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DAOIST VERSES IN SIX DYNASTIES OF CHINA

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Daoist Verses In Six Dynasties of China

YANG, Xin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

the month and year of the initial submission

Dec 2023

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates verses from early Daoist scriptures and those crafted by the men of letters, often referred to as “literati,” who employ discourses and imagery of transcendence during the Six Dynasties era. It challenges the modern-constructed academic division between “Literature” and “Religion,” proposing that verse in Daoist sacred texts, often out of appreciation of Literature history, exhibit significant literary artistry. Conversely, it argues that the works of literati, typically viewed as secular and rational, frequently incorporate Daoist themes and esoteric knowledge. Above all, it posits that “literature” can be found within “religious” sacred texts, while the “religious” can be discovered in “literature”, thereby transcending the constraints of modern academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

The study employs a holistic approach inspired by Charles Taylor's characterization of modern and premodern conditions, transcending modern disciplinary boundaries such as “Literature,” “Philosophy,” “Religion” and so on. This framework aligns with the integrated knowledge systems of traditional societies, where religious elements are naturally interwoven with all aspects of life.

The dissertation is divided into two main parts. The first part examines various forms of verses in early Daoist scriptures, including tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, heptasyllabic, and narrative verse. It provides both aesthetic analysis and explores the religious aspects, such as meanings, exercises, and doctrines embedded in these verses. This section contends that these verses, often overlooked in literary history, demonstrate a high degree of verbal artistry and linguistic skill. This challenges the modern literary standards, which are dominated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Here I continued to deploy the modern constructed terms such as “Religion/Religious,” “Literature/Literary,” but it should be noted that these terms are non-existent in traditional China. The rationale for employing these terms is further elaborated in the Introduction.

Western-constructed concept of "pure literature" that tends to undervalue texts serving practical purposes.

The second part presents case studies of two literati, Xi Kang and Yu Xin, who incorporated Daoist discourses and imagery into their works. It argues that a precise understanding of their verses requires knowledge of Daoist esoteric traditions and the historical context of Daoist development. Xi Kang's works, for instance, reflect influences from Han dynasty fangshi traditions and Chuci period shamanic practices, while Yu Xin's imitation of Buxu hymns reveals an interplay between literati and Daoist traditions, despite potential barriers in light of his initiation into Daoist esoteric knowledge.

These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the textual tradition in Chinese literature and culture, reflecting a broader, interconnected ontology of traditional Chinese society. Such understanding transcends the narrow disciplinary divisions of "religion" and "literature" present in modern scholarship, allowing us to approach the sources encountered and employed by ancient well-educated individuals, whether literati or Daoist adepts. Through this analysis, we gain insight into an intellectual world fundamentally different from our contemporary categorization thought, a world that the traditional Chinese people inhabited.

## Publications Arising from The Thesis

### **Article**

Yang, Xin Shirley. (2023). Transcendence in Xi Kang's Poetry. *Journal of Daoist Studies*, 16, 57-80.

### **Conference Presentations (Peer-reviewed)**

Yang, Xin Shirley. (2023). *The Immaterial Deity-Images of Early Daoism: A Case Study on the Highest Clarity School throughout the Six Dynasties*. Paper presented at the Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia Conference, Korea and Online.

Yang, Xin Shirley. (2021). *Transcendence as Religious Belief and a “Surviving Project”*: *New Investigation of Xi Kang’s Poems of Roaming into Transcendence*. Paper presented at the Daoism and Literature Myths, Stories, Novels, Poetry, changed to online.



Dedication

To My Parents and Grandma

## Acknowledgement

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Mark Meulenbeld, for his dedicated guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout my studies. His encouragement inspired me to write this Dissertation in English, a decision that will undoubtedly benefit my future endeavors. His erudition and enthusiasm for knowledge have greatly influenced my academic journey. I also extend my gratitude to my other supervisors, Dr. Bony Schachter, and Dr. Zhang Yu, for their invaluable support and feedback. Special thanks to Dr. Schachter and Dr. Zhang Yu for reviewing my Dissertation and facilitating the graduation process.

I am grateful to Professor Wu Guangzheng of Wuhan University for his inspiration and generosity in providing resources, including his monograph, which has been an important reference in my field. My appreciation also goes to the Journal of Daoist Studies for giving me my first publication opportunity in English, which significantly improved my academic writing skills. I thank Professor Lü Pengzhi and his students for their assistance in sourcing rare materials, and Dr. Wong Sau Ngan Kate for her mentorship during my time as a Teaching Assistant. I am also thankful to Mr. Liu Hong-yi, Ms. Lu Celine, and Mr. Chen Yu for their insightful opinions and support. Special thanks to my counselors, Ms. Cynthia Chan and Ms. Sharon To, and to Ms. Loris Lau and Ms. Lucy Wong from our general office, for their continuous warmth and support during challenging times.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my family—my grandmother, father, and mother—for their unwavering support and understanding, which allowed me to focus on my academic pursuits. Their sacrifices and encouragement have been invaluable. My grandmother, Zhao Xiaoping, even during her surgery in the spring of 2023, urged me to focus on my graduation, a testament to her strength and support. Each time I think about their sacrifices, I am moved to tears.

This Dissertation's complement though can't find too many excuses for myself, went through the complete whole process of the pandemic and the closure of the University due to be captured. I cannot say I am not affected by all these things. Having a glance back to the five years of PhD study, many things happened, many things come and go, sometimes time may be just too rushing for us to remember many details. Writing, though in certain theorist points of view, is just reconstructing of the past. Somehow one day, when I read this record closing to things happen, and the reader may only be me, the details I ever wrote may remind me about things that ever existed.

# Contents

## Contents

COVER PAGE.....	1
TITLE PAGE.....	2
A Certificate of Originality.....	3
Abstract.....	5
Publications Arising from The Thesis.....	7
Dedication.....	8
Acknowledgement.....	9
Contents.....	11
INTRODUCTION.....	13
Daoist Literature, Daoist Canon Verses, and Chapter Structure.....	13
Conceptual framework.....	32
A Critical Examination of the Evaluation Criteria for “Pure Literature”.....	37
Historicized Traditional “Literature”: Centering on <i>Wenxin Diaolong</i> and <i>Wenxuan</i> .....	40
PART I CANONICAL VERSES IN EARLY DAOISM.....	47
1. The abundance of verse forms in Daoist practice.....	47
1.1 Tetrasyllabic verses, invocations, and incantations.....	48
1.2 <i>Zhen’gao</i> as Representative of Pentasyllabic Verses.....	58
1.2.1 Verses on Merging Effulgence, Or the Spiritual Marriage.....	59
1.2.2 Verses on Ingesting Radiance and Essence.....	69
1.3 Heptasyllabic verse in <i>Huangtingjing</i> .....	72
1.4 The Narrative Verse Regarding <i>Laozi</i> .....	74
2. The Daoist Lore and Practice as the Verse Context.....	77
2.1 Nourishing life with Radiance and Essence.....	77
2.2 The Five Dipper and Three-Ones.....	83
2.3 Visualization of Gods of Nine Palaces in Head and Six Orbs.....	90
2.4 Envisioning the Elaborated System of Bodily Guardians.....	96
3. The Buxu Hymns in Rituals.....	101
3.1 The Religious Connotation of Buxu Stanza, The Necessary Traditions to Understand.....	104
3.1.1 Circumambulation or Pacing the Guideline? The Buxu Rites.....	105
3.1.2 The Buddhist Influence, to what extent?.....	113
3.1.3 The Correlation with The Highest Clarity Tradition.....	120
3.2 The Buxu Rites: Ritualization of Mythology.....	126

3.3 The Stanza for Buxu Rite, Literary or Not? .....	133
3.4 A New Glance on Buxu Stanzas and The Expository Part .....	135
Coda .....	139
<b>PART2 THE LITERATI'S DAOIST DICTION: CASE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>139</b>
The Significance of Case Study .....	139
The Vague Definition of “Literati” and “Daoist” .....	141
4. Xi Kang and Youxian Poem .....	143
4.1 Nourishing Life .....	147
4.2 The Poems .....	155
4.3 The Sublunary Entangles the Divine Optional: The Worldly Entanglement.....	162
4.4 Conclusion.....	169
5. Yu Xin and Buxu Hymn .....	171
5.1 The Comprehensive Textual Traditions Exceeding Daoist Lore.....	175
5.2 Admonishing the Emperor: A More Confucian Standing Ground and Role .....	178
5.3 Courtier Status and Secular Use of Immortality Materials .....	185
5.4 Work’s Refinement and Yu Xin’s Courtier Status.....	187
Conclusion of the Case Studies.....	190
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>199</b>
Abbreviations.....	199
Primary Sources .....	200
Secondary Literature .....	202

# INTRODUCTION

## Daoist Literature, Daoist Canon Verses, and Chapter Structure

Daoist literature is a field which has recently been in a state of evolution and growth. Despite its relevance for discussions of ancient literature, only few scholars have done so from a Daoist perspective, and more generally scholars often neglect the sphere of “religion”. This omission is closely related to the establishment of modern academic disciplines. When these modern disciplines were built, they formed a set of secularized narratives, depriving the narrative about literature of its inherent religious dimension.<sup>2</sup> Overwhelmingly, in traditional China, Literature and Religion were inseparably interwoven. Here, of course, I use modern disciplinary terms such as “Religion”, “Literature” and Art as heuristic devices to elucidate phenomena at that period. For example, in ancient times, poetry, music and dance were often presented together in religious events. Regrettably, our present academic discourse on literary studies has been heavily influenced by Western concepts of “pure Literature” with an emphasis on lyricism as the dominant yardstick for determining what is “Literary,” while marginalizing others; it also perpetuates the practice of exploring and hierarchically evaluating classical Chinese literature (Wu 2014, 293).<sup>3</sup> But this approach cannot suitably apply to the reality of traditional China. A research paradigm based on modern categorization and classification does have certain advantages and rationale, of course, but it also otherwise prevents one from gaining a more comprehensive understanding of certain topics or figures in

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<sup>2</sup> The "secularized narrative" tries to exclude the world of divine beings and spirits, which naturally existed with humans in a "premodern" world, an enchantment time (Taylor 2007). More elaborations on "secular narrative" and its impact of literary study of modern scholars, see (Meulenbeld 2015, 7-10). In fact, not only literature, but all subjects in modern time are situated in such a rationalization process, deprived the religious dimension that naturally interwoven with all spheres. More details expounded in below section.

<sup>3</sup> The term “pure literature” is widely deployed in Literary thought discussion. At least in 20<sup>th</sup> century’s China’s context, it means being lyrical in content and being sophisticated in literary device, its opposition” applied literature” which serve certain specific purpose, in certain context is specifically as a contrast to Literature serving politics. Detailed examination of this term is in section three of this introduction. Sometimes in Japan’s intellectual circle, the opposition to pure literature includes popular literature, entertainment literature, or monogatari literature, indicating a perspective of elitism (Seidensticker 1965, 174).

traditional China, obfuscating the way they were originally perceived in premodern times.

The term “Daoist Literature” is deployed in responding to this deficiency within our modern disciplinary framework. It acknowledges both the “literary” and the “Daoist” aspect. Conducting an investigation into the term “Daoist literature,” thus, is indispensable for establishing a comprehensive research framework for this study.

Before this investigation, it is important to note that, throughout this Dissertation, though I still employ the modern terms such as “religion/religious”, “literature/literary”, “politics/political”, secular/divine, literati/Confucians, atheist(s) and genres. etc., these terms are in fact nonexistent in traditional China. I continue to utilize these terms because, we, both the author and the intended readership, are all modern people, who are educated under a similar modern categorization of discipline system and related discourse. In the meantime, numbers of scholars, regardless of cultural origin, are continuing to deploy these concepts and discourses for scholarly discussions. Hence, without this set of terminology and discourse, we may lose the communal base to describe and signify. Considering this, this kind of reflective awareness of using these modern terms, will always accompany my examining work of traditional China, which, in fact, are less presented in previous studies.<sup>4</sup>

Following, using the term “Daoist literature” and its subset of “Daoist verse”, we will investigate how this term came to be deployed and the initial approaches taken in early studies. In the pioneering exploration of scholars such as Edward Schafer, Stephen Bokenkamp, Paul Kroll, and Judith Boltz, roughly two aspects of the topic were addressed. First of all, studies addressed how Daoist diction, imagery, and ideas were transmitted and incorporated into poetry, with special emphasis on Tang poetry. Second, explorations were

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<sup>4</sup> I will be immensely grateful to my supervisor, Mark Meulenbeld’s thought-provoking reminder about this in his review comment for me.

about the verses (sometimes accompanied by an examination of other Literary forms) directly from Daoist sacred texts, though not only but mainly found in today's Daoist canon.<sup>5</sup>

For Schafer, the pioneering scholar who paid attention to Daoist literature, after his exploration on the divine women in Tang Literature and Tang poetry (Schafer 1973), he then paid attention to the concept of “pacing the void” in Daoist poems of the Tang (Schafer

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<sup>5</sup> The term "Daoist canon" in this context refers to the imperial project of the Ming Dynasty, which undertook a massive collection of Daoist scriptures. The texts referenced are from *Zhengtong daoze* 正統道藏, 36 vols. Beijing: Wenwu; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian; and Tianjin: Guji chubanshe, 1988. Hereinafter referred to as DZ. The Daoze numbering follows Schipper and Verellen 2004, 2005. In addition to the Daoist canon, Dunhuang manuscripts are also acknowledged and utilized by scholars following this line of inquiry.

It is noteworthy that, for contemporary scholar, there is an easy access to *Daoze* because of the commercial reproduction of Ming canon in 1926. Over a long historical period, the contents of the "canon" and texts outside it, the certain repositories have undergone significant textual evolution. Further, the natural tendency of exclusiveness of early Daoist text became strengthened and systemized along with the organization and hierarchy order built in editions of Daoist canon. Hence, the scriptures we can more easily access today were often secretly transmitted within limited circles, relating to a matter of initiation and ordination.

Specifically, Ge Hong published the first extant Daoist catalogue around 310 A.D., though he still hadn't distinguished between texts inside and outside the "canon". Ge's collection represented a more ancient southern tradition, at a time when the institutionalized Tianshidao haven't penetrated. For early Tianshidao in the north, also, it maintains its own texts which distinguishes what the adepts should read and what should not. These texts are unified under the title *Zhengyifawen* (正一法文 Statutory Texts of the One and Orthodox), inextricable link can be found with later revelation of Shangqing and Lingbao in forth-century South. *Sandong jing* 三洞經 (The Book of the Three Caverns), which comprises the three catalogues of scriptures, namely Shangqing, Lingbao and Sanmei, created the condition for developing of Daoist canon. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Daoist master Lu Xiujing, who served the court of Liu-Song dynasty, provided the first inventory of canonical scriptures organized as Three Caverns, namely the Cavern [Penetrating] Truth, the Carven [Penetrating] Mystery, the Cavern [Penetrating] Divinity, respectively comprise the texts of Shangqing, Lingbao and *Sanhuang wen*. In this canon, *Zhengyifawen* of early Tianshidao is not included, while later Lu's successor's new canon gave this catalogue the status of seventh division of the whole structure. Till this time, roughly in the Sui or early Tang period, the canonical and hierarchical structure of Three Caverns and Four Supplements (*Sandong sifu* 三洞四輔) came into being. After that, subsequent dynasties saw cycles of collection, destruction, and restoration of the Daoist canon, such as the Kaiyuan Era Canon and its loss in An Shi civil war, following the recopying of Tang Xuanzong period followed by the destruction in end of Tang. This restore and destruction cycle continued to happen with Dynasties change, such as Yuan Dynasty's burning of the canon and collection in Ming as imperial project again (Chen 2014, 88-179; Schipper and Verellen 2004, 5-40).

These historical facts and condition remind us that, when discussing the topic of “Daoist influence in traditional verse creation”, we must consider the transmission status of scriptures during specific periods. As Kirková outlined, understanding which Daoist texts secular authors likely knew and drew from, and the degree to which they retained scriptural connotations in their poetry, is crucial (Kirková 2016, 7). This context impacts our analysis of literati works, whose authors often had ambiguous belief statuses. This is also the underlying rationale of scholar like Li Jing when specifically locating the concrete time of Tang verse influenced by Shangqing tradition (Li 2017).

Therefore, while the term "canon/canonical" here is based on the commercial version released, examining “Daoist verse in Six Dynasties” requires awareness of the textual tradition of this imperial project's composition, or its long-term textual tradition's evolution (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 49). That is, there is certain difference between the canon we can see today and the “canon” in Six Dynasties, or even, there is no systemized formed “canon” in certain period yet. Simultaneously considering the internal and external transmission of concerned sacred texts, this study will conduct necessary textual analysis and bibliographic examination to prudently discuss the "influence" of Daoist literature on "secular" literati's work.



1977).<sup>6</sup> In this monograph, he used the term “Taoist poem” to refer to Lü Yan’s 呂巖 pentasyllabic verse which promotes transcendence (Schafer 1977, 134).<sup>7</sup> Here, Schafer structured this whole monograph through terms of celestial bodies, such as “the Sky,” “the Star,” “the Moon,” and “the planets,” as well as an introduction about cosmogony and cosmic flight. In this monograph, “Taoist poetry” is just part of the rich sources he applied to situate the depiction of these symbols, no matter whether the depiction is in writing or in image.<sup>8</sup>

As indicated in this book and his later works, for Schafer, “symbols and metaphor” (Schafer 1977, 2), as he himself referred to this, and their precise understanding, translation and exegesis are always his emphasis, with special interest to exploit the Daoist connotation behind term and allusions. The philological approach is his characteristic perspective. This feature consistently permeates his scholarly work, as well as his students who formed his intellectual heirs, which is substantiated by his friends and colleagues (Elizabeth Colson, and Jeffrey Riegel 1991, 184).

In 1985, Schafer deployed the term “Taoist poetry” in his study on Cao Tang, though his interest was not only limited to Cang Tang himself, but the broader Daoist framework that situates Cao Tang’s verses on roaming into transcendence (*Youxianshi* 遊仙詩). Literary analysis here, not hard to imagine, is not his emphasis when addressing Cao Tang’s “Taoist poetry”. Following, in 1986, he published “Empyrean Powers and Chthonian Edens: Two Notes on T'ang Taoist Literature” (Schafer 1986). In this article, Schafer explored two popular themes that originate from very early Daoist beliefs, which demonstrate the extent that Daoist motif pervades Tang Literature. It can roughly designate the topic of “how

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of “pacing the void” can roughly refer to the action and steps of ascending to heavens in Daoist traditions.

<sup>7</sup> Namely Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, one of the eight transcendents in folklore.

<sup>8</sup> Schafer specially made Appendix A to discuss Tang star icon.

Daoism influences traditional Chinese literature” during that time.

The above characters of attaining “mature understanding of metaphors and symbols” in Literature (Schafer 1977, 2) also emerge in the work of his students, such as Kroll, Bokenkamp, and even some scholars of the subsequent generation. Kroll conducted exploration about poetry imagery, medieval Daoism and Literature, and Li Bai (701-762).<sup>9</sup> For the imagery exploration he had “The Egret in Medieval Chinese Literature” (Kroll 1979) and “The Image of The Halcyon Kingfisher in Medieval Chinese Poetry” (Kroll 1984), in which the author focusses on certain imagery, specifically the Egret and the Halcyon Kingfisher from Daoist examine materials across “various areas of medieval culture”, of course, including works from Daoists or Daoist aficionados. In 1999, in “The Light of Heaven in Medieval Taoist Verse” shows a more sophisticated example of this intellectual approach but with more apparent emphasis to Daoist text. In this article, he explored the “features and imagery of the celestial regions” (cf. Kroll 2009, 2) and analyzed a diverse range of texts, both religious and secular, to unveil a “cluster of images” and a “lexicon of light” (cf. Kroll 2009, 10). The term “medieval Taoist verse” was deployed in the title, its examining objects in fact include works by Cao Zhi, Guo Pu, and even harks back to *Chuci* 楚辭 (“The Songs of Chu”). However, it prioritizes “revelatory verses” from the Shangqing school, underscoring the author's intent to highlight the importance of verse in Daoist sacred texts.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Which Kroll wrote as Li Po.

<sup>10</sup> The Shangqing School of Daoism, also called School of the Highest Clarity or Supreme Purity (Robinet 2000, 196). Its inception identified with a sequence of revelations received by Yang Xi between 364-370. The corpus of Shangqing scriptures gained widespread acceptance among the Chinese aristocracy in fifth and sixth centuries. Later in Tang Dynasty, Shangqing school became the foremost rank within the Three Caverns (Sandong 三洞). Citing Lu Xiujing 陸修靜's (406-477) elucidation, Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美 identified Shangqing school as one of the three notable Daoist schools in Six Dynasties (Kobayashi and Li Trans., 5).

The doctrines and practices of the Shangqing school exhibit a synthesis of preceding traditions, encompassing the influence of the Celestial Master (Tianshi dao 天師道) tradition from the northern regions, the incorporation of local cults in Southern China, the infusion of Buddhist elements, and discernible traces of the Arcane Learning (Xuanxue 玄學) debate, such as the deliberations on "dependence and independence" (“you dai” he “wu dai” “有待” 和 “無待”). Notably related to our topic here, the Shangqing texts evoke reminiscences of ancient Chinese

A more direct exploration of Daoist scripture and the verses these contain is also among Kroll's focal areas. Examples include "Seduction songs of one of the perfected", which translated nine poems of Lady Youying, and again outlined a Daoist poem lineage trading back to *Yuanyou*, which had widely impact and imitation work in Six Dynasties and Tang periods (Kroll 1996, 181). In a Poetry Debate of the Perfected of Highest Clarity (2012), he addressed the poem debate about "with reliance" (youdai 有待) and "without reliance" (wudai 無待) between the transcendents, which is recorded in *Zhen'gao*. For these studies, as Kroll himself will sort them, they are "translations from Shangqing scriptures" (Kroll 1996, 181), detailed translation of involved materials and accounts are provided and become the apparent emphasis of these article.

More comprehensive investigation of Daoist verses we found Daoist Verse and the Quest of the Divine (Kroll 2009). In this article, he explored the "Daoist verse" in multiple forms, including "Far roaming"; heptasyllabic verse from Celestial Master text and its impact on Cao Cao's creation; heptasyllabic verse in *Huangting jing*; poem, mainly pentasyllabic verse from *Zhen'gao*; Then tetrameter form from Shangqing texts that works as incantations; and finally, the Songs for Wei Huacun's annunciation. This article demonstrates a comprehensive and ambitious investigation into Daoist poetry, going beyond mere translation by incorporating extensive analysis. The exploration covers various aspects including the philology of Daoist esoteric meaning, also the contribution of these diverse verse forms in Daoist sacred text to contemporary literary history narrative. The author's intellectual approach and expertise are apparent in their analysis of the religious dimensions present in these verses. Additionally, more sophisticated and depth content indicated in the exploration

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myths and align with the literary traditions represented by the *Chuci* 楚辭 (The Songs of Chu) and the works of Sima Xiangru (79-117 BCE), which secured Shangqing texts certain level of poetic and literary excellence (Robinet 2008, 858).

on certain texts such as *On Far Roaming* and *Zhen'gao*, which all follows the author's previous knowledge accumulation. For further to move, there is an opportunity to delve deeper into heptasyllabic verses in terms of various verse form in Daoist scripture, more exploration can also be further conducted on verse from other Daoist schools such as Lingbao Daoism and Celestial Master Daoism.

For inquiry interest in Li Bai, which Kroll himself will call this inquiry interest as “influence of Shangqing texts on poets in the Tang dynasty” (Kroll 1996, 182). Referred works here are Li Po's *Transcendent Diction* in 1986, *Verses from on High, The Ascent of T'ai Shan*” (Kroll 1983; cf. Wu 2021, 243); For Lipo's *Purple Haze* (Kroll 1997; cf. Kroll 2009), with his intellectual strength of delving into certain important imagery, Kroll revealed the Daoist connotation behind Li Bai's predilection in deploying “purple” imagery. In fact, such Daoist influence on important poet of Tang Dynasty, specifically, on Li Bai, has been demonstrated in his earlier article, namely *In the Halls of Azure Lad*. In the article, careful study conducted on the important Daoist divinity Azure Lad (qing tong 青童) and his paradise regions fang-chu, and it ended in how this divinity “manifests himself” in Li Bai's three existent works (Kroll 1985; cf. Kroll 2009, 88).

A Final point worth mentioning is, in *Spreading Open the Barrier of Heaven* (Kroll 1986), the author addressed the importance of annotated translation of *Dao Zang* and remarked that one of most important reason for students' reluctance to delve into treasures of *Dao Zang* and relative scholarly achievement of this field is lack of annotated translations of Daoist canon writing (Kroll 1986; Cf. Kroll 2009, 22-23). May follow this idea and recall Schafer's proposition, philology and translation are Kroll's consistent caring point. Endeavor of this aspect peaks in his edition of the *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Kroll 2014; Kroll 2015; Kroll 2017). As indicated in the Introduction, the aim of

this dictionary is to “provide immediate assistance for the interpretation and translation of words in certain contexts” (Kroll 2017, 10).

In short, for Kroll, the “Daoist verse” he explored at least include, firstly and undoubtedly, verses directly from Daoist scriptures, including but not limited to Shangqing school; and secondly, verses that are actively influenced by Daoism, as far as to Yuanyou, and as late as Li Bai’s work. While the author is a characteristic figure of flourishing of High Tang poetry’s achievement, he became Kroll’ enthusiastic exploring objects. We can boldly and roughly say, for Kroll, his standing ground is basically religious. Just like his teacher Schafer, whose interest in Cao Tang is not only limited to Cao Tang, behind these examinations of “Daoist verses” is a more ambitious agenda, that is, to change the bias and ignorance of Daoism.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from above, while basically acknowledging Daoism’s widely penetration in important poet such as Li Bai, Bokenkamp noticed two entirely different interpretation of Li Bai’s “Transcendent Diction”.<sup>12</sup> That is, one intellectual path took these immortal elements just as the author’s wild imagination, while another argues that these transcendence elements can only be properly understood when situated in Daoist context (Bokenkamp 1991, 57). Associated with this controversy is the verse author’s Daoist identity issue, that is, whether the writers who often deploy Daoist terms, imagery and allusions are themselves Daoists, can their belief tendency be discerned from this incorporation of Daoist wording, imagery, allusions and ideas? Some authors are notably known as Daoists, such as Wu Yün, or had ever demonstrated a clear dedication to Daoist beliefs, such as Cao Tang. But for other authors things can be complex, since there is no direct supporting evidence about their Daoist identity, while these authors can still have certain mastery of Daoist knowledge. Instead of

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<sup>11</sup> Wu Guangzheng also noticed this point (Wu 2021, 241).

<sup>12</sup> Bokenkamp, Stephen R. (2007). Li bai, huangshan, and alchemy. *Tang Studies* (25), 29-55.

entering this controversial debate, Bokenkamp figured out another way to discuss “the question of Taoist influence in Chinese Literature” (Bokenkamp 1991, 58). In his scholarly article “Taoism and Literature: the pi-lo Question”, he centered on a specific Daoist terminology, namely pi-lo 碧落, collecting twenty-one occurrences of the term in nineteen different poets ranging from early Tang to Late Tang (Bokenkamp 1991, 58). By examining these term occurrences in these poems, this study was to point out to what extent this term in a certain poem demonstrates a knowledge of the scriptural uses of the term, with an approach that was very much inspired by Zürcher’s Buddhist influence on Taoist scripture.

Relatively speaking, Bokenkamp’s inquiry interest is more apparent religious from the very beginning, which incipiently indicated in his Master thesis, “The Pacing the Void Stanzas of the Ling-pao Scriptures (Bokenkamp 1981).<sup>13</sup> In this work, precise understanding of terms, allusion and annotation is still his emphasis, which may recall his teacher Schafer’s influence. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of early Daoist schools including Shangqing Daoism and Celestial Master Daoism, as well as Buddhism (i.e., dharmabhānaka 梵唄) and ancient classics such as *Shujing* 書經 (Book of Documents)<sup>14</sup> and *Huainan zi* 淮南子 (Master Huainan), Bokenkamp translated, annotated, and provided a concise introduction to the ten-stanza liturgical hymns. Though at this moment, he didn’t explicitly deploy the term “Taoist literature”.

Later in his devotion to *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Bokenkamp directly utilized the terminology “Taoist literature”, as an independent Chapter that parallel to other parts named “Buddhist Literature”, “Women’s Literature”, “Popular

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<sup>13</sup> The Lingbao 靈寶 or Numinous Treasure school of Daoism, another essential school of Daoism in Six Dynasties, appeared a little later than Shangqing Daoism.

<sup>14</sup> Another prevailing name Shangshu 尚書.

Literature, “Drama”, “Fiction”, “Poetry”, “Prose” and so on, showing a tendency of setting Daoist literature as a distinct domain with specific signified content. Under this title “Taoist Literature”, Bokenkamp outlined five types of Daoist writings which he called “literary genres found in Taoist writings” (Bokenkamp 1986, 138).<sup>15</sup> The five genres, tentatively a portion of identified pre-Sung Daoist text, include (1) Revelation and Ritual, (2) Hagiography, (3) Historical and Topographical Monographs, (4) Philosophical and Alchemical Treatise, and (5) Exegeses and Encyclopedic Compilations, which are all basically religious texts (Bokenkamp 1986, 138).

When also applying the term “Taoist literature” and almost the same framework<sup>16</sup> in the contribution to *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Boltz specially address the period from Five Dynasties to Ming as the part two of “Taoist literature” section, in which she aims to present “the nature and diversity of canonic literature”. In her later more comprehensive survey, *A Survey of Taoist Literature, Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Boltz 1987), above five headings were elaborated into “ten genres...under five broad headings (Boltz 1987, 18). More Daoist texts in this period, such as *Gaoshang shenxiao zishu dafa* 高上神霄紫書大法 (Great Rites in The Purple Script of the Most Exalted Divine Emphyrean) were examined in this *Survey*. Meanwhile, a study of the Daoist textual traditions, which especially on the history and structure of *Daozang* itself, was provided.

Hence, for Bokenkamp and Boltz, although both of them already noticed there are abundant literary forms such as verse, novel, drama. etc. in Daoist cannon, as well as how *Daozang* and other extra-canonical collections inspired or even was the direct stimulus for many verses and novels in the “literary traditions” as we call today, it is worth noting that

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<sup>15</sup> Namely, “narrative, verse, commentary, technical and descriptive writing, song, and.....proto-drama, in both canonical and extra-canonical sources (Bokenkamp 1986, 138).

<sup>16</sup> As above.

their focus primarily lies more on Daoist textual tradition itself. Literary analysis, like the aesthetic dimension and its significance in religious practices (i.e., ritual and visualization), receive comparatively less attention in these studies.

Additionally, in Hong Kong and Taiwan areas, notable scholars such as Li Fengmao 李豐楙, Chan Wai Keung Timothy 陳偉強 and Lin Shuai Yue 林帥月, have also made significant contributions to the study and exploration of this concept.

For Li Fengmao, he emphasizes Daoist literature, which he also called “transcendent Daoist literature” (xiandao wenxue 仙道文學), is basically a branch of Daoist studies. Thus, for him, Daoist literature is undoubtedly religious, and its content should not limit to “how Daoism influenced literati’s work and folk tales (Li 1996, 3). But on the other hand, from the point of view that Daoism, ancient shamanic activity and fangshi’s roaming experience all share the common goal of seeking transcendence, works reflect these activities are all outlined in his Xiandao wenxue “lineage”. This to some extent enlarges what included in under this term and may involve the controversial author’ belief status debate that Bokenkamp ever wanted to avoid (Bokenkamp 1991, 57-58).<sup>17</sup> For Li, “Daoist literature” (Daojiao wenxue 道教文學) not only means “Daoism and Literature”, but it can also be “Literature(forms) in Daoism (classics, ritual, myth) and the Literary analysis of Daoist hagiography. Furthermore, it also includes revealing the religious connotation of fiction of “journeying through the transcendent realm” and “legend of divine women” (Li 2010, 467).

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<sup>17</sup> For example, while undoubtedly Li’sao 離騷 (Encountering sorrow) and Yuanyou 遠遊 (On Far Roaming) in *Chuci* are considered the early origins of "Literature of Roaming into the Transcendence" (youxian wenxue 遊仙文學), works by Ruan Ji, Guo Pu, and other writers with reclusive thoughts are seen as positive transformations stemming from the same source (Li 1996, 5). Further, for Cao Cao and his son, even though they doubt the existence of the celestial realm, (i.e., *Biandao* 辨道 (Argument on the Way), since in their verses, they beautifully "sings the music of roaming immortal" and “evokes the aura of immortality through poetic expression, these works are also placed within the broader context of the "Literature of Roaming into Transcendence series". Original sentences: 曹氏父子的《辨道》，在詩歌中卻仍是一再歌詠神仙之樂，均曾運用詩歌體的歎唱以激發遊仙的氣氛” (Li 1996, 7).



Lin Shuaiyue 林帥月, her definition of Daoist literature holds the same contribution and controversy.

In Hong Kong, it will be Timothy W. K. Chan's expertise and interest in exploring the contrasting and evolving imagery present in Daoist and Literary texts, thereby highlighting the interplay between Daoist tradition and literary tradition in traditional China. This can be seen in his works such as “Jade Flower and the Motif of Mystic Excursion in Early Religious Daoist Poetry,” which delves into the varying interpretations of the term “jade flower” in different contexts (Chan 2010, 166). As well as his study titled “Yujingshan chaohui, cong liuchao buxu yi dao chutang youxianshi” “玉京山朝會——從六朝步虛儀到初唐遊仙詩”, which traces the transformation of the imagery of “Jade capital Mountain” (Yujingshan 玉京山) from its sacred significance in the Lingbao ritual to its literary prominence admired by Tang poets (Chan 2021).

In his exploration of the interaction between Daoist tradition and literary tradition, Chan also identifies the distinctive literary features of Daoist sacred texts, with a specific focus on Shangqing Daoism. He argues that rich and vivid imagery are deployed and aroused in shangqing visualization practice (Chan 2008; Chan 2011). In his 2011 publication *Yixiang feixiang: shangqing dadongzhenjing suoshu zhi cunsi xiulian* 意象飛翔: 《上清大洞真經》所述之存思修煉, Chan also highlights the similarities between the visualization process and the creation of imagery in Literature (Chan 2011, 219, 243-245).

Furthermore, when referring to “Daoist poems,” as discussed in “Jade Flower and the Motif of Mystic Excursion in Early Religious Daoist Poetry,” Chan uses this term to describe compositions as early as Yuanyou that contain “esoteric Daoist references” (Chan 2010, 165). It is worth noting that in this study, the author adopts a “literary perspective” to analyze how

the descriptive elements contribute to the distinct, immortal world that the Daoist texts strive to depict (Chan 2010, 166). Although, primarily, his area of interest remains the study of religious and literary texts through philological analysis.

In mainland China, the recognition and inclusion of the term “Daoist literature” in the authoritative “Encyclopedia of China” dictionary in 1983 indicate this and signifies the emergence and continued development of this academic field. Two types of intellectual trends can be identified when examining Daoist literature. The first trend adopts a broad interpretation of “Daoist Literature,” with Zhan Shichuang 詹石窗 being an influential early researcher in this field. The second trend advocates for a more rigorous and narrow definition, and scholars such as Sun Changwu 孫昌武 and Wu Guangzheng 吳光正 have made significant contributions to this ongoing discussion.

For Zhan Shichuang 詹石窗, who published “*Daojiao wenxueshi*” 道教文學史 (A History of Daoist Literature) as early as 1992, holds that the scope of Daoist Literature, not only include works influenced by Daoism, but also needing to address writings reflect Lao-Zhuang thoughts (Zhan 1992, 4, 7). This definition, though with its rationale, but just as Wu criticized, there are few essential writers in traditional society that didn't write works that have connection to either Daoism or Buddhism (Wu 2014, 108).

Sun Changwu proposes three aspects of “Daoist literature,” which encompass various forms of literary works related to Daoism. According to him, the first aspect consists of literary works of significant value found in Daoist classics, mainly recorded in the *Daozang* 道藏 (The Daoist Canon). These works include different classes, such as biography, eulogy, petition and memorial and so on. The second aspect involves poetry composed by educated Daoist. While some of their works are part of the *Daozang*, many more can be found in

general or specialized collections. The third aspect of Daoist literature includes writings by scholars from past dynasties that incorporate Daoist themes or touch upon Daoism.

Analyzing this aspect requires a specific examination due to its broader scope and potential variations.

In summary, according to Sun Changwu, the first and second aspects undeniably fall under the category of “Daoist literature.” However, the third aspect necessitates a closer analysis due to its diverse nature, encompassing various works with Daoist content or involvement in Daoism (Sun 2014, 4-6). Sun Changwu's categorization provides a helpful framework for defining Daoist Literature, his definition brings us closer to a clearer and less broad understanding of Daoist verse, though it should be noted that while a poem written by an educated Daoist may not always be similar to a religiously-oriented Daoist verse counterpart.<sup>18</sup>

Proposing a very strict definition of Daoist literature, Wu Guangzheng also made certain reflective exploration on the undervaluation or ignorance of Daoist Literature. With comprehensive collection and review of studies on Daoist Literature from both overseas and mainland sources, Wu Guangzheng proposed that Daoist literature is religious in nature, explicitly exclude “Literature” influenced by Daoism from Daoist Literature. He argues that “Daoist Literature” should be the “Literature” produced in the process of Daoist practice and Daoism spreading, its main creator should be a “Daoist” (Daojiao tu 道教徒) (Wu 2014, 107-08). Further, Wu also has shown an awareness and reflection about the problem when applying the western construct evaluation standard, such as “pure literature”, to examine traditional society objects.<sup>19</sup> But further critical examination and reflective awareness of the

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Schafer pointed out that Wu Yün's “Cantos on pacing the void” didn't write “four arbitrary groups phrases that characterize the “pacing the void” poem (Schafer 1981, 389-90).

<sup>19</sup> His collaboration with another scholar who intended to examine how the term “Literature” in modern disciplinary sense came into establishment and then developed into the advocacy of “pure literature” (Chun

deployment of modern construct terms, for instance, “religion/religious”, “literature/literary,” “politics/political,” secular/divine, literati/Confucians, atheist(s) and genres. etc., which are in fact, nonexistent in traditional China, is still needed. Besides, on the vague distinguishing of what defines a “Daoist” and what character a “literato”, there is still room for examination and discussion.

Above all, the main controversial point about definition of “Daoist verse” is on those work influenced by Daoism.<sup>20</sup> That is, when the poet actively deployed Daoist wording, image and allusions, or referring to Daoist theme, such as depicting roaming, does these works count as “Daoist” verse, which basically implies religious connotation, or rightly as another interpretation approach indicates, just the poet’s wild “imagination”.<sup>21</sup> This question in fact related to the works of lots of poets, whose Daoist belief status cannot be figured out.

For this study, the objects examined in this dissertation are predominantly verses in scriptures that are included in the Daoist Canon.<sup>22</sup> There are several reasons for this choice. Firstly, there is no controversy regarding the religious nature of verses found in Daoist scripture. These verses are widely acknowledged and categorically recognized as “Daoist verses.” Additionally, while some significant studies have explored specific works like *Zhen'gao* (Bokenkamp 1986; Bokenkamp 1996; Bokenkamp 2021; Kroll 1985; Kroll 1996; Kroll 2009; Kroll 2012) and liturgical Buxu hymns (Schafer 1981; Schipper 1989; Zheng 2018; Luo 2018; Chan 2021; Feezeel 2022), there is also scholar having examined *Laojun*

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wenxue 純文學) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has shown this awareness (see Liu and Wu 2019), though further elaboration still need to be observed,

<sup>20</sup> In fact, Japanese Academia also addressed definition of Daoist Literature (Cf. Li 1996, 3). Important scholars there are 遊佐升 and 宮澤正順, who published relative monograph respectively in 1992 and 1984, with the former hold a broad sense of Daoist Literature that close to Zhan Shichuang, and the latter more “Daoist” in nature. (cf. Wu 2014, 105-06).

<sup>21</sup> This controversy has outlined by Bokenkamp in his own contribution to the question “Daoist influence in traditional poems”, he listed two representative scholars of the two sides. see (Bokenkamp 1991, 57)

<sup>22</sup> as has preliminarily elucidated in footnote 5.

*bianhua wuji jing* (老君變化無極經) (Dudink 2000). This study aims to shed light on lesser-discussed aspects of *Zhen'gao* verse, such as verses referring to merging phosphor and ingesting radiance, which are crucial practices of Shangqing school.

Meanwhile, this study also encompasses the relatively neglected Heptasyllabic verse found in *Huangtingjing*, showcasing its oral and narrative characteristics. Another focus of this study is the Tetrasyllabic verse, frequently employed as invocations and incantations in Daoist scriptures, which has received some scholarly attention but lacks thorough clarification and examination. All of these are trying to be presented in a comprehensive and systematic way to demonstrate the abundant verse form that is actively and skillfully used in Daoist scriptures (Chapter1).

Examining these verses found in Daoist scriptures provides valuable insights into a broader textual tradition that is often overlooked due to disciplinary divisions. It becomes apparent that “Literature” can be found within Daoist sacred texts. Notably, the verse forms used in Daoist scriptures align with the development of verse during the same period, as revealed by existing literary histories. Additionally, Chan's study highlights how the incantations and invocations found in Daoist scriptures, particularly those in Shangqing texts, offer a vivid glimpse into a genre that was prevalent during the Eastern Jin era but is no longer practiced today or documented by Liu Xie (Chan 2011, 223).

