performed: “It passes the through the ‘falling sunlight’ and crosses the ‘flying bridge’, / Floats over the ‘gnats’ and brushes Heaven.” 歷倒景

出沒上烟霞。	Emerging and disappearing, ascending to the hazy auroras. ⁶⁸
春泉下玉雷，	Spring founts descend Mount Yuliu. ⁶⁹
青鳥上金華。	Azure birds ascend Mount Jinhua. ⁷⁰
漢帝看桃核，	Han Wudi looked upon peach pits;
齊侯問棗花。	The Marquis of Qi inquired about jujube blossoms. ⁷¹
上元應送酒，	[The Lady of] Upper Prime ought to have presented wine;
來向蔡經家。	And come to Cai Jing's home. ⁷²

This stanza couches the more critical lines in a conventional display of narrating transcendent jaunts through the heavens. Yu Xin employs terms that identify far-off regions of the heavens that only transcendents can enjoy in roaming. The vehicles of ascent—Nine Mushroom Canopy Carriage and Five Cloud Chariot—also signal such a path; neither are tied to a specific deity, but instead the act of ascending and descending,

而絕飛梁兮，浮蟻蠓而撒天 (*Wenxuan*, 326; translation from David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung*, (53 B.C.-A.D.18) (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1976), 48.

⁶⁸ The second couplet is also translated in Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 344.

⁶⁹ One of the Blessed Lands in the Daoist system of Cavern Heavens and Blessed Lands (*Dongtian fudi* 洞天福地) is known as Mount Yuliu 玉溜山, but this is not relevant to the line in Yu Xin's poem. See *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), 27.10a.

⁷⁰ In several iterations of the Han Wudi story, an azure bird serves as the herald of the Queen Mother of the West. In the *Han Wu gushi* 漢武故事, “two black birds like crows“ 有二青鳥如烏 accompany her upon her first appearance before the emperor. See *Han Wei liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 173. In the *Shanghai jing*, three azure birds (*qingniao* 青鳥) are said to fetch food for Xiwang mu, north of the barrens of Mount Kunlun (*Kunlun xubei* 崑崙虛北); see *Shanghaijing jiaozhu*, 306.

⁷¹ See the discussion below on this line.

⁷² An allusion to the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 tale concerning a meeting between Maid Ma 麻姑 and Wang Yuan 王遠 (Fangping 方平), who gather at the home of Cai Jing 蔡經; see Hu Shouwei 胡守為, ed., *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi* 神仙傳校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2020), 78–99. The story and the significance of the allusion are discussed below. Ni Fan notes that there is an inscription from Shaanxi 陝西 that records a slightly different final couplet; Ni Fan, *Yu Zishan jizhu*, 398. Other sources attribute the whole poem, with this alternative line to Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433). See Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶, *Xu shuhua tiba ji* 續書畫題跋記 (Siku quanshu edition), 1.2b–3a.

which may forecast the “visit” theme shortly thereafter in the poem. Nevertheless, the stanza turns to a pointed commentary in the last two couplets. The second to last couplet highlights two rulers who searched in vain for certain things. After being served peaches by Xiwang mu, Han Wudi eats them and tries to keep the seeds. Upon seeing this, Xiwang mu asks him what he plans to do with them, and he replies that he hopes to plant them, so as to enjoy them in the future as well. Xiwang mu chides him for his ignorance, explaining: “These peaches only bear fruit once every 3000 years. Moreover, the soil of the Central Xia is infertile. If you planted them, they would not grow. So why would you do that?” 此桃三千歲一生實耳，中夏地薄，種之不生如何。

The second line of the couplet alludes to an exchange between Duke Jing 景公 and Yanzi 晏子 in the *Yanzi chunqiu*:

The Duke of Jing asked Yanzi: “In the Eastern Seas, there is water that becomes scarlet, wherein there are jujubes that flower, but do not bear fruit. Why is that?”

Yanzi replied: “Of old, Duke Mu of Qin boarded a dragon boat to bring order to all under heaven. With a yellow cloth that was [the] yellow [emperor’s] he wrapped up steamed jujubes. He reached the eastern sea and tossed away the cloth. He ruined the yellow [emperor’s] cloth therefore it turned the water scarlet. He had steamed the jujubes, so [in the Eastern Seas] jujubes flower, but do not bear fruit.

The Duke said: “I wish to ask in greater detail why this occurs.”

Yanzi replied: “I heard this. You have asked in detail, and I have responded in detail.”⁷³

景公謂晏子曰：「東海之中，有水而赤，其中有棗，華而不實，何也？」晏子對曰：「昔者秦繆公乘龍舟而理天下，以黃布裹蒸棗，至

⁷³ Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (1913–1977), ed., *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 512.

東海而捐其布，彼黃布，故水赤；烝棗，故華而不實。」公曰：「吾
詳問子【何為】？」對曰：「嬰聞之，詳問者，亦詳對之也。」

As with Han Wudi, the Duke is rebuked by someone with greater knowledge, a fact that highlights his ignorance. We also cannot discount the connotations of the jujube as well. In another historical anecdote concerning Han Wudi and Li Shaojun 李少君 found in the *Shiji* 史記, the latter describes his encounter with the transcendent figure Master Anqi 安期生, who ate “gigantic jujubes as big as melons” 食巨棗，大如瓜.⁷⁴ As the story relates, this encounter prompts the emperor to dispatch *fangshi* 方士 upon the seas in search of Penglai 蓬萊 and Li Shaojun to make greater efforts at smelting an elixir. In the end, both undertakings failed. Yu Xin’s couplet emphasizes the empty ambitions of emperors and their foolish inquiries into matters far beyond the purview of statehood and their personal knowledge.

The final couplet of stanza six brings together two stories of meetings between celestial figures and human beings. The first, found in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 involves Xiwang mu, Shangyuan furen, and Han Wudi, while the second, a tale recorded in the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, implicates Wang Yuan 王遠 (Fangping 方平) and Maid Ma 麻姑, who gather with Cai Jing and family. Both stories involve meetings to share in a banquet, which take place on the same day, the seventh day of the seventh month. Furthermore, the meals highlight one aspect of the transcendents’ “repertoire,” the traveling canteen (*xingchu* 行廚), the ability to summon a feast comprised of celestial

⁷⁴ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE), *Shiji* 史記 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 1385–86.

food and drink.⁷⁵ The human sponsors or devotees involved in these encounters are either present or partake of the feast, and the scene emphasizes the disparity between mundane and transcendent existence.

In the first, after Shangyuan furen arrives, beckoned by Xiwang mu's formal summons, she presents a banquet before her and Han Wudi that "the precious viands from the kitchen resembled those laid out by Xiwang mu" 廚之精珍，與王母所設者相似。In this first meeting, Shangyuan furen explains to the emperor that he has yet to attain the Dao because he remains afflicted by five impurities (*wuzhuo* 五濁; also noted as five difficulties [*wunan* 五難] later in the passage)—violence (*bao* 暴), improvidence (*she* 奢), licentiousness (*yin* 淫), cruelty (*ku* 酷), and villainy (*zei* 賊). She sets out a path for him to rectify his character and behavior, one that includes both moral and cultivation prescriptions. In closing, she warns:

Now, as for Amu's supreme cautionaries, sing their wonders and put forth their mysteries, test their respectfully offered encouragement, regulate and moderate [desire], and make your cultivation open to sight. If the effort you make reaches to a hundred years, Amu will assuredly deliver you to the barrens of the Mystic Capital, welcome you in the gate towers of Mount Kunlun, give you a position as a celestial official, and set you to roam about all the ten directions. My discussion has come to an end. You sir, can you temper yourself by these? If you cannot, then there is nothing else to say.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ On transcendent repertoires, see Robert Ford Campany, *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 39-61. On the religious-cultural significance of food in the conceptualization of transcendents, see Robert Ford Campany, "The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China," *T'oung Pao* 91, no. 1/3 (2005): 1-57.

⁷⁶ *Han Wudi neizhuan* (CT 292), 11b. Translation adapted from Smith, "Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative," 503-04.

且阿母至戒，妙唱玄發，驗其敬勗，節度明脩，所奉比及百年，阿母必能致女於玄都之墟，迎女於昆闕之中，位以仙官，游邁十方。吾言之畢矣，子厲之哉。若不能爾，無所言矣。

Later in the story, Han Wudi receives ever more consequential texts and practices at the behest of Xiwang Mu. Shangyuan furen, despite her several objections, follows the directive and transmits twelve texts that would allow the emperor to more effectively employ the techniques found in the initial scripture revealed by Xiwang mu, the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖. These texts represented some of the highest, most efficacious secrets of the heavens, composed and protected by the gods. Xiwang mu explains to the emperor:

These are the collected writings of the grand spirits, composed by the Most High of the Three Heavens. At times, they are checked and fixed by the Celestial Perfected of the Three Sovereigns, while at others they are put forth by the Parental Figures of the Nine Heavens and the Perfected Vermillion Lad. This series of books and talismans is stored in the Purple Mound Terrace, hidden in the Numinous Altar Chambers, sealed in coffer of patterned jade, contained within the silk enfolds of thoroughwort infused screeds, bound by unadulterated silk from Mt. Luofu in the north, and stamped with the Grand Thearch's seal. All the noteworthy perfected and noble spirits descend to roam about the mountains and waters and view the forests and peaks in order to closely evaluate and scrutinize adepts who are intent in their purpose, perhaps telling them of the Way and its virtues or transmitting the celestial talismans to them.⁷⁷

此皆太靈羣文，並三天太上所撰，或三皇天真所造校定，或九天父母真人赤童所出。此輩書符，藏之於紫陵之臺，隱以靈壇之房，封以華琳之函，蘊以蘭簡之帛，約以北羅之素，印以太帝之璽。諸名真貴靈下遊山川，看林岫以眇視察有心之學夫，或告之以道德或傳之以天符。

Because they were meant to be closely guarded and only transmitted at lengthy intervals to the most worthy of practitioners, those who received them, the emperor included, were

⁷⁷ *Han Wudi neizhuan* (CT 292), 23a. Translation adapted from Smith, "Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative," 522.

threatened with punishment for improperly leaking them into the world. However, Han Wudi reverts to his unscrupulous ways, abandoning all semblance of adhering to the Xiwang mu and Shangyuan furen's guidance. In the end, Xiwang mu, displeased with his conduct, sets fire to structure that houses the divine writings and the texts are lost. All of this context underlies this single couplet, and the following allusion to Cai Jing provides the crux of the critique.

Yu Xin, in the final line of stanza six, suggests that Shangyuan furen should have instead gone to Cai Jing's residence. Early on in the story of Cai Jing, who is only a peasant, Maid Ma recognizes his bones and physiognomy as markers of predestined transcendence. Later, Wang Yuan and Maid Ma visit Cai Jing and his family, offering them celestial foodstuff and wine. All appreciate the gift of wine, consuming it and becoming intoxicated. One attendant at the banquet, Cai's neighbor Chen 陳, also receives texts from Wang Yuan, and the closing of the story affirms that they were treasured in his family for many generations.⁷⁸ The juxtaposition of these two stories in the couplet suggests several critiques. First, Shangyuan furen made a mistake in presenting a banquet and wine before Han Wudi, for as she insinuates, with his failure all her words were for naught. The more worthy recipients of divine transmission were Cai Jing and his neighbor. Second, Cai Jing was also worthy on a more consequential front and so achieved transcendence. While moral conduct and diligence in cultivation were indeed important, two prerequisites that Han Wudi subsequently abandoned, one's heavenly endowed disposition was also significant. Shangyuan furen, meeting Han Wudi

⁷⁸ *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi*, 78–99. Translated and discussed in Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong's Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 259–64.

for the first time and in later encounters in the story, points out that Han Wudi remains hindered by his disposition, afflicted as he is by impurities. Cai, on the other hand, despite his lowly background, possessed transcendent markers and was singled out by Wang Yuan for exactly this reason. The implication, therefore, is that without such markers, one might as well abandon the pursuit; one's time would be better spent on more appropriate matters.

While the *Han Wudi neizhuan* served as a major reference point for Yu Xin in his *buxu* poems, other anecdotes concerning the emperor also emerge in allusions. The first couplet of stanza five contains an oblique reference to Han Wudi:

洞靈尊上德，	In the [Palace] of Cavern Numen, revere the Highest Power; ⁷⁹
虞石會明真。	At the Stones of Great Stupidity, meet with the Luminous Perfected.

The second line in the couplet, though, suggests the story of the meeting between Han Wudi and the spirit of Mount Jiuyi 九嶷之神.⁸⁰ The story concerns Wang Xing 王興，

⁷⁹ There are several locations known by the title Dongling 洞靈 that are associated with *Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊, the highest deity in the Lingbao pantheon: 1) Palace of Cavern Numen (*Dongling zhi guan* 洞靈之觀) in a heavenly region in the north that is a place of darkness; however, *Yuanshi tianzun* opens his mouth bringing light and salvation there. The deity notes that the palace bears the name because the Lingbao heavenly writs (*tianwen* 天文) will be placed in storage there; see *Taishang zhutian lingshu duming miaojing* 太上諸天靈書度命妙經 (CT 23), 8a–10b; 2) Cinnabar Terrace of Cavern Numen 洞靈丹臺 located atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) in the Mystic Capital (*Xuandu* 玄都), where on the 23rd day of each month a collective of deities holds a *zhai* 齋 to pay homage before the Lingbao heavenly writs. During this time the deities also check the registers of the living to take stock of their good deeds and transgressions. *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 3.3b. In the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), this is said to take place on the 18th day of the month (6.6b–7a). To whom the title of the divine figure the “Most Virtuous One” (*Shangde* 上德) might refer is unclear. *Taishang laojun* 太上老君, the deified figure of Laozi, was granted the title “Most Virtuous August Thearch of the Chaotic Primordial” 太上老君混元上德皇帝, but this was much later in the Song dynasty. The line also suggests some correlation with chapter 38 of the *Daodejing* 道德經: “A person of the highest virtue is not virtuous, and so through this possesses virtue; a person of the lowest virtue does not lose virtue, and so through this does not possess virtue. The highest virtue is non-purposive action, and with nothing, one can so act. 上德不德，是以有德；下德不失德，是以無德。上德無為而無以為。 This line is also alluded to in Yuwen You's *Daojiao shihua xu* 道教實花序 to describe a feature of the Dao; see *Quan shanggu sandai qin han sanguo liuchao wen*, 3903a.

who successfully attains immortality after sustaining the practices he surreptitiously overheard the spirit describing to Han Wudi. As a central character in the short anecdote, the emperor serves as the foil for Wang Xing. He ascends Mount Song 嵩山 and goes to the Stone Chamber of Great Stupidity 大愚石室,⁸¹ where he establishes a place of worship, a *daogong* 道宮, and instructs Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 and Dong Fangshuo 東方朔 to perform ritual acts 齋潔思神. Later on, a transcendent being, the spirit of Jiuyi appears before Han Wudi. When the emperor asks him the reasons for the visit to the mountain, the spirit informs him of his search for sweet flag (*changpu* 菖蒲). Han Wudi gathers the herbs and begins to consume the medical plant, but after several years and no success at obtaining transcendence, he gives up. We learn, however, that Wang Xing also took the spirit's advice to heart and remained diligent in his practice, thus obtaining immortality in the end. Company astutely notes: "An implication of this hagiography—aside from the benefits of ingesting preparations of the herb sweet flag or calamus—is that even illiterate commoners can, by dint of effort and dedication, achieve results unavailable to rulers and officials because of their attachment to the pleasures of aristocratic life."⁸² The failure of the emperor looms large when set against the example of Wang.

⁸⁰ *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi*, 278–80. Company, *To Live*, 341–42.

⁸¹ Han Wudi's trip to the mountain is also recorded in the *Hanshu*, 190. The citation from the *Shenxian zhuan* has this slightly different name for the location; see *Shenxuan zhuan jiaoshi*, 278–79. A Daoist source, the *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔 (CT 463), compiled in the early Tang, also contains a brief synopsis of the anecdote with the same location title as the poem notes, the *Dayu shishi* 大虞石室; 12.3a.

⁸² Company, *To Live*, 342.

Rather than a subtle criticism, the closing couplets of stanza nine offer a more direct condemnation of Han Wudi. The emperor is placed alongside the Prince of Huainan 淮南王, Liu An 劉安:

漢武多驕慢，	Emperor Wu of the Han was possessed of much arrogance;
淮南不小心。	The Prince of Huainan was not careful.
蓬萊入海底，	When Penglai sinks to the seafloor,
何處可追。	Where can it be sought?

The mention of Han Wudi here again brings to light his encounters with *Xiwang mu* and *Shangyuan furen*, and his subsequent dismissal of their exhortations. That he did not follow their prescribed path of conduct and cultivation, instead believing himself to be fated to ascend to transcendence, ultimately brought the goddesses' anger upon him. He lost his access to the teachings through *Xiwang mu*'s punishment and the goddesses never came to see him again. Most importantly, he never achieved transcendence and the Dao. The reference to Liu An's carelessness likely alludes to his hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan*, a font of allusion for Yu Xin in this set of poems, though a similar anecdote appears in the *Baopuzi*. The passage from the *Shenxian zhuan* reads:

When An, Prince of Huainan, hosted the transcendent elders (*xianbo* 仙伯), his actions were impolite. Their leader submitted a report stating that An was disrespectful, and he was banished to be in charge of the latrines for three years.⁸³

⁸³ Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), et. al., comp. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1975), 1034a. Translation adapted from Company, *To Live*, 442. Compare a similar passage from the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子: “In former times when Liu An, Prince of Huainan, ascended to the heavens for an audience with the Thearch on High, he sat spread-legged, spoke loudly, and boasted, “I, the single man” [a prerogative of rulers]. For this he was assigned to guard the celestial latrine for three years” 昔淮南王劉安。昇天見上帝。而箕坐大言。自稱寡人。遂見謫。守天廁三年; Wang Ming 王明 (1904–1974), *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1981), 321; translation adapted from Company, *To Live*, 77 and 239). The *Taiping guangji* has an elaborated version of these simpler anecdotes, which may be why Company has not included it in his translation of Liu An's hagiography. See *Taiping guangji*, 53; also translated in Smith, “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative,” 467.

淮南王安謁仙伯，坐起不恭，主者奏安不敬，謫守廁三年。

The narrative, like Han Wudi's, underscores rulers' hubris and disrespect, perhaps intentional, in treating esteemed transcendents. For his dereliction of decorum, the prince also suffers punishment, though it may have been less severe than Han Wudi's. We might interpret this couplet simply as a call to humility and respect for both the celestial beings and practices involved, yet the following couplet suggests a sense of hopelessness in pursuing such matters. Those rulers who had sought out the transcendent realms (Penglai, Fangzhang 方丈, and Yingzhou 瀛洲), its transcendent residents, and the drugs of longevity thought to grow there were only met with disappointment. The realms could be glimpsed from afar, but once the venturers came upon them, they sunk into the sea and winds stirred to carry the ships off again.⁸⁴ Kirkova has suggested that the "lack of aptitude for immortality shown by various ancient sovereigns was a popular motif in the *youxian* verse at least since Guo Pu;"⁸⁵ and she rightly points to Yu Xin's "Respectfully Matching Prince Zhao's Poem on Roaming in Transcendence" 奉和趙王遊仙 as a piece that might also be read as a critique of an emperor's pursuit of transcendence.⁸⁶ While this may be the case, such tropes extend beyond *youxian* literature and reach back further in time. Yu's *buxu* poems, I am suggesting, take this critical stance to an exceptional

⁸⁴ *Shiji*, 1369–70.

⁸⁵ Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 347. She cites the closing lines of Guo Pu's *Youxian shi* #6 (Lu Qinli, 866) as evidence: "King Zhao of Yan had no numinous qi, / Emperor Wu of Han was not one of immortal stuff" 燕昭無靈氣，漢武非仙才. Translation adapted from Kirkova's

⁸⁶ Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 325–27. The poem can be found in *Yu Zishan ji*, 217–219. This is one of several possible interpretations of the poem that she offers, all of which deserve greater attention. Her brief analysis hinges on how to interpret the bevy of allusions to transcendent hagiographies, which is precisely the issue at hand here in the *buxu* poems.

level, coupling this motif with transcendent stories that might also be interpreted as critique, as well as repeated reminders of the futile endeavor of pursuing transcendence. For example, in stanza five, Yu poses a question, followed by subtle rebuttal of the implicit answer:

自此逢何世，	From this point, what generations are left to meet? ⁸⁷
從今復幾春。	From now, how many springs will come again?
海無三尺水，	The sea will not have even three feet of water,
山成數寸塵。	The mountains shall become several inches of dust.

The answer to the Yu's second question would surely be very few—human existence is finite. The unspoken assumption seems to be that fears concerning one's lifespan serve as the impetus for pursuing longevity practices and transcendence. However, the following couplet counters with the assertion, buttressed by an allusion to a well-known story of transients, that everything fades, everything shall be exhausted. The line alludes to a conversation between Maid Ma 麻姑 and Wang Yuan 王遠 (Fangping 方平), who during their encounter at Cai Jing's 蔡經 house, discuss the changing of geologic features over the course of time:

Maid Ma declared: "Since I entered your service, I have seen the Eastern Sea turn to mulberry fields three times. As one proceeds across to Penglai, the water came only up to one's waist. I wonder whether it will turn to dry land once again."

Wang answered with a sigh, "Oh, the sages all say that the Eastern Sea will once again become blowing dust."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ My interpretation of the line differs considerably from Kirkova's (*Roaming into the Beyond*, 341–42). In her translation of the stanza, she notes that this may refer to the separation between Queen Mother of the West and King Mu. She translates the line as "From this time on, in which generation shall we meet?" The grammar of the line, as well as the parallelism in the couplet, does not support this reading though. It is simply a rhetorical question inquiring about how long one shall live.

⁸⁸ *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi*, 80. Translation from Company, *To Live*, 262.

麻姑自說：“接待以來，已見東海三為桑田。向到蓬萊，水又淺于往昔，會時略半也。豈將復還為陵陸乎？”方平笑曰：“聖人皆言，海中復揚塵也。”

The closing couplets of the fifth stanza might be interpreted as a suggestion to abandon concerns of longevity and cultivation practices when faced with the inevitably of decline.

Other allusions subtly suggest that emperor's should place lodge their interests in matters of the state. A couplet in stanza five juxtaposes the stories of two transcendants,

Jie Xiang 介象 and Dong Feng 董奉：

移梨付苑吏	The transplanting of pears is entrusted to the garden attendant;
種杏乞山人	For planting apricots, pray ask the mountain people.

According to his hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan*, Jie taught the “art of concealing one’s form” 隱形之術 to the Wu 吳 ruler (Sun Quan 孫權 [182–252]). The ruler heard of Jie’s illness and dispatched attendants to care for him along with a gift of pears. After he ate them, Jie feigned his death and traveled afar to Jianye 建業. There, he gave the seeds to an imperial garden attendant, who then dispatched a report of the incident to the court. The ruler opened the already interred coffin of Jie and discovered a talisman therein.⁸⁹

The transcendent figure Dong Feng lived on Mount Lu and was known for curing the sick. After healing a patient, he would then ask the person to plant apricot seeds, five for a more severe illness and one for a less severe. After some time, a grove of apricot trees flourished. Dong Feng would then allow people to take some of the apricots for free, asking that they only leave an equal measure of grain, which he then distributed to the

⁸⁹ *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi* 254–61; Campany, *To Live*, 189–94. On the textual history of the story, see *ibid.*, 423–26.

poor.⁹⁰ Why make reference to these two stories? What possible implications might emerge from a reading of the couplet?

The two stories are certainly not about the failings of transcendence, like other parts of the poems, for each of the main figures achieves their goal through the use of *shijie* 屍解 (escape by means of a simulated corpse) with talismans.⁹¹ Perhaps we might read it as a subtle criticism of the value that emperors place upon certain transcendent figures and acts. Jie's powers center on allusions and bodily transformations; he makes a particular ocean-dwelling variety of fish appear in the palace courtyard, before then instantly dispatching an attendant to a distant market in Chengdu to obtain a species of ginger with the help of a talisman and staff. Upon performing these feats, Jie garners even greater respect and admiration from the emperor. After Jie Xiang's illness, the emperor sends an offering of pears to him as a gesture of charitable concern. Dong Feng is just as talented in transcendent arts, but uses his skills to heal people, asking only that they plant apricot seeds in return. After some time, the apricot seeds grow into an extensive grove, which he then shares freely with people, provided they share some of their grain. Dong, in turn, offers this grain to the poor, uplifting an even greater number of people. The hagiography relates that district magistrates did recognize Dong's

⁹⁰ *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi*, 263–71; Campany, *To Live*, 141–46. On the textual history of the story, see *ibid.*, 390–93.

⁹¹ Much has been written on this practice. See especially Isabelle Robinet, "Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism," *History of Religions* 19, no. 1 (1979): 37–70; Anna Seidel, "Post-Mortem Immortality--Or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body," in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, ed. Shaul Shaked, David Shulman, and Guy G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 223–37; Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, "Corpse Deliverance, Substitute Bodies, Name Change, and Feigned Death: Aspects of Metamorphosis and Immortality in Early Medieval China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 1–68; Campany, *To Live*, 52–60; and Robert Ford Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), *passim*.

contributions and built a house and found him a wife. While Jie focuses on illusion and transformation, Dong utilizes his abilities for the practical needs of a community— healing the sick and providing for the poor; however, the former garners esteem at the highest level. The couplet contrasts the value placed upon certain transcendent actors and the exercise of their magic arts. In the story of Jie Xiang, the emperor fawns over seemingly meaningless magic acts, while in the Dong Feng anecdote, though local officials acknowledge his contributions, he goes largely unnoticed. The couplet may serve as a subtle reminder of the mistaken value placed on inconsequential transcendent acts, performed for the amusement of the emperor. Admittedly, the couplet is rather ambiguous, allowing for deniability on the part of the poet, but taken together with other allusions, the bulk of stanza five suggests a critique of placing too much worth on both transcendent actors and longevity practices.

Rhetoric and Remonstrance

While the historical circumstances may have provided the impetus for Yu Xin's *buxu* composition, we might also consider them in light of the literary tradition. Critical reflections on immortality practices and imperial critique through poetry were not new to Yu Xin or the Northern Zhou; Han dynasty writers offer several analogous examples. Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) "*Fu* on Pondering the Mystery" (*Sixuan fu* 思玄賦) portrays the narrator traversing the four directions and the well-known transcendent locales, paying a visit to Xiwang mu and other goddesses, and going out beyond the

Gates of Heaven (*Changhe* 闔闔).⁹² But in the end, Zhang rejects the experience in favor of an existence defined by Confucian moral order.⁹³ Unlike Yu Xin's *buxu* poems, his piece serves as a personal reflection on his own circumstances at court. Moreover, perhaps because of its personal nature, it can be read as a forthright repudiation of celestial journeys and pursuing immortals. In light of the controversial environment surrounding religion at Emperor Wu's court, Yu Xin would have had to adopt a more tactful approach. Part of this strategy, it seems, is to suggest a form of Daoism that could in fact align well with state matters and the duties of the emperor. Lingbao Daoism offered additional ritual means, outside of the traditional state sacrifices and codes of the *Liji*, to support the state.

Expressing veiled dissent in poetry was also an established facet of the literary tradition. The emperor, who was so engrossed in individual pursuits as to shirk his ruling responsibilities, often stood among the targets of critique.⁹⁴ Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) "Fu on the Great Man" (*Daren fu* 大人賦) serves as an excellent example of such veiled criticism, scoffing at the Queen Mother of the West and the desire to live

⁹² *Wenxuan*, 651–77; Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 1914–38. Translated in Knechtges, *WXIII*, 105–38.

⁹³ David Knechtges, "A Journey to Morality: Chang Heng's *The Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery*," in *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping Shan Library*, ed. P.L. Chan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 162–82; reprinted in *Court Culture and Literature in Early China* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002).

⁹⁴ Sima Xiangru targeted other imperial behavior, such as the hunting parks and extravagance. See David R. Knechtges, *WXII*, 73–114; and Edward H. Schafer, "Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 11 (1968), 318–43. Patricia Ebrey explores the rhetoric of writings on excessive spending, building, and traveling by the emperor in her "Remonstrating Against Royal Extravagance in Imperial China," in *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions*, ed. Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 129–49.

forever.⁹⁵ The work, a satirical criticism of immortality, was aimed at Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 140–87 BCE), who in the end, failed to discern its subtle criticism and may have even been further inspired in his pursuits.⁹⁶ Yang Xiong identifies Sima Xiangru’s *fu* as critique in his comments on the purpose of *fu* as “suasion” (*feng* 諷).⁹⁷ He remarks that, because of the *fu*’s ornate and exaggerated language, the message meant to rectify the emperor’s behavior was lost on him. The more positive descriptions of transcendence and elaborate details obfuscated what was essentially meant as critique. I would suggest a similar dynamic plays out in Yu Xin’s *buxu* poems; that is, the criticism is couched in a bevy of positive descriptions, allusions, and imagery concerning celestial jaunts, those derived from the *Youxian* poetic mode.

The idea of poetry as a form of remonstrance or persuasion and critique is rooted in the “Great Preface” of the *Shijing* 詩經:

⁹⁵ The *fu* is part of Sima Xiangru’s biography in the *Shiji*, 3056–62 and has been translated in Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, vol. 2 rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 296–99; Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 182–84; and most recently with full annotations in Nicholas Morrow Williams, “Inventing the Fu: Simulated Spontaneity in Sima Xiangru’s ‘Great Man,’” in *Reading Fu Poetry: From the Han to the Song Dynasties*, ed. Nicholas Morrow Williams (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022), 23–30.

⁹⁶ See David R. Knechtges, “Wit, Humor, and Satire in Early Chinese Literature (to AD 220),” *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–71): 91–92. Campany reads the key passage of the piece as a critique of method as opposed to outright criticism of transcendence itself. He suggests the *fu* serves as an attempt to reconcile the divergent roles of emperor and transcendent seeker because it “places the emperor in the role of cosmically itinerant protagonist” and provides an example of an emperor attaining transcendence on his own terms. See his *Making Transcendents*, 205–207. Williams also suggests that the issue of criticism in the poem is more complex; thus, we need to account for a much broader range of considerations, in particular, the discourses on immortality popular at the time and the performative nature of Sima Xiangru’s biography. See his “Inventing the Fu,” *passim*, but especially 4–6.

⁹⁷ *Hanshu*, 3575. The passage alluded to here is discussed and translated in Knechtges, “Criticism of the Court in Han Dynasty Literature,” 67–69. On the topic of *feng*, see also Wu Fusheng, *Written at Imperial Command: Panegyric Poetry in Early Medieval China* (Albany: SUNY Press 2008), ch. 5–6 and all of chapter 1. He glosses the term *feng* 風 as “indirect criticism” (5).

By *feng* those above transform those below; also by *feng* those below criticize those above. When an indirect admonition is given that is governed by patterning (*wen*), the one who speaks it has no culpability, yet it remains adequate to warn those who hear it. In this we have *feng*.

上以風化下。下以風刺上。主文而譎諫。言之者無罪。聞之者足以戒。故曰風。⁹⁸

In his discussion that follows the translated passage, Stephen Owen notes the role of *wen* in this dynamic: “[W]en is supposed to place its user in a protected domain, free from the culpability normally attendant on criticizing authority. Wen does not conceal the message (the listener or reader still recognizes it clearly enough to take warning), but it protects socially dangerous discourse.”⁹⁹ Prized by the imperial family and other literati of the time, Yu Xin’s *wen* may have provided him cover for such critique. Nevertheless, in going too far with his craft, he may have, like Sima Xiangru, muddled the message.

Some might object that Yu Xin’s *buxu* pieces reflect a more positive outlook on transcendent practices, such as in stanza six we saw above:

飄飄入倒景，	Floating and fluttering, entering Inverted Luminescence;
出沒上烟霞。	Emerging and disappearing, ascending to the hazy auroras.

We should be wary of jumping to conclusions as to the qualitative value of such descriptions or Yu Xin’s state of mind regarding such propositions. Like Sima Xiangru’s “*Fu* on the Great Man,” a poet may employ such language only to reject or undermine it in other places, a rhetorical move that I believe Yu Xin is also employing. This would reflect a strategy of identification or consubstantiation—one must first attempt to find

⁹⁸ Slight adaptation of the translation in Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1996), 46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

common ground with the audience to better allow for the arguments to be heard and have any potential impact.¹⁰⁰ Amidst an imperial court partial to Daoist ideas and practices, it would have behooved Yu Xin to rely on such a strategy to generate any sort of rhetorical power. Citing Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Wu Fusheng notes the possible coexistence of both demonstrative rhetoric, often celebratory praise in Chinese panegyric tradition, and deliberative rhetoric, an act of persuasion, directed at achieving a particular action. These could be woven together within a singular piece, as some epideictic rhapsodies of the Han demonstrate.¹⁰¹ When we account for both of these types of rhetoric within a work, "it helps us to view the often-hyperbolic praise in panegyric poetry from another perspective—not merely as a form of sycophancy but also as a means to convey the poet's advice to an emperor."¹⁰² As I have argued thus far in this chapter, I believe, Yu Xin was using similar rhetorical strategies, both demonstrative and deliberative. While he celebrates transcendence with imagery and language, through subtle allusions, he suggests to the reader that such pursuits are fruitless. Yu Xin's lasting impact on the conceptualization and use of *buxu* was to shift *buxu* poetry from religious hymn to rhetorical or political device. Other poets, even Daoist writers, followed suit with subsequent *buxu* compositions.¹⁰³ Attention to rhetoric is indeed key to understanding Yu

¹⁰⁰ See Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 3–46, but esp. 19–29. We might also consider Yu Xin's use of imagination as a rhetorical device; see *ibid.*, 78–84.

¹⁰¹ See Wu, *Written at Imperial Command*, 13–21. In the discussion, Wu focuses on Sima Xiangru's "Rhapsody on an Imperial Excursion and Hunt" 天子遊獵賦.

¹⁰² Wu, *Written at Imperial Command*, 5.

¹⁰³ See the chapter in this dissertation on Wu Yun. As I argue in another article, Emperor Zhenzong of the Northern Song 宋真宗 (r. 997–1022) also composed a series of *buxu* poems to commemorate and defend his performance of the *Feng* 封 and *Shan* 禪 rituals he performed in 1008. Zhenzong's set of poems have

Xin's *buxu* poems; however, there is another aspect of the poems, one that has yet to be sufficiently addressed, that suggests an alternative, yet complimentary way to understand these pieces.

Daoist Synthesis

Yu Xin primarily relies on two Daoist works throughout the poems, the *Wupian zhenwen* and the *Daode jing*, both of which contrast sharply with the narratives concerning emperors and transcendents. In Yu Xin's writing, these two works offer an acceptable form and standard of Daoism, a synthesis that could serve government and political ends. Above, I briefly mentioned the opening lines of the first stanza as an example of an anthologist's choices of inclusion/exclusion concerning Yu Xin's works. However, the stanza certainly deserves fuller attention. It opens:

渾成空教立，	Inchoate chaos coalesced, and the teachings of the void were established;
元始正圖開。	The [Celestial Worthy of] Primordial Commencement opened the diagrams at that moment.
赤玉靈文下，	In scarlet and jade, the numinous texts descended;
朱陵真氣來。	At the Vermillion Mounds, perfected qi arrived. ¹⁰⁴

In the first line, Yu Xin describes the formation of the cosmos, referring to chapter 25 of the *Daode jing*: “There was something formless yet complete, / That existed before heaven and earth; / Without sound, without substance, / Dependent on nothing,

been collected in the *Jinlu zhai sandong zanyong yi* 金籙齋三洞讚詠儀 (CT 310), a compilation of Daoist hymns written by Song emperors Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997), Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1125), and Zhenzong.

¹⁰⁴ Vermillion Mounds (*Zhuling* 朱陵) is another term for the Southern Palace (Nangong 南宮), Vermilion Palace (Zhugong 朱宮), and Southern Glory (*Nanchang* 南昌), which is a location often associated with the refinement of deceased souls before rebirth. In the Lingbao scriptures, it is also known as the Palace of Penetrating Yang (*Dongyang guan* 洞陽宮). See Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 416n.

unchanging, / All pervading, unfailing. / One may think of it as the mother of all things under heaven.” 有物混成，先天地生。寂兮寥兮，獨立不改，周行而不殆，可以為天下母。¹⁰⁵ The “teachings of the void” refer to those of Lingbao Daoism,¹⁰⁶ specifically the Perfected Writs (*Zhenwen* 真文): “The Perfected Writs in Red Writing on Jade Tablets from the Numinous Treasure Cavern Mystery of Primordial Commencement were born within the empty cavern prior to Primordial Commencement” 元始洞玄靈寶赤書玉篇真文，生於元始之先空洞之中 (1.1a-b). *Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊, the highest deity of the Lingbao pantheon, who resides atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain 玉京山 in the Grand Veil Heaven 大羅天, reveals and transmits celestial “texts” that would become Lingbao scriptures within the mundane world. Yu’s second line recounts the deity’s opening of the charts in the heavens: “The [Celestial Worthy of] Primordial Commencement opened the diagrams and twelve numinous signs arose above, while twenty-four corresponding resonances were manifested below” 元始開圖，上啓十二靈瑞下發二十四應。¹⁰⁷ In the second couplet, Yu Xin hints at further aspects of the process by which the celestial texts were refined, one that is described in detail in the *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22):

¹⁰⁵ Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 100–101; translation from Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 174.

¹⁰⁶ *Kong* 空 in Daoist studies is often rendered as “emptiness,” though not exclusively. I have chosen to translate it as “void” here to differentiate it from the Buddhist “teachings of emptiness” (*kongjiao* 空教) that refers to ideas associated with the concept of *sūnyatā* and *pratītya-samutpāda*.

¹⁰⁷ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.2b.

Yuanshi tianzun refined them in the lodges of cavernous yang, smelted them in the halls of flowing fire. When [*Yuanshi tianzun*] refreshed their orthodox script, their luster produced a brilliant radiance. The *qi* of cavernous yang is red, thus the writs are called red writings...as a divine wind swirled, the august Dao was completely unfolded. *Yuanshi tianzun* registered the order, the great perfected plied the brush and the jade consort swept the mat. Gold was cast into slips and the writing was engraved on jade tablets. The Five Elders, who have been administered with registers, secreted them away in the palace of the Numinous City of the Nine Heavens.¹⁰⁸

元始鍊之於洞陽之館，冶之於流火之庭，鮮其正文，瑩發光芒。洞陽氣赤，故號赤書...神風既鼓，皇道咸暢，元始登命，太真按筆，玉妃拂筵，鑄金爲簡，刻書玉篇，五老掌錄，祕於九天靈都之宮。

The first stanza integrates a brief allusion to the *Daode jing* with the Lingbao mythology of the formation of celestial writs. Yu Xin, throughout the series of poems, returns to these texts again and again.

In stanza eight, Yu Xin resorts to the same allusion concerning the formation of the Lingbao celestial writs, but couches it in more conventional rhetoric of the sights of heavenly excursions:

北闕臨玄水，	The Northern Pylons overlook the dark waters;
南宮生絳雲。	The Southern Palace give rise to crimson clouds.
龍泥印玉策，	Dragon paste imprints the jade slips;
大火煉真文。	A great fire refines the perfected script. ¹⁰⁹
上元風雨散，	In the Upper Primordial, trials and hardships
	disperse;

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1b–2a.

¹⁰⁹ “Perfected writings” refer to the Lingbao celestial writs, whose formation is recounted in the *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22) and several other works of the early Lingbao corpus. The *Duren jing* 度人 contains a concise description of the writs’ emergence and their significance: “Then, when the era *Chiming* unfolded, / Through the self-actualization of cyclical progression, / Primordial Commencement, to provide stability, / Caused to descend the Five Tablets. / These jade graphs in red writing, / Along with the dragon script of the Eight Potencies, / Protect and regulate the cycles of kalpas / So that heaven might long endure. 赤明開圖，運度自然。元始安鎮，敷落五篇。赤書玉字，八威龍文。保制劫運，使天長存 (*Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* 元始無量度人上品妙經四註 (CT 87) [hereafter *Duren jing sizhu*], 6a–7b; translation from Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 422).

