



religions

Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits

Edited by
Jinhua Jia

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Religions*

Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits

Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits

Editor

Jinhua Jia

MDPI • Basel • Beijing • Wuhan • Barcelona • Belgrade • Manchester • Tokyo • Cluj • Tianjin



Editor

Jinhua Jia
University of Macau
China

Editorial Office

MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

This is a reprint of articles from the Special Issue published online in the open access journal *Religions* (ISSN 2077-1444) (available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special.issues/Sacri.MW>).

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

LastName, A.A.; LastName, B.B.; LastName, C.C. Article Title. <i>Journal Name</i> Year , <i>Volume Number</i> , Page Range.
--

ISBN 978-3-0365-5827-1 (Hbk)

ISBN 978-3-0365-5828-8 (PDF)

Cover image courtesy of Jinhua Jia

© 2022 by the authors. Articles in this book are Open Access and distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license, which allows users to download, copy and build upon published articles, as long as the author and publisher are properly credited, which ensures maximum dissemination and a wider impact of our publications.

The book as a whole is distributed by MDPI under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND.

Contents

About the Editor	vii
Preface to “Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits”	ix
Jinhua Jia	
Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2021 , <i>12</i> , 319, doi:10.3390/rel12050319	1
Yi Zhu	
The Bestowal of Noble Titles upon the Mountain and Water Spirits in Tang China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 229, doi:10.3390/rel13030229	17
Wen Lei and Luying Zhao	
Daoism and Sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks in Tang China (618–907)	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 398, doi:10.3390/rel13050398	29
Zhaojie Bai and Teng Yao	
Daoism and the Operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in the Late Imperial China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 159, doi:10.3390/rel13020159	53
Chenxi Huang and Siyu Chen	
The Northern Stronghold Sacrifice and the Political Legitimacy of Ethnic Minority Regimes in the Late Imperial China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 368, doi:10.3390/rel13040368	69
Yuanlin Wang	
The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2021 , <i>12</i> , 960, doi:10.3390/rel12110960	85
Yuanlin Wang and Aiyun Ye	
Evolution of the Sacrificial Ritual to the South Sea God in Song China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 939, doi:10.3390/rel13100939	101
Hua Yang	
Water Spirits of the Yangzi River and Imperial Power in Traditional China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 387, doi:10.3390/rel13050387	119
Teng Li	
The Sacred River: State Ritual, Political Legitimacy, and Religious Practice of the Jidu in Imperial China	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 507, doi:10.3390/rel13060507	133
Nicholas Morrow Williams	
A Constant Cascade: Ancient and Medieval Verse on the Four Waterways	
Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2022 , <i>13</i> , 166, doi:10.3390/rel13020166	149

About the Editor

Jinhua Jia

Jinhua Jia (Prof. Dr.), who received her PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder, is Adjunct Professor of the University of Macau, Research Professor of Wuhan University, and Chair Professor of Yangzhou University. Prof. Jia holds membership of the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), fellowship of the National Humanities Center (USA), and research associateship of the Harvard Divinity School, and she has taught at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the City University of Hong Kong, and Xiamen University. Her research interests include traditional Chinese religion, thought, literature, and women and gender studies. She is the author of a number of books and articles, including *From Ritual Culture to Classical Confucianism* (in Chinese, Oriental Publication Center 2020); *Gender, Power, and Talent: The Journey of Daoist Priestesses in Tang China* (Columbia University Press 2018); *Study on Classical Chan Buddhism* (in Chinese or Japanese, Oxford University Press 2010, Shanghai People's Press 2013, Kyūko Shoin 2018); *The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- through Tenth-Century China* (State University of New York Press 2006); and *Study on the Collections of Gathering and Groups of Poets in the Tang Dynasty* (in Chinese, Peking University Press 2001/2015). Prof. Jia has also edited/coedited a number of books, including *Li Zehou and Confucian Philosophy* (University of Hawaii Press 2018); *Buddhism and the Chinese Tradition* (in Chinese, Shanghai People's Publishing 2017); and *Gendering Chinese Religion: Subject, Identity, and Body* (State University of New York Press 2014).

Preface to “Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits”

Sacrifice to spirits of mountains and waters was already an established state ritual in the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) and continued in the Zhou to Qin dynasties (ca. 1046–206 BCE). From the Western Han to the Northern Song eras (206 BCE–1126 CE), imperial courts gradually formed a ritual system of sacrifice to great mountain and water spirits, which mainly consisted of the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五岳, i.e., Mt. Tai 泰山, Mt. Hua 華山, Mt. Heng 衡山, Mt. Heng 恒山, and Mt. Song 嵩山), five strongholds (*wuzhen* 五鎮, i.e., Mt. Yi 沂山, Mt. Wu 吳山, Mt. Guiji 會稽山, Mt. Yiwulü 醫巫閭山, and Mt. Huo 霍山), four seas (*sihai* 四海, i.e., the east, west, south, and north seas), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆, i.e., the Yangzi River 長江, Yellow River 黃河, Huai River 淮水, and Ji River 濟水). This system was maintained up to the end of the last imperial dynasty (the Qing) in 1911.

As state ritual, this sacrificial system was constructed by the Confucian ritual culture, which encompassed religious, ethical, and political domains. In practice, however, it gradually interacted and integrated with various religious traditions, such as Daoism, Buddhism, and folk belief, especially in its local manifestation and dissemination. Those eighteen great mountains and waters marked geographical and directional borders and territories modelled on the yin-yang and five-phase framework that helped shape Chinese people’s cosmographical understanding of the world. Together, they also constituted a set of sacred, symbolic spaces, which symbolized the sanctioned political legitimacy of the imperium and functioned as the loca for communication with the divine and the supernatural, as well as the media between religion and its secular context, state ideology and local belief, or various ethnic groups. In those mountains and waters, grand temples were built and rebuilt, state rituals of sacrificial ceremonies were performed year after year, local people’s routine religious worship and activities were conducted, and numerous essays and poems describing the landscapes and ritual ceremonies were written and inscribed on steles preserved inside the temples. Therefore, the theme of this volume involves a broad scope, including Confucian ritual culture, state sacrificial ceremonies, Daoism, Buddhism, local cults, cosmography, religious, political, and historical geography, and art and literature.

Starting with Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918), a considerable number of modern scholars have studied the five sacred peaks from various perspectives and yielded fruitful results. Major issues, however, are still subject to debate or require broader and deeper examination. As for the five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, as well as the whole state system of sacrifice to mountain and water spirits, a number of scattered studies published in the Chinese language have emerged thus far, while scholarship produced in other languages remains almost absent.

Reprinted from the Special Issue of *Religions* bearing the same title, which comprises ten articles published in 2021–2022, this volume represents the first comprehensive investigation of this important ritual system that lasted for two thousand years in imperial China and influenced the Chinese cultural tradition in various domains. By applying a combination of approaches from religious, political, historical-geographical, and cultural studies and discovering many new primary sources, especially stele inscriptions preserved in the sacrificial temples, this volume contributes to the study of traditional Chinese ritual institution and culture, the beliefs and practices of Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, and folk religious traditions, as well as their interaction and integration, and the political, sacred, and cosmographic geography. We hope that this volume will provide novel and useful information not only to scholars of Chinese studies and religious studies but also to college

students so as to expand their understanding of traditional Chinese religion and culture.

The volume begins with a comprehensive account on the formational process of the traditional state sacrificial system to mountain and water spirits. Written by Jinhua Jia, Professor of Yangzhou University and the University of Macau, chapter one describes how the major geographical landmarks were gradually integrated with religious beliefs and ritual-political institutions to become symbols of territorial, sacred, and political legitimacy, and how they helped maintain the unification and government of the traditional Chinese imperium for two thousand years. A historical map of the locations of the sacrificial temples dedicated to the eighteen mountain and water spirits is appended for the reader's visual reference, in order to aid in their understanding of this chapter and later chapters.

In chapter two, Zhu Yi, Professor of Fudan University, provides a general examination on the Tang rulers' bestowal of noble titles upon twenty-eight mountain and water spirits, including the five sacred peaks, four strongholds (in the Tang, only four strongholds were designated), four seas, and four waterways. Zhu effectively demonstrates that, when confronting violent political changes, the rulers yearned for blessings and protection from these natural deities, while in the context of the expansion of monarchical power in the secular world, they also sought to establish their authority in the realm of divinity.

The remaining eight chapters are arranged in the conventional order of sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways. Authored by Wen Lei, Professor of Beijing Normal University, and Luying Zhao, a PhD candidate of Arizona State University, chapter three presents an important study on Daoism's interaction with the state sacrificial ritual for the five sacred peaks in the Tang dynasty. The authors convincingly argue that the establishment of the shrines for the Perfected Lords on these sacred peaks, which was suggested by the Daoist master Sima Chengzhen, manifested Daoists' efforts to transform the state sacrificial system, while the imperial authority in turn permeated the Daoist sacred geographical framework.

The next two chapters turn to the research on the strongholds. In chapter four, Zhaojie Bai, Associate Professor of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, and Teng Yao, Associate Professor of Xinzhou Normal University, present a sound investigation of Daoism's influence on the operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in the late imperial period. Through the discovery and analysis of previously overlooked stele inscriptions preserved in the temple, they offer a meticulous account of how and why Daoist priests replaced the official personnel in the operation of the temple, with the result that it not only served as an official place of worship but also gained the function and identity of a Daoist abbey and folk temple.

Written by Chenxi Huang, Assistant Professor of Anhui University, and Siyu Chen, MA graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, chapter five also examines stele inscriptions preserved in the Northern Stronghold Temple in an original study of its relationship with the ethnic minority regimes in the late imperial period. As the authors insightfully argue, due to its geographical location, in the Yuan and Qing dynasties Mt. Yiwulü, the northern stronghold, achieved prominence among the five strongholds and became an instrument used by the Mongolians and Manchus for claiming the legitimacy of their political regimes, demonstrating how the ethnic minority rulers successfully utilized the old sacrificial ritual to serve their new political agenda.

As for the seas, we have chapters six and seven studying the south sea. These two chapters are sister articles, investigating the evolution of the sacrificial ritual to the south sea spirit. Authored by Yuanlin Wang, Professor of Guangzhou University, chapter six focuses on the Tang dynasty. Applying various kinds of historical sources, the chapter carefully describes how the suburban ritual evolved into both the suburban and local ritual forms, and how the role and identity of the ritual performer

changed from the early to late Tang. The reciprocal relationship between Buddhism and the belief in the south sea spirit, in its local manifestation, is also discussed. Written by Yuanlin Wang and Aiyun Ye, Assistant Professor of Guangzhou University, chapter seven focuses on the Song dynasty. During the Northern Song, the south sea spirit and its temple were conferred with noble titles for several times, and its role in blessing and ensuring local stability was stressed. Because of its geographical location, the power of the south sea spirit was further enhanced during the Southern Song. The temple became the largest of its kind in the Lingnan region, local folk beliefs were incorporated into the canonized ritual, and many “detached palaces” of the spirit were built in other places for local people’s worship.