Furthermore, due to the distinct characteristics of Daoist verse, which combine sophisticated literary form with religious content, this study will encompass both a comprehensive analysis of the religious aspects and an exploration of the philosophical content. Additionally, it will include a literary examination, as defined by our modern disciplinary framework. Understanding the teachings and practices of Daoism is crucial for academic researchers exploring Daoist poetry within traditional Daoist texts, as well as

scholars investigating works that draw inspiration from Daoism. Recognizing the significant role of Daoist teachings and practices enables a deeper comprehension of the linguistic complexities present in these verses. Additionally, a literature review reveals the need to emphasize the rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of Daoist verse and their contributions within a religious context. This interdisciplinary approach, aimed at fully comprehending the features of Daoist verse, will be incorporated in Chapter 2. Daoist lore and practice will be explored in conjunction with the verses discussed in Chapter 1. The same approach will be applied to sections 3.1-3.2 of Chapter 3, further enhancing our understanding of the function of Daoist verse.

Besides, regarding the aforementioned controversial point regarding a poet's use of Daoist imagery and allusions to Daoist scripture, rightly as Bokenkamp has been aware of, regarding whether these authors necessarily a Daoist, where are their source of Daoist esoteric knowledge from and does Daoist cannon just a source of poetic inspiration rather than a deeply understood belief system, the answers to these questions may vary on a case-by-case basis. This study focuses on two representative case studies, Xi Kang and Yu Xin, who both demonstrate a profound understanding of transcendence and weave it into their verses, creating verses that is closely associated with a Daoist scriptures counterpart, for example, poems on roaming into transcendence and cantos on pacing the void respectively. However, despite these apparent similarities, the authors' relationship with Daoism, as well as the themes and literary devices employed in their creations, differ significantly. This distinction, explored in Chapters 4 and 5 and formed Part two of the Dissertation, justifies the rationale to address Daoist cannon verse when discussing “Daoist verse”. Additionally, these two parts provide a concise response to the typical question about how Daoism influences

traditional Literature<sup>23</sup>, specifically discussing verse here. Lastly, it sheds light on the ambiguous modern construct of the term “literati”, which typically refers to educated individuals but carries connotations of rational atheism current times, and a “Daoist”, which biasedly implies superstition and a lack of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> By doing so, it brings attention to the

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<sup>23</sup> As has preliminarily elaborated in footnote 5.

<sup>24</sup> This kind of bias, or attack, to specify, existed in both modern and premodern time. As Owen, who is primarily prominent as a literary scholar, has also noted that, people identified as advocates of public morals in premodern (also indeed modern), often showed disapproval of immortality cult and divine realms outside the human sphere. And the actual enduring interest relating to immortality, though maybe deem as “tainted”, as Owen termed it, included a wide range of contents: not only the “philosophy” on “the way”, but also immortality techniques that the adepts (fangshi) claimed to have practiced and used, as well as local cults (Owen 2006, 138-39).

This perspective has gradually been reflected upon and corrected in recent scholarship, though its impact persists. For example, Signs of this can be discerned in a Goossaert's 2015 publication. In this article, the author started his work stating, following the line of inquiry to explore the so called “elite life”: “The time when historians considered scholars and elites of late imperial China rational atheists, more or less tolerant of but uninterested in the religion of the masses, is thankfully coming to an end (Goossaert 2015, 82-125). This statement reflects a longstanding trend that depicting premodern scholars and elite as “rational atheists, more or less tolerant of but uninterested in the religion of the masses”. This reflected a somehow downlook attitude on folk cults, which should not belong to (educated) scholars and (prominent) elite. And this idea is realized and corrected at least till 2015, quite a recent time, showed such a voice's enduring existence. And Daoism, closely intertwined with mass folklore, was particularly susceptible to such disdain, at least in public phase.

This is a tendency existed both in modern and antiquity time. For modern and close modern period, the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century China witnessed grand powerful criticism toward traditional Chinese culture, in which Daoism was significantly attacked. As Wang Dongjie presented, several impressions were linked with Daoism: Daoism was described as casual syncretism of techniques and divinity worship, often associated with the “vulgarity of common people”, or as “degraded residues” of pure Daoism, namely Laozi and Zhuangzi philosophy. Not hard to discern, the despise or attack on Daoism was accompanied by the separation of called philosophical Daoism and religious Daoism, a distinction made by outsiders rather than the Daoist internal (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 6-7). In this separation, the latter often labeled as “superstition”, a distainable one, while the former is a noble “philosophy”.

Wang traces and attributes the discriminative attitude to Ming Qing Confucian officialdom tradition. In this time, Qing intellectuals attacking Song Neo-Confucianism thought by figuring out how they actually absorb Buddhism and Daoism. This is approach essentially same with the rationale that Song Neo-Confucianism belittled Buddhism and Daoism, meaning that once correlated with somehow “tainted” thought from the other two traditions, the criticizing target's legitimacy become doubted (Wang 2018, 143).

In fact, however, such kind of hostile attitude and exclusiveness incline not only can be traced back to Ming-Qing Confucian officialdom tradition, but also already existed in Late Han period, when Confucianism absorbed and integrated all the other “schools”, establishing its dominating orthodoxy status. Integrations also happened in later dynasties when official Confucian doctrines renew itself, for example, Song neo-Confucianism (Seidel 1989, 227). Turn back to the Han dynasty case, the increasing “partisanship”, as Schipper described, was noticeable in Wang Chong's 王充 *Lun Heng* (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 7). We can further notice that, when Liu Xie 劉勰, a scholar in Southern dynasties, defended Buddhism from Daoist attack, the Daoists' departure point is basically that Buddhism's regulations will result in the destruction of country, family and the practitioner's physical body (i.e., shaving the hair), which apparently violate, though not directly pointed out, the Confucian value and etiquette (i.e. against filial piety) (“Miehuo lun” 滅惑論). This indicates the Confucian fundamental status not only indicated in despise and partial recognition towards Daoism and Buddhism, but also presented in the Buddhism and Daoism controversy, in which Confucian value was adopted as theoretical weapon to attack their religious competitor. Meanwhile, the Confucian fundamental status also counts for the ignorance of Daoism in western studies affected by missionaries' perspective. The teachers of these missionaries are primarily Confucian scholars. As Seidel noted, in western studies, although Daoism is a fundamental part of traditional Chinese culture (which is a point has been realized by Chinese figures in early 20th century though they think this prevailing impact is on the negative side), the Daoist studies were the last to be conducted. Seidel attribute this to ideological blind spot instead of practical

blurry and debatable division between being a Daoist or a literato, and uncovers the intricate interplay of Daoism, Literature, and the intellectual world in traditional society.

Lastly, in order to enhance the theoretical significance and fully contextualize our analysis, this study will critically examine the construction of the modern secular disciplinary narrative and its divergence from the knowledge system in traditional Chinese society. Under this macro framework, though, when dealing with our study objects and examining the specific texts, the discussion of textual bibliography and philology is weaving in the whole analysis, for its importance considering the feature of ancient text, and specifically, the special preservation and circulation of Six Dynasties Daoist sacred texts. In the forthcoming section of Introduction, we will present a conceptual framework inspired by Charles Taylor, and a contextualization of an approximate equivalent concept of “Literature” in traditional society. Besides, we will critically examine the contemporary standard of literary evaluation known as “pure literature” in order to uncover the reasons behind the exclusion or underestimation of Daoist verse and the existence of this “blind spot” within the current framework of modern disciplinary categorizations. Through this theoretical framework, we aim to reveal the underlying factors contributing to the neglect of Daoist verse within contemporary scholarship, while with the textual and bibliographical analyzing tool together,

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difficulties. From seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is Christian missionaries that shaped Europe’s perception of China, the teachers of whom, not hard to discern, are basically Confucians (Seidel 1989, 226).

Above all, despite the actual existent enduring interest in immortality no matter from well-educated literati to rulers, at least in public values, Daoism is quite easily depicted as a low-class religion that entangled with mass religion, are “collection” of superstitious technique and divinity worship, lacking sophisticated “philosophy”. This comment accompanied by the separation of Lao-Zhuang thought, as notable philosophy, and disdainable religious Daoism which is a container of all the other undesirable techniques or worship that is not apparently Buddhist. Such attitude and discrepancy, not originated from Daoism internal side, but created by Confucian commentators and scholars as Schipper and Goossaert called the “fundamentalist Confucians”. Even in early 20<sup>th</sup> century China, the important figures of new culture invention campaign, though radical attack traditional culture including Confucianism, underlying they are still profoundly affected by the Confucian fundamentalism and sustained the stand of premodern Confucians, as Wang’ article has expounded. In western academia, the missionary’s depiction which built the image of China are shaped by their Confucian teacher. Besides, in concrete historical context such as from seventeenth to twentieth century, the biased attitude and attack attitude also come from secularization process. This secularization process is further elaborated in section two of Introduction.



we will delve into the knowledge system and its existing and circulating status in Six Dynasties.

### Conceptual framework

The contemporary field of study and its associated research approaches undeniably exhibit notable differences when compared to those prevalent in traditional society. Just as Charles Taylor partially critiques and adopts the crucial strand of contemporary secularization theory following Max Weber, he adopted the antonym of the term “disenchantment”, namely “enchantment”, to describe the premodern condition.

Specifically, for Weber, who expounded that our modern world is a secularized world, one of the features of this world is the “differentiation” and “autonomization” of different spheres, such as what we today call economy, politics, religion, literature, philosophy etc. today. This division and differentiation are driven by a process called “rationalization” (cf. Taylor 2007, 779). In this disenchanted world, as Weber termed, secularity in three senses could be observed, namely secularized public spaces, the decline of belief and practice, and finally secularity in the third sphere, which made the new conditions of belief. In this new condition, belief becomes an option other than the definitely unchallenged and the unproblematic existence (Taylor 2007, 1-22). Put it another way, the process of disenchantment of the world, rationality, calculation, and empirical knowledge replaced the supernatural and metaphysical. This disenchantment has resulted in the decline of traditional religious authority, the growth of secularization, and a diminished significance of mystical and transcendent elements in shaping society and culture (Weber 2004, 13, 30) (Grosby 2013, 301). Although, for China’s religious question, Goossaert figured out that, this

replacement of modernization and science to the more integrated traditional order didn't completely realize. While the ideology and secularization process were forcefully enforced over a century span, the traditional order has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, persisting both locally and transnationally, and having spawned several waves of new religious movements (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 7-8).<sup>25</sup>

No matter how, for Charles Taylor, he developed the term enchantment as the antonym secularization. Although Taylor thought enchantment may not be the best expression, he used it to highlight the "crucial feature of the premodern condition". According to Taylor, the enchanted world... "is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in" (Taylor 2007, 26). As for the "enchanted view of the universe", as Taylor describes it, it is a world that "saw us human being in a field of spirits, some of whom were malign" (Taylor 2007, 27). It is right in this traditional world contrast to a world of a secular age: "The whole set of distinctions we make between the religious, political, economic, social, etc., aspects of our society cease to make sense. In these societies (note: archaic societies), religion was everywhere, was interwoven with everything else, and in no sense constituted a separate 'sphere' of its own" (Taylor 2007, 2)

This modern/ traditional differentiation, and the awareness for the "modern condition" evoked by Taylor also offer inspiration for the case of China. While their discussions primarily focused on Western countries, China underwent a radical process of modernization during the last century. At least in the field of modern subject establishment, the same

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<sup>25</sup> Goossaert listed several manifestations of this "secularization" process: one of them is the category of religion was formed, and separate religious institutions were simultaneously established and recognized as autonomous entities. Others are Christianity emerged as a dominant institutional presence and prevalent normative model, while the ideology and political regime that achieved the highest level of political sacralization emerged as the most successful (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 8).

categorization/automorization of different spheres such as politics, economics, literature, history, philosophy. etc. were artificially brought into being.

However, the modern disciplinary framework is not the case of the knowledge system that existed in traditional China. So sometimes we may find these phenomena that, firstly, for Literature, History, Philosophy and Politics, these subjects are examining the same objects, which is especially true for ancient times. For example, *Zhuangzi*, will probably exist in all the above-mentioned subjects' narratives, such as "philosophy classics" in philosophy realm, From a literary standpoint, it demonstrates exceptional allegorical skills., while in the field of religious studies, not a few Daoist exercises can find its early origin in *Zhuangzi*.<sup>26</sup> And secondly, the process of "rationalization" tended to overlook or downplay the religious aspects that were in fact unavoidably "interwoven" in premodern texts.

It is also in this modernization process that Daoism and Buddhism are labeled as "superstitions", in which Daoism received more severe attacks.<sup>27</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that many practices considered "superstitious", such as fengshui, yinyang, and five phases, are closely related to Daoism.

These conceptualizations of the modern world as articulated by Weber and Taylor, and by Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer in the specific Chinese case, basically provide us an outlook and reflection of our "modern condition", it figures out how our knowledge system and intellectual world is built in our modern time, which is largely different from the traditional society. With awareness of this, we may have a consciousness about what we may neglect under our modern research paradigm which is based on thought of categorization and

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<sup>26</sup> When discussing the crucial concept of Chinese "Literature", Owen also noticed the case of *Zhuangzi*'s vague position within the framework of modern discipline. (Owen 2017, 4).

<sup>27</sup> About the "invention" of the concept "superstition" and "religion" in Late Qing and the early Republican China, Goossaert has a sophisticated elucidation about this, see (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 4-13).

in the process of rationalization. For example, when we modern scholars are examining subjects from traditional society, we may not consider that the scriptures from Daoism, such as Shangqing school scriptures, may have impact on literature, nor we may think these “religious” scripture will contain “literature” (though religious scholars will notice this when reading scriptures, but their emphasis is more on Daoism cosmology, related practices such as visualization and ritual. etc.). So, these artificial lines of separation tend to obscure from view the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach.

In fact, specialists in relevant fields, such as those working on the domains of the literary and the religious, all have noticed this kind of cross-discipline feature when tackling the ancient China study field, when departing from their own research area. For example, Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, as one of the most recognized traditional Chinese literature scholar in Mainland China, he described a necessity for the knowledge of literary thought History, which further requires the knowing of philosophical idea in simultaneous time (Yuan 2002,85).<sup>28</sup> For Stephen Owen, who is well-known for his study on the “early making” of traditional Chinese poetry, he has already noticed the importance of “transcendence” in these poetries(Owen 2006, 139-76). He further observantly figured out that, our current studies have a “contemporary scope of literature”, which may not fit the traditional Chinese understanding in pre-900CE. (Owen 2017, 3). Meanwhile, for Robinet who characterized with her comprehensive study on Highest Clarity Daoism (Shangqing Daoism 上清派道教), she figured out that there is a remarkable poetic power of Shangqing language. (Robinet 2000, 197). Also, as the pioneer of proposing the concept “Daoist literature”, Bokenkamp and Schafer will point out the poetry was a reliable indicator of heavenly

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<sup>28</sup> “我在講授中國文學史的過程中深深感到，研究文學史必須了解文藝思想史，研究文藝思想史又必須了解哲學思想史”。

inspiration. Generations of secular poets have used stylistic and thematic elements that are reminiscent of Yang Xi's poetry (Bokenkamp 1986, 142; Bokenkamp 2021, 5).<sup>29</sup>

Hence, reasonably speaking, a concept and conceptual framework that transcends modern disciplinary boundaries and aligns with the knowledge system of premodern times is a necessity. In light of this, this study takes a holistic approach that repudiated the modern secularized narrative separating religious aspect from other spheres such as literature, philosophy, and politics, which are in fact naturally interwoven in traditional society. As Goossaert pointed out, although the holistic approach has its application scope limitations, it has the “virtue” of showcasing the impossibility of separating the religious from “the secular” in traditional society (Goossaert and Plamer 2011, 7). By embracing a more comprehensive perspective, though still have to deploy the modern term for reasons (as before), this investigation aims to get close to the natural status of the traditional textual and intellectual world.

Just as *Wenxin diaolong* has been showcased and criticized by modern literary scholars who advocate the valuations standard of “pure literature”, the author Liu Xie’s systematic elucidation about abundant contemporary work categories is going after his “theoretical framework”. namely the opening chapters “Yuandao” 原道 (Dao as Origin), “Zhengsheng” 徵聖 (Evidence from the Sage), “Zongjing” 宗經 (The Classics as Literary Sources). Furthermore, unlike the narrow focus of our contemporary understanding of “pure literature,” Liu Xie's collection encompasses a significant number of writings intended for practical purposes. Additionally, even *Wen Xuan*, which modern scholars praised for its selection criterion of emphasizing “Refined Literature” and indeed exclude certain works from the “Histories” and “Master” categories, its collection still include works that go beyond

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<sup>29</sup> Bokenkamp cited Schafer to expound this opinion.

mere “art for art's sake”. The following section analyzes the concept of “pure literature” as embraced by modern Chinese intellectuals and explores its associated connotations and reception process. Following, the study investigates the traditional Chinese concept of “wen” within the Six Dynasties corpus, which can be loosely correspond to “Literature” in modern sense (Owen 2017, 4). The objective of this is to provide a contextual understanding of the “categories” in the Six Dynasties period, highlighting their differences from modern literary genres.

### A Critical Examination of the Evaluation Criteria for “Pure Literature”.

This section we will examine the evaluation standards behind contemporary literary study: the ideal of “pure literature”, which is deeply rooted in the radical adoption of modern/western discourse from Late Qing on in China. According to Zhang, Jian’s study with abundant materials: The term “pure literature” (Chun wenxue 純文學) and the division of “pure literature” and Miscellaneous literature (za wenxue 雜文學)<sup>30</sup> is basically from Japan, while for Japan’s intellectual world, its origin can be traced back to Thomas De Quincey (Zhang 2018: 80-87). Specifically, scholars who hold the division of “pure literature” and “mix-literature” in early 20<sup>th</sup> century China, such as Huang, Ren 黃人 (...) and Lǚ, Simian 呂思勉 (1884-1957), have been impacted by Ōta Yoshio 太田善男 (1880-?), who had an obvious absorption from De Quincey’s division of literature of knowledge and literature of power. In Yoshio’s elucidation, the feature of literature lies in its beauty in both content and form. The characteristic division between pure literature and mixed literature is, for the former, it is lyrical and functions though affections of pleasure and empathy, for the latter, it

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<sup>30</sup> Translation inspired by Wilt Idema, see (Idema 2014, 31).

is for knowledge, and it works with wit. The purpose of the former is to move, while the latter is to teach, which reminds us of the most quoted paragraph of De Quincey's critical essay: "The Literature of Knowledge and the Literature of Power", written for Alexander Pope and first published in *North British Review* in 1848.

In China, Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) is one of the most recognized and earliest scholars who employ "pure literature" to analyze traditional novel, such as *Sanguo yanyi* and *Honglou meng*.<sup>31</sup> In his analysis, he maintains that literature should be aesthetic disinterestedness rather than for a purpose. That is, literature is not to make a living, not to serve social and political functions, but just for playing. This Aesthetic disinterestedness upholding is in fact not inherited in the later drastic political change process. The featured connotations, or specialized version of "pure literature" in China are basically two connotations: first of all, being lyrical in content, and secondly, with sophisticated literary devices.

In the 1980s, after the prolonged era of political dominance, the desire to return to Literature itself has been awakened theories which emphasize the form aspects, such as new criticism, narratology, and structural linguistics are enthusiastically introduced into China, as a reaction and repulsion of the extremely instrumental use of literature for political purpose in the past decades. Literature is redefined as "an art of language", emphasizing its autonomous position, though, again, ironically, it in fact bears another sense of political function in the deep and never be disinterest ultimately. But no matter how, a trend of rewriting Literature history happened in this time.

Though the conjunction of the western term "Literature" with China's modernization

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<sup>31</sup> Specifically, in *Wenxue xiaoyan* 文學小言 (Brief comment on Literature) and *Hongloumeng pinglun* 紅樓夢 (The Remarks on Dream in Red Chamber).

process is somehow intricate, just like its counterpart in Western traditions, the modern secularized Chinese Literature includes the four genres of poetry, novel, drama, and prose, and adheres to the standard of “pure literature” that emphasizes lyrical content and artistic form. This standard serves as the self-explanatory guiding principle when analyzing selecting and narrating literary phenomena.

There is always some controversy regarding the essence and distinguishing feature of Literature, regardless of China or the western world.<sup>32</sup> The term “pure literature”, which emphasizes the autonomous feature of Literature, does confirm literature’s position as an independent field that can be distinguished from other modern subjects, other than affiliated tool of others or serving other purpose.<sup>33</sup> However, the establishment of a standard often leads to the neglect of other aspects, as Owen observes the problem of “taking a category of one tradition and looking for it in another” (Owen 2017, 3). The term “Literature” itself is an imported word, and in traditional Chinese, the closest equivalent is the term “wen” 文.

However, when we consider the categorization system of traditional China, specifically “Wen” and “Bi,” we encounter certain complexities. For instance, texts that we may consider literary today, such as *Zhuangzi*, did not belong to the category of “wen” in ancient times. On the other hand, there are other texts that were categorized as “wen” in the past but are not

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<sup>32</sup> In both western and Chinese intellectual world, there exist the definition of literature in narrow sense and in broad sense. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century of China, Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) holds the opinion of literature in broad sense, that is, those are written in paper or silks, all are “literature”, which is not widely accepted at that time. In contrast, just as illustrated above, most modern Chinese scholars tend to define literature in narrower sense, at most taking in mix-literatures which are practical writings. In the western world, the well-known Glossary from Abrams, its entry of “literature” outlines three opinions of literature definition. The first is the narrowest sense that designate fictional and imaginative writings, which is delimited to above-mentioned four genres. In a broader sense, literature also includes other writings crossing boundaries to, say, philosophy, history, and even scientific work to general audiences, if only these works excel in “form, expression and emotional power”. In the most expanded use, “literature” refers to all written work, just like Zhang Taiyan’s opinion, “whatever kind or quality” (Abrams and Harpham 2014, 200-01).

<sup>33</sup> As early as in the 1920s, Zhu Xizu 朱希祖 has clarified that his upholding of “pure literature”, is just based on the need of independence of literature, together with “philosophy”, “history” and others, cf. (Zhang 2018, 83).



regarded as literature today. These texts include certain practical writings that are still recorded in *Wenxin diaolong* and *Wenxuan* but have been excluded or undervalued in contemporary literature history. This issue is closely tied to our examination of Daoist verse such as invocations(zhu 祝) examined in Chapter 1. These contradictions all create the problem of employing a term, category, and connotation from a tradition in order to look into another one. This usually creates a mismatch that is not recognized as such. Moreover, as Owen's reflection on the term "wen" from 3rd century to the late imperial time indicates, even within the traditional Chinese tradition, there was a fluctuating definition of what constitutes "wen" and the categorization of "wen" 文 and "bi" 筆. This category of wen and bi has delighted modern literary scholars who celebrated finding the distinction between pure literature and mixed literature in traditional China. However, it is important to recognize that this categorization was not always stable and eventually dissolved in later dynasties (Owen 2017: 10). This is also the criticizer of "pure literature in China", such as Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 has figured out in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup>

### Historicized Traditional "Literature": Centering on *Wenxin Diaolong* and *Wenxuan*

In light of this, regarding what it is the case in the traditional China, we need to go back to the category system at that time, just as the solution that Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 had proposed after pointing out this problem. That is, it is necessary for us to investigate and represent the categorization system c at that time, specifically, Six Dynasties which applied to

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<sup>34</sup> Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948) just has an accurate critique: first of all, the pure literature only contains four genres, namely poetry, novel, drama, and later added prose, with this range, how we count the rhapsody of Han Dynasties(hanfu 漢賦). Further, the division of "wen" and "bi" in Six dynasties does not continue to exist, how, as Zhu wittily asked, does this division of pure and mixed literature base? Zhu Ziqing, *PingGuo shaoyu zhongguo wenxue pipingshi shangjuan* 評郭紹虞中國文學批評史上卷 (Remark on Chinese Literary Criticism of Guo Shaoyu, volume one) (cf. Zhang 2018, 90). Owen puts it as: (this distinguishing of "wen" and "bi" "virtually dissolved" in Tang Dynasty with only a few survivals (Owen 2017, 10).

our study objects here, and contextualize it in its existing historical background, to avoid the negative selecting from our “modern” lens and gain a more empathy idea and different understanding to practical writings. A brief examination of *Wenxin diaolong* and *Wenxuan* will help here.

For *Wenxin diaolong*, which is often praised for four aspects: first, its abundant record and discussion of writing genres (36 genres in total specifically). Second, it distinguishes wen and bi, which is mostly highly lavished and praised by modern scholars because this can be analogous to pure literature and mix-literature in our time, as a sign of emerging idea that literature become an independent field. And following the third, the 36 genres were classified to these two categories, wen and bi, which Liu Xie hold the standard of “rhymed and unrhymed”.<sup>35</sup> This division serves as the fundamental logical rationale, ensuring logical coherence throughout the underlying structure of this book. And fourth, its exploration of the nature of literature.

Put aside the division of wen/bi, or the modern scholar called “pure/ miscellaneous literature”, for Liu Xie, it is no doubt that no matter the writing is to reveal etiquette (Li 禮), or it is to manifest emotion (Qing 情), the success in form and excel in language skill are both emphasized.<sup>36</sup> Put it another way, though the form requirement different for wen and bi, what Liu Xie praised is both in the successful using of language to as for writing target, no matter to reveal the etiquette (Li 禮), or express the emotion (Qing 情).

What we observed from Xiao Tong’s *Wen Xuan* will show more of the contraction indicated above that presented from within its text itself. Xiao Tong’s *Wen Xuan*, which is

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<sup>35</sup> “The Rhymed writing is wen while the unrhymed writing is bi” (youyun weiwen, wuyunweibi 有韻為文，無韻為筆)(WXDLZ, 655; Cai and Zhang 2019, 10).

<sup>36</sup> The division of wen and bi, following the definition above.

enthusiastically and highly praised by modern scholars for its more apparent advocacy and evaluation of “pure literature”. Indeed, there are certain reasons for that. In *Wen Xuan’s* Preface and its final collected content, we do observe signs of emphasizing form and an awareness of what is the “literary” and what is not, with which Xiao Tong adopted it as the criteria of selecting works included in. In the Preface, Xiao Tong listed the genres he omitted and preserved, and gave a brief reason about his selection. In his elucidation, he firstly left out works from the Masters of pre-Qin, such as *Mengzi* 孟子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Xunzi* 荀子 and *Han Feizi* 韓非子, the reason is that – in his understanding – these writings are primarily for establishing doctrines, while – again, in his understanding – skillful writing is not their fundamental concern(以立意為宗，不以能文為本). Then Xiao Tong lists the second type that he omitted, they are the “beautiful language of the worthies” (賢人之美辭), “the upright integrity of loyal minister” (忠臣之抗直), “the speeches of great strategists” (謀夫之話) and “The eloquence of sophists” (辨士之端). In Xiao Tong’s opinion, though these contents are widely recorded and transmitted, however, since they are not like “literary pieces” (事異篇章), the anthology doesn’t include them. Then for the third type, namely the “histories that record events” “chorological-organized works, since their function is to praise right and censure wrong, as well as “recording and distinguishing similarity and difference(褒貶是非，紀別異同), which Xiao Tong thought was not like literary works”, these are also not included in the Anthology. Most of these excluded works, in traditional knowledge system, are from collection of 經(Classics), 史(History), 子(Master) (WX1, 1; Knechtges 1982, 19), which, in our modern mind, shows the awareness to distinct “Literature” and scholarly works. In contrast, What Xiong Tong hold to preserve in the anthology includes their Judgements(zan 贊), treatises(lun 論), postfaces(xu 序) and evaluations(shu 述), what they

have in common with is their “intricate verbal eloquence” and “literary splendor”, the form aspect. See from this, it is indeed that Xiao Tong highly emphasizes the form aspect and already has a standard about “literary” and with this to select what works to be included in the anthology. Meanwhile, even in this concise narration of the Preface, we will clearly know and notice the abundant genres that have existed, which shows the awareness of classification of writings. All of these indeed show the *Wen Xuan* already obtained a view about “Wen”, namely “refined Literature” which distinguish “wen” from writings in a broad scope, and this standard does have relation to the valuation of the formal aspect. However, this standard does not align with the modern scholars’ idealized and praised understanding of “Literature”. Suppose we do look carefully into the whole content of the Preface, and the actual works and works that *Wen Xuan* takes in. In that case, it is not hard for us to find the contradiction to the “pure literature” in our modern sense, which asks being lyrical in content and aesthetic in form. Seen the 37 genres<sup>37</sup> in total, certain number of genres' content are not lyricalness, but for analyzing, reasoning, debating and narrating. This has already been indicated and outline in Xiao Tong's Preface:

Next, Admonition arises from repairing defects;

Warning comes from aiding correction.

The Treatise in analysis and reasoning is refined and subtle;

The Inscription in narrating events is clear and smooth.

When praising the deceased, a Dirge is made;

When painting portraits, an Encomium is composed.<sup>38</sup>

(Knechtges and Xiao 2014, 81).

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<sup>37</sup> There is also version of 38 or 39 genres (Knechtges 2017, 295).

<sup>38</sup> 次則箴興於補闕，戒出於弼匡，論則析理精微，銘則序事清潤，美終則誄發，圖像則贊興(WXDLZ) .

Further, though the Masters' work, such as *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, *Han Feizi*, which include sufficient "philosophical or political" discussion, are omitted from the selection, in the actual collection of *Wen Xuan*, we will see almost five chapters are for treatise(論)lun, which is obviously not for lyrical purpose but addressing moral and political topic. Combining the exposition in the Preface, Xiao Tong obviously does not exclude those writings that serve specific practical purposes. For these writings, as we can observe, are mostly in what Knechtges called "elegant parallelism", even the prose in *Wen Xuan*, which are thought to be chosen as "refined literature"(Knechtges and Xiao 2014, 45-46). Put it another way, though for practical purposes other than being lyrical, the ornate and aesthetic in form are very important evaluation standards. If we recall Xiao Tong's explanation for why and why not take in certain writings above, the main selecting criteria of this Anthology are relatively clear.<sup>39</sup> A certain sense of what the Formalist in 20<sup>th</sup> century "foregrounding" of literary device can already be observed, though, it may be out of expectation of our modern literary scholar, this criterion also applied for those practical writings serve specific purpose, as above quoted, which occupies much larger proportion, no matter in *Wen Xuan*, and in *Wenxin diaolong*.

Above all, as we can observe from both *Wenxin diaolong* and *Wen Xuan*, in fact, accounting around 2/3 proportion genres is above mentioned practical writings. Meanwhile, it is not hard to find, the requirement for literary device, such as the verbal eloquence, the skillful utterance, and the language ornament, are not only requirement for works that are lyrical.

*Wen Xuan's* case may be more thought-provoking for our reflection here. Contrasting

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<sup>39</sup> Tao Yuanming's (365-427) neglect in *Wen Xuan* may also indicate the style the Anthology praise, inversely.

to *Wenxin diaolong*, *Wen Xuan* received more praise in advocates of pure literature today, because contrasting to making “Yuandao”原道(Dao as Origin), “Zhengsheng”徵聖(Evidence From the Sage), “Zongjing”宗經 (The Classics as Literary Sources) as the opening chapters of *Wenxin diaolong*, and they are somehow taking as the “theoretical framework” of the whole structure of this comprehensive monograph, in Xiao Tong’s Preface we may see a seemingly more clear-cut proposition of praising “refined literature” because Xiao Tong’s unambiguous exclusion of works from the Masters and the Histories, and the reason is that writing skills or other form and expressing factors are not their fundamental concern.<sup>40</sup> This indeed shows that, for Xiao Tong, he probably already has formed a very clear idea about what is “wen” and what is not, and this feature is rightly highly praised and highlighted by modern literary scholars. However, as we have illustrated above, though emphasizing the literary devices, this emphasis is obviously a universal standard, for both lyrical and non-lyrical genres. What we may further deduce is that, since Xiao Tong had already chosen what he considered as “Literature” in this Anthology, what he already included in this collection is just the “literature” he recognized. Hence, no matter the “Examination Questions”(ce wen 策文) for the “flourishing talents”(Xiucai 秀才) to answer which addressing problems on agriculture, policies, personnel issues and so on, or the Proclamations(Xiwen 檄文) to accuse enemy leaders for one’s own commander, or the memorial writing for a Buddhist temple, such as The “Toutuosi beiwen” 頭陀寺碑文 (Stele for the Dhūta Temple), which is full of Buddhist terms, concepts and thoughts writing in parallel prose, they all should belong to the “Wen” scope as Xiao Tong has defined.

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<sup>40</sup> A typical example is Yang Honglie 楊鴻烈; his comments for *Wen Xuan* and *Wenxin Diaolong* are very representative of modern literary scholars who hold "pure literature" to evaluate traditional texts and writings (Zhang 2018, 87-88).

Therefore, it becomes evident that, though lyricism holds a significant place as a primary criterion for evaluating literary works in contemporary discourse, at least during the period encompassing *Wen Xuan* and *Wenxin diaolong*, the definition of “wen”, a roughly analogue to “Literature” today, extended beyond the sole expression of emotions, as well as beyond modern literary genres such as poetry, novels, drama, and refined prose. Instead, it encompassed a vast range of more than thirty categories of writings.

However, as an establishment of the authority of pure literature, the form requirement for practical writings, which actually existed in Liu Xie and Xiao Tong’s work, seem somehow neglected. In fact, just as Zhou pointed out, one of the negative impacts of worshipping “pure literature” as the mainstream standard of literature history today is that the practical writings with intricate aesthetical device disappeared (Zhou 2019, 9). And more specifically for our discussion in this section, the example of the “Toutuosi beiwen” mentioned above, will more help with our case, because, apparently, in this commemorative writing of Dhūta Temple’s construction, the whole text is inevitably discussing Buddhist concepts and doctrines, and it was written to record, introduce and commemorate this temple, other for “Art’s sake”, but it is still included in Xiao Tong’s selection of “refined” literature.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, returning to our focus of examination, how about the verses that addressing Daoist content, say, ritual or visualization practice, can be classified as “Literature”, can we sort to “Literature” within unquestionably religious text? How should we comprehend the religious element, specifically Daoist elements discussed here, in the extensively recognized classical “Literary” texts? These issues, along with underlying reflective awareness guiding analysis, serve as the primary objective of this dissertation, aiming to stimulate thoughtful

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<sup>41</sup> Though this work is in parallel prose that can be called elegant of course.

deliberation among readers.

## PART1 CANONICAL VERSES IN EARLY DAOISM

### 1. The Abundance of Verse Forms in Daoist Practice

The prevalent use of diverse literary forms, such as tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, heptasyllabic verses, and rhymed prose, in Daoist scriptures is an observable phenomenon. However, these literary forms have traditionally been marginalized in the realm of “high Literature” or even “Literature” due to perceived deficiencies in the evaluation standard of what is “Literary.” For instance, a scholar posits that using verses to expound teachings and discuss the 'way' often results in a diminished artistic quality of the writings.<sup>42</sup> This perspective, while possibly accurate in some instances, raises the question of whether literature discussing religious or philosophical matters, or those serving preaching or philosophical discussions, necessarily lack artistry or are confined to dull, abstract wording devoid of figurative features, which assumption is problematic and warrants a reevaluation.<sup>43</sup>

This chapter, based on an in-depth examination of primary sources, particularly Daoist verse in Daoist scriptures, argues for a critical reassessment of our current standards regarding the concept of “pure literature.” By adopting a perspective that is more attuned to the historical context of these verse forms, taking into account their religious context and

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<sup>42</sup> 藉詞來說教論道，其藝術性的低落是意料中事”Cf. (Wu 2014, 109).

<sup>43</sup> In the context of traditional China, there are, in fact, no modern disciplinary terms such as “philosophy,” “literature,” and “history. These disciplines, which emerged in a modern, secular age, are characterized by the “independence of different spheres” (Taylor 2007, 779) (Weber 2004, 13). This modern world is a disenchanted world that excludes belief in gods, ghosts, and spirits prevalent in premodern times. Therefore, while this study continues to use these terms, which are part of the modern discourse, for the traditional society case, it should not be interpreted as devoid of religious connections. In fact, the “philosophy” discussed in these poems often has significant religious undertones.



purpose, we can achieve a more nuanced assessment.

In other words, we can bridge the disciplinary gap by adopting a holistic approach that considers religion an equal conversation partner. The artistic value of these verses in Daoist materials will also be fully appreciated if we challenge the prevailing standards of “pure literature” often used to evaluate Daoist poetry.

This holistic perspective, which incorporates religion, sheds new light on these undervalued Daoist verses, compelling us to reconsider our standards and assumptions regarding our definition of “literary.”

### 1.1 Tetrasyllabic verses, invocations, and incantations

Daoist texts make abundant use of tetrasyllabic verse; they are widely deployed in Daoist scriptures. This feature is true even in *Zhen 'gao*, which is characterized by its abundance of pentasyllabic verse at first sight. Most of these tetrasyllabic works appear as invocations or incantations. Though initially intended for a specific religious purpose, these verses possess high artistic quality.

Overall, here below discuss several occasions where these invocations or incantations are applied, enabling us to establish a primary categorization of these tetrasyllabic verses.

Tetrameter verses play a vital role in visualization practice. Content of these verses align with both the subject matter and the actions being depicted. For example, the invocations and incantations executed in practice evoke vivid and imaginative images in the practitioner or even viewer's mind on the level of visual and aural senses. A piece from *Basujing* may be one of our representative examples:

*In Basujing*<sup>44</sup>, in the practice of absorbing the light of the sun, after ingesting the purple breath in the five-color flowing sunglow in the visualization, the adept will intone:

Fluid, the *hun*-soul of the sun flows with light,

日魂流光

Torrential, the five colors pour.

五色滂沱

Refining the *hun*-soul in the Golden Gate,

鍊魂金門

The round light is grand and dazzling.

圓景峨峨，

The numinous light reveals effulgence,

靈暉吐曜

Receiving the brilliantness in the celestial river.

受明天河

The Jade Ganoderma is much and brim over,

玉芝盈溢

The cymbidium, how moist and fragrant!

蘭潤芳嗟

... ..

(four lines omitted here for relevance and length consideration)

The form attached to ultra sunlight,

形附太暉

Soar, the corporeal in flying sunglow.

身騰飛霞

Thousands of years and eon,

千齡萬劫

Let people not decline and spoil.

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<sup>44</sup> The full name: *Dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi riyue Huanghua jue* 洞真太上八素真經服食日月皇華訣.

使不傾差

(DZ 1323, 0478b; Translated by me)

As with many invocations in Daoist texts, their content is closely related to the relevant practices. Knowing what the practice is and the elucidation and instruction around this very piece of invocation will help us get a more precise understanding of the meaning of this work. Here, we find the practice of absorbing sun radiance at a particular time. Thus, we see many rephrases depicting the effulgence and brightness of the sun, impressing the reader with specific images and scenery of glittering radiance.

Meanwhile, right before expounding the specific steps of this practice, there are two paragraphs specifically about the sun essence (rijing 日精) and “moonlight” (yueguang 月光); it may help us understand more precisely its connotations. Through this explanatory tale in prose, we will promptly comprehend the reason behind the initial couplet of this invocation, referring to the flowing light of hun-soul and the presence of five-color pouring. We will notice that the five colors are visualized by the adept, while there is the action of envisioning the five-color flowing sun glow.

For the second couplet, we will know the Golden Gate (Jinmen 金門) is the place to refine and generate the sun essence because, in the paragraphs mentioned above, it writes: “the sun essence is red, .....it is often on the third, ninth, seventeenth, twenty-first and twenty-fifth day, on the Golden gate, .....refined sun soul brightening essence eight lights. On this day, the sun Florence flows, and scatters, the flying(sun) root pouring, the golden essence are full and overflow, (thus) the whole world is nourished”. In this narrative, the Golden Gate is also where the adept ascends after achieving transcendence. It is said the

Golden Gate is in the western pass of heaven and is the gate to reach the numinous state.<sup>45</sup>

From the analysis above, we can see that, though the context has almost reminded us of the content of the invocation, we still can discern the unique poetic qualities created by this tetrameter verse. This prosodic aesthetic can be indicated in two aspects. First of all, the wording and phrasing of the invocation are quite depictive and illustrative. It can be adequately commented on as work with artistry, though Daoism should not correlate to aesthetic value or intention in a modern prejudice. Specifically, as indicated, its active employment of adjective words and verbs makes the image of the verse quite vivid and sensory. For example, the light “flowing” and the five colors “pour.” The reduplicative words “grand and magnificent” (e' e 峨峨) vividly illustrate the splendid vision of refining and absorbing sun energy. The color scheme indicated in this short invocation is abundant and bright; each careful reader can form a picture of this grand scene through these pictorial phrasings.

Meanwhile, there are also phenomena like Jade Glossy Ganoderma sufficient to overflow (Yuzhi yingyi 玉芝盈溢). This Daoist invocation undoubtedly serves an areligious purpose, which it does with high literary feature and show a high master of language skill. Secondly, in the form aspect, it has relatively regular rhyming words, which create the musical sense of this invocation. It is organically for the adept to intone. This concise and rhythmical form is better suited for recitation. Sometimes, the way of tetrasyllabic also perfected serves and suits certain, for example, intense atmosphere of the process of the

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<sup>45</sup> 日精赤……常以月生三日、九日、十七日、二十一日、二十五日，一月五過，於金門之上，鍊於日魂耀精八芒也。當此之日，日華流散，飛根滂沱，金精盈溢，普天得潤也。夫欲求仙，當以其日採禦日根，靈降玉戶，精充幽關，體生奇光，與日同年。潛行其道，昇到金門。金門在天西關之內，日月通靈之門也。

soul's incarnation. This kind of work will be examined below.