中天歌吹分。
靈駕千尋上，
空香萬里聞。

In the mid-heavens, song and windpipes distinct.¹¹⁰
A numinous carriage rises a thousand *xun*;
The fragrance of emptiness redolent for a thousand
li.¹¹¹

Playing on the association of the Five Phases (north-black/dark; southern-scarlet), the first couplet describes celestial abodes. The Southern Palace referenced in the second line segues into the next couplet, which highlights two forms of celestial writing, the Lingbao writs and the Dragon Script of the Five Potencies (*bawei longwen* 八威龍文). The former are refined in the Southern Palace, also known as the Vermilion Palace (*Zhugong* 朱宮), Southern Glory (*Nanchang* 南昌), and Vermilion Mound (*Zhuling* 朱陵), the last of which Yu Xin also cites in the first stanza. The next two couplets then return to commonplace imagery connected to *youxian* poetry—the sights and sounds of the surrounding skies as a celestial chariot climbs to the heavens. This stanza is indicative of Yu Xin’s signature writing style, leaping from image to image and allusion to allusion, without clear connections. But, it is perhaps a stanza like this, which plays on heavenly ascent and Lingbao cosmology, that would be so pleasing to the sympathetic ear of the emperor.

¹¹⁰ The distinction in this couplet between an upper and middle heavens may stem from another Lingbao scripture, the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie gongde qingzhong jing* 太上洞玄靈寶三元品戒功德輕重經 (CT 456). This work lays out the various palaces and offices of the upper, middle, and lower primordial realms, as well as the divine officials that occupy the bureaus. The gods of the Lingbao pantheon often outlined in scriptures often note that they reside or come from the Upper Primordial.

¹¹¹ The closing images are reminiscent of the departure of Xiwang mu and Shangyuan furen recounted in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* (CT 292), 26b and *Taiping guangji*, 22. The phrasing is slightly different in these versions, but both describe a profusion of fragrant *qi* (*xiangqi* 香氣) appearing upon the goddesses’ departure.

Yu Xin also relies heavily on the *Daode jing* as a source of allusion. Stanza two begins with another depiction of cosmogenesis, but invokes the renowned opening lines of the *Daode jing*:

無名萬物始，	The absence of names is the beginning of the myriad things; ¹¹²
有道百靈初。	The existence of the Way is the start of the hundred spirits. ¹¹³
寂絕乘丹氣，	In silence unsurpassed, ¹¹⁴ mount the cinnabar qi. ¹¹⁵
玄明上玉虛。	In mystic brightness, ascend to the Jade Void. ¹¹⁶

Here again, we find Yu Xin mingling clear allusions to a well-known Daoist text with imagery of celestial ascent and transcendence. Stanzas three and five provide interesting

¹¹² Alluding to the first lines of the *Daode jing* 道德經: “The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way; / The names that can be named are not unvarying names. / It was from the Nameless that Heaven and earth sprang; / The named is but the mother that rears the ten-thousand creatures, each after its own kind” 道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。Laozi jiaoshi 老子校釋，2–5; translation from Waley, *The Way and Its Power*, 141.

¹¹³ Kirkova translates the first couplet of this stanza in *Roaming Into the Beyond*, 342; see also Luo Yiyi’s translation of the stanza in “Yu Xin and the Sixth-Century Literary World,” 307–309.

¹¹⁴ Yu Xin also uses this term in the first line of the 5th of his “Songs on Painted Screens” (*Yonghua pingfeng shi* 詠畫屏風詩), juxtaposing the term with *xiaoyao* 逍遙: “Free and unfettered, ramble in the cinnamon glade; / In silence unsurpassed, arrive at the Peach (Flower) fount” 逍遙遊桂苑，寂絕到桃源。See Lu Qinli, 2395.

¹¹⁵ Cinnabar *qi* is often associated with the auroras (*xia* 霞) such as in the Zuo Si’s 左思, “Fu on the Shu Capital” (*Shudu fu* 屬都賦): “Magnificently thrusting themselves through the blue empyrean, / Releasing vermilion vapors as rose clouds” 千青霄而秀出，舒丹氣為霞; *Wenxuan*, 176; translation from Knechtges, *WXI*, 343. See also Edward H. Schafer, “The Grand Aurora,” *Chinese Science* 6 (Nov. 1983): 21–32.

¹¹⁶ My translation closely follows Edward H. Schafer, “Cosmic Metaphors: The Poetry of Space,” *Sinological Papers*, no. 5 (1985), 7; see also Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 186. Jade Void/Vacuity, in Shangqing literature, refers to the highest reaches of the Jade Clarity Heaven (*Yuqing tian* 玉清天). To be possessed of the “qi of Jade Vacuity” was to be a “descendent of Jade Vacuity” (*Yuxu zhi yin* 玉虛之胤), ranked higher than other transcendent figures. See for example the excerpts of the *Dongzhen taishang suling taiyou miaojing* 洞真太上素靈太有妙經 cited in the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 95.9b–10b. In Lingbao scriptures, *yuxu* 玉虛 (Jade Barrens) refers more specifically to the area surrounding the Mystic Capital; see *Duren jing sizhu* 3.37a–b (CT 87) and Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 426. See also Edward H. Schafer, “Wu Yun’s Cantos on ‘Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (December 1981): 407–421.

examples of the poet attempting to connect cosmogonic principles found in the *Daode jing* and cultivation practices.

凝真天地表，	Concentrate perfected [qi] beyond Heaven and Earth; ¹¹⁷
絕想寂寥前。	Sever thoughts before the Silent and Still. ¹¹⁸
有象猶虛豁，	The presence of images is still the unfolding of the void; ¹¹⁹
忘形本自然。	The forgetting of the self was always that which is so of itself. ¹²⁰

The first line subtly hints at the *Wupian zhenwen* and the actions of *Yuanzhi tianzun* with its use of the term *ningzhen* 凝真,¹²¹ but based on the parallelism in the couplet, it is plausible that the term refers to a form of cultivation practice, however vague that may be. It is likely that it points to the concentration of primordial *qi* within the body in an effort to return to and join with the Dao.¹²² To “sever thoughts” and “forget the self” was to

¹¹⁷ The term *ningzhen* 凝真 is used at a critical point in mythological account of Yuanshi tianzun’s formation of the world in the *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.6a–b. See my discussion of this passage below.

¹¹⁸ Another reference to chapter 25 of the *Daode jing*, see note #105 above.

¹¹⁹ Alluding to chapter 21 of the *Daode jing*: “Such the scope of the All-pervading Power / That it alone can act through the Way. / For the Way is a thing impalpable, incommensurable. / Incommensurable, impalpable. / Yet latent in it are forms; / Impalpable, incommensurable / Yet within it are entities. / Shadowy it is and dim; / Yet within it there is a force, / A force that though rarefied / Is none the less efficacious” 孔德之容，唯道是從。道之為物，唯恍唯惚。忽兮恍兮，其中有象；恍兮忽兮，其中有物。窈兮冥兮，其中有精；其精甚真，其中有信。 *Laozi jiaoshi*, 87–89; translation from Waley, *The Way and its Power*, 170.

¹²⁰ *Ziran* 自然 used here as another term for the Dao itself.

¹²¹ *Wuzhen pian* (CT 22), 6a–6b. The relevant passage is translated below.

¹²² See for example a passage from the *Taiji zuo xiangong qingwen jing* 太極左仙公請問經: “Cultivate virtue and nurture the spirits; amass emptiness and concentrate perfected [qi]; then your perfected body will be fixed, and you will be able to exit and enter being and nothingness” 修德養神，積空凝真，真身乃定，出入有無. Cited in *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 100.8b. Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933) also notes in one of his writings: “Cultivate within, then concentrate perfected [qi] and return to the One” 修於內則凝真反一. See *Guangcheng ji* 廣成集 (CT 616), 17.4b.

condition the mind and body to become more like the *Dao*, to align the self with a state that would then allow one to move beyond the mundane. That Yu uses terms—*jiliao* 寂寥 and *ziran* 自然—associated directly with the *Dao* and highlighted in verses of the *Daode jing* makes these connections evident.¹²³

Stanza four, dense with allusions, though, suggests both personal cultivation practices, as well as collective ritual practices. It reads:

道生乃太乙，	When the Way was born, then there was the Grand One; ¹²⁴
守靜即玄根。	Preserving stillness—that is the root of mystery. ¹²⁵

¹²³ A couplet from stanza five further emphasizes Yu’s use of language in this manner: “In essential wondrousness, think on the Mysterious Female; / In void nothingness, nurture the Valley Spirit” 要妙思玄牝，虛無養谷神. “Essential wondrousness” alludes to chapter 27 of the *Daode jing*, while the “Mysterious Female” and “Valley Spirit” recall chapter 6 of the same work. See *Laozi jiaoshi*, 109–10 and 25–27 respectively.

¹²⁴ There are several different interpretations of *Taiyi* (cosmogonic principle, celestial body, deity). Yu Xin, in this line, is referring to *Taiyi* as a cosmogonic principle. This idea can be traced to a collection of bamboo slips from the Warring States period titled *Taiyi shengshui* 太一生水, unearthed at the Guodian tombs in 1993. The text defines a process of cosmogenesis from *Taiyi*, a principle of cosmogonic unity, to water to heaven and earth and so forth. The process is comparable in some ways with the cosmogony outlined in chapter 42 of the *Daode jing*, as scholars have pointed out. The *Huananzi* offers a particularly detailed discussion of *Taiyi* as cosmogonic principle in the chapter “Quan yanxun” 詮言訓 that begins: “Cavernous and undifferentiated Heaven and Earth, chaotic and inchoate Uncarved Block, not yet created and fashioned into things: this we call the “Grand One.” 洞同天地，渾沌為樸，未造而成物，謂之太一. Translation from John S. Major et al., eds., *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, Translations from the Asian Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 536. See also Sarah A. Queen’s discussion of the key themes of the chapter, which highlights the principle of *Taiyi*, in *ibid.*, 529–33. On *Taiyi*, cosmogony, and the *Taiyi shengshui* text, as well as its relationship to other texts, see Sarah Allan, “The Great One, Water, and the Laozi: New Light from Guodian,” *T’oung Pao* 89, no. 4/5 (2003): 237–85; Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004), 160–67; Erica Brindley, “The *Taiyi shengshui* Cosmogony and Its Role in Early Chinese Thought,” in *Dao Companion to the Excavated Guodian Bamboo Manuscripts*, ed. Shirley Chan (Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 153–62; Marianne Bujard also surveys several key complexes of ideas associated with *Taiyi*, focusing on the state sacrifices to *Taiyi* in the Han; see her “State and Local Cults in Han Religion,” in *Early Chinese Religion, Part I: Shang through Han 1250 BC–220 AD*, ed. John Lagerwey and Mark Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 791–96.

¹²⁵ “Mystic root” alludes to chapter 16 of the *Daode jing*; see *Laozi jiaoshi*, 64–67. It may have been a term Yu Xin adapted from the *Wupian zhenwen*, though its use there is not as pertinent as in the *Daode jing*. Several passages of the *Wupian zhenwen* use it to describe the celestial writs; see *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.2a; 1.4b; 1.6b.

中和煉九氣，
甲子謝三元。

Be centered and harmonious to refine the nine qi;¹²⁶
During the sexagenary cycle of days, thank the
Three Primes.¹²⁷

居心受善水，
教學重香園。

A settled mind can receive the excellent waters;¹²⁸
Carry on learning by duplicating the fragrant
garden.¹²⁹

Yu Xin, in the first line, notes the existence of Taiyi, conceived of in earlier works as a principle from which the cosmos came into being. In the following line, Yu plays on a passage from chapter sixteen of the *Daode jing*:

¹²⁶ Zhonghe 中和 might also be understood as “centrally harmonious qi” (*zhonghe zhi qi* 中和之氣), another term for primordial qi (*yuanki* 元氣), a blending of the both *yin* and *yang* qi. The line would then read something like: “The ‘centrally harmonious refined into the nine qi.’” The *Xiang'er Commentary to the Laozi* (*Xiang'er zhu* 想爾注) points to this concept of “centrally harmonious qi” in several places. For example, “The Dao values the centrally harmonious. You should practice it in inner harmony. Your will should not flood over, for this is a transgression of the Dao.” 道貴中和，當中和行之，志意不可盈溢，違道戒。 (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 79); and “There are three streams in the heart. Both yang deviances and the yin harm should be shut up and not employed. The central stream is the correct one” 心三川，陽耶陰害，悉當閉之勿用，中道為正 (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 410). As Bokenkamp notes, this central stream refers to the “centrally harmonious qi” (*EDS*, 43). According to the commentary, adepts aimed to let this kind of *qi* flow throughout their body.

¹²⁷ According to Lingbao scriptures the *jiazi* day, along with the *gengshen* 庚申, three primes (*sanyuan* 三元), eight seasonal nodes (*bajie* 八節), and natal destiny day (*benming* 本命), were all associated with performances of the *zhai* 齋 in Lingbao sources. But here, the term likely refers to the entirety of the sexagenary cycle. On the various types of Lingbao *zhai*, see John Lagerwey, “Canonical Fasts According to Lu Xiujing,” in *Affiliation and Transmission in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 41–79.

¹²⁸ Alluding to chapter eight of the *Daode jing*: “The highest good is like that of water. The goodness that of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain. It is this that makes water so near to the Way. / And if men think the ground the best place for building a house upon, / If among thoughts they value those that are profound, / If in friendship they value gentleness, / In words, truth; in government, good order; / In deeds, effectiveness; in actions, timeliness— / In each case it is because they prefer what does not lead to strike, / And therefore does not go amiss” 上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭，處衆人之所惡，故幾於道。居善地，心善淵，與善仁，言善信，正善治，事善能，動善時。夫唯不爭，故無尤。 See *Laozi jiaoshi*, 31–33; translation from Waley, *The Way and its Power*, 151.

¹²⁹ The line refers to the transmission of the *Dafan yinyu* 大梵隱語 that takes place in the Fragrant Grove (*Xianglin yuan* 香林園); see *Taishang lingbao zhutian neiyin ziran yuzi* 太上靈寶諸天内音自然玉字 (CT 97), 3.1a–7a. The ode (*song* 頌) that the various deities sing in celebration describes the scene: “The Celestial Worthy returned in his jade carriage, / Descending to his seat with the fragrant garden” 天尊廻玉駕，降席香園中。 See also *Taishang dongxuan lingbao miedu wulian shengshi miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶滅度五鍊生尸妙經 (CT 369), 1a–b.

Push far enough towards the Void, / Hold fast enough to Quietness, / And
of the ten thousand things none can be worked on by you. / I have beheld
them, whither they go back. / See, all things howsoever they flourish /
Return to the root from which they grew. This return to the root is called
Quietness; / Quietness is called submission to Fate; / What has submitted
to Fate has become part of the always-so. / To know the always-so is to be
illuminated.¹³⁰

致虛極，守靜篤。萬物並作，吾以觀復。夫物芸芸，各復歸其根。歸
根曰靜，是謂復命。復命曰常，知常曰明。

The two lines of the first couplet share a subtle connection, one associated with Daoist cultivation practices. The act of “preserving/holding the One” (*shouyi* 守一), a meditative practice with varying interpretations, was widely undertaken in early Daoism, the subject of some debate on what the practice actually entailed.¹³¹ Essentially, the practice involved preserving the Dao-like qualities within the body in order to bring oneself closer to the Dao—stillness and quietude, conceived of as essential characteristics of the Dao, were crucial to such an undertaking. Yu Xin raises a similar concept in the third couplet (“settled mind” [*juxin* 居心]), weaving an additional allusion to chapter eight of the *Daode jing*—“The highest good is like that of water” 上善若水. The following line alludes to a lengthy scene of transmission described in the *Taishang lingbao zhutian neiyin ziran yuzi* 太上靈寶諸天內音自然玉字, a central Lingbao scripture, that takes place in the Fragrant Grove (*Xianglin yuan* 香林園). *Yuanshi tianzun* reveals the Secret

¹³⁰ *Laozi jiaoshi*, 64–67; translation from Waley, *The Way and its Power*, 162.

¹³¹ Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 33–36. On the practice in Celestial Master thought, see Stephen Bokenkamp, “Traces of Early Celestial Master Physiological Practice in the Xiang’er Commentary,” *Taoist Resources* 4, no. 2: 37–54; On Shangqing *shouyi* practices, see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-Shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Giradot, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 120–38; and J. E. E. Pettit and Chao-jan Chang, *A Library of Clouds: The Scripture of the Immaculate Numen and the Rewriting of Daoist Texts*, New Daoist Studies (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020), *passim*.

Language of the Great Brahma (*Dafan yinyu* 大梵隱語) to *Tianzhen huangren* 天真皇人 and the company of celestial beings. The language, eight graphs for each of the 32 heavens, was an additional form of celestial writing, alongside the Lingbao Perfected Writs, generated from the primordial pneumas of previous kalpas. Because they were incomprehensible in their original form even to divine beings, *Tianzhen huangren* transcribed the language into a readable script and annotated the graphs to create a scripture.¹³² Lingbao scriptures that originate with *Yuanshi tianzun* constitute the “conveyed knowledge” that Yu Xin writes of in the last line above. Read together, the last couplet imparts the idea that one must quiet the mind so as to receive the Lingbao teachings. Yu ingeniously weaves together core principles of the *Daode jing*, cultivation practices, and Lingbao ideology.

Ritual practices are also briefly suggested in the stanza as well. The Lingbao scriptures devised a ritual calendar that demarcated the many days with special ritual significance, on which both practitioners and celestial beings hosted ritual retreats (*zhai* 齋). The *Wupian zhenwen* lays out these days, describing in extensive detail the attendant deities, the celestial offices, and the occasion for the ritual procedures. For example, on the *jiazi* day, the following takes place:

The venerable deities and utmost perfected of the Upper Palace of Grand Mystery regularly dispatch the great emissaries of the Central Terrace of Grand Unity on the *jiazi* day to descend and make a circuit of all the heavens and earths. They inspect the gods of heaven and earth and dispel

¹³² See Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), *Suishu* 隋書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 1091–92, which describes this process of “translation.” Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維 has written extensively on the process. See his, “Writing from Heaven: Celestial Writing in Six Dynasties Daoism” (Bloomington, Indiana University, 2005), 342–50; and “Shengdian yu chuanyi—liuchao dao jiao jingdianzhong de ‘fanyi’” 聖典與傳譯—六朝道教經典中的「翻譯」, *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 31 (Sept. 2007): 185–233.

the mixed customs and demonic essences. On this day, if one can establish a retreat and burn incense, the great emissaries of the Central Terrace will register one's good deeds and merits and submit them to Upper Thearchs of the Three Heavens. The Upper Thearchs will then appoint this person as inspector of heaven and order the demons and divine kings of the earth to list one's name in the jade registers so that they may long serve as a perfected being.

太玄上宮至真尊神，遣常以甲子日，遣大一中臺大使者下，周行諸天諸地，檢校神祇，驅散雜俗鬼精。當此日，能設齋燒香，中臺大使者，皆條善功，奏上三天上帝，上帝即除為監天，領地上鬼神王者，書名玉曆，長為真人。

According to the passage, one could secure one's place in the heavenly registers and become a perfected being by performing the proper rituals upon the designated day. The poem suggests that one "thank the Three Primes." The term *sanyuan* 三元 has a range of meanings (cosmological, bodily, ritual), but because of the verb used in the line (*xie* 謝), it likely refers to collective ritual practice. The Three Prime days, according to the lunar calendar, the fifteenth day of the first (*shangyuan* 上元), seventh (*zhongyuan* 中元), and tenth (*xiayuan* 下元) months, were specific days set aside to perform *zhai*. Nevertheless, *xie* remains somewhat ambiguous. One might make offerings to the gods of the three offices (*sanguan* 三館)—heaven, earth, and water. In the Lingbao ritual tradition, these three days were associated with confession and a specific form of the *zhai*, known as the Retreat of the Three Primes (*Sanyuan zhai* 三元齋).¹³³ In this case, we might then translate the verb as "acknowledge fault." The couplet referencing the *jiazi* day and the

¹³³ See Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志, "The Lingbao Fast of the Three Primes and the Daoist Middle Prime Festival: A Critical Study of the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie jing*," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 35–61.

Three Primes, a confounding mix of vague allusions, nevertheless centers on both personal and collective ritual practice.

The Lingbao scripture *Ziran jiutian shengshen zhangjing* 自然九天生神章經 (hereafter *Shengshen zhangjing*) may provide some insight into the stanza as well. In this work, we find a direction correlation between the nine *qi* and three primal forms of *qi*—*xuan*, *yuan*, *shi* 玄元始—associated with three deities—Tianbao 天寶, Lingbao 靈寶, and Shenbao 神寶. Though they embody different characteristics, they are all part of a greater unity:

These three, though they may have [formed] at different periods and their names diverge, at root, they are one.¹³⁴ They were divided according to the three forms of *qi*—*xuan*, *yuan*, *shi*—and governed them. The Three Treasures became the venerable deities of the three *qi*, designated as such for the generation of the three *qi*. The three merged and gave birth to the nine *qi*. The nine *qi* emerged from before the Grand Emptiness and was hidden within the Empty Caverns.

此三號，雖年殊號異，本同一也。分爲玄元始三炁而治，三寶皆三炁之尊神，號生三炁，三號合生九炁。九炁出乎太空之先，隱乎空洞之中。¹³⁵

The passage continues on to describe the fixing of the celestial bodies, heaven and earth, the five phases, and humanity, followed by a transcription of the stanzas one should recite for 1000 days with proper ritual purity and conduct. In Yu's line about refining *qi*, he appears to be describing the process by which the adept transmutes the primordial *qi* into nine, but he omits any reference to other forms of *qi* as noted in the passage above. The following line envisions a ritualized thanks/confession before deities, perhaps those

¹³⁴ The deities came forth at different points in prior kalpas; see *Ziran jiutian shengshen zhangjing* 自然九天生神章經 (CT 318), 1a.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1b.

associated with the *Shengshen zhangjing*, emanations of the Three Primes. It may be impossible to arrive at a definitive interpretation of enigmatic lines such as this. What would a reader make of such references? The ambiguities certainly allow for broad interpretations, but Yu Xin's subtle intimations of Daoist ideas and practices, almost all grounded in a somewhat limited set of materials (the *Wupian zhenwen* and the *Daode jing*), I think suggests that he was exploiting such materials for a sympathetic and informed readership. Specificity or coherence may not have been the ultimate goal; however, whatever the aim, the imprecise allusions to cosmological processes, cultivation practices, and rituals, bolstered by authoritative language and imagery, might still be pleasing to the informed reader.

Daoist Messianism and a Unified State

But why center the *Wupian zhenwen* and other Lingbao teachings in the poems? Daoism was at the center of ongoing court conversations concerning religion. At the time of his writing these poems, Yu Xin was likely well aware of the courts' Daoist inclinations. Yu Xin, I believe, while offering a delicate critique of a specific forms of Daoism—the fervent pursuit of elixirs and longevity or the unwavering support of figures claiming to possess such secrets—was also promoting a state Daoist ideology, a synthesis of the Lingbao teachings and the *Daode jing*, aligned with Emperor Wu's ambitions—to bring order to a divided state. The Lingbao corpus and its ritual repertoire, along with the *Daode jing*, could support the work of Confucian governance. The *Wupian zhenwen* itself makes claims to order and authority, which implicates the emperor and the state:

Heaven treasures them to float, Earth hides them to settle. The Five Emperors wield them to defend. The three luminous bodies ascend on them to heighten their brightness. Superior sages honor them to achieve perfection. The five peaks follow them to obtain numinous power. The Son of Heaven acquires them in order to achieve governance. The throne enjoys them to bring about Great Peace. The mysterious virtues of these luminous writings are the mystic root of Heaven and Earth.

天寶之以致浮，地祕之以致安，五帝掌之以得鎮，三光乘之以高明，上聖奉之以致真，五嶽從之以得靈，天子得之以致治，國祚享之以太平。寔靈文之妙德乃天地之玄根。¹³⁶

In a later passage, the text reiterates the immense benefits for the state of possessing the

Writes:

Those who obtain them shall live as long as the three *qi*. If one diligently enacts their ritual methods, then he can bring about divine transcendence. One only has to purify the heart and act with complete reverence, then house and state will be made secure and peaceful; one's fate will be preserved, and he will cross over calamities, sweeping away all that is inauspicious. If the Son of Heaven and his nobles revere them, then the state will enter an era of Great Peace. Murderous plunderers will be naturally extinguished, and the borderlands will not be disputed. Citizens will rejoice in song, and all the heavens will flourish. When the [kalpa] cycles push forward for several revolutions,¹³⁷ at that time the upright Dao will be effected. Those who are able to obtain it, should sit and summon forth that which is self-so [the Dao]. The wondrous emphases of the celestial perfected are that which is secreted away in the nine heavens. They cannot be casually leaked into the world, otherwise you personally shall be tried and punished.

有得之子，與三氣長存，勤行其法，尅致神仙，但精心躬奉，家國安寧，保命度災，掃諸不祥。天子侯王，奉之致國太平，凶寇自夷，邊域不爭，兆民歌唱，普天興隆。運推數周，正道當行，有得之者，坐招自然。天真妙重，九天所秘，不得輕泄，考罰爾身。¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.2a–b. Translation adapted from Catherine Bell, “Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy,” *History of Religions* 27, no. 4 (May 1988): 377–78.

¹³⁷ The term *tuiyun* 推運 is used in Lingbao texts to indicate the cyclical passage of time and cosmological development. See for example *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhang jing* 洞玄靈寶自然九天生神章經 (CT 318), 2a.

¹³⁸ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.30b.

The Perfected Writs and Lingbao scriptures present themselves, in Catherine Bell's words, as "ritual instruments of unsurpassed power for the rectification of the universe" and "tangible evidence of the conferral of an unprecedented mandate...the very unity of the truly heavenly and terrestrial and as the instruments for mediating these realms."¹³⁹ Their symbolic power as instruments of order and governance would certainly resonate with Emperor Wu's goals.

Images of cosmogonic formation in the poems, those alluded to in the *Wupian zhenwen*, also imply that the emperor stands at the forefront of a new age. Yu Xin implies these association through specific language and images found in Lingbao scriptures. The first line uses the term "concentrate perfected [qi]" (*ningzhen* 凝真), recalling *Yuanshi tianzun* as he contemplates rebuilding the cosmos at the beginning of a kalpa cycle:

The Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement solidified his inner perfected spirits, and his thoughts were on distant matters. He leaned against a small table, lofty and upright. He was summoning the Five Thearchs, so as to discuss and fix *yin* and *yang*, calculate kalpa conjunctions, shift and correct river sources, examine and record heaven's movements, and select the seed people. He was pointing and gesticulating with his fingers into the grand void, whistling loudly and clearly into the Nine Mysteries. For a long time, he paid no attention to any statements, and thus the path of seeking transcendence was cut off.

元始天尊方凝真遐想，撫几高抗，命召五帝，論定陰陽，推數劫會，
移校河源，檢錄天度，選擇種人，指拈太無，嘯朗九玄，永無開聽於
陳辭，乃閉闕於求真之路。¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Bell, "Ritualization of Texts," 376 and 378.

¹⁴⁰ *Wupian zhenwen* (CT 22), 1.6a–b. This scene is reminiscent of another found in the *Lingshu ziwen* 靈書紫文, in which the Azure Lad (*qing tong* 青童) goes before the Sage Lord of the Latter Age (*Housheng jun* 後聖君). The Lord reacts in a similar manner, and the text employs some of the same language. See *Huangtian shangqing jinque dijun lingshu ziwen shangjing* 皇天上清金闕帝君靈書紫文上經 (CT 639), 1.2a–2b Translated in Bokenkamp, *EDS*, 309–310.

From this vignette, we realize that *Yuanshi tianzun* establishes the foundations of the cosmos and determines the elect (seed people) that shall occupy the newly created world. With allusions of cosmogonic import such as this, Yu Xin's *buxu* poems can be understood in the context of a longer tradition of Daoist symbols of apocalyptic ideology and messianism. Daoist messianism, rooted in early Chinese traditions, can be found throughout the scriptures and writings of different textual traditions and movements (Celestial Master, Shangqing, Lingbao, and sectarian movements) in the Six Dynasties. Such works provided a reserve of language and imagery for both millenarian religious movements and emperors to draw upon.¹⁴¹ The complex of ideas defined in these scriptures involved notions of crisis, judgement, salvation, redemptive figures, and individuals who would assist in ushering in the dawn of a new era, and they drew upon Buddhist teachings, such as the centrality of cyclical cosmic eras (i.e. kalpas [*jie* 劫]).¹⁴² The *Wushang miyao*, the Northern Zhou Daoist collection, cites several of these important scriptures, such as the *Dongzhen santian zhengfa jing* 洞天三天正法經 and the *Taishang zhutian lingshu duming miaojing* 太上諸天靈書度命妙經 in a section titled "Kalpa Cycles" (*Jieyun* 劫運).¹⁴³ As Bokenkamp has demonstrated, these Daoist cycles

¹⁴¹ Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙 provides a survey of these schools and texts in his article "Chuancheng yu duiying: Liuchao Daojiao jing zhong 'moshi' shuo de tichu yu yanbian" 傳承與對應：六朝道教經中「末世」說的提出與衍變, *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 9 (Sept. 1996): 91–130.

¹⁴² For an overview of this complex in both Daoist and Buddhist contexts, see Erich Zürcher, "Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism," *T'oung Pao* 68, no. Livr 1/3 (1982): 2–10; see also Anna Seidel, "Taoist Messianism," *Numen* 31, no. 2 (December 1984): 161–74.

¹⁴³ See *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 6.1a–5a. The latter text is listed as the *Dongxuan lingshu jing* 洞玄靈書經, but the passage cited is one taken from the Lingbao scripture *Taishnag zhutian lingshu duming miaojing* 太上諸天靈書度命妙經 (CT 23). Passages from several of these same texts in the *Wushang*

of time, defined at differing lengths and with endpoints impossible to predict, though many tried, were also the cause of great anxiety, for their end portended extensive disaster and suffering.¹⁴⁴ The end of a cycle also brought with it the possibility of a politico-religious savior, and it was this particular image that appealed to rulers, for it bolstered claims to a mandate to rule.¹⁴⁵

The Lingbao scriptures were particularly concerned with cycles of time and the salvation of the elect at the opening of a new cycle.¹⁴⁶ At the end of a major cycle,¹⁴⁷ one of the five thearchs would arrive to ferry the elect across the apocalypse that accompanied the culmination. Lingbao sources point to the end date of the *Kaihuang* 開皇 kalpa, the current kalpa cycle, which was preceded by three others—*Longhan* 龍漢, *Yankang* 延康, and *Chiming* 赤明—as the *jiashen* 甲申 year. Due to the cyclical nature

miyao, along with other different ones, are cited in the early Tang collection *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊 (CT 1139) in a section “Numbers of Kalpas” (*jieshu* 劫數); see 9.1a–5b.

¹⁴⁴ Stephen Bokenkamp, “Time after Time: Taoist Apocalyptic History and the Founding of the Tang Dynasty,” *Asia Major* 7, no. 1 (1994): 71–72.

¹⁴⁵ Historical rulers that drew on apocalyptic imagery and saviors included Emperor Wen of the Sui 隋文帝 (r. 581–684), Emperor Gaozu of the Tang 唐高祖 (r. 618–626), and Empress Wu Zhao 武曩 (r. 690–705). See Anna Seidel, “The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao-Tzu and Li Hung,” *History of Religions* 9, no. 2/3 (November 1969): 216–47; Arthur F. Wright, “The Formation of Sui Ideology” in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 71–104; Bokenkamp, “Time after Time;” N. Harry Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 145–226; and April D. Hughes, *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2021).

¹⁴⁶ For a synopsis of these Lingbao eras and kalpa cycles, as well as their accompanying cosmological developments, see *juan* 3 of the *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), titled *Lingbao lueji* 靈寶略紀. On the Lingbao contributions to Daoist apocalyptic thought, see Lee “Chuancheng yu duiying,” 28–35; and Zurcher, “Prince Moonlight,” 6–7.

¹⁴⁷ The Lingbao scriptures outline five major and minor cycles associated with the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行). See Bokenkamp, “Time after Time,” 70–71; and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao tiandi yun ziran miaojing* 太上東玄靈寶天地運自然妙經 (CT 322), 6b–7a for a description of these cycles.

prescriptions, among them upholding and propagating the Lingbao teachings and writings, shall be saved.¹⁵⁰ The line may have also been a subtle reminder to the reader, perhaps the emperor, that he was among the elect because of his character and good deeds and would be judged accordingly.

The notion of the end times is most clearly articulated in the first stanza which closes with several indications of salvation:

青衣上少室，	The azure-robed one ascends [Mount] Lesser Chamber; ¹⁵¹
童子向蓬萊。	The lad moves toward Penglai. ¹⁵²
逍遙聞四會，	Rambling free and easy, having heard the four convergences. ¹⁵³
倏忽度三災。	Swiftly and suddenly, crossing over the three calamities. ¹⁵⁴

Both couplets here allude to apocalyptic themes found in Daoist scripture. As

Bokenkamp has suggested, Yu Xin employs a clever allusion to the Azure Lad (*qing tong*

¹⁵⁰ *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 (CT 352), 1.3b–4b. In his discussion of the elect, Lee emphasizes the receipt of talismans and the recitation of scripture to establish merit, though the means by which one may become a “seed person” depends on much more; see his “Chuangcheng yu duiying,” 28–35.

¹⁵¹ Mount Shaoshi (Lesser Chamber) is a peak upon Mount Song (*Songshan* 嵩山), the central mountain among the five marchmounts (*wuyue* 五嶽). In Ge Hong’s *Baopuzi*, it is said to be the location of transcendent foodstuffs; see *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, 179.

¹⁵² Penglai is one of several isles in the Eastern Sea 東海, along with Yingzhou 瀛洲 and Fangzhang 方丈 where transcendents were said to reside.

¹⁵³ “Four convergences” (*sihui* 四會) also refers to the meeting of the sounds of the four directions. See for example Song Yu’s 宋玉 (fl. 3rd cent. BCE), “Gao tang fu” 高唐賦: “Slender branches sadly moan, / With sounds like syrinx and flute. / Clear and turbid are blended together, / Quintuply changing, quadruply merging” 纖條悲鳴，聲似竽籟。清濁相和，五變四會. *Wenxuan*, 878; translation from Knechtges, *WXIII*, 333.

¹⁵⁴ According to the Buddhist tradition, there are both minor or major calamities. Minor calamities—war, pestilence, and famine—occur at the close of the existent kalpa cycle (*zhujie* 住劫), while major calamities—fire, storms, and flood—occur at the end of the kalpa of collapse (*huaijie* 壞劫).

青童) in the first couplet by splitting the two characters of the figure's appellation, a move reminiscent of other prophetic verses.¹⁵⁵ The Azure Lad and Li Hong 李弘, known as a messianic figure in early Daoist scriptures, do not feature as extensively in Lingbao literature as in Shangqing works,¹⁵⁶ but one Lingbao-inflected scripture,¹⁵⁷ the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao tiandi yun ziran miaojing* 太上東玄靈寶天地運自然妙經 does contain references to Li Hong's imminent arrival, in which his name is rendered as *Gong kou shi ba zi* 弓口十八子.¹⁵⁸ Li Hong and his apocalyptic associations were apparently well-known in northern China, for Kou Qianzhi, Daoist counselor to the Northern Wei, received revelations from Lord Lao railing against false-practitioners who proclaimed Li Hong's coming manifestation.¹⁵⁹ In these lines, the Azure Lad returns to the celestial realms, leading the elect, who have escaped the apocalypse,¹⁶⁰ as indicated in the closing

¹⁵⁵ Kirkova echoes this analysis but arrives at a very different conclusion, one that I disagree with, in which she links the idea of salvation in the stanza to liturgy, noting that “Although Yu Xin makes no references here to ritual performance, the text can be perceived as a synthesis of the essence and significance of the Daoist liturgy.” See her *Roaming into the Beyond*, 339–40.

¹⁵⁶ See Li Hong's hagiography, the *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖列記 (CT442), which was originally part of a key early Shangqing work, the *Lingshu ziwén* 靈書紫文. On the apocalyptic implications of the *Lingshu ziwén*, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scripture*, 295–99.

¹⁵⁷ I use the term “Lingbao-inflected” for this work does not appear in Lu Xiuqing's catalogue of Lingbao scriptures from 437, the *Lingbao jingmu* 靈寶經目, but it clearly shows signs of Lingbao teachings. Seidel notes that scriptures, such as this, were likely excluded because of their “character as a pastiche of several Daoist traditions (Lingbao liturgy, popular messianism, *huahu* 化胡 literature) and especially Buddhist morality and cosmology;” see Anna Seidel, “Le sūtra merveilleux du Ling-pao suprême, traitant de Lao tseu qui convertit les barbares (le manuscrit S. 2081): Contribution à l'étude du Bouddhotaoïsme des Six Dynasties,” in *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang*, vol. 3, ed. Michel Soymié (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient 1984), 306.

¹⁵⁸ *Taishang dongxuan lingbao tiandi yun ziran miaojing* 太上東玄靈寶天地運自然妙經 (CT 322), 4b and 6a.

¹⁵⁹ See Seidel, “Taoist Messianism,” 169–71.

¹⁶⁰ The Azure Lad is most often associated with Eastern Florescence (*donghua* 東華); see the discussion in Paul W. Kroll, “In the Halls of the Azure Lad,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (March

couplet of Yu's first stanza. While the "three calamities" and its sense is rather straightforward, particularly because of the verb that precedes it in the line, we need turn to the Lingbao scriptures again to understand the "four convergences." The term also resonates with apocalyptic themes, such as in a section of the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 that provides a ritual method for being saved from the great floodwaters at the close of major cycle. The section opens: "At the conjunction of a major kalpa of heaven and earth, flood waters shall emerge from the four directions to sweep away the impure and eliminate evil. Of the myriad things, not one shall remain" 天地大劫之交，洪水四出，蕩穢除惡，萬無遺一. According to the passage, only the few who possess the Lingbao perfected writs will be saved. A visualization method, one in which the practitioner envisions the transformation of the body into a flood dragon (*jiaolong* 蛟龍), is provided. The practice also requires the recitation of a lengthy incantation, part of which reads: "I have joined the thearch's chosen, my name listed in the nine heavens. The vermilion writings are that which mitigate the great calamities of the four directions. On this day, I declare my fate for the myriad deities to all hear" 我參帝簡，名列九天。大災四會，赤書所蠲。是日告命，

1985): 75–94. A deity known as Prince Moonlight (*Yueguang tongzi* 月光童子 i.e. the Bodhisattva Candraprabha-kumāra), also associated with Daoist and Buddhist apocalyptic themes, has some association with Penglai. In two Dunhuang texts studied by Erik Zürcher, "The Scripture of the monk Shouluo" (*Shouluo biqiu jing* 首羅比丘經) and the "Scripture of the Realization of Understanding preached by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra" (*Puxian pusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經, Prince Moonlight resides in a cave on Penglai, where a king and his entourage visit him and subsequently learn from him about the apocalypse and the methods needed to be saved. See Zürcher, "Prince Moonlight" 33–37.

萬神咸聞。¹⁶¹ The parallelism of the line indicates that Yu Xin was drawing on this apocalyptic association, portraying the elect as having transcended disasters to roam about free and easy in the heavens with the Azure Lad.

Daoist writings of the Six Dynasties, the Lingbao scriptures among them, were replete with apocalyptic and messianic conceptions and imagery that would long be employed in support of a ruler. Yu Xin, it appears, was among the writers that drew on these, focusing on a body of religious writings that was particularly appealing to the emperor and members of the ruling family. The historical moment and the court atmosphere provided the impetus for Yu Xin, but his ingenuity was to weave together such disparate source material to craft a compelling argument both critical and supportive of imperial designs. His choice of medium—a decidedly Lingbao form of hymn—was especially incisive and likely had a profound effect.

Conclusion

In these poems, Yu Xin relies on several timeworn tropes and images from conventional sources of literary allusion, but infuses the pieces with fresh ideas found within the Lingbao corpus, the Daoist textual tradition at the center of discussions on state religion and the cornerstone of compilation projects such as the *Wushang miyao*. The poems, as I have argued above, function on two levels as both critique and promotion, two sides of the same coin, though, I believe. To fervently pursue transcendent aims and support those who claim insight into such techniques would only

¹⁶¹ *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 (CT 352), 1.20a. The scripture uses similar language (1.25a) to describe a staff (*ce* 策) used to summon a flood dragon.

distract from the necessary activities of governance. A ruler should be concerned with the generation of peaceful state and preserving the ritual forms conducive to this. Yu Xin's composition of these stanzas offers a powerful symbolic representation of what a ruler could be for the state if his intentions and efforts were channeled properly.