The last three chapters concentrate on the waterways. In chapter eight, Hua Yang, Professor of Wuhan University, offers a sophisticated study on the practice of sacrifice to the water spirits of the Yangzi River and its many tributaries and lakes. As the author methodically demonstrates, the sacrifices offered to these spirits were gradually incorporated into the codes of state ritual and became symbols of the religious and political legitimacy of the imperial regimes. Since the majority of the dynasty capitals were located in the north, the act of worshipping the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin implied recognition by, and blessing from, the southern divinities, and symbolized the political and military administration over the south.

Chapter nine, authored by Teng Li, Assistant Professor of Shijiazhuang Tiedao University, provides a comprehensive study of the sacrifice to the Ji River spirit. Although it vanished long time ago, the Ji River had always been an indispensable part of the state ritual system and continuously received regular sacrifice, representing a symbol and mechanism of political legitimacy. Through the use of solid historical and local records, this chapter also successfully demonstrates that, after the Song dynasty, the Ji River spirit was gradually transformed into a regional protector of local society, and its cult interacted and integrated with other religious beliefs, such as Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion.

Chapter ten, with its innovative topic and approach, draws a perfect conclusion for this volume. Authored by Nicholas Morrow Williams, Associate Professor of Arizona State University, the chapter conducts a fascinating study of ancient to medieval verses on the four waterways. The chapter first describes the transformation of the literary representation of China’s great rivers from the *Book of Songs* and *Elegies of Chu* to the establishment of the divine status and political ramifications of the four waterways in the Western Han state ritual system. The author then expertly analyses several representative poetic works, revealing how their authors celebrated the numinous powers and divine inhabitants of the great rivers.

The completion of this Special Issue owes much to all the authors’ support and dedicated work. I am grateful to editors and assistants of the Religions editorial office, especially Ms. Ester Dong for her initiation of the Special Issue and Ms. Gloria Qi for her guidance and help throughout the journey. My sincere gratitude also goes to the many anonymous reviewers who spent their precious time reading the draft versions of the articles/chapters and offering numerous insightful comments for their revision.

From 2017 to 2019, I led three teams of field trip to investigate the Temple of the Ji River Spirit (Jidu miao, inside which the Shrine of the North Sea Spirit is also attached), the Temple of the Eastern Stronghold Spirit (Dongzhen miao) and Mt. Yi, and the Temple of the Northern Stronghold Spirit (Beizhen miao) and Mt. Yiwulü. Several authors who contributed to this volume, including Chenxi Huang, Zhaojie Bai, Teng Li, and Siyu Chen, took part in one or more of the field trips. We investigated the history and present context of these temples and mountains, collected stele inscriptions and other local records, observed local religious activities, and even witnessed a

fascinating temple fair. The experience of these field trips has no doubt greatly facilitated our research on these sacred spaces. I would like to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for sponsoring all the trips.

Jinhua Jia

Editor

Article

Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits

Jinhua Jia ^{1,2}¹ College of Humanities, Yangzhou University, Yangzhou 225009, China; jhja@um.edu.mo² Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

Abstract: Sacrifice to mountain and water spirits was already a state ritual in the earliest dynasties of China, which later gradually formed a system of five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, which was mainly constructed by the Confucian ritual culture. A number of modern scholars have studied the five sacred peaks from different perspectives, yielding fruitful results, but major issues are still being debated or need to be plumbed more broadly and deeply, and the whole sacrificial system has not yet drawn sufficient attention. Applying a combined approach of religious, historical, geographical, and political studies, I provide here, with new discoveries and conclusions, the first comprehensive study of the formational process of this sacrificial system and its embodied religious-political conceptions, showing how these geographical landmarks were gradually integrated with religious beliefs and ritual-political institutions to become symbols of territorial, sacred, and political legitimacy that helped to maintain the unification and government of the traditional Chinese imperium for two thousand years. A historical map of the locations of the sacrificial temples for the eighteen mountain and water spirits is appended.

Keywords: five sacred peaks; five strongholds; four seas; four waterways; state ritual system of sacrifice; Chinese religion; Chinese historical geography

Citation: Jia, Jinhua. 2021.Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050319>

Academic Editor: Mario Poceski

Received: 9 March 2021

Accepted: 26 April 2021

Published: 30 April 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Sacrifice to mountain and water spirits was already a state ritual in the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–ca. 1046 BCE) and continued in the Zhou to Qin dynasties (ca. 1046–206 BCE). From the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE) to the Northern Song (960–1126) eras, imperial courts gradually formed a ritual system of mountain- and water-directed state sacrifices, consisting of the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五岳),¹ five strongholds (*wuzhen* 五鎮), four seas (*sihai* 四海), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆), which was mainly constructed by the Confucian ritual culture. This system lasted through the end of the last imperial dynasty (Qing) in 1911.

This essay studies the formational process of this sacrificial system and its implied religious-political conceptions, focusing on two major issues. The first issue is the origin of the five sacred peaks, the earliest and most significant components of the system. Starting with Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918), a number of modern scholars have studied the five sacred peaks from various perspectives, yielding fruitful results,² but major problems are still being debated or need to be plumbed more broadly and deeply. The second issue is about the formation of the full sacrificial system of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways. While the Western language scholarship has almost overlooked this system, some Chinese and Japanese scholars have studied its different stages and aspects. Yet a comprehensive description of the formational process of this important system is still lacking. Applying a combined approach of religious, historical, geographical, and political studies, and drawing upon both transmitted and excavated sources, in what follows I examine these two issues with new arguments and conclusions.

2. Origin of the Designation and Composition of the Five Sacred peaks

The origin of the five sacred peaks is confusedly and complicatedly documented in various early sources, about which some scholars have conducted general literature reviews.³ Those reviews are inspiring but inadequate, and each scholar has offered a different interpretation and conclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake a new, brief yet comprehensive review and explication here.

In the Shang dynasty, sacrifice to mountain and water spirits was already a state ritual, as seen in the oracle bone inscriptions (Chen 1988, pp. 594–96; Chang 2010, pp. 159–62; Liu 2017, pp. 528–30). One of the most frequent objects in the sacrifice was explained as *yue* 岳, referring to great mountain (Sun 1992, 1.26), about which scholars have agreed but with different opinions as to whether *yue* refers to general mountains (Ding 1988, p. 407) or to a specific mountain, such as Mount Taiyue 太岳山 (also named Mount Huo 霍山) in Shanxi (Qu 1960, pp. 62–67), Mount Song 嵩山 in Henan (Sun 1992, 1.20; Allan 1991, pp. 99–100; Liu 2017, pp. 511–12), or Mount Hua 華山 in Shaanxi (Guo 1983, pp. 93–94; Zhan 1992, p. 68).

Subsequently, the literature of the Zhou (ca. 1046–256 BCE) to the early Han contains new and different references to *yue*, roughly comprising two groups. In the first group, the term *yue*, four-*yue* 四岳, or great-*yue* 大岳 is related to clan ancestors, genealogies, and ancestral spirits. In the *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the States; Lai 2000, 3.138), the term four-*yue* refers to the legendary figure Gonggong's 共工 four grandsons, who helped Yu the Great 大禹 in taming the waters and were thus awarded noble titles with the surname Jiang 姜. Uncovering the veil of the legendary figures, here four-*yue* can be interpreted as referring to the ancestors of the Jiang tribe. In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo's Commentary, Zhuang 22, Yin 11, Xiang 14), *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry, no. 259), the *yue*, great-*yue*, or four-*yue* are also described as the ancestors or ancestral spirits of several clans derived from the Jiang tribe, such as Xu 許, Shen 申, and Fu 甫 (Gu and Liu 2005, pp. 77–79). In addition, in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents; Kong and Kong 2000, 2.47–58, 3.65), the legendary sage king Yao 堯 had conversations with the four-*yue*, and another sage king Shun 舜 met with the lords of the four-*yue* daily. Again, uncovering the legendary veil in both records, the four-*yue* can be interpreted as referring to clan chiefs/lords who were in charge of the lands in the four quarters.

In the second group, *yue* or four-*yue* refers to mountains or mountain spirits. The *Zuozhuan* (Zhao 4) lists the term four-*yue* together with the names of mountains and places as perilous passes over the nine precincts (*jiuzhou* 九州). Scholars have explained this kind of four-*yue* as referring to the great mountains in the four quarters generally (Zhou 2012, pp. 52–57) or to the borders defining the territory of the Zhou (Kleeman 1994, p. 228). Furthermore, in the covenant documents excavated from Houma 侯馬 and Wenxian 溫縣, the Jin 晉 state in the Spring-Autumn period often requested Yueshen 岳神 (Spirit of Yue) as a witness and named the spirit as Yuegong 岳公 (Sire of Yue). This Yuegong may refer to the spirit of Taiyue Huoshan 太岳霍山 (Grand Yue of Mount Huo), the mountain worshiped by the Jin people (Wei 2010, pp. 76–83; Zhao and Lang 2017, pp. 1–5).

The *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) encompasses both groups by recording seven different *yue*: *chongyue* 崇岳 (lofty great mountain), *beiyue* 北岳 (northern great mountain), *yueshan* 岳山 (peak of great mountain), *yue* (great mountain), *zhuyue* 諸岳 (varied great mountains), *nanyue* 南岳 (southern *yue*), and *xiyue* 西岳 (western *yue*). The first five refer to great mountains and the last two to clan ancestors (Yuan 1985, pp. 29, 60, 93, 123, 260, 272, 299).

In summary, in early sources there are roughly nine different implications of the term *yue*, four-*yue*, or great-*yue*—namely, as Mount Taiyue or Mount Huo, the spirit of Mount Huo, Mount Song, Mount Hua, other names of mountains, clans and lineages, clan ancestors and ancestral spirits, clan chiefs and lords, and a general name for great mountains or borders in the four quarters. Can we reconcile so many meanings of *yue*? Here I offer a new hermeneutical solution from the perspective of ancient people's mountain worship and worldview for reconciling and correlating all these different implications. Since all

mountains were regarded as spirits by ancient people,⁴ the names of mountains were also the names of spirits. Furthermore, because humans often settled their communities in mountain areas, local clans were inseparably connected to mountains in belief, life experience, and administration. Thus, *yue*, four-*yue*, or great-*yue* referred to both mountains and the spirits of the mountains, as well as extending to the clans, clan chiefs and lords, and clan ancestors and ancestral spirits who dwelled in the mountain areas. Consequently, these seemingly different records are in fact interrelated with one another. Moreover, this concept of correlating human communities with the natural environment and supernatural divinities presents the early characteristic of ancient Chinese correlative thinking and beliefs, which later developed into the heaven-human resonance, object-subject connection, and the all-embracing system of yin-yang and five-phase cosmology during the late Warring States to early Han period.