This kind of verbal artistry is not an isolated example of only one single text. Intricate invocations and incantations can be found in other significant scriptures dealing with visualization practices. Take a piece from *Huangqi yangjing jing*<sup>46</sup> as another brief elucidation, it reads:

Early-morning drinking in the orchid pond

朝飲蘭池

Staying in the golden cottage at night

夕宿金廬

The sun and the moon intersect

日月交帶

The mysterious shade the purple emptiness

玄廡紫虛

The souls are at ease and peace

魂安魄寧

Thousands of gods bless the living

萬神保居

The four perfected carry the deed,

四真攜契

descending to cloud chariot,

降致雲輿

(One can) ascend to the Golden Palace,

上昇金闕

listed in the Emperor's book.

列名帝書

(DZ 0033, 0825c-0826a)

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<sup>46</sup> The full name: *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxingjing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經 (DZ33).

This piece of work belongs to the visualization exercise conducted between the beginning of winter and the start of spring. After visualizing the sun and moon within the body, their light shining throughout the adept, the adept is to recite this invocation. Like other verses of Daoist text, the opening two couplets, namely four lines, often describe the scenery. The first two lines still illustrate an aspect of existence as a transcendent being, i.e., roaming freely. No matter the “orchid pond” or the “golden cottage,” they both bring us a sense of elegance. Then follows the grand scenery with numinous splendor: the sun and moon intersect, indicating an ancient, mysterious world. From a formal perspective, starting at the fourth line and on, each alternating line has a similar rhyme. If one is going to chant this invocation, it is easy to discern the music's rhythm and flow. With the pictorial scene in the words, the adept reader can more easily enter into a grand and harmonious atmosphere in this depiction of celestial life.

Of course, in invocations that are a part of exorcism methods to repel demons or exorcise evil, which is also the second category of our subject discussed here, the “atmosphere” showcased in the invocation is totally different. The tetrametric form also successfully serves this purpose as an exorcistic incantation, strengthening the words' effect. For example, in *Shangqing sanzhen zhiyao yujue*<sup>47</sup>, there is an invocation that belongs to a ritual method applied while going through dangerous paths or temples with demonic beings. It reads:

The scarlet bird<sup>48</sup> soars in the sky,

朱鳥凌天

The invincible might expand inside.

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<sup>47</sup> *Shangqing sanzhen zhiyao yujue* 上清三真旨要玉訣. *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (DZ 421), *Zhen'gao* (DZ 1016), and *Shangqing wozhong jue* 上清握真訣 (DZ 140) also record below lines.

<sup>48</sup> In the ancient Chinese cultural context, the “scarlet bird” (zhuniao 朱鳥) can both refer to the seven constellations in the south and one of the four cardinal sacred bird.

神威內張

.....

(Certain couplets are omitted here to make it not too long)

Fierce beasts and rushing bulls,

猛獸奔牛

Holding knives and swallowing spears.

銜刀吞鎗

Lifting mountains and seizing the heaven

揭山攬天

(They are) Divine rose-finch and poisonous dragon.

神雀毒龍

Spitting fire, the Six heads,

六頭吐火

The king of chewing ghosts.

啖鬼之王

Pig with electric and Father of Thunder

電豬雷父

Tugging stars and flowing sideways.

掣星流橫

Owlet (squeal like) “ke” and bo<sup>49</sup> burn,

梟嗥駁灼

Crossing against the wind and running wild.

逆風橫行

Celestial Raptor spread and display,

天禽羅陳

All are settled around.

皆在我傍

Breathing bottomless fames

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<sup>49</sup> A kind of fierce beast in legend that looks like a horse and can eat tigers and leopards.

吐火萬丈

to wipe out the ominous.

以除不祥

Masses of spirits open the path,

群精啟道

Sealing the mountain county

封落山鄉。

(DZ 0422, 0627c-0628a. Trans. from me)

The ambiance of this verse is significantly more intense, in stark contrast to the holy and delicate imagery of the previous invocation. This invocation enumerates a variety of fierce beasts intended for the adepts or practitioners intoning it to dispel demons and malevolence and to evade peril. These ferocious creatures and ethereal entities possess the ability to elevate mountains and seize heaven, thereby safeguarding the adept from malevolent forces. As opposed to the style typically depicting celestial scenes, the entirety of the image is fierce and intense, other than tranquil, serene, and colorful. The usage of tetrameter form in this context perfectly serves the intensity of the piece. The brevity and strength conveyed by these shorter lines effectively apply and suit the exorcism occasion rather than evoking a calm and quiet atmosphere.

A record in *Zhen'gao*, which is about the Northern Emperor (北帝 Beidi) killing a spirit, is also of a similar type:

Celestial Reed! Celestial Reed!

天蓬天蓬

The lad of Nine Primal evil.

九元煞童

... ..

The purple pneuma ride to the sky

紫氣乘天



The scarlet sunglow illustriously rush  
丹霞赫衝  
Swallow the demon and eat the ghost,  
吞魔食鬼  
Straightening the back and booze the wind.  
橫身飲風  
(ZG 323)

The short calling in the opening to the Celestial Reed, who currently is a celestial body to dispel evil, sets the whole atmosphere of this invocation, which is bound to be dynamic rather than peaceful. The four lines cited above contain both scenery depiction (the first two lines) and action (the following two lines). The color scheme here (purple and scarlet) and the divinities and spirits listed are not entirely auspicious.<sup>50</sup> The action is fierce. We can say the invocation is rather expressive of the appropriate feelings for the occasion.

The last category of invocation we may outline is the one applied in the *declarations of the Perfected*—some scenes and pieces in *Hanwudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (The Esoteric Biography of the Han Emperor Wu).

The Queen Mother (of the West) then asked her servant, Song Lingbin, to fetch another Map and present it to the Emperor. Lingbin reached into her robe and retrieved a scroll which was stored inside a satchel made of cloudy brocade. The scroll's illustrations and calligraphy were just as exquisite and clear as the one in the Queen Mother's cloth bag. The Queen Mother stood up and handed it to the Emperor. She then recited the invocation:

“High above in the heavens, and below on earth  
天高地卑  
The Five Marchmounts maintain their shape.  
五嶽鎮形

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<sup>50</sup> In Shangqing corpus, purple is also the color of heaven and the color of the sun, which reveals brightness.

The rising vapors in the Mysterious Ford,  
元津激炁  
The fundamental essence of the Silvery Sea,  
滄澤元精  
The nine paths encircling the sky,  
天回九道  
The everlasting harmony of the Six Harmonies,  
六和長平  
The Eightfold Ensemble of the Supreme—  
太上八會  
These are formed by those who soar through heaven,  
飛天之成  
The symbols of perfected immortals.  
真仙節信  
With these, you can communicate with spirits.  
由茲通靈  
Reveal them and meet destruction,  
泄墜滅腐  
Treasure them and attain eternal life.  
寶歸長生  
Che, handle them with care,  
徹其慎之  
I dare to caution you, Disciple Liu!”  
敢告劉生  
(DZ 0292, 0055b; Trans. From Smith 1992, 524)

As pointed out by Paul Kroll, the Perfected often prefer to communicate or celebrate their ideas and directives in beautifully crafted verse (Kroll 2009, 965). As the above example indicates, this tetrameter verse is used when the Queen Mother of the West bestowed a precious heavenly scroll and map upon the Martial Emperor of the Han.

## 1.2 *Zhen'gao* as representative of pentasyllabic verses

*Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of The Perfected) is a crucial text of early Shangqing Daoism, compiled by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536)<sup>51</sup>. *Zhen'gao* is a record of the revelations transmitted to Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-386?), presented in scattered notes and consisting of twenty Fascicles. Among these revelation notes, knowledge is presented about self-cultivation practices, the topography of a systematized pantheon, sacred geography, and lineage.

Despite *Zhen'gao* receiving unique recognition as a central text of the Daoist Canon, the many verses employed in these declarations need more analysis for their literary quality for reasons mentioned before. Nonetheless, they are often characterized by high poetic literacy. As Kroll put it, the Zhenren were skilled and enthusiastic poets who frequently preferred to communicate or celebrate their ideas and directives in exquisitely crafted verse (Kroll 2009, 965).

The first through fourth chapters of *Zhen'gao* preserve some eighty verses. These hymns, if not carelessly neglected or disregarded by certain preconceived notions, their words are meticulously composed to create a profound impact on the listeners, leaving them amazed by the elegance and expertise in the eloquence and mastery over language. The Perfected were skilled poets and masters at captivating audiences with their words. Their contributions have left an indelible mark on Chinese literature and continue to inspire generations. Just as

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<sup>51</sup> Tao is a prominent figure who is not only significant and influential in Daoist history but also highly literate, having a close relationship with the Southern aristocracy. He figured out the forgeries of *Zhen'gao's* early edition, which did much help for latecomers to get access to the original revelation record that Yang Xi remained.

scholars have figured out, these verses with high literacy cast a profound impact on poetry, especially on the flourishing of the splendor of the Tang Dynasty poetry (Zhang 2009, 384-429; Bokenkamp 2021, 5). Thus, the following sections are an examination of these verses.

This section places particular emphasis on *Zhen'gao* as a representative text for examining pentasyllabic verses. This choice stems from the fact that *Zhen'gao* predominantly features quinquasyllabic verses. However, it is essential to note that pentasyllabic verses are not the sole focus of the text; tetrasyllabic verses are also presented, predominantly utilized in incantations. Additionally, the sophisticated parallel prose, primarily utilized in the narrative sections to elucidate events or introduce figures, will be briefly taken into consideration for a better understanding of our verses addressed. Concerning Pentasyllabic verses, two types have received comparatively less attention while skipping the poetry debate that has been addressed (Kroll 2012).

#### 1.2.1 Verses on merging effulgence, or the spiritual marriage

The first and most central type consists of those verses that reflect the interaction between a female transcendent and an ordinary mortal. Specifically, *Zhen'gao* records three pairings of spiritual union. That is, E' lü hua's 萼綠華 sending poem to Yang Quan 羊權, The Consort of Ninefold Blossoms (Jiuhua zhenfei 九華真妃) declaration to Yang Xi 楊羲, and the Lady Cloud Grove revelation to Xu Mi 許謚, encouraging or even urging them to engage in the spiritual marriage, taking cultivation practice and enjoying the transcending leisure together after ascending. This can be said to be part of the central content of the poems in *Zhen'gao*, most of the verses are unfolded under this background or framework.

The E' lü hua poem is contained in the opening part of the text, implying the importance of the revelation from the female transcendents, especially the contact and

courtship they offer. This emphasis on divine communication and union is what the Shangqing school featured and primarily emphasized. What is worth noting is that the courtship offered by the Shangqing Goddess is a kind of spiritual union called “the mating of effulgences” (oujing 偶景). About this kind of spiritual marriage, some interesting comparisons can be made.

The relationship (or even mating) that the Shangqing school promoted, of course, as reflected in the *Zhen'gao*, is best described as “spiritual marriage.” It is in contrast to the practice advocated by the Celestial Master Daoism. This school, an essential source for Shangqing Daoism and one of the primary Daoist schools in the Six Dynasties more generally, has inspired a certain number of rituals. In these, there is the ritual of passing (guodu yi 過渡儀) or mixing of pneumas (heqi 合氣). This ritual is supposedly involved in the actual sexual intercourse between the two partners. Hence, this practice received some criticism, not only from Buddhist circles but also from within Daoist spheres. The later development school Shangqing Daoism is just the “dissenter,” though it is also largely impacted by the celestial Master school.

In the second fascicle, *Yun xiang pian* (Part of Setting Scripts and Images into Motion 運象篇), rightly in the opening of this part, there is a discussion about “The yellow, red way pneumas union method” (Huangchi zhidao hunqi zhifa 黃赤之道混氣之法). Several Perfected declare their idea about this method. In the first place, the Perfected Man of Pure Numinosity [Lord Pei] 清虛真人 firstly put forward his critique towards “merging pneumas.” He elucidates that this way, prompted by Zhang Ling 張陵, is merely a method for procreation and has no connection to the Perfected.<sup>52</sup> Most people who practice this technique

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<sup>52</sup> Also called Zhang Daoling 張道陵.

only exhaust their seminal essences rather than achieve actual vitality. Worse, most who attempt it are put on trial and punished. Following this, Lord Pei continues to figure out the limit of this practice. Even for those few people who master it, the best outcome is the attainment of non-death. The transformation of Zhang himself is, in fact, not through this technique. In light of this, he calls it an “inferior way of the muddied life” (zhuosheng zhi xiadao 濁生之下道), which indulges in lustful desires and holds on to superficial visions. It contrasts with the superior method, described in the “hidden tome,” which poses a challenge for many individuals to grasp.

The Lady Purple Tenuity continues. She also holds that the way of mixing pneumas is an inferior one, other than what the celestial Perfected who reside in lofty palaces discuss. She more explicitly expounds what is “the mating of effulgences” (“oujing” 偶景) what is treasured is preserved in their partner, and the mutual love is reflected in the two lights. Though named husband and wife, they do not engage in typical marital activities. The bad result of preserving yellow and red pneumas in the chest is that they will be unable to see the Perfected or encounter spiritual beings. Instead, they would labor in vain and face consequences from the Three Officials.

Following is the supplementary remark from The Perfected Man of Purple Yang (Ziyang zhenren 紫陽真人) and The Middle Lord Mao (Mao zhongjun 茅中君). Their brief remark is closer to parallel prose, mainly in Tetrameter form. It gives an elusive declaration that warns not to engage in the “misgiving of yellow and red” and not to violate the light.

Here, in this discussion, the Ninefold Blossoms Perfected Consort (Jiuhua zhenfei 九華真妃) intones a paragraph to urge the recipient of her declaration to “release any hindrances and let go of worldly matters” (Zongzhi wangbi 縱滯忘鄙). It specifically

includes “Letting go of desires in the purity of the (the Perfected’s) fragrance, find solace in the connection of these high creatures’ destinies. Then the perfected and this man can renew their closeness in a place of sacred clarity, where their virtues merge with the radiant lights and come together in joyful union, and their hair styled in elegant peaks. In short, the Perfected Consort urged Yang Xi to abandon his mundane desires, which, in this context, may specifically refer to the kind of sexual intercourse prescribed by texts in the Celestial Master tradition and henceforth converted into the kind of spiritual union promoted by Shangqing Daoism.

Above all, before Shangqing Daoism, the essential way to help the ordinary mortals to transcend was to join the spiritual union, thus showing the clear stand of Shangqing school to leave out the method of “merging pneumas,” which is taken vulgar and inferior.

Meanwhile, the story type of a goddess descending to mortal men and marrying them is abundant throughout medieval literature. For example, the legend of Du Lanxiang 杜蘭香, Xian Chao 弦超 in *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Records of Searching for the Spirits), Huangyuan 黃原 and Hebo jianü 河伯嫁女 (The marriage of the river God) in *Youming lu* 幽明錄 (Records of the Hidden and Visible Realms), are similar to this kind of tale. Though there are differences in the concrete plot of each respective narrative<sup>53</sup>, the similar essential plot and narrative structure between Shangqing revelation and the folk tales, their occurrence nonetheless indicates the widespread acceptance and interest toward the divine descending at that time, as well as Shangqing Daoism’s cultural continuity in the folklore.

Also, the seeking of goddess recalls the shamanic flight in the *Chuci*’s time. Archaic sources for the corpus and ideas that early medieval Daoism inherited from the Warring State

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<sup>53</sup> Lin Shuai yue carefully analyzed the differences under the similar narrative structure of a goddess descending and having a marriage with a human story (Lin 1994, 132-37).

Period, including famous texts like *Chuci*, have been argued.<sup>54</sup> But in this case, the shaman's quest for Goodness is always, and seems inevitably, unsuccessful. The female deities of rivers and mountains persistently eluded the shaman. Thus, in the lyrics that present such quests, such as “Xiangjun” and “Xiang furen,” the tone of the shaman's self-confession is always full of sorrow. However, in the case of encountering the Goddess in *Zhen'gao*, though still in the dense religious context, the way of the interaction of the goddess and the seeker of Revelations has been different.

If we carefully examine the records contained in *Zhen'gao*, we find that both in the verse and the prose narrative, the Goddesses are no longer mystic, unapproachable, and “elude” the human's quest. In contrast to *Chuci*, as we will immediately see, the descending is so frequent and dense in the several years the revelation took place. Rather than a phenomenon that is hidden and not approachable, the communication between the Perfected and ordinary humans is ubiquitous.

Further, in contrast to the *Chuci*'s shamanic flight, when the shaman's action and confession form the main content of the text, the deities the shaman was seeking always appear to be hidden or unattainable. In *Zhen'gao*, it is the female Perfected who initiates the spiritual union. Not long after descending, we will see that both the Lady of Cloud Grove and the Ninefold Florescent express their acknowledgment of the virtue and character of Xu Mi and Yang Xi, proposing to establish the relationship of merging effulgences with them. The Lady of Cloud Grove praises Xu Mi:

Your fine virtue projects a spiritual radiance,

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<sup>54</sup> For a fuller elucidation and analysis, please see (Hawkes 1967; Kroll 1996; Kroll 2010). In addition, this does not mean that only *Chuci* showcases such inheritance. In fact, not a few texts we may take as “philosophical classics,” such as *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Guanzi*, contain the cosmogony that later Daoism indicates, which shows a far and deep connection between Daoism and ancient China's thought.



良德映靈暉

And your excellent root shimmers with flowery opulence.

穎根集華蔚

(ZG, 73; Smith 2013, 137-38)

Furthermore, the Perfected Consort mentions Lady Wei of the Southern Marchmount, who supervised Yang Xi, indicating that Lady Wei has been aware of Yang Xi's admirable qualities for a considerable period of time. In addition, she makes a reference to “the connection resembling the intertwining of pine and gauze” (Songluo zhi chan 鬆蘿之纏), symbolizing a spiritual union (ZG, 30).

In the meantime, in the first four Fascicles that contain many of the verses, not only the revelation from the two Ladies, namely the Lady of the Cloud Grove and Consort Perfected, count a large proportion of these verses. In the delivered content, the deities repeatedly praise the appropriateness and benefits of this union, illustrating the leisure after ascending and appealing to them to come together and enjoy. This serves as a means to motivate the vacillating mundane man to abandon the temporal life immediately and to adopt the cultivation techniques of Shangqing finally.

For example, a piece from the Lady of Right Blossom (Cloud Grove) depicts the grand scene and happiness of being a transcendent who can roam freely.

With vaulting leaps on shafts of cloud and light,

騰躍雲景轅

I float and survey space above the aurorae.

浮觀霞上空。

My cirrus-draped carriage dances vertically, horizontally.

霄輶縱橫舞

My purple canopy lodges in numinous quarters.

紫蓋托靈方

Vermilion smoke twists around my flags and streamers;

朱煙纏旌旄  
 My feathered cape fans the scented wind.  
 羽帔扇香風  
 Lightning howls—I catch the Fierce Beast;  
 電嗥猛獸攫  
 Its thunderous call excites my mystic dragons.  
 雷吟奮玄龍  
 Tuning pipes resound in the Kun[lun] court;  
 鈞籟昆庭響  
 Golden mouth-organs sing on divine [Mount] Zhong.  
 金笙唱神鍾  
 Gathering polypores on the steeps of Blue-grey Billows,  
 采芝滄浪阿  
 Plucking the blooms on Eight Clearwaters' summit,  
 掇華八滄峰  
 My vermilion face is daily freshened.  
 朱顏日愈新  
 When a Kalpa passes, I shall resemble an infant child.  
 劫往方嬰童  
 Nourish your form in tranquility on the eastern crags,  
 養形靜東岑,  
 And the seven spirits will freely be in communion.  
 七神自相通  
 In the windblown dust are anxieties and woes  
 風塵有憂哀  
 That reduces my white-templed old man.  
 隕我白鬢翁  
 In the enduring hidden realm, I leave distant sighs,  
 長冥遺遐歎  
 Regretting that you do not sooner flee upward.  
 恨不早逸縱

(ZG, 90; Trans.Smith 2013, 174)

This piece of verse expresses several spheres about the leisure life of the Perfected. In the first six lines, it is indicated that “I” (referring to the Lady of Cloud Grove) is “floating and surveying space.” The use of “vaulting leaps” in the first line illustrates the goddess's lightness and dynamic state. The second to sixth lines depict the movement of the carriage, the Lady's purple canopy, flags, and streamers during their flight. The subsequent lines, namely the seventh and eighth, portray the mystic creature that, in *Chuci*, represents

legendary entities. Additionally, there are sounds from the tuning pipes and Golden Mouthorgans. Following all these, the verse presents two activities of the Lady: gathering the polypore, a plant known for its longevity efficacy, and plucking blooms (lines nine to ten). Lastly, turning to the remaining portion, it returns to the Lady herself, who becomes younger rather than growing old until she resembles an infant. In contrast, in the “windblown dust,” representing the mundane world, people inevitably end up mortal. Therefore, this reasoning leads to the conclusion that failing to transcend is a cause for remorse.

Right after her descending with Lady of Purple Tenuity, the Perfected Consort describes her heavenly life in the verse that she reveals and initiates Yang xi to come together to “enjoy many blessings”:

Cloudy gate-towers stand erect in the void above,  
雲闕堅空上  
Rose-gem terraces stretch into the dense-cloud net.  
瓊台聳鬱羅。

... ..

Bending down, I rinse [my mouth] with fluid from a vase of clouds,  
俯漱雲瓶津  
Looking up, I pluck the blossoms of green crabapple.  
仰掇碧柰花。  
I wash my feet in the jade-bright Heavenly Pool,  
濯足玉天池  
Beat oars across the Oxherd’s River,  
鼓枻牽牛河  
[Then] urge ahead my chariot of luminous clouds,  
遂策景雲駕  
Rein in my plummeting dragons by the dark riverbanks.  
落龍轡玄阿。

... ..

In Purple Tenuity we have met a good matchmaker,  
紫微會良謀  
So, I sing that we shall enjoy many blessings.  
唱納享福多。

(ZG, 31; Trans.Smith 2013, 62-63)

Above all, these vivid and ornate depictions naturally establish an allure for the potential disciples. The female deities' lives are sumptuous and free, and there are also companions from the enthusiastic goddess who initiates spiritual marriage. At the same time, as many gods will do in the songs of Han dynasties, after the encounter, the gods will bestow the human certain herbs or drugs that for long-living.<sup>55</sup>

A particular piece is just a straightforward expression of the calling from the goddess to the human, such as the below verse in Fascicle four:

Mindful Master Xu "The Axe" says you should pick the five polypores.

有心許斧子，言當采五芝。

[But] polypores and herbs need not be obtained, and you, after all, cannot come.

芝草不必得，汝亦不能來。

If you do come, certainly you can receive them:

I would give you them to eat!

汝來當可得，芝草與汝食。

(ZG, 141; Trans. Smith 2013, 266)

The content is plain. Lady Right Blossom promises that if Xu Mi comes, she will share this long-living polypore with him, showing her admiration for this human partner and tempting him to go together with her<sup>56</sup>. However, the goddess knows he will not come. Though short, there are appeals, suggestions, and also a slight complaint about Xu Mi's delay. This shows that, instead of being mystic and not approachable, leaving the grieving shaman,

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<sup>55</sup> For this narrative plot pattern, Owen makes a conclusive of this plot structure of encountering transcendent in verses and songs in the Wei dynasty (Owen 2006, 139-77).

<sup>56</sup> This primary "plot" makes sense in the whole context of *Zhen'gao* and Shangqing Daoism as a school that bears the mission to attract more disciples. The goddess' offering and the pleasure and happiness after transcending is an "attraction" of this. From this sense, it is probable that this "broadcasting" generally takes men as default readers and recipients, given the historical backdrop. Following this rationale, it is not hard to know why female deities occupy the most "camera shot."

the Goddesses in *Zhen'gao* are enthusiastic deities who actively interact with mundane individuals, though the very person has been particularly chosen. They also take the role of initiating and fostering the union between the mortals and the transcendentals, offering the mundane people the prospect of an enjoyable and infinite life.

Furthermore, the female deities often reveal declarations, answering questions from Xu Mi and Yang Xi instructing the precious sacred way to transcend. Often, there are messages and replies between, which is especially prominent between the Lady of Cloud Grove and Xu Mi. For example, right after the verse mentioned above, there are prose-style accounts that, in the twelfth month, Xu replies and alludes to the “Wooing and Duration” (咸恒) in the verse from Lady of Cloud Grove used. Xu Mi's reply frequently appears after the Lady's declaration, showing his gratitude and acknowledgment. This interaction, verses mainly, with a few elucidations in parallel and plain text, form the divine Lady and the brief question/reply from Xu Mi. This accounts for a certain proportion of the revealed content in the first four Fascicles, which concentratively include the verses revealed from the Perfected.

From all the analysis above, this section especially focuses on verses on the spiritual marriage of the transcendence and the mortal, the goodness and the mundane man in the Shangqing tradition. With this investigation, we find a deep correlation with ancient culture and the prevalent story pattern that people relished. Specifically, these verses about the encounter of human and goddess not only recall the shamanic request of Goodness in *Chuci's* time but also demonstrate a broad cultural contact with this kind of prevailing folk tales, but these verses, created in highly verbal artistry and aesthetic value, showcasing a mastery and utilization of prevalent pentasyllabic verse form, and still present its novelty in the theme of union with the goddess and literary device in verse writing. This, if it is not hard to discern, closely corresponds to and is involved in the cultural context and verse development in that

time.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.2.2 Verses on ingesting radiance and essence

In the meantime, one of the essential contents of the verses in the Perfected Declaration includes certain portions addressing ingesting light and the essence of Shangqing practices.

Central Shangqing techniques include ingesting the light or essence, pacing to the Dipper, and so on, which are conducted in the visualization.

Firstly, some verses are about ingesting the rays/essence from the sun, moon, and stars and applying the astral powers. For example, In Fascicle three, a verse refers to:

I chew upon the blossoms of the Three Numina,

咀嚼三靈華

Exhale and inhale the rays of the Nine Spirits.

吐吸九神芒

(ZG, 91; Trans. Smith 2013, 132)

This part describes the celestial life of Lady of Right Blossom. It elucidates the practice that the Perfected does. The terms “chew upon the blossoms of Three Numina” and “exhale and inhale rays of the Nine Spirits” are closely related to the Shangqing practice of nourishing with the Sun/moon/star (often Dipper) 's light or essence. The Three Numina (sanling 三靈) rightly refers to the sun, moon, and stars. In The “Biography of Yang Xiong” in *Hanshu* (Book of Han 漢書), there employed the term “Three Numina.” Shigu 師古 annotated it as: “Ruchun 如淳 said: ‘The Three Numina, the correspondence of Sun, Moon

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<sup>57</sup> From some aspect, maybe we can take this as the growth of human confidence in this kind of seeking transcendence: more techniques and methods are supplied by these religious schools to achieve it.

and Stars signify” (Cf. ZG, 71). At the same time, in the Shangqing scripture, *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經 (Shangqing Scripture on Following the Three Trajectories Including [Absorbing] the Yellow Pneuma and Yang Essence), the Three Trajectories here is refer to cultivating oneself with the luminaries from sun, moon, and Dipper (DZ 0033, 0831a; Robinet 2004, 148). Thus, it is reasonable to know that “chew upon the blossoms of the Three Numina” here refers to the practice of ingesting the light of the sun, moon, and Dipper.

Meanwhile, the “Nine spirits” in the second line of this couplet refers to the cosmic counterpart of the nine spirits in the Nine Palaces of Head. In Smith's survey, the nine spirits in Shangqing primarily refer to the connotation of *Huangting neijing yujing* (the Inner Chapter of Yellow Court Scriptures 黃庭內景玉經), as its commentary shows (Smith 2013, 133). However, combining the context here, for example, this couplet's upper line refers to the stellar sun, moon, and stars. Thus, we can deduce that “the Nine Spirits” here does not refer to the corporeal gods Nine Spirits in the nine palaces of the head, but its cosmic correspondence, the nine stars of the Dipper.

Another example related is the one that alludes to “sup up the moon's essence” (can yuejing 餐月精). A verse in Fascicle three from *Lady of Purple of Tenuity* reads:

Uncovering its radiance, I draw from Cinnabar Prime;

啟暉抱丹元

Pushing open its light, I sup on the moon's essence.

靡景餐月精

(ZG, 91; Trans. Smith 2013, 178)

This example is more pronounced. There is not only a direct reference to ingesting the essence of the moon (“sup on the moon's essence”), but also, we see the phrasing such as

“uncovering its radiance” (qihui 啟暉) and “pushing open its light” (feijing 扉景). Where is “radiance” from? To answer this question, we also notice the couplet right before this one, which is:

Where divine blossoms shine on the immortals’ terraces

神華映仙台

And the round dazzler tilts in the wind.

圓曜隨風傾

The round dazzler (yuanyao 圓曜) refers to the sun in the Shangqing corpus. In

Fascicle nine of *Zhen’gao*, there is an explanation about this terminology: “……the Perfected Fangzhu(方諸真人) calls the sun as Yuanluoyao 圓羅曜” (ZG, 306).<sup>58</sup> Thus, it is easy to figure out these two couplets' content is on the exercise related to the sun and moonlight. The details of these exercises about absorbing the sun, moon, and Dipper energy are in the section below, “Nourishing with the Astral Light.”

Aside from the technique related to absorbing essence from the moon and sun, there are, of course, verses that address the practice relating to the Dipper.

In the left hand, holding a canopy of Jade Flower,

左把玉華蓋

Fly off on light and tread the seven primes.

飛景臨七元

The three chronograms gleam in purple radiance,

三辰煥紫暉

Gazing on tiptoe to touch the bright Perfected.

竦眄撫明真

(ZG, 107, trans. from me)

Scholars have identified the “seven primes” mentioned here as a reference to the Dipper constellation (Kroll 2009, 969; Smith 2013, 203). The phrase “Fly off on light and

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<sup>58</sup> A few other names of the sun are also recorded here.



tread the seven primes” signifies the rhythmic and sequential movement associated with the Dipper constellation, which adheres to specific patterns originating from the Steps of Yu. This concept holds significance within the Shangqing school during the Six Dynasties period and in medieval practices of visualization exercises and ritual performances (Huang 2012, 40).

Above all, the verses in *Zhen'gao* encompass a substantial number of sensuous and vibrant imagery, employing precise verbs that infuse the lines with a sense of motion. While the content is undoubtedly centered around the doctrines, practices, and worldview of the Shangqing school, it is undeniable that these verses exhibit a distinctive poetic aesthetic through their verbal artistry, linguistic prowess, and high level of literary craftsmanship.

### 1.3 Heptasyllabic verse in *Huangtingjing*

Careful readers will also find that the famous *Huangting jing*, no matter its inner or outer chapter, is all composed of Heptasyllabic verses. It is one of the central scriptures of early Daoism and profoundly impacts contemporary and later people.

In *Huangting jing*, it put forward the corporeal god's system, which includes Nine perfected ones in the head and God of the Six viscera, namely the heart, liver, lungs, spleen, kidneys, and gall bladder.

Unlike other Shangqing scriptures, the *Huangtingjing* solely consists of verses rather than verses accompanied by prose elucidations. However, it may precisely be due to this unique feature that the verses within the *Huangtingjing* incorporate certain sections that serve to provide explanations (or elaborations). It is through this particular form that the text may indicate a more oral characteristic, distinct from the scholarly nature found in other scriptures, for example, we will indeed see such texts that are elucidative, which can be less poetic.

The palace of the spleen section belongs to wusi.  
脾部之宮屬戊巳  
Inside is a bright lad, wearing yellow garb.  
中有明童黃裳里  
He dissolves grain and spreads qi, assisted by the teeth.  
消穀散氣攝牙齒  
He shows up in the Great Storehouse, one of two bright lads.  
是為太倉兩明童

However, certain pieces still perform well in imagery depicting and creating, as well as regular rhythmized form. The case mentioned above may have good reason relating to these verses' primary function: serving the visualization practice. For the latter, though, it can be a standard feature that all the verses form maintains because, for these verses, they are ultimately for reciting or intoning; the regular rhyme here will help with this action. Let us still take some examples to expound:

The palace of the gall bladder section is the essence of all six viscera.  
膽部之宮六腑精  
Inside is a lad, called [Dragon] Brilliance or Majestic Brightness.  
中有童子曜威明  
Thunder and lightning, the eight quakes, shake the jade flags.  
雷電八振揚玉旌  
Dragon banners streak the sky as he wields the fire bell.  
龍旗橫天擲火鈴  
(DZ 0331, 0910a; Trans. Kohn 2023,133)

Although this piece of work bears similarities to others in introducing the deity in the palace of this viscera, it employs language skills to depict the scene vividly. The imagery is rich, and the atmosphere is effectively created. Following the introduction of the lad, [Dragon] Brilliance or Majestic Brightness, the subsequent couplet further portrays the deity's surroundings. Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes are employed to convey the power and strength of the deity, leaving a grand impression on the reader and emphasizing its impressive

might. The depiction of flowing and shaking flags and banners serves two purposes. First, it symbolizes the deity's power and strength. Second, it forms the backdrop against which the deity is portrayed, adding depth and atmosphere to the visualization and understanding of this god. Notably, the verse pays attention to presenting intricate details such as the facial features, costumes, and ornaments. Upon neutral analysis, it becomes evident that this cited piece exhibits no lesser excellence in visual depiction and imagery creation than those highly acclaimed literary works.

These instances do not occur in isolation, forming the distinctive features of Heptasyllabic verses in *Huangting jing*. Specifically, a particular portion of the verse serves the purpose of providing elaboration and introduction. At the same time, this portion also includes elements that demonstrate a certain level of poetic aesthetics, showcasing highly skilled use of language.

#### 1.4 The narrative verse regarding *Laozi*

In this period, several texts about Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians, such as *Laozi bianhua jing* 老子變化經 (The Scripture of Laozi's Transformation), *Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經 (Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians), *Laojun bianhua wuji jing* 老君變化無極經 (The Scripture of Old Lord's Unlimited Change), are mainly composed of rhymed verses. The content primarily revolves around the transformation and shapeshifting of the ancient Lord, who assumes the form of barbarians in the Western regions. During the Western Han Dynasty, he arrived in the world using the alias, Li Hong. He disclosed himself to Zhang Ling in Shu County, who subsequently established twenty-four administrative districts. Regarding the verses employed in these scriptures, these several characteristics can be discerned.

First and foremost, it is noteworthy that the content exhibits distinct colloquial features, rendering it engaging and memorable.

I lament for the people of this era,

吾哀時世人，

That they do not believe in the deities of the afterlife.

不信冥中神。

Within a single family, there are divisions and conflicts,

一門有十息，

even when given the freedom to act, they are without virtuous intentions.

縱意行不仁。

... ..

I advise the people of this era,

吾告時世人，

the broken bones are not for real

髑骨不別真。

In leisure moments, they do not come to communicate together,

閑時不共語，

While in an emergency, they seek help without delay.

急便來求人。

(T2139, 1269; Trans. from Me)

Upon closer examination, the lines in question primarily consist of colloquial language rather than written text, and their meanings appear to be relatively straightforward. A notable example of this is the final line mentioned above, which possesses a plaintive and spoken feature, just like the language adopted when people are talking. Furthermore, the incorporation of rhyming patterns in the final characters of these lines may serve as a mnemonic device, facilitating the recitation and memorization of the text.

Secondly, since these texts are close to the hagiography of Laozi, the certain body of

content is inevitably narrative verse. For example,

In the past, when I converted barbarians,

我昔化胡時，

[I] ascended Mount Taibai in the west.

西登太白山。

There, within the confines of the rocky caves, I cultivated my character,

修身巖石里，

from all directions, [I] gathered together with various immortals.

四向集諸仙。

... ..

In the past, I departed from Zhou and journeyed westward,

我昔離周時

Transforming myself into a guest of distant lands.

西化向麗賓。

Along the way, I passed through the barriers of Hanguan,

路由函關去，

Until I finally had the opportunity to meet Yin Xi in person.

會見尹喜身。

(T2139,1268; Trans. From myself)

These lines are typical narrative verses, which always conclude the narrative elements: when, who, and doings. For example, in the first part of the citation, it is “during my transformation into a barbarian,” then what “I” did is ascend Mount Taibai in the west, cultivating my character in the rocky wave, and finally, gathering together with various immortals. Similarly, in the second part of the citation, these lines are in verse; it is also almost like narrative prose if there is no line feed.

Besides, there are also elegant seven-word verses that depict the scenery of roaming or landscape depicting.

My body grows out of feathers and soars and glides like drifting clouds.

身生吾羽飛雲行，

Ascending to the Yellow Mountain's sacred realm, [I] pay homage to the venerable deity.

上謁老君山中黃。

Roaming and observing the sights, I find respite in the tranquil chambers of Nanyue.

遊觀南嶽宿閑房，

Alongside the immortal sage Wang Qiao, we freely wander and soar through the heavens.

仙人王喬共遨翔。

(DZ1195, 0373b; Trans. From myself)

Unlike the oral or explanatory nature of the preceding lines, this couplet appears to harken back to the tradition of depicting landscapes in painting, capturing nuanced emotions that likely serve as poetic expressions of interest.

## 2. The Daoist Lore and Practice as the Verse Context.

Scholars who delve into the study of Daoist verses, whether found in canonical Daoist texts or in the works of secular poets influenced by Daoism, have recognized the significance of comprehending the intricacies of Daoist teachings and practices in order to accurately and precisely grasp the linguistic nuances present in these verses (Kroll 2009, 973).

### 2.1 Nourishing life with radiance and essence

Just as indicated in the verses in *Zhen'gao*, in the declaration of the Goddess, there are always actions that absorb or inhale/exhale the ray or numinous light from the sun, the moon,

or the stellar which correspond to the human body.<sup>59</sup>

It is indeed one of the important practices of Shangqing lore to make an “exchange” with the sun, moon or dipper, not only one scripture of Shangqing school has recorded these practices, which mainly contain several types.

First of all, just as within *Zhen’gao* itself has indicated, there is a method delivered by the Azure Lad (青童) that elucidates how to ingest the sun light and moon light. For the sun, sitting towards directions of respective time, the adept should visualize there is the image of sun in heart, as big as coin; The color of the sun light is red, moving upward and goes out of the throat, reaching in teeth, then back to the stomach. This exercise should be done one third times per day, insisting for one year, the illness will be eliminated, and for five years, the body will be radiant. Practicing this method for eighteen years, one must achieve the Way, and there will be no shadow if one walks in the sunshine and also can be devoid of the evil energy of the ghost and wicked. Similarly, as for ingesting the light of moon, one should envision the moon image in niwan 泥丸, namely the head. The visualized light is white.<sup>60</sup> The light descends from the brain to thought, also stops between the teeth. The timing is to do this visualization before the fifteenth day of the month, cause after the middle of the month, the moon light will dim.

In fact, excepting the version in *Zhen’gao*, there are widely records in Scripture of Six Dynasty which are related to absorbing the light or essence, in short, ultimately making energy change from the stars.

There is also a term called ingesting the Solar/Lunar essence (Fu rijing/yuejing fa 服

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<sup>59</sup> The verses see section 1.2.2.

<sup>60</sup> this is also version that contain both yellow and white.

日精/月精法). In *Wozhenjue*<sup>61</sup>, there simultaneously existed the section about absorbing the sun/moon light(服日/月芒法), and the section of “ingesting the sun pneuma” (服日氣法)” “ingesting the moon essence” (服月精法). From the style and content to see, the section of “ingesting the sun pneuma” (服日氣法)” are the correspondence part of the “ingesting the moon essence” (服月精法). In *Wozhen jue*, the content about absorbing the sun/moon light(服日/月芒法) is nearly the same with the methods in *Zhen’gao*, while for the “ingesting the sun pneuma” (服日氣法)” “ingesting the moon essence” (服月精法), the visualization vision is different, the whole action framework is similar (i.e., facing the sun/moon, visualizing certain light come to the adept’s body”. But in this practice named “ingesting the solar/lunar essence/pneuma”, its envisioned picture is as follows. For solar practice, after facing the sun, one should visualize the five-color fluid aurora to the body, down to the feet, and up to the head over. Then visualize purple breath in this aurora, coming together to the adept’s mouth, swallow this purple breath for 45 bites, then do the saliva swallowing, teeth grinding and invocation. For the Lunar practice, it is to five color fluid essence in the moon come to the body. Down to the feet and up to the head over. Again, to envision there is yellow breath in this essence, coming together the five-color to the adept’s mouth. Ingesting the breath fifth bite, swallowing saliva ten times and clicking the teeth. Also, finish the invocation. Through this, the practice of absorbing the sun and moon essence finished.

Another way of absorption the ray of sun and moon are recorded in *Basu jing*, whose

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<sup>61</sup> The full name *shangqing wozhen jue* (shangqing instructions kept in hand 上清握真訣). About whether this scripture is a six-dynasty text, there is controversy. The item in Taoist cannon edited by Schipper and Verellen hold that there is no sufficient supporting evidence that this text is a pre-tang one though some song bibliography contains it. But even this critique will figure out that the content of this scripture is overlapped to *dengzhen yinjue* by Tao Hongjing. So, no matter when to date this text, its content belongs to Shangqing lore is no doubt.



practice is comparatively sophisticated and with more procedure and method.<sup>62</sup> In this scripture, it provides another way of ingesting the rays that drink the water which are enriched by the sun and the moon and bath with it. The practice in this scripture also featured with containing talisman and invocation simultaneously. To make it concrete. For the adsorption of sun rays, the adept should do the retreat and burn the incense, then leave outside a bowl of water and writing a corresponsive talisman to put in it, tapping teeth westward and then invoke. After a night, in the middle of the next day, drinking the water toward the sun, then again, tapping teeth and doing another invocation. After this is finished, go back indoors and use the remain water to wash through the body. Following the visualization that the five-color fluid aurora descending and wrapping the adept's body. There is also purple breath in this five-color fluid aurora descending together to the mouth of the adept. Swallowing forty-five times and swallowing saliva nine times. Then do the invocation again. Finally, one should the Gate of sun in heart for nine times, this way the practice stopped. The scripture also gives detailed instructions about how to write the special talisman.