In reading the poems in this manner, I also want to suggest we consider the performative and ritual qualities of the pieces and the context of their writing. The composition of court poetry was essentially a performance before an audience, and Yu Xin did on occasion play the role of entertainer, a performer valued for his artistic skill and poetic craft, as several poems in his extant corpus attest.¹⁶² Though the *buxu* poems do not contain the phrase “composed on imperial command” (*fenghe* 奉和) in their title, they certainly presume the same imperial audience, one that would discern the significance of the allusions throughout. Just as Yu Xin wrote some of his poems to a small audience of southern exiles, as reflected in his use of allusions to the immediate and personal past,¹⁶³ the intended audience for his *buxu* poems likewise may have been limited to those that understood the import of the *Wupian zhenwen* and Lingbao ideas.

The composition of court poetry might also be considered as ritual exchange, an offering of praise before an authority. In exchange, the emperor might offer approbation

¹⁶² Two poems composed upon imperial command also concern the court debates on religion, one titled “Upon Imperial Command, Respectfully Matching ‘Advancing the Two Teachings’” (*Fenghe chanhong erjiao yingzhao* 奉和闡弘二教應詔), and “Upon Imperial Command, Respectfully Matching ‘Dharma Assembly’” (*Fenghe fayan yingzhao* 奉和法筵應詔); see Lu Qinli, 2362–63. Luo Yiyi has discussed both poems in her “Literary Responses to Religious Debates at the Northern Zhou Court.” Wu Fusheng also discusses Yu Xin and several of his poems labeled *yingzhao* 應詔; see his *Written at Imperial Command*, 175–84.

¹⁶³ See Xiaofei Tian, “Yu Xin’s ‘Memory Palace’: Writing Trauma and Violence in Early Chinese Aulic Poetry,” in *Memory in Medieval China: Text, Ritual, and Community*, eds. Wendy Swartz and Robert F. Campany (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 124–57.

before other literati or more tangible benefits, such as title or position, which need not be immediate. That court poets may simultaneously criticize or offer advice does not necessarily undermine their status as offering. The ritual exchange is governed by certain expectations and rules that constrain language and expression.¹⁶⁴ One can offer a critique of the emperor, the court, or policies, but must do so in an oblique manner. The very rules that govern poetic expression in this context limit what might be expressed, which could engender tension between individual sentiments and actual expression.¹⁶⁵ Outright reproval would certainly represent a breach of expected ritual conduct. Yu Xin's contingent status at the court also reflects the power structures in such a ritual exchange. The poet is always subordinate, and ritualized interactions "are not secondary reflections of the relationships of authority and deference that are structuring interactions between rulers and ruled. They create these relations; they create power in the very tangible exercise of it."¹⁶⁶ Engaging in the act of court composition validates and solidifies the status of the actors. Nevertheless, poets still had the capacity to assert their own sense of authority and power, but must do so only in a socially acceptable manner.

It is the cache of Lingbao Daoist allusions that marks the poems as a form of political ritual. Lingbao texts offered the symbolic means to support political legitimacy and authority. As David I. Kertzer notes, "Many of the most powerful symbols of legitimacy are of religious origin. It should come as no surprise, then, that new political

¹⁶⁴ See Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 153–55 on rule governance as a "Characteristic of Ritual-like Activities."

¹⁶⁵ See Wu, *Written at Imperial Command*, 1–12.

¹⁶⁶ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 136. The analysis here draws on her outline of genres of ritual in the same book. On "Rites of Exchange and Communion," see 108–114; on "Political Rituals," see 128–35.

forces eagerly rummage through the preexisting body of religious rituals and symbols to find those that will enrich their own ritual forms.”¹⁶⁷ Emperor Wu was not a “new political force” as in one who had just assumed office or power, but his endeavor to unite the state would position him as primogenitor of a new dynastic state. His turn to Confucian rituals and norms of the *Liji* provided a continuity with the prevailing, legitimate moral order. Lingbao Daoist rituals and texts, on the other hand, offered symbols of salvation and messianic redemption. Lingbao cosmology and symbols would imbue Emperor Wu’s rule with a sacrality bound to the very origins of the universe. Tied together, these two systems were powerful and dynamic sources of authority and legitimacy that could support Emperor Wu’s aims at unification. We can also appreciate the poems’ subjunctive quality, a unique feature of ritual according to some scholars,¹⁶⁸ for in their use of cosmological symbols, they ask readers to imagine a world in which the emperor takes up the mantle and leads the state into a new era of peace and stability.

As political ritual, the poems also represent a “deliberate, self-conscious ‘doing’ of highly symbolic actions in public,” an aspect that also relates to their performative quality.¹⁶⁹ The choice of structure and title, signifying a clear referent, serves to frame the performance, indicating to the audience that, not only does Yu Xin understand the underlying significance of his choice, he also has something valuable to contribute. Yu Xin may have been inspired to use the *buxu* form by viewing ritual performances

¹⁶⁷ David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 45.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Puett, “Ritual and the Subjunctive” in *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, Seligman A, Weller R, Simon B, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2008), 17-42.

¹⁶⁹ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 159–60. See the entire section on performance as a characteristic of ritual, 159–64.

themselves, as Lee Fong-mao has suggested.¹⁷⁰ But that would imply an ability to parse the semantic and poetic features from a complex repertoire of ritual gesture, movement, music, and sound. It is far more likely that Yu took his inspiration from the *Buxu jing* itself. This text was certainly available to readers at the time, as editors of the *Wushang miyao* cite it at least four times in the extant sections of the collection.¹⁷¹ Moreover, the allusions throughout the poems to Lingbao cosmology and ideas suggest a more intimate knowledge of Lingbao texts rather than a passing familiarity with ritual performance. Yu Xin's stanzas are linked to the *buxu* ritual hymns through title and form, but their content and language betray deeper connections to Lingbao texts and teachings. They are certainly not tied to Daoist ritual performance or meant to be employed in a ritual setting, yet they exhibit ritual-like qualities—the rules that govern the exchange between poet and emperor, the performative aspects, and the framing—and, as I have argued here, might also be read as political ritual. Yu Xin, poet, polymath, and skilled rhetorician, in reinventing this form for what it was and could be used for, paved the way for future writers to further explore the form, as well as the resonances of the term *buxu*.

¹⁷⁰ Lee, *You yu you*, 289.

¹⁷¹ Lagerwey, *Wushang biyao*, 260–61. See also Ofuchi, “On Ku Ling-Pao,” 47. Schipper and Verellen raised the issue of textual access when they divided their study of scriptures into “texts in general circulation” and “texts in internal circulation.” See Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* 道藏通考, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), v–vii. They classify the *Buxu jing* in the latter category; however, the events at the Northern Zhou court and Yu Xin's *buxu* poems would complicate this issue.

CHAPTER 4

RETURNING TO THE VOID: WU YUN'S POETIC PROGRAM OF CULTIVATION AND TRANSCENDENCE

Introduction

Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778), one of the most notable Daoist figures of the Tang dynasty alongside Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735) and Du Guangting 杜廣庭 (850–933), was a prolific writer, known primarily for important works on cultivation and the pursuit of immortality—the “Treatise on Mystic Mainstay” (*Xuangang lun* 玄綱論) and the “Treatise on the Feasibility of Studying Transcendence” (*Shenxian kexue lun* 神仙可學論).¹ These treatises were widely read and cited—the *Shenxian kexue lun* was aimed at a literati readership and passages from his *Xuangang lun* are preserved in numerous Daoist encyclopedic sources from later periods.² Though there are several contradictory or misleading sources on Wu Yun’s life,³ it was Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818), notable statesman of the Tang, who wrote Wu Yun’s most reliable biographical

¹ Among many discussions on Wu Yun’s life, see especially Jan de Meyer, *Wu Yun’s Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3–102 [hereafter WYW]; idem., “Mountainhopping: The Life of Wu Yun,” *T’ang Studies* 17 (1999): 171–211; idem., “Linked Verse and Linked Faiths: An Inquiry into the Social Circle of an Eminent Tang Dynasty Taoist Master,” in *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honor of Kristofer Schipper*, eds. Jan de Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 148–84. See also Kamitsuka Yoshiko 神塚淑子, “Go Un no shōgai to shisō” 吳筠の生涯と思想, *Tōhō shukyō* 東方宗教 54 (1979): 33–51; and Russell Kirkland, “Taoists of the High T’ang: An Inquiry into the Perceived Significance of Eminent Taoists in Medieval Chinese Society,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1986), 96–111 and 324–42.

² The *Xuangang lun* is preserved as a standalone text in the *Daozang* (CT 1052), while the *Shenxian kexue lun* is part of Wu’s collected works; see *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* 宗玄先生文集 (CT 1051), 2.9b–16a.

³ On the thorny issue of Wu’s biographical materials, see Kirkland, “Taoists of the High T’ang,” 324–42; Jiang Yin 蔣寅, *Dali shiren yanjiu* 大歷詩人研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 312–15; and De Meyer, WYW, 3–8.

source, a preface to Wu's collected works.⁴ Wu lived a predominantly peripatetic life, traveling among famous mountains, such as Mount Song 嵩山 and Mount Zhongnan 終南山. He was, though, summoned to the capital of Chang'an 長安 at the behest of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713–756) in the fourth year of the Celestial Treasure (*Tianbao* 天寶) reign period (745). The reason for his summons appears to have been unrelated to his prowess as a Daoist figure but instead was connected to his notoriety as hermit and poet.⁵ According to Quan Deyu's preface, Wu was "ordained in the entirety of Zhengyi methods" 齊整正一之法 by Feng Qizheng 馮齊整, a disciple of Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (585–682), the 11th patriarch of the Upper Clarity (*Shangqing* 上清) Daoist school. It is unclear from extant records whether he received full Daoist ordination, that is admission into the full textual legacy of Shangqing corpus, which represented the highest level of ordination in the Tang.⁶ Nevertheless, as scholars have recognized, Wu was

⁴ In the preface, Quan notes that he "followed the bidding" 從期命 of one of Wu Yun's disciples Shao Jixuan 邵冀玄 in writing the short preface and biography. For Quan's biography, see the preface to *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* 宗玄先生文集 (CT 1051); also collected in Dong Gao 董誥 (1714–1818), et al., eds., *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 4999a–5000a; and Li Fang 李昉 (925–966), et al., eds., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 3631a–32b. Another piece, titled "Wu zunshi zhuan" 吳尊師傳, also attributed to Quan, is appended to the *Zong xiansheng xuangang lun* 宗玄先生玄綱論 (CT 1052); see also *Quan Tangwen*, 5164b–65a. The two pieces display a number of discrepancies on some critical details of his life. Kirkland accounts for the discrepancies by suggesting that they were aimed at different audiences; see his "Taoists of the High Tang," 96–111. De Meyer, following Jiang Yin but with additional discussion, rejects the "Wu zunshi zhuan" as a later forgery based on the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 biography; see his *WYW*, 3–8. For the *Jiu Tangshu* biography, see Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946), *Jiu Tangshu* (Beijing: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 5129–30.

⁵ Both Sima Chengzhen and Li Hanguang 李含光 (683–769), thirteenth Shangqing patriarch, had already transmitted Shangqing texts and methods to the emperor by that time in 721 and 748 respectively. See T.H. Barrett, *Taoism Under the Tang: Religion and Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: Wellsweep, 1996), 69. Moreover, according to the Quan's preface, Wu requested ordination after his first arrival in the capital.

⁶ On his Daoist affiliations, see Zhan Shichuang 詹石窗, "Wu Yun shicheng kao" 吳筠師承考, *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 1 (1994): 26–28; and De Meyer, *WYW*, 33–37. A number of Daoist texts outline the

indeed conversant in the language of Shangqing Daoism, as evidenced by many of his writings.⁷ Wu Yun's career in Chang'an was short-lived, for after being appointed Hanlin Academician in Attendance (*Hanlin gongfeng* 翰林供奉) in 754, despite not having ever passed the *jinshi* examinations, he left the capital soon thereafter around the eruption of the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion in 755. Shortly before, he submitted the *Xuangang lun* 玄綱論, one of his most well-known works, to Emperor Xuanzong on July 5, 754. After his departure, he returned to traveling about famous mountains, where he continued his writing and cultivation practices.

This chapter delves into Wu Yun's "Lyrics on Pacing the Void" (*buxu ci* 步虛詞), a set of 10 stanzas of varying lengths (10, 12, or 14 lines) in pentasyllabic verse, which follow the form of the Lingbao *buxu* hymns (rhymes on alternating lines and 10 distinct rhymes). Though this chapter centers on Wu's *buxu* poems, this focus is not exclusive, for in explicating them, we must also turn to his other poems and writings on transcendence, especially the "Poems on Roaming in Transcendence" (*Youxian shi* 遊仙詩) and "Fu on Ascending to Perfection" (*Dengzhen fu* 登真賦).⁸ The *Youxian shi* series

various ranks of ordination; for a list of these works and a sound introduction to the issue of Daoist ordination see, Charles Benn, "Daoist Ordinations and *Zhai* Rituals in Medieval China," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 322–337. For scholarship on Tang Daoist ordinations, see Kristofer Schipper, "Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, eds. Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Polz, and Hans Hermann-Schmidt (Würzburg: Köningshausen + Neumann, 1985), 127–48; and Lü Pengzhi, "Ordination Ranks in Medieval Daoism and the Classification of Daoist Rituals," in *Affiliation and Transmission in Daoist: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012): 81–107.

⁷ De Meyer does however caution: "Of course it is undeniable that Wu Yun was well read in the literature connected with the Shangqing school. Yet this alone does not imply that Wu Yun had been transmitted the Shangqing canon" (WYW, 36). See also his comments in "Review of Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages. Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiè siècle*," *T'oung Pao* 108 (2022): 543–49.

⁸ For the *Youxian* series, see *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051); 2.26b–30b; for the "Dengzhen fu," see *ibid.*, 2.5b–7a.

is a set of 24 distinct stanzas of varying line length, while the “Dengzhen fu” is a singular work, one of eight *fu* poems that survive in a compilation of Wu Yun’s writings titled *Collected Works of the Master who Reveres the Mysteries (Zongxuan xiansheng wenji 宗玄先生文集)* (CT 1051), a work of three fascicles (*juan* 卷) that contains only a fraction of his original work.⁹ These three pieces, alongside his other treatises on transcendence, notably the *Xuangang lun* and the *Shenxian kexue lun*, help us to appreciate the consistency and complexity of Wu’s Daoist thought.

In this chapter, I argue that we must read all of these works in concert, for in them, Wu expresses a coherent vision of the cosmos and humanity’s place within it, of transcendent existence, and of a methodology for attaining divine transcendence. My interpretation of the *buxu* poems starkly contrasts with Schafer’s understanding of Wu Yun’s *buxu* and *youxian* series that he characterizes in the following manner:

In both visions, the initiate becomes, in effect a space pilot—but not one who follows a definable flight plan, or travels measurable distances. His excursions are shaped by literary imagery, often dazzling, which gives a vivid impression of incredible galactic adventures. It is verbal magic, intended to transport the reader into realms which his own feeble imagination can hardly adumbrate.¹⁰

While Schafer brought attention to the significance of Wu Yun’s poetic writings on transcendence, his analysis of the poems fell short in some regards, in particular contextualizing the pieces in light of Wu’s other writings. As I argue, when read together,

⁹ For a short intro to the collection, see Kristofer M. Schipper, and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 437–38 [hereafter *HCD*]. Quan Deyu’s preface notes that Wu’s written work amounted to 450 *pian* 篇. By other accounts, Wu wrote over 450 poems; see *Daomen tongjiao biyao ji* 道門通教必要集 (CT 1226), 12a.

¹⁰ Edward H. Schafer, “Wu Yun’s Stanzas on ‘Saunters in Sylphdom,’” *Monumenta Serica* 35 (1981–83): 345.

the three works portray a clear cosmology and experience, one that in fact, reflects both Shangqing ideas and a Tang Daoist synthesis of cosmological visions—they are neither the adept’s unplanned, ecstatic excursions to the Heavens nor the author’s attempt to create this experience for the reader.¹¹

Moreover, these works reveal Wu as a systematic thinker, who was invested in propagating Daoism among the literati. Wu sought to spread his understanding of Daoist teachings in different forms as a way of engaging with a wider audience. The poetic works stand together as a consistent body of material, reflecting an undoubtedly complex cosmology and a process of achieving transcendence, but one that adheres together nonetheless. His language of transcendence and cultivation practice used across this poetry also may have had an impact on later *buxu ci* iterations.¹² In contrast with Yu Xin’s *buxu* poems, Wu Yun’s exhibit clearer resemblances with the Lingbao *buxu* hymns, going beyond structure and rhyme pattern to include parallel allusions and narrative structure. But they do function like Yu Xin’s rhetorical pieces. In other words, the narrative found within the poems delivers a vivid portrayal of the almost limitless possibilities of pursuing Wu’s formula of morality and cultivation. Wu’s poems paint a picture of the ideal outcome of this Daoist cultivation path, and in doing so, serve as a kind of means of proselytization.

¹¹ Olivier Boutonnet also suggests this regarding Wu’s *youxian* series. See his *Le char de nuages: érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du VIII^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2021), 307–308 (Kindle edition).

¹² Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916–991) wrote a series of five *buxu* poems whose language and imagery of cultivation and celestial ascent mirrors that of Wu’s *buxu* pieces; see *QTS* 755.4a–5a. Xu’s poems are discussed and partially translated in Harry Kaplan, “Lyrics on Pacing the Void.” *Phi Theta Papers* (Berkeley, CA) 14 (1977): 51–60.

Each *buxu* stanza in the set of ten involves an amalgamation of allusions, primarily to Daoist sources, an aspect that contrasts with Yu Xin's *buxu* stanzas that hinge on both literary sources, such as the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, as well as a limited number of Daoist sources. Schafer was indeed right that Wu's *buxu* stanzas present key points of Shangqing Daoist doctrine—he notes, in particular, the prominent influence of the *Huangting jing* 黃庭經—but, as Olivier Boutonnet points out, we cannot discount the potential importance of several other significant Shangqing texts to Wu Yun's thought and poetic compositions. While a full explication and annotation of each stanza and the complex of allusions throughout them might allow conjecture on the Daoist texts to which Wu Yun may have been privy, such an endeavor is beyond the scope of this chapter. Highlighting aspects of the path to transcendence and the experience, as they are depicted in the set, allows us to see how the stanzas reflect key facets of Wu's thought, as well as fundamental ideas of Shangqing practice and Lingbao cosmology. In untangling the varied references to these teachings, we of course must turn to Daoist scriptures; and though we may never be certain that Wu had direct access to specific texts, the poems evidence the fact that Wu Yun was acquainted with important concepts and understandings across various scriptural traditions.

Worldly Preparations, Attitudes, and Moral Actions

The ability to ascend into the heavens did not happen overnight, but was the product of intense preparation and cultivation practice. Preconditions, such as the proper heavenly endowment, also impacted the adept's potential for success on the path to transcendence. Without, the necessary prerequisites, an adept might not be able to tread

the loftiest heights of the heavens and return to the Dao. Wu Yun's poems on transcendence describe an adept who has fulfilled all requirements, whose good fortune and labor may now culminate in a final return to the Dao.

Before delving headlong in the language and imagery of Wu's *buxu* poems, a brief note regarding the opening lines that stand outside the central narrative structure:¹³

眾仙仰靈範，	A crowd of transcendents looks up to the Numinous Standard, ¹⁴
肅駕朝神宗。	Their stately carriages ready to pay court before the Divine Progenitor. ¹⁵
金景相照曜，	Their golden effulgences illuminate one another, ¹⁶

¹³ Edward Schafer brought Wu Yun's poetic works on transcendence to the attention of western scholars with his translation and discussions of the *buxu* poems in "Wu Yun's 'Cantos on Pacing the Void,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (Dec. 1981): 377–415; and of his *youxian* poems in "Wu Yun's Stanzas on 'Saunters in Sylphdom,'" *Monumenta Serica* 35 (1981–83): 309–45. Obviously my own work on Wu Yun's poetry owes a great deal to his pioneering pieces. While I have retained some of his translations, in many other places I have completely revised them according to my own understanding and reading of Wu's collective body of writing and other Daoist texts. Below I note where I have retained or altered translations.

¹⁴ The "Numinous Standard" here is another term for the Dao. Pi Youqi 薛幽棲, one of the Tang commentators on the *Duren jing* 度人經, discusses the following line of that scripture:

"The entire kingdom, male and female, inclined their hearts and took refuge in the Dao. Those assembled were like droplets of mist or dense fog, countless in their multitudes. They crowded into one half of the area of the kingdom, so that it tipped to the side but still they would not be stopped."

一國男女，傾心歸仰，來者有如細雨密霧，无缺之眾，迨國一半，土皆偏陷，非可禁止。
Translation from Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 407–08.

Pi writes: "'Ze' means to crowd into or cram. [The passage] stresses that the people of the kingdom submitted to the Numinous Standard and returned their hearts to the transformation of the perfected." 迨者，充塞也。重說國人，歸仰靈範，回心真化。 See *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaoqing sizhu* 元始無量度人上品妙經四註 (CT 87), 1.13b.

¹⁵ Based on the parallelism of the line, "Divine Progenitor" is likely another term referring to the Dao. However, in another work, it is an alternative name for a god known as *Zhongyang siming jun* 中央司命君. See *Dongzhen taiyi dijun taidan yinshu dongzhen xuanjing* 洞真太一帝君太丹隱書洞真玄經 (CT 1330), 23a–b.

¹⁶ "Golden effulgences" refers to the *bajing* 八景 of the celestial carriages. As Schafer describes them, they are "a set of luminiferous spirits who defend the strategic channels of the human body, but also externalized and free of their somatic prison, are mobile and far-ranging, and may attend the mystic vehicle that takes the successful adept to his eternal home;" see Edward H. Schafer, "Empyrean Powers and

逶迤昇太空。

As winding and meandering, they ascend to the
Grand Emptiness.¹⁷

I suggest that these lines function as the “affective image” (*xing* 興) of the set, establishing the atmosphere and expectations, and they do so in several ways.¹⁸ First, they stand in a rather peculiar position in the context of the overall narrative of the set. As I explore below, the first stanza concerns the essential conditions of the adept that, once fulfilled, allow the ascent to the heavens; however, in the second couplet here the ascent appears to have already begun. Wu primes the reader’s expectations by alluding to the journey’s culmination in the opening lines. “Numinous Standard” and “Divine Progenitor” refer to the ultimate goal, a return to the Dao. Moreover, the verb in the first line (*ying* 迎) creates a sense of anticipation and expectation of things to come. The last line briefly encompasses what shall transpire, a leisurely ascent into the heavens. Finally, the following lines in the first stanzas break sharply from this image, returning the reader to a period prior to the take-off.

After the opening, the first stanza considers the process that has allowed the adept to reach this pivotal moment, touching on the conditions and preparation of the adept:

七玄已高飛，

My [ancestors] of the Seven Mysteries have already

Chthonian Edens: Two Notes on T’ang Taoist Literature,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1986): 672. On the subject of the *bajing* in Tang literature, see *ibid.*, 671–76. In his exposition of the *buxu* line, Schafer reads the mutual illumination as that coming from the sun, moon, and stars (*sanjing* 三景) and the *bajing*. While possible, it seems more likely that there are numerous carriages, all reflecting upon one another. See Edward H. Schafer, “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos on Pacing the Void,’” 393–94 n. 66.

¹⁷ Sometimes translated as “Grand Hollow;” see Edward H. Schafer, “Cosmic Metaphors: The Poetry of Space,” *Schafer Sinological Papers* 5 (1984): 11.

¹⁸ For a discussion and translation of the relevant passage from the “Great Preface” (*Daxu* 大序) to the *Shijing* 詩經, Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, 1992), 45–46.

soared aloft,¹⁹
 火鍊生朱宮。 Having been refined in the fires and born into the
 Vermillion Palace.²⁰

The idea of the bond between the living and the seventh generation deceased ancestor was widespread in Daoist writings and scriptural traditions. Key scriptures from both the Lingbao and Shangqing corpora discuss such notions, describing the deceased ancestors' path from the underworld to the Southern Palace (*Nangong* 南宮) for refinement. For example, The *Duren jing* suggests the benefits of hearing the recitation of the scripture:

有聞靈音， 魔王敬形。 敕制地祇， 侍衛送迎。 拔出地戶， 五苦八難。 昇七祖昇遷， 永離鬼官。 魂度朱陵，	Upon hearing these numinous tones, The Demon Kings adopt postures of reverence. They command the chthonic powers To stand in attendance and act as escort. Plucking open the gates of earth, Eradicating the five sufferings and eight difficulties, They transfer the seven generations above, Where they are forever separated from the officers of the dead. Their cloudsouls pass through the Vermillion Mound,
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

¹⁹ Saving one's ancestors of the prior seven generations was considered one of the preliminary steps of Shangqing cultivation practice. Here it is noted as *qixuan* 七玄, but in many other writings, we find *qixuan zhi zu* 七玄之祖 or simply *qizu* 七祖 (see the discussion below). On the concept of rebirth in early medieval Daoism, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 158–92. Wu also hints at this concept in the fifth stanza of his *Youxian* series: “At the Tortoise of the West, my registers were initially fixed. / In the Eastern Florescence, my name has already been evaluated. / In the three offices, neither omissions nor censures / My seven ancestors have ascended in cloudy Chariots.” 西龜初定籙，東華已校名。三官無遺譴，七祖升雲輶。 *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.27b; translation from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 317–18.

²⁰ The Vermilion Palace is also known by other terms, such as the Vermilion Mound [Palace] (*Zhuling gong* 朱陵宮), and the Southern Palace (*Nangong* 南宮). According to the *Duren jing* 度人經, once a person died, the bodily spirits would be cast into the Vermillion Palace and be refined (*lian* 煉) there before being reborn. See Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 411. Schafer equates this mention of refinement and fire to a common concept found in Wu's writings “refining *yin* with *yang* fire” 以陽鍊陰. On this, see especially *Xuangang lun* (CT 1051), 11a–b; fully translated in De Meyer, *WYW*, 274–75. However, these are fundamentally different ideas. In this particular stanza, refinement refers to the process deceased souls undergo before being reborn.

受鍊更生。 Where they are refined for rebirth.
是謂无量， This is called Illimitable,
普度无窮。 Universal Salvation without End.²¹

A section of the *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經, perhaps *the* most important Shangqing scripture, also notes: “Once the ancestors of seven generations have resolved the bonds of their corpses, they shall receive blessings and be made luminous in the vermilion quarter” 七祖解尸結，受福明朱方.²² The connection between the living and their deceased ancestors was a more general idea that permeated Daoist scriptures, but parts of the *Taishang suling dongxuan dayou miaojing* 太上素靈大有妙經 (CT 1314) [hereafter *Dayou miaojing*] provide a more detailed understanding of the complex of religious teachings and practices associated with this concept of ancestral burden.

This particular Shangqing scripture has long been recognized as a fragmented, incomplete, catholic mix of interpolations, labeled by Isabelle Robinet as “apocryphal,”²³ but by the Tang, it was recognized as one of the three most important Shangqing texts known as the “Three Wonders” (*sanqi* 三奇).²⁴ Thanks to an insightful new study concerning the reading, composition, reception, and revision practices of early medieval

²¹ *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* (CT 87), 3.41a–42a; translation from Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 427.

²² *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經 (CT 6), 6.14b.

²³ On Robinet’s work on the scripture, see her *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient: Dépositaire, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1984), vol. 1 76-85, and vol 2. 285-301.

²⁴ J. E. E. Pettit and Chao-jan Chang, *A Library of Clouds: The Scripture of the Immaculate Numen and the Rewriting of Daoist Texts* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020), ii. The other two texts are: 1. *Perfected Scripture of the Great Grotto in Thirty-nine Stanzas* (*Dadong zhenjing sanshijiu zhang* 大洞真經三十九章); and 2. *Precious Scripture on the Five Ancient Lords, Jade Seal of the Feminine One* (*Ciyi yujian wulao baojing* 雌一玉檢五老寶經).

Daoists, we now also have an excellent translation of the work at our disposal. The fact that this scripture was consequential for Shangqing patriarchs and disciples for much of the high Tang is pertinent to a consideration of Wu's poems, as he likely came across the work at some time during his career.

The *Dayou miaojing* contains the *Most High Illustrious Code of the Nine Perfected* (*Taishang jiuzhen mingke* 太上九真明科) [hereafter *Jiuzhen mingke*], which describes the protocols and rules by which the Shangqing adept was expected to abide.²⁵ Though adepts may have glimpsed other Shangqing scriptures or were destined to become a transcendent because of their heavenly endowment, the *Jiuzhen mingke* remained the key to unlocking the divine mysteries promised for the Shangqing practitioner:

But even if [these adepts] have seen these scriptures, they will not be able to open them up and start reading unless they know about the different grades of rules and rituals in the Illustrious Code of the Nine Perfected, i.e., the books of the highest perfected treasures of the three grottoes' Three Wonders. The Illustrious Code is guarded and secretly hidden in a palace in the Mysterious Metropolis where it is kept in a golden room on Jade Capital [Mountain]. It does not circulate in the human world. This [Code] illuminates the deep profundity of the Three Grottoes and proclaims the ritual norms of the perfected assembly. It also removes predestined litigations [lodged] in tenebrous palaces, and saves seven [generations of your] ancestors [by placing their names on] transcendent registers. Since this will cover all of the manifold methods, the [officials in the] Nine Yin will surely strike all your inherited guilt. The miraculous [benefits of the Code] can be obtained right away since all of its rules have been carefully crafted.

然雖見此文，而不知《九真明科》條檢儀式，三洞奇文太上真寶書，不可得而便披也。明科寶祕，藏於玄都之宮，玉京金房之內，不傳於

²⁵ The full text of the *Most High Illustrious Code of the Nine Perfected* (*Taishang jiuzhen mingke* 太上九真明科) is found in the *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* 洞真太上素靈洞元大有妙經 (CT 1314) but also in fragments in other texts. There is also a standalone version (CT 1409), but it is not the entirety of the text, as Robinet has noted; see her entry on the scripture in *HCD*, vol. 1, 207–8.

世。此乃明三洞之淵蹟，標眾真之儀格，拔宿對於幽宮，度七祖於仙籍，業總絡於萬道，解九陰之重責，其妙可得立用，其科可以肅勵。今故標出三品篇目，以稱揚三奇素靈妙經，可誠於後學使，勤尚之人告，慎於寶科也。²⁶

The Most High Lord of the Great Dao (*Taishang dadao jun* 太上大道君) explains that, because adepts are born of impure qi, their bodies are defiled and their actions corrupt. Without first attending to the body and one's actions, refining them through adherence to a series of strict ritual protocols involving, among other things, scripture transmission and expiation of sins, the adept would be lost in the pursuit of transcendence.

Not everyone was meant to receive the *Jiuzhen mingke*, but those that did would assuredly reap the immense benefits:

The Upper Minister (the Azure Lad) reported, "If adepts have golden bones and jade marrow, their names will be ranked in the Azure Palace. As such, they will be able to receive the Code and practice it in secret. This is why the initiation rite for receiving the Code enigmatically accords with the upper canon [of heaven]. When [adepts] put these ritual measures into practice, they will experience a result on par with Perfected [beings]. Their seven generations of ancestors will be elated as all of their transgressions will be forgiven and they will be shielded from disasters. Thus, all of the [ancestors'] knots from previous lives will be unraveled and the adept will rise to the heavens and will feast on high in the Jade Capital."

上相青童君曰：「凡有金骨玉髓，名參青宮，得有此文，祕而施行。於是承受之儀，玄合上典；施用節度，與真同功。贖罪拔難，宿結咸解，七玄之祖於是而欣。已身昇騰，上宴玉京也。²⁷

Proper practice not only implicates the individual adept, but also the seven generations of ancestors. Throughout, the text warns that ritual impropriety or

²⁶ *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 47a; translation from Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 233–34.

²⁷ *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 48b; translation from Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 236.

carelessly divulging the scripture's contents would bring punishment and suffering to one's ancestors. But this is also a reciprocal relationship, for the deceased's offenses also hinder an adept's progress; therefore, they must first be expunged.

The *Jiuzhen mingke* is divided into three grades (*sanpin* 三品), and the nine articles (*jiupian* 九篇) of the middle grade (*zhongpin* 中品) deal with ritual transgressions that one must avoid; many are merely admonitions to avoid certain actions to ensure ritual purity, but the first two deal with the adept's pre-existing conditions due to ancestors' transgressions. For example, the first reads:

The Middle Grade of the Mysterious Metropolis, Record One: An adept will have to undergo a severe interrogation if one of the following apply: [a] one of his previous seven [generations of] ancestors murdered or caused injury to others, pillaged or looted, schemed or plotted against rulers, or [b] one of their Nine Tribes plotted unethical designs. There is no worldly clemency that can be granted for adepts whose [family members] have caused endless knots in the Nine Yin after being blamed for these iniquitous actions. Adepts will never be allowed to sully the perfected scriptures and pilfer the precious writs due to these unresolved transgressions.

玄都中品第一篇曰：諸是後學，七祖以下，有殺害人命，劫賊攻掠，謀圖奸媾，篡逆之過，九族交通，謀反无道，其考尤重。怨對咎逮，積結九陰，非赦所原。後生皆不得以餘殃之身，參染真經，竊受寶文。²⁸

However, this is not a hopeless condition, the text assures. Only with the appropriate ritual program involving ritual confession and purification could one absolve one's ancestral conditions and assure them of salvation. The crux of the reference to the “Seven Mysteries” (*qixuan* 七玄) in the first *buxu* stanza is to affirm that the adept has completed

²⁸ *Dongzhen taishang suling dongyuan dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 54a–b; translation from Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 236.

the initial steps and can now continue on the path to individual transcendence. His familial relationships, the ties binding him to the mundane world, have been resolved through proper practice and conduct.

Confession and the concomitant accumulation of merit provides salvation for the adept's ancestors, lifting them out of the stygian underworld. As a further comment on merit, the following lines of the first *buxu* stanza describe the dispersion of merit throughout the world:

餘慶逮天壤， Any excess blessings reach sky and loam,²⁹
平和王道融。 Harmoniously merging with the kingly path.³⁰

Through moral action, confession, proper attention to ritual protocols and admonitions, an adept might accumulate merit in excess. In such a condition, these might not only extend to the family but throughout the world, aiding others and the state (i.e. the “kingly path”).³¹

Later in the stanza, Wu further considers the personal condition, as he writes:

²⁹ The term “yuqing” 餘慶 appears in the *Yijing* 易經: “A household that accumulates good acts will surely have blessings in excess; while a household that accumulates ill acts will surely have misfortune in excess” 積善之家，必有餘慶，積不善之家，必有餘殃是也. *Zhouyi jianyi shangjing* 周易兼義上經, in *Chongkan Songben Shisanjing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) (1815; reprint, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), 20b. In Wu’s estimation, the proper cultivation of the practitioner creates merits that extend to the ancestors. Wu explains this in the fourth chapter of his *Xuangang lun* in his discussion of the “middle people” (*zhongren* 中人), those endowed with a mix of *yin* and *yang* qi: “When middle people commit good, then harmonious qi responds, but when they commit ill, harmful qi gathers. This is why [for those] who accumulate good acts, they will have blessings in excess, and [for those] who accumulate evil acts, they will have misfortune in excess” 夫中人為善，則和氣應，為不善，則害氣集。故積善有餘慶，積惡有餘殃. *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 3a–4a; translation from De Meyer, WYW, 272.

³⁰ “Kingly path” refers to the Confucian ideal of a ruler who governs through benevolence, right-principles, and moral order. See the “Universal Standard” (*Hongfan* 洪範) chapter of the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經) in *Chongkan Songben Shisanjing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏, 173b.

³¹ This understanding of merit is echoed in other Shangqing works, such as the *Gaoshang taixiao langshu qiongwen dizhang jing* 高上太霄琅書瓊文帝章經 (CT 55), 16a.

使我躋陽原， My being allowed to climb to the origins of yang,³²
其來自陰功。 Comes from my hidden merits.³³

The lines here thrust the reader into Wu Yun’s system of thought, clarified throughout his treatise writings, albeit not exclusive to them. The “origins of yang,” other times noted as “supreme yang” (*zhiyang* 至陽), represents the pure state of the heavens,³⁴ a source of harmony and order for both body and state, born at the very moment of the differentiation of the Dao. Death and disorder were degenerative moves away from pure yang; the reverse, an intentional restoration of yang, allowed one to ascend to transcendence. To bring about pure yang in the body through refinement was one of the primary goals of Wu’s system of cultivation. In doing so, the adept returned to a condition aligned with the heavens, and therefore possessed the ability rise and join the ranks of the perfected.³⁵

Yet the following line suggests that this achievement, the experience of climbing to pure yang, was not just happenstance, but conditioned upon meritorious action.

Establishing hidden merits (*yingong* 陰功) or hidden virtues (*yinde* 陰德) was one of the

³² Cf. stanza nineteen of Wu’s *youxian* series: “I ascend as far as the Font of Yang, / I desire rest in the Hostel of the Luminous Aurora” 予昇至陽原，欲憇明霞館; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.29b. Translation from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 330.

³³ “Hidden merits” is an important facet of Wu’s thought that has been recognized by earlier scholars. Schafer argues in the note to his translation that Wu Yun was quite concerned with hidden merits; see his “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos,’” 396 n. 75; as well as De Meyer, *WYW*, 303 n. 85. Cf. *youxian* six, which reads: “It is nothing other than the distinction of my *yin* achievements / That will bring me aloft in the bright light of day. / What need for me to make the transit of a Grotto Archive / I shall pass up and over the Vermillion Tumulus” 豈非陰功著，乃驗白日昇。焉用過洞府，吾其越朱陵; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.27b. Translation from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 319. See my discussion below.

³⁴ Cf. *Xuangang lun*, 3a–4a (CT 1052): “Pure yang is superbly splendid above, and beyond the nine heavens there is no *yin*” 純陽赫赫在乎上，九天之上無陰也. Translation adapted from De Meyer, *WYW*, 271.

³⁵ Cf. *Xuangang lun*, 2.26b (CT 1052): “Transcendents surpass supreme yang and match with the perfected” 仙者超至陽而契真. Translation adapted from De Meyer, *WYW*, 274.

first steps along the path to transcendence. In Bokenkamp's words, such actions, discussed in several places throughout the *Zhen'gao* 真誥, constituted "the performance of secret good deeds intended not to earn earthly recompense but postmortem reward."³⁶ Wu discusses this facet of a Daoist cultivation program in several instances in other writings. First, he describes the accumulation of hidden virtue in the broader context of moral action and fostering upright attitudes and dispositions:

Next, to admire eminent figures and esteem antiquity so as to restrain one's will while valuing action;³⁷ to know that glory and splendor are fleeting attachments, so one should ignore and never inquire after them; to know that sensual pleasures are capable of corrupting one's nature, so one should renounce and never seek them; to cut short yin thieving;³⁸ to plant hidden virtues; to hold back anger and curb desires; to make praise and blame uniform; to dwell in forests and mountains; to cultivate purity and perfection. This is the second [group of qualities] that draw one nearer to the transcendent path.

³⁶ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family: The Zhen'gao or Declarations of the Perfected* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 164n. 149. One passage of the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (CT 1016) describes the hidden merits of Xu Jing 許敬: "In this fashion Jing's hidden merit not only flowed down to his descendants, but his manifest merit also was known throughout the generations. This is why his years were long and his body remained healthy" 如此非唯陰德遠流後胤。敬自陽功著世。所以年永身安 (20.5a). The text follows the emendations provided by Bokenkamp, as well as his translation from *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family*, 79–80.

³⁷ Likely an allusion to the first lines of the "Constrained in Will" (*Keyi* 刻意) chapter of the *Zhuangzi*; see Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 535. Translated in Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 119.

³⁸ "Yin thieving" appears to be a general category of immorality that robs the body of *yang qi*: "That which the Dao is most averse to is licentiousness, murder, and yin thieving" 道之所至忌者，姪殺陰賊; *Xuanguang lun* (CT 1052), 13b–14a. Translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 321. In other Daoist scriptures, "yin thieving" is noted among longer lists of moral precepts. See for example the list of ten from *Yuanshi tianzun* in the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經 (CT 352): "When the heart is neither evil nor jealous, it will not generate yin thieving; examine your speech and be vigilant of your transgressions, so that your thoughts will be regulated" 一者，心不惡妒，無生陰賊，檢口慎過，想念在法 (1.2b). In another Daoist work, it is listed as one of 180 moral injunctions in the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie gongde qingzhong jing* 太上洞玄靈寶三元品戒功德輕重經 (CT 456), 23b. On this latter list, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "Imagining Community: Family Values and Morality in the Lingbao Scriptures," in *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*, eds. Alan K. L. Chan and Yuet-Kueng Lo (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 203–26.