None of those early records discussed above refers to the designation and composition of the five-*yue*/five sacred peaks, and all the four-*yue* mentioned are also unrelated to the composition of the five sacred peaks. The early texts that do mention the five sacred peaks are the three Confucian ritual classics, the *Yili* 儀禮 (Classic of Ritual), *Zhouli* 周禮 (Ritual of Zhou), and *Liji* 禮記 (Records of Ritual). Since all these classics contain records concerning sacrifices to the five sacred peaks and four waterways, many modern scholars have followed the traditional view that this sacrificial scheme was already established in the Zhou dynasty. However, when we examine relevant sources carefully, we find this view is unsubstantial.

First, scholars have now generally agreed that although these classics contain contents and materials of the Western Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period, they were probably completed during the period from the Warring States to the early Han, and some portions may include ideal designs for the unified imperium by scholars of the Qin to early Han, not necessarily actual religious-political institutions.

Second, the records concerning the five sacred peaks and four waterways in these texts are inconsistent and contradict each other. For example, the *Liji* (Zheng and Kong 2000, 11.396–397, 12.451) says “great mountains and waters are not for enfeoffment” 名山大澤不以封 in one place and “the regional lords offer sacrifices to the great mountains and waters in their lands” 諸侯祭名山大川之在其地者 in another. The same classic (Zheng and Kong 2000, 11.425–426) also records that the king of Zhou held inspections on Mount Tai 泰山 and the southern, western, and northern sacred peaks, without naming Mount Tai as the eastern sacred peak and without mentioning the central sacred peak.⁵ The *Zhouli* (Zheng and Jia 2000, 33.1020–1034) lists nine strongholds in nine precincts, in which four of the five sacred peaks are included, but without naming them as sacred peaks.

Third, although the sacrifice to mountains and waters became ritualized during the Zhou era, the king of Zhou possessed the mountains and waters “all under the heaven” mostly in name, and he could in fact offer sacrifice to most of them only at a distance or on inspection tours. The regional lords were the ones who actually owned the mountains and waters within their lands, so that they could offer sacrifices to them both at a distance and in person. Both transmitted and excavated early texts contain extensive records concerning regional lords’ sacrifices to the mountains and waters in their lands during the Spring-Autumn and Warring States periods (Yang 2012, pp. 287–313; Yang 2011, pp. 4–26; Niu 2020, pp. 20–24; Tian 2015, pp. 258–63), but none of them uses the terms of *yue*/sacred peak and *du*/waterway, with the three ritual classics as exceptions. In the two texts compiled during the late Warring States period, the *Guanzi* 管子 (Master Guan Zhong) emphasizes the relationship between mountain-water and government but never mentions the five sacred peaks and four waterways; the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Annals of Sire Lü) uses the five-phase scheme to explain the sacrificial rituals and governmental activities but never mentions the five sacred peaks that embody this scheme. The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* uses a scheme of five classics to list mountains in the five quarters of south, west, north, east, and central and describes in detail the sacrifices made to mountains, but it never mentions the designation of the five sacred peaks and the sacrifice to them. All these point

to a reasonable conclusion that the sacrificial scheme to the five sacred peaks (and the four waterways) had not been established in the pre-Qin period.

Neither did this scheme appear in the Qin dynasty. The Qin abolished the old system of enfeoffment and established a new prefectural system under a centralized government. As a result, sacrifices to the mountains and waters were unified, ending the pre-Qin situation of regional lords sacrificing to those located in their own lands. The Qin defined seven mountains and four rivers in the central Shaanxi plain and five mountains and two rivers in the eastern region as great mountains and rivers and added other minor mountains and rivers to form a state sacrificial network (Sima 1963, 28.1372–73; Yang 2011, pp. 4–10; Niu 2020, pp. 26–32; Tian 2015, pp. 277–93). This network included four of the five sacred peaks (without Mount Heng 衡山, the later southern sacred peak) and all the four waterways, but none of them were named as *yue*/sacred peak or *du*/waterway (Gu 1933/2004, pp. 12–23). This fact tells us that no such sacrificial scheme of the five sacred peaks and four waterways existed yet in the Qin. In addition, when Ying Yin 嬴駟, the lord of the Qin state, offered sacrifices to Mount Hua (the later western sacred peak) to pray for the healing of his illness, he did not use the term *yue*/sacred peak (Li 2006a, pp. 343–61). The stele inscription of sacrifice to Mount Tai (the later eastern sacred peak) by the First Emperor of Qin (r. 247–210 BCE) also contains no mention of the term sacred peak (Sima 1963, 6.242–47).

Then, when did the designations of the five sacred peaks and four waterways first appear in datable texts? Here for the first time, I find that these designations are first seen in the *Xinyu* 新語 (New Discourses) by Lu Jia 陸賈 (240–170 BCE) dated between 206 BCE and 195 BCE. The text reads (Wang 1986, 1.6, 1.13):

The land is partitioned by the five sacred peaks, divided by the four waterways, schemed by marshes, and connected by springs. 地封五岳，畫四瀆，規洿澤，通水泉。

At that time, the four waterways were blocked, and the flood caused damage. Therefore, Yu dredged the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers, guiding the four waterways to flow into the seas. 當斯之時，四瀆未通，洪水爲害。禹乃決江疏河，通之四瀆，致之于海。

Lu Jia's *New Discourses* was commissioned by Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206–195 BCE), founder of the Han dynasty, and written when Liu was on the throne (Sima 1963, 97.2697–701). It is thus reasonable to speculate that the designations of the five sacred peaks and four waterways may have been the geographical layout for a unified imperium formed roughly from the late Warring States to 195 BCE.

Still, Lu Jia did not list the specific compositional elements of the five sacred peaks and four waterways. The earliest extant identification of the specific mountains associated with the five sacred peaks is found in Mao Heng's 毛亨 commentary to the *Classic of Poetry*, also dating roughly from the late Warring States to the early Han:

Yue refers to the four sacred peaks: Mount Tai of the eastern sacred peak, Mount Heng of the southern sacred peak, Mount Hua of the western sacred peak, and Mount Heng of the northern sacred peak. In the Yao era, the Jiang clan were made the four lords and in charge of the sacrifices to the four sacred peaks, fulfilling the duties of regional lords. Then, in the Zhou era, there were the Fu, Shen, Qi, and Xu clans/states. 岳，四岳也。東岳岱，南岳衡，西岳華，北岳恒。堯之時，姜氏爲四伯，掌四岳之祀，述諸侯之職。于周則有甫，有申，有齊，有許也。(Mao et al. 2000, 18.1419)

Mao Heng thus identified four of the sacred peaks but without the central sacred peak. He related these mountains with different implications of the term four-*yue* from earlier texts, including clan chiefs/lords and clan lineages descended from the Jiang tribe, thus showing traces of transition from the four-*yue* in literature to the actual four sacred peaks in geography. The *Book of Documents* describes Shun's seasonal inspection tours to Mount Tai and the southern, western, and northern sacred peaks; although it does not clearly name Mount Tai as a sacred peak, Shun's visit to it in the springtime implies its match

with the eastern sacred peak according to the five-phase theory. Likewise, Kong Anguo's commentary on this record named the same specific mountains of the four sacred peaks as Mao Heng did (Kong and Kong 2000, 3.65).⁶ The first designation of Mount Song as the central sacred peak is seen in Emperor Wudi's decree issued in the first year of Yuanfeng (110 BCE; Ban 1964, 6.190–91). The *Erya* 爾雅 (Correct Words; Guo and Xing 2000, 7.239) lists all the five sacred peaks, but it follows Wudi to identify Mount Huo as the southern sacred peak (see further below). Thus, in accordance with these texts, the compositional elements of the five sacred peaks likely gradually took shape in the period from the late Warring States to the mid-Western Han.

The change from four sacred peaks to five sacred peaks with the addition of the central sacred peak was obviously influenced by the five-phase theory, which emerged in the late Warring States and matured in the Western Han (Robson 2009, pp. 32–42). Mountains and waters were symbols of state territories, and this was especially true in the case of magnificent mountains. The four sacred peaks were related to the four lands (*situ* 四土) in the four cardinal directions/quarters (*sifang* 四方). The four lands recorded in the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang era embodied the combination of various relationships between the Shang kingdom and its bordering states/tribes (Keightley 1979–1980, pp. 25–34; Wang 2000). In the Zhou era, the four great mountains represented the regional states in the four quarters guarding the central court, which was a symbol of the relationship between the Zhou court and the regional lords. The addition of the central sacred peak by the mid-Western Han symbolized a unified and centralized imperium and bureaucracy. More importantly, during the Western Han there were continuing disputes concerning the cyclical revolution of the five powers (*wude* 五德). For example, in the reign of Emperor Wendi (r. 180–157 BCE), scholars argued about Han holding the power of Earth, Water, or Fire; by the reign of Emperor Wudi, Ni Kuan's 倪寬 (d. 103 BCE) and Sima Qian's opinion was adopted, and Han's power was confirmed as Earth (Sima 1963, 26.1260; Ban 1964, 25b.1270–71). Earth represented the central, and thus the addition of Mount Song as the central sacred peak was a part of the ritual-political construction of cosmological power and centralized imperium.

The composition of the four waterways was probably completed in the same period as well. The *Shiji* quotes a record from the "Tang gao" 湯誥 (Announcement of Tang) in the *Book of Documents*:

In the east is the Yangzi River; the north, the Ji River; the west, the Yellow River; and the south, the Huai River. With the four waterways regulated, all people had their homes. 東爲江，北爲濟，西爲河，南爲淮，四瀆已修，萬民乃有居。 (Sima 1963, 3.97)⁷

Scholars have generally agreed that, in the *Book of Documents*, those chapters with contents before the Zhou dynasty were mostly composed later, probably from the Warring States to the Western Han. The *Erya* (Guo and Xing 2000, 7.250) also records the same names of the four waterways.

