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“Let Immortals Govern”:

the Power Structure in the Construction of Daoist Sacred Geography

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Introduction

The word *Xian* 仙, by its graphic form “山” recorded in *Shuowen Jiezi* (说文解字, the earliest Chinese Dictionary), is glossed as “man in mountain”¹. Another form of this word in *Shuowen Jiezi* is 僊, which is glossed as “long lived and ascended”. It implicitly signifies a picture on which a recluse is meditating by a mountain cave. In the theory of religious Daoism, such transcendental recluses are often named as “True-man”(Zhenren 真人) or “Immortal”² (Xian Ren 仙人), who are Daoist practitioners having attained the Dao. Mountains, as the places where immortals attain the Dao and achieve their transcendence, are one of the most significant natural beings for Daoists³ and are positioned in the core of Daoist practices. It is through the practices of Daoists in mountain caves that Daoists gradually constructed their sacred geography centering on mountains.

There are several categories of Daoist sacred geography developed by different Daoist lineages, which mainly emerged between the 2nd and the 6th centuries. As revealed by Gil Raz, three main lineages of religious Daoism---the Celestial Masters (Tianshi 天師), the Highest Purity (Shangqing 上清), and the Numinous Treasure (Lingbao 靈寶)⁴--- developed the system of twenty-four parishes⁵(Zhi 治) and the system of thirty-six cavern heavens (Dongtian 洞天) and seventy-two blessed lands (Fudi 福地).⁶ The latter system also overlaps with the system of the Five Sacred Peaks (Wuyue 五嶽), which showcases the interaction between the imperial geographic imaginations and Daoist sacred geography.

As Daoist sacred mountains are the locus of transcendence and sanctity for Daoists, the Daoist sacred geography--- in other words, the narrative of the way to perceive their

¹ *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 说文解字注 8A.38b.

² This thesis adopts “immortal”, the translation of Kristofer Schipper in *The Taoist Body*. (Schipper, 1993)

³ This thesis defines Daoists as a group of people who practice to attain the Dao. Daoism is defined as a tradition of various textual and ritualistic lineages that identify Dao as the highest, dynamic, inexpressible, and attainable being or non-being.

⁴ They emerged approximately in the Six Dynasties period (222-589 AD) among a closely related group of southern elite families living near Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing), the capital of the southern dynasties.

⁵ This thesis adopts the translation “diocese”.

⁶ For the readers who find it hard to understand the background of this thesis, Gil Raz’s *Daoist Sacred Geography in Early Chinese Religion* is highly recommended. (Raz 2009, 1409-52.)

sacred landscapes, can shed light on the contour of the Daoist history in early medieval China. In this regard, a theory explaining the historical process of the construction of the Daoist sacred geography has been put forward by Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, to generalize the Daoist history as a history of Daoist surrendering to the imperial power. In his book *A History of Surrender: A Study on the Thoughts of Religious Daoism in the Six Dynasties and Sui-Tang period (222-907 AD)*, he proposed that the Daoist thoughts, knowledge and rituals were “purified” by a long-term self-reform to attain the orthodoxy approval from the state regimes; Daoist lineages were denigrated to be “the others” by the official ideology (mostly Confucianism); the legitimacy of Daoist narratives is constructed by the discourse of power. From the sense of Michel Foucault, the history of religious Daoism is a fabulous illustration for the theory of power structure.⁷

It is mainly from the three aspects that Ge Zhaoguang argues his theory. The first one is that the socio-militarized structure of twenty-four dioceses was transformed as imagined geography of cavern heavens and blessed lands, which means Daoists lost their socio-military power in the secular world. The second one is that many significant rites and ceremonies, such as “the rites of passage”(Guodu Yi 過度儀) and “charcoal-painting ceremonies” (Tutan Zhai 塗炭齋), were removed by Daoists themselves to get away from the moral criticism from Confucianists and Buddhists. In addition, the ritualistic knowledge and magics of Daoism was shadowed by the prevailed metaphysical teachings and mysterious philosophies in order to cater to the tastes of Confucian intellectuals and other imperial cultural elites. Ge Zhaoguang concludes that religious Daoism acknowledged its allegiance to the imperial power by castrating some of its most featured knowledge and skills. Although there have been commentary articles on his theory, no one has ever responded to it by a study on the construction of the Daoist sacred geography.

In this thesis, I will examine his theory by responding to the three aspects. As a

⁷ This is mainly to say that the narrative, knowledge and discourse of the party being governed will be disciplined by the party that governs. In the case of Daoist history, religious Daoism is the party that was disciplined by the official ideology of the imperial regime. (Ge Zhaoguang, 2003)

response to the first aspect, I will argue that the inclusion of the Five Sacred Peaks in the system of cavern heavens is not “surrender”, rather, given the case of Sima Chengzhen, a Daoist master of Highest Purity who persuaded the emperor Xuanzong (trad., 685-762 AD) to construct Daoist abbeys on the sacred mountains in order to entrench the governance of Daoist immortals, the inclusion showcases the Daoist conquest to the mountain deities representing natural forces of the Five Sacred Peaks. In the 2nd chapter, I will argue that the Daoist rituals became official rites conducted during the Tang period (618- 907 AD) when offering sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks, to point out the weakness of the theory of “surrender” --- it cannot fully cover the historical phenomenon when Daoists acquiring political power and being a solid part of the authority. In the 3rd chapter, I will introduce the historical process when the True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks (*Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* 五嶽真形圖) turned from a cartographic tool into a ritualistic tool and the medium of Daoist magics, as a counter-example to the general principle that the ritualistic knowledge was shadowed by metaphysical Daoist thoughts and faded away. As a general claim, I will conclude that Daoist sacred geography, along with the ritualistic knowledge and tools centering on it, is “needed” by the imperial power; it is the legitimacy of power that is constructed by the discourse of knowledge, and because of which, the construction presents a historical landscape where Daoists adapted themselves to be a part of the imperial power.

Chapter One

Twenty-Four Dioceses and Cavern Heavens

1.1 The Origin of the Twenty-Four Dioceses and Cavern Heavens

The biggest question remaining within the first aspect of the theory of “Daoist Surrender” is either that the system of the twenty-four dioceses is parallel to the system of cavern heavens, or they are different phases of one geographical system in a continuous lineage. Since this theory proposes that the evidence of the surrender of Daoism to the imperial power is that Daoists transformed the socio-administrative system of 24 dioceses into an imagined system of caverns heavens, the theory implicitly acknowledges that there is a historical process which turns the former system of sacred geography into the latter one.

This question requires us to research into the origin of the two systems. The origin of the system of 24 dioceses is deeply connected to the emergence of the Celestial Master Daoism in Sichuan Province. It is well known that the Celestial Master Daoism co-emerged with the rise of Yellow Turbans in the latter half of the 2nd century. As a Daoist movement of strong political appeal, it seeks to establish a new political order by guaranteeing its religious rule in the name of Laozi, the legendary founder of this religion (or this school of thoughts).⁸ It organized its believers into communities and even militaries by inventing a system of 24 dioceses, which is governed by “libationers” (Jijiu 祭酒). This religious system administered the registers of people under the rule of the Celestial Masters, as a religious imitation to the governing system of the contemporary state regime. With the help of this system, the Celestial Masters successfully maintained the existence of a Daoist kingdom until the arrival of the military force of Cao-Wei regime.⁹ Although the symbolic meanings of the number 24 have been noticed¹⁰, there is no doubt that the primary

⁸ Seidel 1969, 216-47.

⁹ See a detailed description on this part of history in Terry Kleeman’s *Celestial Masters: History and Ritual in Early Daoist Communities* (Kleeman, 2016).

¹⁰ Raz 2009, 1424.

function of this system was administrative.

The sacredness of the system of 24 dioceses originates from the Daoist mythology, which narrates the story that Zhang Daoling, the legendary founder of the Celestial Master Daoism and the first Celestial Master, defeated the devils of the Six Heavens (Liutian 六天) in Sichuan and established his rule by bringing in a new religious order. According to a Daoist text presented approximately during the 3rd century to the 6th century, the establishment of the 24 dioceses is “to distribute the primal, original, and inaugural pneuma (Qi 氣), and administer the people.”¹¹ The pneuma is what Zhang Daoling acquired from the revelation of Laozi, the personification of the supreme Dao.