其次希高敦古，尅意尚行。知榮華爲浮寄，忽之而不顧；知聲色能伐性，捐之而不取。剪陰賊，樹陰德，懲忿窒慾，齊毀譽，處林嶺，修清真。近於仙道二也。³⁹

In this group of qualities, the second of seven discussed in his *Shenxian kexue lun*, Wu underscores moral attitudes and actions, especially the need to curb desire for worldly pleasures. “Yin thieving” and “hidden virtues” stand in juxtaposition, the former a category of concealed immoral action that would damage one’s chances at transcendence. Virtuous and moral action would, on the other hand, allow one to establish good merit.

In a passage of the *Xuangang lun* titled “Establishing Merit and Correcting Transgressions” (*Ligong gaiguo* 立功改過), Wu notes:

Merits tend toward yin, and transgressions tend towards yang. When merits are yin [secret], then they can be completed; when transgressions are yang [in the open] then they can be eliminated. If merits are not completed and transgressions not eliminated, then on what grounds can [one’s name] be written in the transcendent registers? Longevity would surely not be something one could hope to achieve. However, merit does not depend on the greatness of an act; whenever one encounters a sentient being, then he works to aid it. Transgressions do not depend on small acts; whenever one is aware that something is wrong, then he makes amends. One need not pursue establishing merits with great urgency or rush to correct transgressions. Once corrected, do not allow a transgression to occur again; once merit is established, do not grow weary midcourse of [pursuing more]. This is what is known as “Renewing one’s virtue daily, and heaven naturally bestowing blessings.”

功欲陰，過欲陽。功陰則能全，過陽則可滅。功不全，過不滅，仙籍何由書，長生非可冀。然功不在大，遇物斯拯。過不在小，知非則悛。不必馳驟於立功，奔波於改過，過在改而不復爲，功惟立而不中倦，是謂日新其德，自天祐之。⁴⁰

³⁹ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.13a. Translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 304.

⁴⁰ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1051), 13b–14a; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 445. Quan Deyu also describes Wu’s “hidden merits” in the preface to Wu’s Collected works, see *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT1051), 1b. Schafer notes the importance of “yin achievements” (*yingong* 陰功) (his translation of the

The accumulation of merit was a constant struggle, one that an adept had to approach with diligence and sincerity. The passage continues with Wu suggesting that regularized ritual announcements of merit (*yangong* 言功) and repentance (*huiguo* 悔過) were not necessary, and outward expressions, such as kowtowing or reciting texts, were merely “minor [acts of] goodness” (*xiaoshan* 小善). For Wu, the internal state of the adept was truly what mattered. De Meyer has rightly pointed out that such a stance bears some resemblance to the suggestions found in an early Shangqing scripture, the *Dongzhen taiyi dijun yinshu dongzhen xuanjing* 洞真太一帝君太丹陰書洞真玄經 and the condemnation of “outer methods” (*waifa* 外法).⁴¹ All of this is bound up in the opening stanza that focuses on the conditions of the adept prior to casting off on the journey upward.

But moral action would not necessarily assure transcendence; it merely drew one closer to the path. Heavenly endowment was also critical for progress. Wu expresses such ideas in his transcendence poems through reference to several aspects of the body. First, there are the adept’s “golden bones” (*jingu* 金骨) or “golden hues” (*jinse* 金色). In the second *buxu* stanza, Wu poses the question:

自非挺金骨，	If one is not endowed with golden bones,
焉得諧夙願。	How can one accomplish such a longstanding wish?

term) in Wu’s thought in the context of discussing a spurious source attributed to Wu, the *Nantong dajun neidan jiuzhang jing* 南統大君內丹九章經 (CT 1054). See Schafer, “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos,’” 382–84.

⁴¹ See his discussion in *WYW*, 446–47. He cites *Dongzhen taiyi dijun yinshu dongzhen xuanjing* 洞真太一帝君太丹陰書洞真玄經 (CT 1330), 37a.

Lest we think, based upon his *Shenxian kexue lun*, that Wu offered a more egalitarian stance on the possibility of transcendence, we are reminded by lines such as these that his understanding of such matters was highly exclusionary. The transcendent condition was available to only those deemed worthy based on their very nature. Wu's conservative views on the limited possibility of transcendence echo earlier discussions on the broader subject of physiognomy, as well as Daoist ideas concerning marks of transcendence.⁴² The human was also conditioned by the measure of yang or yin qi within the body, though unlike one's "golden bones," a concept that suggests predestination, one could effectively transform the dark, stagnant yin qi into pure yang (*chunyang qi* 純陽氣) through acts of goodness and cultivation practices.⁴³

The *Xuangang lun* passage titled "Clarifying What to Adopt and Reject" (*Ming qushe* 明取捨) brings together the ideas of endowment, morality, and merit, as Wu explains the reasons why many fail to obtain transcendence:

Someone asked: "Transcendence is what people admire most, and death is what people despise most; yet, among gentlemen throughout the ages, there has never been one who was unaware of this. But those who follow conventions are quite many and those who pursue transcendence are quite few. Why is this?"

⁴² Works on early physiognomy include Wang Chong's 王充 (27–97) *Arguments Weighed in Balance* (*Lunheng* 論衡) and Liu Shao's 劉邵 (ca. 170–245) *Treatise on the Judgment of Men* (*Renwu zhi* 人物志). The concern expressed within these works was finding worthy figures to serve in government positions. It was believed that the outward appearance of individuals—their bone structure, coloring, physical markings, etc.—was believed to be an indicator of intellect, character, and morality. Reading these outward signs could better facilitate the appointment of worthy candidates. Physiognomy ideals, marks of a kind of predestined transcendence, are also expressed in early Shangqing works. On this, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 298–301 and 355–59, the latter section a translation of the *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖道君列紀 (CT 442), 9b-12a.

⁴³ See two chapters in Wu's *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), "Heavenly Endowments" (*Tianbing* 天稟) (3a–4a) and "Refining Yin with Yang" (*Yi yang lian yin* 以陽鍊陰) (11a–b).

或問曰：仙者人之所至美者也，死者人之所至惡者也。而歷代之君子罔有不知，而從俗者至多，習仙者至少，何也？

[I], in my humble ignorance, responded, saying: “There are two principles regarding this [question]. As for the first, if the qi with which one is endowed is not lofty, then the aims that one aspires to will be difficult and remote. This is why one remains mired in nearby pursuits, while forgetting long-term prospects. One is troubled by reputation and bewildered by desires, and in the end, remains fettered and humbled in the web of the world, without ever setting foot in the Perfected realms.

As for the second, though one’s endowed qi may be serene and lofty, and one’s “divine mind” mature and advanced, if the merits of aiding others are not yet complete, the path of ascending to transcendence will remain distant. This is simply why people hesitate and return to ranks of nobility, and have yet to free themselves from the preoccupations of rulers. If one’s longstanding meritorious deeds have been made manifest and one’s name entered at the Cinnabar Terrace, then one transcends and sunders ties to the world of dust, with nothing left to bind them.

愚應之曰：此有二理。一者，所稟之氣非高，即所希之志難廣。故溺於近務，忘乎遠見，為聲名所汨，嗜慾所昏，終繫伏於世網，竟無蹈於真域。二者，雖稟氣蕭邁，神襟秀邁，而濟物之功未備，登仙之路猶遠，是以遲迴人爵，未解帝懸耳。若夙勛已著，名入丹臺，則超跡絕塵，物所不能累也。

Someone again asked: Transcendents must have bones, and without them, they cannot study transcendence. Why is this?

又問曰：仙必有骨，無骨不可學仙，奈何？

[I], in my humble ignorance, responded, saying: In any instance, a craftsman must rely on his innate talents and employ this in his artistry. Those who study [transcendence] must possess [transcendent] bones and fix their aspirations upon the Dao. Certainly ice cannot be engraved and the ignorant cannot become transcendents—this is a natural principle. Those who have impure spirits and unexalted bones, they are not the ones endowed with qi of yang numena. Those not endowed with this yang qi certainly do not possess a heart that favors transcendence. Yet, for those who possess a heart that favors transcendence, they have not yet drawn out such abiding transcendent bones.

愚應之曰：夫工者必因其材而施乎巧。學者必有其骨而志乎道。故水不可鑿，愚不可仙，自然之理也。所以神不清、骨不峻者皆，非

稟陽靈之氣也。非稟陽靈之氣者，必無慕仙之心也。苟有慕仙之心者，未有不夙挺夫仙骨者也。

[The other] said: Then can one, possessing such bones but not cultivating oneself, achieve transcendence?

曰：然則有仙骨不修而可致乎？

[I replied], saying: One who possess such bones but does not study is like one with innate talents who does not labor. Thus, gold is concealed within ore, but without smelting, it remains a stone. The Dao resides with people, but without refining, one remains an ordinary person. Though one may not possess such bones and therefore cannot become transcendent, it is also the case that one cannot simply rely on such bones and expect to be raised up lightly.

曰：有骨而不學者，亦如有材而無工。故金藏於鑛也，不冶而為石。道在於人也，不鍊而為凡。雖無骨而不仙，亦不可恃骨而待輕舉也。⁴⁴

The exchange highlights the confluence of circumstances—endowment and dedicated cultivation—that determine the possibility of attaining transcendence. While one may be favored, furnished with both the right “bones” and “lofty qi,” without due attention to action, accumulating merit and cultivating one’s inner qi to become more like a perfected being (*zhenren* 真人) attuned to the Dao, there was little hope for an adept. Those endowed with heavenly “stuff” had to also fix their aspirations and remain diligent in their practice to obtain a loftier existence.⁴⁵ In short, both fate and action were critical factors.

⁴⁴ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 23a–24b; translation adapted from De Meyer, *WYW*, 247–49. My translation differs significantly in certain places. This entire passage and the ideas within it echo the ideas on “marks of transcendence” found in the *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖道君列紀 (CT 442).

⁴⁵ De Meyer makes this point in discussing the same passage of the *Xuangang lun*; see his *WYW*, 246–49. What I wish to make clear here is that Wu Yun’s poetry reflects the same kind of thinking. We cannot understand the poetry without reference to his theoretical treatises. De Meyer in discussing chapter 32 of Wu’s *Xuangang lun* appears to see the poetry and issues as separate: “So far Wu Yun has only sparingly made use of the highly ornate esoteric language of medieval mysticism, so typical of his *buxu ci*, his

Wu captures such ideas of preparation in all three selections of his poetry on transcendence. For instance, the fourth stanza of Wu Yun's *youxian* poems cautions against the trappings of the mundane world and highlights the metaphysical connection between Perfected beings and the adept's own body:

愍俗從遷謝	Being concerned with conventions advances one toward decline and decrepitude,
尋仙去淪沒	Searching for transcendence distances one from foundering and dissolution.
三元有真人	Within the Three Primes, there are Perfected beings,
與我生道骨	Who, like me, were born with the bones of the Dao. ⁴⁶

Wu opens the “Dengzhen fu” with the following lines, which underscore the sequential nature of the cultivation process:

悟世促而道永。	I have awakened to the brevity of the world and the constancy of the Dao;
知名疎而體親。	Recognized the inferiority of renown and the intimacy of the body. ⁴⁷
遂忘機而滅跡。	Thus, I have “ignored contrivances” ⁴⁸ and

youxian poems and his ‘Rhapsody on the Ascent to Perfection.’ This undoubtedly is a reflection of the somewhat elementary nature of the contents of *Xuangang* chapters 28 through 32” (249).

⁴⁶ Translation adapted from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 315–16.

⁴⁷ The language of these first two lines is reminiscent of several other writings by Wu. First, there is the biography Wu wrote for Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477) in 761, titled the “Stele for Lord Lu, Master of Unadorned Simplicity” (*Jianji xiansheng Lu jun bei* 簡寂先生陸君碑), *QTW* 9659a–60a. On the stele, see De Meyer, *WYW*, 391–403; and Timothy Swanger, “Biography and its Social World: the ‘Stele of Lord Lu,’” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 3 (2020): 259–80. Second, the sentiments in the *fu* line also echo the first lines from Wu’s “Rhapsody on Roosting in the Cliffs” (*Yanqi fu* 巖棲賦), (CT 1051), 1.1a–2b. See Paul Kroll, “Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T’ang,” *T’oung Pao* 84 (1998): 96. The allure of renown and official position were one of the key causes that Wu argues led people away from pursuing transcendence and the Dao. See a passage of the *Shenxian kexue lun* 神仙可學論 in *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 12a. The whole of this work is translated in De Meyer, *WYW*, 280–319, but see especially 299–300 on these ideas.

⁴⁸ The term *wangji* 忘機 references a passage from the *Zhuangzi* chapter “Heaven and Earth” (*Tiandi*) in which a farmer of Hanyin 漢陰 rejects the suggestion of Zigong 子貢 to utilize tools that would make his work simpler and easier. The farmer explains that he refrains from using them because, according to his master, they may in the end lead to an unsettled spirit 神生不定, a place where the Dao will not reside. See

extinguished traces.⁴⁹
方鍊骨而清神。 Only then could I refine my bones and purify my
spirits.

An adept had to first develop the attitudes necessary to advance on the path. Wu advocates for the rejection of the trappings of the world—status and distinction—for these were ephemeral, empty desires unlike the constant, ever-present Dao. External objects were mere distractions that had to be cast aside; the focus should instead be on the body and its constituent elements, qi and spirits (*shen* 神), that once refined would allow one to ascend to transcendence. Only with these preliminary steps, those outlined more explicitly in the *Shenxian kexue lun*, could one progress to a curriculum of cultivation practices. Because of the conciseness of the *buxu* poems, these ideas are not fully evident in the lines; however, when we place all of Wu's works on transcendence together, we can begin to grasp the poems' underlying teachings.

Bodily Cultivation

While divine endowment and the accumulation of merit to dissolve ancestral burdens were necessary preparations, Wu's blueprint for celestial ascent required

Zhuangzi jishi, 433–34. Wu Yun eulogizes this farmer figure in one of his 50 *Songs on Lofty Gentleman* (*Gaoshi yong* 高士詠) poems titled “The Old Man of Hanyin” 漢陰丈人 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 3.9a–b). In his “Yiren fu” 逸人賦, the longest of his rhapsodies, Wu also cites the figure as a model (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 1.6b). For a translation and discussion of the poem, see De Meyer, 177–205. In his “Yanqi fu” 巖棲賦 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 1.1a–2a), Wu professes similar sentiments. Translated in Kroll, “Lexical Landscapes,” 99–100.

⁴⁹ Wu's *Shenxian kexue lun* calls upon people to “transcend their traces in the dust and dregs of this world and roost in perfection beyond material existence” as part of the first set of conditions aimed at drawing one closer to transcendence; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.13a. This ideal is a constant theme in his other poetry. See the second half of his poem “Expressing My Innermost Feelings on New Year's Day so as to Encourage Myself, to be Handed Down to My Brethren” 元日言懷，因以自勵，詒諸同志; translated in De Meyer, *WYW*, 91–92. In his “Yanqi fu,” Wu uses similar language; see Kroll, “Lexical Landscapes,” (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 1.1b).

additional focused cultivation. Such practices are intimated in his *buxu* poems and spelled out in much greater detail throughout his prose writings. The first necessary step in the cultivation process was to still the body and mind, a reoccurring theme throughout Wu Yun’s writings.⁵⁰ *Buxu* stanza three highlights the cultivated qualities of the adept that enable the ascent:

心叶太虛靜， 寥寥竟何思。 玄中有至樂， 澹泊終無爲。	My mind is in accord with Grand Void stillness; Empty and silent, I am finally without thoughts. ⁵¹ Within the dark, there is utmost joy; Calm and at rest, I am finally without purposive action. ⁵²
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The first steps included ridding the heart and mind of distracting thoughts to engender stillness and quietude—only then could one connect with the Dao. Residing in a state of non-purposive action (*wuwei* 無為), the adept became ever more like the Dao. A form of Daoist meditative practice known as “sitting in oblivion” (*zuowang* 坐忘), with roots in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, was prevalent among Daoist adepts during the high Tang.⁵³ Livia Kohn has described the practice as a “state of deep meditative absorption and mystical oneness, during which all sensory and conscious faculties are overcome and which is the

⁵⁰ See also the *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052) chapter “[The Process] of Study has a Systematic Order” (*Xue ze youxu* 學則有序) (9b–10a); translated and discussed in De Meyer, *WYW*, 318–19.

⁵¹ On cleansing the mind of thoughts, see De Meyer, *WYW*, 206–30; and one of Wu Yun’s extant *fu*, his “*Fu* on Cleansing the Mind” (*Xixin fu* 洗心賦); *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.3b–5b.

⁵² Wu discusses *wuwei* 無為 as an ideal in his *Xingshen kegu lun* 形神可固論; see *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.21a–b.

⁵³ On the *Zhuangzi* passage that first cites *zuowang* 坐忘, see *Zhuangzi jishi*, 284–86. Livia Kohn discusses this passage in her book on the subject, *Sitting in Oblivion: The Heart of Daoist Meditation* (Dunedin, FL: Three Pines Press, 2010), 16–33.

base point for attaining the Dao.”⁵⁴ Several works outline the practice and associated teachings;⁵⁵ among these, the *Zuowang lun* 坐忘論, which exists in two separate versions, the longer being traditionally attributed to Sima Chengzhen, has received substantial scholarly attention.⁵⁶ Wu Yun has been drawn into the debates on the authorship of these works because the shorter version, engraved on the back of a stele dedicated to Sima Chengzhen, quotes Wu Yun’s *Shenxian kexue lun*.⁵⁷

While he composed neither of the treatises, Wu Yun did offer his own contributions to the body of work on similar practices. His *Xuangang lun* describes a similar process of “cleansing the mind” (*xixin* 洗心) to ensure the body retains its yang nature, that is, its affinity with the heavens and the Dao:

Among scholars of higher learning, there are sometimes those who find happiness in “distant refuge,”⁵⁸ joyous they are in a realm of careless contentment, thus making perfection and transcendence something that can be met and the empyrean and Han River something that can be ascended to—they are the kings of the spirits. Though they may be kings of the spirits, there is still the fear that their qi of yang concordance may

⁵⁴ Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion*, 1.

⁵⁵ The collection of related works includes two separate texts titled *Zuowang lun* 坐忘論, the *Dingguan jing* 定觀經, *Cunshen lianqi ming* 存神鍊氣命, *Neiguan jing* 內觀經, *Tianyinzi* 天尹子, *Wuchu jing* 五廚經, and *Xinmu lun* 心目論. See Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion*, 59–72.

⁵⁶ Scholarly consensus is that Sima Chengzhen was not the author of the longer *Zuowang* treatise. Most recently Jia Jinhua has weighed in on these debates, offering evidence from epigraphical sources for authorship on the shorter inscription. See her *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 79–99. For a helpful overview of the authorial issue, see Cheng Tsan-shan 鄭燦山, “*Tangdai Daojiao sanpian Zuowang lun kaozheng*,” in *Liuchao Sui Tang Daojiao wenxian yanjiu* 六朝隋唐道教文獻研究 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 2014), 157–78.

⁵⁷ The stele is collected in Chen Yuan 陳垣, et. al, eds., *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 176–77.

⁵⁸ *Yuanji* 遠寄 indicates the world beyond the mundane. In effect, Wu is noting that these scholars take interest and pleasure in the search for transcendence.

discharge and leak, while their *qi* of *yin* deviance may prevail and assail [the body]. [To avoid this], they can enter a quiet chamber and temper the mind, repress and control whatever arises, and observe silence, concentrating on the One. Then their spirits will not disperse and *yang* numen will remain complete. They must take care to be void of sentiments of joy and contentment, lest they invite the arrival of *yin* deviance.⁵⁹

上學之士，時有高興遠寄，陶然於自得之境，為真先可接，霄漢可昇者，神之王也。雖曰神王，猶恐陽和之氣發泄，陰邪之氣乘襲耳，可入靜室夷心，抑制所起，靜默專一，則神不散而陽靈全。慎無恣其樂康之情，以致陰邪之來耳。

The body, in Wu Yun's estimation, was not only endowed with "golden or transcendent bones" from the heavens, but also "upright" or "perfected qi" (*zhengqi* 正氣 / *zhenqi* 真氣) and spirits (*shen* 神).⁶⁰ As one drifted away from the Dao, confounded by the trappings of wealth, status, and mundane desires, the spirits would scatter, yang energies would dissipate, and *yin* forces would encroach upon the body. Emptiness, quietude, stillness—all characteristics aligned with nature of the Dao—enabled one to preserve yang and stave off the intrusion of *yin* qi, the force that imperiled the body's divine character.⁶¹ Put simply, the fundamental goal of this cultivation process was to embody the qualities of the Dao and return the form to a primordial condition. This notion of human degeneration from the Dao, as well as the idea that cultivation serves as the means to return to the source or revert one's nature, has long held a place in Daoist thought. Wu Yun's system foregrounds these concepts, and his *buxu* poems and other poetic works on

⁵⁹ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 12b–13a; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 213–214.

⁶⁰ On the notion of heavenly endowments, see *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 22a–23a.

⁶¹ Several other passages in the *Xuangang lun* highlight the need for stillness and quietude as a prerequisite. See "Nature and Sentiments" (*Xingqing* 性情) (4a–4b), "Transcending Action and Stillness" (*Chao dongjing* 超動靜) (4b–5b), "Matching and Roaming in Nothingness" (*Tongyou wu* 同遊無) (5b–6a), "Commanding Nature and Concentrating Spirits" (*Shuaixing ningshen* 率性凝神) (18a–b). See De Meyer's discussion on this aspect of Wu's thought in WYW, 320–26.

transcendence vividly depict the gradual process. Two other stand-alone works, the “*Fu* on Cleansing the Mind” (*Xixin fu* 洗心賦) and the “Treatise on the Mind and Eyes” (*Xinmu lun* 心目論), are also related to this complex of ideas on meditation. Though vastly different in both tone and form,⁶² both pieces touch on the necessity of cutting off the senses and perception to still the body and mind.⁶³ The opening of the *Xinmu lun* ties together several critical ideas on the theme of mental quietude that run through Wu Yun’s writings:

That which gives life to people is the spirits; that to which they entrust themselves is the bodily form. [The space] within the square inch is indeed called the numinous prefecture.⁶⁴ When it is still, the spirits are vitalized, and the form is calm; but when it is agitated, the spirits are troubled, and the form degenerates. Indeed, only when the deep roots are pacified to the extreme, can one cultivate one’s nature and sentiments. However, what agitates the spirits is the mind; what disturbs the mind are the eyes. [If this occurs], one loses perfection and becomes distanced from the root—there is nothing more grave than this.⁶⁵

人之所生者神，所託者形，方寸之中，實曰靈府。靜則神生而形和，躁則神勞而形斃。深根寧極，可以修其性情哉，然動神者心，亂心者目，失真離本，莫甚於茲。

Human beings are endowed with spirits, heaven entrusting them to their corporeal forms.

⁶² The *Xinmu lun* is an imagined dialogue between the eyes and mind, a kind of parable meant to underscore the importance of stilling the mind; while the *fu* appears to be primarily biographical.

⁶³ On the treatise, see Livia Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion*, 71–72 and 207–212, and idem., “Mind and Eyes: Sensory and Spiritual Experience in Daoist Mysticism,” *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 129–56. On the *fu*, see De Meyer, *WYW*, 207–27. The idea of “cleansing the mind” had particular relevance in Shangqing thought, as the goddesses of the *Zhen’gao* advocate for the practice; see *ibid.*, 210 n. 14.

⁶⁴ *Fangcun* 方寸 refers to the heart.

⁶⁵ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 15b–16a. Translation adapted from Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion*, 207.

Here, as in other places in his writing, Wu stresses the relationship between perception and inner states; that is, that sensory faculties agitate the mind, particularly the eyes in their discernment of alluring sights. Such agitations, in turn, stirred emotions and affected the spirits, causing them to scatter.⁶⁶ The aim was to cut off the external senses to obtain a condition associated with the Dao: “[The state of] not being tempted by [external] things is called ultimate quietude. With ultimate quietude one can then ally with ultimate emptiness” 不為物之所誘者，謂之至靜。至靜然後能契於至虛。⁶⁷ Both the outside (perception) and the inside (*yin qi*) could prompt further devolution from the Dao. The solution to both threats was the continuous practice of mental quietude through meditative practice and embodying the qualities of the Dao.

Once the mind and body had been stilled, thus preserving the spirits and yang qi, then additional measures could be taken to transform and refine the body to bring it further into accord with the Dao. Stanza four of the *buxu* series alludes to various practices, and it is worth exploring in full, as it marks the turning point in the series of poems, the juncture at which the adept surges forth into the heavens. The first two couplets read:

稟化凝正氣， With endowments and transformations,⁶⁸ I

⁶⁶ On stirring the emotions, see chapter 27 of Wu’s *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 18a–b, translated in De Meyer, WYW, 323. Wu does not discount other sense faculties; see the same chapter of Wu’s treatise.

⁶⁷ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 4b–5b; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 324.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 4a–4b: “As for what gives birth to me, that is the Dao; as for what it endows me with, that is the spirits” 夫生我者道，稟我者神; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 322. On being endowed with “perfected qi” (*zhenqi* 真氣), see chapter 28 of Wu’s *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 18b; translated in De Meyer, WYW, 236–39.

鍊形為真仙。	concentrate upright qi; Refining my form to become a perfected transcendent. ⁶⁹
忘心符玄宗，	I forget the mind to accord with the Mystic Ancestor; ⁷⁰
反本叶自然。	And return to the root to harmonize with that which is so of itself. ⁷¹

The first couplet intimates Wu's understanding of the human condition. As noted before, human beings are endowed with spirits and both yin and yang qi, both of which derive from the very beginnings of the cosmos. Yin and yang, generated from primordial qi (*yuanqi* 元氣), came together to form the human being.⁷² While the spirits were unchanging and enduring, the two qi were subject to the "transformative pivot" (*huaji* 化

⁶⁹ The "nine ranks of transcendents" refers to the categories of transcendents in the Taiqing 太清 heaven. *Yunji qiqian* (3.6b) records: "Grand Clarity houses nine [ranks] of transcendents, Upper Clarity houses nine [ranks] of sages, and Jade Clarity houses nine [ranks] of sages, which amounts to 3927 positions. As for the nine [ranks] of transcendents, they are as follows (in order): upper transcendent, lofty transcendent, grand transcendent, mystic transcendent, celestial transcendent, perfected transcend, divine transcendent, numinous transcendent, and utmost transcendent. As for the perfected and sages in the [other] two realms, their titles also follow this sequence."

太清境有九仙，上清境有九真，玉清境有九聖，三九二十七位也。其九仙者，第一上仙，二高仙，三大仙，四玄仙，五天仙，六真仙，七神仙，八靈仙，九至仙。真聖二境，其號次第 (CT 1032, 3.6b).

⁷⁰ "Wangxin" 忘心 alludes to a line of the "Giving Away a Throne" (*Rangwang* 讓王) chapter of the *Zhuangzi*: "Hence he who nourishes his will forgets about his bodily form; he who nourishes his bodily form forgets about questions of gain; and he who arrives at the Way forgets about his mind." 故養志者忘形，養形者忘利，致道者忘心矣; *Zhuangzi jishi*, 977. Translation from Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 246.

⁷¹ Wu also uses the phrase "return to the root" in his *Xinmu lun*: "The eyes said: 'You are closer! But you have not yet arrived at it. If it was this way, you would claim to desire stillness, but be rash in your pursuit of it; you would take leave of the dust, but the dregs would encroach upon you. You would remain in the darkness about the use of returning to the root, and then travel afar to be alone.'" 目曰：「近之矣！猶未為至。若然者，所謂欲靜而躁隨，辭埃而滓襲，闕乎反本之用，方邈然而獨立。 *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051, 2.18a); translation adapted from Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion*, 210.

⁷² On the cosmogony and the formation of the world and humanity, see chapter 2 of Wu's *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 1b–2b. Chapter 12 of the Wu's same treatise also discusses the human body; see *ibid.*, 10a–b. On *Xuangang* 2, see WYW, 263–64; on *Xuangang* 12, see *ibid.*, 233.

機), under constant transformation and fluctuation.⁷³ Human beings, comprised of these two critical forces, thus also experienced similar conditions of flux, which were influenced by their behaviors and state of mind. The adept sought to move beyond the transformative pivot, by both reforming conduct and recasting the body into a yang heavenly state like that of the other transcendents and perfected beings.

To concentrate “upright qi” was to amass yang qi through the practice of refining yin with yang (*yi yang lian yin* 以陽鍊陰): “When yang triumphs, then yin dissipates, and one becomes a transcendent” 陽勝則陰銷而仙.⁷⁴ Wu’s prose works contain extensive mention of the process, in particular sections twelve through fourteen of his *Xuangang lun*.⁷⁵ The fourteenth section of that same work bears the title of the practice and concludes:

Striving to refine and eliminate the dark, stagnant qi with yang numen will cause one to be empty and bright both inside and out, as well as penetrate and merge with the utmost perfected. For one who remains long devoted to this matter, how can transcendence be far away?⁷⁶

務以陽靈鍊革陰滯之氣，使表裏虛白，洞合至真，久於其事者，仙豈遠乎哉。

⁷³ See *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 1b–2b: “Nurtured as they [the various kinds (*zalei* 雜類)] are from the one qi, they sowed myriad differences and planted divisions. Since they were subject to the transformative pivot, their transformations and changes were inexhaustible” 自一氣之所有，播萬殊而種分，既涉化機，遷變罔窮; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 264.

⁷⁴ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052) 10a–b; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 233.

⁷⁵ Discussed thoroughly in De Meyer, WYW, 269–79.

⁷⁶ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 11a–b; translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 274–75. See also chapter 19 of the same treatise: “Humane Discernment and Steadfast Quietude” (*Renming zhenjing* 仁明貞靜), where the process is succinctly described: “Upright qi will secretly gather in the junctions and storehouses, and naturally the po-souls will be refined and the corpses eliminated. The spirits will be concentrated and the body purified. Yin sediments will all be dispelled, then the form will be unified and lightly rise” 正氣密集於關府，自然魄鍊而尸滅，神凝而體清，陰滓都銷，則合形而輕舉 (14a–b); translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 318 n. 144.

With the completion of yang numen, the body no longer had any “yin sediments” (*yinzi* 陰滓) and shined with a magnificent radiance.⁷⁷ Though the practice of bodily refinement is mentioned or alluded to throughout Wu’s extant writings, the precise details of the process—visualizations, incantations, etc.—are absent; these would presumably be passed on orally from master to disciple. More widely circulated works, poetry and prose treatises, would not be suitable venues for revealing such esoteric measures.

Buxu stanza four, however, gives some suggestion of the methods of cultivation, though with the terse language of the verse, we can only speculate as to the precise nature of the practices. The stanza continues:

帝一集絳宮，	The Thearchic Monad assembles in the scarlet palace; ⁷⁸
流光出丹玄。	Flowing light issues forth from the Cinnabar Mysterious[Palace]. ⁷⁹
無英與桃君，	Non-Pareil and Peach Lord; ⁸⁰
朗詠長生篇。	Clearly sing the tracts of long life.
六府煥明霞，	The six receptacles brilliant with lustrous auroras; ⁸¹

⁷⁷ “Yin sediments” was a common term Wu used in his poetry; see a line from the “Dengzhen fu” (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051, 2.5b). The “Xixin fu” also employs the term; see *ibid.*, 2.4b.

⁷⁸ The term “scarlet palace” refers to the heart.

⁷⁹ The Cinnabar Mysterious Palace (*Danxuan gong* 丹玄宮) is one of the nine palaces (*jiugong* 九宮) in the head, occupied by a god known as *Niwan taiyi zhenjun* 泥丸太一真君. On the palaces and practices associated with them, see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Maoshan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 127–31. Meditations on the god of the nine palaces were an important part of early Shangqing practice, and, in fact the methods associated with the *Danxuan gong* were the culmination of a series of meditations on the gods of the nine palaces and may have been reserved for the most advance adepts. See the discussion on the nine palaces in Petit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 77–87.

⁸⁰ Non-pareil, in Shangqing works, is often grouped with White Prime (*Baiyuan* 白元) and Yellow Elder Lord (*Huanglao jun* 黃老君) in meditation on the Three Ones (*Sanyi* 三一). For a description of these body gods, see *Ziyang zhenren neizhuan* 紫陽真人內傳 (CT 303) 10b–11a.

百關羅紫煙。

The hundred junctions veiled with purple smoke.

As in the Lingbao *buxu* stanzas, we find mention of the Thearchic Monad, indeed, in precisely the same stanza in the sequence of ten (fourth). Similarities such as this demonstrate that Wu Yun viewed the earlier hymns as his model for composition. To be sure, Wu Yun was familiar with the Lingbao verses, citing lines from the third and fourth stanzas in another of his prose works, the *Xingshen kegulun* 形神可固論.⁸² The corporeal location of the Thearchic Monad noted in Wu's fourth *buxu* stanza is somewhat peculiar, as it is often described as being situated in the upper cinnabar field (*shang dantian* 上丹田), in the head, rather than the heart.⁸³ The references to Non-Pareil and Peach Lord, also body gods, likewise appears somewhat unique. Known by various names, the two gods take on different functions in the Shangqing and Lingbao texts, and are regularly connected to other deities in practice. In the *Duren jing*, the two are associated with a group of body gods, collectively known as the Grand Lords of Long Life (*Changsheng dajun* 長生大君), who “Grasping tallies and clutching registers, / Ensure the fate and the root of life. / Roaming on high in Upper Clarity. / They come and go from the floriate chambers.”⁸⁴ Wu Yun's mention of gods as “singing the tracts of long life” evokes this association to the gods' roles outlined in the *Duren jing*. Moreover, Shangqing works

⁸¹ Six receptacles refers to a group of bodily organs that includes the stomach, large and small intestines, gall bladder, urinary bladder, and the triple burner (*sanjiao* 三焦). The last does not refer to a specific anatomical organ, but its function has been the subject of much discussion and debate.

⁸² *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.20a–b.

⁸³ Wu Yun, in his *Shenxian kexue lun* uses the same phrasing: “assemble the Thearchic Monad in the crimson palace” 集帝一於絳宮; see *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.15b. However, as here in the *buxu* line, the *Shenxian kexue lun* passage does not elaborate on the practices.

⁸⁴ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 423; see also 384–85.

relate the notion of spontaneous sounds as indicators of successful cultivation practice, which may be the idea that Wu is alluding to in the passage.⁸⁵ That the two beings would appear alone as a pair is unexpected. However, considering the strictures of both poetic form and rhyme, which may have prompted Wu to make creative choices that did not fully align with Daoist scriptures and teachings, we may not want to read too much into the pairing. Furthermore, we may never be able to fathom the number of scriptures that have been lost due to the vicissitudes of time, thus forever rendering the endeavor to examine carefully and potentially substantiate poetic allusions such as this unresolvable.

One last note concerning stanza four and its imagery and allusions to practice. The Cinnabar Mysterious Palace refers to one of the nine palaces in the head, which houses a body god known as the Grand Monad Perfected Lord (*Taiyi zhenjun* 太一真君).⁸⁶ An earlier section of this chapter noted the significance of the *Dayou miaojing* for Daoists in the Tang. As such, the scripture might serve as a lens through which we can understand some of Wu's allusions. The same scripture contains a Shangqing meditative practice known as "Guarding the Grand Monad Perfected Lord in the Mysterious Cinnabar [Palace]" 守玄丹太一真君.⁸⁷ The method, in this work conceived as the foremost among the meditations on the Nine Palaces, involves a protracted series of

⁸⁵ See for example a passage in the *Dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 18b–19a. Translated in Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 170–71.

⁸⁶ The scripture notes that the "Mysterious Cinnabar Palace is above the Cinnabar Field and measures one square cun. It has purple rooms and green chambers, and it is filled with vermillion vapors" 玄丹宮在丹田之上，正房[方]一寸，紫房錄室，朱烟滿內 (*Dayou miaojing* [CT 1314], 15b). Translation from Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 174–77. The authors also note in their discussion of the practice that this passage can likely be traced back to Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (456–536) *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣; see *ibid.*, 83–84.

⁸⁷ On this, see Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 174–77.

retentive actualizations (*cunsi* 存思). The adept first actualizes a purple celestial qi from the Northern Culmen (*Beiji* 北極) filling the Mysterious Cinnabar Palace and the body. Before long, the body merges with the purple qi. Next, the adept envisions the sun's essence suffusing the palace. Once the sun is centered in the mass of purple qi, the adept can actualize the appearance of the god, descending from the Northern Culmen to take its place within the scene. At the culmination of the process, the adept ascends with the god to the Northern Dipper (*Beidou* 北斗). Diligent practice for eighteen years, the instructions assure, allows the adept to travel to the Shangqing heavens and receive texts and talismans. The stanza's final descriptions of radiance and purple smoke permeating the body resonate with the scripture's depiction of the practice. Visualizations of purple qi flowing through the body and the illumination of internal corporeal locations are not exclusive to this particular practice;⁸⁸ therefore, Wu's use of such terminology, found across various Shangqing scriptures, prohibits us from singling out a definite referent. The stanza appears to be alluding not to a specific method of cultivation, but a range of practices that would lead to the adept's transcendence. Thus, it is fitting that the closing of stanza four returns to the celestial voyage:

飈車涉寥廓，	My tempest carriage crosses the endless expanse;
靡靡乘景遷。	Slowly and steadily, I ride upon the phospors to be promoted.
不覺雲路遠，	I don't feel that the cloudy road is distant. ⁸⁹

⁸⁸ A section of the extent *Dadong zhenjing* on the Hui Feng 徊風 meditation method indicates that purple cloud vapors will be emitted from parts of the body at certain points over the course of the process. On the Hui Feng method, see *Dadong zhengjing* (CT 6), 6.16a–18a. Cf. also the opening couplet of Wu's third *buxu* stanza: "The three palaces emit bright lights, / Shining vividly like the Vaporous Ornament" 三宮發明景，朗照同鬱儀 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* [CT 1051], 2.31a).

⁸⁹ Cf. *Youxian* #2; *Zongxian xuansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.27a–b.
解茲區中戀， Resolve these longings of the human world

斯須遊萬天。

But just in this moment, I have already roamed the
myriad heavens.⁹⁰

The final couplet describes the adept's experience of time, suggesting that a singular moment engrossed in the meditative process on earth encompasses a considerable duration in the heavens.⁹¹ Time in the transcendent experience seems an eternity compared to mundane existence. To become a transcendent was to achieve a longevity unimaginable to the human condition. The remainder of the stanzas focus on the upward journey to the farthest reaches of the heavens and the culmination with the Dao.

The Experience of Celestial Ascent

In all three of his works dedicated to transcendence, Wu Yun presents a conception of otherworldly experience grounded in companionship, joyous ramblings, merriment, and jovial gatherings, followed by a return to the Dao. The discussion above focused on the preconditions and cultivation practices of ascending to the heavens and beyond, but here I turn to the journey itself. The ascent, we should understand, is not a solitary mission, but takes place amid crowds of transcendents (*zhongxian* 眾仙), as the

結彼霄外侶。
誰謂天路遐，
感通自無阻。

And join with those companions beyond the empyrean.
Who says the celestial road is distant?
With resonant connections, there will naturally be no obstructions.

Translation from Schafer, "Saunters in Sylphdom," 314–15.

⁹⁰ The last line is also reminiscent of Chapter 47 of the *Daode jing* 道德經: "Without leaving his door / He knows everything under heaven. Without looking out of his window, / He knows all the ways of heaven" 不出戶知天下; 不闕牖見天道. Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 189–90; translation from Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 200.

⁹¹ Cf. *Youxian* #2; *Zongxian xuansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.30b.

不疾而自速，Neither fast nor slow, we proceed at a natural speed.

萬天俄已周。The myriad heavens already encircled in a brief moment.

Translation from Schafer, "Saunters in Sylphdom," 342.

opening line of the set suggests. Further imagery throughout the pieces dwells on this aspect of the journey as well. In *buxu* stanza two, the narrator marvels at the number of “perfected companions” that shall join in the journey:

真朋何森森，	Perfected companions—how densely thronged!
合景恣遊宴。	With merged effulgences, ⁹² I shall abandon restraint to roam and feast. ⁹³
良會忘淹留，	At the magnificent gathering, I shall forget my concerns to stay for a while.
千齡纔一眇。	A thousand years will flash by in a single glance.