3. Emperor Wudi's Taking Back of the Sacred Peaks and the Establishment of the Sacrificial Scheme of the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Waterways

In the early Han, the Qin prefectural system was changed and a combined system of enfeoffment and prefecture was adopted. At that time, kings of princedoms possessed vast territories and were powerful in their own right (Ban 1964, 14.393–94; Yan 2007, pp. 10–19; Zhou 1987, pp. 6–7). Because many great mountains and waters lay within the territories of the princedoms, the kings once again offered sacrifices to the mountains and waters in their lands, largely returning to the situation of the pre-Qin era. For instance, the *Shiji* records:

At the beginning, the famous mountains and great rivers in princedoms were offered sacrifices by supplicants of the kings, not by officials of the emperor. 始名山大川在諸侯，諸侯祝各自奉祠，天子官不領。 (Sima 1963, 28.1380–81)

The “Xiyue Huashan bei” 西岳華山碑 (Stele of the Western Sacred Peak of Mount Hua) established in 161 also states:

When Emperor Gaozu first ascended throne, he abolished the excessive sacrifices of the Qin. Emperor Taizong (i.e., Wendi) followed suit and ordered relevant offices to manage it. Those mountains and waters within the princedoms were offered sacrifices by the kings seasonally. 高祖初興, 改秦淫祀。太宗承循, 各詔有司。其山川在諸侯者, 以時祠之。 (Gao 1997, p. 270)

Thus, we can infer that although the designations of the five sacred peaks and four waterways already appeared in the early Han, these had not yet officially entered the state sacrificial system.

Later, both Emperors Jingdi (r. 157–141 BCE) and Wudi made great efforts to weaken the power of the kings and reduced their territories to only one prefecture each, so that princedoms gradually became equal to prefectures and the kings remained in name only. As a result, the centralized administration of the prefectural system in the Qin era was restored (Yan 2007, pp. 19–30; Zhou 1987, pp. 6–7). Among those imperial efforts, Emperor Wudi’s gradual taking back of the jurisdictional and sacrificial right of the five sacred peaks was of primary importance for the final establishment of the state sacrificial system to mountains and waters. Previous scholarship has not paid attention to this major event yet, which is examined carefully as follows.

First, about the western and central sacred peaks, Mount Hua was located in Huayin 華陰 and from the beginning belonged to the metropolitan area of the Han court (Ban 1964, 28.1543–44); in 205 BCE, Shen Yang 申陽, the king of Henan, surrendered to Emperor Gaozu and thereupon Mount Song returned to the central court (Ban 1964, 1.33). Although these two sacred peaks were thus under the management of the central court before Emperor Wudi, it was he who in 110 BCE ordered temples to be built on both mountains to begin the imperial sacrifice to the mountain spirits (Gao 1997, p. 270; Ban 1964, 6.190–91).

Second, the other three sacred peaks were actually taken back step by step by Emperor Wudi from the princedoms. As for Mount Tai of the eastern sacred peak, according to the *Shiji*, sometime between 122 BCE and 117 BCE the king of Jibei 濟北 knew that Emperor Wudi would be performing the grand sacrificial rituals of *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 on Mount Tai and so he presented the mountain in his territory to the emperor (Sima 1963, 28.1387, 12.458). Since the emperor made the decision of the *feng* and *shan* rituals first, the king in fact had no choice but to return the mountain.

The situation of the southern sacred peak meanwhile was quite complicated. The *Shiji* records that Emperor Wendi abolished the princedoms of Qi 齊 and Huainan 淮南 and ordered the grand supplicant (*taizhu* 太祝) to offer sacrifice to the major mountains there; the annotator Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (fl. 736) commented on this record that these mountains referred to Mount Tai in Qi and Mount Tianzhu 天柱 in Huainan (Sima 1963, 28.1380–81). However, both the *Shiji*’s record and Zhang’s commentary were incorrect. As just studied, it was not until Emperor Wudi’s reign that Mount Tai was returned to the central court. Furthermore, in 174 BCE, Emperor Wendi put Liu Zhang 劉長, the king of Huainan, to death for political conspiracy and then appointed Liu Xi 劉喜 to succeed upon the throne in 168 BCE (Ban 1964, 4.121). In 164 BCE, Wendi then divided Huainan into three portions and appointed Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BCE) as the king of Huainan, Liu Bo 劉勃 as the king of Hengshan 衡山, and Liu Ci 劉賜 as the king of Lujiang 廬江. Subsequently, in 153 BCE Emperor Jingdi transferred Liu Ci to Hengshan and changed Lujiang to a prefecture (Ban 1964, 44.2144; Zhou 1987, pp. 46–57). Because Mount Tianzhu, also named Mount Qian 灊山 or Mount Huo 霍山, was located in Lujiang prefecture, it was therefore not until 153 BCE that this mountain returned to the central court. In 122 BCE, Emperor Wudi ordered that Hengshan princedom become a prefecture (Ban 1964, 44.2156) and so Mount Heng, designated the southern sacred peak by early Han scholars of classics such as Mao Heng and Kong Anguo, also became a possession of the central court. Then in an imperial tour to Mount Tianzhu in 106 BCE, Emperor Wudi redesignated this mountain as the southern sacred peak. The *Shiji* records:

In the winter of the next year [106 BCE], the emperor inspected the Nan prefecture and reached Jiangling, from where he went east. He ascended Mount Tianzhu in Qian district and named it the southern sacred peak. 明年冬, 上巡南郡, 至江陵而東. 登禮灑之天柱山, 號曰南岳. (Sima 1963, 28.1387; Ban 1964, 25.1243, 6.196)

Finally, in 114 BCE Emperor Wudi took back Mount Heng 恒山 of the northern sacred peak. The *Shiji* records this event as follows:

The king of Changshan committed a crime and was removed from his office. The emperor enfeoffed his younger brother in Zhending for carrying on their ancestral sacrifice and changed Changshan to a prefecture. Then, the five sacred peaks were all in imperial prefectures. 常山王有罪, 遷, 天子封其弟于真定, 以續先王祀, 而以常山爲郡. 然後五岳皆在天子之郡. (Sima 1963, 28.1387, 12.458; Ban 1964, 14.417)

Both Hengshan (Mount Heng) and its location in the Hengshan principedom were changed to Changshan 常山 to avoid Emperor Wendi's name taboo (Liu Heng 劉恒).

In sum, Emperor Wudi's recovery of the jurisdictional and sacrificial right of the five sacred peaks can be summarized as follows:

1. Mount Hua originally belonged to the imperium's metropolitan area; Wudi built a temple there to begin the imperial sacrifice in 110 BCE.
2. Mount Song returned to the central court in 205 BCE; Wudi built a temple there to begin the imperial sacrifice in 110 BCE.
3. Mount Heng 衡山 returned to the central court after Wudi abolished the principedom of Hengshan in 122 BCE; Mount Tianzhu/Huo returned to the central court in 153 BCE and was redesignated as the southern sacred peak by Wudi in 106 BCE.
4. Mount Tai was presented to Wudi in 122–117 BCE by the king of Jibei.
5. Mount Heng/Chang 恒山/常山 returned to the central court after Wudi abolished the principedom of Changshan in 114 BCE.

Therefore, at the time when Wudi performed the *feng* and *shan* sacrificial rituals to Mount Tai in 110 BCE, all five sacred peaks belonged to the imperial prefectures; then in 106 BCE, the emperor redesignated Mount Tianzhu/Huo as the southern sacred peak, which differed from the designation of Mount Heng as the southern sacred peak by the early-Han scholars. In fact, Mount Heng was located in the south of China and conformed to the principle of the five-phase scheme that matched the five sacred peaks with the five quarters; Mount Tianzhu, on the other hand, was located in the central region of Han territory and thus was not appropriate to be called the southern sacred peak. The reason for Wudi's redesignation was probably because Mount Heng itself was remote and so inconvenient for imperial tours, as suggested by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), Gan Bao 干寶 (ca. 286–336), and Xu Lingqi 徐靈期 (d. 474).⁸

Clearly, Wudi had his own political and religious agenda in reclaiming his jurisdictional and sacrificial right to the five sacred peaks before performing the *feng* and *shan* rituals on Mount Tai. Just like the First Emperor of Qin, Wudi's real purpose for the *feng* and *shan* rituals was to report to heaven and earth his great achievements in unifying the imperium and to announce his sovereign power sanctioned by heaven's mandate. The five sacred peaks symbolized the layout of the four quarters surrounding the center, a sign for the unification and centralization of the imperium. Wudi abolished principedoms, suppressed riots, and expanded Han territory. Taking back the five sacred peaks was also a symbol of his achievements, demonstrating that the central court already held both the divine authority and jurisdictional right. Furthermore, the emperor was fond of making requests of the divine; his interest in imperial tours and sacrifices to the mountains and waters were often accompanied by his aim of seeking the spirits and immortals (Tian 2015, pp. 316–17).

The direct result of Emperor Wudi's taking back of the five sacred peaks was the official establishment of the sacrificial scheme of the five sacred peaks and four waterways by Emperor Xuandi (r. 74–49 BCE). According to the *Hanshu*, in the third month of the first

year of Shenjue (61 BCE), the sacrifice to the five sacred peaks and four waterways was officially established as an annual regularity in state ritual, which was to be held four times a year (Ban 1964, 25.1249; Gu 1933/1996, p. 581). Meanwhile, sacrifices to the sacred peaks and waterways were also attached to other kinds of major state ceremonies (Niu 2020, pp. 39–42).

Although the following Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern dynasties (220–589) were mostly a division period, many of the states continued this sacrificial scheme with Mount Tianzhu/Huo as the southern sacred peak in order to implement the ritual ceremonies and sanction their political legitimacy. Those ceremonies were usually attached to major sacrifices to heaven and earth or were performed distantly, and only the sacred peaks and waterways located within each dynasty's territory were actually offered sacrifices. In the third year of Taichang (418), the Northern Wei even established a Temple of Five Sacred Peaks and Four Waterways (Wuyue sidu miao 五岳四瀆廟), placing all the nine spirits together in order to hold sacrificial ceremonies conveniently (Wei 1974, 108.2737; Liang 2009, pp. 205–18; Niu 2020, pp. 50–101).

Then, in 589 Emperor Wendi of Sui (r. 589–604) “made Mount Heng in the south the southern sacred peak and demoted Mount Huo to be just a famous mountain” 以南衡山為南岳，廢霍山為名山 (Li 1992, 3.69). The cosmographical layout designed by the early-Han scholars, which better suited the geographical deployment of the four quarters surrounding the center and the five-phase cosmological framework, was thereupon resumed. This scheme of five sacred peaks with Mount Heng as the southern sacred peak was subsequently followed by all later dynasties.