Although the system of 24 dioceses is stated as sacred, it should be noted that it is more of a simulation to the institution of the state regime. The terms “diocese” and “libationer” are borrowed from the official Confucian discourse used in the Han imperial bureaucracy. Within the reign of each diocese, adyta were set for political purposes, which has been proved to be another imitation to the political system of the Han regime. The setting of adyta simulates the institution of “confession room” in the Han period (206 BC- 220 AD). After the fall of the reign of the Celestial Masters in Sichuan, this system of sacred geography gradually became a scheme for rituals. Ge’s theory has pointed out that this narrative mostly presented when the Daoists in the Six dynasties period conducting rituals of “summoning ghost soldiers” (junjiang libing zhi fa 軍將吏兵之法), which means the political significance of this system has gone.¹²

As a system integrating sites of local significance and heterogeneous beliefs, it is hard to claim that the system of cavern heavens has, if any, holistic historical connections with the system of 24 dioceses. The system of cavern heavens, as most would acknowledge, ambiguously reflects the different geographical imaginations of the people in medieval China¹³, among which some are not even “Daoist”, such as the

¹¹ *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiaojie kejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經, DZ 789, 14b. The citations on the texts in the *Daoist Canon* are marked with DZ and coded according to Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen’s *The Taoist Canon: a Historical Companion to the Daozang* (Schipper and Verellen, 2004).

¹² Ge 2003, 1-16.

¹³ Raz 2009, 1400-1.

Five Sacred Peaks, the mountain listings in the *Classics of Mountains and Seas* (Shanhai Jing 山海经), etc. Compared to the listing of official sacred mountains that are mostly situated in the north, the system of cavern heavens covers many mountains from southern China. In the explanation given by the recent studies, this historical phenomenon partly results from the southward migration of Chinese population in the Six dynasties period, during which the southern separated regimes seek to confirm their legitimacy by offering reverence to the deities of local mountains.¹⁴ Some may say that there is also Buddhist influence on this system, while an evidently-proved judgement is that Chinese Buddhists started entering into mountain areas and constructing their sacred geography under the influence of Daoists, especially the Daoists from the lineage of Highest Purity.¹⁵

The most significant difference between the system of 24 dioceses and the system of cavern heavens is that the latter one is not involved in the administration of the material world. It is better to summarize the invention of the system of cavern heavens as a process of “inclusion”, rather than “construction”. The sites included are of local significance prior to their enlistment, which implicitly suggests, there is little possibility that this imagined geographical system is derived from the system of 24 dioceses.

¹⁴ Wei 2017, 115-29.

¹⁵ Zürcher 2007, 8-15.

1.2 Cavern Heavens as Locus of Immortals

The system of cavern heavens, in spite of being a combination of different traditions of mountain cults, still presents the features of Daoist ideas. The most intriguing feature of this system is that each site recorded is a micro-cosmos, where time and space are ambiguous, and dwellers can enjoy all the well-beings that people in medieval China can imagine in the mundane world. This imagination to the “otherworld” reflects a Daoist opinion on transcendence: immortality and forever well-being. As has been pointed out, the imagination on cavern heavens partly results from the geographical imagination of the people in the Han period, when the legends of “Ten Continents 十洲”, “Three Fairy Islands 三島” and “Mount Kunlun 崑崙山” went popular thanks to the exotic imagination provoked by the geographical exploration of that time¹⁶. Most sites of cavern heavens retain their existence in “this world”, but in the Daoist imagination, each microcosm must be entered from a narrow cave, which marks the boundary of the imagination and reality. This sacred geographical imagination significantly enlarges the space out of the reign of universal kingship. Since the world in medieval China is supposed to be ruled by the supreme king, the imagination of cavern heavens creates a way to approach the “other world”, to attain transcendence.

It has been stated above that almost all the mountains listed are located, and famous in southern China, and are associated in the Daoist lineage of Highest Purity. One of the earliest Daoist text holistically introducing the system of cavern heavens is the *Images of the Heavenly and Earthly Palace with Preface* (Tiangong Difu Tu Bingxu 天宮地府圖並序), which attributes to the composition of Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎, a Daoist master of Highest Purity¹⁷ whose biography has been illustrated by Paul Kroll

¹⁶ Ge 2011, 20-32.

¹⁷ A fundamental research on Mount Mao and the Highest Purity lineage is Isabelle Robinet’s *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-Shan Tradition of Great Purity* (Robinet, 1993).

and Livia Kohn¹⁸. There are “10 Grand Cavern Heavens” and “36 Minor Cavern Heavens” in Sima Chengzhen’s *Preface on the Images of the Heavenly and Earthly Palace*, where the Five Sacred Peaks are listed as the Second Cavern Heaven to the Sixth Cavern Heaven.¹⁹ As has been pointed out, the locations and sequence of the mountains listed were not finalized before the Tang period, and Sima Chengzhen is a distinguished significant Daoist for the construction of this geographical imagination²⁰. This arrangement reflects his view that the immortals in the Daoist theology is of higher hierarchy than the mountains enjoying sacred status in the mundane world.

If we follow the logic stated by the theory of “Daoist surrender”, we would acknowledge that the construction of the system of cavern heavens is merely another proof for the “surrender” of Daoists: Daoists abandoned their socio-military power in the mundane world, so that the geographical system of 24 dioceses was replaced by the imagined geographical system of cavern heavens. Nevertheless, the construction of the system of cavern heavens by Sima Chengzhen presents another side of this history to us, which illustrates that the system of cavern heavens is, to some degree, a manifestation of the rise of the Daoist power in the spiritual world.

As an politically significant Daoist in the Tang period, Sima Chengzhen has important influence on the interaction between Daoists and royal politics of his time; with his assertion, the Emperor Xuanzon 玄宗 (trad., 685-762 AD) established Daoist temples on all of the Five Sacred Peaks and a few other sacred mountains for the Daoist immortals of Highest Purity. The record of this event in the *Old Book of Tang* goes as such:

In the 9th year of the reign of Kaiyuan (721 AD), the Emperor Xuanzong summoned Sima Chengzhen to the capital again to receive the Daoist diagrams offered by him in person. In the 10th year of the reign of Kaiyuan, Xuanzong came back to the western capital, so Sima Chengzhen asked to return to Mount Tiantai 天台山. Xuanzong allowed it and composed a poem for him. In the 15th

¹⁸ A part of his life stories can be found in Paul Kroll’s *Szu-ma Cheng-chen in T’ang Verse* (Kroll 1978, 16-30). Sima Chengzhen is a Daoist master of Shangqing 上清 tradition. Considering his thoughts, Livia Kohn’s *Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima Chengzhen’s Zuowanglun* is available for reference. (Kohn 1987)

¹⁹ Lei 2009, 196-97.

²⁰ See Franciscus Verellen’s *The Beyond Within: Grotto-Heavens (Dongtian) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology*. (Verellen 1995, 265-260)

year, Xuanzong summoned him again to the capital and let him choose a place of wonderful views on Mount Wangwu 王屋 to build a temple. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Sima Chengzhen said: “Currently, the deities worshipped by the temples on the Five Sacred Peaks are all the deities of mountains and forests, who are not justified and authentic deities. There are cavern heavens for immortals on the Five Sacred Peaks where immortals of Shangqing tradition keep their duty. The winds and rains of mountains and rivers, the orders of Yin 阴 and Yang 阳, are what they govern. Crowns, costumes and servants of immortals, they all have their customized rankings. (I hereby) ask to construct altars and temples (for immortals) to let immortals govern.” The Emperor Xuanzong allowed it and wrote a decree to establish a temple for each immortal on every Sacred Peak. All of the visual images and regulations of these temples follow the will of Sima Chengzhen, whose design is based on the recordings in the Daoist classics.²¹

This material records an important historical event in the Daoist history: the Emperor Xuanzong ordered to establish Daoist abbeys for immortals of Highest Purity in the range of the Five Sacred Peaks (Wuyue zhenjun ci 五嶽真君祠), Mount Qingcheng 青城山 and Mount Lu 廬山.²² Before this event, the Five Sacred Peaks were occupied by the mountain deities who enjoyed state reverence and sacrifices. For instance, during the 3rd year of the Tai Chang reign (418 AD) of the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty²³ (386-534 AD), the regime established temples to offer sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Sacred Rivers in the darkside of the Sang Gan 桑乾 River. As recorded in the *Book of Wei*:

Every year in the spring and autumn (we) send priests (to conduct rituals to the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Sacred Rivers) with cattle and money. (We) offer sacrifices to the Four Sacred Rivers only with cattle. (We) rank the level of this bureau according to the ancient (tradition).²⁴

²¹ Liu 1975, 5128.

²² According to previous studies, the construction of Immortal Abbeys of the Five Sacred Peaks happened during the reign of Kaiyuan 開元. The exact year of the construction is controversial among scholars. Chen Guofu 陳國符 (1914-2000) stated that the construction of abbeys on the Five Sacred Peaks happened in the 14th year of the Kaiyuan reign, and the construction of Daoists abbeys on Mount Qingcheng and Mount Lu happened in the 20th year of Kaiyuan. (Chen 1963,56) Timothy Barrett consents with this theory (Barrett 1996, 54-55), while Lei Wen in his *Jiaomiao Zhiwai* 郊廟之外 argues that the construction lasted from the 19th year to 20th year of the Kaiyuan reign. (Lei 2009, 202)

²³ It is a dynasty founded by the Tuoba (Tabgach) clan of the Xianbei nationality, which ruled northern China.