The second line suggests that these beings are not mere companions, but partners, joined by the very nature of their being—their “effulgences” (*jing* 景), bodily spirits located within the three Cinnabar Fields (*dantian* 丹田) in sets of eight, linked together to ascend to the heavens.⁹⁴

Joining the perfected with one’s effulgences, through calculated internal visualizations, is especially significant in the history of Daoist practice. A practice known as “merging of the pneumas” (*heqi* 合氣) was consequential to the cultivation repertoire of early Celestial Master (*Tianshi* 天師) communities. Involving the ritualized sexual union of male and female practitioner, the practice called for male adepts to undertake *coitus reservatus*. Yet contrary to other “arts of the bedchamber” (*fangzhong shu* 房中術)

⁹² On “merging effulgences” and its importance in early Daoist practice, see the discussion that follows. The idea was also suggested in various Shangqing hymns. See for example the *Gaoshang taixiao langshu qiongwen dizhang jing* 高上太霄琅書瓊文帝章經 (CT 55), 16a–b.

⁹³ Numerous references to feasting in the Shangqing heavens can be found throughout the Shangqing corpus. See for example *Dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 41b: “If you do this for nine years, you will ride the clouds and fly all the way to a feast in Grand Clarity. 如此九年，乘雲飛行，遊宴大清也. Translation from Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 217.

⁹⁴ See also chapter 18 of Wu’s *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 13b–14a, in which Wu describes the attitudes one must cultivate to become companions of the perfected.

popular at the time, which were focused solely on the male's pursuit of longevity, the Celestial Master method was also meant to benefit the female adept. By participating in the sexual rite, guided by a master and by some accounts in front of members of the Daoist community, both practitioners preserved their internal energies and essences, advanced upon the path of ordination, and assured their salvation in the approaching apocalyptic disasters.⁹⁵ The Shangqing movement sought to replace this physical practice of *heqi* with a spiritual marriage between goddesses and adepts known as “Mating the Phosphors” (*Oujing* 偶景). Yang Xi, the renowned medium of the bulk of original Shangqing revelations, participated in such a union, and the *Zhen'gao* details his courtship, betrothal, and marriage to Consort An of the Nine Blossoms of the Upper Palace of Purple Clarity 紫清上宮九華安妃.⁹⁶ Wu Yun seems to be drawing on these ideas in his description of “merged effulgences” but unlike earlier descriptions in the *Zhen'gao*, his account does not indicate a single perfected partner, but instead a host of transcendents. We should note that sexual cultivation practices continued into the Tang, and, in fact, Wu Yun advocated for sexual unions between married partners as a way to “preserve the spirits” (*shoushen* 守神); however, these were regarded as lesser practices,

⁹⁵ See Terry F. Kleeman, *Celestial Masters : History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Asia Center, 2016), 158–74; and Gil Raz, “The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism,” *NAN NÜ* 10, no. 1 (2008): 86–120.

⁹⁶ See Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Declarations of the Perfected,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 171–79.

inferior to the more recondite methods of Shangqing meditations and fraught with the dangers of misuse and abuse.⁹⁷

Joined with the perfected, the adept rises in a grand retinue. The *buxu* poems, as well as Wu's other transcendence poetry, offer descriptions of the dynamic scene, turning our attention to the divine standards and apotropaic features of the entourage. In *buxu* stanza two, even before taking off, the adept looks upon the retinue and remarks on several conspicuous features:

八威清遊氛，	The Eight Daunters shall clear the drifting miasmas. ⁹⁸
十絕舞祥風。	[Banners] of ten striations shall dance upon the auspicious winds, ⁹⁹

The “Dengzhen fu” contains the lengthiest description of the group in similar terms:

星官後從，	Star officials follow behind，
雲將前驅。	As cloud generals clear the path ahead.
使八威與六領，	Enabling the Eight Daunters and the Six Guides, ¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See the section titled “Shoushen” 守神 of the *Xingshen kegu lun* 形神可固論; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.24b–26b, as well as De Meyer's excellent discussion on this passage and facet of Wu Yun's thought in *WYW*, 345–74. On sexual practice and female Daoist practitioners in the Tang, see Jia Jinhua, “The Identity of Tang Daoist Priestesses,” in *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body*, eds. Jia Jinhua, Kang Xiaofei, and Yao Ping. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), 105–13.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Youxian* #23; *Zongxian xuansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.30b.

八威先啟行，	The Eight Daunters go ahead of me, opening up the way;
五老同我遊。	The Five Elders journey in my company.

Translation from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 342. See Schafer's comments on the Eight Daunters in his “Empyrean Powers and Chthonian Edens,” 671–76.

⁹⁹ These “banners of ten striations,” also known as “numinous pennons of ten striations” 十絕靈幡 or “magnificent pennants of ten striations” 十絕華帳, were the standards of transcendent and divine retinues, such as that described in the *Duren jing*. See also *Tiashang dongxuan lingbao zhenwen yaojie shangjing* 太上洞玄靈寶真文要解上經, 1a.

¹⁰⁰ The Six Guides are similar to the Eight Daunters, as they serve an exorcistic function. Early Shangqing literature provides an apotropaic method, which involves breathing methods and the recitation of a spell, to be used when traveling upon dangerous roads, ghostly temples, or suspect places. Cited in several early Shangqing works compiled by Tao Hongjing, such as the *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (CT 1016), 10.9a; and the *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (CT 421), 2.10b. The method is noted as originating from the *Dadong zhengjing* as the “Upper Method of the Great Spell to Check Malefic Forces, the Esoteric Stanzas of the

盪遺祆於天衢。	To eliminate the remaining evil spirits along the thoroughfare to the heavens. ¹⁰¹
麾百魔以震伏，	Before their standards, the hundred demons tremble and yield.
總萬靈以遊娛。	Altogether, the myriad numinous beings ramble in enjoyment.
十絕紛紛兮，	[Banners] of Ten Striations flap and flutter,
拂重霄而凌厲。	Sweeping against the tiered empyrean and soaring upward.

The “Eight Daunters,” emanations of the three sets of eight effulgences (*bajing* 八景) of the adept’s body, open the way before the retinue, sweeping away malignant forces that dare to encroach upon the transcendents.¹⁰² The banners signal the regal status of the retinue, in much the same way as those of an imperial train. The fifteenth stanza of Wu’s *Youxian* series adds details concerning the celestial animals that join in the journey:

排景羽衣振，	Arranging my phosphors, my feathered garb sways;
浮空雲駕來。	Floating in the emptiness, the cloud carriage arrives.
靈幡七曜動，	On numinous pennants, the Seven Scintillances

Lofty Above” 高上內章遏邪大祝上法。The spell to be recited, at one point, reads: “The Six Guides spit fire, and devour demon kings” 六領吐火，啖鬼之王。

¹⁰¹ “Tianqu” 天衢 might be alternatively translated as “Crossroads of the Sky,” a reference to a specific constellation, four stars in Scorpio at the intersection of celestial equator and ecliptic. Cf. *Youxian* #2; *Zongxian xuansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.27ab.

將期駕雲景 An appointment impends—I shall harness clouds and phosphors,
超跡昇天衢 I shall leave my troubles below, and ascend to the crossroads of heaven.

Translation from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 334; see also his note to the lines.

¹⁰² See also *buxu* #7, which comments on other apotropaic devices, two different sets of talismans associated with Shangqing transmissions; see *Zongxian xuansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.32a:

豁落制六天，	<i>Huoluo</i> controls the Six Heavens.
流鈴威百魔。	Flowing bells frighten the hundred demons.

“Huoluo” is an abbreviation for the “Huolo qiuyan” 豁落七元 talisman. On this talisman and a list of related scriptures, see Edward H. Schafer, “*Li Po’s Star Power*,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions* 6 (Fall 1978), 5–15. “Liujin” refers to the “Liujin huoling” 流金火鈴 talisman. Olivier Boutonnet noted Wu’s use of the latter term in these lines and cites the *Dongzhen taishang zidu yanguang shenxuan bianjing* 洞真太上紫度炎光神玄變經 (CT 1332); see his *Le char de nuages*, 307–308 (Kindle edition).

	stir. ¹⁰³
瓊障九光開。	On rose-gem banners, the Nine-Fold Radiance unfolds. ¹⁰⁴
鳳舞龍璈奏，	Phoenixes dance as dragon lithopones play;
虬軒殊未迴。	In my spirax coach, I break from any future return. ¹⁰⁵

Along the journey, the group stops off at various celestial locations (see below). In this passage, the carriage returns to collect the adept for the imminent departure. As the transportation emerges on the scene, its standards are illuminated in celestial light, and divine animals join in the march forward. The final line expresses the adept's confidence that this shall be the final leg, culminating in a merging with the Dao after lengthy preparation and cultivation process. Descriptions such as these evoke similar portrayals of divine retinues, such as in the *Duren jing*:

The completely Perfected heaven-soaring spirit kings and all of the countless greater deities who provide long life and salvation in the ten directions are all alike borne by carriages with cinnabar-red compartments, green shafts, feather canopies, and red-gem wheels, all formed of soaring clouds. To these are harnessed vermilion phoenixes and pentachromatic spirit banners of ten striations. Before, nine whistling phoenixes sing out in unison. Behind, eight trumpeting simurghs sound at once. Lions and white cranes whistle and sing in austere harmony. The Five Ancient Ones clear the road ahead, while the masses of Transcendents flank the carriage shafts. In myriad conveyances, on thousands of mounts, the procession arrives, floating through the void.

十方至真飛天神王長生度世無量大神，並乘飛雲，丹輿綠輦，羽蓋瓊輪，參駕朱鳳，五色玄龍，建九色之節，十絕靈旛。前嘯九鳳齊唱，

¹⁰³ Seven Scintillances refers to the sun, moon, and the five brightest planets (Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn).

¹⁰⁴ This likely alludes to the nine stars of the Northern Dipper.

¹⁰⁵ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.30a. For an alternative translation, see Schafer, "Saunters in Sylphdom," 331–32, where he lists it as #20 in the series.

後吹八鸞同鳴，師子白鶴，嘯歌邕邕，五老啓塗，羣仙翼轅，億乘萬騎，浮空而來。¹⁰⁶

The details here—regalia, attendants, and celestial animals emitting their divine sounds—are all part of Wu’s envisioned retinue. While other works cite similar elements of celestial entourages, in particular the “Eight Daunters,” the representation of the banners noted in Wu’s transcendence poems is predominantly associated with Lingbao works. Given the *Duren jing*’s elevated status in the Tang, among both Daoist priests and the lay populace, it is not surprising to find such clear parallels.¹⁰⁷ From a cosmological standpoint, the connection is also apt, given that the central location in the *Duren jing*, the Mystic Metropolis (*Xuandu* 玄都) atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉景山) is the intended destination, as all of Wu’s poetic works on transcendence make clear.

Celestial Banquets and Foodstuffs

In stanza #2 of the *buxu* series, we first find mention of a “magnificent gathering” in the celestial heavens, a rather ambiguous reference at first read; yet in other poems we see the details of this experience elaborated in greater detail. Wu Yun’s *youxian* series is

¹⁰⁶ *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* (CT 87), 2.22a–2.27a; translation from Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 417–18. According to the commentators of the *Duren jing* passage, the striations are all of a different color, and the banners, made of separate strips of silk, are carried by either jade maidens (*yunü* 玉女) or perfected.

¹⁰⁷ Other Tang poets, those familiar with Daoist images and teachings, such as Lu Guimeng 陸龜蒙 (d. ca. 881) and Pi Rixiu 皮日休 (ca. 834–ca. 883), also utilized this image of the “Banners of ten striations” in their poetry; see Lu’s “Gouqu shan chaozhen ci ershou” 苟曲山朝真詞二首 (*QTS* 621, 11b) and Pi’s “Shangzhen guan” 上真觀 (*QTS*, 610.11b). Some writers also employ similar language in commemorative temple inscriptions; see the “Chizhou chongjian ziji gong beiming” 池州重建紫極宮碑銘 (QTW, 9242b) and “Xuanzhou kaiyuan guan chongjian zhong sanmen ji” 宣州開元觀重建中三門記 (QTW, 9221a).

rife with images of feasting and enjoyment, accompanied by transcendent companions.

Early on in the series (#5) Wu Yun cites a banquet in Jade Clarity as an objective:

一朝出天地，	One morning, I shall go forth from heaven and earth;
億載猶童嬰。	To remain like a child or infant for myriad years.
使我齊浩劫，	This shall allow me to span vast kalpas;
蕭蕭宴玉清。	And in a dignified and stately manner, feast in Jade Clarity. ¹⁰⁸

Jade Clarity (*Yuqing* 玉清), the highest of the three Shangqing heavens, lodges the loftiest transcendents of the heavens, those of the finest heavenly endowment and exemplary cultivation. With such qualities, the adept has obtained a lofty rank in the celestial hierarchy and expects to share in the festivities in Jade Clarity.

These banquets, of course, involve much food and drink, not that of the mundane world, but of the transcendental variety. For example, *buxu* stanza #2 alludes to a foodstuff meant to realize one's transcendent endowment:

上採空青蕤。	Ascending to pluck the petals of the Hollow Azure [Forest].
令我洞金色，	That will enable me to open my golden hues.

In this couplet, Wu cites an obscure substance, cited in the *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經 (CT 33).¹⁰⁹ Eating the celestial flower

¹⁰⁸ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.27b; translation adapted from Schafer, "Saunters in Sylphdom," 318.

¹⁰⁹ Of those who study and obtain transcendence, there are none who do not pass through the Cavern Yang after, undergoing eightfold refinements and ascending to heaven. Having undergone refinement, then they can consume the flowers of Hollow Azure. The feathered plumes of birds with golden wings are made into flying transcendent clothing to be granted to the bodies that have undergone refinement. With [this clothing], they can ascend to the Nine Phoenix Terraces of Jade Capitoline.

凡後學得仙，莫不經洞陽之宮，受八鍊而昇天也。受鍊過，便得食空青之花，金翅之鳥皆以羽衣結為飛仙之服，給於受鍊之身，以登玉京九鳳之臺也。*Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經 (CT 33), 6a.

will allow the adept to further reveal his transcendent nature. In the “Dengzhen fu,” Wu also depicts a gathering of transcendents as a banquet or feast (*yan* 讌), one where adepts will be able to imbibe the “nighttime damps” and enjoy the “mystic harmonies”:

倚華蓋而招真，	As we draw near to the Floriate Canopy, ¹¹⁰ I am summoned by the perfected,
登紫庭而謁帝。	To ascend to the Purple Courtyard and present myself before the Thearch. ¹¹¹
飲予以沆瀣，	To be offered drinks of nighttime damps; ¹¹²
樂予以玄鈞。	And treated to music of the mystic harmonies. ¹¹³
左盼夫鬱儀，	To the left, I gape at the Shadowed Regalia;
右瞻乎結璘。	To the right, I gaze upon the Knotted Spangles. ¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ The “Floriate Canopy” (*Huagai* 華蓋) is a series of nine stars that hangs over the seat of another star known as the Great Thearch of the Celestial Sovereigns (*Tianhuang dadi* 天皇大帝), the seat of a god named Yaopobao 耀魄寶. See Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–684), comp., *Jinshu* 晉書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 289.

¹¹¹ “Purple Court” (*Ziting* 紫庭) is another term for Purple Palace (*Zigong* 紫宮), a series of fifteen stars located beyond Taiwei 太微 and Changhe 闔闔 and north of the Big Dipper. Purple Tenuity, one of the stars in the cluster, is the seat of the Great Thearch (*Dadi* 大帝), where the Son of Heaven (*Tianzi* 天子) regularly resides and has power over fate (*ming* 命) and salvation (*du* 度). See *Jinshu*, 290; Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T’ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 47; and idem, “Cosmic Metaphors,” 4–5.

¹¹² The term “nighttime damps,” (*hangxie* 沆瀣) a drink associated with transcendents, first appears in the “Far Roaming” (*Yuanyou* 遠遊) poem of the *Chuci* 楚辭: “Sup on the six pneumas and quaff the damps of the coldest midnights— / Rinse my mouth with truest sunlight and imbibe the aurora of dawn” 餐六氣而飲沆瀣兮，漱正陽而含朝霞. Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1070–1135), comp., *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 166. Translation from Paul W Kroll, “On ‘Far Roaming,’” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 4 (December 1996): 661.

¹¹³ “Mystic harmonies” (*xuanjun* 玄鈞) denotes the music of the perfected, which is performed during gatherings in the heavens. The *Zhen’gao* 真誥 contains a revelation from Youying furen 右英夫人 describing four perfected lords reciting poems “matched with the stringed sounds of the mystic harmonies and expansive hymnodies” 和玄鈞廣韶之絃聲. *Zhen’gao* (CT 1016), 3.9a–9b. The term also refers to the music of celestial retinues; see for example *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真經 (CT 1344), 2.1a–b; and *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* 太上飛行九晨玉經 (CT 428), 3a.

¹¹⁴ Shadowed Regalia” (*Yuyi* 鬱儀) refers to the sun, while “Knotted Spangles” (*Jielin* 結璘) refers to moon. I follow Bokenkamp’s translations of the two terms; see his *EDS*, 348 and 370, n. 35. These lines parallel a couplet of stanza four of the Lingbao *buxu* hymns: “Glancing left, I raise the Shadowed Regalia; / Glimpsing right, I grasp the Knotted Spangles” 左顧提鬱儀，右盼携結璘. *Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經 (CT 1439), 4a; translation adapted from Stephen Bokenkamp, “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-pao Scriptures” (Master’s thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 78. On the place of the sun and moon in Daoist cultivation practice, see Isabelle Robinet,

信巍巍以蕩蕩，	Truly, they are toweringly tall and immensely infinite,
肅肅而振振。	Stern and solemn, yet incited and inspired,
享讌斯徹，	I thoroughly relish this banquet.

While “nighttime damps” has a long association with transcendent existence, cited early on in the “Yuanyou” 遠遊 of the *Chuci* 楚辭, the notion of “mystic harmonies” is a feature of both celestial banquets and retinues unique to Shangqing descriptions. The eighth *buxu* stanza depicts similar delights in the highest heaven:

高 清 無 侈 靡，	Lofty and pure, there is nothing excessive and inordinate,
遇 物 生 華 光。	Those beings who encounter it generate magnificent light.
至 樂 非 簫 歌，	Supreme music is not the song of the panpipes.
玉 音 自 玲 琅。	Jade sounds naturally clatter and clink.
或 登 明 真 臺，	At times, I scale the Terrace of the Brightly Perfected, ¹¹⁵
宴 此 羽 景 堂。	Or feast at the Hall of the Feathered Effulgences. ¹¹⁶

“Randonnées extatiques des taoïstes dans les astres,” *Monumenta Serica* 32 (1976): 159–273; Monica Esposito “Sun-Worship in China: The Roots of Shangqing Taoist Practices of Light.” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 345–84; and Bokenkamp, *EDS*, 314–24.

¹¹⁵ While there are various references to the “Terrace of the Brightly Perfected” in Daoist scriptures, those in Shangqing works appear most pertinent. The hagiography of Shangqing god Lord Pei 裴君, also known as Pei Xuanren 裴玄仁, recounts the deity’s expeditions with the five thearchs (*wudi* 五帝), who together mount a flying dragon chariot (*feilong zhi che* 飛龍之車), to travel to various celestial locales. Among their many stops is the “Terrace of the Brightly Perfected.” See *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (CT 1032), 105.15b–16a. For a discussion of the hagiography and issues surrounding early Shangqing hagiographical composition, see J.E.E. Pettit and Matthew Wells, “Revelation in Early Daoist Hagiography: A Study of *The Traditions of Lord Pei*,” *Asia Major* 3rd Series 33, no. 2 (2020): 1–24. The *Shangqing taishang dijun jiuzhen zhongjing* 上清太上帝君九真中經 (CT 1376) transforms the description of Pei’s travels into an incantation to be recited during cultivation. The method involves imbibing astral and lunar essences, practices alluded to often in Wu’s writings; see 2.7a.

¹¹⁶ The line may be taken directly from a passage of the *Dadong yujing* 大洞玉經 (CT 7), a version of the *Dadong zhenjing*; see *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 (CT 1138), 19.3b. In the *Wushang miyao* excerpt, the Hall of Feathered Effulgences is said to be where a god titled Royal Lord of the Upper Thearchs, Perfected Earl who Oversees the Inner Sanctuaries of the Perfected 司禁真伯上帝王君 sometimes feasts. The opening line of the 37th section of the extant *Dadong yujing* (20a–b) reads: “In the Mystic Isles, the end of the three channels, / In Feathered Effulgences, the courts of grand nothingness” 玄洲絕三津，羽景太无庭. The commentary thereafter notes that “Feathered Effulgences (*yujing* 羽景) refers to the “name of a hall” (*tangming* 堂名). Cf. a line from Wu’s *Shenxian kexue lun*, in which he describes the

杳靄結寶雲，	Deep and remote—precious clouds entangled;
霏微散靈香。	Thick and permeating—numinous fragrance dispersed.
天人誠多暇，	Celestial beings in truth enjoy great leisure;
歡泰不可量。	Their joy and wellness is unfathomable. ¹¹⁷

The lines remind us that celestial music, a central feature of such a transcendent experience, fundamentally differs from that of the mundane world—the instruments of mere mortals and their sounds cannot compare to the spontaneous tones of the heavens. In narrating aspects of the transcendent experience, joyous gatherings of music and food, Wu relies on both general poetic allusions, but also quite specific references to Shangqing terminology.

Cosmology

Wu's poems contain markers of earlier poems on transcendence, both in terms of experiences and celestial locations. Lively descriptions of banquets, feasting, music, and merriment can be found in the *youxian* poetic tradition from its earliest roots in the *Chuci*.¹¹⁸ Wu also alludes to locations commonly cited in *youxian* poems—Xiwang mu's residences, the Purple Court (*Ziting* 紫庭), Heaven's Portal (*Changhe* 闔闔), and Grand Tenuity (*Taiwei* 太微)—familiar language for literati well-versed in the literary tradition. However, Wu's cosmological vision diverges significantly from alternatives reflected in

abilities of perfected beings: They revel in the Lodge of Bright Auroras and feast in the Hall of Feathered Effulgences” 嬉明霞之館，宴羽景之堂。 *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.15b.

¹¹⁷ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.32a.

¹¹⁸ See the discussion in Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 108–16. On this aspect of Cao Tang's 曹唐 (ca. 797–ca. 876) *youxian* verse, see Lee Fong-Mao 李豐楙, *You yu you: Liuchao Sui Tang youxianshi lunwenji* 憂與遊: 六朝隋唐遊仙詩論文集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1996), 203–14.

youxian poetry. By Wu's estimation, such locations are mere waystations on a lengthy ascent to return to the Dao. *Buxu* stanza five reflects Wu's attitude in this regard:

煌煌青琳宮，	Glittering and gleaming, the Palace of Blue Sapphires. ¹¹⁹
粲粲列玉華。	Brilliant and bedazzling, the arrayed jade fluorescence.
真氣溢絳府，	Perfected qi overflows from the rose-gold bureau.
自然思無邪。	But, as a matter of course, my thoughts do not deviate.
俯矜區中士，	I look down upon the gentleman of the district in sympathy;
天濁良可嗟。	Their heavenly turbid [qi], how regrettable!

Despite its tantalizing beauty, the adept does not plan to finally lodge at the Palace of Xiwang mu, and, in fact, to be stranded therein, would be an unfortunate conclusion to the lengthy journey. ¹²⁰ The lines reveal an air of condescension for the residence and its inhabitants—these are not fully perfected beings for they have yet to fully purify their endowment of *qi*. The adept refuses to be swayed by the enticing scenery of Xiwang mu's abode and remains fixed on moving upward to the ultimate destination. The fact that this is stanza number five in the series indicates that much remains beyond; the adept

¹¹⁹ The Palace of Blue Sapphires (*Qinglin gong* 青琳宮) is a residence of Xiwang mu atop Tortoise Mountain (*Guishan* 龜山). See *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 22.12b.

¹²⁰ Cf. lines from Wu's *Youxian* #14 on the visit to the Xiwang mu's residence:

揚蓋造辰極，	I raise the canopy and depart from the culmen of the chronograms;
乘煙遊閭風。	Riding the mists to roam about Langfeng.
上元降玉闈，	[The Lady] of Upper Primordial descends from the jade vestibule;
王母開琳宮。	The Queen Mother opens the sapphire halls.
天人何濟濟，	Heavenly figures—how impressively imposing!
高會碧堂中。	At this lofty gathering within the cyan halls.
列侍奏雲歌，	Arrayed attendants playing cloud songs;
真音滿太空。	The perfected sounds filling the Grand Hollow.

Zongxuan xiansheng wenji (CT 1051), 2.29a; translation adapted from Schafer, "Saunters in Sylphdom," 337–38.

has clearly not reached the conclusion of the ascent. As the adept moves upward, we begin to better understand the outlines of Wu's cosmological vision.

Shangqing Daoist cosmology posited a threefold hierarchy of heavens, Grand Clarity (Taiqing) as the lowest, Upper Clarity (Shangqing) above that, and Jade Clarity occupying the highest plane of the celestial heavens. Such a vision of the cosmos prevailed in the early revelations associated with the Shangqing movement and was codified in Tao Hongjing's 陶弘靜 (456–536) *Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈威業圖 (CT 167). However, competing revelations, characterized by claims to ever higher heavens, marked Early Daoism. Lingbao Daoist texts claimed to originate in the palaces of *Yuanshi tianzun* 元始天尊, atop the Jade Capitoline Mountain, which stood at the center of the Grand Veil Heaven (*Daluo tian* 大羅天), beyond the Shangqing heavens. By the Tang dynasty, these competing cosmological visions appear to have been resolved, with the Lingbao vision taking precedence. One early Tang text, the *Daomen jingfa xiangcheng cixu* 道門經法相承次序 (CT 1128), which purports to record conversations between Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (584–682), the 11th Shangqing patriarch,¹²¹ and Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 628–683) discusses this synthesis. The text maintains that the Grand Veil Heaven (*Daluo tian* 大羅天) was situated at the pinnacle of the heavens overtopping the trio of heavens—Taiqing, Shangqing, Yuqing.

¹²¹ Wu was a spiritual descendent within Pan's lineage, so it would be quite reasonable to assume he was, at the very least, familiar with such a cosmological vision, or perhaps even ascribed to such a vision. Feng Qizheng 馮齊整, a disciple of Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (585–682), the 11th patriarch of the Upper Clarity (*Shangqing* 上清) was Wu's direct master. See Quan Deyu's preface to *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051) and De Meyer, *WYW*, 33–37.

In Wu's *buxu* stanzas, the adept surpasses the inferior realms and ascends to the halls of the Shangqing heavens, as evidenced by mentions of the Terrace of the Luminous Perfected (*Mingzhen tai* 明真臺), the Hall of Feathered Effulgences (*Yujing tang* 羽景堂), and the Courts of Jade Dawn (*Yuchen ting* 玉晨庭).¹²² The twentieth verse of Wu's *youxian* series clarifies the adept has ascended to Jade Clarity:

招携紫陽友，	I have been summoned by companions of Purple Yang, ¹²³
合宴玉清臺。	To join and feast at the Terraces of Jade Clarity.

The highest realm of the Shangqing heavens, Jade Clarity, serves as the location for the revels of perfected and transcendents, where the adept can join in the joyous celebrations. But while Jade Clarity may offer wondrous experiences among the perfected, something more remains beyond—the promise of an encounter with the loftiest gods and a realization of the Dao. Wu's "Dengzhen fu" expresses the adept's sense of disquiet at remaining in these lesser realms:

諒茲境之足悅，	In truth, this realm is sufficiently pleasing,
乃此情之匪留。	But then these sentiments will not allow me to remain.
揚玉輪以逕進，	Raising the jade wheel, we advance forward. ¹²⁴
更冉冉而上浮。	And once again, slowly and steadily float

¹²² From other Daoist sources, it is evident that these locations are situated in the Shangqing heavens. See *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 22.10b and 20a.

¹²³ Schafer suggests that this refers to one specific companion, Zhou Yishan 周義山, a Shangqing deity also known as the Perfected Being of Purple Solarity (*Ziyang zhenren* 紫陽真人); see his "Saunters in Sylphdom," 331 n. 97. While the allusion is not out of the realm of possibility, I doubt the explanation because of the manner in which Wu writes about transcendent companions along the journey. They are referred to collectively and anonymously.

¹²⁴ "Jade Wheel" (*yulun* 玉輪) is generally used to denote the moon; however, it can also be used as synecdoche for the chariot or carriage that carries the adept to the heavens. See for example, the 29th stanza of the *Huangting neijing*; *Yunji qiqian* (CT 1032), 12.13a.

upward.

The adept, while enjoying rambling amusement amidst his perfected and transcendent companions, recognizes the ephemeral nature of such delights—something more lies beyond.

And so, the adept moves on, “To go far beyond the upper reaches of the Nine Heavens” 迺出九天上 for an audience before a divine figure in the highest reaches of the heavens.¹²⁵ The ninth *buxu* stanza describes the encounter:

爰從太微上，	Then I follow to go atop Grand Tenuity;
肆覲虛皇尊。	To go in audience before the Sovereign of the Void, the Revered One. ¹²⁶
騰我八景輿，	Springing me upward, my chariot of eight phosphors;
威遲入天門。	Circuitously meanders to enter Heaven’s Gate.
既登玉晨庭，	Now that I have scaled to the Courts of Jade Dawn; ¹²⁷
肅肅仰紫軒。	I hastily look upward to the purple balustrade.
敢問龍漢末，	Do I dare to inquire about the end of Draconic Magnificence, ¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *Youxian* #22 in *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.30a; translation adapted from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 341.

¹²⁶ Cf. a line from Wu’s “Dengzhen fu”: “To enjoy an audience before the [Celestial Worthy] of Primordial Beginning at the Jade Dawn / To present themselves before the Void Thearch at the Golden Portes” 覲元始於玉晨，謁虛皇於金闕. *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.6b; translation adapted from De Meyer, *WYW*, 266. For a discussion of the various references to Xuhuang, see De Meyer, *WYW*, 265–69. See especially chapter three of Wu’s *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 2b–3a, where the term appears to refer to a cosmological principle.

¹²⁷ The Palace of Jade Dawn (*Yuchen gong* 玉晨宮) is associated with the Lord of the Dao of Jade Dawn (*Yuchen daojun* 玉晨道君), a god first mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of the *Dadong zhenjing* (CT 6), 3.15a. On the palace, see *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 22.10a. The Courts of Jade (*Yuchen ting* 玉晨庭) are mentioned in a song of the perfected preserved in the *Wushang miyao* (CT 1138), 20.6a. In several hymns found within Shangqing scriptures, roaming and feasting in Jade Dawn is mentioned; see for example, *Dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 12a; translated in Pettit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 156–57. In Wu’s poetry, however, Jade Dawn refers to the residence of the Void Thearch (*Xuhuang* 虛皇).

¹²⁸ “Draconic Magnificence” refers to the first kalpa (*jie* 劫) in Lingbao mythology. See the discussion below.

如何闢乾坤。	Or how <i>Qian</i> and <i>Kun</i> opened?
怡然輟雲璈，	Pleased, [the deity] puts down the cloudy <i>ao</i> ,
告我希微言。	And informs me with words mysterious and abstruse. ¹²⁹
幸聞至精理，	I am fortunate to have heard the principles of Utmost Essence;
方見造化源。	And to have just seen the source of Creative Transformation.

Xuhuang zun refers to *Xuhuang daojun* 虛皇道君, who appears in the first lines of the *Huangting neijing* 黃庭內經, an important Daoist text in the Tang, with which Wu Yun was most certainly familiar.¹³⁰ However, by the Tang, the deity had also been equated with *Yuanshi tianzun*, the loftiest god of the Lingbao pantheon.¹³¹ Several pieces of evidence throughout the poems suggest that Wu Yun understood the journey's culmination to be in the halls of *Yuanshi tianzun*;¹³² here, I focus on stanza nine, in which

¹²⁹ Allusion to the fourteenth chapter of the *Daode jing*: “Because the eye gazes but can catch no glimpse of it, / It is called elusive. / Because the ear listens but cannot hear it, / It is called the rarified. / Because the hand feels for it but cannot find it, / It is called infinitesimal” 視之不見，名曰夷；聽之不聞，名曰希；搏之不得，名曰微。Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 52–53; translation from Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 159.

¹³⁰ The opening lines of the *Huangting neijing* read:

上清紫霞虛皇前，	In the purple aurora of Highest Clarity, before the Resplendent One of the Void.
太上大道玉晨君，	The Most High, Great Dao Lord of the Jade Source of Light,
閑居藥珠作七言，	Dwelling at was in the Stamen-Pearl palace, composed verses of seven words,
散化五形變萬神，	Dispersing and transforming the five shapes of being, permutating the myriad spirits:

是為《黃庭》作內篇。 This is deemed the *Yellow Court*, known as the Inner Book.

Yunji qiqian (CT 1032), 11.10b–11a; translation from Paul Kroll, “Body Gods and Inner Vision: The Scripture of the Yellow Court,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 131.

¹³¹ See *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* (CT 87), 1.1a–b. Cheng Xuanying's 成玄英 (fl. 631–650) commentary makes this clear.

¹³² He references the Mystic Metropolis at several points in his poems on transcendence poems. Cf. a couplet of the “Dengzhen fu”: “Dragon and luan bird rise, / To carry me aloft to the Mystic Metropolis” 龍鸞竦兮，升我於玄都; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.6a. Or the twenty-second *youxian* stanza:

the adept inquires about the “end of Draconic Magnificence” (*Longhan mo* 龍漢末)

According to the Lingbao cosmogony, the generation of gods and scriptures from the primordial Dao occurred over the course of vast kalpa cycles, periods of time unfathomable to humanity. *Yuanshi tianzun* originated in the first kalpa cycle known as Draconic Magnificence. When the kalpa ended, it was succeeded by the Extended Vigor (Yankang 延康) kalpa, the point at which primordial *qi* emerged. In the following kalpa, Vermillion Brilliance (*Chiming* 赤明), the first stirrings of differentiation from the primordial *qi* began, and *Yuanshi tianzun* materialized as a deity.¹³³ In stanza nine, the adept poses questions about the cosmogenesis, which only *Yuanshi tianzun* can answer. In describing the God, Wu Yun’s lines also imitate stanza nine of the Lingbao *buxu* hymns that reads:

虛皇撫雲璈，	The Sovereign of the Void strums his cloudy <i>ao</i> ;
衆真誦洞經。	As the masses of perfected recite the Cavern
	Scriptures.

Whereas scripture recitation and performance were foregrounded in the Lingbao version, Wu Yun moves to replace this aspect with his own principles and teachings, which we find conveyed in the last lines of stanza nine—the principles of Utmost Essence (*zhijing* 至精) and the source of creative transformation (*zaohua yuan* 造化源).

“Ascending aloft, atop the Purple Culmen, / To feast here on the peaks of the Mystic Metropolis” 高昇紫極上，宴此玄都岑 *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.6a; translation adapted from Schafer, “Saunters in Sylphdom,” 332. Or *buxu* stanza six: “One glance at the Grand Upper Capital; / And I then know how small the multitude of heavens. 一觀太上京，方知衆天小; *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.32a.

¹³³ On this, see Bokenkamp, *EDS*, 380–82; see also *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaoqing sizhu* (CT 87), 3.1a–8b; partially translated in *EDS* 421–22. The commentators to the *Duren jing* provide several helpful comments on the cosmogony.

In Wu's view, this deity, seated at the pinnacle of the heavens, was the very embodiment of the Dao, an emanation of the primordial essence that controls the transformations and fluctuations of *yin* and *yang* and manifests as the germ of creation.

He writes in the third section of his *Xuangang lun*:

Heaven and earth cannot exist on their own; that which possesses heaven and earth is the Great Ultimate. The Great Ultimate cannot turn on its own; that which turns the Great Ultimate is Perfect Essence. Perfect Essence is that which is so of itself; it is nothing but spirits and luminosity. This is indeed what is called the Sovereign of the Void, who resides aloft the Nine Clarities,¹³⁴ who oversees the mystic transformations and commands the myriad numen. Through it, *qian* is set in motion and *kun* is made calm. Still and soundless, it works through non-purposive action, and everywhere employs it and is completed.

天地不能自有，有天地者太極。太極不能自運，運太極者真精。真精自然，惟神惟明。寔曰虛皇，高居九清，乃司玄化，總御萬靈。乾以之動，坤以之寧。寂默無爲，羣方用成。

In the passage, Wu equates several principles, the Dao (*ziran* 自然) with Perfect Essence (*zhijing* 真精) with the Sovereign of the Void (*Xuhuang* 虛皇). But his use of language in the passage, which Jan de Meyer has characterized as an indication that Wu was “inebriated by his own version of perfection,”¹³⁵ should not be discounted as mere mysticism or a confusing mix of terminology. For Wu, these principles carried significant meaning and were not mere rhetorical attempts made in an effort to sway an audience. In Wu's system of thought, *Xuhuang* was both a principle, equated with Perfect/Utmost Essence (*zhijing* 至精 or *zhenjing* 真精), and the divine embodiment of that principle. The use of this kind of dual referential language was characteristic of Wu's writing and

¹³⁴ The Nine Clarities are a further division of the Three Clarity (*Sanqing* 三清) Heavens.

¹³⁵ De Meyer, *WYW*, 267

practice. As Tim Swanger has recognized, one of the principles cited in the *Xuangang lun* passage translated above, Primordial Harmony (*Yuanhe* 元和), carries meaning on multiple levels, in particular both the cosmological and physical.¹³⁶ One sought to embody the principle of Primordial Harmony in practice, so as to align one's state of being with the Dao. As primordial substance, Perfect Essence generated the cosmos and triggered its operations. In divine form, as a manifestation of Perfected Essence, *Xuhuang* oversaw the heavens and creation of the scriptural teachings:

At the beginning of the Nine Mysteries,¹³⁷ when the two phenomena had yet been constituted, a numinous wind assembled the wonders, and the empty caverns concentrated the splendors. Precious stanzas formed in the completion of the inchoate chaos; jade graphs manifested in independent transformations. Generated from the boundaries of being and non-being, they radiated prior to the “dark and yellow.”¹³⁸ Sun and moon obtained them and shined; *qian* and *kun* depend on them to “cover and carry.”¹³⁹ Thereupon, the Supreme Sovereign of the Void ordered the Heavenly King of Primordial Commencement to compile them into gold tablets and order them in jade stanzas. Initially, these were secreted away in the upper mysteries to not yet flow forth into the world. Only when [the gods] descended and observed that one possessed the Dao could they confer these texts.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Timothy Swanger, “Biography and its Social World: The ‘Stele of Lord Lu,’” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 3 (2020): 267–69.

¹³⁷ Another term for the Nine Heavens (*Jiutian* 九天) or Nine Clarities (*Jiuqing* 九清).

¹³⁸ Dark refers to heaven, while yellow refers to earth.

¹³⁹ In the *Zhuangzi*, the Dao is described as that which “covers and carries.” See Guo, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 406.

¹⁴⁰ *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052), 8b–9a. Translation adapted from De Meyer, WYW, 315–16. On the relationship between the two gods, cf. the following lines of the “Dengzhen fu”:

何萬夫之足越。	How are the myriad gentlemen sufficient to cross over,
覲元始於玉晨，	To enjoy an audience before the [Celestial Worthy] of Primordial
	Commencement at the Jade Dawn,
謁虛皇於金闕。	To present themselves before the Sovereign of the Void at the Golden
	Portes,
真朋森而無算，	So that perfected companions might stand with them together like a
	forest, their numbers uncountable,
咸顧予以致悅。	All regarding them with conveyed delight?

九玄之初，二象未構，靈風集妙，空洞凝華，寶章結於混成，玉字標於獨化，挺乎有無之際，煥於玄黃之先，日月得之以照臨，乾坤資之以覆載。於是無上虛皇命元始天王篇之金簡，次之於玉章，初祕上玄，未流下土，降鑒有道，乃錫斯文。

Xuhuang, both the incarnation of the primordial principle and initiator of scripture, possessed the secrets of cosmogenesis. The final lines of *buxu* stanza nine reveal that the divine being divulged such arcane knowledge during the meeting with the adept:

幸聞至精理，	I am fortunate to have heard the principle of
	Ultimate Quintessence; ¹⁴¹
方見造化源。	And to have just seen the source of Creative
	Transformation.

Xuhuang informs the adept about the principle, Ultimate Quintessence, that sets in motion the creation of the cosmos.¹⁴² Because the divinity is also an incarnation of this principle, to see the god is also to glimpse the source that sets the cosmos and world in motion, from stillness and purity to the creative vacillation between yin and yang. Wu's conception approaches the Lingbao scriptural account of *Yuanshi tianzun*, in that *Xuhuang* both originates in and embodies the inceptive forces of the Dao.