Some scholar has contended that the Northern Zhou 北周 had already changed the southern sacred peak to Mount Heng, according to a record in the *Wushang biyao* 無上秘要 (Supreme Secret Essentials; Niu 2020, p. 128). However, although the *Wushang biyao* was compiled under the order of Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou (r. 561–578), it is an important Daoist encyclopedia, and the record concerned uses the Daoist title of the Lord of the Five Sacred Peaks (Wuyuejun 五岳君) to name the spirits, describing them with the corresponding elements of the five-phase framework (Wushang biyao 1988, 18.43, 19.47). Under this framework, Mount Heng is obviously more suitable to the elements related to the south, as it is actually located in the far south. Therefore, this text reflects the Daoist list of the five sacred peaks but does not necessarily represent the state ritual scheme of the Northern Zhou; otherwise the Sui that directly followed the Northern Zhou would not have to make the change.

4. The Five Strongholds, Four Seas, and the Finalization of the State Sacrificial System

Although scholars have studied the sacrificial scheme of the five strongholds and four seas respectively, there are still some controversial issues, as well as the lack of a comprehensive description. This section offers a new explication of the controversial issues and a full picture of the finalization of the sacrificial system, including all of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways.

The designation of “stronghold” is first seen in the *Zhouli*, which records in one place “four strongholds and five sacred peaks” 四鎮五岳 without giving the names of specific mountains, and “nine strongholds in nine precincts” in another place (Zheng and Jia 2000, 22.697–698, 33.1020–1034). The latter record includes Mount Guiji 會稽山 in Yangzhou 揚州, Mount Heng 衡山 in Jingzhou 荊州, Mount Hua in Yuzhou 豫州, Mount Yi in Qingzhou 青州, Mount Tai in Yanzhou 兗州, Mount Yue 岳山 (i.e., Mount Wu) in Yongzhou 雍州, Mount Yiwulü 醫巫閭山 in Youzhou 幽州, Mount Huo 霍山 in Jizhou 冀州, and Mount Heng 恒山 in Bingzhou 并州. In his commentary to this record, Zheng Xuan divided the “nine strongholds” into four strongholds (Mounts Guiji, Yi, Yiwulü, and Huo) and five sacred peaks (Mounts Tai, Heng, Hua, Wu, and Heng; Zheng and Jia 2000, 33.1020–34). Obviously, Zheng was simply trying to reconcile the two different records in the *Zhouli*, without providing any other early evidence; his listing of Mount Wu as one of the five sacred peaks but without Mount Song did not fit any composition of this designation.

Some scholar asserts that Zheng Xuan followed the two sets of five sacred peaks in the *Erya* (Niu 2014, pp. 37–44). However, although the *Erya* does list another set of five mountains (Hua, Wu, Tai, Heng, and Heng), it does not designate this set as the five sacred peaks. Xing Bing’s commentary to this set seems to be reasonable: “To record these five mountains at the beginning [of the section] is to list the famous mountains of the middle kingdom” 篇首載此五山者，以爲中國之名山也 (Guo and Xing 2000, 7.231).

During the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern dynasties, sacrifices to the five sacred peaks and four waterways were often accompanied by more or fewer strongholds (Fang 1974, 19.584–585; Wei 1973, 6.108, 6.114; Liang 2009, pp. 205–18; Wang and Zhang 2011, pp. 181–85). Then, in 594 Emperor Wendi of Sui ordered that temples be established in four strongholds, including Mount Yi as the eastern stronghold, Mount Guiji as the southern stronghold, Mount Yiwulü as the northern stronghold, and Mount Huo as the Jizhou stronghold; in 596, another temple was built on Mount Wu as the western stronghold (Wei 1973, 7.140). Together, the Sui maintained a designation of the five sacred peaks and four strongholds (Wei 1973, 2.45–46), excluding Mount Huo and without naming it as the central stronghold. I suppose that such a designation probably followed the five sacred peaks and four strongholds recorded in the *Zhouli* and did not dare to go beyond this classic. The Tang dynasty followed the same designation and sacrificial scheme (Xiao 2000, p. 199; Liu 1975, 21.820). It is notable that Mount Huo enjoyed a respectful position under the Tang, for it was the ruling house’s place of origin, with the legend of the mountain spirit providing divine power for establishing the new dynasty. In 751, the spirit of Mount Huo was given the title of Yingshengong 應聖公 (Duke of Responding to the Sage; Du 1984, 46.263; Liu 1975, 1.23; Wang 1987, 120.1873). Yet it was not listed as the central stronghold, which, in my opinion, was again possibly influenced by the *Zhouli*.

Initially the Song dynasty followed suit and listed only the four strongholds (Wang 1987, 120.1873). Then in the sixth year of Qiande (968), Mount Huo was added as the central stronghold to become five strongholds, but “soon the sacrifice to the five strongholds was again lacked” 既而五鎮之祭復闕 (Li 1987b, 9.13–15). Some scholars had not noticed this fact and inexactly contended that the sacrifice to the five strongholds had continued ever since 968 (Wang and Zhang 2011, p. 183). In fact, it was not until the sixth year of Taiping xingguo (981) that the designation and sacrificial scheme of the five strongholds was finalized (Toqto’a 1977, 102.2485–86).

The worship of the sea spirits originated in ancient times as well. The Chinese character “hai” 海 refers both to shallow sea areas near the continent and to large lakes. In the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Master Zhuang Zhou), the spirit of the north sea was called Ruo 若 and the spirit of the south sea Shu 儻. In the Chu songs, the sea spirit was also called Ruo. Meanwhile, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* provides detailed accounts of the names and characteristics of the spirits of the east, west, south, and north seas (Wang 2006, pp. 16–19). The Lu 魯 state made sacrifice to the east sea within its territory, and the Qin state made sacrifices to the four seas (Zuozhuan, Xi 31; Chen 2001, 11.574). According to the *Shiji*, a Sihaici 四海祠 (Shrine of the Four Seas) was established in the Yong 雍 area (Sima 1963, 28.1375; Li 2006b, p. 146). Such a sacrifice was probably a distant ritual to the spirits of the seas. Some scholar asserts that the four seas here referred to the four quarters, the same meaning as “all under heaven,” with the reason being that the Yong area was in the Qin region and far away from the seas (Niu 2016, pp. 245–49). This assertion is not substantial because the Qin state did make sacrifice to the four seas, as mentioned above.

When the First Emperor of Qin made his imperial tours to the east, he offered many distant sacrifices to the spirits of seas along the coast (Sima 1963, 6.223–94). From 61 BCE, the sacrifice to the five sacred peaks and four waterways was often accompanied by sacrifice to the sea spirits (Ban 1964, 25.1249), while after, the Han sacrifices to the sea or four seas were also attached to other court sacrificial rituals (Wang 2006, pp. 30–49). During the Sui, a temple for the east sea was built in Guiji district and another for the south sea was built in Nanhai 南海 town (present-day Guangzhou, Guangdong; Wei 1973, 7.140). In the Tang, the sacrifice to the east sea was changed to Laizhou 萊州 (present-day Laizhou,

Shandong), and the sacrifices to the west sea and north sea were performed distantly in the temples of the Yellow River and Ji River, respectively (Du 1984, 46.1282). As for the north sea, there had been no definite location, with either the Bohai 渤海 or lakes and areas in the remote north referred to, for example, Lake Baikal and Lake Balkhash. Then in the reign of Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722) of the Qing dynasty, the sacrifice to the north sea was changed to the performance of distant rituals in Shengjing 盛京 (in present-day Shenyang, Liaoning), while in the reign of Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1795), a temple for the north sea was established in the Shanghai pass 山海關 (Qinding Daqing huidian zeli 1987, 83.616; Qinding Huangchao wenxian tongkao 1987, 100.244–45). As for the west sea, it generally referred to lakes on China's western border, and a temple was once built beside Lake Qinghai 青海湖 under the Qing (Wang 2006, pp. 1–15; Wang 2015, pp. 24–31; Niu 2016, pp. 245–49).

From the time of the Southern-Northern dynasties to the Sui, the designation of *yue-zhen-hai-du* 岳鎮海瀆 (sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways) often appeared in records of sacrificial rituals, but it was then used as a general term rather than as a specific system (Wei 1973, 6.110, 7.126–27, 130, 148). According to the available literature, it was not until the reigns of Emperors Gaozu (r. 618–626) and Taizong (626–649) in the early Tang era that the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, four seas, and four waterways became an official designation (Du 1984, 46.1282; Liu 1975, 21.819–20).

Eventually, with the addition of the central stronghold, in 981 the state sacrificial system of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways was finalized. According to the *Songshi* 宋史 (Song History; Toqto'a 1977, 102.2485–86), on the day of the beginning of spring, sacrifices were offered to Mount Tai of the eastern sacred peak at the Daiyue Temple 岱岳廟 in Yanzhou 兗州 (present day Tai'an, Shandong), Mount Yi of the eastern sacred peak at the Dongzhen Temple 東鎮廟 in Yizhou 沂州 (present day Linqu, Shandong), the east sea at Donghaishen Temple 東海神廟 in Laizhou 萊州 (present day Laizhou, Shandong), and the Huai River at Huaidu Temple 淮瀆廟 in Tangzhou 唐州 (present day Tongbai, Henan). On the day of the beginning of summer, sacrifices were offered to Mount Heng of the southern sacred peak at Nanyue Temple 南岳廟 in Hengzhou 衡州 (present day Hengyang, Hunan), Mount Guiji of the southern stronghold in Nanzhen Temple 南鎮廟 in Yuezhou 越州 (present day Shaoxing, Zhejiang), the south sea at Nanhaishen Temple 南海神廟 in Guangzhou 廣州 (present day Guangzhou, Guangdong), and the Yangzi River at Jiangdu Temple 江瀆廟 in Chengdufu 成都府 (present day Chengdu, Sichuan). On the day of the beginning of autumn, sacrifices were offered to Mount Hua of the western sacred peak at Xiyue Temple 西岳廟 in Huazhou 華州 (present day Huayin, Shaanxi), Mount Wu of the western stronghold at Xizhen Temple 西鎮廟 in Longzhou 隴州 (present day Pinglu, Shanxi), and the west sea and Yellow River at Hedu Temple 河瀆廟 in Hezhongfu 河中府 (present day Puzhou, Shanxi; the sacrifice to the west sea was performed distantly). On the day of the beginning of winter, sacrifices were offered to Mount Heng of the northern sacred peak and Mount Yiwulü of the northern stronghold at Beiyue Temple 北岳廟 in Dingzhou 定州 (present day Quyang, Hebei; the sacrifice to Mount Yiwulü was performed distantly) and the north sea and Ji River at Jidu Temple 濟瀆廟 in Mengzhou (present day Jiyuan, Henan; the sacrifice to the north sea was performed distantly). On the day of the earth god, sacrifices were offered to Mount Song of the central sacred peak at Zhongyue Temple 中岳廟 in Henanfu 河南府 (present day Dengfeng, Henan) and Mount Huo of central stronghold at Zhongzhen Temple 中鎮廟 in Jinzhou 晉州 (present day Huozhou, Shanxi).