²⁴ Wei 1997, 2737.

It can be inferred from this material that the Northern Wei dynasty had established a system to manage the ritualistic affairs of the Five Sacred Peaks before Emperor Xiao Wen 孝文 started a systematic reform of sinicization and moved the national capital from Datong 大同 to Luoyang 洛陽 in 494 AD²⁵. The name of the institution being in charge of affairs of mountain worship in the Northern Wei period is not available in the present historical record today. But in the historical records of another northern regime, the Northern Qi 齐 dynasty (550-577 AD), the name of this institution is available:

The minister and the assistant of the minister of the Imperial Ancestral Temple also take charge of the management of the Bureau of Outskirt Sacrifice (Jiao Si 郊祀) and the Bureau of Worshipping Deities (Chong Xu 崇虛) in the Northern Qi period. The Bureau of Outskirt Sacrifice is responsible for managing the deities in the Five Outskirts 五郊之神, the Bureau of Worshipping Deities is responsible for the sacrifices offered to the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Sacred Rivers.”²⁶

The inclination of institutionalization on this issue has become clearer after the reunification of China in the Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 period (581-907 AD). The Sui regime constructed statues to worship the mountain deities and set regulations to protect them. As recorded in the *Book of Sui*, the statues of mountain deities are strictly protected by the law of the empire:

The Buddhists and Daoists who destroyed the statues of Buddha and the Supreme Celestials (Tianzun), people who destroyed the statues of mountain deities and river deities, will be sentenced with the crime of revolt.²⁷

The Five Sacred Peaks and Four Dominant Sites moderating clouds and rains, rivers, lakes, canals and seas, infiltrating lands, bringing up all creatures, benefiting humans, shall be respected by establishing temples to offer sacrifices. (Anyone) who dare to damage or steal the statues of Buddha, celestials and deities of mountains and rivers, will be sentenced for treason.²⁸

From the materials above, we can get the information that the belief on mountain deities has been tightly bound up with the well-being of the empire, so that the sacrifices are seriously treated and managed by official institutions. This national belief is so

²⁵ Charles 2013, 1-38.

²⁶ Li 1992, 400.

²⁷ Wei 1973, 715.

²⁸ Wei 1973, 45-6.

serious that behaviors of blasphemy are seen as bad as treason. Statues were established and protected by the national law, which showcases the feature of iconolatriy of this belief. In addition, as mountain deities are regarded as deities managing natural phenomenon such as weathers, the management of them symbolizes the imperial order in the natural world.

In the Tang period, the mountain deities were invested with titles and ranks of nobility. The Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 entitled Mount Song 嵩山, the Central Sacred Peak, in the name of the “Heavenly Middle King” (Tianzhong Wang 天中王) in 695 AD, whose ranking is higher than the Three Councilors (San Gong 三公) and lower than the empress herself²⁹. There are 16 times of investiture to mountain deities in total on the history of the Tang period, according to the counting of *Jiaomiao Zhiwai* 郊廟之外³⁰. These ceremonies reveal the reverence that the regimes in the Sui and Tang period offered to these personalized mountain deities. After these ceremonies, the connection between the kingship and these mountain deities were deepened--- these deities became the ministers of emperors in the spiritual and natural world. Because they were involved in the bureaucratic hierarchies of the mundane world, the universal kingship can also implement its power to them.

From the perspective of Daoists, especially those from the tradition of Highest Purity, the mountains deities, as long as they are from the Five Sacred Peaks or other famous mountains, are all flesh-eating vulgar deities (Xueshi zhishen 血食之神) who are supposed to be regulated, even wiped out. The attitude of Daoists on the issue of vulgar deities may vibrate from the moderate stance to the radical one, but they share the common ground that vulgar cults are “evil” or “excessive”. For instance, Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (trad., 406-477 AD), a Daoist Master in the Six Dynasties period who started a Daoist reform and is respected as one of the patriarchs by the Daoists of Highest Purity, had a comment on vulgar mountain cults and classified the “legitimate sacrifices” and “excessive sacrifices (Yin Si 淫祀)”. He said:

²⁹ Liu 1975, 891.

³⁰ Lei 2009, 43.

“Only sacrifices offered from emperors to Heaven, from the Three Ducal Ministers to the Five Sacred Peaks, from Princes to Rivers and Mountains (are legitimate)Apart from these rituals, other deities cannot be worshipped..... Or these would be excessive sacrifices.”³¹

Lu’s allowance on the state sacrifices on the Five Sacred Peaks shows his tolerance to these five flesh-eating deities in respect of the state. Given the material above recorded by the *Old Book of Tang*, Sima Chengzhen is one step further than him on this issue, since he directly asked the emperor Xuanzong to replace the mountain deities who are “not justified and authentic deities”(fei zhengzhen zhi shen 非正真之神) with the Daoist immortals from the tradition of Highest Purity. It is obvious that for Sima Chengzhen, the Daoist immortals living in the cavern heavens of the Five Sacred Peaks are of higher hierarchies than mountain deities worshipped before. Considering that some deities he wants to replace already had noble titles in the system of bureaucracy³², his proposal is audacious and of ambitious political purposes. With his proposal, the immortal abbeys in the range of the Five Sacred Peaks were successfully constructed. Scholar Lei Wen has listed the tablet inscriptions recording the completion of construction in each mountain in *Jiaomiao Zhiwai*, such as the Tablet of Mount Tai’s Daoist Abbey (Daiyue Guan Bei 岱嶽觀碑) below which records the completion of the construction of the Daoist immortal abbey on Mount Tai.

³¹ DZ 1127.

³² Such as the deity of Mount Song, who was entitled to be “Heavenly Middle King” during the reign of the empress Wu Zetian, as mentioned above.

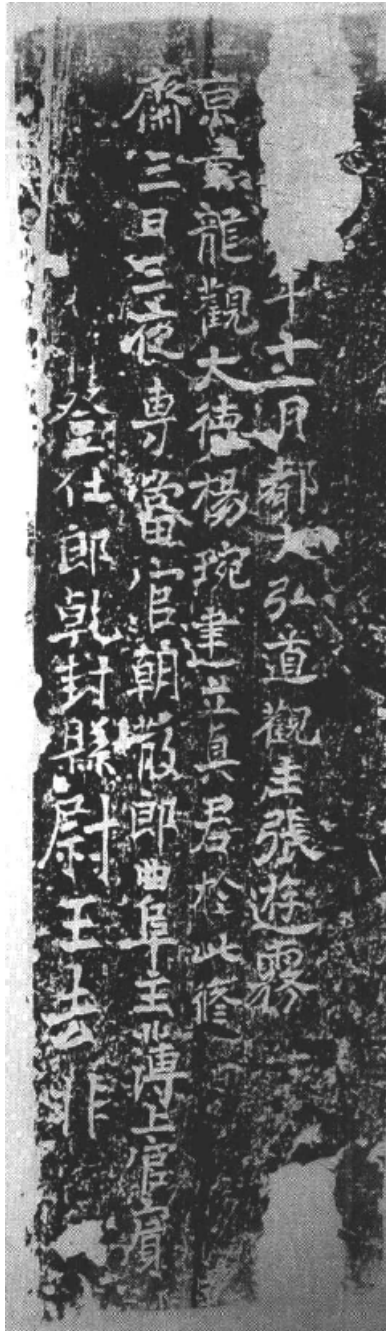


Fig 1 the Tablet of Mount Tai's Daoist Abbey, quoted from Lei Wen's *Jiaomiao Zhiwai*.³³

Du Guangting³⁴, a Daoist priest serving for the Tang regime and a Daoist master of Highest Purity, also listed the Five Sacred Peaks and their mountain deities in his work *Dongtian Fudi Yuedu Mingshan Ji* 洞天福地岳瀆名山記³⁵, while he did not mention Daoist immortals of Highest Purity dwelling in the cavern heavens of the Five

³³ Lei 2009, 169.

³⁴ His biography and relationship with the Tang regime can be found in Franciscus, Verellen's *Du Guangting (850-933): Taoïste De Cour À La Fin De La Chine Médiévale* (Verellen, 1989).

³⁵ DZ 599.

Sacred Peaks³⁶. On the contrary, he showcases unusual respect to the mountain deities of the Five Sacred Peaks by assigning them to a particular category. Concerning Du Guangting's close connection with the Tang regime, he apparently accepted the mountain deities worshipped by the state and regards them as a part of the Daoist theology, which is different from his predecessor Sima Chengzhen. As a result, the state cults were incorporated into the Daoist sacred geography. In this way, Daoists "rule" the Five Sacred Mountains by constructing a sacred geography which integrates local knowledge, sacredness, and belief.