In *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing*, its title indicates generating of energy of sun and moon.<sup>63</sup> Cause, it may also have been indicated above expounding, the color of moon light is often depicted as yellow, and the essence of the sun is the yang essence. In the meantime, in the opening of this scripture, it quoted the words from the Lord of Southern Pole High Primal that: "I was bestowed the essentials of following the three trajectories from the (Lord) High, the way of Yellow pneuma and Yang essentials".<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> The full name of this scripture is *dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi riye huanghua jue* ('absorption of solar and lunar essences 洞真太上八素真經服食日月黃華訣). It is an early shangqing classics which can be roughly dated to eastern jin (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 142-43).

<sup>63</sup> Here after *huangqi yangjing jing*. It is dated to eastern jin (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 148).

<sup>64</sup> 南極上元君曰：吾受高上順行三道之要，黃氣陽精之道(DZ0033, 0822b).

Considering there probably be intertextuality between the two sentences, namely “the three trajectories from the (Lord) High” and “the way of Yellow pneuma and Yang essentials”, Thus the connotation of “the way of Yellow pneuma and Yang essentials” and “the three trajectories” should combine together to understand. In the meantime, in the text there are such elucidations: “to exercise the critical part of the three trajectories, (one) should ..... audience the light of the sun and moon for three times a month; In the midnight then (one) should audience the essence of the seven stars.<sup>65</sup> Hence, we will surely know this term “huangqi yangjing” is related to nourishing (at least) from the energy of sun and moon.

Briefly speaking, for the exercise of sun and moon, one should do the respective practices in the eight solar terms, namely the start of four seasons, two equinoxes and the two solstices. The action sequence of each time point is roughly the same. For example, taking the exercise of “the start of summer” 立夏 to analyze. There are several steps of this exercise: 1) In the middle of this day, with authentic bead (Zhenzhu 真珠)<sup>66</sup> and talisman to put in clean water, then towards south bath (with this water) and click the teeth, following the invocation. Finished this, one ingests the pneuma eight times and goes back indoors. 2) burn the incense, use certain powders to cloak the body, with hands rub and produce heat to wipe the face and the whole body. Then lying, clicking teeth and visualizing. First to visualize the purple breath of the sun descends to the adept’s body. Then the adept envisions oneself ascend to the palace. Thirdly and finally, one visualizes the certain transcendent (details about the God’s appearance and costumes are provided here), who give the adept certain plants/herbs/drugs and so on. Then the exercise ends with an invocation.

From the beginning of summer to the start of autumn, during this period, one should

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<sup>65</sup> 修行三道之要，當以月生三日、十五日、二十五日，一月三朝日月之光，夜半則朝七星之精 (DZ 0033, 0831a).

<sup>66</sup> The stuff to use will change according to different solar term.

rub the heart and visualize that the sun is in the heart while the moon is under the heart, The light of the sun and moon shine through the body. Then do the invocation and lie down.

For the other seven solar terms, the sequence of action is almost the same, except the details, such as the talisman and the stuff employed during this process, are varied.

The practice for Dipper is slightly different. Here in this practice, one should visualize that he or she lies in the Dipper. The light of the seven stars cloaks oneself, and oneself lies within the seven stars. After this for a long time, one will see seven Lad (young god) who stand respectively on one of the seven stars. All of them exhale different colored light. These seven colors will go to the adept's body. With forty-nine bites, the adept invokes. Finally, rubbing one's body with powder, the adept lies down and the exercise ends.

Above all, no matter the detail of absorbing energy from the Sun, moon and Dipper that differs, there is consistent indication that, human, as part of the cosmos, through engaging the celestial movement with sun and moon, which symbolize the alternating movement of Yin and Yang that governing the world, and exchange energy to the stars. The human, as the third entity of the cosmic "system", through in line with, or synchronizing with the time, space, and the positions of celestial bodies with certain exercise, the adept follows and joins a "cosmic cycle" of creation, continuation and diminishing of a universe. The method to ingest the ray or essence of astral body at certain point of time within one year perfectly enrolled in the rhythms of the cycle, which, like the feature of wholeness that traditional Chinese culture will show, depict the picture that people are naturally put themselves as part of the cosmos which inner entities between have active interaction and corresponding impact within.

## 2.2 The five dipper and three-ones

Another practice that closely related to the actualization of Gods in the Nine Palaces in head is guarding the one (Shouyi 守一) and guarding the three-ones (守三一 shou sanyi).<sup>67</sup>

The same vividity feature of the deities in body can also be observed, even most depiction is presented in words, along with certain images preserved, which give us direct illustrations of early Daoism iconography record. In our design, as Verellen put it, even the illustrations are the relatively straightforward visual representation, they are still in the intricate relationship with words, thus should be understood with its verbal elucidations(Verellen 2016, 182), as well as the ritual context they are in.

To start, what is preserving the one (Shouyi 守一) Basically, it means concentration, its general method is to visualize or actualize so they can again dwell in the adept's body, thus bringing physical strengthening the adept. It is in fact a mediation tradition predates Shangqing School's absorption and can be traced back the era of *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In Shangqing Daoism's practice, which is our examine school, it is presented as part of the practice preserving the Three-ones (Shou sanyi 守三一) and Five Dipper and the Three-ones (Wudou sanyi 五斗三一) (Kohn 1989, 124-54; Robinet 1993, 120-27; 2000, 217-18).

So, what is the preserving the three-ones (Shou Sanyi 守三一)? What is the Five Dipper and the Three-ones (Wudou sanyi 五斗三一) and its related practices?

The Three-ones, in Shangqing Daoism's practice, means the Gods who are in charge of the Three Cinnabar fields: namely the upper, the middle, the lower cinnabar field (Xiao 2006, 77; Kohn 1989, 136). In each of the fields, there are respective deities and their assistants, governing and protecting different parts of the body. Preserving or guarding the

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<sup>67</sup> Unlike the case of dwelling gods of three cinnabar fields, the head's nine palaces will be empty if one does not visualize these deities, so somehow the visualization of gods in nine places is also the actualization of these gods (Robinet 1993, 127).

three-ones, namely through certain visualization and practice procedure, to make the Gods present and dwell in the palaces of the three cinnabars. By doing so, people will be strengthened, long-lived and making the final goal: ascending to the transcendence state.<sup>68</sup> Otherwise, no visualization of these deities for long time, they will leave and resulting the weakening of people.

Providing the importance of visualizing gods in the three cinnabars, then who these deities are, how they look like, and how to visualize them? The scriptures as manual give detailed description. Table 2 below presents a quick glance of these deities.

As we can observe from the table, as the analysis we made before. Each deity in the three cinnabars is in fact given a biography including multiple aspect information (the name, surname, cognomen the ornament and so on), though quite brief, the deities' images (their outlook, what they hold, in which hand and so on), identities, functions are all prominent.<sup>69</sup> Taking the whole practicing sequence into account, the vivid divine world becomes more apparent to us.

Since the lords in the three cinnabars also appeared in *Dadong zhenjing*, 39 sections, and also part of the deities in Nine Palaces in head, here we won't repeat. So, what is the whole sequence, as the ritual context of actualizing these deities, which help us deeper understand these divine imageries?

For the upper cinnabar, first one must visualize purple breath moving towards heaven. In the purple breath there are images of the sun, nine inches in diameter, brightening ninety

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68 Here i employ the term “transcendence” other than “immortality”. About the difference between “transcendent” and the term “immortal”, see bokenkamp early daoism scripture (Bokenkamp and Nickerson 1997, 22-23).When expressing the word “youxian”遊仙, kroll takes it as “roaming into trasendance”,which may help with a better understanding of term use here (Kroll 1996, 655).

69 This is another aspect about the scriptures that, unlike certain stereotypes that the content in scriptures is boring religious preaching, the shangqing text are in fact shows a high mastery of words and literary feature, which make their verbal expression quite expressive, especially considering their writing purpose these words serve. Shangqing texts' impact in later dynasties' poetries, such as tang dynasty, has also become another study topic.

thousand kilometers. After the adept or practitioner feel the change in body happened, they forget their own body (wangshen 忘身), then she or he “see “the Lord Emperor of Niwan (Niwan dijun 泥丸帝君), whose image is just like described above. And then is his attendant.

For the middle cinnabar, the breath towards heaven is red and the sun vision rising in which is seven inches diameter brightening seventy thousand kilometers, then after the adept or practitioner enter then state of losing consciousness of body, the encounter of deities happens, their images present.

Finally, is the lower cinnabar, first visualize the white breath, in the white breath there are sun vision in five inches diameter, brightening fifty thousand kilometers. Then the subject forgets her/his body, then meeting the gods.

All the scenery of the encountering ends with the intoning from the main deity, in verse form.

There are also methods that correlate the practices of preserving the three one, concerning the whole body in which include the palaces in head, with the methods of visualizing the nine places in head: firstly, the preserving the three one, then the nine places in head, after all these done, finally is the highest level of practicing: preserving The Emperor One (Diyi 帝一).<sup>70</sup>

As has mentioned above, preserving the three ones present as part of the practicing technique of Five Dippers and Three Ones (wusou sanyi 五斗三一) in Shangqing Daoism. Then next, what is Five Dippers and Three Ones (wudou sanyi 五斗三一) and the exercise step?

Basically, it means in the visualization scenery, the adept or practitioner will ascend to the Dipper together with the three ones, namely the three main deities of the three

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70 see (Xiao 2006, 76)

cinnabars, as well as their minister, total in seven personages, finally taking a seat in the constellations of the Northern Dipper which correspond to current season. The practice for two equinoxes and two solstices, and June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 15<sup>th</sup> as the scriptures also mentioned, has roughly similar procedure but the details vary, notably in the star that the adept and the six deities will ascend to.

Specifically, Let's take the exercise in the spring equinox for example as a representative demonstration, which date's practice is also most elaborated both in *Shangqing jinque dijun wudou sanyi tujue* 上清金闕帝君五斗三一圖訣 (The Instruction with illustration on Five Dipper and Three Ones of Shangqing Lord Emperor), in short, *Wudou sanyi tujue* and *Suling jing*.

The specific procedures are: in the middle night of spring equinox, after entering the chamber and burning the incense, the adept faces the east and grind the teeth. Then the adept starts to visualize the three ones in the three cinnabars as elaborated above. After all the six deities, including the main lords and their ministers, are actualized, the practitioner stays in the central, surrounded by these deities, then rides the exhalation of a purple breath (ziqu 紫炁) and together ascends to the yang ming star 陽明星 in the Northern Dipper, who is the god in charge of the eastern in the Dipper. Upon arriving, the visitors take a seat in the star together, exhale the purple breath for thirty times. This way long long time, the Eastern Primony Supreme High Palace (Dongyuan taishang gong 東元太上宮) will appear. In this palace, there are the youth of the green mastery (qingxuan xiaotong 青玄小童), who will bestow the adept the true light.

More specific details for this imagery of ascending are provided:

Firstly, before the visualization practice starts, one must see a purple breath, which is like a thread, descending directly from the up high to the front of oneself, then start the practice of visualizing three-ones.

Then during the rising, the seven-personage formation must be like the shape of wild geese, one by one forward.

Third, except visualizing the seven personages, one must also “wear the northern dipper” “巾斗七星”, in a manner that the scoop is on one’s head and the handle in front.

Finally, at the end of the visualization “journey”, the seven personages return from the purple breath, back to the three cinnabar palaces, then end with a tetrasyllabic invocation.

Similarly, in summer solstice, facing south, the adept just ascending to the Danyuan star 丹元星 then the deity in this respective Palace. In autumn equinox, facing the west, the destination to ascend is Yinjing star 陰精星 and meet its respective deity. In winter solstice, towards the north, the Beiji star 北極星. And finally, on June the first or fifteenth, facing southwest, riding breath of four colors, the adept and the gods in cinnabar fields will ascend to the Tianguan star 天關星.

From the instructions and accompanied illustration, a vivid, iconic feature can easily be observed: what the deities going to appear in the adept’s mind look like how they symmetrically layout with their assistant deities, together with what they are called and where they dwell, the practitioner is with full knowledge and image about their bodily deities. Then is the scenery of ascending, after “seeing” these deities within body, they will line one by one and together ascending to the constellation in the Northern Dipper in wild geese way. We will also know the colorful breath existing in these procedures, such as purple breath, which is the color of heaven, that appear before the adept and deities’ ascending and return.



Each step, how to operate, are all in detail, these iconographic depicting (in words or illustrations) help and guide the practitioner to create vivid image in mind, lead them to a journey to a celestial place, prototype of mental image to create, showing the way of Shangqing Daoism's method of communication with gods and seek for their protection and ascending.

Corresponding to the opening question, what do the "Five Dippers" refer to, till now we can answer this question clearly. They are the five stars, namely Yangming star 陽明星, Danyuan star 丹元星, Yinjing star 陰精星, Beiji star 北極星 and the Tianguan 天關星 in Northern Dipper, which correspond to specific solar term.

And the five dipper and three one together, form the practice system five dipper and three-ones (wudou sanyi 五斗三一), which is a correlate system. In this system, there are abundant images of deities.

The Cinnabar Filed	Location	The Deity	The Depiction
The Upper Cinnabar Field: Niwan Place at the center of the head 上丹田	Three inches behind the middle of the eyebrow.	The main lord 主神	<p>Lord Emperor of the Niwan, Chizi(the infant)泥丸天帝君上元赤子,</p> <p>The avoided name Xuanningtian 玄凝天, courtesy name sanyuanxian 三元先; one name bowushang 伯無上, another noshihua 伯史華.</p> <p>naked without costume, looks like new-born infant, holding the White Tiger Talisman (Baihu fu 白虎符), enveloped by cyan Jade letter.</p>
泥丸宮: 腦	Notes: two/one inches behind is Dongfang palace 洞房, Mingtang palace 明堂.	The assistant of main lord 輔神	<p>Lord Emperor assistant, avoided name Zhaolejing 肇勒精, courtesy name zhongxuansheng 仲玄生; One name qifei 起非, another name changfu 常扶.</p> <p>Hold <i>Dadong jing</i>.</p> <p>naked and like a new-born infant.</p> <p>Is the god of the essences of the teeth, tongue and the skull.</p>

Table 2. The Gods for Visualization in The Three Cinnabar Fields, generated from *Suling jing*  
(DZ1314, 0410c)

### 2.3 Visualization of gods of nine palaces in head and six orbs

Beside the systematic bodily guardian deities in large number, a more sophisticated visualization technique about Gods and Palaces dwelling in head has been developed and presented by Shangqing school. Robinet calls this technique on Brian as an “innovation” of Shangqing (Robinet 2000, 211). As briefly mentioned, Shangqing school has put much emphasis on Brain, which can be reflected in the deities’ number, high ranking, and the sophisticated elaboration and even the color scheme of deities’ costume of the Nine Palaces. Below is the further elaboration.

Not one central scripture of Shangqing has expounded the Nine Palaces in head and their dwelling gods inside. The relative early one can be *Huangting neijing jing* 黃庭內景經 (The Interior Yellow Court Scripture), it puts forward the concept “Niwan” 泥丸 to refer to head and figures out the Nine Perfected one (Jiu Zhenyi 九真一) are the lord gods which governing inside, as well as preliminarily depicting the deities’ status (in purple costumes and the attire fluttering) and the visualization techniques’ function.

The spirit of the brain is Root of Essence (Jinggen), also known as Niwan  
腦神經根字泥丸

... ..

The nine perfected of the Niwan each have their own chamber.  
泥丸九真皆有房

... ..

Their spirits equally wear purple robes and capes of flying gauze  
同服紫衣飛羅裳

Only think of this one section and gain limitless longevity  
但思一部壽無窮

It is not that they each live separately: they are together in the brain  
非各別住俱腦中

Lined up by rank, seated in order, all face outward  
列位次坐向外方  
(DZ0331, 0909b; Kohn 2023, 115-17)

Though comparing to it other chapters that outline the Gods guarding the orbs the part for head is relatively brief, the nine deities of nine palaces are all in purple costume has already indicated the importance of brain, cause in the classical Daoist color scheme, purple is the color of heaven(Robinet 1993, 132) (Li 2009, 181).

The guarding deities in head become much more systematic and detailed in other scriptures of Shangqing Daoism, such as *Suling jing* 素靈經 and *Ciyi jing* 雌一經<sup>71</sup>: the nine Main lord of Nine Palaces contain four feminine deities and five masculine ones, and the number of dwelling gods become more, because in each palace there are the main lord god and the assistant one, some even contains three: one main lord and two assistant ones, respectively standing in left, middle and right. These gods, meanwhile, their surname, name, cognomen, location, direction, costumes (color, ornament, even texture), coronet, appearance (like infant. etc.), body size, motion (holding bell, talisman. etc) are fully introduced and illustrated, as well as the palaces' name and its location (Table1). In those palaces which are most fully described, similar layout structure can be observed: the main deity is accompanied in a symmetry way with assistant deity each in left and right, which is classical divine figural

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71 The full name of *suling jing* and *ciyi jing* are: *dongzhen taishang suling dongxuan dayou miaojing* 洞真太上素靈洞玄大有妙經 and *Dongzhen gaoshang yudi dadong ciyi zhijian wulaobao jing* 洞真高上玉帝大洞雌一至檢五老寶經. As xiao, dengfu surveyed, the scriptures which contained content on nine palaces in head include: the section of “sigong cizhenyi neishen booming yujue 四宮雌真一內神寶名玉訣 in *suling jing*, *taishang daojun shouyuandan shangjing* 太上道君守元丹上經, *shangqing suling shangpian* 上清素靈上篇, *shangqing mingtang xuandan zhenjing* 上清明堂玄丹真經, *daongzhen taishang daojun yuandan shangjing* 洞真太上道君元丹上經, *dengzhen yinjue*, the first chapter 登真隱訣卷上, *yunji qiqian*, volume fifty 雲笈七籤 . 卷五十 . 祕要訣法 . 三一九宮法, and so on, all these scriptures contain the nine palaces and the dwelling deities, in which the *suling jing* and *ciyi jing* are most fully elaborated. Except *ciyi jing* has certain difference centering on the palace of jade emperor(玉帝宮), *suling jing* and other documents are most similar and should belong to the same system(Xiao 2006, 76, 78).

imagery.<sup>72</sup> This figural layout feature has close relation with traditional divine image, though was thought to be influenced by Buddhism(Liu 2001, 51-55).

Take Mingtang Palace as example, the main lord in the middle of this palace is Bright Mirror Wunderbar Lord (mingjing shenjun 明鏡神君), with the Bright Youth Perfected Lord (Mingtong zhenjun 明童真君) in the left and Bright Female Perfect Officer (mingnv zhenguan 明女真官) in the right. They are all in green brocade costume, with four jade bells in the waist and their mouth bears jade mirror. Overall, they all look like infant, which correspond the idea in *Laozi* that the way(dao 道)is the original (Jin 1999, 253).

Though in limited words, the short bio and picture of the deities are with deep connotation. This tradition of call the deities name can trace back to Han dynasties, the difference is only in the point that Han's practices are for healing disease, while till Shangqing Daoism's tradition is for cultivation and immortality(Xiao 2004, 2-4). The deities in Mingtang Place 明堂宮 is two masculine deities and a female one, which symbolize the Yin lies in Yang, and Yang include Yin (Jin 1999, 253).

A tridimensional spatial locality of the Nine Palaces has also been expounded clearly; these specifications may still be for the visualization purpose.<sup>73</sup> Starting from the middle of eyebrow, before entering the first cavity the Mingtang Palace 明堂宮, it is a kind of vestibule

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<sup>72</sup> The most representative is mingtang 明堂 and dongfang 洞房 palaces.in tao' explanation, this is because though the masculine deities is inferior to the female one, they have scripture circulate so people know details. In contrast, the female ones don't have (DZ421,6:0607b; DZ1314,33:0406b; DZ1371,33: 0838b) (Jin 1999, 252).

<sup>73</sup> Here mainly presents the content of *suling jing*, which holds with the same system with certain other scriptures, as in note 17. The difference bwtween *ciyi jing* and *suling jing* on nine palaces is on the fifth cavity of *suling jing*, the jade emperor palace 玉帝宮. In *ciyi jing* it it called the place of the golden flower(jinhua gong 金華宮) or the dongfang palace of the feminine-one and golden flower(jinhua ciyi dongfang gong 金華雌一洞房宮). In *suling jing*, the jade emperor palace is the first palace fot the four feminine deities. In contrast, in *ciyi jing*, the dongfang palace of the feminine-one and golden flower is residence of three ladies: the three original ladies of simplicity(sansu yuanjun 三素元君).and it seems that *ciyi jing* ingores antoher three cavities in *suling jing*(Robinet 1993, 132-34; Xiao 2006, 78).

which has gateway in each side, called the Yellow Portico (Huangque 黃闕) on the right, and the Scarlet Terrace (Jiangtai 絳台) on the left. The Yellow Portico has a Purple Gate, in which a spirit with same color of Gate dwells inside; Similarly, a deity dressed in green lives in the Green Chamber, which is harbored by the Scarlet Terrace. The two deities both look like infants, holding bells of liquid fire. Visualizing them at dusk or do visualization, as actualizing and seeing, then call the deities' name and invocation.

Right behind the vestibule is the Mingtang Palace, one inch deep from the middle of eyebrow. Following Mingtang, two inches from the face is the Dongfang Palace 洞房宮. Similarly, behind Dongfang Palace, from three to five inches deep are respectively situated Dantian 丹田宮, Liuzhu 流珠宮 and Yudi Palace 玉帝宮. Meanwhile, above the Mingtang Palace is Tianting Palace 天庭宮, with Jizhen Palace 極真宮 following and locate above Dongfang. And Taihuang Palace 太皇宮 above Liuzhu Palace 流珠宮. As described, each of the cavity is one square inch in size. As also indicated in the Table, the first four Palaces dwell the masculine deities, while the other four Palaces live the feminine ones. When visualizing, since the feminine deities are more important, so they are visualized behind the masculine one (Robinet 1993, 130). And after visualization of cavities which shelter feminine deities are finished, the exercise relates to Xuandan Palace 玄丹宮 start.<sup>74</sup>

The Exercise steps stipulation helps us understand in what context these deities in Nine Places are depicted and why certain details are provided. For example, as for preserving the feminine deities who dwell in the four cavities, the scripture expounds that at certain regulated time, the adept must “preserve” the deities' name.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in this condition, the

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<sup>74</sup> The specifics of exercises related to xuandan palace 玄丹宮, see (DZ1032,22:0350b; DZ1314,33: 0407c), (Robinet 1993, 130-31).

<sup>75</sup> Robinet made a note explanation that “preserve” is to “meditate upon”(Robinet 1993, 130).

garments (the dress color, coronet), body size (i.e.,6.6 inches), dwelling places, the detailed surname, name, cognomen, are provided.

Based on above information, not only we master a tridimensional location of the Palaces, but also the vivid images of the deities are in mind. Hence, though mostly we can only see texts, the essential role of scriptures to help adepts or practitioners to visualize is presented.<sup>76</sup> The words provide the primary given prototype of visualization, based on which the adepts and disciples enter the world of images, which is ultimately real for the Daoism devotees (Li 2010, 103). From the other way, the world with abundant interaction with varies deities also show us an abundant Daoism pantheon world, though not presented through carvings or paintings.

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<sup>76</sup> As has mentioned in introduction, certain reasons resulted in the lack of illustrations in the visualization practice.

The Palaces	Location	The Gods and Their Verbal Elucidations
The Palace of Mingtang g 明堂宮	Left	<p>The Bright Youth Perfected Lord, the avoided name xuanyang, the courtesy name shaoqing, wearing green brocade costume, with four jade bells in the waist and their mouth bears jade mirror, looks like infant.</p> <p>明童真君，諱玄陽，字少青。著綠錦衣，腰帶四玉鈴，口銜玉鏡，形如嬰兒。</p>
	Middle	<p>The Bright Mirror Wunderbar Lord, the avoided name zhaojing, the avoided name zhaojing, courtesy name siming, wearing green brocade costume, with four jade bells in the waist and their mouth bears jade mirror, looks like infant.</p> <p>明鏡神君，諱照精，字四明。著綠錦衣，腰帶四玉鈴，口銜玉鏡，形如嬰兒。</p>
	Right	<p>The Bright Female Perfect Officer, avoided name weiyin, courtesy name shaoyuan, wearing green brocade costume, with four jade bells in the waist and their mouth bears jade mirror, looks like infant.</p> <p>明女真官，諱微陰，字少元。著綠錦衣，腰帶四玉鈴，口銜玉鏡，形如嬰兒。</p>
The Palace of Dongfang g	Left	<p>The Childe Wuying, name xuanchongshu, courtesy name hefuzi; one name primony symilicity lord, another name the Wunderbar Childe.</p>



Table 1. The Nine Places and their deities, generated from *Suling jing*'s version.

## 2.4 Envisioning the elaborated system of bodily guardians.

A typical document that shows the convention of depicting the physical appearance of body guardians is the *Shangqing Dadong Zhenjing* (Huang 2012, 29). In Zhu, Ziyong 朱自英's (1976-1029) preface, the *Dadong zhenjing* is taken as the first of the three marvelous classics. (“上清三奇書之首”) (DZ6, 0512b), thus here is placed as first examining object. In this text, as we can observe, the central 39 group of deities are large in number and are more systematic. Also, more physical pictorial illustrations, as well as talismans can be seen. This is related to this text's generational preservation and collective editing, thus inventing the textual version problem and necessity for textual study.

A brief textual study helps us more precisely locate our investigating target other than getting lost in the texts' complexity. In *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* we can see the “double structure”<sup>77</sup> of each of the thirty-nine sections from volume 2-5 in the DZ6 version<sup>78</sup>. The two parts in each of the 39 sections respectively address the celestial deities and the corporeal guardians, and these two are corresponding. In the central 39 stanzas, which are composed in verses of 4-6 characters, are presented to the high cosmic deities. Visualization of bodily guardians' part are in prose, with illustrations and talisman, occupying the starting and ending part of each 39 section, and this content may have been added later (Robinet 1993, 98-99; 1997, 133; 2000, 201; Zhang 2007, 228-34,47; Chan 2011, 219-23).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The wording “double structure” is from Robinet, see (Robinet 1993, 98).

<sup>78</sup> Having a glance on the textual problem of *dadong zhenjing* shed light on the “double structure” of *Dadong zhenjing* this text, *Dadong zhengjing*, can be traced back to Eastern jin. Now the variant versions exist, what we can see today are several versions with different titles (Robinet 2000, 201; Zhang 2007, 228). With careful text study, it is found that the *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* (DZ6) version is most close to the six dynasties one (Robinet 2000, 201; Zhang 2007, 228; Chan 2011, 221).

<sup>79</sup> However, even this DZ6 version dated back to six dynasties is also a collective supplementary work, called “supplemented version” (大本). In contrast, the “essential version” (小本) is mostly close to the one that

Relatively speaking, the 39 bodily guardians are more related to our topic, because first of all it is the corporeal deities which are more mentioned and involved in the visualization practice (Robinet 1993, 100; 1997, 133). Just following this, secondly, it is just for these visualization practices, the physical illustrations and talismans are provided.

In the central 39 sections of *Shangqing dadong zhenjing*, in order, the 39 deities from 1st to 39th to visualize are:

Youth of the Taiwei Heaven(Taiwei Xiaotong 太微小童),The Esteemed God of Supreme Oneness (Taiyi Zunshen 太一尊神), Jade Emperor(Yudi Jun 玉帝君), Childe Wuying of the Left(Zuo Wuying Gongzi 左無英公子, Esteemed Baiyuan Lord of the Right(You Baiyuan Zunshen 右白元尊神), Controller Of Fate Of The Central(Zhongyang Siming Zhangren Jun 中央司命丈人君), The Peach Lord of The Fate Gate(Mingmen Taojun 命門桃君),The Infant of High Oneness Niwan(Ninwan Shangyi Chizi 泥丸上一赤子), Primordial Lord Of The Middle Oneness Scarlet Place (Jiangong Zhongyi Yuanjun 絳宮中一元君),The Original King of Yellow Court of Gate of Life in Lower Cinnabar (Mingmen Xiayi Huangting Yuanwang 命門下一黃庭元王),The Nine Veritables of Niwan(Niwan Jiuzhen 泥丸九真),The Eight Veritables Of Gall Bladder (Danzhong Bazhen 膽中八真), The Seventh Veritables Of Kidney(Qizhen Xuanyang Jun 七真玄陽君), The Six Veritables Of The Lungs(Feizhong liuzhen 肺中六真), The Five Veritables of the Spleen(Pizhong Wuzhen 脾中五真),The Four Veritables of The Liver (Ganzhong Sizhen 肝中四真),The Three

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Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-?) And Xu family were preserving and practicing in tao hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536)'s record. Robinet (2000) and Zhang (2007) will both agree that the head part ("songjing yujue" 誦經玉訣) and some part of the ending, content on whirlwind" and "unitive fusion" of DZ6, are added comparing to the essential version. But no matter how, the main content of it is the thirty-nine sections from volume 2-5, has been relatively clear (Zhang 2007, 231; Chan 2011, 222).

Veritables Of The Blood-Essence(Jingxue Sanzhen 精血三真),The Two Veritables Of Stomach(Weiguan Erzhen 胃脘二真),The One Veritables Of The Heart(Xinzhong Yizhong 心中一真),The Veritable Of The Nine Originals(Jiuyuan Zhizhen 九元之真),The Spirit Of The August Oneness (Huangyi Zhi Hun 皇一之魂),(The Purple Simplicity Of The Left)Zisu Zuoyuanjun 紫素左元君,The Yellow simplicity Of The Central(Huangsu Zhongyuan Jun 黃素中元君),The White Simplicity Of The Right(Baisu Youyuanjun 白素右元君),Controller Of Fate In The Sun(Rizhong Siming 日中司命),The Peach Lord in the Moon(Yuezhong Taojun 月中桃君),The Youth of the Left Eye(Zuomu Tongzi 左目童子),The Youth of The Right Eye(Youmu Tongzi 右目童子),The Youth of The Lungs(Feibu Tongzi 肺部童子),The Lord Of The White Breath of the Embryo (Taizhong Baiqi Jun 胎中白炁君),Lord of The Green Breath of the Embryonic Knots(Jiezhong Qingqijun 結中青炁君),Lord of the Black Breath of The Embryonic Knots (Jiezhong Heiqi Jun 節中黑炁君),Lord of the Yellow Breath of Womb (Baozhong Huangqi Jun 胞中黃炁君),Lord of the Red Breath of The Blood (Xuezhong Chiqi Jun 血中赤炁君),Original Father (Shangxuan Yuanfu 上玄元父), Old Lord of the Three Simplicities (Sansu Laojun)三素老君,Five Emperor(Wudi 五帝/五老),Emperor's Assistant (Diqing 帝卿(泥丸上一帝卿)),The Esteemed Lord of Emperor One(Diyi Zunjun 帝一尊君).

Generally speaking, these illustrations for the thirty-nine sections practice follow the similar pattern that show the adept's visualization scene. The adept is seated frontally or back towards the viewer, the vapor emanates from them and flows over the adept's head, different deities stand on the vapor. These deities high in vapor can be one, three, five, seven, eight, nine or twelve in number, all are distributed in a symmetrical layout from in horizontal.

These number of deities, has certain connotation, for example, for the Nine Veritables (jiuzhen 九真), the corresponded deities' quantity to visualize is from nine to one. And the "nine" comes from the "three", namely each of the "Three Originals" divide into three, then comes the Nine Veritables (Jiuzhen 九真), which form the world and constitute the human embryo(Robinet 1993: 101). This recalls the cosmology outlined in *Daode jing* 道德經 (The scripture of the Way and the Moral): "The way produced the one, the one creates the two, the two creates the universe" "道生一， 一生二， 二生三， 三生萬物" (Chapter42). This formation and constitution reflected in certain number also show Shangqing's heritage of cosmology structure from the traditional Chinese pattern, in which the number 1,2,3,5,9 play a key role(Robinet 2000, 214-15).

Also, deities' appearance and ornaments vary according to different corporeal parts, which correspond different symbolic meaning. Just as "The Emperor One" (diyi 帝一), the final last deity to visualize after the other all deities' visualization finish, the appearance of it is an infant. The Emperor One is the fusion after and from other corporeal deities' visualization complete, it is the final stage in *Dadong zhenjing*'s practice to reach. From this perspective The Emperor One can be seen the highest gods in the *Dadong zhenjing* 39sections, the infant look, which also often emphasized in *Daode jing*, demonstrate the highest ideal of Daoism, but in a more religious way. We can also observe that the deity which guard the Brain, niwan 泥丸, often appear with the symbol and image of Emperor, like the dress "red costume and crown" (Hong gunmian 紅袞冕) and the ceremonial canopy. This image of deity in Brain reflects Shangqing school's understanding about the role and place of Brain in the whole body, namely, Brain is the lord of body(Li 2009, 183).This valuation on Brain, other than on heart, has its advancing meaning which is much close to our today's view of body, in such an early time.

A more complex, unitive and systematic body system vision can be seen from deities 39 sections deities' visualization. Each section corresponds to a different part of the human body, certain systematicity represent in the setting of these deities. Firstly, though this is just the basic pantheon, the number of these bodily guardians has expanded comparing to *Taiping jing* and *Laozi zhongjing* 老子中經 (The central scripture of Laozi). It not only contains the deities for the important human viscera, such as the Nine Veritables respectively for niwan 泥丸 (Brain), gall bladder, kidneys, lungs, spleen, liver, the blood-essence, stomach, and heart<sup>80</sup>, as well as the deities in charge of more macro part of body such as the upper, the middle, and the lower: the immortals in the three cinnabars. It also contains the guardians for the certain smaller orifices, such as the eyes, the nose, the ears, the tongue (in mouth), also the lords for the knots(jie 結), the embryo(tai 胎) and the womb(bao 胞). Meanwhile, for the pair orifices, their deities are almost all the same with minor difference, as well as their accompanied text. In fact, they are correlated to the sun and the moon, the most significant example are the sections for eyes: the left and the right one. In the guiding text for depicting the deities, the deity for left eye is “looks likes the sun stellar, and holding the sunlight” “狀如太陽星，手執日光” (DZ6,1, 0542b), while the right eye deity is “looks like Taiyin, and holding the moonlight” “狀如太陰星，手執月光” (DZ6,1, 0543a-b). They are seen as the materialization and representation of the sun and the moon, and all these pair parts such as hands, kidneys beside ears and eyes are corelated with the Sun and the moon, which indicate Yang and Yin respectively (Robinet 1993, 101). And this vision and correlation with the two star in human body has a long enduring impact till present's design(Li 2011, 143). All these show a sign of elaboration and development of Shangqing practices and its pantheon. The

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<sup>80</sup> just as above mentioned, the interest thing is the visualized deities' number is also nine, eight, seven, ... till one.

thirty-nine sections' deities visualized form the basic pantheon of Shangqing school, which is another contribution of Shangqing Daoism.

### 3. The Buxu Hymns in Rituals

The Buxu hymns that we are going to examine here mainly refer to the work actually applied to corresponding rituals, worked as liturgical hymns, in contrast to works created by Daoist-favor figures such as Yu Xin 庾信, Yang Guang 楊廣 of Sui dynasty, Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 of Tang Dynasty, and Yuan Haowen 元好問 in Jin Dynasty, whose writings in fact didn't enter the performance of Daoist ritual. Additionally, the liturgical hymns discussed here are mainly those in the period when Buxu Hymns were rightly fully created and established, namely the Six Dynasties. In these Dynasties, it is unclear whether it has been applied in singing or has had relative settings in musical aspect (Schipper 1989, 112); thus, the musical aspect is not the concern of this exploration.

This study pays more attention to the literary aspect of the ten stanzas, arguing that the accusation of being repeated should be taken within its ritual application context. Specifically, though no brand-new creation but heritage is required as for the Buxu stanzas because of its ritual performance purpose, it cannot say that Buxu stanzas are just boring preaching cliché, rather, it still shows the certain verbal artistry, literary skills and expertise of language use. Through this examination, it will also arouse a change in our definition of the “literary”.

The verses of Pacing the void (Buxu ci 步虛詞), as its name showed, are the liturgical

hymns which is applied in the Rite of Pacing the void. For Lingbao tradition, the audience ritual that Buxu hymns are performed is the central plot in Lingbao Retreat(Schipper 1989, 110; Lü 2008, 161; Sun 2014, 167; Kirková 2016, 335), study further hold that it is just Buxu rite reflects the establishment process of Lingbao ritual, its formation actually involved in the southward migration of Celestial Master Daoism and the complicated establishment process of the Highest Clarity and Numinous Treasure School(Zheng 2015, 6; Luo 2018, 222). The rite and the Hymns applied within are still performed in today's Daoist ritual practice. (Schipper 1989, 110). Hence, the exploration of Buxu Hymns naturally linked to many important and meaningful issues of Daoist ritual, still gain its significance.

Thus, this chapter also aims to contribute to the controversial problem on understanding of ritual steps indicated in Stanza two, contextualizing the ten stanzas of Buxu stanzas in the development of Daoist school and tradition to recognize the certain ritual connotation in the stanza exactly, trying to provide certain (may neglected) material and theoretical angle, to deepen the understanding of catching certain meaning of these Buxu stanzas.

Furthermore, it discusses the topic about Buddhist influence, considering the whole Lingbao tradition, but centered on the ten stanzas themselves to in line with the enquiry of this section. It tries to respond to the somehow generalized impression that, just as the whole Lingbao tradition, the ten stanzas witness an apparent of Buddhist elements. It is to a great extent true. But a deepen and detailed examination of the Buddhist elements in the ten stanzas will show, what it's connotation within this liturgical hymn and to what extent it has kept its original Buddhist ideas, this, may sharpen our idea about this topic: the incorporation of Buddhism in Lingbao tradition.

In correlation with Buddhist influence issue problem, it also related to the “heritage”

of Lingbao from Shangqing tradition within the scope Daoism development itself. And because of the multiple sources, it naturally comes out the problem about how these elements from different traditions co-exist in these stanzas, and which determine the connotation of the whole content of these stanzas more essentially. This discussion involves a little with the relation of Shangqing and Lingbao school. While still mainly focusing on the examination of the connotation of this verse, this exploration tries to outline a bigger picture behind the stanzas.

As for liturgical Buxu hymns, these hymns indeed have been recorded in the ritual texts of many Dynasties. Among these texts, the earliest and typical source of Buxu stanzas in the Six dynasties is in Yujingshan buxujing (Zheng 2018, 246) of Lingbao tradition. It is also the main source of Buxu stanzas, which also contains its main interpretation (Schipper 1989, 133). The *Dongyuan shenzhoujing* 洞淵神咒經, at the same time, contains another form of liturgical Buxu, which is also linked to another version of Buxu rite that is different from Lingbao tradition but closer the folk lore of that time. Apart from these, other fragmented pieces of Buxu lyrics which mostly belong to Shangqing texts, also existed in the Six Dynasties.

Later, the canonical text of Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406-477), the *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 record the same ten stanza of *Yujingshan buxujing*. In the following Dynasties, Buxu hymns are going to be recorded, and sometimes created. For example, the creation by the famous Tang Daoist Wu, Yün, and the twenty pieces of work collected in *Taishang huanglu zhaiyi* 太上黃籙齋儀 by Du Guangting. Till Song dynasty, the three emperors, Emperor Taizong, Emperor Zhenzong, Emperor Huizhong, all were engaged in the writing of Buxu hymns, which are collected in the *Jinluzhai sanding zan yongyi* 金籙



齋三洞贊詠儀 and are also applied in the Golden register ritual 金籙齋. The pieces of Huizong are still chanted in today's Daoist ritual performance. Hence, from above brief outline of the different Buxu hymns type in various Dynasties, it is easy to find that the Buxu hymns of Lingbao tradition in the Six Dynasties, will be our primary exploration target, because it is the relatively early completed Buxu liturgical hymn in our exploring period. At the same time, Proper attention, of course, will be given to the early version in Shangqing tradition, such as *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 and *Shangqing wushang jinyuan yuqing Jinzhen feiyuan buxu yuzhang* 上清無上金元玉清金真飛元步虛玉章 and so on, and also the pieces that in *Dongyuan shenzhoujing* 洞淵神咒經, which contain more folk-lore feature, because though Yujingshan version is the piece when we mention Buxu will commonly refer to, it is still cannot be totally called the earliest only source, outlining related verses on pacing the void present us a broader and more comprehensive picture here.

Through both presenting of religious esoteric knowledge and examination of the form and devices, this section reveals the undivided status of the “religious” and the “literary” in the textual tradition in traditional society. Going through both religious and literary tradition (Chan 2010, 165-66; Chan 2021, 1), this study lays full importance on the religious connotations too, because as for our study object, the liturgical hymns, it is nearly not possible to catch the stanzas' content and idea without these knowledges. Furthermore, this chapter's analysis not only includes the scripture examination as a must, but try to understand it within an active theoretical framework as stated in Introduction.