Figure 1 marks the locations of fifteen temples of sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways in the Northern Song, among which the northern stronghold, north sea, and west sea were outside of the Northern Song territory, and their spirits were attached to Beiyue Temple, Jidu Temple, and Hedu Temple respectively, to which sacrifices were performed distantly. The Northern Stronghold Temple (Beizhen Temple 北鎮廟) was first built in the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), the North Sea Temple (Beihai Temple 北海神廟) and West Sea Temple (Xihai Temple 西海神廟) were built in the Qing dynasty,

and the Beiyue Temple was moved from Dingzhou to Hunyuanzhou 渾源州 (present day Hunyuan, Shanxi) in the early Qing. Since these four temples were not in the Northern Song territory, I mark them with light color.



Figure 1. Temples of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways in the Northern Song (The Northern Song map is based on Tan 1982–1987, v. 6.1).

To sacrifice to each mountain and water spirit on their corresponding day of beginning of spring, summer, autumn, winter, or the earth god (eighteen days before the beginning of autumn) was a ritual scheme called “greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five suburbs” (*wujiao ying qi* 五郊迎氣), which started from the Sui-Tang period. This scheme was based on the five-phase cosmology and matched the five quarters of the mountains and waters with the five seasons.⁹

5. Conclusions

In this essay, I apply plentiful primary and secondary sources to examine issues concerning the formation of the traditional Chinese state ritual system of sacrifice to mountain and water spirits. Five major discoveries and conclusions can be drawn from the examination.

First, I clarify the confused records and scholarly debates concerning the origin of the designation and sacrifice of the five sacred peaks. In the documents from the Shang dynasty to the Western Han, we see different records concerning the term *yue*, four-*yue*, or great-*yue*, variedly referring to individual or general mountains, spirits of mountains, clan genealogies, clan chiefs and lords, and clan ancestors and ancestral spirits, to which scholars have offered different interpretations. I propose a new argument that all these can be explained and reconciled with the ancient Chinese people's mountain worship and worldview: because all mountains were perceived as spirits, the names of mountains were also the names of spirits, and local human communities established close connections with their mountains. Thus, these terms were used to refer to both mountains and the spirits of the mountains, as well as extending to the clans, clan chiefs/lords, and clan ancestors/ancestral spirits who dwelled in the mountain areas.

Second, because the three ritual classics describe a sacrificial scheme of five sacred peaks and four waterways, many scholars believe this scheme had already been established in the Zhou dynasty. I retort to this opinion by indicating that in the Zhou era the king possessed all the great mountains and waters only in name, while the regional lords held the jurisdictional and sacrificial right to mountains and waters within their territories. The sacrificial scheme of the five sacred peaks and four waterways was not actually implemented during this period. The unified Qin imperium (221–206 BCE) then began integrating the sacrifices to the great mountains and waters but still without yet using the designations of *yue*/sacred peak and *du*/waterway.

Third, I indicate that the first datable appearance of the designations of the five sacred peaks and four waterways is seen in the *New Discourses* composed by Lu Jia between 206 BCE and 195 BCE. Thus, these designations were probably formulated from the late Warring States to 195 BCE and represented the cosmographical design for the unified imperium modeled on the five-phase theory that formed during this period.

Fourth, most importantly, I for the first time reveal Emperor Han Wudi's significant action of taking back the sacrificial right of the five sacred peaks from regional princedoms, with his agenda of holding both the divine legitimacy and jurisdictional right for the unification and centralization of the imperium. The emperor's action led to the official establishment of the sacrificial scheme of the five sacred peaks and four waterways in 61 BCE.

Fifth, I provide solutions for several controversial issues concerning the eventual completion of the sacrificial system of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways in the Northern Song in 981 CE, therefore offering a full picture of its formational process.

Thus, mainly constructed by the Confucian ritual culture, those geographical landmarks were gradually integrated with religious beliefs and ritual-political institutions to become a symbolic system of territorial, sacred, and political legitimacy and to help maintain the unification and centralization of the traditional Chinese imperium for about two thousand years.¹⁰

Funding: This article draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The Chinese character *yue* 岳 was first translated as “sacred mountain” by sinologists. Edward Schafer coined the term “marchmount” to translate *yue* so as to connote “the ancient belief that these numinous mountains stood at the four extremities of the habitable world, the marches of man’s proper domain, the limits of the ritual tour of the Son of Heaven” (Schafer 1977, p. 6). This term has since been generally followed by scholars. Recently, James Robson has used a new translation of “sacred peak” for *yue* (Robson 2009, pp. 334–35, n31). I agree with Robson that “sacred peak” is a clearer translation of *yue* and adds one more reason that *yue* originally meant “great mountain” and that its derived implications are much more complicated than what Schafer stated (see further below).
- ² See mainly Chavannes (1910), Gu (Gu 1933/2004, Gu 1933/1996), Sakai (1937, pp. 70–118), Qu (1960, pp. 62–67), Kroll (1983, pp. 223–60), Yoshikawa (1991, pp. 215–78), Kleeman (1994, pp. 226–38), Tang (1997, pp. 60–70), Wu (2005, pp. 616–41), Robson (2009), Zhou (2012, pp. 52–57), Tian (2015), and Niu (2020).
- ³ See mainly Gu (Gu 1933/2004, Gu 1933/1996), Qu (1960, pp. 62–67), Kleeman (1994, pp. 226–38), Tang (1997, pp. 60–70), Wu (2005, pp. 616–41), Robson (2009), Zhou (2012, pp. 52–57), Niu (2020, pp. 3–13).
- ⁴ In both transmitted and excavated texts, we see numerous records of worship and sacrifice to famous or nameless mountain spirits. The most typical records are seen in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which lists in detail sacrifices and jade ware offered to mountain spirits of all quarters.
- ⁵ This record is about the same as the legendary sage king Shun’s inspection recorded in the “Shundian” of the *Book of Documents* mentioned previously, showing that both should be later formulations.
- ⁶ Both the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Han History*) mix the original text with Kong Anguo’s commentary when citing this passage (Sima 1963, 28.1355–56; Ban 1964, 25.1191). This mixed citation, with the fact that Kong Anguo identified Mount Heng as the southern sacred peak, not Mount Huo as designated by Emperor Wudi in 106 BCE, demonstrates that Kong’s commentary was not simply contrived by Mei Ze 梅賾 (also named Mei Yi 梅頤; fl. 317–322) in the Eastern Jin, as many Qing-dynasty and modern scholars assumed, but possibly had earlier documentary support. In fact, in recent decades a number of scholars have argued about the reliability of the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書 (*Book of Documents in Old Scripts*) and Kong Anguo’s commentary. For a summary of this new scholarship, see Chen (2013, pp. 109–13).
- ⁷ This quotation is not seen in the transmitted *Book of Documents*.
- ⁸ The *Erya* records Mount Huo as the southern sacred peak, which obviously follows what Emperor Wudi established. To this record, Xing Bing’s commentary cites Guo Pu’s words to suggest that Wudi’s decision was made because Mount Heng was too remote (Guo and Xing 2000, 7.239). The *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*Readings for His Highness Compiled in the Taiping Xingguo Reign-Period*; Li 1987a, 39.9) offers a similar saying by citing Guo Pu’s words, Gan Bao’s 干寶 *Shoushen ji* 搜神記 (*Records of Seeking for Divinities*), and Xu Lingqi’s 徐靈期 (d. 474) *Nanyue ji* 南岳記 (*Records of the Southern Sacred Peak*). See Tang (1997, pp. 60–70). There have been great disputes by both traditional and modern scholars concerning the two southern sacred peaks (for summaries of these disputes, see Robson 2009, pp. 57–89; Niu 2014, pp. 37–44; Tian 2015, pp. 306–17), but the original events and factors were in fact quite clear and simple.
- ⁹ For a detailed discussion of this ritual, see Niu (2017, pp. 105–12). The ritual ceremonies of the sacrifice to those mountain and water spirits were rich and complicated and had continued changing and being enriched, as recorded in official histories, stele inscriptions preserved in the temples, literati’s works, and local annals. Because of the limited space, this essay is unable to cover this topic.
- ¹⁰ During this long period, this sacrificial system gradually interacted and integrated with other religious traditions such as Daoism, folk cults, and Buddhism, especially in its local manifestation and dissemination. Those sacred mountains and waters that are located in the borders also became the loca for the interaction and fusion of the beliefs of various ethnic groups, and some of the spirit worshipers were even disseminated abroad. These are topics that require further research.

References

- Allan, Sarah. 1991. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ban, Gu 班固 (32–92). 1964. *Hanshu* 漢書 [*Han History*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Chang, Yuzhi 常玉芝. 2010. *Shangdai zongjiao jisi* 商代宗教祭祀 [*Religious Sacrifice in the Shang Dynasty*]. Beijing: China Social Science Press.
- Chavannes, Édouard. 1910. *Le T’ai chan: Essai de monographie d’un culte chinois*. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Chen, Mengjia 陳夢家. 1988. *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷虛卜辭綜述 [*Comprehensive Discussion of the Oracle Bone Inscriptions from the Yin Ruins*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