In general, the Daoist sacred geography either expels the local deities representing natural forces by establishing the governance of immortals in the range of sacred mountains, or acknowledges the mountain deities of politically or culturally significant mountains as a part of Daoist theological genealogy. In both ways, Daoists can implement their power and expand their knowledge in the spiritual world. This is to say that the system of cavern heavens is not, as the theory of "Daoist surrender" stated, a manifestation of the power-declination of Daoists.

³⁶ Lei 2009, 212.

Chapter Two

When Daoist Rituals become Official Rites

2.1 “The Jet of Dragons”

In the theory of “Daoist surrender”, one of the most important proof for the yielding of Daoists to the imperial power is that, the Daoists in medieval China (mainly the Six dynasties period and Sui-Tang period) purified their rituals to get orthodoxy approval from the state regime.³⁷ In this chapter, I will reveal the common ground that Daoists and the state regime share in the power structure of medieval China, to illustrate how Daoist lineages can play significantly as insiders of the state regime, not “surrenders” having to show their allegiance outside the structure of the dynasties in medieval China.

As is well known, the legitimacy of medieval Chinese dynasties is derived from the sanctity of regimes, in the form of the so called “mandate of heaven”. It is widely and consistently believed by ancient Chinese that the sacred heaven is the source of legitimacy, from which emperors attain their authority to bring orders to the world. One of the major tasks for rulers to attain the “mandate of heaven” is to study and understand the decrees of the sacred heaven³⁸. In the *Great Learning*, one of the fundamental Confucian classics, it goes that:

He (the virtuous ruler) contemplated and studied the illustrious decrees of Heaven.³⁹

By “reading” the decrees of Heaven, ancient Chinese rulers can claim the sacredness of their authority. One of the methods to “read” the illustrious degrees of Heaven is to offer sacrifices to sacred mountains so that the heavenly signs and omens would be able to appear. Some may find heavenly decrees by discovering unusual treasures, such as a scripted jade buried in lands. In the East Han period (25-220 AD), cultural elites (mainly Confucianists) were enthusiastic about reading, explaining and annotating heavenly decrees by commenting on Confucian classics. Such activities are

³⁷ Ge 2003, 29-74.

³⁸ The connection between Chinese regimes and the mandate of heaven has been illustrated by modern scholars and their studies, such as Glanville’s *Retaining the Mandate of Heaven: Sovereign Accountability in Ancient China* (Glanville 2010, 323-343) and Zhao Dingxin’s *the Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China* (Zhao 2009, 416–33), etc.

³⁹ Confucius and Legge 2013, 361.

called Chenwei activities, signifying a popular activity of political divination in accordance with Confucian classics. The discovery by Anna Seidel of the deep connection between Chenwei 讖緯 and Daoists in the late Han and early Six Dynasties period can enable us to rethink the interaction of Daoists with the national ideology of dynasties. As the Chenwei 讖緯 activities in the Han period are tightly connected to politics (more precisely, to the legitimacy of dynasties), by using supernatural imperial treasures, making supernatural signs and creating divination texts, emperors and ambitious politicians can claim their obtaining of the mandate of heaven, thus consolidating their power or even usurping the throne.⁴⁰

Because of this, as listed in Jack Dull's dissertation, Chenwei activities and texts were strictly prohibited in more than ten periods in Chinese history.⁴¹ In this context, Daoists in the late Han and early Six dynasties period who are obsessed with all kinds of rituals (which are generally copies and reproduction of Chenwei activities), signs and divination books, have their influence on the belonging of the mandate of heaven. For the rulers of the secular world, they are mediums between "this world" and the "other world". Emperors and kings need Daoists to acquire or assure the legitimacy of their power. In this way, Daoists in medieval China were politicalized, and played a crucial role in the construction of legitimacy of dynasties.⁴²

One of the most frequent activities that emperors conducted to show their ownership of the mandate of heaven in medieval China is the Feng Shan ceremony⁴³ (封禪大典) offered to Mount Tai 泰山. As the most sublime mountain among the Five Sacred Peaks, Mount Tai is also listed in the system of cavern heavens as the Second Cavern Heaven (Di'er Dongtian 第二洞天) by Sima Chengzhen.⁴⁴ Mount Tai is the medium between secular rulers and the heavenly authority, through whose acknowledgment the legitimacy of the power of emperors can be assured. According to

⁴⁰ Seidel 1996, 54.

⁴¹ Dull 1966, 401-406.

⁴² Seidel 1996, 65-90.

⁴³ Feng Shan ceremony is an official rite where emperors offer sacrifices to Mount Tai to consolidate their mandate of heaven. This rite is generally conducted to show off the political achievement of emperors.

⁴⁴ The history and religious significance of Mount Tai have been sufficiently studied by both Chinese scholars and sinologists. Le Tai Chan, the well-known masterpiece of Chavannes Edouard (1865-1918), introduces the state sacrifices offered to Mount Tai in the first chapter (Chavannes 1910, 6-57).

the study by Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福, Mount Tai is also the place where the souls of the dead are governed in the ancient imagination. In the Han period, the personification of Mount Tai is the ruler of all ghosts.⁴⁵ Since Mount Tai is such a politically significant mountain, the Daoist influence on this mountain and the Feng Shan ceremony can showcase their importance to the construction of the state legitimacy.

During the reign of Li Zhi 李治 (trad., 628-683), the Emperor Gaozong of Tang, the imperial regime conducted a Feng Shan ceremony on Mount Tai, for the first time in the Six dynasties and Sui-Tang period. Before this ceremony, Li Zhi consulted a Daoist called Liu Daohe 劉道合 and sent him to Mount Tai, as a temporary official being in charge of the rituals asking for blessings from heaven. The *Old Book of Tang* records this event:

At the beginning, the Daoist called Liu Daohe lived in seclusion with Pan Shizheng 潘師正 on Mount Song 嵩山. The Emperor Gaozong heard of his fame, so he established the Taiyi 太一 Temple on Mount Song for Liu Daohe. The emperor then summoned him to the capital and treated him with courtesies. When the emperor was about to conduct Feng Shan ceremony on Mount Tai, a long period of rains went endless, So the emperor ordered him to conduct rituals in the Yiluan 儀鸞 Palace to end the endless rains. Soon after that, the weather went sunny. The emperor was exultant, then he sent Liu Daohe to conduct rituals on Mount Tai to ask for blessings.⁴⁶

As a part of the official rite conducted on Mount Tai, the Emperor Gaozong also ordered Daoists to conduct the ritual called “the Jet of Dragons (Tou-long 投龍)⁴⁷”, a Daoist ritual resulting from the belief on the Three Officials of Heaven (Sanguan Dadi 三官大帝, signifying the Official deities of Heaven, Earth and Water in the Daoist theological genealogy). The Daoists who participate in this ritual would bundle the bamboo slips of wishes, jades and a golden dragon together and throw them into mountain valleys after a series of rites. As showcased by recent archaeological studies,

⁴⁵ Xiao 1990, 50-69.

⁴⁶ Liu 1975, 5127.

⁴⁷ The earliest academic study published on this ritual is “Le Jet des Dragons” by Edouard Chavannes. He translated the name of this ritual as “Le Jet des Dragons”, which in English is “the Jet of Dragons”. This thesis adopts this translation. See from Edouard Chavannes’s *Le Jet des Dragons* (Chavannes 1919, 53-220). The recordings on this rite as a part of this Feng Shan ceremony can be found at the page 91 of Edouard Chavannes’s article.

several golden dragons and bamboo slips used for this ritual have been discovered, such as Fig 2 below.



Fig 2 Bamboo Slips of Wishes used in the 26th year of the Reign of Kaiyuan (713-741 AD), quoted from Lei Wen's *Jiaomiao Zhiwai*. The original source is Liu Yang's *Images for the Temple: Imperial Patronage in the Development of Tang Daoist Art*, Fig 13-14.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Lei 2009, 145.

The indispensable function that Daoists have in the official rite of mountain cults and other rituals asking for blessings or assuring legitimacy for the state regime determines that their existence is necessary to the state. As we can see from the case of Liu Daohe, Daoists have the usefulness for a medieval Chinese regime, which Confucian elites cannot cover by their knowledge and roles. Partly because of the tight connection that the Tang regime has with Daoists, the Emperor Gaozong established an empire-wide Daoist network--- he ordered every prefecture to build at least one Daoist temple⁴⁹. The Tang regime successfully constructed a national system to manage Daoist affairs from the reign of the Emperor Gaozong. In the second year of the Feng Shan ceremony, the Emperor Gaozong conducted a ceremony to offer reverence to Laozi, entitled him as the “Supreme Metaphysical Emperor” (Taishang Xuanyuan Huangdi 太上玄元皇帝), and regarded him as the ancestor of the royal family⁵⁰. Because of this, Timothy Barrett described the reign of Gaozong as the beginning of the theocratic system of the Tang regime, from when the imperial power consolidated its union with Daoists⁵¹.