The visit with *Xuhuang* was the last stop on the journey before proceeding onward to the ultimate goal—a return not to divine manifestations, the heavens and the

Zongxuan xiansheng wenji (CT 1051), 2.6b.

¹⁴¹ I follow De Meyer's translation for *zhijing* 至精; De Meyer, *WYW*, 263–64. Schafer translates this concept as “ultimate germ;” see his Wu Yun's ‘Cantos,’” 412. Typical of Wu Yun's language, *zhijing* refers to both a cosmological principle in the second section of the *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052, 1b–2b) and a principle of practice in the tenth section of the same work (8b–9b).

¹⁴² *Xuangang lun* (CT 1052, 1b–2b).

gods, but rather to the foundation of the cosmos itself—the Dao. The final stanza of the *buxu* poems reflects the attainment of this aim:

二氣播萬有，	The two <i>qi</i> spread wide for the myriad creatures to possess;
化機無停輪。	The transformative pivot never ceases to turn. ¹⁴³
而我操其端，	Yet, I control its key.
乃能出陶鈞。	Thus, able to emerge beyond the potter's wheel.
寥寥升太漠，	In the empty stillness, I ascend to Grand Silence. ¹⁴⁴
所遇皆清真。	Where everything I encounter is pure and perfected.
澄瑩含元和，	Clear and transparent, it contains primordial harmony. ¹⁴⁵
氣同自相親。	Here, <i>qi</i> is the same, following from their mutual relationship.
絳樹結丹寶，	Scarlet trees produce cinnabar jewels;
紫霞流碧津。	From purple auroras flows cyan liquid.
願以保童嬰，	I wish to preserve my childlike youth with this;
永用超形神。	Forever employing it to transcend form and spirits.

¹⁴³ On the “transformative pivot” (*huaqi* 化機) and its role in cosmogony, see *ibid.* De Meyer translates the term as “mechanism of transformation” (WYW, 264), Schafer as “transmuting motor” (“Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos,’” 413, n. 149). One of the abilities of the “divine person” described by Wu was to be able to transcend this principle; see the *Shenxian kexue lun* passage (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 15b–16a) translated below on page 253.

¹⁴⁴ Grand Silence (*Taimo* 太漠) is a term Wu uses to denote the void, and is used across all three transcendence pieces. The Song dynasty expanded version of the *Duren jing* describes it: “Grand Silence is located at the outer edges of the empty darkness of the unbounded, where the alternations of yin and yang generate the two principles” 太漠者在空玄无極之表，交變陰陽以生二儀; see *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing* 靈寶無量度人上品妙經 (CT 1), 12.4a. Schafer recognized the significance of the term, explaining it as the “nullity beyond the cosmos itself;” see “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos,’” 413, n. 152. A couplet in the twenty-first *youxian* poem reads: “A numinous wind is born from Grand Silence; / Softly wafting, it blows against my lapels” 靈風生太漠，習習吹人襟 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 2.30a). In the *Dengzhen fu*, Wu writes, “Tread upon the rarified remoteness of Grand Silence; / Enjoy the brilliant brightness of the luminous auroras” 躡太漠之清迥，弄明霞之焜煌 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji*, 2.6b–7a). De Meyer first noted these uses of the term in Wu’s three poetic pieces on transcendence; see WYW, 313 n. 124.

¹⁴⁵ “Primordial harmony” (*yuanhe* 元和) appears throughout Wu’s writings, referring to a range of interconnected ideas—cosmological, corporeal, ethical, and emotional. Here in this line, it is certainly related to the cosmological as a condition of all-encompassing unity prior to the differentiation of yin and yang. In his *Xuanguang lun* (CT 1052), Wu writes: “Prior to the empty cavern, when the supreme void was not yet fathomable, primordial harmony was clear and upright” 空洞之前，至虛靡測，元和澄正 (2b). Alternative translations in De Meyer, WYW, 267; and Swanger, “Biography and its Social World,” 268. For an excellent discussion of the range of meanings Wu ascribes the concept of *yuanhe*, see *ibid.*, 267–69.

The adept ascends beyond the binary divisions of the cosmos and the flux of the “transformative pivot,” into a realm of soundless stillness called Grand Silence (*Taimo* 太漠), characterized by primordial unity. Wu Yun’s characterization of this realm was not entirely unique; other Daoist sources describe something similar, though with varying terminology. For example, a Shangqing hymn relates the process of cosmogenesis :

翳翳元化初，	The primal transformation began in a dark shroud,
眇眇晨霞散。	When dawn auroras dispersed in a distant dimness.
太寂空玄上，	Grand Stillness hovered above emptiness and
	vacuity,
寥朗二儀判。	And in Vast Clarity, the Two Mechanisms split. ¹⁴⁶

The realm of Grand Silence, standing before even the two principles of *yin* and *yang* diverge, becomes the playground of the perfected in Wu’s vision. They can only accomplish this by “transcending spirits and form,” the heavenly endowments that emerge after the bifurcation of primordial unity.

The experiences narrated within Wu’s transcendence poems accord with a succinct account of perfected beings provided in his *Shenxian kexue lun*:

Perfected beings merge with the Dao; these figures are called divine beings. Divine beings can exist or perish, be hidden or illuminated. They emerge beyond the Transmuting Trigger and enter the precincts of the Grand Silence. Without mind, they employ mystic discernment; without wings, they soar and wheel. They revel in the Lodge of Bright Auroras and feast in the Hall of Feathered Effulgences. Their joys are equal to that of vast kalpas, and their blessings are boundless. Their longevity is the same as the Grand Void and cannot be measured.

真與道合，謂之神人。神人能存能亡，能晦能光，出化機之表，入太漠之鄉，無心而玄鑒，無翼而翱翔，嬉明霞之館，宴羽景之堂，歡齊浩劫而福無疆，壽同太虛而不可量。¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ *Dayou miaojing* (CT 1314), 65b; translation from Petit and Chang, *Library of Clouds*, 270.

In Wu's eyes, the ideal existence of a perfected being, attained through a lengthy process of preparation and cultivate, was one characterized by joyous rambling, the consumption of wondrous, celestial foodstuff and drink in the company of equals, with the ultimate possibility of reuniting with the Dao. It was an existence of boundless joys and blessings, one well worth championing to sympathetic readers through both poetry and prose.

Conclusion

Wu Yun, in writing these *buxu* poems, found inspiration in the Lingbao hymns of the *Buxu jing*, but his pieces diverge in several key ways.¹⁴⁸ He crafted a set of poems that undoubtedly reflect his own ideology on cultivation and practice, as evidenced by the countless connections to his other writings. Moreover, unlike the Lingbao hymns, these poems were neither meant for the performance of ritual, to be chanted within the Lingbao *zhai buxu* rite, nor were they meant to be recited in individual cultivation practice.¹⁴⁹ On this latter aspect, Olivier Boutonnet has suggested otherwise. His recent work on Wu

¹⁴⁷ *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* (CT 1051), 2.15b–16a. The *Daozang* version is corrupt, missing a character in the line 歡齊浩劫而無疆壽同太虛而不可量. I follow the *QTW* and the *WYYH* that have added the *fu* 福. Translation adapted from De Meyer, *WYW*, 313–14.

¹⁴⁸ Others Daoists familiar with Shangqing teachings and the *Buxu jing* were also likely writing new *buxu* hymns, as evidenced by the collection of ten stanzas in the *Shangqing wushang jinyuan yuqing jinzhen feiyuan buxu yuzhang* 上清無上金元玉清金真飛元步虛玉章 (CT 1375), which contains a set of ten pentasyllabic verses. In language and form, these stanzas clearly demonstrate an affinity with the early Lingbao *buxu* stanzas.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁹ A later collection of Daoist hymns from the Song dynasty titled *Yuyin fashi* 玉音法事 (CT 607) cites several of Wu's *buxu* poems as “Pentasyllabic [Hymns] for Scattering Flowers” (*Wuyan sanhua* 五言散花). De Meyer has suggested that Wu did perform rituals based on a couplet written by Du Yi 杜弈 in a linked verse composition titled “Meeting Celestial Master Wu at the Very Honorable Bao's Residence on Middle Prime Day” 中元日鮑端公宅遇吳天師 (*QTS* 789.2a–2b). The couplet reads: “From its precious box emerges the Golden Register, / The Flowery Pond is rinsed by the Jade Spring” 寶笥開金籙，華池漱玉泉. De Meyer's translation from “Linked Verse and Linked Faiths,” 170. While I agree with his basic reading of the line as alluding to ritual, I do not believe we can conclude that this was a reference to a ritual actually performed by Wu.

Yun's transcendence poems in *Le Char de nuages: Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiè siècle* is instructive for drawing our attention to how the depictions within the poems are indebted to scriptures elucidating Shangqing meditative practices.¹⁵⁰ In responding to earlier work by Paul Kroll, Boutonnet seems to suggest that Wu's transcendence poems are lived in the present as meditation.¹⁵¹ We should consider Kroll's comments on Daoist verse in light of Boutonnet's arguments regarding Wu's poems. In his piece "Daoist Verse and the Quest of the Divine," Kroll writes:

At the same time that these poems are often highly personal, they are not and cannot be purely self-referential. Their "plots" are determined by experiential considerations regarding the reality—especially the spiritual reality—pressing upon the poets. This includes not only matters of private or ritual practice, but also a web of intertextuality... Yet, an appeal to precedent or citation of authority—so evident in other contemporary and earlier Chinese poetry—is not a significant feature of medieval Daoist poetry. Or rather it constructs and appeals to a different order of authority. Rhetorically speaking, however, the emphasis in these poems is not on the better past, but on the better future.¹⁵²

Kroll raises several key points here—personal writing, intertextuality, authority, and rhetoric—all of which are relevant to a discussion of Wu Yun's poems. Boutonnet disagrees especially with Kroll's last claim, arguing instead that the emphasis in Wu's

¹⁵⁰ See Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages: Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiè siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres/essais, 2021), 278–317 (Kindle edition). Jan De Meyer has recently written a critical review of the book, taking Boutonnet to task for suggesting that Wu was an ordained Shangqing priest. I agree with De Meyer's adamant assertion, based on compelling evidence and logic, that Wu Yun was never ordained as a Shangqing priest. However, his poetry and allusions cannot be fully explained without reference to Shangqing works. Moreover, we cannot discount the possibility that certain Shangqing texts, those ostensibly reserved for ordained Shangqing priests, may have been shared with him. See Jan De Meyer, "Review of Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages. Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiè siècle*," *T'oung Pao* 108 (2022): 543–49.

¹⁵¹ Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages*, 303–304 (Kindle edition).

¹⁵² Paul Kroll, "Daoist Verse and the Quest of the Divine," in *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)*, Part 2, eds. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 983–84.

poems is placed on the present,¹⁵³ concerned as they are with the immediate, active experience of ascending to the heavens. This would seem to imply that Wu's poems were not simply depictions or descriptions, but in fact may have been meant to be recited in meditative cultivation. Yet, there is no evidence to suggest these *buxu* poems functioned as such. Wu's poems may capture aspects of Shangqing cultivation methods or obliquely reference knowledge that is conducive to such practices, but they are not part of them. On the contrary, when considered alongside his other writings, the *buxu* poems appear to be one component of the author's broader, systematic efforts to make Daoist ideology, cultivation, and practice legible to a wider literati audience. Such efforts included prose treatises and the use of a variety of poetic genres to express a unified theoretical vision of the cosmos, human existence, and religious practice.

Wu's poetry on transcendence aligns well with Kroll's characterizations of Daoist verse in several ways, but we may add to his comments concerning Wu's compositions. Wu's pieces are personal—he certainly aspires to these heights of transcendence and is deeply personally invested in the Daoist teachings that inform his transcendence poetry. Such aspirations are reflected in the language used in the poems themselves, the use of the personal pronoun.¹⁵⁴ They are also personal as part of Wu's devoted teaching and propagation of the Dao. He advocated for Daoist teachings, cultivation, and a way of life throughout his written work, and poetry constituted a key part of his propagation endeavor. Wu's poetry, I argue, concerns both present and future. As Kroll suggests of

¹⁵³ Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages*, 303–304 (Kindle edition).

¹⁵⁴ Bokenkamp recognized this early on in his brief discussion of Wu Yun's *buxu* stanzas. See his "The 'Pacing the Void Stanzas' of the Ling-Pao Scriptures" (MA Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 33.

other Daoist verse, Wu's pieces serve as advertisements of a future possibility for readers and practitioners, as well as an imagined future existence for Wu himself. As of the writing of this poetry, he had not obtained transcendence—this could only happen at a future time for him, as well as for readers who opted to follow the path he prescribed. On the other hand, the present concern involves arousing interest in potential Daoist devotees. Wu's poems on transcendence depict a "spiritual reality," as Kroll puts it, in a literary fashion, presented in such a way as to engender interest and engagement with Daoist teachings. They are performative, in the sense that Robert Campany has suggested Shangqing scriptures are as well.¹⁵⁵ Campany has argued that practitioners, in undertaking the ritualized cultivation found within Shangqing scriptures, performed a new religious identity before both a social and divine audience. In poetic form, Wu performs the identity of a perfected being, ascending to great celestial heights, and asks readers to imagine that they can as well. The poems present the possibilities of transcendence for literati readers—an enticing vision of what awaits those ambitious enough to tread a similar path. Wu can only do this through reference to his own religious authority—his intimate knowledge of Daoist scripture and doctrine. His work also appeals to the authority of the literary tradition, turning to traditional forms of poetry to express his vision. Throughout the pieces, we find gestures to the received poetic tradition on immortality, language and imagery with which readers would have been quite familiar. However, while he relies on this kind of literary authority, at the same time

¹⁵⁵ Robert Campany 康若柏, "Shangqing jing de biaoyan xingzhi 上清經的表演性質, trans. Frankie Chik, in *Daojiao xiulian keyi de wenxian tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, ed. Tim Wai-keung Chan (Hong Kong: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018), 25–53.

he upends it, presenting, in his mind, a more authoritative version of Daoist transcendence that supersedes anything found within earlier poetry.

Wu champions his vision of conduct, cultivation, and cosmology throughout his writings, presenting in his *buxu* poems, as well as the *youxian* series and the “Dengzhen fu” a precis of this path and the joys that may await those who pursue it. When we consider his transcendence pieces alongside his prose, we see that the two categories of writings are two sides of the same coin. De Meyer has hinted at a kind of dichotomy in Wu’s writing, that is, one between systematic theory and rhetorical mystical poetry and thought.¹⁵⁶ But this is a false distinction, for they are mutually informative—the theory informs the poetry, and the poetry depicts the theory in arresting and dynamic language. Wu was assuredly a systematic thinker, a devoted Daoist who sought to spread Daoist teachings to a wider audience. But he was also a gifted poet, one whose *buxu* poems, in both their expansive scope and depth, stand apart from others of the Tang, the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁵⁶ See De Meyer, *WYW*, 265–67.

CHAPTER 5

WRITING RITUAL: PACING THE VOID IN TANG POETIC DISCOURSE

Introduction

During the Tang, references to *buxu*, which point to Daoist ritual performance and its music, were widespread throughout poetry. The proliferation and ubiquity of Daoist ritual during the Tang likely, in part, precipitated this increased attention to the performances.¹ This chapter explores how poets employed the term *buxu* and made sense of Daoist ritual, an exercise in studying the ordinary, as JZ Smith would put it, for ritual performance would have been commonplace in the lived experiences of literati at time.² Daoist ritual performance in the Tang, similar to today, gave spectators a memorable, sensory experience. The performative elements that seem to have especially struck a chord with observers include the music and sounds, but writers also commented upon the entire range of sensory elements. For some, encounters with Daoist ritual, whether actual or imagined, evoked a sense of appreciation for the interrelation between heaven and earth; however, for others, they stirred familiar poetic sentiments of longing and frustration, as well as a concern with impermanence.

In examining experiences of ritual and music, we cannot, of course, recover the original emotional response, no matter how extensively authors may have described them. Indeed, the reception of a performance is unique for an individual, shaped by a range of both personal and social elements. What we can do, though, is explore the ways in which

¹ See Li Cheng 李程, “Tangdai wenren de buxu ci chuanguo” 唐代文人的步虛詞創作, *Wuhan daxue xuebao (renwen kexue ban)* 武漢大學學報 (人文科學版) 66, no. 6 (Nov. 2013): 114–18.

² Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xii–xiii.

writers convey that individual experience and filter it through a particular cultural discourse, one shaped by the weight of literary history. The expression of the experience takes on a more collective guise, as writers turn to shared ideas, tropes, images, and language to convey their individual experience. While the subject of Daoist ritual may have been a unique feature of Tang poetry, allusions to *buxu* and several associated ideas were often rendered through familiar idioms and tropes in being integrated into the “grammar” of Tang poetry.³

Ritual Encounters and Celestial Resonance

Poets employed the term *buxu* in describing ritual scenes; however, the mere use of it should not be taken as evidence of a performance of the *buxu* rite which we explored in chapter two. In some cases, poets appear to have utilized the term to describe imagined ritual performances or as metonymy for the whole of Daoist ritual. Many of these poems are set in mountain and temple spaces, a kind of “focusing lens” for the poets’ recognition of the sacred nature of both the ritual performance and its sounds.⁴ Ritual performance activates such spaces, transforming them into points that mediate the connection between the heavens and earth, and poets attempted to capture this transformation and the resonant responses of the heavens.

³ Stephen Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 73–138. On an early contribution to this effort, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Taoism and Literature: The *Pi-lo* Question,” *Taoist Resources* 3, no. 1 (1991): 57–72.

⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 54–55.

Xu Hun's 許渾 (ca. 787–854), “Passing the Night at the Abbey of All-Encompassing Congruence” 宿咸宜觀 is an excellent example to begin with, for it encompasses key aspects of ideas surrounding the poet's experience of Daoist ritual and the use of the term *buxu*:

羽袖飄飄杳夜風，	Feathered sleeves float and flutter in dim night;
翠幢歸殿玉壇空。	Halcyon banners ⁵ return to the halls [of heaven], the jade altar stands empty.
步虛聲盡天未曉，	The sounds of Pacing the Void exhausted, not yet dawn in the sky;
露壓桃花月滿宮。	Dew presses down the peach blossoms, and the moon fills the palace.

Describing the performance of ritual in the first line, the poet likens the Daoist priestesses of the Xianyi Abbey and their movements to transcendents flitting about on the wind.

Soon, though, the altar stands empty after the conclusion of the ritual before the break of dawn. The natural responses in the night scene of clarity and stillness fill the altar space, the *yin* moonlight, appropriate to the *yin* nature of the female performers, supplanting the priestesses after they vacate the space. In the final lines, we are left with the sense of the still and quiet consuming the scene where the vibrant sounds of the ritual just rang out.

Xu glimpses what has actually transpired, the invisible nature of the ritual event—the gods have left the space and the heavens have responded in kind to the ritual. In this, the poem makes him a participant and insider, privy to knowledge of the workings of the

⁵ “Cuizhuang” 翠幢 is not a very common term used in Tang literature or even in Daoist texts. Ma Dai 馬戴 (799–869) does use it in the closing line of his poem “Sent to Tian, the Exquisite Talent at Cloud Terrace Abbey” 寄雲台觀田秀才: “In my leisure, I read transcendent writings to draw near the halcyon banners” 閑讀仙書倚翠幢; see QTS, 556.14b. It is used in a singular Daoist text, the *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* 靈寶領教濟度金書 (CT 466, 282.24a), to describe the standards carried by a divine retinue as it descends from the heavens, which the practitioner visualizes during the performance of a ritual.

heavens. Xu’s use of the phrase “buxu sheng” connotes the music of the entire ritual complex, not simply the *buxu* rite.

Descriptions of nighttime temple or mountain scenes appear to have become somewhat of a trope in reference to *buxu* and Daoist ritual. Lu Guimeng’s 陸龜蒙 (d. 881) poem “Evening at the Grotto Palace” 洞宮夕 describes the completion of a ritual in much the same fashion as Xu Hun:⁶

月午山空桂花落，	The moon at its zenith, ⁷ the mountain empty, osmanthus flowers falling; ⁸
華陽道士雲衣薄。	Daoist priests of the [Abbey] of Flourishing Yang, their cloudy garb thin. ⁹
石壇香散步虛聲，	On the stone altar, incense disperses with the sounds of Pacing the Void;
杉雲清冷滴棲鶴。	The conifer mists clear and cool, dripping upon the perched crane.

⁶ *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (CT 304) has a slightly different title, “Fall Evening at the Grotto Palace” 洞宮秋夕, as well as an alternative third line: “On the stone altar, incense disperses, pacing the void slowly” 石壇香散步虛遲 (28.22a). This version replaces “sheng” 聲 (sound) with “chi” 遲 (slow, lingering), creating ambiguity—Does the line refer the speed of the music or perhaps the steps taken by the priests? It could, of course, indicate both. The change though would emphasize that the ritual is in progress, as Lu watches the paces, whereas the *QTS* version simply focuses on the sounds as an indication of the ritual.

⁷ “Yuewu” 月午 refers to the point in time when the moon reaches its peak in the sky and begins its descent.

⁸ “Osmanthus flowers falling” (*guihua luo* 桂花落) indicates the moonlight falling upon the empty mountain landscape.

⁹ “Flourishing Yang Abbey” 華陽觀 is the temple founded by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) on Mount Mao 茅山 after he retired there in 492. The term “Huayang” is also associated with the eighth Grotto Heaven (*dongtian* 洞天), known as *Jintan huayang* 金壇華陽, which is located on Mount Mao. It was also part of the titles of various Shangqing patriarchs: Tao Hongjing (*Huayang zhenren* 華陽真人, posthumously appointed as the 9th) and Liu Hunkang 劉混康 (*Huayang xiansheng* 華陽先生, 25th patriarch). Elsewhere, Zhu Ziyong 朱自英 (23rd patriarch) is referred to as a “Huayang daoshi” 華陽道士; see *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑 (CT 296, 48.10b). Lu wrote two other poems referencing or addressed to the “Daoist Priests of the [Abbey] of Flourishing Yang,” such as “Song for the Reclusive Gentleman Ding” 丁隱君歌 (*QTS* 621.6a–8a) and “Sent to the Cherished Daoist Priests of the Abbey of Flourishing Yan” 寄懷華陽道士 (*Maoshan zhi* [CT 304], 28.22a–23b).

Lu was intimately familiar with the performance of Daoist ritual, frequenting the temples and hermitages of Daoists on Mount Mao.¹⁰ He wrote several poems on Daoist ritual,¹¹ describing the altar spaces, the gestures and movements of the priests, and the sounds of ritual. Yet despite his proximity to Daoism, its spaces and practitioners, Lu's poem here displays few unique qualities. He recounts his experience of a ritual at the Huayang Abbey, where *buxu* music has been playing. Like Xu Hun's poem above, the scene is created with reference to the dissipation of sound upon the altar at the end of the ritual. As the incense disperses, he envisions a crane perched upon the altar platform taking in the scene. The crane, an animal often associated with transcendents, ostensibly arrives as confirmation of the ritual's efficacy—the heavens answer the ritual performance by sending a creature to affirm that the performance involved the successful execution of ritual procedures and the appropriate measure of sincerity. In the final couplet, the

¹⁰ His poems on Mount Mao and the activities there are collected in *juan 28* of the *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (CT 304).

¹¹ Edward H. Schafer includes Lu among a list of Daoist poets from the Tang. See his *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts'ao T'ang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 7–10. The best example of his poetry on ritual, first brought to attention by Schafer, may be “Welcoming the Perfected” 迎真, which is the first of two poems Lu sent to Daoists on Mount Mao.

九華磬答寒泉急，	Lithophones of the Nine-Fold Brilliance answer the cold springs' urgency;
十絕幡搖翠微濕。	Banners of Ten Striations wave in the dampness of the halcyon haze.
司命旒旌未下來，	The fluttering standards of the Director of Destiny have yet to descend;
焚香抱簡凝神立。	With incense burning and clutching the [audience] tablet, [the officiants] stand with rapt attention.
殘星下照霓襟冷，	The remnant stars cast a glow down, cold upon rainbow lapels;
缺月才分鶴輪影。	The waning moon just now revealed, reflecting on the crane Wheels.
空洞靈章發一聲，	The Numinous Stanzas of the Vacuous Grotto emit one Sound;
春來萬壑煙花醒。	Spring comes to the myriad valleys, the misty flowers awaken.

Translation adapted from Edward H. Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times* (Boulder, CO: Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1980), 41. See *juan 28* of the *Maoshan zhi* (CT 304) for a number of his poems concerning Mount Mao, ritual, and Daoist figures.

principle of “resonant response” (*ganying* 感應) plays out, the ritual sounds in line three leading on to the appearance of the crane.

The phrasing and description of the scene parallel not only Xu Hun’s poem, but also other pieces. For example, take Wang Wei’s (699–759) poem, “Bird-Cry Ravine” from “Five Poems on Miscellaneous Topics on the Cloud Stream of the Huangfu Marchmount” 皇甫嶽雲溪雜題五首：鳥鳴澗：

人間桂花落，	In the human world, osmanthus flowers fall;
夜靜春山空。	The night still, the spring mountain empty.
月出驚山鳥，	The moon emerges, startling the mountain birds;
時鳴春澗中。	Who, from time to time, cry out within the spring ravine. ¹²

Moonlight falls upon an empty mountain, and the poets take note of the sounds resonating in the stillness. Lu’s poem on ritual becomes a kind of modular reproduction; the first couplet describes the empty mountain scene filled with moonlight, while the second couplet intimates the sounds that disrupt the quiet stillness. The nature of the sounds in these two poems diverges of course, but Lu relates his encounter with ritual in a rather derivative manner, relying on expected images, language, and structure.

Other poems capturing the experience of ritual may have been unique, but the emphasis was similarly on the ritual mediation between heaven and earth. Zhang Zhongsu 張仲素 (769–819) composed a poem describing the ritual performances of the Upper Primordial Festival held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month titled,¹³

¹² Also translated in Paul Rouzer, trans. *The Poetry and Prose of Wang Wei*, vol. 2 (Boston: Walter De Gruyter Inc., 2020), 99.

¹³ The festival was held on the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar calendar, the first of three calendar days dedicated to *zhai* and offerings. On the Lingbao rituals dedicated the Middle Prime (*Zhongyuan* 中元), see Lü Pengzhi, “The Lingbao Fast of the Three Primes and the Daoist Middle Prime

“Hearing Pacing the Void at the Grand Clarity Palace on the Upper Primordial Day” 上元日聽太清宮步虛.¹⁴ This poem presents perhaps the clearest, most extensive treatment of ritual performance I have found in Tang poetry, and provides a stark contrast to the two poems discussed above:

僊客開金籙， 元辰會玉京。	Transcendent guests open the Golden Register; On the occasion of the Prime to gather in the Jade Capital.
靈歌賓紫府， 雅韻出層城。	With numinous songs, they become guests at the Purple Bureau, Elegant melodies come forth from the tiered city.
磬雜音徐徹， 風飄響更清。	Chimes mingle, their sounds slowly penetrating; A wind whirls, and their resonance becomes even clearer.
紆餘空外盡， 斷續聽中生。	Meandering and lingering, before fading out beyond the reaches of the sky. Halting and continuing, emerging within hearing distance.
舞鶴紛將集， 流雲住未行。 誰知九陌上， 塵俗仰遺聲。	Dancing cranes, scattering then coalescing; Drifting clouds, halted not yet moving. Who knew that on this grand city avenue, We dusty mundane creatures could look up to the lingering sounds.

The “transcendent guests,” Daoist priests, begin the ritual as the proceedings also unfurl in the heavens. The line “Elegant melodies come forth from the tiered city,” refers to Mount Kunlun. Zhang captures the movements of the priests in the line “Dancing cranes scattered, but on the verge of coalescing.” Time has almost altogether halted during this

Festival: A Critical Study of the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie jing*,” *Cahiers D’Etrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 35–61.

¹⁴ Grand Clarity Palace 太清宮 was located in the capital of Chang’an 長安; originally named the Temple of the Mystic Primordial 玄元廟, its title was changed on the twelfth day of the third month of the second year of the Tianbao 天寶 reign period (Apr. 15, 743); see Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 866–867; and Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946), *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 216–17.

profound ritual moment, as the clouds hang in the sky, unmoving. Zhang, though, has a different reaction to the ritual performance and its sounds than others; where several poets ponder the nature of the cosmos and their own personal being, Zhang professes a sense of wonder at the rare opportunity to observe a moment where the heavens and the mundane world coalesce.

The poems addressed in this brief section both rely on standard poetic language and imagery to write a ritual encounter, while at the same time creating new tropes with reference to *buxu* or its music. Often used as synecdoche for Daoist ritual, as opposed to a specific indication of the Pacing the Void rite, these terms (*buxu* and *buxu sheng*) became correlated with other ideas and understandings. Poets underscored the link between the heavens and earth, confirmed by resonant responses that appeared upon the scene. As an emanation of the heavens, the *buxu* music perhaps even represented the possibility of celestial grace within the realm of the mundane. These themes also run throughout poems that focus more specifically on the poets' personal circumstances.

Ritual Encounters and Personal Cultivation

Ritual encounters referenced through *buxu* often stirred poets' personal reflections. In this, the focus of the poem becomes not the ritual, but the inner thoughts of the poet, transforming the piece into a thematic play on conventional literary topics. Allusions to *buxu* serve as an entry point to contemplations on established themes such as impermanence, searching for elixirs, and considerations of transcendence.¹⁵ Fang Gan's

¹⁵ For a discussion of these themes in early medieval poetry, see Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 139–77.

方幹 (809–888) poem, “Hearing ‘Pacing the Void’ at Night” 夜聽步虛, exemplifies the connection between hearing ritual music and reflections on aspirations of transcendence. In the poem, he describes the observation of ritual performance and the feelings aroused by such an experience:

寂寂永宮裏，	In the silence and stillness within the expansive palace,
天師朝禮聲。	The sounds of the Celestial Master going in audience.
步虛聞一曲，	I hear a single tune of “Pacing the Void,”
渾欲到三清。	And am completely taken with reaching the Three Clarities.
瑞草秋風起，	Amidst the propitious plants, an autumn wind arises, ¹⁶
仙階夜月明。	Transcendent stairs in the night moon glow.
多年遠塵意，	For many years, I’ve harbored sentiments to distance myself from this dusty world;
此地欲鋪平。	At this stage, I wish to pave the way.

The first couplet describes the ritual scene, while the middle two comment upon the sensory experience, the sounds of the music, the feeling of wind, and the sight of a moonlight illuminating the scene. The ritual moment stokes a desire to cast aside temporal concerns and ascend to the heavens. The structure of the poem builds the sense of growing determination and anticipation, with the fourth line breaking from descriptions of the scene to reveal the poet’s reaction to the ritual performance.

Thereafter, Fang envisions the celestial surroundings as opening before him, before finally declaring his resoluteness to actualize his vision of transcendence. Fang’s goal, to reach the Three Clarities, the tripartite division of the Shangqing heavens, was a shared

¹⁶ “Propitious plants” (*ruicao* 瑞草) is another term for “transcendent plants” (*xiancao* 仙草), a category that includes things such as “numinous mushrooms” (*lingzhi* 靈芝), polypores and fungi that, when ingested, were believed to be conducive to attaining longevity and perhaps even immortality.

ambition of other writers who wrote of the “road to the Three Clarities” (*Sanqing lu* 三清路) and their efforts to traverse the path. In the final couplet, Fang expresses his long held inclination to pursue transcendence and ends on a note of determination, albeit tempered by his recognition that preparations remain necessary.

Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698–756) composed a poem titled “On the Mountain Dwelling of the Master of Refinement Zhu” 題朱鍊師山房 that describes the full sensory experience of Daoist ritual:

叩齒焚香出世塵，	Clacking teeth and burning incense to depart this realm of dust;
齋壇鳴磬步虛人。	The sounding lithophones on the libation altar, figures pacing the void.
百花仙醞能留客，	Transcendent wine of a hundred flowers can detain a guest; ¹⁷
一飯胡麻度幾春。	Once I consume western hemp-seeds, ¹⁸ how many springs shall I cross over?

Wang highlights the sounds and smells of the setting, paying particular attention to the Daoist ritual officiant who clacks his teeth together to summon gods of his body and send them to the heavens on their official duties. The understanding of such ritual procedures was, perhaps, not as esoteric as we would believe; other poets display an awareness of

¹⁷ “Transcendent wine” (*xianyun* 仙醞) can both denote wine made by transcendents, as well as connote excellent wine; in Wang Changling’s poem, it seems to carry both meanings.

¹⁸ The consumption of western hemp-seeds, or sesame, for achieving longevity is cited extensively in Daoist texts, with early references in the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (CT 292) and *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序 (CT 388). Lord Pei 裴君, a Shangqing deity of great significance in early scriptures, has a hagiography in the *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑 that cites him as a practitioner of this longevity method, and the interlinear commentary contains detailed instructions on the preparation of the seeds; see CT 296, 7.11b–12b.

meditation and scripture recitation practices that called for clacking of teeth.¹⁹ Wang’s use of the term *buxu*, though, suggests not individual practice, but the proceedings of a public ritual. It seems that Master Zhu’s hospitality, demonstrated by the sharing of fine wine, has prompted Wang to linger and inquire about certain cultivation practices, here intimated by a reference to digestion of western hemp-seeds, a foodstuff long associated with the pursuit of longevity. Despite the opening couplet, striking for its attention to details of the ritual space, the closing lines deliver the crux of the poem, the personal reflection on individual pursuits of longevity.

Reflections prompted by ritual also made use of conventional references to transcendent characters and topography. In Qian Qi 錢起’s (710–82) piece titled “Roaming About the Daoist Abbeys of Mount Fufu at Night then Ascending to the Temple of the Mystic Primordial” 夕游覆釜山道士觀因登玄元廟,²⁰ traditional conceptions of transcendence come alive against the backdrop of the experience of Daoist ritual performance:

冥搜過物表，	Deeply searching going beyond material things;
洞府次溪傍。	At the cavern bureau, I stop-off nearby a stream.
已入瀛洲遠，	I have already entered a place far from Yingzhou;
誰言仙路長。	Who says the road to transcendence is long? ²¹

¹⁹ See for example the poems by Zhang Ji 張籍 (766–830) and Quan Deyu 全德與 (759–818), “Presented to the Grain Eliminator” 贈辟穀者 (*QTS* 384.4a–b) and “Preserving the Gengshen Day Together with a Daoist” 與道者同守庚申 (*QTS* 320.11b–12a) respectively. In the latter poem, Quan writes, “Gathering in my vision, I forget my likes and dislikes; / Clacking my teeth, I assemble my divine spirits” 收視忘取捨，叩齒集神靈.

²⁰ Mount Fufu is located in Lianjiang county 連江縣 in present day Fuzhou 福州.

²¹ The sentiment in this line parallels that in several lines of Wu Yun’s poems of transcendence. Cf. stanza four of his *buxu* series: “I don’t feel that the cloudy road is distant” 不覺雲路遠 (*Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* 宗玄先生文集 (CT 1051), 2.31b; or stanza two of his *youxian* series: “Who says the celestial road is distant?” 誰謂天路遐 (ibid., 2.27a).

孤煙出深竹，	A solitary strand of smoke emerges from the deep bamboo;
道侶正焚香。	Daoist companions just now burning incense.
鳴磬愛山靜，	Sounding lithophones cover the mountain's stillness; ²²
步虛宜夜涼。	Pacing the Void is suited to the night chill.
仍同象帝廟，	Thus they share in the sanctuary of the Emperor of Form, ²³
更上紫霞岡。	Then ascending again to the ridges of the Purple Empyrean.
霽月懸琪樹，	A clear moon suspended above alabaster trees, ²⁴
明星映碧堂。	Bright stars dazzling on the cyan hall. ²⁵
傾思丹灶術，	My thoughts turn to the arts of the vermilion furnace;
願采玉芝芳。	I wish to gather the fragrance of jade mushrooms. ²⁶
儻把浮丘袂，	Perhaps I may grasp the sleeves of Fuqiu; ²⁷
乘雲別舊鄉。	Mount the clouds and depart from my old hometown.

²² Reading 愛 as 蔓, meaning to cover, conceal, or hide.

²³ Alluding to a line of the *Daode jing* 道德經: “I do not know whose child it is, but it existed prior to the Emperor of form” 吾不知誰之子，象帝之先。Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed., *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 21.

²⁴ According to the *Shanhai jing* 山海經, *yuqi shu* 珎琪樹 grow upon Mount Kunlun; see Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed., *Shanhai jing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 299.

²⁵ “Cyan halls” (*bitang* 碧堂), a location upon Mount Kunlun governed by Xiwang mu 西王母, house groups of transcendents. See the passage on Mount Kunlun in the *Shizhou ji* 十洲記 in Wang Genlin 王根林, et. al., eds., *Han Wei liuchao biji xiaoshuo dagun* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 70.

²⁶ “Jade mushrooms” (*yuzhi* 玉芝) are cited throughout early Daoist scriptures, as a foodstuff of transcendents. The *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, a work of the Ming dynasty, provides a succinct definition, noting that they are one of five kinds of “numinous mushrooms” (*lingzhi* 靈芝), white, and when eaten for a long time will lighten the body and make it undying, so as to achieve longevity and transcendence. See Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–1593), *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1975), 1712.

²⁷ Alluding to the story of Wang Ziqiao 王子喬 in the *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳. Wang chanced upon the Daoist 道士 Fuqiu Gong 浮丘公, who received him as a disciple and taught him for more 30 years upon Mount Song; see *Lixian zhuan* (CT 294), 1.14a. Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) utilized this image of Fuqiu’s sleeves in the third stanza of his *Youxian* series: “To the left I grasp Fuqiu’s sleeves, / To the right, I clap Hong Ya’s shoulder” 左挹浮丘袖，右拍洪崖肩; LQ, 865.

The ritual scene, which the author happens upon in the temple, becomes the context for a longer consideration of the arts or techniques and foodstuffs that might allow the author to transcend his mundane existence. Almost the entire poem is couched in the traditional imagery of *youxian* verse— Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwang mu* 西王母), transcendent figures, such as Fuqiu, and Mount Kunlun. The temple space has taken on the divine character of *Xiwang mu*'s celestial residence, alight with the glow of the moon and stars. In Qian's description, one of the key features of the performance is the Daoist's ascent to the heavens, described here with an allusion to "Purple Empyrean." Such an impression may be due to the use of multi-level platforms for the altar spaces. Daoist ritual officiants ascended to the higher levels of the platform during points of the ritual, meant to imitate an ascent to the courts of the gods. Observing the ritual movements may have prompted Qian to link the association to his own efforts to depart from the world into the heavens. Ritual performance again becomes the catalyst for considering one's individual transcendent aspirations.

While Qian's poem likely comments on an actual ritual experience, Li Xiang's 李翔 (n.d.)²⁸ poem, "Sent the Subject of the Abbey of Searching for the Perfected" 寄題尋

²⁸ Li Xiang is the author of the *Shedao shi* 涉道詩, a collection of 28 poems found in a Dunhuang manuscript (P. 3866). The *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書 contains a reprint of the collection. ed. Hu Daojing 胡道靜 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992-1994), 21:540–544. On the collection, see Wu Qiyu, 吳其昱, "Li Xiang ji qi She Dao shi," 李翔及其涉道詩 *Dōkyō kenkyū* 道教研究 1 (1965): 271–91. He dates the poems to 860–874. The authorship of this collection and the poems contained therein has been the subject of debate; for a summary of this work, see Paul Amato, "Rebirth of a Lineage: The Hereditary Household of the Han Celestial Master and Celestial Masters Daoism at Dragon and Tiger Mountain," (PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 2016), 217–221. Much discussion has surrounded a poem from this collection titled "Presented to the Zhang [Family] Celestial Masters of Longhu Shan" (*Xian Longhu shan Zhang tianshi* 獻龍虎山張天師); see Timothy Barrett, "The Emergence of a Taoist Papacy in the T'ang Dynasty," *Asia Major* Third Series 7, no. 1 (1994): 101–02; Amato, "Rebirth of a Lineage," 197–99 and 217–21 (poem translated on 217). See also briefly Neil Schmid, "Tun-huang Literature" in *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 981.