### 3.1 The religious connotation of buxu stanza, the necessary traditions to understand

In fact, just as Lingbao ritual contains content or elements from varied traditions, such as Shangqing school Daoism and Buddhism, most obviously, these are also reflected in the ten stanzas. Rightly as Bokenkamp call it, it is a cross-fertilization of ideas, complexes of myth and symbolism(Bokenkamp 1981, 103). And in his annotated-type analysis of the ten stanzas, which contain certain similarities to the traditional way of how premodern scholar interpret classic, also shows this feature.

It contains at least these contents and aspects, as below (which is closely related to the rituals, though from different traditions. It can be put that, without this religious knowledge, the term and corpus, the settings of the Buxu stanzas, cannot be really exactly and fully released. Thus, the writing below will try to figure out what the ten stanzas connote to gain a basic and better understanding about Buxu stanzas. While in the second section, following the religious connotation revealing, it is literary analysis, which corresponds to certain stereotype to religious verses just like Buxu stanzas.

Specifically, the influence from Buddhism on, no matter Lingbao ritual and Buxu stanzas, is the early trend of scholar's studies thus comparatively become the "conventional" idea of studies on Buxu. Recently study showed more interact and emphasis of the inner development and need of Daoism within. Hence, this sections analysis will put more emphasis on Daoist field, but still take the influence of Buddhism into present things more completely.

### 3.1.1 Circumambulation or pacing the guideline? the buxu rites

First of all, no doubt, we will find the content of the ten stanzas are directly related to Buxu rite, which is certainly such an important rite in Lingbao school (Schipper1989, 110), In the second stanza, it reads:

When we circle around, our steps follow the pattern of the stars on high.

旋行躡雲綱

We ride the Void, tracing the mysterious structure (of the earth).

乘虛步玄紀.

(DZ1439,0626a; Trans. from Bokenkamp 1981, 63)<sup>81</sup>

In this line, there is an apparent direct reference of the term “pacing the ‘guideline’ on high” (Nie yun gang 躡雲綱), it brings the long controversy on what the pace exactly is when chanting the Buxu stanzas, and which exactly the steps are applied in Buxu rites.

In the descriptive narratives about the ritual procedures right before the ten stanzas, after the contents about visualization techniques and other actions, it comes the sentence that “(The light) along with me, circling around scripture and circumambulating (sui wo raojing xuanhui er’xing 隨我繞經旋迴而行) (DZ1439, 0626a).

This guide some scholar to the conclusion that the ritual episode “circumambulation” is just the “pacing the guideline on high” (Wang 2011, 75, 77) , because the wording “circling round” (xuanxing 旋行) also appear right before the term “pacing the guideline on high” (xuanxing buyungang 旋行步雲綱). This seems somehow to make sense.

But for other scholars, representative ones such as Andersen, Poul and Luo, Zhengming, figure out that “Pacing the guideline and treading the Dipper” (Bugang niedou 步罡躡斗) and “Pacing the void (Buxu 步虛)” actually belongs to different traditions so should not take as the same. Thus, here the direct reference “pacing the guideline on high” (步雲綱)” should not be interpreted as these structured ritual steps that follow the cosmic pattern but be the loosely circumambulation(Andersen 1989; Luo 2018).

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<sup>81</sup> The translation below, if not special noted, the translation is from me, while from others with a few adaptations will be noted.

But even the two forms, circumambulation and pacing the guideline, are different, why are there in the ten stanzas of Buxu stanzas in *Yujingshan buxujing*, there appears both terms, and what actually the ritual episode in stanza two is referring to.

In fact, no matter the current rituals practiced today which will chanting Buxu stanzas, or later text recording and explanation about the ritual, they both easily make things even more confusing. First of all, both the two forms, circumambulating or pacing the guideline when chanting the Buxu stanzas exist in today's practice. This is already found in Schipper's famous fieldwork in Taiwan (Schipper1989, 116)

Secondly, if we refer to the scripture of later dynasties' texts, the two forms also both recorded in important ritual texts. In *Yuyin fashi*(玉音法事), which is recognized as the early source of Buxu stanzas that today's practice refers to. It clearly figures out that the officiants should be progressing slowly in the "steps of guideline" (gangbu 罡步).<sup>82</sup> But right after the Northern Song, in the *Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi*(無上黃籙大齋立成儀), which is the comprehensive collection of liturgies from previous dynasties and is as important source today's scholar are still widely referred to, the steps when chanting Buxu becomes circumambulations again.

I will argue that the ritual action circumambulation is indeed differed significantly from the Bugang, and the two steps in its form are totally different and are from varied tradition<sup>83</sup>. For circumambulation (xuanxing 旋行), if we check the original text, there is only

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<sup>82</sup> “壇眾丁罡步徐行” (DZ 0607, 0141a).

<sup>83</sup> Anderson made comprehensive survey of walking the guideline (“Bugang” 步綱 or 罡), tracing its ancient archaic form to “steps of Yu” (Yubu 禹步) and how it is cooperated in the general liturgy in later dynasties. With abundant materials, he concluded that Bugang does not belong to Lingbao tradition. For later record in Northern Wei, namely *Wushang biyao*, the content about Bugang is basically derived from shangqing tradition. Later in Tang ritual texts about the hierarchical order about Three Carvens, Bugang is recorded in Shangqing tradition and Zhengyi tradition, rather than Lingbao, as Andersen has presented (Andersen 1989, 39-42).

simple description such as “slowly and peaceful” “circle round the censer or scripture and so on “, no further description or requirement about the steps are given. In contrast, for pacing the guideline (Bugang 步綱/罡), since its basis are certain cosmic pattern and stellar’ layout (in Shangqing tradition), for Bugang’s regulation, it apparently appeared more detailed and is regulated to go on in a certain step.

Meanwhile, we also need to figure out these following facts: first of all, the ritual steps that chanting Buxu stanzas in *Yujingshan buxujing* should be circumambulation’, because basically this text belongs to Lingbao tradition. Examining the main early Lingbao scriptures, such as *Taijizhenren fu lingbao zhajieweiji zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 and *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀, the description about the movement when chanting the Buxu stanzas are circling (the censer or scripture) 旋繞(香爐/天文) (DZ0532, 0868c; DZ0528, 0852c) or make a tour (ci shiqi xunxing 次師起巡行(DZ0528, 0852c), there is indeed no sophisticated regulation and detail about the steps, which contrast significantly to the steps of Bugang.

Then the question is, why there is the conflict shown in *Yuyin fashi* (Northern Song) and *Wushang huanglu daizhai lichengyi*(Southern song). This question should be related to when the steps of Bugang are integrated into the Buxu rites. For this question, both Luo, zhengming and Anderson agree that Bugang is an additional element which integrated in the liturgy after Tang dynasty, For Anderson, this was in Tang Dynasties and for Luo, the time point is in Northern Song.

Comparatively I will agree Anderson because he indeed examine sufficient original Daoist texts and finds evidence that shows the clues of integration by tracing the archaic form of Bugang, namely the steps of Yu, Bugang in Shangqing corpus such as *Jiuchen yujing*, in

essential Daoist texts such as *Wushang biyao* of Northern Wei and *Sandong xiudaoyi* of Tang dynasty. This way he pointed out that in *Wushang biyao*'s content of Bugang is apparently integrated from the Shangqing tradition. And in Tang dynasty scripture, in its hierarchical arrangement about Three Caverns, the part related to Bugang just mentioned in Shangqing and Zhengyi tradition, while no reference to Lingbao tradition (Andersen 1989, 39-42). Thus, I agree that Anderson's argumentation and conclusion is with reason, though the controversy about the date of scriptures' producing time and preserving procedure never end.<sup>84</sup> The article is indeed a solid attempt if we need to discuss thing within historical perspective. The limitation, this may not be totally appropriate word, does not belong to Anderson's alone, but belongs to all historical narratives.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> As Schipper, the well-known senior Daoist expert, found and described no matter the important classic *Daode jing* (The Scripture of the way and the virtue 道德經), or the collections in *Daozang*, unlike the Buddhist counterpart, most of the scriptures in *Daozang* are without clear author and writing date. We can even say, it is not Daoist favor and feature to present the texts in a clear, organized historical way in front of their later readers (Schipper 1999, 204-05). This feature, indeed, bring us certain obstacle if we want to discuss thing under a historical framework, tracing its "development". Though for Daoist view of time and cosmology, the linear time view, which is necessary for historicism, is meaningless, but for our later scholar, somehow "secular", this lack of historical sign do bring us difficulties and limitation in doing tracing work. But, as an expedient, we still need to discuss it in a relative established historical order.

<sup>85</sup> Maybe we can have a brief reflection on how the texts are inherited and collected, which is the basis for a further coherent historical narrative.

The text we relied on to analyze, it inevitably went through a procedure of collecting and preserving. The collection of previous dynasties, especially those are close to the early text, say, as *Yuyin fashi*, *wushang huanglu lichen dazhai yishi* to early *Yujingshan buxu jing*, are important text for us today to contrast text and try to figure out what it originally is and means.

But just as Owen introduce how the poetries' original text in weijin came to later scholars such as shenyue 沈約. Even contrasting to us, Shen Yue's collection and narrative will be much reliable because he is still not that far from Wei jin period, but just as Owen pointed out, even this "not that far", several hundred years had passed. And we do not know how bad a condition is when the material the editor collected came in front of him<sup>85</sup>. (Owen2006, 1-8).

This inevitably resulted that, even the closest scholars work which was trying to restore the previous texts as they really were. We don't have to say each collection has its selection rules, that's too broad. We may also reasonably aware that, facing a text from several hundred years ago, though comparing the whole thousands year of history it is short, it does many years had passed and happened if we took the later editor as real human lived with an empathetic attitude. No need to say there are (frequent) wars, there are many dynasties change. etc. So, my tentative explanation for such a conflict is: the later scholars have the same difficulties as us today when facing the early text such as *Yujingshan buxujing*. When reading the original text of the ten stanzas, specifically, "旋行步雲網", I would agree that interpretation like *Yuyin fashi* and from wang xiaodun would make sense. Even Anderson, who does not agree that circumambulation and bugang are the same with his comprehensive

But within this historical framework, as far as we can go. An additional evidence I want to add, which supports the viewpoint that the integrations of Buxu rites and Bugang roughly happened in Tang dynasties is from *Dongyuan Shenzhou jing* (Scripture of Divine Incantation of the Abyssal Caverns 洞淵神咒經). Certain important scholars have noticed this scripture presents another form of circumambulation (Shipper1989, 112; Li 2010, 109). That is, the Master and the patron sit on a high platform, while the other Daoist circling around the master orderly. This happened after the master recites an invocation. When the other Taoists start to circle around this master, it is at this moment, the master will chant the Buxu stanzas. It is an early sample of Buxu stanzas in a pure liturgy text (Schipper 1989, 112).

In the Buxu section of this scripture, *Dongyuan shenzhoujing*, the description about the steps of circling is just in a way of being slow<sup>86</sup> and no further elucidation. This content appears in volume seven. However, in volume fifteen, which is thought to be added by Tang Daoist, its stanzas apparently are related to Acquired eight trigrams (Houtian bagua 後天八卦), which is the basis of how steps of Yu are arranged.<sup>87</sup> Each of these verses starts from a

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analysis and study, he seems not denied right in this line, it is a direct reference to the term from bugang, but just hold that this line should be understood symbolically.

This is far enough a mature and solid conclusion, but I hope, in the least, it can bring my reader a little inspiration, in a relatively logical way. The mission of this section has been achieved.

<sup>86</sup> The original text is: 法師中務取一人聰明瞭了分明者為法師，與主人唱道。並安二高座，高座上一人稱揚聖號，為其主人。其餘道士，次次旋行耳。高座上法師，執步虛唱和，座下人旋行徐徐。高越而望天，聽雲中鴻聲。若聽嘹嘹之響，似玄景之宮，天人之歌矣 (DZ0335, 0026a).

<sup>87</sup> Mollier compare different versions of *Shenzhou Jing*, including the Dunhuang manuscript (Pelliot and Stein collections), Du Guangting's compilation and other scriptures that preserve the ten-juan version in Tang dynasties. Meanwhile she considers the wording feature of text as supporting evidence, for example, the allusions in first ten juans to Liu Yu(363-442), the founder of Liu Song dynasties, the vocabulary specially belongs to Six dynasties(suo lu 索虞) and the substitution to the names of Tang emperors Li Yuan 李淵 (566-635), Li Shimin 李世民 (598-649), Li Zhi 李治(628-683) of the versions preserved in Tang dynasties, comprehensively she confirmed that the original version of *Shenzhoujing* at least can date to early fifth century, and keeping existed as ten-juan in the beginning of Tang Dynasty, until Du Guangting expanded it into twenty juan in Five dynasties.

Mollier's early monograph on *Shenzhou Jing* presents a similar recapitulation, but with more detailed and

direction, namely from the East, South, West, North, The Central, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and finally, the above, the below. Each direction corresponds to a deity, for example, Lord of Canglao (canglao jun 蒼老君) in the east, Lord of Yandi (yandi jun 炎帝君) in the south. More apparent sign is that till the direction of northeast, southeast, southwest, northwest, we see the gods named following the eight diagrams (see table 01). The another eleven verses right following this group are more apparently relates each direction to eight diagram 八卦, rightly matching the introduction of eight diagram in *Yijing* 易經 (The Book Of Change).<sup>88</sup>

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elaborated analyzing process, such as the concrete detail on the allusion to Liu Song (Mollier 1990, 53, 56-57; Mollier 2004, 270-71). Lü, Pengzhi accepted and cited this conclusion, see (Lü 2008, 174).

<sup>88</sup> In the Chapter “Shuogua zhuan 說卦傳 (“Explaining the Trigrams”) of *Classic of Changes*, it reads:

The myriad things come forth in **Zhen [Quake]**; *Zhen* corresponds to the **east**. 萬物“出乎震”，震，東方也。They are set in order in **Sun [Compliance]**; *Sun* corresponds to the **southeast**. “Set in order” means that they are fresh and neat. “齊乎巽”，巽，東南也，齊也者、言萬物之絜齊也。

**Li [Cohesion, Fire, i.e., the sun]** here means brightness. That the myriad things are made visible to one another here signifies that this is the trigram of the south. The fact that the sage [king] faces the **south** to listen to the whole world and that he turns toward the brightness there to rule is probably derived from this. 離也者，明也，萬物皆相見，南方之卦也。聖人南面而聽天下，嚮明而治，蓋取諸此也。

**Kun [Pure Yin, Earth]** here means the Earth. The myriad things all are nourished to the utmost by it. This is why it says: “gives them maximum support in **Kun**.” 坤也者，地也，萬物皆致養焉，故曰：致役乎坤。**Dui [Joy]** here means autumn at its height, something in which the myriad things all find cause to rejoice. This is why it says: “makes them happy then in *Dui*.” 兌、正秋也，萬物之所說也，故曰：說言乎兌。[As for] “has them do battle in **Qian**” *Qian* here is the trigram of the **northwest**, so this signifies where yin and yang exert pressure on each other. 戰乎乾，乾、西北之卦也，言陰陽相薄也。

**Kan [Sink Hole]** here means water. It is the trigram of due **north**. It is the trigram of wearisome toil. It is here that the myriad things all find refuge. This is why it says: “finds them thoroughly worn out in *Kan*.” 坎者、水也，正北方之卦也，勞卦也，萬物之所歸也，故曰：勞乎坎。**Gen [Restraint]** is the trigram of the **northeast**. It is here that the myriad things reach the end of their development, but it is also the beginning of that development. This is why it says: “has them reach final maturity in *Gen*.” 艮、東北之卦也。萬物之所成終而所成始也。故曰：成言乎艮(Guo ed., 2006, 404-05); Translation from (Lynn 1994, 121-22).

In the section “Buxu jiecao pin 步虛解考品 (“Category of Explanation and Textual Study of Buxu”) in *Dongyuan Shenzhou jing* 洞淵神咒經 (Scripture of Divine Incantation of The Abyssal Caverns), there are series stanzas like this:

東方九霞天，震宮清冷府……  
 南方三炁宮，重離煥太陽……  
 西方七炁尊，兌宮飛金鋒……  
 北方五炁尊，重坎玄武神……



Taking the creations date of the scripture, it indeed supports that, in Tang Dynasty, the Bugang are integrated with Buxu rites. But originally Buxu rites and its stanzas, it is just loosely the circling steps, are not Bugang.

Stanza I	東方蒼老君，號曰勾芒靈……
Stanza II	南方炎帝君，八表號閻浮……
Stanza III	西方蓐收神，號曰為句尼……
Stanza IV	北方鬱單境，帝神曰玄冥……
Stanza V	中央戊巳神，黃帝總萬機……
Stanza VI	東北艮之子，其神禦陰節……
Stanza VII	東南巽之域，地戶張網羅……
Stanza VIII	西南坤之母[毋]，神呪收邪精……
Stanza IX	西北乾之父，其神通天光……
Stanza X	上方諸天帝，出入大羅門……
Stanza XI	下方地祇靈，網網都九域……

Table 1 (DZ0335,6:0057b)

The ritual finally, in the second stanza of ten Buxu stanzas, could be and probably the ritual action of second stanza is just a direct reference to terminology of Bugang, as Bokenkamp, Anderson and Schipper have pointed out. But for the understanding of this line: considering the comprehensive background, just as shown above, the direct reference to the

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中央戊巳神，五土列為尊……  
 東北清梵天，艮宮深清冷……  
 東南梵寶宮，巽域青雲阿……  
 西南梵炁城，坤宮太玄霞……  
 西北號天門，乾宮紫霞深 (DZ0335,6: 57b-58a) 。

terminology of Bugang should not actually refer to the ritual “Bugang niedou 步罡躡斗”, rather, it should be understood symbolically as the representation of the divinities pacing the void as in the myth described.

### 3.1.2 The Buddhist influence, to what extent?

Indeed, it is not a new consensus that Lingbao tradition witness apparent impact from Buddhism, thus, this is the early trend of scholar’s study and become part of relative steady new convention (Zheng 2015, 3-4; Feezel 2022, 104). Recent study showed more interact and emphasis of the inner development and need of Daoism within. But here we may still need to simply outline the Buddhist influence, to make a more comprehensive exposition. In light of this, a proper investigation about the Buddhist elements in the ten stanzas and its status in these verses are still of necessity. This following section is just to give a brief description of these aspects. Just as here below.

First of all, no doubt to say, as one of the important “sources” of Lingbao tradition, we do find the great influx of Buddhist terminology in Lingbao texts. This is also indicated in these ten verses. For example, just list a few to illustrate. In the first stanza, the fourth line “the wheel of the law also makes three revolutions”, the term “the wheel of the Law” 法輪. Meanwhile, the fifth line, “the four paramount 四大, are apparently corpus from the Buddhist doctrines. It is also to notice the Kalpa 劫 in the last sentence of the second stanza is another typical cosmic time concept in Buddhist cosmogony. At the same time, the Six means of Salvation 六度, the Demon king 魔王 in the fifth one, the typical icon “Lotus blossom” 蓮花 in the fifth, and the six stanzas, “the Sarīra 舍利, a transcribed Buddhist item that we are familiar with. And the “seven treasure” 七寶 in the seventh piece; the “five sufferings” in the

eighth one, and so on. It is not hard to discern the Buddhist influx.

In the ritual aspect, the plot of “pay homage to the ten directions” 禮十方 is no doubt also a product of Buddhist impact. The concept “ten directions” obviously does not come from the Daoist tradition, though for Daoism it does have a long-lasting idea about space, that is, the traditional five-fold pattern, namely four cardinal directions plus the central one, and in the Celestial Master Daoism’s tradition, the ritual plot is paying homage to the four directions (Lü 2008, 160). And this “ten directions” concept is represented in the ritual sequences, this plot of “paying homage to ten directions” becomes the central part of the Lingbao Retreat. However, as below content will also touch this problem, the incorporated concept “ten directions” in Daoist scriptures, are in fact already not equate the original connotation as it in Buddhist tradition.

Another frequently mentioned idea that the circumambulation action corresponds to Buddhist pradaksina to circle around the Buddha’s remains, and the ten stanzas are under the influence of Buddhist fanbai 梵唄 psalmody. These have been frequently elucidated, thus here just mention in brief.

However, just as Zürcher, who devotes his comprehensive investigation about the Buddhist influence in early Daoism, has expounded: the borrowings and impact from Buddhism are in fact strikingly superficial and in a general sense, and never be a dominant existence in Daoist scriptures, even in Lingbao tradition. The terminology and conception which has obvious Buddhist origin, are actually incorporated as isolated elements which detached from its original doctrinal meaning and concept and changed its function within the whole Daoist framework.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> In his frequently cited article “Buddhist influence on early Taoism, Zürcher pointed out four categories about Buddhist influence on Daoist texts, namely “formal borrowing”, “conceptual borrowing”, “borrowed

This conjunction of Daoist terms and ideas with Buddhist terms ideas, is also not hard to observe in the ten stanzas. A specific investigation is provided here to help us gain a more proper understanding of these Buxu hymns. For example, the fifth stanza :

Manipulating the reins, we proceed to each of the Ten Directions 控轡適十方,  
Pausing in our circumambulations at the Lodge of Darkling phosphors. 旋憩玄景  
阿。

Above, we survey the Ziggurat of a Kalpa of Fathoms 仰觀劫仞臺,

Below, we glimpse the veil of purple clouds. 俯盼紫雲羅。

Cyclically roaming at ease in the Capital of the Most High 逍遙太上京,

(Then), seated on the Lotus Blossoms together 相與坐蓮花。

Accumulating in learning and become the Perfected 積學為真人,

In tranquility, the vital and the Guarded are harmonized 恬然榮衛和。

Forever enjoying endless longevity 永享無期壽,

How can the span of a myriad cedrelas be considered much? 萬椿奚足多。

(DZ1439, 0626b; Trans. changes made based on Bokenkamp1981's version)

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complexes” and finally, the “pervasive influence” of Buddhist thoughts or practices but without finding notable Buddhist terms. With investigation he put up a “mechanism of borrowing”, that is, the more a (Buddhist)element is detached from its original meaning and context, ... this can be observed no matter in terminology plane, or in doctrinal concepts, namely conceptual borrowing level, and only be affected when the whole complexes are taken in (Zürcher 1980).

Except three Buddhist terminology, namely “ten directions” “十方”, “劫” the kalpa and “the Lotus blossom” 蓮花, the content of the whole stanza is about the scene after being transcendence through related practices.

Most of the corpus are Daoist and reflect the typical transcendence ideal and illustrative scene from Daoism. Each line is full of this information. For example, in the first couplet, “manipulating the reins” 控轡 is seen as an indication of successful control of corporeal spirits (Bokenkamp 1981, 90) Then, the term “十方” indeed a typical Buddhist term which shows the Mahāyānistic worldview (Zürcher 1980, 123), that is, an innumerable world-system consisting of a cluster of billion worlds, with uncountable Buddhas active in these worlds.

However, concerning the context of this verse, the worldview shown in this line “Manipulating the reins, we proceed to each of the Ten Directions, pausing in our circumambulations at the Lodge of Darkling phosphors”, this sense of space here is essentially Daoist. Firstly, the “ten directions” here seems not to indicate a cluster of worlds, but a broad sense means the Grand world, and the destination for the roaming in this grand world is the Lodge of Darkling phosphors.<sup>90</sup> The “Darkling phosphor”, though for prudence we cannot make an assertive claim, it does remind us of the target place that with associate with Daoist immortality.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, the Daoist scheme of perceiving the world is a

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<sup>90</sup> Zürcher further expounding that in early Daoist scriptures the term “ten directions” shows a triple compromise between ① the old Daoist conception of earthy paradise in a horizontal plane ② a vertical Paradise system both Daoist and Buddhist ③ the sole Buddhist worldview in the Ten direction of Space, including nadir. His observation is based on the Shangqing text’s description about “outer countries” 外國 (Zürcher 1980, 110).

<sup>91</sup> For example, in the section on “Lady of the High Prime (Shangyuan furen 上元夫人)” in *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壩城集仙錄, which has many similarities to *Hanwudi neizhuan*, it reads: “This book is hidden in the Ziggurat of Darkling phosphors by the High Lord, you should cherish it and keep it confidential 此書上帝藏於玄景之台, 子其寶秘焉 (DZ0783, 0175b).

horizontal one, namely the Chinese fivefold pattern: the four cardinal directions plus the center, a horizontal liturgical space<sup>92</sup>. This Buddhist term “ten directions” does appear here, but its original Buddhist meaning seems never elaborated. In contrast, a compatible space for Buddhist cosmological conception and the fundamental Daoist one is presented here.

The same goes for the term “Kalpa” 劫, another important conception about the Buddhist conceptualization about time. But the connotation adopted here become generalized, it is a descriptive part of the Ziggurat, as Bokenkamp called the term “劫仞臺” a “descriptive appellation” for the Mystic Ziggurat of the seven treasure 七寶玄臺 (Bokenkamp 1981, 91). Meanwhile, the construction pattern of this couplet with corresponding opening of “仰觀” and “俯盼” recall the frequently employed sentence style in Youxian poems in *Zhengao*<sup>93</sup>, which are used to depict the free and happy living after transcending the limit of time and space (see also part1).

The following couplet appears the typical Buddhist icon, the Lotus. As we can see from this verse text, The action of “sitting Lotus blossoms” (坐蓮花 *zuo lianhua*) indeed shows strong Buddhist influence at the first sight. However, as the counterpart line of this whole couplet, sitting Lotus happened after roaming freely and at ease in the Most High

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<sup>92</sup>see (Zürcher 1980, 124-125). There are also thirty-two Heaven 三十二天 mode in Lingbao scriptures, which are organized as four directions, each direction contains eight heavens (Xie 2009, 38-39; Mugitani 1988, 59-60). Regarding the spacial view and world constructure, Kunio Mugitani provides a detailed discussion, revealing how Daoism sought to integrate different, and sometimes contradictory, views on space and become systemized in response to Buddhist doctrines. That is, originally, Daoist space view was associated with the five directions concept in ancient Chinese culture, which is a horizontal structure. In contrast, as for Buddhist cosmology, multiple worlds are overlapped centered around Mount Sumeru. To remain competitive in light of Buddhism's challenge, Daoist classics proposed a spiral structure of space in the second half of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (Mugitani 1988, 64). Although the influence of Buddhism is evident in this process, the core of this cosmogony remains fundamentally Daoist. The world is seen as evolving from "the one" and is structured based on Qi ontology (Mugitani 1988, 67-68; 71-72).

<sup>93</sup> For example: 控飈扇太虛，八景飛高清。仰浮紫晨外，俯看絕落冥 (ZG, 85)。  
絳景浮玄晨，紫軒乘煙征。仰超綠闕內，俯眇朱火城 (ZG, 92)。

capital, which is the celestial locale has its trace in ancient Mythology of Thearchy Shun's time, then appeared in the description of Mystic land in Han dynasty, such as *Han wudi neizhuan*, and then existed in the Shangqing and Lingbao Daoism as the transcendent realm. Also, no doubt the term "roaming freely and at ease" 逍遙 is the typical scene about immortality of Daoism which again can trace back to *Zhuangzi*. Considering the whole couplet and its context, this couplet, along with the scenery of roaming into the Most High capital, Sitting Lotus Blossom seems become a descriptive element of the transcendent being, involved and become part this scenery, to depict the leisure and attractive status after transcending.

No need to say the last couplet, all are conventional ideal of being immortality in Daoist world: being the Perfected, and then long-living and no death. The calculation term "Ten thousand Cedrela "萬椿" is the time concept which is a common figure for long-living, as can be traced back to *Zhuangzi*.<sup>94</sup>

All in all, the whole verses of stanza five showed a marked and profound Daoist tradition about immortality, including reminding self-cultivation practice, as well as the illustration and depiction about the living after being transcended. The Buddhist vocabulary does appear, but become an element, or descriptive function matter, that is somehow lose its Buddhist original connotation.

The same works for the six stanzas.

The Grand Way takes as its norm mystical quiescence.

大道師玄寂，

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<sup>94</sup> In far antiquity times, there was the existence of a grand tree known as the "Great Cedrela," which marked eight thousand years as the duration of spring, and eight thousand years as the duration of autumn 上古有大椿者，以八千歲為春，八千歲為秋。(ZZJZY, 15; Trans. me).

We rise as Transcendents to befriend Nonpareil.

升僊友無英。

The Lording works salvation through numinous talismans,

公子度靈符，

Grand Unity offers up the Cavern Stanzas.

太一捧洞章。

Sarīra flash in a golden form,

舍利曜金姿，

Dragon mounts arrive in a whirlwind to meet us.

龍駕歛來迎。

The Heavenly Worthy regards his cloud-chariot,

天尊盼雲輿，

Swirling, whirling, he soars, mounting the void.

飄飄乘虛翔。

Fragrant blossoms like flying flakes of snow,

香花若飛雪，

In vaporous billows entwine the Mystic Bridge.

氛靄茂玄梁。

In our brains we do homage to the Golden Porte,

頭腦禮金闕，

Joining hands to wander Jade Capitoline Mountain.

攜手遨玉京。

(DZ1439, 0626b; Trans. Bokenkamp 1981, 95)

In depicting another aspect of being transcendence, this stanza provides the scene about making friends with transcendent beings (to imply the protagonist's state is also in transcendence). Except the apparent Buddhist terms “舍利”, the transcendent, such as “無英”, are very typical Daoist ones, and the depiction “公子度靈符，太一捧洞章” not hard to



remind us of the transcendence picture in visualization of *Dadong zhenjing*.<sup>95</sup> Then the “dragon ride” 龍駕, the heavenly worthy 天尊, and finally the term Golden Gate “金闕”, the jade capital 玉京, all these are not hard to find the sign of a Daoist cultural sphere, its idea and related practice. The Buddhist term “Sarīra” 舍利 here is again become an isolated appearance, a descriptive element in the whole Daoist transcending world.

### 3.1.3 The correlation with the highest clarity tradition

The impact from the Shangqing Daoism as correlation from Daoist within can be more profound and complicated. These can be discerned from many aspects.

It is, no doubt, first of all, related to the important figure of Lingbao school, Ge, Chaofu 葛巢甫 (?-?). Many signs show that the Ge family that Ge Chaofu belongs has close relationship of the Xu family, who is the principal patron of Shangqing Daoism. This close relationship is typically reflected in the marriages between the two clan members. It is recorded Four daughter of Ge family were given in marriage<sup>96</sup> to the descendent of Xu Hui and Xu Mi, in which two of the marriages are found linked to people associated with Lingbao scripture (ZG, 588-89) (Bokenkamp 1983, 445-46). This intimate social relations between the Xu and Ge family bestowed sufficient possibility that Ge Chao fu has full access to Shangqing texts, which is only transmitted within a small circle, and it is also probable for him to have a very mastery of the Shangqing Daoism.

Many terms, ideas and practices existed both in Shangqing and Lingbao scripture, of course, with difference that can be called “emendation”, “rework” or “development”, further

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<sup>95</sup> For example, the very part of Three Cinnabars in *Dadong zhenjing*.

<sup>96</sup> It is a regret to use the wording “given in marriage” here, but somehow this is the true status of women’s destiny, be “given in marriage”, in the ancient time.

support above assertion. For example, most related to our topic here, the term “pacing the void” (Buxu 步虛) is not the new creation of Lingbao tradition, but already existed in Shangqing corpus.<sup>97</sup> This is early pointed out by Bokenkamp and Schipper (Bokenkamp 1981; Schipper 1989), though just in a brief way. If we search the Daoist texts in the Six Dynasties carefully, it is not hard to find the concept “Buxu” has also been used in scriptures that do not belong to Lingbao tradition, and the most apparent one is Shangqing corpus. For example, in the fourth volume of *Taishang dadao yuqingjing* 太上大道玉清經, it describes an occasion when the mass transcendent see off the Heavenly worthy, it is at this time that these transcendents intone the Buxu verse. This verse is pentasyllabic in form, depicting the numinous scene of the immortal world, along with promoting some idea of Dao. In general, it is about the ascending scene under this term “Buxu” (DZ1312, 0324b).

Then is the most frequently cited phrase “ode of golden perfected, songs of pacing the void” 金真之詩, 步虛之曲, appeared both in *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文 (DZ1334, 0567c) and *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真經 (DZ1344, 0604a), which are both the canonical scripture of Shangqing tradition. Observing the context that perform the “ode of golden perfected, songs of pacing the void”, it is often in the occasion to transmit practices methods, exorcismal talisman and incantations. The adept intones these verses and songs on earth reenact the event happen in

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<sup>97</sup> But as for the earliest appearance of the term Buxu, it is still a problem with controversy, because just as Luo pointed out, Buxu as a term also presented in Buddhist text (Luo 2018, 228), but the author provides a possibility that it is the Buddhist text translation that borrow the Daoist term to translate the Buddhist scripture. Meanwhile, though not directly using the term “Buxu”, thorough examining the context to discern the connotation of the term “Bu xuan” 步玄, Luo found the interlink of the two term “Buxu” and “Buxuan”, thus found out the “Bu xuan songs” sung by the Lady High Primordial in *Hanwudi neizhuan* is also a kind of songs that close to Buxu hymns, though these songs are applied in the occasion of conversation, other than in the ritual imitating celestial actions (Luo 2018, 233-34). No matter how, for the topic we will discuss here, we only need to tackle the Buxu in Shangqing scripture.

heaven and regenerate the power and efficacy of the sacred event, this is rightly the mode of chanting Buxu hymns. Meanwhile, Feezell will also conclude the mode that the stanzas order showcases the progressive description of celestial ascent procedure, this has already prefigured in *Taishang feixing jiuschen yujing*(太上飛行九晨玉經), which is reflected in the ten Buxu stanza in Lingbao scripture (Feezell 2022, 43-50).

Except above mentioned concept of Buxu in Shangqing, abundant signs also show the close contact of Lingbao school with Shangqing tradition, just list a few to illustrate, Ge Xuan, an important ancestor of Ge family who was said to have ascended. Both Shangqing and Lingbao scripture deal with the same problem about Ge Xuan's afterlife. In Shangqing revelation from Yang Xi and Lingbao scripture, they both try to answer this question and give out his encounter and current status after he ascended. Though with a subtle difference. And secondly, as for the practices plane, the important exercise of Shangqing, ingesting the five sprouts, also has a Lingbao version, though do has changed and maintain different characteristics.

These many signs do not imply Lingbao just a recall of Shangqing Daoism, no matter considering that Lingbao corpus in fact incorporate rather wide range sources such as Buddhism, the celestial Master Daoism, or just the same item that exists both in Shangqing and Lingbao, things already changed. In fact, the Lingbao tradition dose made to own its unique lasting place in Daoism history. Just as the “Buxu verses in Shangqing school never appeared in company with the structured ritual steps. And the mythology that Buxu rite represents, though, again, has certain close contact with Shangqing (Wang 2009, 786-87), but do own Lingbao's own style and feature. Though Bokenkamp seems have the incline of holding critical wording about Lingbao scripture's “bold use” of the Shangqing, he also pointed out that the “Lingbao version” is not a mere embellishment of its Shangqing

counterpart.<sup>98</sup>

Turning back to the ten stanzas, we do find the more profound “heritage” from Shangqing tradition which form more essential content of these stanzas. Along with the analysis of stanza fifth and sixth stanza in above Buddhist impact part, we may have gotten the primary impression that how the Daoist idea and its immortality ideal, practice, form the central and fundamental sphere of the whole construction of above-mentioned verses.

In fact, these are not isolated examples. Just as Zürcher pointed out after sophisticated analysis, meditation is one of the central parts of Daoism which belongs to the “hard area “that is immune from Buddhist impact.”<sup>99</sup> For The fourth stanza, it just typically reflects the meditation practice that recall Shangqing visualization.

Lowering and raising our heads, we retain the Most High, Causing floriate phosphors to flower in the Cinnabar Filed. 俯仰存太上，華景秀丹田。

Glancing left, we raise the Clustered Regalia; Glimpsing right, we grasp the Congealed Spangles 左顧提鬱儀，右盼携結璘。

The Six Means of Salvation crown our Brahmā actions; The Way and its virtue are renewed each day. 六度冠梵行，道德隨日新。

Our previous lives have amassed auspicious response; We listen to the scriptures with the respect accorded the closest relative 宿命積福慶，聞經若至親。

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<sup>98</sup> Bokenkamp cited Tao Hongjing's remark, "fabricated", on Ge Chaofu's "rework" of Shangqing scripture, agreed that Lingbao texts are "indeed an intricately-wrought fabrication" containing elements from different sources (Bokenkamp 1983, 441-42).

<sup>99</sup> In contrast to the “soft area” which is open to the influence of Buddhist ideas. (Zürcher 1980, 121)

Yet our heavenly endowments exceed the stuff of inheritance. In song we chant the  
Tablets of subtlety and tenuity. 天挺超世才，樂誦希微篇。

Dashing through the Void—the breath of Grand Harmony; We expel and inhale a  
stream of Fluid Aurora. 沖虛太和氣，吐納流霞津。

The embryonic breath stills the hundred junctions; As, through the limpid solitude, we  
penetrate the Three Gates of Ease. 胎息靜百關，寥寥窺三便。

The Muddy Pellet is transfused with luminous phosphors, forming the transcendent of  
Golden Efflorescence. 泥丸洞明景，遂成金華仙。

Demon-kings respectfully accept our employment; With the result that we are able to  
attend audience in all the heavens. 魔王敬受事，故能朝諸天。

All of this arises from the practice of retreats and precepts—unbroken effort secures  
our abiding karma. 皆從齋戒起，累功結宿緣。

Flying, we rush into the Grand Void, Joining hands with the highest Transcendents. 飛  
行凌太虛，提攜高上人。(Trans. Bokenkamp 1981, 75-89)

Both Schipper and Zheng will point out that the term *yuyi* 鬱儀 and *jielin* 結璘 are  
Daoist vocabulary and imply the meditation practice from Shangqing school (Schipper 1989,  
114; Zheng 2018, 254). Zheng further carefully figure out that the narrative part in  
*Yujingshan buxu jing* right before the ten stanzas, namely the “Buxu yin” (Chant of pacing  
the void 步虛吟), explained the process before entering Buxu, with prose text, is rightly  
corresponds to the content of the fourth verse. For Bokenkamp, he traces the Palace of  
Golden Efflorescence (Jinhua gong 金華宮) to *Huang Ting Jing* (The scripture of yellow

court 黃庭經), in which this palace refers to the lungs.

But in addition to these, here I would like to further figure out is, not only yuyi 鬱儀 and jielin 結璘 are Shangqing Daoism's vocabulary. Further, it also has full reason to remind us about practice in *Ciyijing* (The Scripture of The Female One 雌一經) of Shangqing canon<sup>100</sup>, which is called one of “the three marvelous of Shangqing school” (shangqing sanqi 上清三奇).

For example, not only the terminology niwan 泥丸, Jinhua palace 金華宮, grinding the action of grinding the teeth(叩齒 kouchi), swallowing the saliva and the following visualization actions in the stanza are to remind us of the pragmatic practicing guide in *Ciyi jing*. It can be discerned more clearly in the narrative before the ten stanzas which have close relationship about this fourth hymn. In this prose text, it describes that (when) one visualizes the sun and the moon, the light going though (one's) nose, then (in the visualization), the light shines out of head back, and brightening as the nine-color round circle and lighten the ten directions. After this process, one just visualizes the Lord of Three Simplicity Primordial (Sansuyuanjun 三素元君) in the Golden flower Palace (Jinhua gong 金華宮), who looks like an infant. All these vividly remind us of the visualization practice about the Nine Palaces of Head in *Ciyi jing*.<sup>101</sup> No matter how, the content of this fourth stanza has profound relationship to Shangqing school Daoism is undoubted.

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<sup>100</sup> The full name of *Ciyi jing* is *Dongzhen gaoshang yudi dadong ciyi yujian wulaobao jing* 洞真高上玉帝大洞雌一玉檢五老寶經. The Date of this scripture should be roughly in Eastern Jin, and no later than the start of Lingbao movement in early 5<sup>th</sup> century (Schipper 2004, 187). This supports the possibility that Lingbao scripture do can have reference to this earlier Shangqing scripture.

<sup>101</sup> About the detail of *Ciyi jing*'s practice, see visualization practices in part 1.

### 3.2 The Buxu rites: ritualization of mythology

Just as Feezell pointed out on *Yujing shan buxujing*, though the mythological narrative part is probably late added in contrast to the ten stanzas of Buxu lyrics, they in fact should not be strictly distinct. Rather, the narrative's content is also indicated in the stanza, as analysis below.