What happened during the reign of the emperor Gaozong is not an isolated case, the following Chinese dynasties, such as the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD), also acknowledged this union of power from their conducting “the jet of dragons” and other rituals related to state sacredness. The emperor Zhenzong of Song 宋真宗 (trad., 968-1022 AD) conducted another Feng Shan ceremony in the beginning of the 11th century⁵², and the emperor Huizong of Song 宋徽宗 (trad., 1082-1135 AD) conducted the ritual of “the jet of dragons” for many times. Some of the golden dragons used by Huizong are preserved in Zhejiang Museum today.⁵³ For political purposes, the Daoist activities--- the making of divine omens, the jet of dragons, and many other Daoist rituals as state rites--- are repeatedly conducted, which shows the stability of the Daoist-state union. From the materials we listed above, it is the state regimes that need the support from

⁴⁹ Barrett 1996, 31.

⁵⁰ Liu 1975, 90.

⁵¹ Barrett 1996, 29-30.

⁵² Ge 1995, 68-78.

⁵³ Wang 2014, 27-33.

Daoists to consolidate their legitimacy. From this sense, the theory of “Daoist surrender” is, at least, lacks the insight to this side of the Daoist-state interaction.

2.2 The Daoist-State Interconnection

It has been stated above that the sites listed in the system of cavern heavens have their local sacredness and significance prior to the enlistment. Since the theory of “Daoist surrender” implicitly suggests a process of “de-politicization” of Daoist sacred geography from the system of 24 dioceses to the system of cavern heavens, I will argue in this section that the system of cavern heavens is highly politicized, as seen from the selection of sites.

For the purpose of consolidating their legitimacy, almost all the regimes in the Six Dynasties period offered sacrifices to the sacred mountains within their boundaries. In 221 AD, the Cao-Wei regime “starting to offer sacrifice to the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Sacred Rivers”⁵⁴. During the Sheng Ping 升平 reign (357-361 AD) of the East Jin period (317-420 AD), cultural elites such as He Qi 何琦 (a historian in the East Jin period) sighed for the loss of the Sacred Peaks and called for restoring the routine sacrifices offered to Mount Tianzhu, the only sacred peak available for a southern regime. His opinion recorded by *the Book of Song* goes as this:

Since the disaster of Yongjia (it refers to the fall of the Western Jin dynasty (266-316 AD) and the uprising of nomadic nations), the Divine Land has been occupied by enemies, everything has been changed. Only Mount Tianzhu 天柱 in County Qian 潛 is within the king’s realm. In the past, an official of a hundred piculs of cereals would be selected to take charge of these affairs (of the rituals of this mountain). Now that our regime is seeing a resurgence but an official being in charge of this has not been appointed, Lu Jiang 廬江 prefecture often send a high-ranking official to manage the rituals of this mountain in the four seasons. From the reign of Xian He 咸和 to the present, (this process) has been consistently repeated.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Chen 1959, 78.

⁵⁵ Shen 1974, 482-83.

This record explicitly suggests that the selection of officials to take charge of the affairs of sacrifices offered to the Sacred Peaks is a routine of the Jin regime. It is only because the country was in a crisis that this convention was broken. After the restoration of the political order, this routine, as a component of the cultural orthodoxy of the regime, needs to be resumed.

Because of the political separation in the Six dynasties period, the change of situating of sacred mountains and the (sometimes reluctant) inclusion of the mountain deities worshipped by vulgar beliefs have become historical phenomenon. Resulting from the unavailability of the sacred mountains situating in the central plain⁵⁶, the Daoists of Highest Purity and the Celestial Masters⁵⁷ had to explore southern China to construct their sacred geography. The statement by Ge Hong 葛洪⁵⁸ (trad., 283-343CE) is a straight forward reflection of this mindset. In the book called *Baopu Zi* 抱樸子 (Baopu Zi is also a self-made title of Ge Hong), he said:

“Some may ask: ‘Among the mountains and valleys of southern China, there are many poisonous and evil (materials), are there any ways to explore?’ Baopu Zi answers: ‘the earth and airs of the central plain and high lands (it refers to northern China) are purified and harmonious (but unavailable), there are no such things. Currently, the lands of Wu 吳 and Chu 楚 (the two names of ancient kingdoms located at southern China in the Warring States period. In here he refers to southern China, which is the territory of his homeland) are humid, hot and steaming. Although Mount Heng 衡山 and Mount Huo 霍山 are also sacred mountains, there are still many poisonous insects.....(To overcome this predicament) we can.....’⁵⁹

After the statement above, Ge Hong introduces all kinds of methods resisting the harm of fierce beasts and insects in the cited chapter of *Baopu Zi*. It seems from the text above that he was trying to answer a general puzzlement of Daoists at that time. In his time, the reign of the Jin regime had retreated to the south, so that all the Daoists (most of them were in the south) had to accept the situation that most of the famous mountains

⁵⁶ Such as Mount Tai which is situated in Shandong 山東 province, a land generally occupied by northern or even nomadic regimes in this period.

⁵⁷ Historically speaking, the two identifications often overlap with each other in this period.

⁵⁸ A Daoist leader and a scholar in the East Jin period who is respected as “Immortal Mentor Ge” (Ge Xianshi 葛仙師) in *the Book of Jin*. (Fang, 1996)

⁵⁹ Wang 1980, 306.

were not available. This situation suggests that the Daoist activities are inter-connected with the movements of the state regimes in the Six dynasties period, as they share the challenge that the divine northern land has been lost.

By discovering the phenomenon that the newly worshipped mountains of state regimes are also the new centers of Daoist activities, we can find the inter-connection of the Daoists and state regimes in the Six dynasties period recognizable. For instance, according to Wei Bin 魏斌's research on "the history of the Six dynasties period in the mountains", southern regimes started to offer sacrifices to Mount Zhong 鐘山 and worship its deity Jiang Ziwen 蔣子文 for political purposes. Although merely being a bibulous and lust local official when he was alive, Jiang Ziwen became the deity guarding Mount Zhong 鐘山 and received local people's cult. As this cult is clearly a vulgar and excessive cult (yin si 淫祀), it was prohibited by the state regime at first. Nevertheless, under the pressure that Mount Zhong is geographically too close to the capital Jian Kang, the state regime later on restored this cult and treated Jiang Ziwen as a national guardian.⁶⁰ When China was a unified state in the Han dynasty whose political center is in the north, the cult on Mount Zhong can only exist as a local belief in a periphery area. While in the construction of Sima Chengzhen and Du Guangting on the system of cavern heavens, Mount Zhong is listed as one of the thirty-six "minor cavern heavens", which shows the inter-connection of Daoists with the selection of state regimes.⁶¹

Another solid proof of that is that the sacred mountains from the south are absolute majority in the system of cavern heavens. Since this Daoist sacred geography was presented in the early Tang period, it is more or less a reflection of the geographical opinion of the Daoists from the Six dynasties period. Considering that the Daoists in the early Six dynasties period still claimed that "most sacred mountains in the divine central plain are not available", it is surprising that the majority of sacred mountains have become southern mountains at the end of the Six dynasties period. It is only by concluding that the construction of Daoist sacred geography is inter-connected with the

⁶⁰ Wei 2017, 115-117.

⁶¹ Wei 2017, 118.

political movements of the state, can we explain the change of Daoist geographical centers from the north to the south.

Chapter Three

The Supposed Marginalized Knowledge: The True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks

3.1 Images of the True Forms

To implement the power-knowledge structure theory of Michel Foucault into the Daoist history, Ge Zhaoguang puts forward in the theory of “Daoist surrender” that the ritualistic knowledge of Daoists was shadowed by metaphysical Daoist thoughts because Confucian elites and official intellectuals always promote the latter tradition and be dismissive to the former tradition. However, by looking at the history of the utilization of the True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks (*Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* 五嶽真形圖), we can find that the change of utilization of these sacred diagrams presents a tendency of transforming from maps to ritualistic tools, which is contrary to the historical trend “from rituals to philosophies” stated by Ge Zhaoguang.

From the sense of semiotics, the True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks are signifiers referring to different forms of the Five Sacred Peaks. They are called “true forms”, because Daoists believe that these images can picture the true forms of things⁶². The name “true form” contains the opinion that “to see what things really are”, which embodies a Daoist view that the objects do not appear in their true forms. Only after being showcased by those diagrams, can the “true forms” of those holy mountains be understood by Daoists. John Lagerwey pointed out that in the Daoist world view, those mountains, along with all other objects of the material world, are formed by “Qi”氣, the most fundamental element of the material world.⁶³ As a dynamic natural being, Qi is

⁶² There are three kinds of most frequently studied *Zhenxing Tu* in academia: Man-Bird Mountain Image (*Renniao Shan Zhenxing Tu* 人鳥山真形圖), Image of the Five Sacred Peaks (*Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* 五嶽真形圖), Image of Fengdu Mountain (*Fengdu Shan Zhenxing Tu* 酆都山真形圖, the Fengdu Mountain is the capital of the underworld in ancient China).