真觀, reads as an imaginary consideration of the temple space. Nevertheless, it ends on the familiar note of searching for a transcendent path:

見說尋真地勢雄，	I have heard of the forbidding terrain near the
面臨湖北倚高峰。	[Abbey] of Searching for the Perfected;
奔濤入夏雷聲迅，	Overlooking the north of the lake, drawing near to
險嶂凌秋黛色濃。	the lofty peaks.
壇上步虛頻降鶴，	Surging breakers inaugurate summer, with sounds
洞中投簡數驚龍。	of thunder swift;
何勞更訪桃源路，	Precipitous peaks overtop autumn, their kohl-blue
水曲雲深千萬重。	colors thick.
	Pacing the void upon the altar brings down cranes
	in succession;
	Casting the [dragon] tablets within the cavern
	repeatedly startles dragons.
	How shall I labor to once more pay a visit to the
	peach font road,
	Where waters wind and clouds deepen over the
	myriad twists and turns?

Like other poems explored above, we find the author framing the ritual performance in terms of the responses stimulated; pacing the void provokes the descent of cranes, while casting the dragon tablets, a Daoist rite for petitioning the gods of the earth for exoneration of transgressions, arouses the dragons that lie within the earth. Li's question at the end though shifts the tone of the poem entirely, from a dynamic illustration of the temple, its surroundings, and imagined events to a cliched inquiry about a path to transcendence, articulated through an obvious allusion to Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365–427), "Record of the Peach Blossom Spring" 桃花源記. In the poem, the reference to *buxu* is not the direct stimulus or precursor to personal reflection—*buxu* is depicted as simply what takes place within a temple space—but it nevertheless gets tied to the trope of the search for transcendence and the attention to the connection between Daoist ritual and the unseen.

As we saw before, the connection between the heavens and earth established within a ritual space was a prominent theme in poems alluding to *buxu*. Yin Yaofan 殷堯藩 (ca. 814), in a poem titled “Watching Daoist Priests Pace the Void on Middle Prime Day” 中元日看諸道士步虛,²⁹ captures the idea not just through the poem’s phrasing, but also a skillful manipulation of line structures. However, the closing lines, while still riffing on the theme of elixirs and transcendence, diverges in its rejection of them. The poem reads:

玄都開秘籙，	In the Mystic Capital, secret registers revealed;
白石禮先生。	For white stones, pay reverence to the gentleman. ³⁰
上界秋光淨，	In the upper realms, autumn beams pure; ³¹
中元夜景清。	On Middle Prime, the night scene clear.
星辰朝帝處，	Stars and celestial bodies pay court before the the arch’s dwelling;
鸞鶴步虛聲。	<i>Luan</i> and cranes pace to the sounds of the void.
玉樹花難老，	Jade trees, their flowers rebuff old age. ³²
珠宮月最明。	At the Stamen-Pearl Palace, ³³ the moon is the brightest.
掃壇天地肅，	Once the altar is swept, heaven and earth are solemn.
投簡鬼神驚。	Once the tablets are cast, ghosts and spirits are startled. ³⁴

²⁹ *QTS*, 472.8b; and Li Fang 李昉, et. al., eds., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 [hereafter *WYYH*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 928a.

³⁰ Master Whitestone is the subject of a hagiography preserved in Ge Hong’s *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳, who “was unwilling to cultivate the way of ascending to transcendence, instead opting for nondying only, thus retaining the pleasures of the human realm” 不肯修升仙之道，但取於不死而已，不失人間之樂; see *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2020), 36. Translation from Robert Ford Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong’s Traditions of Divine Transcendents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 292–94.

³¹ *QTS* has 上界秋光靜. I follow the *WYYH* here.

³² *QTS* has 玉洞花長髮. I follow the *WYYH* here.

³³ This is likely a reference to the Stamen-Pearl Palace (*Ruizhu gong* 蕊珠宮), that by this time was known as the celebrated residence of Laozi.

儻賜刀圭藥， Should it happen that I am bestowed with a measure
 of drugs,
還留不死名。 I shall still preserve a name of nondying.³⁵

The structure of the poem moves back and forth between heavenly and earthly imagery before settling in the final two couplets into the concerns of the poet in the mundane realm. There are, I believe, two possible readings of the structure, though they need not be distinct. The first two couplets distinguish the celestial realm from the human world. The allusion to Master White Stone grounds the line in the human realm, as this transcendent figure spurned ascension to the heavens so as to continue enjoying the pleasures of this world. The couplet juxtaposes the more esoteric registers that originate in the Mystic Capital with the lesser methods of Master White Stone, used simply to pursue long life. In the following couplet, we see an additional straightforward remark on the mundane world—the celebration of Middle Prime, again contrasted with the “upper realms,” the heavens above. These first two lines provide a more obvious contrast; however, in the latter part of the poem, the boundaries between the realms become somewhat blurred. The first reading of the structure (A=heavens; B=this world; ABABABABBBBB) is somewhat tentative I believe, as it hinges upon a correlation between the *luan* and cranes with the Daoist priests. Indeed, there is a connection between the feathered garb (*yuyi* 羽衣) worn by Daoists and these celestial creatures;

³⁴ These two lines are also translated in Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1988), 5. He translates the couplet as “Sweep off the altar and heaven and earth stand stern, / Toss the slips and ghosts and spirits jump startled,” reads this as a reference to divination, but I believe he is mistaken. The first line more likely indicates some apotropaic ritual method, cleansing the altar of impurities, while the second indicates a particular Daoist rite titled “Casting the Dragon Tablets” (*toulong jian* 投龍簡); on this, see Édouard Chavannes, “Le jet des dragons,” *Mémoires concernant l’Asie Orientale* 3 (1919): 53–220.

³⁵ QTS has 還成不死名. I follow the *Wenyuan yinghua* here.

however, while such a reading is not out of the question, there is no explicit connection here. We must also account for our interpretation of “Pearled Palace,” which may suggest Laozi’s celestial residence, the Stamen-Pearl Palace 蕊珠宮, but could equally denote the Daoist temple where the rituals are taking place. If it is the latter, then the structure of alternating lines in the first half of the poem holds—“jade trees” in the heavens offer an elixir of longevity, while the “Pearled Palace,” the temple site, is illuminated by the moon during the performance of the ritual.

The second reading of the structure (A=heavens; B=this world; ABABAAAABBBB) also demonstrates a clear symmetry, but in a slightly different way. The middle two couplets describe the heavens before moving back to the mundane world, the altar setting, and reflecting on his own aspirations of cultivation. Our structural reading of the poem, then, impacts how we read the reference to the “sounds of pacing the void.” If the line does accord with the human realm, then the poet is observing the performance of the rite—the sounds are the musical accompaniment. However, if we read the structure differently, the sounds become linked to the heavens; they are not the sounds of the music accompanying the *buxu* rite, but the music of the heavens, with which celestial creatures dance in sync. But the ambiguity, in fact, accords with a Daoist understanding of the nature of *buxu* as a reenactment of a celestial rite, in which transcendent, perfected, and other heavenly creatures all participate. As the rite takes place in the human realm, celestial beings also conduct it in the heavens. The couplet concerning the altar and tablets conjoins the two realms by making reference to the heaven and earth, along with ghosts and gods.

Yin's final reflection seems to suggest that he, like Master White Stone, alluded to in the opening couplet, would reject the calculated pursuit of transcendence. But he may also reject the consumption of drugs of immortality as well, or at the very least, never actively pursue the practice. The phrase "should it happen" emphasizes the fortuity of encountering someone, a master or transcendent figure, who would grant either immortality substances or instructions to manufacture them. Yin is not seeking out elixirs or masters, but even if he were to chance upon either, he would follow in Master Whitestone's footsteps and reside within the world to pursue life's pleasures. The poem reads as a kind of indictment against the pursuit of transcendence and immortality practices. What begins as an encounter with Daoist ritual, with reference to *buxu* music, ends in a rejection of spiritual concerns in favor of the pleasures of the world and favorable reputation. While this may appear unique in the context of the poems discussed here—other poets seem eager to pursue transcendence—the sentiment is not unheard of in poetic renditions on transcendence. For example, while Cao Cao's 曹操 (155–220) "Ballad of Qiuhu" 秋胡行 #2 rhapsodizes on the potential experience of rambling together with divine figures amidst transcendent locales and heavens, it ends on a more realistic note, recognizing that "Life and death is fated, / to worry about it is folly" 存亡有命，慮之為蚩。³⁶ The poem concludes not with resignation and despondency at the human condition, but an open call to seize the opportunity for merriment and enjoyment of life's pleasures. Likewise, Yin's poem seems to come to the same conclusion, though in a more subtle way. In other words, focusing on the joys of this world is more of a

³⁶ LQ, 351; translation from Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 151.

guaranteed promise than an active pursuit of transcendence. Perhaps he even considers Daoist music as one of the joys of the world that he wishes to continue partaking.

Buxu Sounds on the Wind

In Tang poetry, more prevalent than an experience of ritual was the encounter with the “sounds of Pacing the Void” (*buxu sheng* 步虛聲). Poets connected such heavenly sounds with wind and sacred spaces, an idea that may have been drawn from an anecdote regarding Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) and the origins of *buxu*. The story is clearly a later fabrication not contemporary with Cao Zhi, but the tale seems to have resonated with Tang poets, who seized on the essential elements of it—wind and sound. Recorded in Liu Jingshu’s 劉敬叔 (?–468) *Yiyuan* 異苑, the story recounts Cao Zhi’s chance encounter with celestial sounds:

Cao Zhi, King Si of Chen, byname Zijian, once ascended Fish Mountain, which overlooked Dong’e commandery. He suddenly heard the sounds of chanting scriptures from inside a cliff-side cave. They were clear and penetrating, deep and resonant. Their echoes flowed into distant valleys, solemn and possessed of numinous *qi*. Unconsciously, he gathered in his lappets and bowed in veneration. He was then possessed with aspirations to live out his remaining years there. He promptly followed and conformed to them. Sutra recitation practices of today are all modeled on what [Cao] Zhi initiated. Someone claimed that when Cao Zhi was wandering in the mountains, he suddenly heard the sounds of chanting scriptures in the air, clearly melodious and powerfully vibrant. Those who understood the tones transcribed them by copying [his chanting] as the sounds of divine transcendents. Daoist priests imitated them and composed the music of “Pacing the Void.”³⁷

³⁷ Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔, *Yiyuan* 異苑, *Siku quanshu* edition, 5.9b. Translation adapted from “Wu Yun’s ‘Cantos on Pacing the Void,’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (Dec. 1981): 388; and Kelsey Seymour, “The Buddha’s Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice,” (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2018), 25–26. Stephen Bokenkamp also briefly discusses the passage in his “The ‘Pacing the Void Stanzas’ of the Ling-Pao Scriptures” (MA Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 22–24.

陳思王曹植，字建。嘗登魚山、臨東阿，忽聞巖岫裏有誦經聲，清通深亮，遠谷流響，肅然有靈氣。不覺斂衿祇敬，便有終焉之志。即效而則之。今之梵唱，皆植依擬所造。一云陳思王遊山，忽聞空裏誦經聲，清遠適亮。解音者則而寫之，為神仙聲。道士效之，作步虛聲也。

The story, ostensibly meant to establish the origins of Daoist music “Pacing the Void” in Buddhist scriptural chanting, provides a certain literary credibility for such notions by situating the story in the experiences of a famed literary figure. As scholars have found, Daoist *buxu* rites drew on Buddhist *fanbai* 梵唄 chanting practices,³⁸ so there is a kernel of truth in the story. Nevertheless, Cao Zhi’s place in the generation of Daoist *buxu* music remains suspect. However, the key feature of this story that I wish to highlight is the significance of wind and divine sound.

The connection between *buxu* sounds and the wind was especially prevalent across Tang writing, both in tales and poetry. A story from the *Scattered Histories* (*Yishi* 逸史), which is collected in the *Broad Records from the Taiping Reign* (*Taiping guangji* 太平廣記), describes a dream encounter with a divine figure named Xu Feiqiong 許飛瓊, who according to the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 served as an attendant maiden (*shinü* 侍女) to the Queen Mother of the West and played a kind of reed instrument

³⁸ On *fanbai* practice, see K.P. Whitaker, “Tsaun Jyr and the Introduction of Fannbay 梵唄 into China,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20, No. 1/3, (1957): 585–97; Stephen Teiser *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1994): 168–170; and Kelsey Seymour “The Buddha’s Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2018).

(*huang* 簧) in the goddess's court.³⁹ At the center of the meeting is a poem concerning

buxu and wind. The story reads:

In the early part of the Kaicheng period of the Tang dynasty, Xu Chan, a *jinshi* scholar, was traveling on the river when he suddenly became greatly ill and unaware of human affairs. Several of his relatives and friends sat in a circle to protect him. On the third day, Xu became alert and rose, took up a brush, and wrote in large script on the wall:

At dawn, I entered the lustrous terrace, the dewy air clear;
Sitting within, there was only Xu Feiqiong.
My dusty heart not yet exhausted, mundane affinities remained;
For ten *li* beneath the mountain, the empty moon shined.

When he had finished writing, he went to sleep again. The next day, he arose again with a start, took up a brush and changed the second line to the following: "A heavenly wind descended, on it the sounds of Pacing the Void." After he had finished writing, he was disoriented as if he was intoxicated and he did not go back to sleep. After a while, bit by bit, he spoke, saying: "Yesterday, I dreamt that I had arrived in a lustrous terrace, where there were more than three hundred transcendent women. The entire place was covered by a great canopy. Within, one woman indicated that she was Xu Feiqiong and she conveyed rhapsodies and poetry to me. Once the poem was finished, she ordered me to change the line, saying: 'I do not wish for people of the world to know that I exist.' As soon as she finished, she was greatly extolled. She ordered all of the transcendents to be calm, saying: 'This gentleman has finally arrived here, but he is about to go back. If there is anyone to serve as his guide, then, in due course, he can return [here].'"

唐開成初，進士許灋。遊河中，忽得大病，不知人事。親友數人，環坐守之，至三日，蹙然而起。取筆大書於壁曰：「曉入瑤臺露氣清，坐中唯有許飛瓊。塵心未盡俗緣在，十里下山空月明。」書畢復寐。及明日，又驚起，取筆改其第二句曰「天風飛下步虛聲」。書訖，兀然如醉，不復寐矣。良久漸言曰：「昨夢到瑤臺。有仙女三百餘人。皆處大屋。內一人云是許飛瓊，遣賦詩。及成，又令改曰：『不欲世間人知有我也。』既畢，甚被賞歎，令諸仙皆和，曰：『君終至此，且歸。若有人導引者，遂得回耳。』」⁴⁰

³⁹ See *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (CT 292), 3a.

⁴⁰ Li Fang 李昉, et. al., eds, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghu shuju, 1961), 433. The story is also recorded in the *Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄 (CT 1248, 11.6b-7a), with slight variations, but nothing that significantly alters the meaning of the story. However, Ji Yougong 計有功 credits the poem to

The tale is somewhat reminiscent of the revelatory encounters between Yang Xi, Shangqing Daoist medium, and the heavenly perfected, in which the goddesses transmitted divinely inspired verse.⁴¹ Yet unlike those encounters which occurred in the human world, Xu Chan travels afar to a celestial realm to meet Xu Feiqiong among a host of other transcendents. The goddess transmits one poem, but later recants, wishing to erase her name from the verse to maintain anonymity among human beings. In the place of her name, she recommends the line “A heavenly wind descended, on it the sounds of ‘Pacing the Void.’” As a reflection of notions concerning dreams, the tale seems rather conventional, according with standard models and ideas of otherworldly contact and transmission in dream states.⁴² For our purposes here, though, the story reveals the key conceptualization that *buxu* sounds originated in the heavens. And indeed such an idea was endorsed by transcendents themselves—Xu Feiqiong wrote the poem and the line.

Xu Hun 許渾 (788–860); see Ji Yougong 計有功, comp. *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩紀事. Beijing: (Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 853. Ji’s work includes a brief preface that describes the dream encounter as having taken place on Mount Kunlun. “I often dream of ascending a mountain, where there are palaces and abodes that climb beyond the clouds. Some say that this is Mount Kunlun. Upon entering such places, I see several people just then drinking and beckon to them. Sunset comes and the dream ends” 余常夢登山，有宮室凌雲。人云：此崑崙也。既入，見數人方飲，招之。至暮而罷。

⁴¹ Paul W. Kroll and Stephen R. Bokenkamp have done extensive work on the poems of the *Zhen’gao*. For Kroll, see his “Seduction Songs of One the Perfected,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Jr Lopez (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 180–87; “The Divine Songs of the Lady of Purple Tenuity,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History in Honor of Richard B. Mather & Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003); and “A Poetry Debate of the Perfected of Highest Clarity,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 4 (December 2012): 577–86. For Bokenkamp, see his “Declarations of the Perfected,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 166–79; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family: The Zhen’gao or Declarations of the Perfected* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 98–107 and 129–140.

⁴² The dream account aligns with Campany’s discussion of the visitation paradigm; see Robert Ford Campany, *The Chinese Dreamscape: 300 BCE-800 CE*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2020), 6.

That the line was meant to stand in for the goddess's name further underscores the fact that a brush with heavenly sounds and music represented an encounter with the divine.

Buxu sounds carrying on the wind became a common trope, and, as in poems on ritual encounter, poets often employed the trope as a means to reflect upon their own condition as creatures of the dusty realm. In this, *buxu* and wind became intertwined with other well-established literary themes. Shi Jianwu's 施肩吾 (780–861) poem “Hearing Buxu Sounds in the Mountains” 聞山中步虛聲 serves as a representative example of Tang poet's treatment of sound and wind, which tie the celestial world to this one.

何人步虛南峰頂，	Who paces the void on the summit of the southern peak,
鶴唳九天霜月冷。	While cranes call in the nine heavens, beneath the frosted moon cold?
仙詞偶逐東風來，	Could it be that transcendent lyrics, by some chance, followed an easterly wind,
誤飄數聲落塵境。	And on that mistaken gale several sounds fell into this realm of dust?

The poet hears the ritual sounds carried on the wind and pauses to consider their origin. Whereas poems in the previous section grew out of the observation of ritual performance, here the poet only experiences the residue of ritual performance—waning sounds carried upon the wind from atop the mountain. Shi surmises that the sounds originated in heavenly communications, but by some fortuitous accident, they drifted into the world for him to chance upon. Several points in the poem suggest the permeable boundaries between the heavens and the human realm. First, like the poems in the first section, the connection between human ritual performance and the simultaneous calls of heavenly creatures implies a resonance between the realms. Shi's central question, of course, also indicates the overlap between the heavens and the “realm of dust,” where celestial music

and sounds can reach the world, though perhaps inadvertently at times. We should also recall Zhang Zhongsu's poem "Hearing Pacing the Void at the Grand Clarity Palace on the Upper Primordial Day" 上元日聽太清宮步虛 (discussed above), which characterizes *buxu* music as sounds from the heavens: "Who knew that on this grand city avenue, / We dusty mundane creatures could look up to the lingering sounds" 誰知九陌上, 塵俗仰遺聲. Shi and Zhang's poems, like the story of Cao Zhi, focus on the chance irruption of celestial music into the mundane that allows human beings a first-hand experience of the sounds of a transcendent realm. Serendipitous encounters such as these were a well-established convention. For Tao Yuanming, in his "Record of the Peach Blossom Spring," it was an encounter with a transcendent realm; in the *Shenxian zhuan* and other early tales of the strange (*zhiguai* 志怪), characters were confronted by transcendent figures. These tales often revolved around a protagonist's ability to recognize the nature of the encounter, as one not of this world. If they were capable of doing so, it often signaled their own individual status with the capacity to transcend the world at some point.

Dai Shilun 戴叔倫 (732–789) plays with this idea of transcendent recognition in his poem "Presented to the Feathered Master of Moon Creek" 贈月溪羽士, while touching on several other themes we have already discussed:

月明溪水上,	A full moon shines atop the creek waters;
誰識步虛聲。	Who recognizes the sounds of Pacing the Void?
夜靜金波冷,	The night still, golden waves cold; ⁴³
風微玉練平。	The wind slight, jade-white silk calm. ⁴⁴

⁴³ "Golden waves" (*jinbo* 金波) can refer to the moonlight or moon's rays, but also the waves or ripples on the water that reflect that light.

自知塵夢遠， 一洗道心清。 更弄瑤笙罷， 秋空鶴又鳴。	I realize the dusty dream is distant; Once cleansed, the heart of the Dao becomes pure. So my strumming of the decorated <i>sheng</i> stops, And in the autumn sky, the crane calls again.
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The sounds puncture the calm night around him, a trope in itself as we saw above, inciting realization that the mundane world remains a distant dream, a mirage that obscures the real nature of the cosmos and existence. One simply needs to cleanse one's heart so that it will become purified and more attuned to the Dao. The crane call in the autumn sky legitimates his sense of the world and the possibilities of cultivation. Such a realization causes the poet to cease playing, which in turn, incites another sonic response. The sounds signal that his insights into the human condition and the cosmos may indeed be true, for indeed the poet's ability to recognize the "sounds of Pacing the Void" distinguishes him from others. Though he claims "the dusty dream is distant," in reality, his recognition demonstrates that he is much closer to realizing it than others.

Nevertheless, the poem is less unique in its depiction of the scene. Echoes of *Yonghuai* 詠懷 (Singing My Cares) poetry reverberate in Dai's lines—the poet, a lone figure in the night, pondering concerns that beset him. Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210–263) first poem in his *Yonghuai* series is an especially apt comparison for its comparable setting and imagery:

夜中不能寐， 起坐彈鳴琴。	I could not get to sleep at night, I sat up and plucked my zither.
------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------

⁴⁴ "Yulian" 玉練 is used here to denote the water illuminated by the light of the moon. The term also has resonances with a phrase found in the *Huangting neijing* 黃庭內經, "jade-white refined countenance" (*yulian yan* 玉練顏), used to describe the adept's appearance after cultivation. See *Xiuzhen shishu* 修真十書 (CT 263), 1.8b. Li Bai 李白 (701–762) uses this latter phrase to describe the weaver maid in his poem "Autumn at Cinnamon Tree Hall" 桂殿秋; see *QTS*, 890.3a. The image connects the description of the landscape to the concern of the poem, the poet's ruminations on his own purified heart.

薄帷鑒明月， 清風吹我襟。 孤鴻號外野， 翔鳥鳴北林。 徘徊將何見， 憂思獨傷心。	The thin curtain gave the image of the bright moon, A cool breeze blew on the folds of my robes. A lone swan cried out in the wilds, winging birds sang in the woods to the north. I paced about, what might I see? — anxious thoughts wounded my heart alone. ⁴⁵
----------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Whereas Dai focuses on his status within the mundane world, Ruan never specifies what troubles him.⁴⁶ Yet the poets share similar circumstances as depicted in the poem, articulated with reference to common imagery—the moonlight, cries of birds, and the playing of stringed instruments as a diversion from reality. The allusion to *buxu* sounds is distinct in Dai’s, but the account of the experience relies on a shared literary reserve of tropes and images.

Recognition of the nature of the *buxu* sounds might also be a function of Daoist ordination, as a poem by Gu Kuang 顧況 (ca. 725–ca. 814) suggests. Titled “Peach Blossoms in the Mountains” 崦裏桃花,⁴⁷ this poem has drawn the attention of scholars because it concerns the poet’s ordination as a Shangqing Daoist. My reading of the poem, though, diverges in notable ways from earlier discussions. The poem reads:

崦裏桃花逢女冠， 林間杏葉落仙壇。	In the mountains, peach blossoms chance upon a woman’s capeline; In a grove, apricot leaves fall upon the transcendent
----------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

⁴⁵ LQ, 496; translation from Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, trans., *The Poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, Library of Chinese Humanities (Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 27.

⁴⁶ Ruan Ji was concerned with transcendence and related themes in other poetry, just not explicitly in this poem; see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi (A.D. 210–263)* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 137–226. Holzman estimates that over a quarter of Ruan’s 82 *yonghuai* poems relate to immortality in some way; see page 152. Kirkova also discusses Ruan Ji’s poetry throughout her book *Roaming into the Beyond*.

⁴⁷ For alternative translations of the poem, see Edward Schafer, *Mao Shan in T’ang Times* (Boulder, CO: Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1989), 43; and Terrence Russell, “Taoist Elegies of Ku K’uang,” *T’ang Studies* 7 (1989): 177. My reading of the poem differs from theirs in significant ways.

altar.

老人方授上清籙，	This elder man has just received the Upper Clarity registers; ⁴⁸
夜聽步虛山月寒。	At night, I hear Pacing the Void beneath the cold mountain moon.

Schafer understood the poem as a ritual setting of transmission, but as Russell has demonstrated, and I agree, it has more to do with Gu's own personal situation and his own standing as an ordained Shangqing Daoist. But there is more to the poem than just a statement of Gu's Daoist rank as Russell claims. Russell follows Schafer's interpretation of the first line as Gu himself encountering a priestess, signified by the reference to *nüguan* 女冠. Both insert Gu into the line, but such an interpretation ignores the parallelism in the first two lines. The subject of the second line, "apricot leaves," fall from the trees, just as the peach blossoms do. Moreover, I do not believe the use of *yan* 崦 in the first line refers specifically to Gu's hermitage, but is simply a term to indicate a natural space, parallel to *lin* 林 in the second line. By the time Gu retired to Mount Mao 茅山 in 793 or 794, he had already received Shangqing registers.⁴⁹ Because the poem employs the term "fang" 方 (recently, just) to modify receive (*shou* 授), I think we can place the poem earlier than his retreat to Mount Mao and his stay at his hermitage there. But the poem concerns more than Gu's ordination, as the structure and imagery evinces. Like other poems discussed above, I believe it involves Gu's consideration of transcendence, sparked by the recognition of *buxu* sounds. Downward movement

⁴⁸ On Gu's reception of the Shangqing registers, see Russell, "Taoist Elegies of Ku K'uang," 174–79.

⁴⁹ By Russell's estimation Gu Kuang may began the orthodox initiation process by at least 791. He cites the "Written on the Back of a Stele at the Abbey of the Opening Primordial in Quzhou" 書衢州開元觀碑後 see *QTW*, 5377b.

characterizes the first three lines—leaves and blossoms fall, while registers are transmitted to the next generation. This may imply that downward movement transpires from the skies or heavens to the earthly realm; but an element of chance or serendipity in the encounter exists. As a priestess strolls about the mountain, the peach blossoms fortuitously fall upon her. Something similar might be said of the opportunity to receive registers, an act certainly not available to all. By Shangqing accounts, receipt requires several preconditions, such as marks of transcendence (e.g. golden bones or the requisite *qi*), as well as finding a qualified master who is willing to transmit the registers. Directional movement, though, is reversed in the last line—Pacing the Void implies ascension. The last couplet suggests that receipt of the registers allows him to discern the celestial sounds, which might be likened to a kind of summons, beckoning him to climb to the heavens and join the transcendentals and perfected on high.

Conclusion

As a poetic term, *buxu* was relatively unheard of before the Tang, but as it was assimilated into the lexicon of Tang poetry, it became associated with other poetic motifs and ideas, some quite conventional, others somewhat new. Verse dealing with celestial ascent and ambitions of transcendence had long been part of the mainstream literary tradition, found within the *Chuci*, but particularly prevalent during the Six Dynasties. This shared repertoire of references, images, figures, and topography provided a mature poetic tradition to incorporate notions of “Pacing the Void.” We see poets drawing connections between Daoist ritual, referenced as *buxu*, and allusions to Xiwang mu or Mount Kunlun. Such a vocabulary was an important part of, borrowing from Stanley Fish,

the “interpretive community” of that time.⁵⁰ The range of interpretations and conceptualizations brought to bear on Daoist ritual and practices was informed by preexisting notions of transcendence, the heavens, and other purported Daoist imagery. Poets both read the ritual performance and subsequent writings about *buxu* through the lens of a basic level of understanding informed by an extensive *youxian* literary tradition comprised of stock images, ideas, and language that had become a kind internalized system.⁵¹ Drawing upon these elements, writers could easily reinterpret both Daoist ritual and the idea of *buxu* in a mode more familiar to them. Poets also tied allusions to *buxu* to other longstanding themes and tropes on personal reflection. Ritual performance or its sounds, which the poet observes, in fact, may have known little about, serves as the stimulus for more deliberate consideration of individual concerns, just as other outside phenomena stirred the sentiments. An understanding of the ritual proceedings was not the point, though some poets were undoubtedly more familiar with certain aspects than others; rather, ritual and its sounds became another inroad to the self, to expressing one’s concerns and cares. In this, allusions to *buxu* emerge in poems on conventional themes, such as impermanence, the brevity of life, or longing at night.⁵² On the other hand, in the poetic imagination, *buxu* also evidently implied celestial sounds and music and the

⁵⁰ Stanley Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 14–15. Stephen Owen terms this kind of language the “discourse” or “lore of the immortals,” see his *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827–860)* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 315–17.

⁵¹ Fish, *Is there a Text in this Class?*, 4–5.

⁵² Stephen Owen has highlighted these recurring themes in several of his books; see for example *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 256–57, 260–61; and *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 327–28.

resonant relationship between heaven and earth, not unlike the Daoist scriptural precedents where the term originated.

CONCLUSION

The divide between Daoist studies and Chinese literary studies has traditionally been quite stark, though, led by the efforts of several scholars, a burgeoning appreciation for the foundational importance of Daoism in the poetic tradition continues to grow.¹ As these scholars have demonstrated, wading into the esoteric pages of the Daoist Canon to explore the abundance of materials therein—revealed scripture, hagiography, and ritual programs and documents, among other kinds of writing—helps to illuminate the backdrop against which authors were writing, the pool of ideas from which they drew, and the religious atmosphere which they observed and sometimes actively participated. The permeable boundaries of religion and literature in pre-modern China are often reflected in poems through allusion to ritual, practice, and scripture. At times, we may only make sense of these allusions through specific reference to scripture,² whereas other instances reveal poets availing themselves of a shared poetic lexicon, with only vague traces of the religious domain.

This dissertation examines materials from Daoist scriptures and the literary tradition in an effort to better understand the origins and development of a concept and literary form illustrative of the mutual imbrication of Daoism and poetry. The term *buxu* first emerges in early Shangqing scriptures as an expression, one among many, to describe the celestial jaunts of the gods, as well as the practitioners, those who, through repertoires of bodily cultivation, were able to travel beyond the confines of the mundane

¹ The contributions of Lee Fong-Mao, Sun Changwu Edward Schafer, Paul Kroll, and Stephen Bokenkamp, and more recently Jia Jinhua and Timothy Chan are especially noteworthy.

² This is essentially Paul Kroll's argument in "Li Po's Transcendent Diction," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1986): 99–117.

world in intensive visionary journeys. Shangqing works recount the wondrous musical practices of the gods who joined together for momentous occasions of ritual transmission and celebration. In descriptions of such scenes, *buxu* becomes the title of a celestial tune. Such narrative accounts highlight the celestial production of music, a notion tied to *buxu* in both Daoist ritual and literature.

Lingbao scriptures brought greater specificity to the term, augmenting what was before a broad concept with an entire system of cosmological thought and ritual production. In Lingbao scriptures, *buxu* denoted the progressive ascent of the gods up the Jade Capitoline Mountain (*Yujing shan* 玉京山) to pay homage before the Celestial Worthy of Primordial Commencement and the True Writs (*zhenwen* 真文), the writings that originated in the primordial void. As they circled the mountain, moving upward, the gods sang and performed music in celebration of the ritual event. The *buxu* hymns, a series of ten stanzas, recount these events and were first meant for personal recitation. But what began as a series of hymns developed into an entire scripture, the *Buxu jing*, and a liturgical performance that sought to imitate the work of the gods. Priests paced round the central incense burner and sang the hymns. With each rendition of the *buxu* rite, priests were indeed “performing the heavens.” As Daoist ritual continued to develop, codified under religious reformers such as Lu Xiuqing, the *buxu* rite was transformed into a modular segment that could be transported to different points in rituals; thus, it came to serve a different kind of role within liturgical complexes and carried different meanings. The legacy of these Daoist texts in later understandings of *buxu* proved to be, in large part, twofold. On the one hand, the ten stanza form of the Lingbao hymns was taken up by writers. Though this poetic structure was not the predominant form of *buxu* lyrics, it

proved a powerful rhetorical tool, wielded by Yu Xin and Wu Yun. On the other, *buxu* music came to be associated with the music of the gods, conceived of as a medium that bridged the gap between heavens and earth. But religious ideas are never transferred wholesale from one domain to another, in this case from the religious to the literary; they are reinterpreted, reduced or expanded, rendered into something wholly new at times through complicated processes of individual and communal interpretation. This is precisely what we can discern in later *buxu* poetry and writings.

Writing in the late sixth century at the Northern Zhou court, Yu Xin adopted the *buxu* hymnal form and produced the first “secular” *buxu* poems, those never intended for cultivation or ritual performance. He discarded key features of the *buxu* hymns, in particular the narrative progression of celestial scent, which evinces the triumphant jubilation of the Daoist adept’s journey. Yet, his poems remain heavily inflected by Lingbao Daoist ideology, a product of the social and political environment of the time. The pieces reflect the complex interplay between Daoism and the literary tradition; while drawing on a hymnal form and incorporating scriptural teachings, the poems are rife with common imagery and figures associated with transcendence and immortality. True to his poetic style, Yu layers allusion upon allusion to a variety of sources, both Daoist and literary, but in doing so, renders the rhetorical message somewhat opaque. But this, as I argue, is indeed the point; that is, Yu attempts to subtly criticize a ruler’s pursuit of transcendence, and in doing so, evokes connections to the norms of the *fu*, which at time served as imperial critique. Lingbao scriptures, though, served as the poetic substance for promoting Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou as a messianic figure, poised to unify the empire and usher in a new era of peace and stability. With his brush, Yu negotiates issues

of form, literary history, politics, rhetoric, and audience, transforming a Daoist hymn and scriptural ideas into an ingenious piece of both admonition and promotion.

Wu Yun composed a number of writings on the pursuit of transcendence, among them a set of *buxu* poems patterned on the Lingbao hymns. Yet rather than being explicitly tied to Lingbao doctrine, the content draws on Shangqing scripture and language and Wu's own repertoire of cultivation, both of which reflect the Daoist predilections of the high Tang. Wu's *buxu* poems, like his *youxian* poems and the "Dengzhen fu," build a systematic vision of each stage of pursuing transcendence—preparation, cultivation, and the wondrous joys of the heavens—experiences that culminate in a return to the Dao. Wu's writings made Daoist cultivation intelligible to a broader audience, and a variety of traditional poetic forms, as well as an imitation of a Daoist hymnal arrangement, served as valuable mediums to accomplish such a task. Tang poets regularly wrote of their encounters with Daoist ritual and music, grouping what they observed under the broad rubric of *buxu*. The term no longer carried any specificity as a designation for a particular rite, but served as an inclusive term for a range of Daoist sights and sounds—the ritual movement of priests, the sounds of the ritual instrumentation and voice, or the entire ritual complex. The term became integrated into the poetic lexicon as another external stimuli that primed the inner musings of the poet. But while utilizing such phenomena as poetic subject was somewhat novel, the ways in which poets conveyed these experiences evoked well-established literary imagery and tropes. Nevertheless, poets understood these encounters with sacred spaces, events, and music as points of mediation between the heavens and the mundane world.

This dissertation has examined several key points in the development of *buxu* discourse from roughly the mid-fourth century to the tenth century. Other materials and questions, of course, remain to be studied. We might consider how other *buxu ci* writers, in particular Wei Qumou and Xu Xuan, articulate their own visions of Daoist cultivation and celestial rambling in light of Wu Yun's earlier writings; or we might examine the continuing production of *buxu* hymns by ritual specialists such as Du Guangting, how they adapted them in the face of literary norms, such as prosody, and what that meant for Daoist ritual performances. Later writers from the Song and Ming, emperors and imperial princes, continued to compose pieces in imitation of the early Lingbao *buxu* hymns; thus, we might probe their uses and adaptations of the form. All of these would be fruitful avenues to continue to explore how writers engaged with the Daoist tradition, whether through its ritual, hymns, or doctrine, as we come to better appreciate the place of Daoism in the Chinese literary tradition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

- CT Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des ouvrages*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975. Daoist works from the Daoist Canon (*Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏 (1445)) are cited according to the numbers assigned in Schipper's work. In addition to the number of the work, passages are noted also by their *juan* 卷 and page, followed by a for recto and b for verso.
- EDS Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- HCD Schipper, Kristofer M. and Franciscus Verellen, eds. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 3 vols. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004.
- LQ Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
- P Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts collected by Paul Pelliot. If collected in the *ZHDZ* (see below), they are noted by the volume and page numbers. Also collected in *Ōfuchi Ninji* 大淵忍爾, *Tonkō dōkyō zurokuhen* 敦煌道經圖錄編. Tokyo: Fukubu shoten, 1979.
- QTS Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719), et. al, comps. *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩. *Siku quanshu* edition.
- QTW Dong Gao 董誥 (1740–1880), et. al, comps. *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987.
- T Takakusa Junjirō 高楠順次郎, et. al., eds. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, 100 vols. Tokyo: Daizō shuppan kai, 1922–33. Following the abbreviation, texts are noted by the volume, page number, and a, b, c for the register.
- WXI Knechtges, David R., trans. *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- WXII Knechtges, David R., trans. *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume Two, Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing*,

Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

- WXIII Knechtges, David R., trans. *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume Three, Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- WYW De Meyer, Jan. *Wu Yun's Way: Life and Works of an Eighth-Century Daoist Master*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- WYYH Li Fang 李昉 (925–966), et al., eds. *Wenyuan yinghua 文苑英華*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966.
- ZHDZ Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹, et al. eds. *Zhonghua daozaang 中華道藏*, 48 vols and index (vol. 49). Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004.