First of all, let's take the scene recorded in *Yujingshan buxujing* when the transcendentals do the audience ritual and circumambulation as example to start. In the narrative part of *Yujingshan buxujing*, though this is not the archetype version of describing magnificent Heavenly scenery of transcendentals doing audience in the Jade capital, nor it is the singular one, it is the version that is comparatively elaborated and sophisticated in illustrating the Lingbao mythology.<sup>102</sup> Thus, we take *Yujingshan buxujing* as a representative example to examine the mythology's contents, it includes the several aspects: firstly, the narrative starts with pointing out the location of the Jade capital Mountain: above the Three Clarity Heaven, and how it is: it is without form and dust (“wuse wuchen” 無色無塵). Then following is a spatial introduction about the constructions in the Jade capital Mountain: the upper is the Purple Tenuity Palace (Ziwei shang gong 紫微上宮), while the Three Treasures Sacred Scriptures are in the middle. Located in the eight directions of this Mountain are the seven treasures trees(七寶之樹), with one tree in each direction. These eight trees just cover

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<sup>102</sup> In fact, we do observe the similar scene portrayal about the transcendentals' audience in scriptures such as 元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經, the sacred texts which also document the similar content about include: 洞玄靈寶說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀; 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 太上洞玄靈寶金籙簡文三元威儀自然真一經, 太上洞玄靈寶真文要解上經, and so on. Zheng canshan 鄭燦山 tries to reconstruct a “clan” order of early Lingbao scriptures which traces the *Zhenwen tianshu jing* as the archetype version of the audience and try to outline a transmission from Yuanshi serious 元始系 to Xiangong serious 仙公系 scriptures. In this clan, *Yujingshan buxujing* is rightly on the transmissive point of the two series, while *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshujing* is the original version of the Buxu mythology (Zheng 2015).

all Heavens and spread like a net muffling the Three realms. With all these concise illustrations, the high scared transcendent realm, the Jade Capital Mountain, is not only vividly, detailed presented in the central place of this stereoscopic space outlined in this depiction, but are portrayed as a sacred Mountain with Miraculous splendor with graphic words. In the last sentence, we are introduced, the lord of here is Heaven worthy.

After introducing the Jade Capital's locality, it is the part of transcendents and their audience scene. With all the ornate magnificent literary and rhetoric words, the scenery of transcendents circumambulating is pictured<sup>103</sup>:

The large numbers of great sages, thearchs, 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.

諸天聖帝王,高仙真人無鞅數眾,一月三朝其上,燒自然旗檀反生靈香,飛仙散花,旋繞七寶玄臺三周匝,誦詠空洞歌章。

At this time, music sounds throughout all the heavens, as the cloudy *ao* 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. All flutter and float in multitudes, as they gracefully glide about.

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

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<sup>103</sup> Following cited text of this section, translation mainly from (Feezell 2022, 93-94).



女徐進而跕躑，放窈窕而流舞翩翩，誦誦而容裔也。

The first part of the cited texts above is a narrative one, which indicated the event: the transcendentals do the audience, and how this event happens. For the second part above, after having introduced this event, it follows to depict the spectacle when these great sages, thearchs, lofty transcendentals, and perfected beings are all gathering to do the ritual in Jade Capital, what the auspicious occasion and how magnificent it is.

The depiction does not stop at the exultant atmosphere. There is not only the occasions and the doings of transcendentals, but also the sound from the Jade Capital Mountain:

The Splendid Forest of Seven Treasures sits atop the mountain, its radiant colors shimmering and shining, its vermillion fruits glittering and gleaming. All is gold, silver, pearled jade, crystal, beryl, nacre, and carnelian. Numinous winds fans them, and the musical sounds of five tones come out [simultaneously], gracefully, wonderfully and nuanced.

山上七寶華林，光色焯燁，朱實璨爛，悉是金銀，珠玉，水晶，琉璃，□璫，碼碯。靈風振之，其音自成宮商，雅妙宛絕。

In turn, the transcendentals react according to the “background music”:

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.

諸天聞聲而飛騰，勿輟絃止歌。

The mythical creatures are also participated in the great rejoicing scene:

Divine beasts—dragons, kirins, lions, white cranes, rare birds, and phoenixes—cry out with emotion and leap about.

神獸,龍麟,獅子,白鶴,奇禽,鳳凰, 悲鳴踴躍。

In this atmosphere, the transcendents start chanting scriptures. And it is at this moment, the (numinous)wind of eight directions buffet the pennons, the fragrant flowers are scattered and mingled, and the flowing smoke go to thick clouds.

Though not strictly parallel to the ritual procedure of Buxu practice, the first to fourth stanza contains an apparent directive sign corresponding to the ritual process of the Buxu practice, including before and after, just as shown above. This can be clearly detected from the elucidating paragraph in prose right before the ten stanzas, showing the traces from different traditions. But for the fifth to tenth stanza, the content is more about the sceneries that happens when having gone to transcendence after serious of ritual practice. The most representative example is the seventh one.<sup>104</sup>

Soaring trees—the Garden of Mystic phosphors; Brightly glimmering, this seven-treasure grove.

Heavenly beasts – three hundred varieties: Lions, starching out a myriad furlong.

Flying dragons impatiently paw the ground and below; Spirit-phoenixes respond with cadenced intonations.

The numinous wind fans strange blossoms; Clarified incenses scatter scent amongst one's lapels.

If we were not the stuff of higher transcendents; How could we bear these emotions?

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<sup>104</sup> Although the eighth to tenth stanza is also about scenery after do the circumambulation, relatively speaking, the seventh one we listed here is more apparent and clearer.

騫樹玄景園，煥爛七寶林。天獸三百名，獅子巨萬尋。飛龍躑躅鳴，神鳳應節吟。靈風扇奇花，清香散人衿。自無高僊才，焉能耽此心。

Just following the above illustrated Buxu mythology scenery, we will easily understand the seventh stanza' content. The first couplet is the Garden and the seven- treasure trees, while the second and third couplet is about these heavenly or Mythical beasts. The following couplet is, not surprisingly, about how the numinous wind fans the blossoms and the fragrance scatters. It is just highly corresponding to the part that after the phrase “At that time” (shishi “是時”), as we cited above.

Thus, we will no doubt find parallel between the ritual sequences that the Daoist take in earth and the transcendents' doings, namely the audience rite in the Jade Capital Mountain. Just as Lü Pengzhi recapitulates it: the celestial ritual is the model of ritual conducted by adepts in human world model (Lü 2008, 160). This is also clearly figured out in the early Lingbao scriptures and Later record. For example, in *Taiji zhenren fu lingbao zhajie wei yi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣:

The officiants successively march to the left, circumambulating the censer three times. After Finished, chanting the the Buxu hymns.

The reason to circumambulate the censer is that, imitating the Mystic root unlimited-high Jade cavern Heaven, the Seven treasure natural Ziggurat that the Most High Great Way Lord ruled in the that Grand veil Heaven, where unlimited-High Perfected do the Retreat and Chanting, circumambulating the Most High seven treasure Ziggurat. Rituals today are modeled on this.

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 (DZ0532, 0868c).

In *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guang zhujie fading zhuyuan* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願, with the almost same version of *Jinlu jianwen*, with a slight difference with the depiction of the celestial beings' doing in heaven.

Today the Daoist priests do the Retreat, the reason to patrol and circumambulate the High seat, and chanting the Buxu hymn, is rightly to model the moment when the Mass Mystic Root Sages and Perfected audience the Jade Capital.

……今道士齋時，所以巡繞高座，吟詠步虛者，正是上法玄根眾聖真人朝晏玉京時 (DZ0524, 0824b).<sup>105</sup>

In the Southern Song, the comprehensive collection book of previous important rituals, the *Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀, by Jiang, Shuyu 蔣叔輿 (1156-1217), cited the famous Daoist Zhang wanfu's 張萬福 version in Tang dynasty:

The Heavenly Master Zhang, Wanfu said: ... ..when the Mass sages and Perfected are doing the audience, they all are circumambulating and chanting the Cavern pieces... .. successively march leftward, around the scriptures three rounds... ..each turn back toward the center and scatter the flowers and pay homage, (this) is imitating (the transendents of) the ten directions audience the Mystic capital.

張萬福天師曰：……諸天眾聖，朝時皆旋行，誦歌洞章，以次左行，繞經三周……

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<sup>105</sup> There is a very similar version in *In Taishang dongxuan lingbao jinlu jianwen sanyuan weiyi ziran zhenyi jing* 太上洞玄靈寶金籙簡文三元威儀自然真一經.

每稱善，各回身，向中散花，禮一拜，法十方朝玄都也 (DZ0508, 0579a-0579b).

Just as above evidenced Lingbao scriptures and other collected documents, it is explicitly stated that the Buxu rituals performed by the Daoist adept imitate or replicate the actions of the celestial beings in the transcendental plane.

Just as above evidenced Lingbao scriptures and other collected documents, it is explicitly stated that the Buxu rituals performed by the Daoist adept imitate or replicate the actions of the celestial beings in the transcendental realm.

This “imitation” or reexperiencing the heavenly action or scene, as we can observe from both Lingbao and Shangqing school, is not only applied for Buxu Rites of Daoism, but also other rituals of Daoism. For example, as Lagerwey pointed out, the presentation of the Memorial, which is performed in modern South Taiwan, is a representation of Yu’s myth: that he succeeded in taming the flood then there is an assembly in Mountain Kuaiji (Lagerwey 1987, 151-52). Furthermore, with widespread and almost exhaustive survey of different civilizations, it is found by Mythologists that this is also a phenomenon that can be observed in other religions in world, such as India, Iran, the primitive culture in southern east Australia. Though there is controversy about it is the myth or the ritual is earlier and there is various discussion about this problem (Gaster 2006, 135-36), however, there is a close relationship between the myth and a ritual, this is all the most mythologist would agree.

Specifically, the ritual contains certain sacred, symbolic connotations and takes certain celestial archetype as exemplary model. Each terrestrial practice has a celestial counterpart. It is in fact an imitation of divine gestures or the sacred cosmic drama’s certain episodes (Eliade 1959, 27). Gaster holds that the ritual and the Myth are essentially consubstantial, but present in different aspects. That is the ritual goes in an occurring, immediate and punctual plane, while the mythology in the transpiring, indesinent and

Pretemporal aspect (Gaster 1954, 186-87).

This series functional procedures of rituals making repetition of the concomitant myth also contributes to the revival of the essential transcendental entity, the ideal continuum(Gaster 1954, 186)(Gaster1954, 186). In Eliade's theoretical world, he calls this as an "eternal return" of the sacred dramas of cosmos, which legitimize the human acts (Eliade 1959, 27).

### 3.3 The stanza for Buxu Rite, literary or not?

Again, it is not uncommon that the verses and other literary forms in Daoist scriptures are overlooked, undervalued and improperly revealed. In the premodern classics that collect verses of previous Dynasty, such as *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集), Buxu ci are under the entry of "potpourri" (Zaqu 雜曲), which shows the author's hesitation in classifying these verses, behind which is a lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity towards Daoist verses (Zheng 2018, 245). In the modern study in the verses in the scriptures or created by famous Daoist, they are often not praised and are criticized as not literary and lacking artistry, and this critique is often because, inevitably, their religious purpose: addressing religious doctrines and practices, expressing experiences of adepts, and no need to say, arousing the inspiration for cultivation. These abundant literary forms in scriptures, meanwhile, are sometimes also in a marginal position in religious study, because for the religious scholars, the religious texts, practices, schools, and history are more the emphasis, though for the scriptures there are.

Indeed, Daoist verses, such as Buxu ci, their content and form, are largely affected and even determined by its Daoist presuppositions. However, just as analyzed above, for Buxu stanzas, it is no doubt no matter its form or its content are both largely depending on its applied Daoist context and can only be properly understood within this context, specifically,

the ritual. For the content sphere: having an idea of the traditions that Lingbao school has absorbed and adapted, such as modelling Buddhism, absorption from Shangqing school, as well as the fangshi 方士 tradition, specific term's connotation can only be figured out with these knowledges. Meanwhile, the sequences of the ten stanzas' content can be clearly observed if we also look at the Buxu mythology which shows the transcendent's audience in Upper Heaven. The ten stanzas are applied in ritual, what they chant are also in close relationship with the ritual practice sequences, which, ultimately, is an imitation of what happens in Heaven, in doing which to gain sacred meanings. While for its form, a. we will know that the number of Buxu stanzas is ten, not others, this is determined by what the ritual process it is within. b. And scholar also pointed out that the stanza is in Tetrasyllabic or Pentasyllabic, this is also because of its application in ritual for chanting, which is the most convenient for the movement in ritual (Zheng 2018, 245). c. Further, because of its feature of being applied to ritual purpose, contrasting to the sole literary creations' case which seek for and emphasize in novelty, it is apparently that, after the ten stanza is established in the Six Dynasties, its content and form are almost no change through long period of time.<sup>106</sup> Even with change, it is similar other than thoroughly different, all these indicated that, as verses in Daoist ritual, unlike works that are specifically written for literary purpose, Lingbao Buxu stanzas are more inherited other than newly created. This, not only applied to Buxu stanzas, it may also be the reason that though the verses in Daoist scriptures have been noticed by Literary scholars, they received critique like content repetitive, humdrum and lack the "artistry".

However, the forms serving the religious purpose does not necessarily mean lacking rhetorical or literary devices. One representative devaluation comment is that: "Employing

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<sup>106</sup> The record in *Yuyin fashi* is still the reference for today's practice.

lyrics as vehicle to preach, reveal or talk about the “Dao”, its artistic decline is to be expected”<sup>107</sup>. This observation, as cited, of “preaching and talking about Dao in lyrics” is accurate. However, this contending holding that it is this factor talking about the Dao that leads to these lyrics’ lack of artistry, it is not necessarily true. Just as Wu pointed out, the conclusion shows the evaluation standard behind that worshipping “Pure literature” or “belletristic literature”, while devaluing or criticize those out of this range. Also, as Wang, Meng yuan elucidate it: Since “literature” is chosen as the object of historical study, naturally there exists the issue that “what concepts, methods and measures should be used to investigate, select, discriminate, describe and evaluate various complicated phenomena of literary history “. In contrast, if we check record in important literary criticism classics in Six dynasties, such as Liu Xie’s *Wenxin diaolong*(The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragon 文心雕龍) and Xiao Tong’s *Wenxuan*(Anthology of Refined Literature 文選), it is not hard to find that, at that time, the genres serving for practical purpose, which we called mix-literature in today’s modern discourse, are also required and praised for their sophisticated art skill, to express and to serve its purpose. Even, this becomes the vital evaluation standard for those genres with practical purpose. This, if we are alert enough, is different from our understanding of practical genres today.

### 3.4 A new glance on buxu stanzas and the expository part

For the Buxu stanzas, though haven’t been totally regulated, we will find that the ten stanzas have almost been in rhyme, or at least show a unification in the vowel of the ending words, showing an awareness of the form of verses.

For example, the most apparent and regulated ones are the second, seventh to tenth

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<sup>107</sup> “藉詞來說教論道，其藝術性的低落是意料中事” Cf. (Wu 2014, 109).



stanza. More specifically, for the seventh stanza, except the first line, from the second line and on, the last word's vowel of each line is similar and unified. And for the second, eighth, ninth and tenth one, the unified vowel is located in each couplet's end, other than each line, but still presents a regulated rhyme employment.

Meanwhile, for the first, fourth and fifth stanza, the rhyme of lines and couplets are not totally regular, there are situations of changing rhyme and have two vowels in the final words of lines in whole work. But this also at least shows that, the awareness of caring and using the unification of ending words of lines to create rhyme and music sense.

For the prose narrating part that accompanies the ten stanzas, which closely corresponds to the content of stanzas thus also worth an analysis, it is in fact full intricate literary skills. When to render the magnificent scenery when massive transcendent do audience in the Jade Capital, its narrative start with introducing the sacred realm's location, then the "protagonist" and their doings. This is not hard to remind us about unending narrative technique, the five- "w" principle: when where, who, what, why, a concise and recognized logical way to narrate to organize a narrative sequence when introducing event. It's also not hard to find the similar way to arrange plot in later novels, especially mythological novels, the famous fiction in Ming novels, which is also the type of work profoundly affected by Chinese religious tradition. Meanwhile, this location presenting way also creates a spatial and three-dimensional sense, in which space the Jade Capital Mountain is rightly placed in the central. No matter from the description that the Seven Treasure Trees are scattered in the eight directions of the Mountain, or the movement that the transcendent s circumambulating the upper top of the Mountain, this is all clearly outlined a spatial location that even with sense of Symmetry.

Meanwhile, as the several narrating spheres grouped above, we will see succinct but

exact writing sessions about illustrating this Heavenly grand event scene. The most exciting part should be the section right after the first “five-w” narration, presenting the vast scene when the audience is undergoing and how it is like. Just as indicated in the original texts above, there is an intense use of verbal and adjective words. Starting with “at this moment” (Shishi 是時) and accompanied the “clear and penetrating” sound, the “fastened tempo” by the perfected consorts, the “awe-inspiring” face and “singing with clearance” of the transcendent lad, it successfully created an intense and holy atmosphere that just burn out from this right moment. Just rightly after these music sound, it is the graceful dance of the Jade Maiden, “whirling and swirling... delicate and demure, dancing fluidly... ..flutter and float, gracefully glide”.<sup>108</sup> How can we say that the scene is not rightly coming in front of the readers’ eyes, and arouses aesthetic feeling?

If we are not only caught by the religious content and numinous world, these two writing sequences are no doubt successful in picturing a feast, a festival.

In this narrative, there is scene, there is sound, there is image, there is action. Furthermore, it somehow just like what we see festival from the shot based on camera lens, the first shot is in the singing and dancing of the transcendent lad and the jade maiden, then the lens changed to larger picture to show a grander space, in which the different kinds of treasures make a sound when triggered by the numinous wind. Then there is a reaction accompanied by these jewels “background music” from the Mountain. With these sounds, the divine beings “soar and swiftly upward” (諸天聞聲而飛騰). There are also mythical beasts joining in. This is what we can see from the Shangqing tradition, its featured feast describing, as discussed in previous chapter, which is also remind us about the *Chuci*.

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<sup>108</sup> Translation from (Feezell 2022, 93).

Fascinating and nuanced, all these exact description poetries the scene named the auspicious and flourishing, which the feast that will happen in the Heaven. With this analysis, we cannot deny the success of rendering the atmosphere, even if it is just through words and text. Thus, reasonably enough, these depicting inspire people and disciple. It is undeniable attractive; Thus, it is no doubt an inspiration for people to seek transcendence. From this angel, how can we say the writing is not successful, no matter if we consider its religious framework, or not.

Overall, though low-evaluated, or ignored, If we can abandon the stereotypic impression about religious texts, depart from the original texts, if we can shift our minds and reflect our definition about “the literary” and the implied standard behind, we cannot hardly agree on this idea: though for serving its religious purpose, verses in Daoist scriptures, specifically Lingbao Buxu stanzas here, do obtain the feature that the content and form is relatively limited and settled, and do not seek for novel creation in the inheriting process by later Daoist schools, it cannot be just simply claimed that these verses are boring preaching, and repetitive cliché without literary splendor. Rather, we do frequently find its highly intricate expressing skill, sufficient language expertise and narrating device, which, as analyzed above, properly and successfully serves its religious intent and purpose.

Hence, with analysis above, the strokes of Buxu Stanzas and other text are neither dull nor unliterary. It indeed lacks variants and the seeking for novel change along with period, this is determined by the holy process of inheriting classics from previous traditions that belongs to the development issue of religion, but we cannot just simply come to the claim that verses and narratives in Daoist scriptures are just boring preaching, with magical content that is somehow anti-intellectual. This impression’s formation maintains certain reason, which is related to the intellectual establishment of modernity in modern China, as

well as some long-enduring attack from Confucianists and its ideology within the big context of the three-teachings' competition. Overall, simply ignoring or undervaluing the literary form in Daoist scriptures is not reasonable, just like denying the religious spice of Classics like *Zhuangzi* while praising its richness in parable and allegory, thus is quite literary, is still not proper, which, as illustrated in the introduction part, is the shielding part resulting from our modern discipline divination under secularism.

## Coda

Through the aforementioned examination and analysis, contextualization of these hymns within the larger framework of the Lingbao ritual sequences enables us to understand how these ten stanzas are utilized and their specific setting. This contextualization also sheds light on why the content of these stanzas has remained largely unchanged since their establishment during the Six Dynasties period. Moreover, it is important to note that the decision to have ten Buxu ci rather than any other number is directly linked to the ritual process itself, which has deep roots and serves as a representation and symbolization of the Buxu myth. Additionally, the choice to structure these hymns in tetrasyllabic and pentasyllabic forms is deliberate, aligning with the requirements of their chanting during the ritual (Zheng 2018, 246). In summary, the content and form of the Liturgical Buxu Hymn are intrinsically tied to the ritual performance that it accompanies.

## PART2 THE LITERATI'S DAOIST DICTION: CASE STUDIES

### The Significance of Case Study

As we will see, this part takes the method of case study, through which to address the somehow classical problem when we discuss Daoist literature, that, specifically refers to Daoist influences on Chinese literature.

It has long been provoking scholars' interest in the frequent and prolonged enduring appearances of Daoist terms and allusion in traditional Chinese poetries. Whether understanding them should take adequate esoteric knowledge, which we can approach through *Daozang* today, or these terms and allusions are just “objects of speculative fantasy” and “means to liberate the imagination.” Such questions surrounded the topic of Daoist literature, including the question of whether the authors of these poems were Daoists or not.

These questions give the necessity to this case study method. Just as Bokenkamp has noticed, Discussing the Daoist influence on Chinese literature is closely related to the issue of how we take it when an author employs a Daoist image. Was every poet who employed Daoist terminology necessarily a Daoist, given that Daoism was an esoteric religion with covert transmission rites? A related hypothesis is whether these Daoist terminologies come from some kind of oral transmission, such as speaking with priests or attending Daoist rituals, rather than reading the scriptures? Or did writers at the time use esoteric Taoist symbols as celestial seasonings to enhance works about the imperial court and capital while without truly knowing them? Is it also possible occasion that a few poets were Daoists, but their use of Daoist elements was later adopted by others just in faddish imitation? Then, finally, did Daoist canon solely play the role of “delightful material for poetic fantasy for some (or for most) writers? These questions, as Bokenkamp said, cannot be answered with a definitive conclusion. The answer is, in fact, varies from poet to poet (Bokenkamp1991, 57-58).

Thus, to answer these questions, there is indeed a necessity to examine these poets' case by case, though this method takes a long time, to my writing here, the case study method still serves my writing purposes.

Since this Dissertation mainly addresses the canonical Daoist verse, this part does not seek to take in as many examples to discuss how Daoism, its terms, allusions, and doctrines

will affect each specific poet's creations but chooses particular representative and sampling case to analyze, finally to make this whole “picture” about Daoist literature more complete. The valuation standard about “representative” and “sampling” is mainly based on the whole Dissertation's content. In this part, we choose Xi Kang and Yu Xin as the literati representatives who wrote the Youxian verse and Buxu hymns to reveal the difference between literati and canonical works with similar themes, knowledge, and content.

With these case studies, this part serves as a comparison reference of the Daoist canonical verses. The features will distinguish themselves within the comparison. Together with part one and part two, the verses form in scriptures, and these more “literati writing” verses complete the picture when we talk about Daoist literature, together forming the bigger vision and the larger textual tradition that naturally exist and do not divide by our modern categorized perspective, though the focus of this Dissertation here is mainly on verses, to make our discussing topic more concentrate.

#### The Vague Definition of “Literati” and “Daoist”

When discussing Daoist literature, we may often relate to the literati's literature/writing as a contrast. For example, there may be such saying that poems on roaming into transcendence (youxian shi 遊仙詩) is a trope that is mainly created by literati but significantly related to and inspired by Daoist ideas, terms, concepts and practices, and so on.

However, sometimes, this kind of distinguishing can be vague. A connected problem is what characterized an identity of a Daoist, and what characterizes a literati status? The definition of literati often contains two aspects. Firstly, they are a group of people who are with good education, and secondly, they highly have mastery of art forms to express their

personal feelings, such as poetry, calligraphy and paintings.<sup>109</sup> However, careful reader will find that, these two aspects cannot become the distinguishing identity feature of a “literatus” and a Daoist. If we take the standard that whether one is well educated or not, love poetry and other literary forms or not, we may not be hard to find those people who are usually taken as a Daoist, may maintain quite an education standard, not only is a knowledgeable scholar, but also quite excel in literary excellence. A typical representative of this is Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-546), who is not only the editor of the contemporary preserved *Zhen’gao* version, but he also maintains high verbal artistry in his verse creations in various forms, such as Pentasyllabic poetry and so on. Just view from his verse creations, we may hardly find its difference to what we called literati who love taking Daoist themes and elements in their poetry and prose. Another example from the other side is Xi Kang, in the usual impressions of him he is a well-educated literati born in a Confucian officialdom family, however, if we investigate his verses and treatise, say, *Yangsheng lun* (On Nourishing life 養生論), we will be surprised by his mastery of Daoist knowledge and how theme of transcendence count in his poetry(Owen 2017, 258-59), let alone his anecdotes that following the recluse-like transcendence, Sun Deng 孫登, which at least reveal his interest in Daoism is not just stay in the theoretical interest and absorption, but also in his in-person practice. We may also further ask, can Dao-worshipping family(奉道世家) like Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513), whose family generations follow and worship the Dao, their family members called Daoists? Shen Yue he himself can even do the ritual of petition(shangzhang 上章) (Li 2010, 18). All this set us certain obstacles if we want to characteristically distinguish a Daoist and a literatus.

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<sup>109</sup> This summary is retrieved from “The Cambridge English–Traditional Chinese dictionary” and “Britannica” online version, details see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-chinese-traditional/literati> and <https://www.britannica.com/topic/literati> .

If we take whether engaging in political positions or affairs as the distinguishing factor, things are becoming even more confusing. Because it is so easy to find from the three-kingdom period till Qing dynasty, the important Daoist figures have close relationship with the court and the throne at that time, and not a few Daoist movement are engaged in the rebellion with power pursuit, i.e Yellow Turban Rebellion and the rebellion of Sun'en 孫恩 (?-402). Even not such brutal seeking of shift of regime, till Qing dynasty, the Celestial Master will official audience with the Emperor (Goossaert 2016, 431). In the contrary, reclusion life and being a recluse is also a long-enduring fashion in Confucian officialdom literati, becoming part of their cultural life pattern, though this kind of reclusion never becoming the thorough cut-off and withdraw of the secular life, unlike the cave-dwelling ascetic, the disheveled monk, the aloof fisherman and so on, the somehow stereotyped images we may evoke when we talk about reclusion. Even, sometimes the reclusion becomes a way to go back to the court or gain fame.

#### 4. Xi Kang and Youxian Poem

This section examines Xi Kang's poetry, notably his works on "roaming into transcendence" (*Youxian shi* 遊仙詩), revealing their religious dimensions as also entangled worldly aspect. I argue that any content referring to transcendence or immortality should be understood in an actively religious context, and that Xi Kang's religious activities and creations also serve temporal functions. This mixed feature opens a path toward an empathetic understanding of early medieval literati like Xi Kang and may even establish an enduring pattern among pre-modern intellectuals.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> This chapter has published in *Journal of Daoist Studies* with adaptation, see (Yang 2023).



As one of the members of the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove (*Zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢), Xi Kang 嵇康 (223-263) was known as their “second greatest writer”, while Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263) was called the greatest one (Owen and Chang Sun 2010, 180). He was also famous as a representative of the literary and intellectual circles of the Wei Dynasty (220-266), where he exerted a wide social influence.<sup>111</sup> In terms of his literary creations, he wrote a number of tetrasyllabic verses (*siyan shi* 四言詩) and pentasyllabic poems (*wuyan shi* 五言詩). About a quarter of these focus on roaming into transcendence or becoming immortal,<sup>112</sup> which makes Xi Kang an eminent writer in this poetry theme.s<sup>113</sup> In addition, Xi Kang also played a role in current intellectual trends, notably the Pure Talk (*qingtan* 清談) fashion of aristocratic conversation and the philosophical tradition of Mystery Learning (*xuanxue* 玄學). More specifically, he was known for his persuasive and sophisticated debating skills as well as for a number of relevant essays, such as his *Yangsheng lun* 養生論 (On Nourishing Life) (Henricks 1983).

As regards his poems on roaming into transcendence, previous studies often came from a literary perspective, which means they complied with literature field research paradigms

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<sup>111</sup> His social influence was probably the cause of his execution. When he openly showed his opposition toward the ethics that ruling Sima clan, they condemned him to death.

<sup>112</sup> Zhang Hong calculated that Xi Kang wrote seven *siyan shi* and seven *wuyan shi*, in total roughly a quarter of the existent sixty-two poems of Xi Kang, see (Zhang 2009, 284); Stephen Owen directly pointed out that transcendence is a dominant theme in his poetic writing (Owen and Swarts 2017, 258-59).

<sup>113</sup> “Youxian” (“Roaming into transcendence” 遊仙) was a popular theme during the Six Dynasties and occupied a separate category in Xiao Tong’s 蕭統 *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature). It is also mentioned by major Six Dynasties’ works, such as *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Carved Dragons of the Literary Mind) of Liu Xie 劉勰 (465-522), as well as *Shipin* 詩品 (Grades of Poetry) of Zhong Rong’s 鐘嶸 (468-518). “Youxian” not only appears in the works of latter notable writers, e.g., Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324), it can also be traced back to as early as the *Yuanyou* 遠遊 (Far-off Journey) in the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of the South), then manifest in the *Yuefu* 樂府 of the Han, as well as another important genre *fu* (Rhapsody 賦) of this period.

under a secularized narrative, so that the religious aspect was not the central focus.<sup>114</sup> It is also impacted the field of religious study, and even though the literati held an apparent interest in religion, this did not attract much attention in research. However, in fact, when the poems were written the subject categorization into literary or religious was nonexistent. Rather, poets and thinkers held an enduring interest in the transcendent world which naturally co-existed with their involvement in the worldly affairs of officialdom. Considering this, this study intends to provide a more holistic view that repudiate the distinction that exclude “the religious” from “the literary” or the “philosophical”<sup>115</sup>, tries to understand Xi Kang’s *youxian shi* more comprehensively and exactly. It, however, also lay an empathetic glimpse on the enduring life pattern in which there is always entanglement between the secular element probable-sincere religious act.

Throughout this chapter, though I continue to use the terms, such as philosophy/philosophical, religion/religious, literature/literary, which are modern discourse without that we can’t discuss, exactly the product of categorizations or classificatory schemes. I try to

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<sup>114</sup> As has mentioned, A “secularized narrative” tries to exclude the world of divine beings and spirits, which was naturally co-existed with human in a “premodern” world, an enchantment time, see (Taylor 2007). Matching this mode of inquiry, Lu Xun (2005), who was one of the early modern scholars taking deep interest in Xi Kang and making an early edition of his works, picked “taking drugs” as a main characteristic to understand Xi Kang’s thought and actions, but he ignored it as a religious way to be a transcendent, seeing it just as a symbol of being “with belief.” Zhang Hong (2009) and Sun Changwu (2005) noticed the importance of the *Yangsheng lun* to investigate Xi Kang’s *Youxian shi*, but do not further discuss the religious aspects of Xi Kang’s philosophy and poetry. Literary analysis is also Owen’s emphasis (2006), although he specifies that Daoism was “a useful approach” for poems of this period and points out Xi Kang’s “obsession” with roaming into transcendence.

<sup>115</sup> About how to transcend modern disciplinary cleavages and why the holistic approach applied to traditional China society, see (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 4-13). Kohn (1992) had outlined a “Lao-Zhuang “tradition which related to both “religious Daoism” and “philosophical Daoism” but neither of them, showed a combination trial (Kohn 1992,1-10, 81-95). Wen (2006), Meulenbeld (2010), Schipper (2014) and Goossaert (2011) expounded how the “philosophical Daoism” and “religious Daoism” were distinct and finally invented an “acceptable and disdained” Daoism: the “fundamentalist Confucians”, the Christian norm and the secular attack on Chinese religion, see (Wen 2006, 120-27; Meulenbeld 2010, 1-4; Schipper 2014, 6-7; Goossaert 2011, 4-13).

present the naturally holistic status that these “elements”/aspects in Xi Kang’s work which should be taken into consideration as a whole.

Under this holistic view which transcends secularized disciplinary interest, Xi Kang can be a good example showcasing how this approach is practiced. In turn, this fit-in is based on his writing’s own character: his heterogeneous set of resources and Bricolage feature, no matter from the “religious”, which is often neglected or under-valued, or from the “literary”, which is often taken as purely-secular, or the poetic use of “philosophy”, which is thought should be rationalized and gain no relation to “the religious” in the pre-modern time.

Meanwhile, this holistic trial also changes the way we portray Xi Kang as an educated literati born in an officialdom family. It showcases the complex picture how people in early medieval China lived: to them there was no separation of what we today call secular and religious, nor a “modern” impression that being keen on gods, ghosts, and spirits are just “superstitious” and belongs to less-educated life.<sup>116</sup> Rather, well-educated literati like Xi Kang, somewhat aristocratic, also engaged in close contact with religious adepts, whether Daoist, Buddhist (after its entering), or indigenous popular beliefs. They also mastered a variety of longevity, spiritual, and religious systems and techniques. As Zornica Kirková puts it: “Certain esoteric knowledge had become a part of a broader cultural repertoire shared by the elite” (2021).

The key theme that bridges the gap in this context is known as *you-xian*, a compound that can be read variously: as verb-object, which renders it “roaming as transcendentals” or “roaming with the immortals” (Wai-lim Yip 1997, 143; Kirková 2016, 22); or as adjective-noun, which leads to renditions of “roaming immortals” (Miao 1975, 48; Holzman 1988; Owen 2006) or “wandering immortals” (Frodsham and Cheng Xi 1967, 92; Kirková 2016, 22). However, if we understand the word *xian* in a broader sense and do not limit it to the

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<sup>116</sup> About how this “superstition” discourse was invented, see (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 4-11, 43-65).

persons of immortals, the phrase comes to indicate the state of transcendence or immortality, where the protagonist can roam freely. Matching this reading Edward Schafer renders *youxian* “saunters in sylphdom” (1981), while Paul Kroll calls it “roaming into transcendence” (1996), a rendition I chose to adopt.

#### 4.1 Nourishing life

To understand the context and import of the poems properly, it is important to appreciate the religious dimension of Xi Kang’s ideas about preserving life and his sincere interest in seeking transcendence. In his *Yangsheng lun*, he emphasizes that long life and transcendence can be achieved in this world and outlines various approaches to this end. He also formulates the overarching worldview in terms of vital energy (*qi* 氣) and focuses on the practice of breathing exercises.

Xi Kang articulates that although he himself was not able to actually realize transcendence, it was possible to prolong human life through nourishing health (Dai 2014, 253; Henricks 1983, 22; Sun 2005, 177). To him, transcendents are beings who have received a special kind of *qi*, which means the state is not accessible to anyone and cannot be achieved through artificial labors, such as accumulation of practices and studies. However, prolonging life from a hundred to a thousand years is workable through proper approaches such as keeping mental equanimity and emotional stability (Dai 2014, 253).

After establishing that it is indeed possible to attain long life, Xi Kang outlines three major approaches or techniques. The first and main approach is to remain dispassionate and peaceful within to nourish the spirit; the second is to avoid wealth and official rank to preserve oneself from danger and harm; and the third involves dietary methods, including the abstinence from meat, grains, and wine. The latter goes back to medical information as

documented in the *Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經 (The Divine Farmer's Materia Medica), as Xi Kang quoted. In addition, Xi Kang also recommends taking certain drugs to prolong life.

First, being dispassionate and peaceful to nourish the spirit relates to views that body and physical form as well as essence and spirit are part of a holistic whole and mutually constitutive. The relation of the two is like that between ruler (mind, spirit) and the state (body, physical form). Thus, to keep the body alive it is essential to nourish the spirit. To do so, Xi Kang insists that remaining dispassionate and maintaining internal equanimity is best. This is because strong feelings not only change often, but also do harm to the body. The best status is, as Xi Kang notes, “Let love and hate not dwell in your feelings; anguish and delight not stay in your thoughts.”<sup>117</sup>

Second, one should avoid wealth and rank to preserve oneself from danger and harm. The logic is simple: the more one is endowed with high rank and wealth, the higher chances are that one gets involved in harm and danger. This was especially true in Xi Kang's time, when the political climate was harsh and there were many power struggles among elite groups. This intense atmosphere is conspicuously showcased in one of his poems, entitled *Da er Guo sanshou, qi san* 答二郭三首, 其三 (A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems, No. III). Here he expresses his grief and worries about the situation that “the tactical and strategic vie with one another,” leading to alienation in people's relationship (Owen and Swartz 2017, 330-31). This makes him feel that “fame and position cannot be maintained.”

Third, Xi Kang holds the strong opinion that what people eat has an effect on their life expectancy. He says, “The essence of whatever we eat impacts inner nature and stains the body; there is nothing that does not affect something else” (Dai 2014, 254; Henricks 1983,

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<sup>117</sup> Translation from (Henricks 1983). Without specification, direct citation of translation on original text is all from this work.

25). Based on his reference to the *Shennong bencao jing*, Xi Kang outlines two different kinds of food that lead to different reactions as they enter people's bodies. The first is fragrant and delightful when eaten but decays rapidly within. It exhausts vital energy, defiles the spirit, and poisons the six viscera—in fact reducing health, decreasing life, and shortening blessings. Examples include meat, grain, and wine. The second, which Xi Kang favors enthusiastically, involves certain herbal and mineral remedies, such as *liuquan* 流泉 (flowing fountain) or *ganli* 甘醴 (sweet spring), *qiongrui* 瓊蕊 (agate stamens), *yuying* 玉英 (flowers of jade), *liudan* 留丹 (red sulphur), *shijun* 石菌 (stone mushroom), *zizhi* 紫芝 (purple fungus), *huangjing* 黃精 (yellow essence), and so on.<sup>118</sup> Ingesting these, the body becomes light and long life is attained, a feature that continued later in the Daoist school of Highest Clarity (Shangqing 上清).

Xi Kang particularly pays attention to the concept of vital energy (*qi*). Echoing the *Zhuangzi*, he notes that transcendents are beings endowed with a special form of *qi* and, since

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<sup>118</sup> In general, they are all for longevity or transcendence. Specifically, ***liuquan* 流泉 (flowing fountain) or *ganli* 甘醴 (sweet spring)** namely are spring. ***qiongrui* 瓊蕊 (agate stamens)**: the stamens of agate tree, which grows in Kunlun Mountain, it's said to be eaten by transcendent for longevity (Yin and Guo, 184). Under the item “qiongshu” 瓊樹 (agate tree) in *Kangxi Dictionary* mentioned the stamens of the tree were eaten for longevity. ***yuying* 玉英 (flowers of jade)**: still ingesting for longevity. In “Crossing the Yangtze” (Shejiang 涉江) of *Chuci* reads: ascending the Kunlun Mountains to consume the jade flower, (I will) maintain a lifespan as enduring as Heaven and Earth, and shining as brilliantly as the sun and the moon (登昆侖兮食玉英，與天地兮同壽，與日月兮同光) . ***liudan* 留丹 (red sulphur)**: here following the Wu text, in other edition it's written as Jindan 金丹 (gold cinnabar). In *Baopuzi* 抱樸子 “Jindan” chapter, it's taken as the “highest medicine” (Shangyao 上藥) . If we take it as 流丹 or 硫丹, it's another name of Hufen 胡粉. In *Baopuzi* “Xianyao” 仙藥 chapter there are recording as Shiliudan 石流丹. No matter what version it is, it's used to make cinnabar is no doubt (Yin and Guo 1986, 184; Hu 1995, 1374; Henricks 1983, 56-57). ***shijun* 石菌 (stone mushroom)**: divine plants, eaten by immortals, found on the isles in the middle of the ocean (Henricks 1983, 57; Yai and Guo 1986, 184). ***zizhi* 紫芝 (purple fungus)**: Henricks took it as “Ganoderma” while Yin and Guo noted it as Auriculariales. But anyhow it is a plant eaten to lighten body and gain longevity (Henricks 1983, 57; Yin and Guo 1986, 184). ***huangjing* 黃精 (yellow essence)**: another name is “deer bamboo” or “hare bamboo”, a mountain plant (Henrick 1983, 57; Kohn 2012, 121). Detailed usage and its efficacy see *Daoist Dietetics Food for Immortality* (Kohn 2010, 146).

*qi* is most easily accessible through respiration, he places great emphasis on the practice of breathing exercise. For example, after insisting that one should dispassionate and peaceful inside, he proposes the practice of “breathing by expelling and absorbing” (*huxi tuna* 呼吸吐納), a way of referring to the well-known practice of expelling the old and absorbing the new [breath] (*tugu naxin* 吐古納新). He says,

Therefore, he cultivates his nature to protect his spirit and calms his mind to keep his body intact. Love and hate do not dwell in his feelings; anguish and delight do not stay in his thoughts. Quiet is he and unmoved, his body and breath harmonious and still. Moreover, he breathes to expel the old and absorb the new and swallows herbal drugs to nourish his health, causing form and spirit to draw together and surface and the interior to benefit alike. (Dai 2014, 253; Henricks 1983, 24)

Xi Kang further classifies food based on the smell of their *qi* that is, whether they are fragrant or odorous, thus connecting dietary methods to the understanding and practice of *qi*.

Overall, Xi Kang articulates the various reasons why most people cannot achieve the goal of long life<sup>119</sup> and figures out the approaches for nourishing life and go transcendence. These approaches showcase his combination of spiritual nourishing methods and ingesting certain drugs and herbs for physical longevity. He presents a heterogeneous set of resources such as nourishing the spirit (*yangshen* 養神) and physically preserving the body—another feature that also appears in medieval and later Daoism.

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<sup>119</sup> That is, these people tend to be skeptical about the effectiveness of the various herbs and minerals and maintain no perseverance in the process of nurturing life. They tend to expect instant effects and short-term gain, which is the main reason they ultimately fail.

His heterogeneous set of resources indicate Xi Kang's heritage from traditions from previous Dynasties, such as Lao-Zhuang, ingesting and dietary technique based on *Shennong bencaojing*, which count an important base of Xi Kang's nourishing life idea and maintaining close relationship to fangshi Daoism in Han Dynasty.