⁶³ Lagerwey 1997, 80.

changing all the time; thus the appearances of objects are not settled. Therefore, Daoists need the help of *Zhenxing Tu* to see through the nature of mountains.

The origin of *Zhenxing Tu* is unclear, while its name and utilization tell us that it is relevant to Daoist sacred geography. The earliest *Zhenxing Tu* is *Jiuyi Shan Tu* (九嶷山圖, the image of Jiuyi Mountain), the one excavated in the 1970s at Mawang Dui 馬王堆 Han dynasty tomb, while most of the images of this kind appeared in the Six dynasties period⁶⁴, thanks to a strong Daoist written tradition on recording creatures and creating knowledge of mountains, especially in the Six dynasties period. The cavern heavens where immortals live are the divine libraries of Daoists.⁶⁵ In this faith, Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 created a catalog for all the Daoist classics of his time using the name “Three Caves (San Dong 三洞)”, which becomes the basis of the catalog of the *Daoist Canon* later on⁶⁶.

As the Japanese geologist Takuji Ogawa has pointed out, *Zhenxing Tu* is extremely similar to modern contour maps from shapes and forms. Because of the frequent needs of Daoists to visit cavern heavens, *Zhenxing Tu* became the powerful tool to protect, guide and bless Daoists during their visit. These “true forms” are crucial as maps guiding their visiting activities.⁶⁷ From the perspective of geography, *Zhenxing Tu* is considered by Joseph Needham as one of the most significant cartographical achievements in ancient China, which is advanced than its time.⁶⁸

It is believed by the Daoist scholar Jiang Sheng that there is a historical process of “esoterification” of the utilization of *Zhenxing Tu* after the Warring States period (475-221 BC), given that there is sufficient textual proof proving that *Zhenxing Tu* were not used as maps anymore.⁶⁹ The using of *Zhenxing Tu* was prohibited as a kind of Chenwei activities by the state regime after the West Han period (206 BC-9 AD),⁷⁰ showing the super-natural powers that *Zhenxing Tu* was gifted during the process of

⁶⁴ Jiang 2009, 108.

⁶⁵ Tsai 2006, 67.

⁶⁶ Huang 2014, 126.

⁶⁷ Takuji Ogawa 1919, 413.

⁶⁸ Needham and Wang 1954, 546.

⁶⁹ Jiang Sheng 2008, 51.

⁷⁰ Dull 1966, 401-6.

“esoterification”, which will be stated below.

3.2 The Power of *Zhenxing Tu*: Cartographic and Ritualistic

The cartographic aspect of *Zhenxing Tu* is easier to understand through a comparative study on the different versions of the same diagram. I will showcase the cartographic aspect of *Zhenxing Tu* in the beginning of this section by illustrating different versions of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu*, that is, the True Form of Mount Tai. According to Takuji Ogawa, the copy of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* preserved in Japan is similar to the modern contour line of Mount Tai made in the 20th century. From the fig 3 and fig 4 listed below, we can see the similarity of the contours of the two pictures. Fig 5 is the ancient version of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* collected by *the Daoist Canon*, whose details are notably different from the copy version from Japan but still shares a similar outline with the contour line.

There are many auxiliary characters on fig 5 that mark the names of the peaks and directions. Surrounding the main body of the mountain are many marks that mean “go up from here”(Congci Shang 從此上), which seem to mark the entrances of Mount Tai. On the top right corner of this image, there is a line of characters writing “the world above cannot be reached”(Shangfang Shijie Bukedao 上方世界不可到), which seems to mark the highest point of this peak. According to the presenting texts relating to *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu*, no characters were attached to the images⁷¹, but the current version of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* from the *Daoist Canon* has many auxiliary words as illustrated by fig 5. It is possible that the Daoists in the later generations attached their annotations to the original image. In addition, the presenting *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* from the *Daoist Canon* is printed as black and white, while the attached words of this series of images in the text *Dong Xuan Lingbao Wuyue Guben Zhenxing Tu* 洞玄靈寶五嶽古本真形圖 says:

The black part signifies the shape of the mountain, the red part signifies the water, the yellow spots

⁷¹ Jiang 2009, 108.

signify the entrance of the caves.⁷²

There is a copy of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* collected by the National Museum of Japanese History, which has the red part, black part, and yellow spots. Jiang Sheng published this image in his cartological study on *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu*.⁷³ The copy proves that the description of the attached words is correct.

With the proof mentioned above, we can conclude that *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* used to function as a map telling Daoists the locations of entrances and feasible directions when entering into sacred mountains.

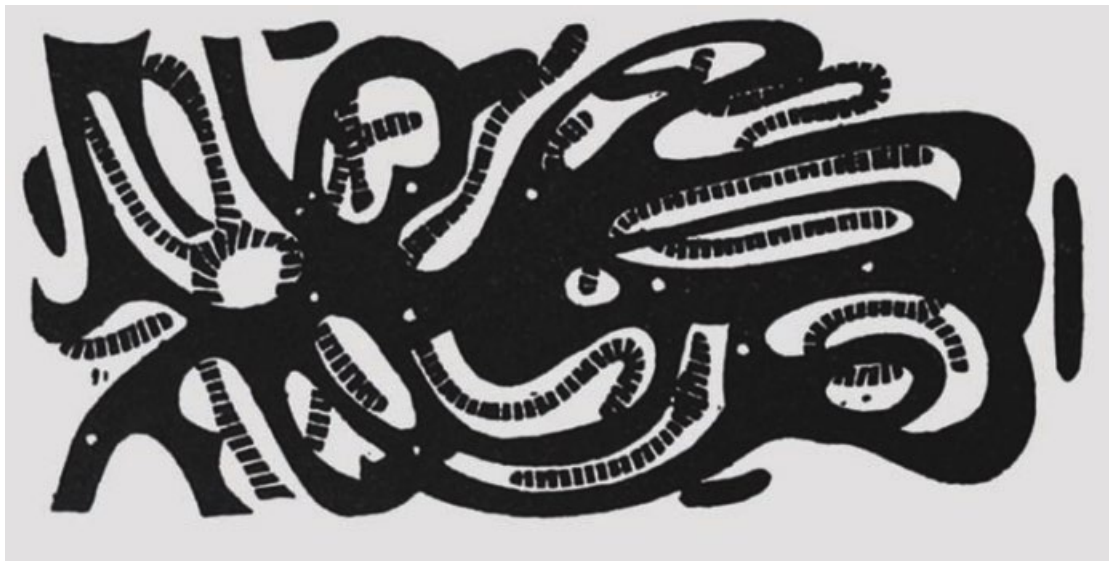


Fig 3. The Copy of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* preserved in Japan, derived from 近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て by Takuji Ogawa.⁷⁴

⁷² DZ 441.

⁷³ Jiang 2008, 51.

⁷⁴ Ogawa 1919, 413.

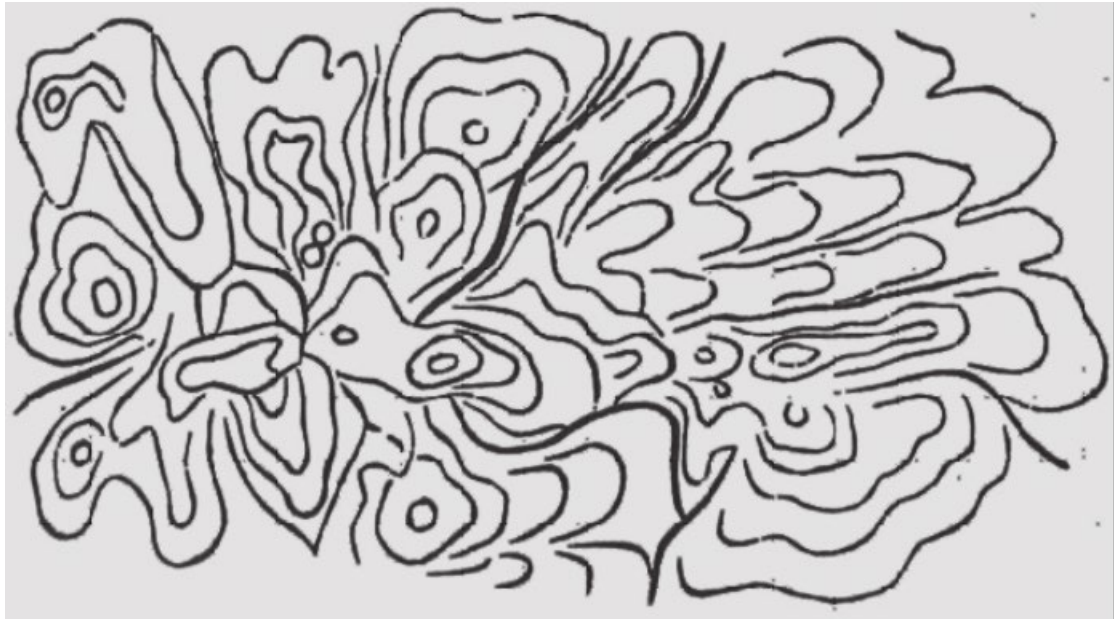


Fig 4. The modern contour line of Mount Tai, derived from *近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て* by Takuji