- Chen, Qiyu 陳奇猷. (Ed.) 2001. *Lüshi chunqiu xinjiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 [New Collation and Exegesis on the Annals of Sire Lü]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Chen, Yifeng 陳以鳳. 2013. Jin sanshinian de wanchu guwen Shangshu ji Kong Zhuan yanjiu shuyi 近三十年的晚出古文尚書及孔傳研究述議 [Examination of the Studies on the Old-Script Book of Documents and Kong Anguo's Commentary in Recent Three Decades]. *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 [Journal of Studies on Ancient Texts] 2: 109–13.
- Ding, Shan 丁山. 1988. *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhua kao* 中國古代宗教與神話考 [Study on Ancient Chinese Religion and Myth]. Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe.
- Du, You 杜佑 (735–812). 1984. *Tongdian* 通典 [Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fang, Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–648). 1974. *Jinshu* 晉書 [Jin History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Gao, Wen 高文. 1997. *Hanbei jishi* 漢碑集釋 [Collected Exegeses on Han-Dynasty Stele Inscriptions]. Kaifeng: Henan University Press.
- Gu, Jiegang 顧頡剛. 1933/1996. Zhou yu yue de yanbian 州與岳的演變 [Development of Zhou and Yue]. In *Zhongguo xiandai xueshu jingdian: Gu Jiegang juan* 中國現代學術經典: 顧頡剛卷 [Modern Chinese Academic Classics: Gu Jiegang Volume]. Edited by Gu Chao 顧潮 and Gu Hong 顧洪. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Education Publishing House, pp. 551–85.
- Gu, Jiegang. 1933/2004. Siyue yu wuyue 四岳與五岳 [Four-yue and Five-yue]. In *Shanyue yu xiangzheng* 山岳與象徵 [Mountains and Symbolism]. Edited by Qi You 游琪 and Xicheng Liu 劉錫成. Beijing: The Commercial Press, pp. 12–23.
- Gu, Jiegang, and Qiyu Liu 劉起鈺. 2005. *Shangshu jiaoshi yilun* 尚書校釋譯論 [Collation, Exegesis, Translation, and Discussion on the Book of Documents]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Guo, Moruo 郭沫若. 1983. *Buci tongzuan* 卜辭通纂 [Comprehensive Compilation of Oracle Bone Inscriptions]. Beijing: China Science Publishing and Media.
- Guo, Pu 郭璞 (276–324), and Xing Bing 邢昺. 2000. *Erya zhushu* 爾雅注疏 [Exegeses on the Correct Words]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Keightley, David N. 1979–1980. The Shang State as Seen in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. *Early China* 5: 25–34.
- Kleeman, Terry. 1994. Mountain Deities in China: The Domestication of the Mountain God and the Subjugation of the Margins. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114: 226–38. [CrossRef]
- Kong, Anguo 孔安國 (156 BCE–74 BCE), and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648). (Eds.) 2000. *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 [Correct Meanings of the Book of Documents]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Kroll, Paul W. 1983. Verses from on High: The Ascent of T'ai Shan. *T'oung Pao* 69.4/5: 223–60. [CrossRef]
- Lai, Kehong 來可泓. (Ed.) 2000. *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解 [Collected Exegeses on the Discourses of the States]. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.
- Li, Fang 李昉 (925–996). (Ed.) 1987a. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Readings for His Highness Compiled in the Taiping Xingguo Reign-Period]. *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Li, Tao 李燾 (1115–1184). 1987b. *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Long Sequel of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government]. *Siku quanshu* edition. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Li, Linfu 李林甫 (683–753). (Ed.) 1992. *Tang liudian* 唐六典 [Compendium of the Sixfold Administration of the Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Ling 李零. 2006a. Qin Yin daobing yuban de yanjiu 秦駟禱病玉版的研究 [Study on the Jade Plaque of Qin Yin's Praying for the Healing of Illness]. In *Zhongguo fangshu xukao* 中國方術續考 [Subsequent Study on Chinese Recipes and Techniques]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, pp. 343–61.
- Li, Ling 李零. 2006b. Qin Han cizhi tongkao 秦漢祠時通考 [General Examination of Shrines and Altars in the Qin and Han]. In *Zhongguo fangshu xukao*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, pp. 142–56.
- Liang, Mancang 梁滿倉. 2009. *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wuli zhidu kaolun* 魏南北朝五禮制度考論 [Study on the Five-Ritual System during the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties]. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press.
- Liu, Xu 劉昫 (888–947). 1975. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Liu, Zhao 劉釗. 2017. Tan chutu wenxian zhong youguan jisi shanchuan de ziliao 談出土文獻中有關祭祀山川的資料 [Sources of Sacrifice to Mountains and Rivers in Excavated Materials]. *Guwenzi yu gudai shi* 古文字與古代史 [Paleography and Ancient Chinese History] 5: 528–30.
- Mao, Heng 毛亨, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), and Kong Yingda. (Eds.) 2000. *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 [Correct Meanings of the Classic of Poetry with Mao Heng's Annotation]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Niu, Jingfei 牛敬飛. 2014. Lun Hengshan nanyue diwei zhi chengli 論衡山南岳地位之成立 [On the Establishment of Mount Heng as the Southern Sacred Peak]. *Tribune of Social Sciences* 2: 37–44.
- Niu, Jingfei. 2016. Lun xianqin yilai guanfang jisi zhong de hai yu sihai 論先秦以來官方祭祀中的海與四海 [On Official Sacrifice to Sea and Four Seas since Pre-Qin]. *Religious studies* 3: 245–49.
- Niu, Jingfei. 2017. Lun zhonggu wuyue jisi shijian zhi yanbian 論中古五岳祭祀時間之演變 [On the Development of the Sacrificial Times to the Five Sacred Peaks in the Medieval Period]. *Studies in World Religion* 5: 105–12.
- Niu, Jingfei. 2020. *Gudai wuyue jisi yanbian kaolun* 古代五岳祭祀演變考論 [Study on the Development of the Ancient Sacrifice to the Five Sacred Peaks]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Qinding Daqing huidian zeli* 欽定大清會典則例 [Imperial Approved Examples of General Institutions in the Great Qing]. 1987. *Siku quanshu* edition. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Qinding Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 欽定皇朝文獻通考 [Imperial Approved General Examination of Our Grand Dynasty's Literature]. 1987. *Siku quanshu* edition. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

- Qu, Wanli 屈萬里. 1960. Yueyi jigou 岳義稽古 [The Early Meanings of yue]. *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 2: 62–67.
- Robson, James. 2009. *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue) in Medieval China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Sakai, Tadao 酒井忠夫. 1937. Taisan shinko no kenkyu 泰山信仰の研究 [Study on Mount Tai Worship]. *Shichō 思潮 [Thought Tendency]* 7: 70–118.
- Schafer, Edward. 1977. *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sima, Qian 司馬遷 (b. ca. 145 BCE). 1963. *Shiji 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Sun, Yirang. 1992. *Qiwen juli 契文舉例 [Cases of Oracle Bone Inscriptions]*. Jinan: Qilu Press.
- Tan, Qixiang 譚其驤. 1982–1987. *Zhongguo lishi dituji 中國歷史地圖集 [The Historical Atlas of China]*. Beijing: SinoMaps Press.
- Tang, Xiaofeng 唐曉峰. 1997. Wuyue dili shuo 五岳地理說 [On the Geography of the Five Sacred Peaks]. *Jiuzhou 九州 [Nine Precincts]* 1: 60–70.
- Tian, Tian 田天. 2015. *Qin Han guojia jisi shigao 秦漢國家祭祀史稿 [History of State Sacrifice in the Qin-Han Period]*. Beijing: Joint Publishing.
- Toqto'a 托托 (1314–1356). 1977. *Songshi 宋史 [Song History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Liqi 王利器. (Ed.) 1986. *Xinyu jiaozhu 新語校注 [Collation and Exegesis on the New Discourses]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296). 1987. *Yuhai 玉海 [Sea of Jade]*. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe.
- Wang, Aihe. 2000. *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2006. *Guojia jisi yu haishang silu yiji: Guangzhou Nanhaishenmiao yanjiu 國家祭祀與海上絲路遺跡: 廣州南海神廟研究 [State Sacrifice and the Relics of Maritime Silk Road: Study on the Temple of the South Sea Spirit in Guangzhou]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Zijin 王子今. 2015. Qin Han ren shijie yishi zhong de Beihai he Xihai 秦漢人世界意識中的北海和西海 [The North Sea and West Sea in the World View of Qin-Han People]. *Journal of Historical Science* 3: 24–31.
- Wang, Yuanlin, and Mu Zhang 張目. 2011. Guojia jisi tixi xia de zhenshan geju kaolue 國家祭祀體系下的鎮山格局考略 [Study on the Strongholds under the State Sacrificial System]. *Social Science Journal* 1: 181–85.
- Wei, Zheng 魏徵 (580–643). 1973. *Suishu 隋書 [Sui History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Shou 魏收 (507–572). 1974. *Weishu 魏書 [Wei History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Kebin 魏克彬 (Crispin Willams). 2010. Houma yu Wenxian mengshu zhongde Yuegong 侯馬與溫縣盟書中的岳公 [The Yuegong in the Covenant Documents Excavated from Houma and Wenxian]. *Wenwu 文物 [Cultural Relics]* 10: 76–83.
- Wu, Hong 巫鴻. 2005. Wuyue de chongtu: Lishi yu zhengzhi de jiniandai 五岳的衝突: 歷史與政治的紀念碑 [Conflicts of the Five Sacred Peaks: Monuments of History and Polity]. In *Liyi zhong de meishu 禮儀中的美術 [The Fine Arts of Rituals and Ceremonies]*. Beijing: Joint Publishing, pp. 616–41.
- Wushang biyao 無上秘要 [Supreme Secret Essentials]. 1988. *Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]*, no. 1138. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe.
- Xiao, Song 蕭嵩. (Ed.) 2000. *Datang Kaiyuanli 大唐開元禮 [Kaiyuan Ritual of the Great Tang]*. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House.
- Yan, Gengwang 嚴耕望. 2007. *Zhongguo difang xingzheng zhidushi: Qin Han difang xingzheng zhidu 中國地方行政制度史: 秦漢地方行政制度 [History of Chinese Regional Administration System: Qin-Han Regional Administration System]*. Reprint. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Yang, Hua 楊華. 2011. Qin Han diguo de shenquan tongyi 秦漢帝國的神權統一 [The Unification of Divine Authority in the Qin-Han Imperium]. *Historical Research* 5: 4–26.
- Yang, Hua. 2012. Chudi shuishen yanjiu 楚地水神研究 [Study on Water Spirits of the Chu State]. In *Guli xinyan 古禮新研 [New Study on Ancient Rituals]*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, pp. 287–313.
- Yoshikawa, Tadao 吉川忠夫. 1991. Gogaku to saishi 五岳と祭祀. In *Zero bitto no sekai ゼロビットの世界 [The World of Zero Bit]*. Edited by Shimizu Tetsurō 清水哲郎. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, pp. 215–78.
- Yuan, Ke 袁珂. 1985. *Shanhaijing jiaoshi 山海經校釋 [Collation and Exegesis on the Classic of Mountains and Seas]*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Zhan, Jinxin 詹鄞鑫. 1992. *Shenling yu jisi: Zhongguo chuantong zongjiao zonglun 神靈與祭祀: 中國傳統宗教綜論 [Spirit and Sacrifice: General Discussion on Traditional Chinese State Religion]*. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe.
- Zhao, Ruimin 趙瑞民, and Baoli Lang 郎保利. 2017. “Houma mengshu Wenxian mengshu zhongde Taiyue chongbai” 侯馬盟書溫縣盟書中的太岳崇拜 [The Worship of Grand Yue in the Covenant Documents Excavated from Houma and Wenxian]. *Shizhi xuekan 史志學刊 [Journal of History and Chorography]* 2: 1–5.
- Zheng, Xuan, and Jia Gongyan 賈公彥. (Eds.) 2000. *Zhouli zhushu 周禮注疏 [Exegeses on the Ritual of Zhou]*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zheng, Xuan, and Kong Yingda. (Eds.) 2000. *Liji zhushu 禮記注疏 [Exegeses on the Records of Ritual]*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zhou, Zhenhe 周振鶴. 1987. *Xihan zhengqu dili 西漢政區地理 [Jurisdictional Geography in the Western Han]*. Beijing: People's Press.
- Zhou, Shucan 周書燦. 2012. Zhongguo zaoqi siyue wuyue dili guannian xiyi 中國早期四岳五岳地理觀念析疑 [Geographical Concept of Four-yue and Five-yue in Early China]. *Zhejiang Academic Journal* 4: 52–57.