Buddhist Texts

- T52 *Guang hongming ji 廣弘明集*
- T2035 *Fozu tongji 佛祖統記*

Daoist Texts

- 1 *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing 靈寶無量度人上品妙經*
- 6 *Shangqing dadong zhenjing 上清大洞真經*
- 7 *Yuanshi dadong yujing 元始大洞玉經*
- 22 *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經*
- 23 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhutian lingshu duming miaojing 太上洞玄靈寶諸天靈書度命妙經*
- 33 *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經*
- 55 *Gaoshang taixiao langshu qiongwen dizhang jing 高上太霄琅書瓊文帝章經*

- 87 *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing sizhu* 元始無量度人上品妙經
四註
- 97 *Taishang lingbao zhutian neiyin ziran yuzi* 太上靈寶諸天內音自然玉字
- 167 *Dongxuan lingbao zhenling weiye tu* 洞玄靈寶真靈位業圖
- 254 *Dadong jinhua yujing* 大洞金華玉經
- 256 *Yujing jiutian jinxiao weishen wangzhu taiyuan shangjing* 玉景九天金霄
威神王祝太元上經
- 263 *Xiuzhen shishu* 修真十書
- 292 *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳
- 294 *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳
- 296 *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑
- 304 *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志
- 303 *Ziyang zhenren neizhuan* 紫陽真人內傳
- 310 *Jinlu zhai sandong zanyong yi* 金錄齋三洞讚詠儀
- 318 *Dongxuan lingbao ziran jiutian shengshen zhang jing* 洞玄靈寶自然九天
生神章經
- 322 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao tiandi yun ziran miaojing* 太上東玄靈寶天地
運自然妙經
- 330 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhenwen yaojie shangjing* 太上洞玄靈寶真
文要解上經
- 344 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhihui benyuan dajie shangpin jing* 太上洞玄
靈寶智慧本願大戒上品經
- 345 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jieye benxing shangpin miaojing* 太上洞玄靈
寶誠業本行上品妙經
- 349 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao fazhu jing* 太上洞玄靈寶法燭經

- 352 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉
訣妙經
- 369 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao miedu wulian shengshi miaojing* 太上洞玄靈
寶滅度五鍊生尸妙經
- 388 *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序
- 410 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhong jianwen* 太上洞玄靈寶重簡文
- 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣
- 425 *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣
- 426 *Shangqing taishang basu zhenjing* 上清太上八素真經
- 428 *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing* 太上飛行九晨玉經
- 442 *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖道君列紀
- 456 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie gongde qingzhong
jing* 太上洞玄靈寶三元品戒功德輕重經
- 463 *Yaoxiu keyi jielu chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔
- 466 *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* 靈寶領教濟度金書
- 507 *Taishang huanglu zhai* 太上黃籙齋
- 508 *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋靈立成儀
- 524 *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jiefa dengzhu yuan* 洞玄靈寶齋說
光燭戒罰燈祝願儀
- 528 *Dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀
- 530 *Dongxuan lingbao yulu jianwen sanyuan weiyi ziran zhenjing* 洞玄靈寶玉
籙簡文三元威儀自然真經
- 532 *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋
戒威儀諸經要訣

- 607 *Yuyin fashi* 玉音法事
- 608 *Shangqing zhuzhen zhang song* 上清諸真章頌
- 613 *Zhongxian zansong lingzhang* 眾仙讚頌靈章
- 614 *Dongxuan lingbao shengxuan buxu zhang xushu* 洞玄靈寶昇玄步虛章序
疏
- 615 *Chisong zi zhangli* 赤松子章曆
- 616 *Guangcheng ji* 廣成集
- 671 *Taishang wuji dadao ziran xuanyi wuchengfu shangjing* 太上無極大道自
然宜一五稱符上經
- 783 *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壩城集仙錄
- 876 *Taishang wuxing qi yuan kongchang jue* 太上五星七元空常訣
- 956 *Zhongnan shan shuo jingtai lidai zhenxian bei* 終南山說經臺歷代真仙
碑記
- 980 *Zhuzhen gesong* 諸真歌頌
- 1016 *Zhen'gao* 真誥
- 1032 *Yunji qiqian* 雲集七籤
- 1051 *Zongxuan xiansheng wenji* 宗玄先生文集
- 1052 *Xuangang lun* 玄綱論
- 1054 *Nantong dajun neidan jiuzhang jing* 南統大君內丹九章經
- 1125 *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科
戒營始
- 1132 *Shangqing daolei shixiang* 上清道類事相
- 1138 *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要

- 1139 *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊
- 1185 *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇
- 1204 *Zhengyi fawen jing* 正一法文經
- 1226 *Daomen tongjiao biyao ji* 道門通教必要集
- 1248 *Sandong qunxian lu* 三洞群仙錄
- 1278 *Dongxuan lingbao wugan wen* 洞玄靈寶五感文
- 1314 *Taishang suling dongxuan dayou miaojing* 太上素靈洞玄大有妙經
- 1315 *Dongzhen shangqing qingyao zishu jingen zhongjing* 洞真上清青要紫書
金根衆經
- 1323 *Dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi ri yue huanggua jue* 洞真太上八
素真經服食日月黃掛訣
- 1330 *Dongzhen taiyi dijun taidan yinshu dongzhen xuanjing* 洞真太一帝君太
丹隱書洞真玄經
- 1332 *Dongzhen taishang zidu yanguang shenxuan bianjing* 洞真太上紫度炎光
神玄變經
- 1333 *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yujing* 洞真太上神虎玉經
- 1334 *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文
- 1336 *Dongzhen taishang jinbian hufu zhenwen jing* 洞真太上金篇虎符真文經
- 1337 *Dongzhen taiwei jinhu zhenfu* 洞真太微金虎真符
- 1339 *Sandong zhunang* 三洞珠囊
- 1344 *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真
經
- 1351 *Dongzhen tai feixing yujing jiuzhen shengxuan shangji* 洞真太飛行玉經
昇玄上記

- 1353 *Shangqing daobao jing* 上清道寶經
- 1355 *Shangqing taishang yuqing yinshu miemo shenhui gaoxuan zhenjing* 上清
太上玉清隱書滅魔神慧高玄真經
- 1356 *Shangqing taishang miemo yudi shenhui yuqing yinshu* 上清高上滅魔玉
帝神慧玉清隱書
- 1357 *Shangqing gaoshang miemo dongjing jinyuan yuqing yinshu* 上清高上滅
魔洞景金元玉清隱書經
- 1358 *Shangqing gaoshang jinyuan yuzhang yuqing yinshu* 上清高上金元羽章
玉清隱書經
- 1359 *Shangqing danjing daoqing yindi bashu jing* 上清丹景道精隱地八術經
- 1362 *Shangqing taishang huiyuan yindao chuzui jiejing* 上清太上廻元隱道除
罪籍經
- 1369 *Shangqing huaxing yinjing dengsheng baoxian shangjing* 上清化形隱景
登昇保仙上經
- 1374 *Shangqing zhu zhenren shoujing shisong jinzhen zhang* 上清諸真人授經
時頌金真章
- 1375 *Shangqing wushang jinyuan yuqing jinzhen feiyuan buxu yuzhang* 上清無
上金元玉清金真飛元步虛玉章
- 1376 *Shangqing taishang dijun jiuzhen zhongjing* 上清太上帝君九真中經
- 1378 *Shangqing jinzhen yuguang bajing feijing* 上清金真玉光八景飛經
- 1389 *Shangqing gaosheng taishang dadao jun dongzhen jinyuan bajing yulu* 上
清高聖太上大道君洞真金元八景玉籙
- 1409 *Taishang jiuzhen mingke* 太上九真明科
- 1439 *Dongxuan lingbao yujing shan buxu jing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經
- P2256 Fragments of the *Tongmen lun* 同門論 by Song Wenming 宋文明 (fl.
550); see also P. 2861

- P2399 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao kongdong lingzhang jing* 太上洞玄靈寶空洞靈章經; reprinted in *ZHDZ*, vol. 3, 63–69.
- P3148 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao xiayuan huanglu jianwen weiyi jing* 太上東玄靈寶下元黃籙簡文威儀經; reprinted in *ZHDZ* vol. 3, 273–82.

Traditional Historical and Literary Sources

- Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), ed. *Hanshu* 漢書. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1986.
- Chen Yuan 陳垣, et al., eds. *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 176–77.
- Dong Gao 董誥 (1714–1818), et al., eds. *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987.
- Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), comp. *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981.
- Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–684), comp. *Jinshu* 晉書. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980.
- Feng Weine 馮惟訥 (1513–1572), comp. *Gushi ji* 古詩紀. *Siku quanshu* edition, 1557.
- Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041–1099), comp. *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集. Beijing: Beijing zhonghua shuju, 1998.
- Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), ed. *Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳. Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989.
- Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, ed. *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995.
- Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1070–1135), ed. *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
- Hu Shouwei 胡守為, ed. *Shenxian zhuan jiaoshi* 神仙傳校釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2020.
- Ji Yougong 計有功, comp. *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩紀事. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965.
- Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al., comps. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961.
- Li Fang 李昉 (925–966) et al., comp. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1975.

- Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518–1593). *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目. Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1975, 1712.
- Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666) et al, comps. *Zhou shu* 周書. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980.
- Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔. *Yiyuan* 異苑. *Siku quanshu* edition.
- Liu Wendian 劉文典, ed. *Huainanzi* 淮南子. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989.
- Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) and Yang Jialuo 楊家駱, comps. *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書. Beijing: Dingwen shuju, 1981.
- Ni Fan 倪璠 (fl. ca. 1705). *Yu Zishan jizhu* 庾子山集注. Collated by Xu Yimin 許逸民. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980.
- Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), ed. *Chongkan Songben Shisanjing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏. Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965.
- Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE). *Shiji* 史記. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981.
- Wang Genlin 王根林, et al., eds. *Han Wei liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999.
- Wang Ming 王明 (1904–1974), ed. *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.
- Wang Ming 王明 (1904–1974), ed. *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi* 抱朴子內篇校釋. Taipei: Liren shuju, 1981.
- Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982). *Tang huiyao* 唐會要. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955.
- Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), comp. *Suishu* 隋書. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980.
- Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (1913–1977), ed. *Yanzi Chunqiu* 宴子春秋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 (fl. ca. 1672), comp. *Yu Kaifu ji qianzhu* 庾開府集淺註. *Siku quanshu* edition, 1782.
- Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), comp., *Wenxuan* 文選. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986.

Yan Kejun 嚴可均, comp. *Quan shanggu sandai qin han sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991.

Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed. *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979.

Yu Fengqing 郁逢慶, comp. *Xu shuhua tiba ji* 續書畫題跋記. *Siku quanshu* edition.

Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed. *Shanghai jing jiaozhu* 山海經校注. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980.

Zhang Pu 張溥 (1602–1641), comp. *Han Wei liuchao bai sanjia ji* 漢魏六朝百三家集. *Siku quanshu* edition.

Zhang Yushu 張玉書 (1642–1711), et. al., comps. *Yuding peiwen zhai yongwu shixuan* 御定佩文齋詠物詩. *Siku quanshu* edition, 1707.

Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), ed. *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984.

Modern Secondary Scholarship

Allan, Sarah. “The Great One, Water, and the Laozi: New Light from Guodian.” *T’oung Pao* 89, no. 4/5 (2003): 237–85.

Amato, Paul. “Rebirth of a Lineage: The Hereditary Household of the Han Celestial Master and Celestial Masters Daoism at Dragon and Tiger Mountain.” Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 2016.

Anderson, Poul. “The Practice of *Bugang*.” *Cahiers d’Extreme Asie* 5, no. 1 (1989): 15–53.

Barrett, T.H. “The Emergence of a Taoist Papacy in the T’ang Dynasty.” *Asia Major* Third Series 7, no. 1 (1994): 89–106.

—. *Taoism Under the Tang: Religion and Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History*. London: Wellsweep, 1996.

Bell, Catherine. “Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy.” *History of Religions* 27, no. 4 (1988): 386–89.

Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Benn, Charles. "Daoist Ordination and *Zhai* Rituals." In *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn, 322–37. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Bokenkamp, Stephen R. "The 'Pacing the Void Stanzas' of the Ling-Pao Scriptures." MA thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.
- . "Sources of the Ling-Pao Scriptures." In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, edited by Michel Strickmann, vol. 2, 434–86. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983.
- . "Traces of Early Celestial Master Physiological Practice in the Xiang'er Commentary." *Taoist Resources* 4, no. 2 (1993): 37–54.
- . "Time after Time: Taoist Apocalyptic History and the Founding of the T'ang Dynasty." *Asia Major* 1, no. 7 (1994): 59–88.
- . "Declarations of the Perfected." In *Religions of China in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., 166–79. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- . *Early Daoist Scriptures*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- . "The Yao Boduo Stelae as Evidence for 'Dao-Buddhism' of the Early Lingbao Scriptures." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9 (1997): 54–67.
- . "Buddhism, Lu Xiuqing, and the First Daoist Canon." In *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, edited by Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey. 181–99. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . "The Silkworm and the Bodhi Tree: The Lingbao Attempt to Replace Buddhism in China and Our Attempt to Place Lingbao Taoism." In *Religion and Chinese Society: Ancient and Medieval China*, vol. 2, edited by John Lagerwey, 317–39. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004.
- . *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- . "Imagining Community: Family Values and Morality in the Lingbao Scriptures." In *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*, edited by Alan K. L. Chan and Yuet-Kueng Lo, 203–26. Albany: SUNY Press, 2010.
- . "The Early Lingbao Scriptures and the Origins of Daoist Monasticism." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 95–124.

- . “Scriptures New and Old: Lu Xiuqing and Mastery.” In *Xinyang, shijian yu wenhua tiaoshi: Di sijie guoji Hanxue huiyi lunwen ji* 信仰、實踐與文化調適—第四屆國際漢學會議論文集, edited by Paul Katz 康豹 and Liu Shufen 劉淑芬, 449–74. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan, 2013.
- . *A Fourth-Century Daoist Family: The Zhen’gao or Declarations of the Perfected*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021.
- . “The Shangqing Poems on Dependence And Independence, Reconsidered.” Unpublished paper.
- Boutonnet, Olivier. *Le char de nuages: érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du VIIIème siècle*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2021. (Kindle edition).
- Bujard, Marianne. “State and Local Cults in Han Religion.” In *Early Chinese Religion, Part I: Shang through Han 1250 BC–220 AD*, edited by John Lagerwey and Mark Kalinowski, 777–812. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Bumbacher, Stephan Peter. *Empowered Writing: Exorcistic and Apotropaic Rituals in Medieval China*. St. Petersburg, FL: Three Pines Press, 2012.
- Brindley, Erica. “The *Taiyi shengshui* Cosmogony and Its Role in Early Chinese Thought.” In *Dao Companion to the Excavated Guodian Bamboo Manuscripts*, edited by Shirley Chan, 153–62. Switzerland: Springer, 2019.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
- Cahill, Suzanne E. *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Campany, Robert Ford. *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth: A Translation and Study of Ge Hong’s Traditions of Divine Transcendents*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- . “The Meanings of Cuisines of Transcendence in Late Classical and Early Medieval China.” *T’oung Pao* 91, no. 1/3 (2005): 1–57.
- . *Making Transcendents: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009.
- . *The Chinese Dreamscape: 300 BCE-800 CE*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2020.

- Cedzich, Ursula-Angelika. "Corpse Deliverance, Substitute Bodies, Name Change, and Feigned Death: Aspects of Metamorphosis and Immortality in Early Medieval China." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2001): 1–68.
- Chan, Timothy W.K. 陳偉強. "Yujing shan chaohui—cong liuchao buxu yi dao chu Tang youxian shi" 玉京山朝會——從六朝步虛儀到初唐遊仙詩. *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* no. 72 (Jan. 2021): 1–25.
- Chang Chaoran 張超然. "Yuan fa ru dao: Nansong lingbao chuandu keyi yanjiu" 援法入道：南宋靈寶傳度科儀研究. In *Jingdian daojiao yudifang zongjiao* 經典道教與地方宗教, edited by Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維, 131–88. Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2014.
- . "Tang Song daojiao zhaiyi zhong de 'lishi cunnian' ji qi yuanliu kaolun—jian lun daojiao zhaitan tuxiang de yunyong" 唐宋道教齋儀中的「禮師存念」及其源流考論——兼論道教齋壇圖像的運用. *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 45, no. 3 (Sept. 2015): 381–413.
- Chavannes, Édouard. "Le jet des dragons." *Mémoires concernant l'Asie Orientale* 3 (1919): 53–220.
- Ch'en, Kenneth. *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Chen Guofu 陳國符. *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考, New Revised Edition. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014.
- Chen Wenting 陳文婷. "Yu Xin 'Daoshi buxu ci shishou' zhong de liuchao daojiao gu lingbao jing sixiang" 庾信《道士步虛詞十首》中的六朝道教故靈寶經思想. *Zhongguo Daojiao* 3 (2019): 16–21.
- Cheng Tsan-shan 鄭燦山. "Tangdai daojiao sanpian Zuowang lun kaozheng" 唐代道教三篇《坐忘論》考證. In *Liuchao Sui Tang daojiao wenxian yanjiu* 六朝隋唐道教文獻研究, 157–78. Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 2014.
- . "Liuchao daojiao buxu yu lingbao zhaiyi de fazhan xipu" 六朝道教步虛與靈寶齋儀的發展系譜. *Zhongguo xue luncong* 中國學論叢 48 (2015): 1–29.
- . "Liuchao daojing Yujingshan buxu jing jingwen niandai kaozheng" 六朝道經《玉京山步虛經》經文年代考證. *Zhongguo xue yanjiu* 中國學研究 72 (2015): 221–66.

- . “Liuchao daojiao buxu ci de yuanxing ji qi nizuo: xinyang yu wenxue zhi duibi” 六朝道教步虛詞的原型及其擬作：信仰與文學之對比. In *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, edited by Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強, 241–60. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018.
- De Meyer, Jan. “A Daoist Master’s Justification of Reclusion: Wu Yun’s Poems on ‘Investigating the Past.’” *Sanjiao wenxian: Matériaux pour l’étude de la religion chinoise* 2 (1998): 9–40.
- . “Mountainhopping: The Life of Wu Yun.” *T’ang Studies* 17 (1999): 171–211.
- . “Linked Verse and Linked Faiths: An Inquiry into the Social Circle of an Eminent Tang Dynasty Taoist Master.” In *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honor of Kristofer Schipper*, edited by Jan de Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet, 148–84. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- . “Review of Olivier Boutonnet, *Le Char de nuages. Érémitisme et randonnées célestes chez Wu Yun, taoïste du viiiè siècle*,” *T’oung Pao* 108 (2022): 543–49.
- Despeux, Catherine. “La culture lettrée au service d’un plaidoyer pour le bouddhisme : le ‘Traité des deux doctrines’ (‘Erjiao lun’) de Dao’an.” In *Bouddhisme et lettrés dans la Chine médiévale*, edited by Catherine Despeux, 145–227. Paris, Louvain, 2002.
- . “Talismans and Diagrams.” In *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn, 498–540. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- . *Daoism and Self-Knowledge: The Chart for the Cultivation of Perfected (Xiuzhen tu)*, translated by Jonathan Pettit. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Ebrey, Patricia. “Remonstrating Against Royal Extravagance in Imperial China.” In *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions*, edited by Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, 129–49. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Eichmann, Shawn. “Converging Paths: A Study of Daoism during the Six Dynasties, with Emphasis on the Celestial Master Movement and the Scriptures of Highest Clarity.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1999.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return: The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959.
- . *The Sacred and the Profane*, translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc., 1987.

- Esposito, Monica. "Sun-Worship in China: The Roots of Shangqing Taoist Practices of Light." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 345–84.
- Fan Xin 樊昕. "Yu Xin 'Buxu ci' de zongjiao yuanyuan ji qi wenxue tedian" 庾信《步虛詞》的宗教淵源及其文學特點. *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxue yuan xuebao* 南京師範大學文學院學報 no. 2 (June 2007): 14–17.
- Fish, Stanley. *Is there a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Fukazawa Kazuyuki 深澤一幸. "Hokyoshi kō" 步虛詞考. In *Chūgoku ko dōkyōshi kenkyū* 中國古道教史研究, edited by Yoshikawa Tadao 吉川忠夫, 363–416. Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1992.
- Graham, William T. *The Lament for the South': Yü Hsin's 'Ai Chiang-Nan Fu.'* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Han Wentao 韓文濤 and Ding Fang 丁放. "Lun buxu yu Tangshi" 論步虛與唐詩. *Wenzhang, wenben yu wenxin—gudai wenxue lilun yanjiu* 文章、文本與溫馨—古代文學理論研究 44 (2017): 317–43.
- Harper, Donald. "Wang Yen-Shou's Nightmare Poem." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 1 (June 1987): 239–83.
- Hawkes, David. *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*. London: Penguin, 1985.
- Holzman, Donald. *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi (A.D. 210–263)*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維. "Writing from Heaven: Celestial Writing in Six Dynasties Daoism" Ph.D. dissertation, Bloomington, Indiana University, 2005.
- . "Shengdian yu chuanyi—liuchao daojiao jingdianzhong de 'fanyi'" 聖典與傳譯—六朝道教經典中的「翻譯」. *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 31 (Sept. 2007): 185–233.
- . "Chuanshou yu ronghe: taiji wuzhenren song yanjiu 傳授與融合：太極五真人頌研究. *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu suo jikan* 中央研究院中國文哲研究所集刊 34 (Mar. 2009): 249–85.
- . *Tianjie zhi wen: Wei Jin nanbeichao lingbao jingdian yanjiu* 天界之文：魏晉南北朝靈寶經典研究. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2010.

- Hsieh Shu-Wei 謝世維, et al. eds. *Taishang dongxuan lingbao kongdong lingzhang jing jiaojian* 太上洞玄靈寶空洞靈章經校箋. Taipei: Zhengda chubanshe, 2013.
- Hu Zhongshan 胡中山. “Yu Xin qiren ji qi xiandao shige” 庾信其人及其仙道詩歌. *Xuzhou shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 徐州師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 34, no. 6 (Nov. 2008): 7–11.
- Hucker, Charles. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008.
- Hughes, April. *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021.
- Ishii Masako 石井昌子. “Kinko Shinfu, Shinko Gyokukyō Shinfu Kō” 《金虎真符》《神虎玉經真符》考. *Sōka daigaku inbun ronshū* 創價大學人文論集 8 (1995): 3–33.
- Jia Jinhua. “The Identity of Tang Daoist Priestesses.” In *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body*, edited by Jia Jinhua, Kang Xiaofei, and Yao Ping, 105–13. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014.
- . *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Jiang Yin 蔣寅. *Dali shiren yanjiu* 大歷詩人研究. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995.
- Jülch, Thomas. “The Buddhist Re-interpretation of the Legends Surrounding King Mu of Zhou.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 2010): 625–27.
- . *Zhipan’s Account of the History of Buddhism in China*. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Kamitsuka Yoshiko 神塚淑子. “Go Un no shōgai to shisō” 吳筠の生涯と思想. *Tōhō shukyō* 東方宗教 54 (1979): 33–51.
- Kang Ruobo 康若柏 (Robert Ford Campany). “Shangqing jing de biaoyan xingzhi 上清經的表演性質, translated by Frankie Chik. In *Daojiao xiulian keyi de wenxian tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, edited by Tim Wai-keung Chan, 25–53. Hong Kong: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018.
- Kaplan, Harry. “Lyrics on Pacing the Void.” *Phi Theta Papers (Berkeley, CA)* 14 (1977): 51–60.

- Kern, Martin. “‘Shi jing’ Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of ‘Chu Ci’ (Thorny Caltrop).” *Early China* 25 (2000): 49–111.
- Kertzer, David I. *Ritual, Politics, and Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Kirkland, Russell. “Taoists of the High T’ang: An Inquiry into the Perceived Significance of Eminent Taoists in Medieval Chinese Society.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1986.
- Kirkova, Zornica. *Roaming into the Beyond: Representations of Xian Immortality in Early Medieval Chinese Verse*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Kleeman, Terry F. “The Performance and Significance of the Merging the Pneumas Rites (*Heqi*) Rite in Early Daoism.” *Daoism: Religion, History and Society*, no. 6 (2014): 85–112.
- . *Celestial Masters : History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Asia Center, 2016.
- Knechtges, David R. “Wit, Humor, and Satire in Early Chinese Literature (to AD 220).” *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–71): 79–98.
- . *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung, (53 B.C.-A.D.18)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- . “A Journey to Morality: Chang Heng’s *The Rhapsody on Pondering the Mystery*.” In *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping Shan Library*, edited by P.L. Chan, 162–82. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983.
- . “Criticism of the Court in Han Dynasty Literature.” In *Selected Essays on Court Culture in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by Lin Yaofu, 51–77. Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 1999.
- Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美. *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990.
- . “Reihō saishō no seiritu no tenkai” 靈寶齋法の成立と展開. In *Dōkyō no saishōgirei no sisōshiteki kenkyū* 道教の齋法儀禮の思想史的研究, edited by Kobayashi Masayoshi, 65–95. Tokyo: Chisen shokan, 2006.
- Kohn, Livia. “Taoist Scriptures as Mirrored in the *Xiaodao lun*.” *Taoist Resources* 4, no. 1 (Feb. 1993): 47–69.

- . *Laughing at the Dao: Debates Among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China*. Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2008.
- . “Mind and Eyes: Sensory and Spiritual Experience in Daoist Mysticism.” *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 129–56.
- . “Northern Celestial Masters.” In *Daoism Handbook*, edited by Livia Kohn, 283–308. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- . *Sitting in Oblivion: The Heart of Daoist Meditation*. Dunedin, FL: Three Pines Press, 2010.
- Kroll, Paul W. “Verses from On High: The Ascent of T’ai Shan.” *T’oung Pao* 69 (1983): 223–60.
- . “In the Halls of the Azure Lad.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (March 1985): 75–94.
- . “Li Po’s Transcendent Diction.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1986): 99–117.
- . “Spreading Open the Barrier of Heaven.” *Asiatische Studien Études Asiatiques* 40 (1986): 22–39.
- . “Body Gods and Inner Vision: The Scripture of the Yellow Court.” In *Religions of China in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr., 149–55. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- . “Seduction Songs of One the Perfected.” In *Religions of China in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr., 180–87. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- . “On ‘Far Roaming,’” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 4 (December 1996): 653–69.
- . “Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T’ang.” *T’oung Pao* 84 (1998): 96.
- . “The Divine Songs of the Lady of Purple Tenuity.” In *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History in Honor of Richard B. Mather & Donald Holzman*, edited by Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges, 149–211. Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003.
- . “Daoist Verse and the Quest of the Divine.” In *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)*, Part 2, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, 953–85. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

- . “A Poetry Debate of the Perfected of Highest Clarity.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 4 (December 2012): 577–86.
- Lagerwey, John. *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VIe siècle*. Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1981.
- . *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
- . “Daoist Ritual from the Second through the Sixth Centuries,” in *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 134–64. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009.
- . “Canonical Fasts According to Lu Xiuqing.” In *Affiliation and Transmission: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 41–79. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012.
- . “Lu Xiuqing’s *Shoudu yi* 授度儀: A Grammatical Reading.” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 1 (2018): 50–65.
- Lau, D.C., Chen Fong Ching, and Ho Che Wah, eds. *A Concordance to the Works of Yu Xin*. Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press: 2000.
- Lee Fong-mao 李豐楙. *You yu you: Liuchao Sui Tang youxianshi lunwenji* 憂與遊: 六朝隋唐遊仙詩論文集. Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1996.
- . “Chuan Cheng yu duiying: Liuchao dao jiao jing zhong ‘moshi’ shuo de tichu yu yanbian” 傳承與對應: 六朝道教經中「末世」說的提出與衍變. *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 9 (Sept. 1996): 91–130.
- . “Han Wudi neizhuan yanjiu” 漢武帝內傳研究. In *Xianjing yu youli: shenxian shijie de xiangxiang* 仙境與遊歷: 神仙世界的想像. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010.
- Li Cheng 李程. “Tangdai wenren de buxu ci chuanguo” 唐代文人的步虛詞創作. *Wuhan daxue xuebao (renwen kexue ban)* 武漢大學學報 (人文科學版) 66, no. 6 (Nov. 2013): 114–18.
- Li Chien-te 李建德. “Taiwan dao jiao zongpai yunyon zhi ‘buxu ci’ ji qi yihan tanxi” 臺灣道教宗派運用之〈步虛詞〉及其意涵探析. *Zhanghua shifan daxue xuezhì* 彰化師大國文學誌 27 (Dec. 2013): 207–36.

- Li Gang. "State Religious Policy." In *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589)*, vol. 1, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, 193–274. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Li Guoxi 李國熙. *Yu Xin houqi wenxue zhong xiangguan zhi si yanjiu* 庾信後期文學中鄉關之思研究. Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe yinhang, 1994.
- Liu Yi 劉屹. "Lun gu lingbao jing 'shengxuan buxu zhang' de yanbian" 論古靈寶經《昇玄步虛章》的演變. In *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 189–205. Weisbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2009.
- . *Liuchao daojiao gu lingbao jing de lishixue yanjiu* 六朝道教古靈寶經的歷史學研究. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2018.
- Lü Chuikuan. 呂鍾寬 *Taiwan de Daojiao yishi yu yinyue* 台灣的道教儀式與音樂. Xueyi chubanshe, 1994.
- Lü Pengzhi 呂鵬志. *Tangqian daojiao yishi shigang* 唐前道教儀式史綱. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008.
- . "Daoist Rituals." In *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, Leiden: Brill, 2010., 1245–1349.
- . "The Lingbao Fast of the Three Primes and the Daoist Middle Prime Festival: A Critical Study of the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao sanyuan pinjie jing*." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 35–61.
- . "Ordination Ranks in Medieval Daoism and the Classification of Daoist Rituals." In *Affiliation and Transmission in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 81–107. Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag, 2012.
- . "The Early Lingbao Transmission Ritual: A Critical Study of Lu Xiujing's (406–477) *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi*." *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1–49.
- Luo Yiyi. "Yu Xin and the Sixth Century Literary World." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2019.
- Luo Yiyi. "Literary Responses to Religious Debates at the Northern Zhou Court." *Early Medieval China* 26 (2020): 67–87.
- Luo Zhengming 羅爭鳴. "Buxu sheng, buxu ci yu bugang tadou—yi *Taishang feixing jiuchen yujing wei zhongxin de kaocha*" 步虛聲、步虛詞與步罡躡斗—《太上飛行九晨玉經》為中心的考察. *Xueshu luntan* 學術論壇 5 (2013): 148–54.

- . “Buxu ci shiyi ji qi yuantou yu zaoqi xingtai fenxi” 步虛詞釋義及其源頭與早期型態分析. In *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, edited by Timothy W.K. Chan 陳偉強, 220–40. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018.
- . “Wei Qumou ji qi ‘Xin buxu ci’ shijiu shou kaolun” 韋渠牟及其十九首考論, *Tangdai wenxue yanjiu* 唐代文學研究 19 (June 2020): 58–71.
- Mair, Victor H., ed. *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Major, John S. et al., eds. *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Martin, François. “Buddhism and Literature.” In *Early Chinese Religion: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)*, Part 2, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, 891–952. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Mather, Richard B. “K’ou Ch’ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy at the Northern Wei Court 425–451.” In *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, edited by Holmes Welch and Anna K. Seidel, 425–51. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Mazanec, Thomas J. “The Invention of Chinese Buddhist Poetry: Poet-Monks in Late Medieval China (c. 760–960 CE).” Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2017.
- Meng Qingyang 盟慶陽. “Wei Jin nanbei chao buxu ci chutan” 魏晉南北朝步虛詞初探. *Shandong xingzheng xueyuan Shandong sheng jingji guanli ganbu xueyuan xuebao* 山東行政學院山東省經濟管理幹部學院學報 5 (Oct. 2005): 126–28.
- Morahashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次 (1883–1982), ed. *Dai kanwan jiten* 大漢和辭典, 13 vols. Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1955–60.
- Mugitani Kunio. “Wu Yun de shengping, sixiang ji wenxue” 吳筠的生平、思想及文學. In *Daojiao xiulian yu keyi de wenxue tiyan* 道教修煉與科儀的文學體驗, edited by Chan Wai Keung 陳偉強, 70–99. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2018.
- Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾. “On Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 33–56.
- . *Tonkō dōkyō* 敦煌道經, 2 vols. Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1978.
- . *Dōkyō to sono kyōten* 道教とその經典. Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1997.

- Owen, Stephen. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996.
- . *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1996.
- . *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.
- . *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827–860)*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.
- Owen, Stephen and Wendy Swartz, trans.. *The Poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang*, Library of Chinese Humanities. Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter, 2017.
- Pettit, J.E.E. and Chao-jan Chang. *A Library of Clouds: The Scripture of the Immaculate Numen and the Rewriting of Daoist Texts*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020.
- Pettit, J.E.E. and Matthew Wells. “Revelation in Early Daoist Hagiography: A Study of *The Traditions of Lord Pei*.” *Asia Major* Third Series 33, no. 2 (2020): 1–24.
- Protass, Jason. *The Poetry Demon: Song-Dynasty Monks on Verse and the Way*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021.
- Puett, Michael J. *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004.
- . “Ritual and the Subjunctive.” In *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, edited by Seligman A, Weller R, Simon B, 17-42. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2008.
- Raz, Gil. “Imperial Efficacy: Debates on Imperial Ritual in Early Medieval China and the Emergence of Daoist Ritual Schemata.” In *Purposes, Means, and Convictions in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 83–109. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007.
- . “The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism.” *NAN NÜ* 10, no. 1 (2008): 86–120.
- . “Daoist Ritual Theory in the Work of Lu Xiujing.” In *Foundations of Daoist Ritual: A Berlin Symposium*, edited by Florian C. Reiter, 119–34. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009.

- . “Ritual Theory in Medieval Daoism.” In *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, edited by Axel Michaels, Anand Mishra, Lucia Dolce, Gil Raz, and Katja Triplett, 407–24. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010.
- . *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of Tradition*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.
- Robinet, Isabelle. “Randonnées extatiques des taoïstes dans les astres.” *Monumenta Serica* 32 (1976): 159–273.
- . “Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Taoism.” *History of Religions* 19, no. 1 (1979): 37–70.
- . “Le Ta-tung chen-ching: Son authenticité et sa place dans les textes du Shang-ch’ing ching.” In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, vol. 2, edited by Michel Strickmann, 394–433. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983.
- . *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du Taoïsme*, 2 vols. Paris: Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient, 1984.
- . “Visualization and Ecstatic Flight in Shangqing Taoism.” In *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*, edited by Livia Kohn, 159–91. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989.
- . *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-Shan Tradition of Great Purity*. Translated by Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Giradot. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Robson, James. “Signs of Power: Talismanic Writing in Chinese Buddhism.” *History of Religions* 48, no. 2 (Nov. 2008): 130–69.
- Rothschild, N. Harry. *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Rouzer, Paul, trans. *The Poetry and Prose of Wang Wei*, vol. 2. Boston: Walter De Gruyter Inc., 2020.
- Russell, Terrence. “Taoist Elegies of Ku K’uang,” *T’ang Studies* 7 (1989): 169–95.
- Schafer, Edward H. “Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China.” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 11 (1968): 318–43.
- . *Pacing the Void: T’ang Approaches to the Stars*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

- . “*Li Po’s Star Power.*” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions* 6 (Fall 1978): 5–15.
- . “Wu Yun’s Cantos on ‘Pacing the Void.’” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41, no. 2 (December 1981): 377–415.
- . “Wu Yun’s Stanzas on ‘Saunters in Sylphdom.’” *Monumenta Serica* 35 (1981–83): 309–345.
- . “The Grand Aurora.” *Chinese Science* 6 (Nov. 1983): 21–32.
- . “Cosmic Metaphors: The Poetry of Space,” *Sinological Papers*, no. 5 (1985): 1–18.
- . *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts’ao T’ang*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- . “Empyrean Powers and Cthonic Edens: Two Notes on T’ang Taoist Literature.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 671–77.
- . *Mao Shan in T’ang Times*. Boulder, CO: Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1989.
- Schipper, Kristofer M. *L’Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste: Han Wou-ti nei-tchouan*. Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1965.
- . “Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts.” In *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, edited by Gert Naundorf, Karl-Heinz Polz, and Hans Hermann-Schmidt, 127–48. Würzburg: Köningshausen + Neumann, 1985.
- . “A Study of Buxu: Taoist Liturgical Hymn and Dance.” In *Studies of Taoist Rituals and Music of Today*, edited by Tsao Pen-Yeh 曹本冶 and Daniel P. L. Law, 110–20. Hong Kong: The Society for Ethnomusicological Research, 1989.
- . *The Taoist Body*, translated by Karen C. Duval. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Schmid, Neil. “Tun-huang Literature.” In *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, edited by Victor H. Mair, 964–88. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Seidel, Anna. “The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao-Tzu and Li Hung.” *History of Religions* 9, no. 2/3 (November 1969): 216–47.
- . “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha.” In *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of Rolf A. Stein*, vol. 2, edited by Michel

- Strickmann, 291–371. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983.
- . “Le sūtra merveilleux du Ling-pao suprême, traitant de Lao tseu qui convertit les barbares (le manuscrit S. 2081): Contribution à l’étude du Bouddhotaïsme des Six Dynasties.” In *Contributions aux études de Touen-houang*, vol. 3, edited by Michel Soymié, 305–52. Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient 1984.
- . “Taoist Messianism.” *Numen* 31, no. 2 (December 1984): 161–74.
- . “Post-Mortem Immortality—Or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body.” In *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, edited by Shaul Shaked, David Shulman, and Guy G. Stroumsa, 223–37. Leiden: Brill, 1987.
- Seymour, Kelsey. “The Buddha’s Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2018.
- Shields, Anna M. *Crafting a Collection: The Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian Ji (Collection From Among the Flowers)*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- . “The Bare Facts of Ritual.” In *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, 53–65. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- . “The Unknown God: Myth in History.” In *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, 66–89. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Smith, Thomas. “Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative: The Legend of the Han Emperor Wu.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1992.
- Steavu, Dominic. *The Writ of the Three Sovereigns: From Local Lore to Institutional Daoism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019.
- Strickmann, Michel. “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy.” *T’oung Pao* 63, no. 1 (1977): 1–64.
- Strickmann, Michel and Bernard Faure. *Chinese Magical Medicine*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

- Sun Changwu 孫昌武. *Daojiao wenxue shijiang* 道教文學十講. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014.
- . *Daojiao yu Tangdai wenxue* 道教與唐代文學. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2017.
- . “Daojiao de xiangge shang” 道教的仙歌上. *Shi dao yiwen* 釋道藝文 3 (2019): 84–92.
- . “Youxian yu buxu ci” 遊仙與步虛詞. In *Shige yu shenxian xinyang* 詩歌與神仙信仰, 120–49. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019.
- Swanger, Timothy. “Biography and its Social World: the ‘Stele of Lord Lu.’” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 3 (2020): 259–80.
- Swartz, Wendy. “Revisiting the Scene of a Party: A Study of the Lanting Collection.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132, no. 2 (2012): 275–300.
- Teiser, Stephen. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- . *The Scripture of the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1994.
- Tian Xiaofei. *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007.
- . “Yu Xin’s ‘Memory Palace’: Writing Trauma and Violence in Early Chinese Aulic Poetry.” In *Memory in Medieval China: Text, Ritual, and Community*, edited by Wendy Swartz and Robert F. Campany, 12–57. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Verellen, Franciscus. “The Heavenly Master Liturgical Agenda According to Chisong Zi’s Petition Almanac.” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004): 291–343.
- . *Imperiled Destinies: The Daoist Quest for Deliverance in Medieval China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019.
- Waley, Arthur. *The Way and Its Power: Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.
- Wang Chengwen 王乘文. *Dunhuang gu lingbao jing yu Jin Tang daojiao* 敦煌古靈寶經與晉唐道教. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002.

- . “Gu lingbao jing de zhaiguan zhidu yu tianshi dao ji fojiao de guanxi” 古靈寶敬的齋館制度與天師道及佛教的關係. *Dunhuang Tulufan* 敦煌吐魯番研究 6 (2002): 55–80.
- . “The Revelation and Classification of Daoist Scriptures.” In *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two*, vol. 1, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, 775–891. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- . “Zhongguo daojiao buxu yi de qiyuan yu gu lingbao jing fenlei lunkao” 中古道教步虛儀的起源與古靈寶經分類論考. *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 54, no. 4 (2014): 68–90.
- Wang Haoyue 王皓月. *Xijing qiuzhen: Lu Xiujing yu lingbao jing guanxi xintan* 析經求真：陸修靜與靈寶經關係新探. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2017.
- Wang, Richard. *Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Wang Xiaodun 王小盾. “Daojiao ‘Buxu wu’—jian lun Daojiao gewu he wuwu zai zongjiao gongneng shang de lianxi yu qubie 道教《步虛舞》—兼論道教歌舞和巫舞在宗教功能上的聯繫與區別. In *Dao fo fu sixiang yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* 道佛儒思想與中國傳統文化, edited by Zhang Rongming 張榮明, 69–89. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1994.
- Wang Zhiqing 王志清. “Lun Yu Xin ‘Daoshi buxu ci’ de daoqu yuanyuan yu wenrenhua tedian” 論“道士步虛詞”的盜道曲淵源與文人化特點. *Shanxi shifanda xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 山西師範大學報 34, no. 3 (May 2007): 54–57.
- Watson, Burton. *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, vol. 2 rev. ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- . *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Whitaker, K.P. “Tsaur Jyr and the Introduction of Fannbay 梵唄 into China.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20, No. 1/3, (1957): 585–97.
- Williams, Nicholas Morrow. “Inventing the Fu: Simulated Spontaneity in Sima Xiangru’s ‘Great Man.’” In *Reading Fu Poetry: From the Han to the Song Dynasties*, edited by Nicholas Morrow Williams, 1–38. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022.
- Wolf, Lucas A. “Ritual Refashioned: Buddhism, Lingbao, and the Adaptation of Vows (Yuan 願).” *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 2 (2020): 182–200.

- Wong, Pui See. “The Internalization of the Tiger Talismans: The Translation and Close Reading of the Hidden Text of the Tiger Talismans 洞真太上神虎隱文.” MA thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2019.
- Wright, Arthur F. “The Formation of Sui Ideology.” In *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, edited by John K. Fairbank, 71–104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Wright, Arthur F. *The Sui Dynasty*. New York: Knopf, 1978.
- Wu Fusheng. *Written at Imperial Command: Panegyric Poetry in Early Medieval China*. Albany: SUNY Press 2008.
- Wu Qiyu, 吳其昱. “Li Xiang ji qi She Dao shi,” 李翔及其涉道詩. *Dōkyō kenkyū* 道教研究 1 (1965): 271–91.
- Yamada Toshiaki. “The Evolution of Taoist Ritual: K’ou Ch’ien-chih and Lu Hsiu-ching.” *Acta Asiatica* 68 (1995): 69–83.
- Yan Jinxiong 顏進雄. *Tangdai youxian shi yanjiu* 唐代遊仙詩研究. Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1996.
- Zhan Shichuang 詹石窗. *Daojiao wenxue shi* 道教文學史. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1992.
- . “Wu Yun shicheng kao” 吳筠師承考. *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 1 (1994): 26–28.
- . *Daojiao wenhua shiwu yanjiang* 道教文化十五演講. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012.
- Zhang Xunliao. “Daoist Stelae of the Northern Dynasties.” In *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589)*, vol. 1, edited by John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, 437–544. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Zürcher, Erik. *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. Leiden: Brill, 1972.
- . “Buddhist Influence on Early Taoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence.” *T’oung Pao* 66 (1980): 84–147.
- . “‘Prince Moonlight’: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism.” *T’oung Pao* 68 (1982): 1–75.