Ogawa.⁷⁵

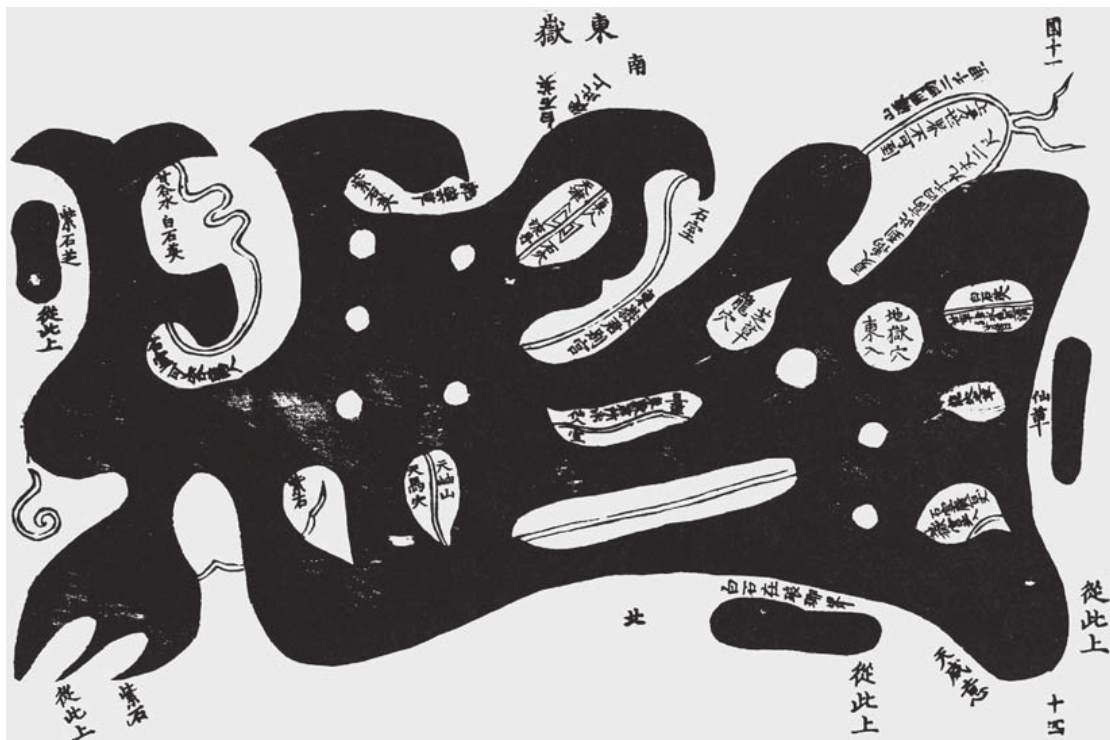


Fig 5. The *Dong Xuan Lingbao Guben Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* 洞玄靈寶古本東嶽真形圖 from the *Daoist Canon*.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ogawa 1919, 413.

⁷⁶ Huang 2014, 185; the original source is DZ 441, 17b-18a.



Fig 6. The *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* Collected by the National Museum of Japanese History (Rekihaku).⁷⁷

So far, We have no clues telling the exact period when *Zhenxing Tu* was used as a map rather than a ritualistic tool, while we can guarantee that the period must be earlier than the Six dynasties period, given that the materials recording the ritualistic power of *Zhenxing Tu* were seen from the Jin 晉 period (266-420 AD) at the earliest. *The Inner Biography of the Emperor Han Wu* 漢武帝內傳 is one of the earliest presenting textual recording on *Zhenxing Tu*, which is from the Six Dynasties period⁷⁸. It claims in the preface that the author of this text is Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, a courtier of the Emperor Han Wu. Nevertheless, according to recent studies, the author of this text is probably an anonymous Daoist in the Six dynasties period⁷⁹. It introduces the creation method and function of *Zhenxing Tu* in a mythological way, from the telling of Queen Mother of the West⁸⁰:

Queen Mother of the West said: “in the first year of Qingxu (a virtual honorific title of the year in the heavenly court) Period of the heavenly emperor, the supreme Daoist embodiment of the three heavens came down to observe the earth. He watched the length of rivers and oceans, checked the heights of holy mountains, set up the heavenly pillar and fitted into the principles of the earth,

⁷⁷ Jiang 2008, 51.

⁷⁸ Schipper 2004, 115-6.

⁷⁹ Jiang 2008, 36.

⁸⁰ Queen Mother of the West enjoys a sublime status in the Daoist theology and mythologies. Before she was worshiped as a Daoist immortal, her legends and images had already appeared in the classics and arts in the Han dynasty and pre-Han periods. The image of Queen Mother of the West was transformed from the human-like beast to a benevolent beautiful goddess whose power includes giving blessings, driving out evil spirits, helping the birth of children, achieving one’s wish, and bestowing immortality to believers. (Wu 1989, 261-302)

planted the five sacred peaks (on the earth) and planned auxiliary towns..... so he measured the area and length of the water, saw the shapes of rivers and mountains. With the rivers being curly, mountains being tall, (every being) meandering and winding, all beings look like written characters. Thus, names were made according to appearances and truths. The divine forms and shapes are secrets from the heavenly court, to the outside world they are the certification of the divinity. The immortals take them, just like taking the seals. (If) Daoists take them to pass through mountains and waters, all the deities will respect and serve. Although you (signifying Emperor Han Wu) are not pure, you visited mountains and rivers for several times; the will of asking and begging (shows that) you do not forget to pursue the Dao. I appreciate that you have this will, now I will instruct you (the divine diagrams), you should serve them prudently like serving your king or father. (If) you divulge this secret to mortals, you will suffer.”⁸¹

This statement connects the power of *Zhenxing Tu* with the Daoist creationism. In the narrative of Queen Mother of the West, *Zhenxing Tu* is created by Taishang 太上, the Supreme being and the personification of Dao, according to the shapes of the natural beings of the universe. In addition, *Zhenxing Tu* is the certification of the identification of Daoists or immortals. The ritualistic power of it enables the carriers to summon the deities to “respect and serve”. Because of this, the secret of *Zhenxing Tu* is not allowed to divulge to mortals, showing the feature that we call as “esoteric”. Although it is a mythological Daoist text, we can still see from the narrative that *Zhenxing Tu* is not yet abstracted, as it is derived from the shapes and forms of the natural beings observed by Taishang from heaven. Considering the similarity of *Zhenxing Tu* with modern contour lines, there is something true behind what we generally view as completely made-up mythology. It should be noted that the ritualistic power of *Zhenxing Tu* is also implicitly suggested by this text.

Along with the *Inner Biography of Emperor Han Wu*, the *Preface of the True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks* (Wuyue Xhenxing Xulun 五嶽真形序論), the *Inner Chapters of Baopu Zi-Xialan* (抱樸子內篇·遐覽), and the *Record of Ten Continents* 十洲記 all share a large number of common contents on the making and using of *Zhenxing Tu*. It

⁸¹ DZ 292.

is believed that they were created in the late Six Dynasties period⁸² at the latest.

As an image picturing the true form of Mount Tai which is one of the cavern heavens of Daoist sacred geography and the Five Sacred Peaks, *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* is a micro-representation of this micro-cosmos. Thus, in the minds of Daoists, this icon is the projection of the power of Mount Tai and partly holds its sacredness. This property enables *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* a perfect tool for rituals. It should be noted here that from the Han period to the Tang period, Mount Tai was locally believed to be a deity governing the life and death and the sanctuary managing the souls⁸³. The long history of the belief on Mount Tai bureaucratized the godship of this mountain, re-defined its existence as a bureaucracy of hell.⁸⁴ Based on this logic, Mount Tai has the power to govern ghosts in the minds of ancient Daoists. Its power functions in the way that it can manage the registers of death of mortals. For the early Celestial Master Daoists, the ones who wish to attain immortality shall conduct a ritual to remove their death registers on Mount Tai with the help of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu*.⁸⁵ In a Celestial Master Daoist text called *Chi Songzi Zhang Li* 赤松子章历, the incantation of this ritual goes that:

(I) Humbly follow the old rituals of the Celestial Master. Meeting the fortunate days for three times, and then remove my death register on Mount Tai, remove from the right list of (my) crimes and death penalties (on *Zhenxing Tu*); change the list of life, add (my) name to the left list, (to) become an immortal in the holy palace.⁸⁶

What is the name of the ritual to remove the death register from Mount Tai is still not clear, while we can find some traces in another Daoist text recording the instruction ritual of *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu*, which is believed by Wang Ka 王卡, a noted Chinese Daoist scholar, to have been created by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景(trad., 456-536 AD)⁸⁷. In *Shoushou Wuyue Tu Fa* 授受五岳圖法 (it's literal meaning is "instruction on the ritual

⁸² Schipper 2004, 265.