As regarding sourcing *Shennong bencaojing*, in Xi Kang's treatise, there is direct quote from "Shennong". This is indicated in both *Yangsheng lun* (An Essay on Nourishing Life 養生論) and *Da nan yangshenglun* (An Answer to Xiang Xiu's Refutation of My Essay on Nourishing Life 答難養生論). Specifically, in *Yangshen lun*, Xi Kang wrote:

Therefore, Shen Nung said: "The superior Drugs nourish fate; The Middle drug nourish nature." He truly understood the principles of nature and fate, and accordingly he assisted and nourished them to take them to completion. But people of the world do not study these; the "five grains" alone they delight in. (Henricks 1983, 26)

神農曰“上藥養命，中藥養性者”，誠知性命之理，因輔養以通也。而世人不察，惟五穀是見。(Dai 2014, 254)

In *Danan yangshenglun*, he quoted Xiang Xiu's opinion that it is Shennong who advocate five grains and made his reply:

The refutation is: "Shen Nong advocated the beginning of grain cultivation", "birds and animals reply on it flying and moving, while living humans see and breathe depend on it." Today (we) do not mention five grains is not promoted by Shennong, having upheld the advance medicine, while also promoting five grains, this dual advocacy is because advanced medicine is rare, difficult to obtain, and hard to access, whereas the five grains are easily cultivated, allowing agriculture to be sustainable over the long term. (Promoting the both to help the people and follow the day, thus preserving the both.



難曰：“神農唱粒食之始“，“鳥獸以之飛走，生民以之視息。今不言五穀非神農所唱也，既言上藥，又唱五穀者，以上藥希寡，艱而難致；五穀易殖，農而可久，所以濟百姓而繼天，故並而存之。(Dai 2014, 300)

The thought of “abstinence of five grains” also remind us of “not consuming five grains while subsisting on the wind and dew (“不食五谷，餐風飲露”) in *Zhuangzi*, as well as “abstinence grains while ingesting qi” (Quegu shiqi 卻谷食氣) in Mawangdui manuscript, though through careful analysis we can confirm the mention of Shennong in Xi Kang’s above two treatises directly from *Shennong bencaojing*<sup>120</sup>. Study also has shown that *Shennong bencaojing* maintains close relationship to fangshi Daoism in Han.<sup>121</sup>

Xi Kang’s self-statement also support his absorption origin of previous traditions. In *Yu Shanjuyuan juejiaoshu*, Xi Kang listed his teachers or role models which may imply his learning procession and intellectual source:

Laozi and Zhuangzhou, who are my teachers, engaged in humble occupations; Liu Xiahui and Dongfang Shuo, who were accomplished individuals, also held lowly positions, (Therefore), I do not dare to look down upon (humble jobs or inferior position).

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<sup>120</sup> As further regarding why Xi Kang is sourcing *Shennong bencao jing*, to specify, though the mostly commonly recognized version of *Shennong bencao* is the Tao Hongjing’s edition, namely *Bencaojing jizhu* 本草經集註 in Liang Dynasty, it actually has older earlier version and got varied names in later circulation. Through textual research and edition-contrasting, researchers tend to believe the text Tao Hongjing adopted together with Mingyi bielu 名醫別錄 to compile *Bencaojing jizhu* was just one of those editions circulated at that time, and the content has already been adjusted (Ma 1990, 246-51; Ma1995, 492; Peng 2020, 23-27). In addition, Ma Jixing’s study recorded different versions and names of this text in Pre-Tang period, rightly recorded Xi Kang quoted one of the variant names of *Shennong bencaojing*, namely Shennong, in his treatise (Ma 1990, 249). Thus, Xi Kang’s nourishing life thought is primary based on *Shennong bencaojing*, a work before his living Dynasties, is no doubt.

<sup>121</sup> In section three of Peng Bisheng’s article listed three reasons why *Shennong bencaojing* maintain various link to fangshi Daoism in Han. (Peng 2020, 27-28). This indicates Xi Kang’s knowledge heritage.

老子莊周，吾之師也，親居賤職；柳下惠東方朔達人也，安乎卑位，吾豈敢短之。(Dai 2014, 196)

And express directly about his reliance in Daoist's words:

Upon hearing the Taoist priest's left words regarding dietary techniques and the cultivation of yellow essence, which are said to promote longevity, I am deeply convinced of their validity.

又聞道士遺言，餌術黃精，令人久壽，意甚信之。(Dai 2014, 198)

Claiming that his approached of tendering life, which indicates apparent impact of Laozi:

I have learned the art of tendering life and have become adept at downplaying reputation and luxury. (I have) abandoned indulgence, allowing my heart to find solace in solitude, (and I) place great value on the principle of inaction.

吾頃學養生之術，方外榮華，去滋味，遊心於寂寞，以無為為貴。(Dai 2014, 198)

Combining records<sup>122</sup>of Xi Kang shows his frequent contact with immortal-like recluse such as Sun Deng 孫登 and Wang Lie 王烈, with all this evidence, it is no wonder Xi Kang's have certain mastery of Daoist techniques, which also maintain ancient root and preservation of previous traditions.

This kind of comprehensive heritage also indicate in his poets writing and His views on nourishing life, moreover, inevitably affected his poetries. This holds true not only for vocabulary and imagery of his poems on roaming into transcendence, but also for the set sequence of topics in his work.<sup>123</sup> This showed his close linkage with previous traditions such

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<sup>122</sup> Though with certain degree of anecdotal feature.

<sup>123</sup> Sun Changwu finds that the language and representation skills of Xi Kang's poetry are monotonous and repetitive (2005, 200).

as poems of the Jian'an period (196-220) and *yuefu* of Han<sup>124</sup>, though his tireless interest in directive quoting or sophisticated elaboration of Lao-Zhuang in poetry bestowed him certain specialness.<sup>125</sup> This slot typically starts with a particular roaming scene such as riding on clouds, driving a chariot drawn by dragons, and more. From here, they move on to outline the main plot of meeting one or several transcendents, sometimes generically called spirit man (*shenren* 神人) or perfected (*zhenren* 真人) and in some cases named individually as, for example, Wangzi Qiao 王子喬. The divine figure(s) commonly grants the mysterious medicine, then followed the narrative telling the ingestion of drugs or other transformation techniques, such as collecting herbs. Then, in the end of the poem, the protagonist himself turns into an immortal and ascends into the empyrean.

A slightly different variant sets out by specifying the hardships and risks involved in living in the ordinary world of political chaos and intrigue, then moves on to express a strong yearning for ascension, as a way to escape from the grief of life. While poems of this kind are not typically classified as “roaming into transcendence,” they supplement the theme and serve to outline a yet different dimension of this kind of poetry and help to understand its larger context. They present the worldly entanglement of the quest for transcendence and remind us of the equally important aspect of the compositional background on which Xi Kang wrote his poems on roaming. Although he had a keen interest in pursuing transcendence and was deeply sincere in this endeavor, his religious concerns also closely

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<sup>124</sup> Owen (2006) and Kirková (2016) had a sophisticated analysis of this set sequence of slot of the very period. Owen attribute this to “an analogue of Daoism” (Owen 2006, 140), while Kirková addresses these Journey depicting as discussing “way” to immortality (Kirková 2016, 203). No matter what, the religious impact is apparent.

<sup>125</sup> Owen and Swartz (2017) expounded this in the treatise focusing on Xi Kang and Ruan Ji (Owen and Swartz 2017, 262). Further, his direct quoting or sophisticated elaboration of Lao-Zhuang, not only show his pioneering position as a Xuanyan poet (Swartz 2018, 45- 48), but also indicate his broad mastery and own proposition in longevity and transcendence, if we do not differentiate the “philosophical” Mystery learning with religious Daoism, Wen (2006) spoke about this (Wen 2006, 120-26). Finally, he developed these heterogeneous sources into a new poetic language.

entangled with the mundane world, which he had to inhabit by necessity. This at the same time also reflects a long-enduring pattern of life among premodern Chinese literati: being an immortal-like recluse still served certain temporal functions, just as working as a Confucian official never hindered religious engagement.

#### 4.2 The poems

Many of Xi Kang's poems on roaming into transcendence use terminology related to nourishing life in connection with classical Daoist concepts, such as making all things equal and nurturing life, carefree and leisure wandering, roaming in Great Clarity, and the like (Owen and Swartz 2017, 351, 269, 301). He also invokes visions of freedom in flight, childlike joy, simplicity, and escape as well as actions of picking herbs, ingesting elixirs, and ascending into the pure sky. For example,

##### **Poem on Roaming into Transcendence**

.....

Wang Qiao lifts me up and takes me away;

We ride the clouds, drive a chariot of six dragons.

Floating and fluttering, we sport in the Garden of Mystery;

Along the road, we meet Huang and Lao.

They teach me the Way of the Natural,

All becomes clear like a childlike simplicity burgeoning forth.

We pick herbs in a nook on Mount Zhong,

And we ingest elixirs, which transform our appearance.

As cicadas shed their shells, casting away filth and entanglements,

I become friends with the transcendence and settle on Bantong.<sup>126</sup>

These lines document the bold and comprehensive tradition that Xi Kang inherited from *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of the South), poems of the Jian'an period (196-220), as well as the contemporaneous philosophical discourse of Mystery Learning (Owen and Swartz 2017, 262). In addition, they also indicate his intimate relation to the prevailing religious tradition of Daoism at his time and his adaptation of immortals' lore and the visions of Zhuang zi. The abundant religious ideas, just as his comprehensive heritage of literary tradition and pioneering "philosophy" adoption, should also be fully noted and contribute to the whole understanding of Xi kang's works.

More specifically, the poem speaks clearly of the key figures in Daoist teachings in the Han dynasty, the Yellow Emperor and Laozi (Huang-Lao 黃老) while emphasizing the importance of the way of naturalness or spontaneity (*ziran dao* 自然道), allowing the protagonist to return to the simplicity of childhood. It also contains direct quotations regarding Daoist techniques of self-cultivation: by picking herbs and ingesting elixirs, the protagonist changes his appearance and can make friends in Bantong 板桐, a place on Mont Kunlun 崑崙, the central world mountain and major realm of the transcendents. Here he meets divine beings and engages in new friendships.

In addition, the poem also describes another place where the protagonist goes after his ascension by "riding the clouds," "driving a chariot of six dragons," and "floating and fluttering." This place is the legendary "hanging garden" (Xuanpu 懸圃), again a location on

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<sup>126</sup> 《遊仙詩》：……王喬弃我去，乘雲駕六龍。飄飄戲玄圃，黃老路相逢。授我自然道，曠若發童蒙。採藥鍾山隅，服食改姿容。蟬蛻棄穢累，結友家板桐 (Dai 2014, 65; Owen and Swartz 2017, 305). The first couplet has been omitted here because of relevance concern.

Mount Kunlun. It is yet another type of the transcendent realm where the protagonist encounters both divine figures who provide him with the elixir of life and also the way of naturalness or spontaneity, the ultimate inherent flow of cosmic oneness. Xi Kang here showed a distinct comprehensiveness in absorption of what we called religious Daoist beliefs and the philosophical one.

The same mixture is also apparent in another poetic series, notably the *Chongzuo*, *siyanshi qishou* 重作四言詩七首 (Seven Stanzas of Recom-posed Tetrasyllabic Verse), and here specifically in the fifth and sixth.

### **The Fifth Stanza**

Repudiate wisdom, discard learning,  
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.  
Repudiate wisdom, discard learning,  
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.  
When you commit a fault, how should you regret it?  
...  
That which pleased him was merely one domain.  
With loosened hair, he sang as he strolled,  
And a harmonious vapor filled within the four borders.  
I make a song to express this:  
Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the Mystery.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> 絕智棄學，遊心於玄默。絕智棄學，遊心於玄默。過而弗悔，當不自得。……所樂一國。被髮行歌，和氣四塞。歌以言之，遊心於玄默 (Dai 2014, 82; Owen and Swartz 2017, 318). Certain lines have been omitted because of relevance concern and been indicated with a “...”.

This presents a take on the ideal life as presented by Laozi and Zhuangzi. For example, the line, “Repudiate wisdom, discard learning” originates from the *Daode jing* sayings, “Cut off sageliness, get rid of wisdom” (juesheng qizhi 絕聖棄智) and “Abandon learning and be free from sorrow” (juexue wuyou 絕學無憂) (Ryden 2008, 41-43).

The following lines, moreover, have their roots in the *Zhuangzi*. More specifically, “Let your mind roam in the dark silence of the mystery” comes from chapter 5 (The Sign of Virtue Complete), while the phrase “Commit a fault but not regret it, do something right but not be self-satisfied” is the ideal state of mind maintained by the perfected as described in chapter 6 (The Great and Venerable Teacher). “With loosened hair, sang as he strolled” similarly connects to a story found in *Zhuangzi* 19 (Mastering Life). Finally, “A harmonious vapor filled within the four borders,” though commentators’ presupposition varies, they all revealed that this expression relates to the life philosophy advocated by *Zhuangzi* (Dai 2014, 84). The concept “harmony” also invokes the very sentence in *Laozi*: “Carrying yin and embracing yang, merge into harmony through the coalescence of these forces” (Fuyin baoyang, chongqi yi wei he 負陰抱陽，衝氣以為和) (Owen and Swartz 2017, 403). In other words, the fifth stanza can be said to closely reflect and be directly inherited from the ideas of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*.

In contrast, the next section, which closely follows this one, presents more mythological aspects:

### **The Sixth Stanza**

I long with Wang Qiao

To ride the clouds and roam the Eight Extremes.

I long with Wang Qiao

To ride the clouds and roam the Eight Extremes.

Swiftly we traverse the Five Marchmounts

And speedily travel a myriad leagues.

He'd bestow divine drugs upon me

To make me grow feathered wings.

I breathe in the air of Primal Harmony,

Which smelts my form and changes my countenance.

I make a song to express this:

I long to travel to and roam the Eight Extremes.<sup>128</sup>

Here Xi Kang shows the aspiration to roam into the heavenly spheres with a well-known immortal figure, Wang Ziqiao, and couches this desire in the format of the classic roaming scene: riding the clouds and traveling across large areas in a very short time, closely matching the “Yuanyou” 遠遊 (Far-off Journey) song in the *Chuci*. Also, he mentions the taking of drugs and the practice of breathing techniques. After receiving divine drugs, the protagonist gains feathered wings, matching a typical metaphor and major symbol found in many descriptions of transcendence from the Han dynasty onward (Li 2010, 3). Susan Huang similarly reminds us of the long-standing Daoist tendency to link humans and birds, apparent both in visual art and literary writings (2012, 135-64). In addition, in the esoteric nomenclature system, the term “Primal Harmony” (*taihe* 太和) reads: “The mouth is the Jade Pond, the palace of Great Harmony” in *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Yellow Court Classic) (Kohn 1993, 184), a compilation on visualization and breathing techniques from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century

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<sup>128</sup>思與王喬，乘雲遊八極。思與王喬，乘雲遊八極。凌厲五嶽，忽行萬億。授我神藥，自生羽翼。呼吸太和，鍊形易色。歌以言之，思行遊八極 (Dai 2014, 84; Owen and Swartz 2017, 320).



CE.<sup>129</sup> All this sets the scene for the protagonist, in the following lines, to change his form and countenance, that is, to become a transcendent.

From the foregoing, apparently, both the “philosophical” and the “religious” part present in Xi Kang’s work as important components. Their content further documents that Xi Kang’s writing was based strongly on traditional sources and inherited from ancient Daoist classics. For example, when he describes the progress of his journey, the imagery invokes “riding the clouds” and “driving a chariot of six dragons,” which is not only reminiscent of the portrait of the spirit man in the *Zhuangzi* but also of the mysterious ascent in the *Chuci*. The *Zhuangzi* has

Far away on Mount Guye [Miaoguye], there lived a spirit man. His flesh and skin were like ice and snow. His manner was elegant and graceful as that of a maiden. He did not eat any of the five grains but inhaled the wind and drank the dew. He rode on clouds, drove along the flying dragons, and thus rambled beyond the four seas. (Fung 2016, 5)

Plus, the “Yuanyou” contains the phrase:

Driving eight undulating dragons,  
Cloud banners flying in rolling waves. (Gopal 2017, 194)

These lines form part of many similar expressions about transcendents and descriptions of how they roam through the empyrean, that can commonly be traced back to these two

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<sup>129</sup> Though taihe do have the meaning of “undifferentiated state of yin and yang”, considering the context “huxi taihe, lianxiang yise” (“呼吸太和，練形易色”), I tend to support here is talking about body-cultivation techniques.

texts. In other words, their imagery and language profoundly influenced later descriptions, both in religious and literary texts, including also the work of Xi Kang.

The ancient classics are both religious and literary in nature. They use a language of high quality and abound in creative and wondrous metaphors while also containing abundant religious information and speaking of religious activities related to the divine world and supernatural beings. Many scholars have emphasized this point. For example, the “Jiuge” 九歌 (Nine Songs) poem in the *Chuci*, thought to be related to shamanic activity, speaks of the Xiang River Goddess (Xiangjun 湘君) or the Lady of the Xiang River (Xiang furen 湘夫人) (Kohn 1992; Gopal 2017). The close relationship between terms in *Zhuangzi* and Daoist meditation and ritual, such as “withered wood” (*kumu* 枯木), “dead ashes” (*sihui* 死灰), has also been revealed (Meulenbeld 2010).

The “Yuanyou,” in particular, is often taken to be the direct model or forerunner of the poems on roaming into transcendence. Not only does it outline the protagonist’s progress into the heavenly spheres, but it also integrates certain self-cultivation notions from Daoism. For example, it mentions that “I sup on the six vital energies and quaff the damps of coldest midnight, rinse my mouth with truest sunlight and imbibe the aurora of dawn.”<sup>130</sup> As Paul Kroll points out, the poem depicts the mysteries of the otherworld and a magnificent journey there, the free roaming among the stars—all “key practices of concentrated visualization, undertaken by for medieval Daoist adepts” (1996). In short, the ancient texts that Kang’s in his writing, are deeply imbued in religious ideas and practices.

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<sup>130</sup> 餐六氣而飲沆瀣兮,漱正陽而含朝霞。 Translation from (Kroll 1996)

#### 4.3 The sublunary entangles the divine: the worldly entanglement.

Beyond this, with an empathetic view to look Xi Kang as a man ever truly lived in society, we can observe that the various religious aspects and sincere beliefs inevitably entangled with worldly aspect, serving certain temporal functions. A view on this is also trial of a holistic approach: not departing from concept, but the phenomena as complexity as they are. The exploration of immortal-like recluse such as Xi Kang, also offer us a vivid example of an enduring-pattern of Chinese Literati's living.<sup>131</sup>

This worldly entanglement can also be discernable in Xi Kang's poems. Not only the works are typically known as "lyrical self-expression",<sup>132</sup> such as the *Siqin shi* 思親詩 (Thinking of My Loved Ones) and *Youzhen shi* 憂憤詩 (My Indignation in Confinement), the same holds true for Xi Kang's poems on roaming into transcendence, which again echoes its forerunner Yuanyou.

More specifically, there are two needs anchored deeply in reality that drive the protagonist to seek transcendence: one is his desire to escape from real dangers in life, most importantly related to politics; the other is, the urge to get away from annoying mundane people and replace human with more divine contacts, seeking close friendship and deep understanding. The latter is clearly apparent in Xi Kang's *Shuzhi shi* 述志詩 (Telling of My Intent), Another example appears in the following:

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<sup>131</sup> I would agree Berkowitz's opinion that reclusion as a way of life should not be simply labeling or be formulaically taken, because it was a human practice "as complex as the humans involved" (Berkowitz 2000, 3-6), though I have partial critique on his somehow subordinative set the religious aspect of reclusion when comparting its secularity character. On one hand, indeed, "reclusion as a way of life" indicate those hermits' trial to "remove themselves from temporal political intrigues" and their "intent on cultivating their persons and transcending worldly trends and fashions, without compromise to their integrity" (Berkowitz 2000, 4). On the other, just as the author repeatedly find the religion's (Daoism or Buddhism) "permeation" and "suffusion" not only in the reclusion practice this time, but in "all of Chinese society as well for the next millennium" (Berkowitz 2000, 2-13). We would agree what the author agree that the seclusion pursuit "might also have included religious concerns (Berkowitz 2000, 13).

<sup>132</sup> This term "self-expressive lyricism" is used following the concise survey of traditional poetry development provide by *Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature* (Denecke, Li and Tian, 241-54).

### **A Response to the Two Guos, Three Poems, III:**

Looking closely at the disarray of the world's affairs,

Piles of danger, there is much grief and fright.

Bestowal and recompense exchange as in a marketplace.

The Great Way is concealed and will not unfold.

When even along a leveled road, one meets thorns and brambles;

For a comfortable stroll, where is one to go?

The tactical and strategic vie with one another;

Fame and position cannot be maintained.

The simurgh avoids the ensnaring net,

Consigning itself afar to a mound on Kunlun.

....<sup>133</sup>

(Owen and Swartz 2017, 331-33).

As Xi Kang himself confessed and closely observed, were hard times to live in. As he described in the first part here, there is much sorrow in life, and he constantly confronts unpredictable dangers. The world is in grave chaos and disorder, and most people engage in relationships only on an entirely utilitarian basis, taking and giving favors like a trade and exchanging benefits with one for another. Living in this world is like walking on thistles and

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<sup>133</sup> 《答二郭三首,其三》: 詳觀凌世務。屯險多憂虞。施報更相市。大道匿不舒。夷路值枳棘。安步將焉如。權智相傾奪。名位不可居。鸞鳳避爵羅。遠托昆侖墟, ....Certain lines have been omitted because of relevance concern and been indicated with a "...".

thorns: it is almost impossible to move at ease. Then the question arises, “Where is one to go?” There really is no place: the poet is entirely helpless in these troubled times.

In concrete terms, Xi Kang’s lifetime saw severe power struggles and hard fighting. “A very difficult time in Chinese history” (Henricks 1983), these were years of constant warfare, factionalism, and intrigue. The reality function of Xi Kang’s writings about roaming into transcendence, then, concerns this very concrete and specific situation, when fame and position—especially one of high rank—had become a grave danger. Under these circumstances, his views of nourishing life and preserving oneself, complete with his recall of the ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi, not only represent an intellectual interest but reflect a close personal need and individual choice under the extreme conditions of his life.

The last line of the poem, therefore, reflects his urgent will to escape from his contemporary world: his aspiration to “consigning himself afar to a mound on Kunlun.” In this sense, Xi Kang’s seeking for transcendence is not only a religious endeavor, although that forms an undeniable and important dimension of it, but also relates to his resolution on how best to live in a world of chaos.

Another practical need is the urge to get away from mundane people whom he despises, seeking instead for close friends (zhiji) “知己”. In Xi Kang’s mind, such a friend ideally is a transcendent, someone not of this world whom he can trust fully. His wish for such companionship is expressed clearly in his poetry. For example:

### **Telling of My Intent: The First Poem**

The submerged dragon nurtures his divine body,  
Bathing his scales, sporting in the thoroughwort pond.  
Craning his neck, he yearns for Dating;  
Resting his feet, he waits for Fu Xi

...

Common men are not my compeers,  
I am slow to follow the ways of the vulgar.  
It is difficult to fit in with a different kind:  
Their base opinions scatter and spread all over.  
On this rough and ragged path, I encounter regret and shame  
For my long-held intent cannot be carried out.

Plowing and weeding so moved Ning Yue.  
A saddle blanket for a mat roused Zhang Yi.  
I shall go and leave behind this crowd of fellow men.  
With a whip in hand, I pursue after Hong Ya.

The brown Peng-bird shakes his six quill-feathers,  
How could nets restrain him?  
Drifting and roaming in the Great Purity,  
Again, I search for new acquaintances.

Wing beside wing, we soar through the Milky Way,  
Drinking dew and supping on carnelian branches.<sup>134</sup>

(Owen and Swartz 2017, 302)

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<sup>134</sup> 潛龍育神軀。躍鱗戲蘭池。延頸慕大庭。寢足俟皇羲... 悠悠非吾匹,疇肯應俗宜。殊類難徧周。鄙議紛流離。轆軻丁悔吝。雅志不得施。耕耨感寧越。馬席激張儀。逝將離羣侶。杖策追洪崖。焦股振六翮。羅者安所羈。浮游太清中。更求新相知。比翼翔雲漢。飲露餐瓊枝。Certain lines have been omitted because of relevance concern and been indicated with a “...”.

The first three lines here depict the divine animal, that is, they focus on the dragon's actions and appearance—quite possibly a self-portrait of Xi Kang himself. The third to sixth lines present the dragon's longing and desire to meet with Fu Xi, the legendary ruler of antiquity. However, auspicious signs have not appeared, which means that the encounter cannot yet be successful. Thus, the dragon has to pace back and forth on the mountain—quite clearly an image of being trapped in space and time while also expressing his impatience and the fact that his intent is not being fulfilled.

The following couplet points out what the specific plight is. As a proud and unique being, the dragon/poet has a hard time to fit in with “the vulgar” and he is deeply bothered by the scattered and spread-out “base opinion” of the masses, yet also full of regret and shame. This is resolved by his pursuit of the ancient immortal Hong Ya and the appearance of the mythical Peng bird, a figure prominent in the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. The bird, yet another symbol of the poet, is not trapped and restrained any more. The protagonist rises into the immortal realm of Great Purity, where he hopes he can find his true friend. The logic here uses the imagery of roaming into transcendence as a way of escaping “common people” while searching for a true friend and celestial companion.

A similarly progression appears in the second poem of this cycle:

### **Telling of My Intent: The Second Poem**

The little quail stakes a claim to artemesia shrubs

It looks up to laugh at how the divine phoenix flies.

A caved-in well serves as the dwelling for the mayfly and frog,

The divine tortoise — where does he return to?

... ..

With impassioned indignation, I think of the ancients;

In my dreams, I see their radiant countenance.  
I long to meet someone who will understand me,  
  
So I may express my frustrations, open up my hidden subtleties.  
Cliffs and caves have many recluses,  
Lightly I take off in search of my teacher  
At daybreak, I ascend to the top of Mount Ji.  
As the sun sets, I am not aware of any hunger.  
Living in seclusion, I nurture my soul  
So that for a thousand years I shall long be at peace.<sup>135</sup>  
(Owen and Swartz 2017, 302)

In the opening lines of this poem, the divine beings, the phoenix and the divine tortoise, are teased and expelled by the quail, mayfly, and frog. Next, the work again expresses the feeling of not fitting in with the world. The protagonist yearns for close companionship and longs for an encounter with a true friend, then expresses his vision of associating with recluses in caves and on cliffs, becoming ever lighter and rising up in a religious way to transcendence.

The key difference between the two poems is the scene of seeking transcendence. In the second, it is embellished with mountains, cliffs, and caves, showcasing a typical change of the transcendent realm, which is said to be related with Daoism's development too. This is what Xi Kang's *youxian* poems contribute to the theme: not only traditional transcendents

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<sup>135</sup> 斥鷃擅蒿林。仰笑神鳳飛。坎井蟪蛙宅。神龜安所歸。... 慷慨思古人。夢想見容輝。願與知己遇。舒憤啟幽微。巖穴多隱逸。輕舉求吾師。晨登箕山巔。日夕不知饑。玄居養營魄。千載長自綏。  
Certain lines have been omitted because of relevance concern and been indicated with a "...".



and their realms are featured, but escape can also be attained through a life in the mountains (sometimes related to Daoist sacred geography) and a lifestyle of seclusion<sup>136</sup>—a yet other destination of transcendence. This indicates an emerging change in picturing roaming into transcendence regarding this theme (Li 2010a, 1-8; Li 2010b, 1-49).

But still, it echoes “Yuanyou” and other works in *Chuci*. As Hawkes pointed out, the private self-expression part is nearly always accompanied together with the imaginary, supernatural journey, till the imperial-court-taste creation such as *DaRen fu*’s excluded the former elements.<sup>137</sup>

In Yuanyou,

...

Grieving at the pressing constraints of the age’s vulgarity, I wish to rise up lightly, to roam far off.

For this body frail and lowly, there is no way to do so—How may I compel it to mount up, to be borne above? (Kroll 1996, 660)<sup>138</sup>

The writer first gives the reason and motivation for his desire to roam far away, that is, he feels grieved at the situation of life during his time. Behind this grief, there is also a mentality of being unwilling to conform to the mundane, a strong urge to be different and extraordinary. Following this, the text presents the resolution and ultimate result: the move

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<sup>136</sup> Yet regarding reclusion, there is also another type called “hiding within the court” (朝隱 Chao yin), which take seclusion as a state of mind and may face the accuse of reclusion belongs to the polemicist (Berkowitz 2000, 7). Here, we are just regarding the actualized reclusion other the nominal.

<sup>137</sup> Hawkes summarize two types of work in *Chuci*, namely Tristia and Itineraria. Tristia is more private personal expression of the poet, especially towards “a deluded prince, a cruel fate, a corrupt, malicious and uncomprehending society”, while Itineraria is often imaginary, mystic journey that is seldomly a real one (Hawkes 1967, 82).

<sup>138</sup> ...悲時俗之迫厄兮，願輕舉而遠遊。質菲薄而無因兮，焉托乘而上扶？ Certain lines have been omitted because of relevance concern and been indicated with a “...”.

toward roaming into the heavens by becoming light in body and rising up to meet the immortals.<sup>139</sup>

This worldly entanglement with seeking transcendence may have been less unnatural for people in ancient times than it would be today: they could take transcendence on as a “functional project” when facing problems in real life, bolstered by a strong and sincere belief in divine beings and the otherworld.

#### 4.4 conclusion

Both Xi Kang as a person and his poems on roaming into transcendence should be understood under a more holistic view, which includes mainly two aspects: an undeniable and substantial commitment to Daoist ideas and practices plus a temporal function in facing of the rather depressing reality of the time. This entanglement between the transcendence aspect and worldly aspect shows us a vivid example of an enduring-life pattern, which not only belongs to Xi Kang, but also an enduring life mode of traditional Chinese literatus, though with detail variants during time. Throughout his life, the Confucian officialdom and public concerns may not be really totally hidden,<sup>140</sup> though he withdrew the offer for public service. The sincere interest in seeking transcendence and appearing as a famous immortal-like hermit, otherwise, secured him a place for integrity: no matter worldly for avoiding the political intrigue, or mentally settled with the aspiration for seeking for other-worldless.

Firstly, is the significant Daoist aspect which should be revealed. Specifically, his *Yangsheng lun* showcased a comprehensive mastery of approach for longevity. As expressed in his *Yangsheng lun*, he emphasized the two key aspects of mind and body, spirit and form. That is, he insisted it was necessary to both nourish the spirit and physically preserve the

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<sup>139</sup> This motivation was also analyzed and summarized in (Kohn 1992, 83-84).

<sup>140</sup> Detail implies that Xi Kang may have relation to an anti-Sima revolt (Sun and Owen 2010,181; Owen and Swartz 2017, 252).

body. In his description of these features, moreover, he shows clear influence of the Daoist tradition, using both the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* as inspiring theoretical models while also integrating longevity techniques for bodily preservation.

Further, for his poem into transcendence, his intellectual heritage from classics, such as *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Shijing* (though not specially analyzed in this chapter), *Chuci*, Jian'an poetry, exerted a visible influence on his creation. Although often considered mainstays of the literary or philosophical tradition and under the classification scheme of secular narratives, the classics themselves contain extensive religious features and some are sacred in the Daoist tradition. They reflect shamanistic and official ritual practices, speak of divine entities, and offer guidance toward spiritual enlightenment. Particularly, Xi Kang's directive quoting and sophisticated elaboration of Lao-Zhuang in poetry, which not only distinguishes him from his predecessor, such as the Jian'an period poet (196-220) and the *yuefu* of Han, but also bestow him the pioneering position of a new poetic, the Xuanyan poetry's creating trend. This aspect, as we have discussed, can also be noted from the perspective of his interest in transcendence.

Besides, as we have discussed, with an empathetic and not-formulaic view on Xi Kang and his Youxian shi, it is noted that sincere religious beliefs and secular concern exist side by side. When religious notions, ideas and practices are followed with true sincerity, we cannot say there are no worldly considerations through adopting this immortal-like way of life, to deal with a dismal reality. Specifically in this chapter, there are two "function": one is to survive under a harsh political situation, the other is to escape annoying mundane people, at least in the heart-and-mind. These entanglements are also clearly reflected in his poems. Thus, it provides a more comprehensive way not only understand Xi Kang as a unique individual—his cultural accomplishments and his particular life choices in the society of his time, but also opens a view of the prevailing lifestyle pattern of intellectuals in this period of history, even longer existed in pre-modern China literati: their role as Confucian officials

never hindered their engagement in religious ideas and practices, just as their pursuit of transcendence may also link with temporal concern.

## 5. Yu Xin and Buxu Hymn

In Chapter Three, the Lingbao Buxu hymns and Buxu hymns in other scriptures, specifically applied in the Buxu rite of respective rituals, have been examined. As mentioned, despite these liturgical Buxu Hymns, the Buxu stanza is also addressed by figures such as Yu Xin 庾信, Yang Guang 楊廣 of Sui dynasty, Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 of Tang Dynasty, and Yuan Haowen 元好問 in Jin Dynasty. Among these works basically considered in literary tradition, the earlier and Six-Dynasties one is Yu Xin's (513-581) *Daoshi buxu ci shishou* (Ten stanzas of Daoist Priest Buxu 道士步虛詞十首). Simultaneously, the title of this suite poem indicates a conscious imitation of Daoist Buxu rite, making it a useful as a contrast to the liturgical Buxu hymn. Furthermore, for studies on Yu Xin's literary works, these ten stanzas are often categorized as Yu Xin's yuefu creations<sup>141</sup> and are less addressed in studies of his poetry (Zheng 2018, 255-56), hence, these ten stanzas and Yu Xin's case can be suitable objects for examination.

Yu Xin, an important figure of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, lived in the Six century. Together with Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583), their literary style is known as "Xu Yu Style" (Xuyu ti 徐庾體), characterized by its literary ornamentation and verbal artistry. This chapter delving into Yu Xin's imitating of Buxu hymns elaborates and argues the following

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<sup>141</sup> See *Yu zishan jizhu* (The Variorum of Yu zishan 庾子山集註) and *Yuefu shiji* (Yuefu collections 樂府詩集)

aspects: Firstly, it's reasonably possible that Yu Xin has certain knowledge of Daoism. This is evident in his Ten Stanzas' content and can possibly be supported by his generational aristocratic family background, considering the Shangqing, Lingbao tradition are primarily popular in Southern aristocracy, as will be discussed in section one of this chapter. However, such mastery of Daoist knowledge is not akin to that of a Daoist adept or advocate, because firstly, Yu Xin's allusions are mostly from *Daode jing*, *Liexian Zhuan*, *Shenxian Zhuan*, *Hanwudi neizhuan*, which are primarily considered as texts in "general circulation", rather than "text in Internal circulation". These external texts are barely referenced in liturgical hymns which is discussed in Chapter Three.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, Lu Xiuqing's establishment of Three Caverns as a formal Daoist canon in the Fifth century may also explain the barrier for person who didn't undergo initiation. Secondly, a close examination of the ten stanzas' plot sequence reveals a subtle negation of immortality, despite abundant allusions referring to transcendence lore. Furthermore, the verse plot sequences don't correspond to any rite, unlike liturgical Buxu hymn. Such findings, analyzed in Section Three and Four, can be further enhanced and explained by Yu Xin's courtier status and the tradition of admonishing emperor recognized by Confucian officialdom. We can easily find that, excepting for "matching poem at command" (fenghe 奉和), seldomly Yu Xin wrote specific treatise elaborating Daoism and Buddhism. This is quite different from Xi Kang's case. It is also this point led scholar like Wu Fusheng to find it difficult to discern Yu Xin's interest in Buddhism or Daoism. Right in this inquiry route, finally, it's no wonder Yu Xin showed a comprehensive reference to abundant textual traditions, which is an indication of his erudition. It is also no wonder highly refinement presented by his poems, as a standard that a literary courtier owns.

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<sup>142</sup> This term and division of general and Internal followed Schipper and Verellen edited Taoist canon.

### 5.1 The integration and mastery of Daoist knowledge in Buxu stanzas.

To start, reading the ten stanzas of imitating the Daoist Buxu, it is no doubt easy to find that Yu Xin has certain knowledge about Daoism. This is evident in his adept incorporation of Daoist references in his Buxu Lyrics, wherein he skillfully employs allusions such as the Myth of the creation of the Universe, the symbolism of fire refining the true text and the practice of concentrating the spirit and refining qi and so on. The most obvious example is the first stanza<sup>143</sup>:

In the Undifferentiated and All-embracing the teaching of Emptiness was established,  
渾成空教立

At the Primordial Commencement correct charts opened.

元始正圖開。

Of scarlet jade numinous writs descended,

赤玉靈文下

From the Vermilion Mound true breath arrived.

朱陵真氣來。

(YZSJZ 392; Trans. Kirková 2016, 338)

This piece of stanza will mostly remind us Lingbao lore, the school that these ten-stanza addressed in title. In *Daode jing*, there reads: “there are stuffs undifferentiated and all-embracing, born before heaven and earth (“有物渾成, 先天地生”). In *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing* (元始五老赤書玉篇真文天書經): “The Primordial commencement opened the charts, from the above starting the twelve numinous auspices, from the downside gave out twenty-four correspondences” (“元始開圖, 上啟十二靈瑞, 下發二十四應”) which definitely reminds us of the original reference about the second line “At

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<sup>143</sup> The order of stanza here mainly refer to Yu zishan jizhu(The Variorum of Yu zishan 庾子山集註), hereafter YZSJZ, since this is the recent most reliable of version of collection and annotation of Yu Xin. About the different stanza order of Yu Xin’s *Daoshi buxuci shishou*(Ten Stanzas of Daoist Buxu Hymns 道士步虛詞十首) in different collection, see ((Feezell 2022, 147).

the Primordial Commencement correct charts opened(“元始正圖開”). If we go back to the whole context of this sentence, we can find this paragraph which the sentence in is about how the Lingbao text come: *the Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian*, born out of empty naturalness, (it gives birth to the heaven an establish the earth, started and transformed the immortals and the brilliant”. This elucidation about how Lingbao school’s crucial text comes and the name Ling bao’s origin is followed by the creation procedure of Universe. The first three stages presented here easily recall *Daode jing*’s well-known cosmology: “The way give birth to one, one begets two, the two comes the three, the three create all things of Universe.” Thus, in this couplet we have full reason to say the second line of this stanza is rightly allude to *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian zhenwen tianshu jing*, because the first- and second-line’s connotation are closely connected and followed. Thus, following the same content flow, the scarlet jade numinous writs (赤玉靈文 *chiyu lingwen*) in the third line also probably referring to the text of Lingbao: *Yuanshi wulao chishu yupian*, other than the scarlet jade shoes that Anqi gave to the Emperor Prime of Qin recorded in *Shenxian zhuan* (Biographies of the Deities and Immortals 神仙傳). Above all, the opening of Yu Xin’s first Buxu stanzas are closely related to Lingbao lore, this is no doubt<sup>144</sup>. Further, in the opening couplet of most Yu Xin’s ten stanza, it is easy recognize Yu Xin’s mastery of Daoist Lingbao, Shangqing lore, the classical *Daode jing*’s allusion and about the techniques of self-cultivation such as meditation and breathing techniques.<sup>145</sup> However, what also counts significant part in Yu Xin’s these ten stanzas are the traditions and contents that exceed Daoist traditions, though in its title it put forward that it is an imitation of Buxu hymns.

Unlike the Buxu hymns in *Yujingshan buxujing* of Lingbao school and series of Buxu

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<sup>144</sup> More detailed discussion about first stanza and its relation to Daoist Lingbao school, see (Chan 2021, 9-11).

<sup>145</sup> Kirková also revealed possible Lingbao and Shangqing tradition in Yu Xin’s ten stanza (Kirková 2016, 340-47).

hymns which are for Buxu rites in Daoist scriptures, we will easily find Yu Xin in fact showed a mix-traditions not only from Daoism. In the meantime, unlike Lingbao Buxu hymn that closely corresponds to the Buxu rites' procedure, and all contents are surrounding the ritual, we do not find such correspondences in Yu Xin's Buxu imitation work. In fact, the allusions in his Buxu stanzas are from various classics from different tradition, we will further find, his frequent allusion to Emperor Martial of Han's records and anecdotes actually made this stanza with religious implication on the surface but more become a "secular" one, being contextualized the traditions that deploy transcendence allusion, plot, scene or knowledge to show some indirect admonishing to Emperor, which are in fact serve a court poetry's role more.

## 5.2 The comprehensive textual traditions exceeding Daoist lore.

Here, let's first take a look at his abundant allusions from different traditions.

Roughly speaking, readers will discern that, apart from Lingbao and Shangqing corpus, Yu Xin also frequently deploy immortality lore widely circulated among Southern aristocrat, such as *Shenxian zhuan*, *Liexian zhuan* (Biographies of Immortals 列仙傳). The *Hanwu di neizhuan* of course, which counts a significant proportion of in his ten stanzas allusions. Besides, the earlier and even ancient classics, such as *Huainanzi*, *Liezi*, *Chuci*, *Mutianzi zhuan*, *Shanhai jing* and so on, are also at Yu Xin's masterly command. In short, for Yu Xin, the Daoist lore, especially Lingbao tradition, are just the abundant allusion sources that he refers to. This contrasts to the focus on Daoist ritual, ideal, and serving its respective religious purpose, just like the canonical verses are. Take some examples to showcase the bold bricolage of textual tradition. The Fifth stanza:

In the Cavernous Numen venerate the supreme virtue,

洞靈尊上德

At Yushi meet the illustrious True Man.