⁸³ Luo 2012, 76-82.

⁸⁴ Ledderose 2000, 164-167.

⁸⁵ Verellen 2003, 39.

⁸⁶ DZ 615.

⁸⁷ A Daoist leader and a politician in the Six dynasties period.

of images of the Five Sacred Peaks”), Tao Hongjing said:

According to the rituals on silks, (I) finished instructing someone with images and wish that all five deities can give him images and articles, to protect his body taking images, to remove sufferings and disasters, to make everything smooth and fortunate. If (the secret of images) was released or despised, all punishments should be conducted according to the chart..... Landing (on the earth) is the deity, who arrived and enjoyed the rituals. Since the sincerity has been shown, the deity, please give the fortune (to us). Begging for the Qi to cover the body, being filled up by honors and blessings, illness being cured, and evilness being removed. Enjoying the long life with good eyes and ears, with all souls being clear and reachable. All wishes being achieved, all things as our wishes.....From today, his name will be listed to three heavens, a memorial to the throne of the Supreme One, to remove his name from the death register, to add his name to the living register; the three dead gods (the foul deities living in human bodies and causing humans to die) will be cleaned and no more disasters will happen. Ordering the Five Sacred Peaks to send Five mountain deities, making thousands of mountains and hundreds of waters to send their servers, guarding the images and articles, protecting the carriers’ bodies, making him immortal and fortunate forever..... Today (we) use a fortunate day in a month, practicing fast and starting sacrificing, listing mistakes and apologizing for bad deeds, wishing the deities of the Five Sacred Peaks, to assist (managing) our destiny; messengers from the far away, pure and sincere land, deign to my dirty place, record my sincerity, forgive my shallowness, absolve all the crimes I made in the past, stop the sufferings and make blessings, absolve my death and save my life. (Images of the Five Sacred Peaks) make the divine light and spiritual Qi always shine in the body, make evil ghosts and ferocious people naturally fall. Wherever they point to, the wishes shall come true: long life with good sights, magical powers, and forever blessings to all my family members and my disciples.⁸⁸

From the statement above, we can see the strong ritualistic power of *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* in the Daoist world. This cited text is an incantation of Celestial Master Daoists when instructing *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* to disciples. There are two significant thoughts embodied by the text.

The first one is the mechanism of the efficacy of *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu*. This ritual

⁸⁸ DZ 266; Wang 2007, 334 – 337.

can help users summoning mountain deities at the beginning, and these deities will bless the instructed one to make him or her immortal. It means that *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu*, as the micro-representation of the Five Sacred Peaks, is the medium connecting Daoists with mountain deities. The second point is that the way that *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* can make someone immortal is to deregister his death and remove his crimes and sins with the help of mountain deities. It suggests that all of the Five Sacred Peaks have the power to decide the life and death of human beings. Considering that from the Han dynasty, the power of Mount Tai in managing the life and death of humans has been projected to all the Five Sacred Peaks⁸⁹, it is possible that all series of *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* acquired the ritualistic power of *Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* from a period no later than the Six dynasties period.

Based on the introduction above, we can see that the logic of the functioning mechanism of the ritual conducted with the help of *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* is similar to the mechanism of “sympathetic magic” or “imitative magic” from the sense of James Frazer’s theory in *The Golden Bough*, which functions based on the similarity between objects.⁹⁰ Because *Wuyue Zhenxing Tu* can be seen as the micro-representation of the Five Sacred Mountains, Daoists can borrow the sacredness of the Five Sacred Peaks with *Zhenxing Tu* as the medium. In this regard, *Zhenxing Tu*’s ritualistic power was promoted in the Six dynasties period and its cartographic function was shadowed. This line of transition is, to some degree, contradicted to the line of declination of Daoist rituals in the Six Dynasties period which is stated by the theory of “Daoist surrender”. Although the theory of “Daoist surrender” can be applied to the disappearance of “the rites of passage”(Guodu Yi 過度儀) and “charcoal-painting ceremonies” (Tutan Zhai 塗炭齋), it cannot be applied to the change of the power of *Zhenxing Tu*. So that we can conclude at the end of this chapter that the theory of “Daoist surrender” cannot fully cover the changes of Daoist rituals happened during the Six dynasties and Sui-Tang period.

⁸⁹ Robinet 2002, 124.

⁹⁰ Frazer 2012, 52.

Conclusion

As a theory of considerable explanatory power to the historical trend of Daoism during the Six dynasties and Sui-Tang period, the theory of “Daoist surrender” does cover a series of historical phenomena related to the change of Daoism, such as the disappearance of “the rites of passage” and “charcoal-painting ceremonies”. It is inevitable to say that to some degree, Daoists in this historical period made compromise to the imperial power. Nevertheless, this theory lacks the insight to another side of this part of Daoist history, that is, the Daoist lineages being a solid part of the power structure of the imperial regime, as seen from the construction of Daoist sacred geography.

It is mainly from three aspects that Ge Zhaoguang approaches to the conclusion that religious Daoism acknowledged its allegiance to the imperial power by castrating some of its most featured knowledge and skills: the transformation of the socio-militarized structure of twenty-four dioceses to the imagined geography of cavern heavens, the removal of significant rites and ceremonies, and the replacement of ritualistic knowledge by the metaphysical philosophies. This thesis argues at first that Daoists also implemented their power and expanded their knowledge to the spiritual world by constructing the system of cavern heavens. In addition, with their rites being a part of the official rituals of mountain ceremonies, Daoists are a strong support for the state regimes in consolidating their legitimacy. At last, as the line of the transition of the function of *Zhenxing Tu* is contradicted to the rule stated as “from rituals to philosophies”, the principle of the declination of rituals is not absolutely right.

It should be noted that this thesis is not to say the theory of “Daoist surrender” has no explanatory power to the Daoist history in the Six dynasties and Sui-Tang period. Considering the complexity of history, to claim that the legitimacy of knowledge is constructed by the discourse of power is only correct under specific circumstances. This thesis is to prove the conclusion that the theory of “Daoist surrender” cannot be universally applied to all the details presented in the Daoist history of the Six dynasties and Sui-Tang period.

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Figures

- Fig 1. The Tablet of Mount Tai’s Daoist Abbey, quoted from Lei, Wen. 2009. *Jiaomiao Zhiwai* 郊廟之外. Beijing 北京: Sanlian Shu Dian 三聯書店, p169. Accessed from 9th December 2019.
- Fig 2. Bamboo Slips of Wishes used in the 26th year of the Reign of Kaiyuan (713-741 AD), quoted from Lei, Wen. 2009. *Jiaomiao Zhiwai* 郊廟之外. Beijing 北京: Sanlian Shu Dian 三聯書店, p145. The original source is Liu, Yang. 2001. “Images for the Temple: Imperial Patronage in the Development of Tang Daoist Art.” *Artibus Asiae Lxi*, 2 (June): 189-262, fig 13-14.
- Fig 3. The Copy of Dongyue Zhenxing Tu preserved in Japan, derived from 近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て by Takuji Ogawa. See from Ogawa, Takuji 小川琢治. 1919. “Chinese pre-modern Cartographical Achievement 近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て.” *Geographical Journal* 地學雜誌 258(8): 407-418. Accessed from 10th June 2019.

Fig 4. The modern contour line of Mountain Tai, derived from 近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て by Takuji Ogawa. See from Ogawa, Takuji 小川琢治. 1919. “Chinese pre-modern Cartographical Achievement 近世西洋交通以前の支那地圖に就て.” *Geographical Journal* 地學雜誌 258(8): 413. Accessed from 10th June 2019.

Fig 5. *The Dong Xuan Lingbao Guben Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* 洞玄靈寶古本東嶽真形圖 from the *Daoist Canon*. Huang, Shishan 黃士珊. 2014. “Picturing the True Form: On the Daoist visualization of Mountain and Waster Landscape from the Perspective of Shanshui Painting and Shanshui Image 寫真山之形：從「山水圖」、「山水畫」談道教山水觀之視覺型塑.” *National Palace Museum research quarterly* 故宮學術季刊 31, no.1(June):185. Accessed from 10th June 2019.

Fig 6. *The Dongyue Zhenxing Tu* Collected by the National Museum of Japanese History (Rekihaku). Jiang, Sheng 姜生. 2008. “The Cartological Study on Dongyue Zhenxing Tu 東嶽真形图的地图学研究.” *Historical Studies* 历史研究 324, no. 6 (December): 34-51. Accessed from 10th June 2019.