虞石會明真。

[In] profound subtlety contemplates the “mysterious female”,

要妙思玄牝

[In] Void and Non-actuality nurture the spirit of the valley.

虛無養穀神。

On the Cinnabar Hill mount a halcyon phoenix,

丹丘乘翠鳳，

At the Mystic Gardens drive a motley unicorn.

玄圃禦斑麟。

Take away the pears, and entrust them to the garden keeper,

移梨付苑吏，

Plant almonds, and give them to the mountain people.

種杏乞山人。

From this time on, in which generation shall we meet?

自此逢何世

From today—how many times will spring return?

從今復幾春。

The sea contains less than three feet of water,

海無三尺水，

The mountain has become a few inches of dust.

山成數寸塵

(YZSJZ, 396; Trans.Kirková 2016, 340)

This fifth stanza from Yu Xin can be said to be a typical example indicate Yu Xin’s showmanship of mastery of the main classics of his time. Overall, we may find the allusions from *Daode jing*, *Liexian zhuan*, *Chuci*, *Hanwudi neizhuan* and *Shenxian zhuan*, covering a wide range of texts. Specifically, just like several other pieces of these ten stanzas, the opening of this fifth one is again an allusion to *Daode jing*. In Section 38 it reads: “The highest life force does not cling to vitality, for this reason it is vital (上德不德，是以有

德)<sup>146</sup>; “Then even if you are wise yet you will go greatly astray. This is called ‘the Key to the Mystery’” (“雖智大迷，是謂要妙”).<sup>147</sup> “The gully’s spirit does not die; She is called ‘the mysterious cleft’. The gate to the mysterious cleft, is called ‘the root of heaven and earth’” (穀神不死，是謂玄牝。玄牝之門。是謂天地根”).<sup>148</sup> Seeing from these original texts’ meaning, we can roughly know, the opening two couplets are about the Daoist appreciative way<sup>149</sup>, the second couplet is more about specific transcendent technique, for example, contemplating Xuanpin [“the Mysterious Female”] and nourishing spirit of Valley. The followed the scene of charioting the phoenix and motley unicorn in the typical transcendent realm Mystic Garden (Xuanpu 玄圃) and the obvious ascending destination Cinnabar Hill in the ancient time. The term Cinnabar Hill (danqiu 丹丘) recalls the sentence in “On far Roaming” in *Chuci*: Along with the transcendent to the Cinnabar Hill and stay in the old land of no death (仍羽人於丹丘，留不死之舊鄉). Wang Yi’s annotation for the Cinnabar Hill reads: it is a place remaining constant bright no matter day and night. In short, this scenery of riding divine beast (halcyon phoenix and motley unicorn) in the transcendent realm are the thing happen after transcending, and this depicting of riding divine beast, especially phoenix, is typical symbol of becoming a transcendent that can trace back to *Chuci*’s time. In the next couplet, Yu Xin again used allusion about Jie Xiang and Dong Feng in his frequently referred book *Shenxian zhuan*, which are all stories about approaching those figures with supernatural power. The final two couplets are about (maybe lament signs) about time. It is about the

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<sup>146</sup> Trans. (Ryden 2008, 81).

<sup>147</sup> Section 27 ; Trans. (Ryden 2008, 57)

<sup>148</sup> Trans. (Ryden 2008, 15).

<sup>149</sup> About the second line of first couplet, Feezeel holds that it has relation to Emperor Martial of Han’s visiting of Mount Jiuyi and the meeting between he and the spirit of Mount Jiuyi (Feezeel 2022, 161). Here I have reservation about this opinion because there is no further directly refer to this is anecdotes about Emperor Martial of Han. But to our whole expounding here it is not a problem about what the specific protagonists are in the second line, we can still catch that this line is referring to meet the transcendent, perfected or immortals.

allusion of Wang Fangping's calling of Magu 麻姑 in *Shenxian zhuan*, in which when Magu came, the Eastern Sea has become the mulberry field for three times. It seems to indicate that the mortal people's seeking and approaching transcendent is futile effort. Even the transcendent will come, it can be such a long time as for human whose life span is so limited. Thus, seeking for transcendence in such a limited body and time can be not wise and will finally be in vain. From all these abundant allusions we can see Yu Xin's ability to "weave" such complicated and different textual traditions in a relative clear smooth meaning flow. The informed reader who knows these allusions will definitely catch his subtle intended meaning, as well as, no doubt, impressed by his broad knowledge.

### 5.3 Admonishing the emperor: a more Confucian standing ground and role

Above examples present a sample of Yu Xin's bricolage of various textual traditions, which indicate that for Yu Xin's version of Buxu hymn, it is not solely corresponding to the Lingbao Buxu rite and only center on related content. At the same time, under these bricolages of allusions which form a meaning flow, we can also detect what we can call "admonishing emperor" element, though subtle and rhiphrastic, which are very familiar to Confucian officials. From the example analyzed above, we can already detect part of Yu Xin's "attitude" toward seeking transcendence, when the finite seeks to be infinite, its outcome can come out in vain. But what finally concentratedly showcased the indirect admonishing to Emperor, is his allusion to Emperor Martial of Han's records in *Hanwudi neizhuan* and other anecdotes that are related to them. Here we will firstly have an investigation about the concrete writing when he alludes to *Hanwudi neizhuan*.

The direct mention of Martial Emperor of the Han appears in the six stanza and the ninth one, but in fact, in the latter half of the ten stanzas the allusion about his seeking for

transcendence becomes more intensive, some of them are just indirect. To begin, in the Sixth stanza:

The Eastern Brilliance [chariots] a Nine Mushroom Canopy [carriage];

東明九芝蓋

The Northern Illumination[rides] Five Cloud chariot.

北燭五雲車。

Soaring off into Inverted Luminescence,

飄飄入倒景

Emerging and disappearing, ascending to the hazy auroras

出沒上烟霞

Spring founts descend Mount Yuliu.

春泉下玉壺，

Azure birds ascend Mount Jinhua.

青鳥上金華。

The Emperor Martial of Han looked upon peach pits;

漢帝看桃核，

The Marquis of Qi inquired about jujube blossoms.

齊侯問棗花。

[The Lady of] Upper Prime ought to have bestowed wine,

上元應送酒，

[And] come to Cai Jing's home.

來向蔡經家。

(YZSJZ, 397)

In the beginning, the first two couplets indicate the transcendence scene. Daoist audiences will know the Eastern Brightness (Dong'ming 東明) are the title of Xia Qi (夏啟) in *Zhen'gao*, the Northern Illumination (transcendent) in *Hanwudi neizhuan* is the one who coupled Mother of the Mysterious Capital. Since in *Hanwudi neizhuan* the Cloud chariot are the vehicle the Queen Mother ride when to Meet Emperor Martial of Han, thus considering

the parallelism of Yu Xin, the Nine mushroom is easy found to be the pattern of canopy, other than being understood as a verb-object structure as in the annotation of *Yuzishan jizhu* suggest (YZSJZ, 397). Furthermore, considering the second couplet(line3-4) are apparently about roaming scenery, such as “soaring off” and “emerging and disappearing”, thus, it is more reasonable that the last couplet is about riding divine chariot ascending. Next, after the ascending movement, the Spring founts and the Azure birds can reasonably be the depiction of transcendence scene, which happened after the ascending. Then comes the allusions that are about the interested rulers’ interactions with the transcendent. Here, the story of Han Martial Emperor and Duke of Jing(景公)<sup>150</sup> indicates the ignorance of them about the divine plant they finally successfully approached. Here we seem to touch the same subtle implication in Stanza five that, even having successfully approached the transcendent, it is Magu specifically in stanza five, because of the limitation (no matter is the life span or the knowledge’s limitation), the story goes after success pursuing of transcendence seems still not ideal. Here we seem to have touched some subtle meaning revealed by the arrangement of Yu Xin’s citation of two allusions in different classics. Then the conjunction of two allusions in the last two lines further confirms this hint. The Lady of High Prime’s sending of wine happened in the narrative of *Hanwudi neizhuan*, but in last line said the lady should go to Cai Jing’s home, other than the Emperor, actually negate all the previous depicting of the mysterious and beautiful transcending scenery, through which we finally catch the “admonishing” purpose, though it is subtle and indirect.

Here what we may add is, if we take the plot in *Hanwudi neizhuan* into account, more about Yu Xin’s verbal artistry and language art skill can be discerned. The plot in *Hanwudi neizhuan* is that, in the beginning, though the Emperor has already been estimated as not

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<sup>150</sup> More detail about Duke Jing’s enquiry about the large jujubes in Eastern Sea, see (YZSJZ, 398). More discussion about this record, see (Feezeel 2022, 166-68).

talented and suitable in seeking transcendence, the Lady of High Prime and the Queen Mother of West still bestowed the Emperor the scriptures and charts. However, he finally returned to his unscrupulous actions, discarding the advice from Queen Mother of the West and the Lady of High Prime, which arouse the displeasure of him from the Queen Mother of the West, who burned the house which store these divine texts. That is to say, the allusion about Han Martial Emperor has originally been a negative image for whom there are plenty reason for his failure in seeking transcendence, thus, for the reader who know *Hanwudi neizhuan*, it maybe natural that the following line tells the Lady of the High Prime should go to Cai Jing's home instead.

This way, the sense of negating transcendence seeking has subtly weakened, though also existed. it may not become a direct point to the "Emperor" or ruler's action, because it can be understood as a natural repeating of *Hanwudi neizhuan* and *Yanzi Chunqiu*. The potential reader, which probably the royal member or even the Imperial ruler, may not feel strong resistance or displeasure.<sup>151</sup> Further, Yu Xin's negative attitude toward the Martial Emperor of Han, is accompanied by another transcendent tale Cai Jing, who is considered as talented in transcendence. Though there is a failure from previous Dynasty's Emperor, here is figure who got positive feedback and patience from the transcendent. It can contain varied possibilities regarding whom the reader will substitute into. Hence, the admonishing negation sense has been reduced, which gives the potential reader more comfortable psychological space to follow the poetry's meaning.

The Ninth stanza's criticism toward the Martial Emperor of Han become more apparent, in this stanza, it does not just imply that the Emperor's ignorance when facing the divine plant from the Queen Mother of the West, but gives out a direct negative comment

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<sup>151</sup> This closely related to Yu Xin's courtier status which actually have influential impact on Yu Xin's poetry writing, more discussion about this aspect will be in the following.

called “arrogant”, finally followed the outcome that the Sacred Mountain Penglai sink into the seafloor and cannot be sought anymore.<sup>152</sup> In fact, in seventh and eighth piece of writing, though not directly mentioned the Emperor, they are in fact still related to the plot in *Hanwudi neizhuan*, for example, the last couplet of the seventh and eight stanza.<sup>153</sup> The last couplet of the seventh stanza’s broader context is about the mistaken trust in the Emperor Martial of Han, while the last two lines of the eighth one is the leaving scene about the Queen Mother of the West. Though here we cannot totally confirm of these are hints about the Emperor’s failure in connecting transcendent, it is probably that the deployment of allusion to Emperor Martial of Han’s complex here all in the same meaning flow and rhetorical skill, just as analyzed above on the sixth stanza.

All these remind us about the tradition that started from Sima Xiangru, in which the sorrowful shamanic fly and transcendent encounter transformed into a way to appeal to the Ruler while also with subtle admonishing towards the Emperor’s doings in pursuing immortality, other than showing personal private feeling which Hawkes categorize it as “tristia” element. This is actually like a court poet does.<sup>154</sup>

Combing Sima Xiangru’s case, the allusion to Emperor Martial of Han’s enthusiastic chasing for immortality and its final failure, do obtain certain subtle meaning which shows Yu Xin’s tendency, though not that obvious. On the surface, Yu Xin’s wide allusion to Daoist Lingbao school, Shangqing school, depicting of the magnificent heavenly landscape, the mastery of citation of tales that recorded in *Shenxian zhuan*, *liexianzhuan*, may indeed please reader who have interest and mastery of Daoist lore for seeking transcendence. But if we go

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<sup>152</sup> 漢武多驕慢，淮南不小心。蓬萊入海底，何處可追尋。(YZSJZ, 400)

<sup>153</sup> (YZSJZ 398, 399)

<sup>154</sup> About Hawkes’s categorization of “Tristia” and “Itineraria”, as well as the analysis of Sima Xiangru’s adoption of transcendence theme as court writing, see (Hawkes 1967, 82; 87-89). Feezeel also mentioned that Yang Xiong identified Sima Xiangru’s fu 賦 illustrating heavenly flying as “suasion” 諷, which is defined as indirect critique that can trace the tradition to *Shijing*. (Feezeel 2022, 175).

into the writing follow of the allusions indirectly imply, we will find all these transcendence pursuing stories are finally in vain, which naturally form the sense of gently admonishing the potential reader of Yu Xin's imitation of Buxu hymns. This gentle admonishing and subtle critique meaning even not revealed through the denial of transcendent's existence, rather, it can be showcased in the mortal people's limitation of life span to meet a transcendent he calls (5<sup>th</sup> stanza), from the kernels from the Queen Mother of West's peach which cannot be grown by the Emperor, indicating the Emperor as the mortal, his lack of knowledge of such divine plant (Stanza six), from the direct condemnation of the Han Emperor.

This attitude is more or less supported by his Youxian poem, which is a matching one to Prince Zhao, namely *Fenghe zhaowang youxian* (Respectfully matching Prince Zhao's Poem of Roming into transcendence 奉和趙王遊仙).

*Fenghe zhaowang youxian*(Respectfully matching Prince Zhao's Poem of Roming into transcendence 奉和趙王遊仙).

Hidden in the mountain also gathering herbs,

藏山還采藥，

To have the Way, one should follow a master.

有道得從師。

[The story of] Chen Anshi in Jingzhao,

京兆陳安世，

[The tale of] Li Yiqi of Chengdu

成都李意期。

[From] the Jade Capital, the *Crane Physiognomy [Scripture]* is transmitted,

玉京傳相鶴，

The Grand Monad transmits the *Flying Tortoise [Treatise]*.

太乙授飛龜。

White stones as fragrant as fresh taro,



白石香新芋，  
Green mud, delicious, like cooked mushrooms,  
青泥美熟芝。  
Mountain spirits confront the radiant mirror,  
山精逢照鏡，  
The wood gatherer came across a game of chess.  
樵客值圍碁。  
Stone patterns are like patches of brocade,  
石紋如碎錦，  
Creeper sprouts resemble silk in disarray.  
藤苗似亂絲。  
Where is [Mount] Penglai?  
蓬萊在何處，  
The Emperor [Martial] of Han wished to sacrifice afar.  
漢後欲遙祠。  
(YZSJZ, 217; Tran. From Kirková 2016, 325-26 with adaptation)

An intriguing textual pattern can be observed in the following passage. Initially, it abundantly employs themes and allusions related to immortality, yet the concluding couplet reverses the transcendental notions presented earlier. The concept of seeking herbs and finding solace in the mountains while following a master figure, possibly representing a transcendent being, is a recurring motif in poems related to the pursuit of transcendence. This thematic parallel can also be observed in Xi Kang's poetry on immortality. Moving on to the subsequent couplet, Yu Xin adeptly continues to employ allusions from *Shenxianzhuan*, further evoking the imagery associated with transcendent existence. However, he intentionally introduces seeming “mistakes” to convey the elusive nature of the search for immortality. Specifically, he gently raises the question of the whereabouts of Mount Penglai, thereby asserting his loyalty to his official position and the Confucian ideals he upholds,

admonishing the Emperor to leave out attention to immortality, though subtly and gently.

#### 5.4 Courtier status and secular use of immortality materials

From the above expounding, we can draw a cautious conclusion. That is, for Yu Xin, though he did have significant mastery of Daoist lore to the extent that he can make precise and skillful allusions to related content, his writing purpose and use of these allusions and knowledge probably is quite secular. In addition to the notable characteristics of mixed textual tradition and the underlying, subtle and indirect admonition to the Emperor that can be inferred from the nuanced meaning flow within his abundant allusions, there are also several other factors that warrant further examination.

Careful reader may notice, in Yu Xin's two volumes of poetries and one volume of Yuefu, totally around 180 pieces of works, except *Daoshi buxuci shishou*, the other pieces of poems which intensively deploy immortality allusions are mostly of two types:

(a). materials at the Imperial command or matching others' poem, for example, *Fenghe zhaowang youxianshi* (Respectfully match Prince Zhao's youxian poems 奉和趙王遊仙詩), *Meng cijiu shi* (蒙賜酒詩 Poem of Indebted for Granting Wine), *Fengda cijiu* (奉答賜酒 Respectfully Replying for Granting Wine); *Zhi Daode jingmiao yingzhao* (至老子廟應詔 At Imperial Edict [Writing Poem] When Reaching Daode jing's Temple); or

(b). Compositions for specific occasions, such as *Ru daoshi guan shi* (Poem [Composed] When Entering the Daoist Temple 入道士館詩), *Xun zhouchushi hongrang shi* (尋周處士弘讓詩 The seeking Recluse Zhou Poem), *Zeng zhouchushi* (贈周處士 To Recluse Zhou). Totally no more than ten pieces of work.

In the meantime, at least from current collection we have to explore Yu Xin's works, Yu Xin didn't write any treatise on Daoism, nor Buddhism, which makes obvious difference

with Xi Kang's case. For Xi Kang, he not only wrote special treatise to address nourishing life<sup>155</sup>, but also directly express his endorsement of Daoism<sup>156</sup>. In his poetries, scholars will all agree that the topic of transcendence accounts for an important part of his poetry.<sup>157</sup>

Under such circumstances, no wonder that Wu concluded that unlike other court poet such as Xie lingyun, Xiao Yan, and others, Yu Xin is not characterized for his devotion to Buddhism and Daoism (Wu 2008, 179).

From all the clues listed above, we may gradually notice the importance of his courtier role in his verses addressing Daoism or even Buddhism. It probably not the religious enthusiasm that drove him to write *Daoshi buxuci shishou*, and other immortal theme verses as mentioned above, it can, and probably be, because of his courtier role to write at command, or to subtly admonish the Emperor's interest in immortality while not to annoy them, which reflect the endeavor to fulfill the traditional Confucian role. All these reflect the crucial point for us to understand Yu Xin's transcendence diction. Here we may add a little more about Yu Xin's personal experiences.

From the record of Yu Xin's biography, no matter Yu Xin he himself, and his family, all have close relationship with the imperial court. This can be discerned from many narratives about his family and his own Biography, it also indicated in the Prince Teng's Preface of his collection, as well as his poetry corresponds to royal figures, such as Prince Zhao 趙王. These signs showcase that, even after his forties, he serves another court, he still

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<sup>155</sup> *Yangsheng lun* (養生論 Treatise on Nourishing life).

<sup>156</sup> In *Yushanjiyuan juejiaoshu* (A letter of severance with Mountain Juyuan 與山巨源絕交書) it reads: [I] also heard from the lifting words from Daoist, the technique of ershu make people long living, [My intent] is rather believing in this; to trip to mountain and marsh and view the birds and fishes, my heart is with much pleasure with it (又聞道士遺言，餌朮黃精，令人久壽，意甚信之；遊山澤，觀鳥魚，心甚樂之).

<sup>157</sup> Details see last Chapter on Xi Kang.

keeps a close and even intimate relationship with the ruler from Northern Zhou.<sup>158</sup>

In such an officialdom family, it is recorded that, for his house, in seven generations there are people who passed the imperial examination of the county level, namely became a *Xiucai* 秀才, in five generations there are people got their collections (cf YZSJZ 1980, 51). Yu Xin himself is well educated too; he holds the position of study courtier of the prince.

From all of these, we can reasonably imagine such experience as courtier of ruler or royal member, which starts from his early age and last most of his life, can be a crucial factor to explain why certain part of his poetries are for “matching” or corresponding to the Rulers, for example: *Fenghe zhaowang youxianshi, Xingtu fude sigeng yingzhao* (Given The Topic Of Four Watches In Traveling at The Imperial Command 行途賦得四更應詔). This is indicated in Yu Xin’s work collection. If we look into his poetry volume, it is not hard to find certain property of his poetry are this type of corresponding work, which are in the name of “respectfully match” (*fenghe* 奉和), “At imperial command” (*yingzhao* 應詔), “Accompany charioting” (*peijia* 陪駕), “Respectfully reward” (*fengbao* 奉報) and so on.

#### 5.5 Work’s refinement and Yu Xin’s courtier status

It may also because of his courtier identity as the ruler or the royal member, the long tradition of emphasizing well-education of his House, his writings, no matter it is at imperial command or not, are often quite erudite (i.e., with abundant allusions to different classics), refined and with high verbal literacy. Just first take the ninth stanza to demonstrate:

In the Mirror of the Earth the steps lead far,

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<sup>158</sup> In *Tengwang you yuanxu* (The Original Preface of Prince You 滕王道原序) (cf YZSJZ, 65), it describes Yu Xin as “屢聘上國，特為太祖所知，江陵名士，惟信而已。綢繆禮遇，造次推恩”. Wu Fusheng’s described as: The prince affectionately recalled Yu Xin’s sponsorship by the Zhou emperors and his own close connection with him. (Wu 2008, 176).

地境階基遠，

In the window of heaven the reflected traces are deep.

天窗影跡深。

Cyan jade forms paired trees,

碧玉成雙樹，

Hollow azurite makes a whole forest.

空青為一林。

Among crane nests one may smelt stones,

鵠巢堪煉石，

Among beehives one may boil gold.

蜂房得煮金。

Emperor Wu of Han was too arrogant,

漢武多驕慢，

The King of Huainan was not careful.

淮南不小心。

The King of Huainan was not careful.

蓬萊入海底

At what place should one look for it?

何處可追尋

(YZSJZ, 400; Trans. Kirková 2016, 345)

It's easy to find orderly and strict parallelism in the example above, which shows Yu Xin's proficiency in poetry art form. For example, in the first couplet, the "Mirror of earth" corresponds to the "window of heaven", the "steps" to "traces", the adjective "far" to "deep". Similarly, in the second couplet:

Cyan jade forms paired trees,

碧玉成雙樹，

Hollow azurite makes a [one] whole forest.

空青為一林。

Adjective to adjective, noun to noun, verb to verb. We may find special ingenuity in the correspondence of paired trees and [one] whole forest, the number though different, but still stick to strict parallelism. Meanwhile, cyan jade and hollow azurite showcase Yu Xin's excellence in colorful vision depiction. In fact, in all his creation, he not only resorted to make colorful vision, but skillfully making use of auditory and olfactory wording and diction, to create the sensuous poetry image. This do remind us about those elaborating of heavenly scenery with pictorial features of Shangqing and Lingbao school. This kind of artistry in form is not an isolated example, another example within the ten stanzas, for instance, the fifth, sixth one, as has quoted above. And also, the second one:

The nameless is the beginning of the myriad things;

無名萬物始，

The Way of Being is the start of the hundred spirits.

有道百靈初。

In silence unsurpassed, mount the cinnabar qi.

寂絕乘丹氣，

In mystic brightness, ascend to the Jade Void.

玄明上玉虛。

(YZSJZ,393; Trans. Fezell 2022, 177)

Just take a piece that does not belong to transcendence theme. For instance, one of *Yong Huapingfeng Shi Er'shisi Shou* (The Twenty-Four Poetries Singing for Screen Drawing 詠畫屏風詩二十四首):

The high building rises from thousand,

高閣千尋起，

The promenade connects four pillars,

長廊四柱連。

The singing sound rises to the round moon.

歌聲上扇月，

The dance shadow enters into string of zither.

舞影入琴弦。

The stream is just outside the window,

澗水纔窗外，

Mountain flowers are right in sight.

山花即眼前。

Only may joy be long,

但願長歡樂，

A hundred years from now on.

從今盡百年。

(YZSJZ, 354)

This is a typical poetry of singing for the objects, which continues the feature of neat and orderly parallelism within the couplet. In the meantime, from the second line one, the last character of the line is the rhymed point, until the last sentence.

Overall, from what we analyzed above, we can know why Yu Xin's work recognized as the Xu Yu style 徐庾體, which is characterized as “not only pretty talented, works also gorgeous and flamboyant” (Jiyou shengcai, wenbing qiyan 既有盛才，文并綺艷) (SK0263, 0756b). And this feature is closely related to their role in court and their intimate relationship with the rulers.

### Conclusion of the Case Studies

After analyzing the content above, it can be concluded that the Daoist tradition is often one of the textual traditions followed by literati creations. However, there are specific differences between individuals, such as Xi Kang and Yu Xin. Xi Kang shows a greater interest in Daoism and the transcendence world, although there are still signs of worldly

concern in his dominant immortality theme. On the other hand, Yu Xin, despite having extensive knowledge of Daoist classics and practices, often employs Daoist diction in response to the Imperial command or to fulfill his duties as a courtier.

Although literati often possess a certain mastery and understanding of Daoist knowledge, as well as affinity with, and inspiration from Daoism, this does not necessarily make them Daoists. However, we cannot adopt a strictly secular perspective based on our modern society neither. For a certain number of literati, the metaphysical concepts and practices of Daoism hold more than just “imaginary” value to enrich their poetry. Daoist cosmology, ideas, techniques, and practices were integrated into the ideological world of the literati, alongside other knowledge and traditions of their time. As Ge Zhaoguang suggests, when analyzing pre-modern figures, it is important to understand their worldview and not impose our modern education, ideas, and perceptions of the world onto them<sup>159</sup>. Concepts such as yin-yang and the five phases, which may be disregarded today, were natural components of daily life, knowledge systems, and even cosmogony during that time (Ge 1998, 107). This aligns with Taylor's emphasis on the awareness that we live in a modern, secular age, in a disenchanted universe, whereas the pre-modern age was universally enchanted.

## CONCLUSION

Based on all the above analysis, this Dissertation argues that with a proper conceptual framework and holistic approach that transcends the modern divisionary scope and aligns with



traditional society knowledge status, the verses in Daoist sacred texts, at least in Six Dynasties as specifically discussed in this Dissertation, contain highly verbal artistry and language skills, demonstrating rich “literary” devices with aesthetic value. This arouses our reflection on the modern definition of “literary” and its inappropriateness when applied to the texts in traditional Chinese society. It suggests that, with a fresh lens that goes beyond modern disciplinary division, “Literature” can be found in “Religious” text, while the religious elements are frequently displayed in the “Literature” and deeply impact certain poetic theme and style. For the former, the “poetic power” and “authentic value” become prominent and outstanding rightly by taking into “religious” purpose, such as ritual performance and visualization exercise, For the latter, considering transcendence lore, motif, plot and style of certain verses of “literati” become transparent and comprehensive.

In Part one, one side of the coin, we explore the highly "literary" verses found in Daoist sacred texts, claiming that highly “literary” verses can be found in Daoist sacred texts, which are frequently neglected in contemporary traditional Literature history for certain reasons as presented. This part covers verses from three main Daoist schools in Six Dynasties, implying the underlying framework when discussing “Daoist verse”. That is, the “Daoist verse” is closely responding to the historical development of Daoism, a point that early advocates of Daoist verse would agree with (Li 2010, 80). Furthermore, the comprehensive utilization of verse forms, such as tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, heptasyllabic, and the deployment of narrative verse, are presented. These forms correspond to the trends in verse evolution as outlined in today's mainstream literature history.

Specifically, *Zhen'gao* is notable for its wealth of pentasyllabic verse. This section sheds light on verses related to Shangqing's main practices, such as merging effulgence and ingesting radiance beyond *Zhen'gao* verse on roaming and feast that have been fully discussed.

With equal presentation of Shangqing's central proposition and exercise and through close reading, which belongs to literary analysis, this part reveals the imagery, plot and style, these verses' poetic power and unique style become apparent. Instead of being mere religious preaching and cliché, these creations exhibit verbal artistry and language skill, serving their practice purpose. This challenges the stereotypical impression from Western pure literature concept, which ignore and downlook the literary value of verses serving a practical purpose. Similarly, Tetrasyllabic verse, which is the main form of the *Shijing*, still played a role during this period, fully serving the atmosphere of Daoist invocation and incantation. The *Huangtingjing*, an early but central text, shows a colloquial rather than a written feature, deploying the heptasyllabic form throughout the text, indicating elements of narrative verse while maintaining a pictorial feature. Finally, we consider the narrative verse about Laozi, which Seidel refers to as the hagiography of Laozi (Seidel 1970, 235; cf. Dudink 2000, 55). Although these texts cannot be considered ornate, their value becomes apparent when considering that Chinese literary tradition is more renowned for its highly developed lyrical tradition rather than narratives.

We further explore the liturgical stanzas in ritual, the religious connotation of the ten stanzas is first fully revealed concerning Buxu rites. After examining the differentiation of “circumambulation” and “pacing the guideline,” the analysis leads to the final inference that the steps in the liturgical hymns in *Yujingshan buxu jing* refer to “circumambulation,” which is without a specific pacing pattern but a rough prompt of the adept's action of circumambulate. The Ten Stanzas' content, though not precisely responding to each procedure of the early Lingbao Buxu rite, corresponds to the process of this ritual. Hence, the content sequence and framework of the ten stanzas are closely centered on this “circumambulation,” a loosely circling step intoned when paying homage to the scripture or the censer in the middle, with responding stanza content. Furthermore, the content and wording of these hymns' present

abundant adoption and adaptation of Buddhism and Shangqing Daoism. Firstly, the examination retraces the prominent Buddhist elements in the ten liturgical hymns to contextualize their significant components while with a more delicate examination of how Buddhist element's function and to what sphere they are weaving in the whole content sequence. Along with the frequently discernable Buddhist vocabulary in the stanza, the Buddhist term appears to become an isolated appearance, a descriptive element in broader and more profound Daoist content. In contrast, as another prominent school appeared a little earlier than the Lingbao tradition, Shangqing Daoism's heritage appears more intricate and profound in the stanzas. In certain pieces of Lingbao Buxu hymn, the Daoist idea and its immortality ideal and practice play the central and fundamental role of the content. Finally, and noteworthy, the stanzas' splendor and magnificence lie in their ritual imitation, depiction, and reaction of heavenly mode, the ritual actions which the liturgical hymns applied and associated with. These ritual actions symbolize the regeneration of power and efficacy of the sacred event. The sacred event is usually described and depicted in Daoist mythology, symbolically reacting to these holy occasions. The ritual and its hymns gain divine and magnificent meaning. In summary, combined with these religious connotations, the setting of stanza number (i.e., Ten) and its verbal vocabulary and illustrative imagery become pointed. Though these liturgical hymns do not seek creation and novelty but emphasize heritage throughout the years, the literary device of Lingbao Buxu hymns presents its sophistication, especially considering its religious application.

In the second part, we address the enduring topic of Daoist influence on the creations of "literati" through the cases of Xi Kang and Yu Xin. These two representative poets, who lived roughly in the third and sixth centuries respectively, are remarkable for their creation of poems on roaming into transcendence and Buxu Hymns.

It firstly claims that the verse content can only be correctly and fully comprehended within broader cultural context, especially Daoism, or the knowledge existed and circulated before the formal establishment of Daoism as we recognize it today<sup>160</sup>. The Daoist esoteric knowledge is essential here in two senses. Firstly, certain vocabulary, imagery and even structure and plot can only be precisely understood with Daoist knowledge. Secondly, this precise comprehension takes into account Daoist development history and the private transmission of Daoist knowledge, helping us better measure the extent to which the author knows and employs Daoist elements.<sup>161</sup> Specifically, when we measure what kind of and to what extent the authors master Daoist knowledge, the establishment of initiation and ordination serves as the underlying background. For example, the first organized formal canon built by Lu Xiuqing in the fifth century provides context for examining Yu Xin's Buxu stanzas.

Yu Xin, who is chosen as representative of literati who claimed a conscious imitation Buxu hymns, factors suggest that the Ten Stanzas' nature can actually be less religious. That is, firstly, signs in these ten stanzas do indicate Yu Xin had some Daoist esoteric knowledge such as from the Lingbao and Shangqing traditions. For certain piece of the works, for example, the first piece, shows an extent of "coherence of religious idea"<sup>162</sup>. However, these elements can be fragmentary, with other abundant allusions from various texts like *Daodejing*, *Liexian zhuan*, *Shenxian zhuan*, *Hanwudi neizhuan* belonging to "general circulation" of (Daoist text).

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<sup>160</sup> This in fact relates to "the historical self-definition of the Taoist tradition within China's religious and intellectual landscapes (Verellen 2004, xiv). Certain scholars have realized the controversy of definition of Daoism, what belongs to "Daoist" (Schipper 2004, 5; Bokenkamp 1986, 138; Wen 2006, 120-27). Facing this controversy, Bokenkamp follows Michel Strickmann's idea, which suggest restricting "Daoist" to the Celestial Master and their lineal descendants (Bokenkamp 1986, 138) and take second to fifth century as the formative period of Daoism (Bokenkamp 1997, xiii). However, the voices that trace "Daoism" to the antiquity period, say, Warring State (Li 2017, 124-29), or later, the Yellow Emperor-Laozi thought (Huanglao sixiang 黄老思想), have never stopped.

<sup>161</sup> Just as Li Jing figures out, for some Tang poets such as Cao Tang 曹唐, in his poem there actually existed misuse of allusion in *Zhen'gao*, indicating that though Cao Tang ever was a Daoist, it may not be easy for him to access *Zhen'gao*, which is in the highest ranking of Three Caverns and Four Supplements (sanding sifu 三洞四辅) canonical system. This indicates how the established canonical system may affect literati's absorption of Daoist esoteric knowledge (Li 2017, 243-44).

<sup>162</sup> Wording from (Kirková 2016, 340).

This can possibly be supported by considering the officially established canonical Daoist inventory structure, the Three Caverns, presented by Lu Xiujing in first half of Fifth century. This time frame is earlier than Yu Xin's life and could have been a barrier for Yu Xin's large-scale reference, as no signs show Yu Xin's initiation during his lifespan. Additionally, through close reading of these Ten Stanzas, not a few works of this imitation work of Daoist Buxu Hymns, the underlying rationale actually deliver a subtle negation of transcendence pursuit. Their content does not correspond to liturgical pace, neither, which is the significant feature of hymns in Buxu rite. In contrast, considering Xi Kang's Youxian poems' writing time and his own expounding, his knowledge inventory is indicating signs of Han fangshi Daoism and knowledge tracing back to *Chuci* period.

These conclusions highlight the importance of "precision understanding," where conventional Literary analysis is situated within the context of Daoist initiation and ordination systems, which often belongs to the horizon of religious study. This approach offers a more accurate understanding of certain literati's works that seem apparently influenced by Daoism.

Aside from this, instead of one-way-street influence, either from Daoist tradition to "secular" poets or the broader absorption of Daoism's absorption from wider cultural context (i.e. ancient cosmology, fangshi techniques and so on)—both "Daoism" or literati's creations share a similar cultural root or inventory inherited from previous dynasties, which are not divided as modern disciplines. They also correspond to the same "literary" trends, such as tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, or heptasyllabic forms of that time. It is also true when considering the internal or external inventory of Daoism. For example, *Laozi*, who are spiritual origins of Daoism, also widely impacted literati's poetry<sup>163</sup>, as seen in the works of Xi Kang and Yu Xin.

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<sup>163</sup> After the strict division of Daoist esoteric texts and texts in general publication came into being, *Daode jing* is still in the overlap of the two categories, which are primarily mutually exclusive (Schipper and Verellen 2004, 5).

Besides, as Seidel concluded from Kandel, Robinet, Kaltenmark and Yamada's studies: authors of early section of *Taiping jing* and the Late Han founders of Daoist groups are from fangshi milieu. Many doctrines and practice of Shangqing Daoism also derive from these masters of techniques (Seidel 1989, 276). The ecstatic fly of Shangqing school also find its early origin in shamanic fly presented in *Chuci*. For Xi Kang, his "Treatise on nourishing life"<sup>164</sup> directly quotes "*Shennong bencaojing*", which has intimate links with the fangshi tradition in the Han dynasty. Besides, His poems on roaming into transcendence (youxian shi) are marked by a bold and comprehensive adaptation of previous poetic traditions, including *Chuci*, poems of the Jian'an period, and the discourse of Mystery Learning. His poems are unique for their poetic use and direct elaboration of Lao-Zhuang thought. These poems adopt the widely-used traditional tetrasyllabic form and the increasingly popular pentasyllabic verse, which are also widely deployed in Daoist scriptures. For Yu Xin, although there may be initiation and ordination issues that act as a barrier for "outsiders" to obtain Daoist esoteric knowledge, his conscious imitation of liturgical Buxu hymns still implies an interplay between the literati and Daoist traditions.

This part of the dissertation also reflects on the vague modern-construct term "literati," which often carries implications of being well-educated, rational, and atheist, and contrasts it with the term "Daoist," which gains nearly instant "superstitious" bias under modern discourse, along with long-standing attacks of fundamental Confucianist. It presents a complex and unique picture that correlates with the long-enduring "literati" living and intellectual pattern in pre-modern China. Specifically, in fact, Xi Kang shows a case with probable sincere Daoist interest with his abundant writing of transcendent themes in his verse composition. At the same time, this religious devotion still presents an entanglement with worldly concern. Yu Xin, as a

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<sup>164</sup> A detailed textual survey is provided in Chapter Four to specify why Xi Kang is quoting *Shennong bencaojing* and *Shennong bencaojing*'s connection with fangshi religion in Han Dynasty.

courtier of the ruling reign, shows considerable erudition and mastery of Daoist knowledge in poetry. However, his composing departure point is more related to his officialdom status. While skillfully presenting and utilizing Daoist ideas, his perspective differs from Xi Kang's situation. While still fully addressing the transcendence interest of his intended royal reader, his intricate and sophisticated literary skill delivers a euphemistic admonishing attitude. All these case studies indicate the non-differentiation status of the so-called "secular" and the "divine" in traditional society, which can only be revealed under a holistic approach.

These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the textual tradition in Chinese literature and culture. Such understanding transcends the narrow disciplinary divisions of "religion" and "literature" present in modern scholarship, allowing us to approach the sources encountered and employed by ancient well-educated individuals, whether literati or Daoist adepts. Through this analysis, we gain insight into an intellectual world fundamentally different from our contemporary categorization thought, a world that the traditional Chinese people inhabited.

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T. *Dazheng zang* 大正藏 in CBETA electronic database <https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/>

SK *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, edited by 紀昀. Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan yingyin

wenyuange siku quanshu 臺北: 臺灣商務印書館影印文淵閣《四庫全書》本, in online database <http://www.xueheng.net/>.

WXDLZ *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註 edited by Fan wenlan 范文瀾. Beijing: Remin wenzue chubanshe, 1962.

WX *Wenxuan* 文選 edited by Xiao Tong 蕭統, annotated by Li Shan 李善. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986.



YZSJZ *Yuzishan jizhu* 庾子山集註 edited by Xu yimin and Ni fan. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980.

ZZJZJY *Zhuangzi jinzhujinyi* 莊子今註今譯, edited by Chen guying 陳鼓應. Beijing: shangwu yinshuguan, 2007.

ZG *Zhengao* 真誥 Translated by Zhu Yueli 朱越利, edited by よしかわ ただお, 吉川忠夫 and ムギタニ クニオ (Kunio Mugitani) 麥谷邦夫, 2006.

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Shanghai: Shanghai shudian; and Tianjin: Guji chubanshe, 1988. The *Daoze* number follows Schipper and Verellen 2004.

DZ6 *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經

DZ0033 *Shangqing huangqi yangjing sandao shunxing jing* 上清黃氣陽精三道順行經

(*Huangqi yangjing jing* 黃氣陽精經)

DZ0140 *Shangqing wozhen jue* 上清握中訣

DZ0292 *Hanwudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳

DZ0331 *Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內景玉經

DZ0335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhoujing* 太上洞淵神咒經

DZ0421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣

- DZ0422 *Shanqing sanzhen zhiyao yujue* 上清三真旨要玉訣
- DZ0508 *Wushang huanglu dazhai lichengyi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀
- DZ0524 *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guang zhujie fadeng zhuyuan* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒  
罰燈祝願.
- DZ0528 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀
- DZ0532 *Taijizhenren fu lingbao zhajieweiji zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀  
諸經要訣
- DZ0607 *Yuyin fashi* 玉音法事
- DZ0765 *Shang qing jinque dijun wudou sanyi tujue* 上清金闕帝君五斗三一圖訣
- DZ0783 *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壩城集仙錄
- DZ1032 *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤
- DZ1195 *Laojun bianhua wuji jing* 老君變化無極經
- DZ1312 *Taishang dadao yuqingjing* 太上大道玉清經
- DZ 1313 *Dongzhen Gaoshang Yudi Dadong Ciyi Zhijian Wulaobao Jing* 洞真高上玉帝大  
洞雌一至檢五老寶經 (*Ciyi jing* 雌一經)
- DZ 1314 *Dongzhen Taishang Suling Dongxuan Dayou Miaoqing* 洞真太上素靈洞玄大  
有妙經 (*Suling jing* 素靈經)
- DZ1323 *Dongzhen taishang basu zhenjing fushi riyue Huanghua jue* 洞真太上八素真經

服食日月皇華訣. (*Basu jing* 八素經)

DZ1334 *Dongzhen taishang shenhu yinwen* 洞真太上神虎隱文

DZ1344 *Dongzhen taishang shuo zhihui xiaomo zhenjing* 洞真太上說智慧消魔真經

DZ1439 *Dongxuan lingbaoyujingshan buxujing* 洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經

T2139 *Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經

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