Article

The Bestowal of Noble Titles upon the Mountain and Water Spirits in Tang China [†]

Yi Zhu

National Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai 200433, China; zhuyi@fudan.edu.cn

[†] This is a translation of Yi Zhu's article "The Conferment of Noble Titles on Mountains, Rivers, Lakes and Seas, and their Official Cult in the Tang Dynasty" 論唐代的山川封爵現象—兼論唐代的官方山川崇拜 originally published in Chinese by *New History* 18.4 (2007): 71–124. Permission was granted by the editorial board of *New History*.

Abstract: In the Tang era, official sacrifices to mountain and water spirits became more methodical than those of the preceding dynasties. What deserves more attention is that the imperial court bestowed noble titles, which were normally awarded to aristocrats and powerful officials, on the twenty-eight mountain and water spirits, including the Five Sacred Peaks, Four Strongholds, Four Seas and Four Waterways. These practices reflected the two-sided attitude of the Tang rulers to the mountain and water spirits. When confronting violent political changes, the rulers yearned for blessings and protection from these natural deities. On the other hand, with the expansion of monarchical power in the secular world, they sought to establish their authority in the realm of divinity. Running parallel in most cases, the bestowal of nobility and the official sacrificial system constituted the official cult of mountain and water spirits, which survived until the first years of the Ming Dynasty.

Keywords: noble titles; mountain and water spirits; Tang era

Citation: Zhu, Yi. 2022. The Bestowal of Noble Titles upon the Mountain and Water Spirits in Tang China. *Religions* 13: 229. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030229>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 28 December 2021

Accepted: 3 March 2022

Published: 8 March 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

As a kind of natural deities, mountain and water spirits were worshipped from ancient times on. In the Tang era (618–907), the cult of mountain and water spirits prevailed greatly in the fields of state rituals, institutional religions and popular religions. Scholars approached some aspects of this cult, including the images of the spirits of Mount Hua 華山 and Mount Tai 泰山 described in the literary sketches (Dudbridge 1995, pp. 86–116; Jia 2002, pp. 13–52), the history of the Temple of South Sea Spirit (Zeng 1991, pp. 311–58; Wang 2006, pp. 55–97) and the contribution of Daoism and popular religions to the state sacrifices to mountain and water spirits (Lei 2009, pp. 39–50, 133–218).

This essay focuses on a political measure related to the cult of mountain and water spirits. In the Tang era, while the official sacrifices to these deities became more methodical than those of the preceding dynasties, the imperial court extraordinarily bestowed noble titles, which were normally conferred upon the consanguineous royal clan members and meritorious officers, on the twenty-eight mountains and water spirits listed in the Table 1. It was understood as the personification of natural deities, which was influenced by popular religions in the Tang era (Lei 2009, pp. 39–50). However, the personification of natural deities appeared as early as the Shang era (ca.1600-ca.1046 BCE) (Chao 1990, p. 106), and the bestowal of nobility was a political behavior essentially. Therefore, the idea of personification is not convincing enough to explain why the bestowal of nobility on these deities happened in the Tang era. This phenomenon should be revisited in the contexts of state rituals and political changes of that time.

Table 1. Noble titles of mountain and water spirits in the Tang era.

Mountains and Rivers	Noble Titles	Year of Bestowal
Mount Song 嵩山	King Tianzhong (Tianzhong Wang 天中王)	688
	Emperor Shenyue Tianzhong (Shenyue Tianzhong Huangdi 神岳天中皇帝)	696
	King Tianzhong (Tianzhong Wang 天中王)	705
	King Zhongtian (Zhongtian Wang 中天王)	746
Luo River 洛水	Duke Xiansheng (Xiansheng Hou 顯圣侯)	688
Mount Hua 華山	King Jintian (Jintian Wang 金天王)	713
Mount Tai 泰山	King Tianqi (Tianqi Wang 天齊王)	725
Mount Heng 恆山	King Antian (Antian Wang 安天王)	746
Mount Heng 衡山	King Sitian (Sitian Wang 司天王)	746
Yellow River 河瀆	Duke Lingyuan (Lingyuan Gong 靈源公)	747
Ji River 濟瀆	Duke Qingyuan (Qingyuan Gong 清源公)	747
Yangtzu River 江瀆	Duke Guangyuan (Guangyuan Gong 廣源公)	747
Huai River 淮瀆	Duke Tongyuan (Tongyuan Gong 通源公)	747
Mount Zhaoying 昭應山	Duke Xuande (Xuande Gong 玄德公)	748
Mount Taibai 太白山	Duke Shenyong (Shenyong Gong 神應公)	749
East Sea 東海	King Guangde (Guangde Wang 廣德王)	751
South Sea 南海	King Guangli (Guangli Wang 廣利王)	751
West Sea 西海	King Guangrun (Guangrun Wang 廣潤王)	751
North Sea 北海	King Guangze (Guangze Wang 廣澤王)	751
Mount Wu 吳山	Duke Chengde (Chengde Wang 成德王)	751
Mount Yi 沂山	Duke Dong'an (Dong'an Gong 東安公)	751
Mount Kuaiji 會稽山	Duke Yongxing (Yongxing Gong 永興公)	751
Mount Yiwulü 醫無閭山	Duke Guangning (Guangning Gong 廣寧公)	751
Mount Huo 霍山	Duke Yingsheng (Yingsheng Gong 應聖公)	751
Mount Yanzhi 燕支山	Duke Ningji (Ningji Gong 寧濟公)	? ¹
Mount Jiweng 雞翁山	Marquis (specific name unknown)	835
Mount Zhongnan 終南山	Duke Guanghui (Guanghui Gong 廣惠公)	837
Mount Zhangren 丈人山	Duke Xiyi (Xiyi Gong 希夷公)	881
Mount Shaohua 少華山	Marquis Youshun (Youshun Hou 佑順侯)	898
Dongting Lake 洞庭湖	Marquis Lishe (Lishe Hou 利涉侯)	905
Qingcao Lake 青草湖	Marquis Anliu (Anliu Hou 安流侯)	905

¹ The exact time of bestowing Duke Ningji upon Mount Yanzhi was not recorded. "Inscription of Shrine Hall of the Spirit of Mount Yanzhi, Duke Ningji" 燕支山神寧濟公祠堂碑 mentions that, Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent 太子少保 Geshu Han 哥舒翰 built a shrine hall on the foot of Mount Yanzhi upon the bestowal of Duke Ningji on its spirit (Li 1966, 879.4636-37). Geshu Han was awarded Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent in 753 (Song 1959, 60.323). Thus, the time frame of bestowal could be narrowed between 753 and 755 when the An Lushan Rebellion broke out.

The bestowal of noble titles indicates the superiority of monarchical power over the mountain and water spirits, which could be observed coincidentally in the state sacrifices to these deities. Thus this essay firstly studies how the emperor reconstructed the relationship between these natural deities and himself/herself by changing the way of addressing himself/herself in the prayer texts and treating the prayer tablets, both of which were parts of the state rituals. On the other hand, the bestowal of nobility aimed at spiritual protection

from the mountain and water spirits. This essay then explains why the twenty-eight deities received the noble titles throughout the Tang era through the detailed analysis of the concerned political background. In addition to whether the bestowal of nobility affected the state sacrifices to the mountain and water spirits in the Tang era, the last part of the essay examines the fate of the bestowal of nobility in the following dynasties.

2. Reconstruction of the Relationship between Monarchical Power and Mountain and Water Spirits

In the state rituals of the Tang era, the sacrifices to mountain and water spirits played important roles. These sacrifices were conducted in the capital and the prefectures where the mountains, rivers and seas are located in the form of Confucianism.

In Chang'an, the mountain and water spirits did not act as the main objects of the sacrifices, except the invocations for rain and sun. They were accessorial deities, with other terrestrial ones, in the sacrifice of Square Mound (Fangqiu 方丘) dedicated to the Earth God (Huangdiqi 皇地祇) (Liu 1975, 21.820; Xiao 1972, 1.15). They also took part in the Sacrifice to Hundred Gods (Zha 蜡), which included many celestial and terrestrial deities, in the twelfth month of the lunar calendar (Liu 1975, 24.911; Xiao 1972, 1.15).

Mountain and water spirits were worshipped locally, which could be observed all over the territories. It was the original and principal form of the state sacrifices to them. In the Tang era, the state sacrifices were vertically divided into three levels: major sacrifices (Dasi 大祀), middle sacrifices (Zhongsi 中祀) and minor sacrifices (Xiaosi 小祀). The regular sacrifices to the Five Peaks (Wuyue 五岳), Four Strongholds (Sizhen 四鎮), Four Seas (Sihai 四海) and Four Waterways (Sidu 四瀆) were ranked middle,¹ while those to other mountain and water spirits were minor (Liu 1975, 21.819; Xiao 1972, 1.12). The Prefects (Cishi 刺史), or the Aides (Shangzuo 上佐) when the prefects were absent, were designated to host the ceremonies of Yuezhen Haidu on behalf of the emperor, on the specific dates according to the Five Phases (Wuxing 五行) Theory (Ikeda 1997, pp. 495–96). After the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763), along with the domination of the Surveillance Commissioners (Guancha shi 觀察使) over the prefectures and counties, their subordinates took charge of these sacrifices (Wang 1982, 73.1244–46). Nonetheless, the absence of the chief administrative officers played down the significance of these sacrifices. In some cases, this practice was corrected. Kong Kui 孔戣 (753–825), the Prefect of Guangzhou 廣州, annually conducted the sacrifices to the South Sea from 818 to 820. These sacrifices were followed by favorable weather and good harvest, and his presence was highly appreciated by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) (Ma 1986, 7.487–88).² Only in the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code* (*Kaiyuan Li* 開元禮) could we see the detailed procedure of the institutionalized sacrifices to these deities (Xiao 1972, 35.199–200, 36.201–2). The inscriptions and notes demonstrate that the regulation of these sacrifices was observed on the whole, even in the second half of the Tang era (Wang 1982, 103.1733; Kong 1983, 17.134; Zhou 1983, 37.453).

The special sacrifices to mountain and water spirits were held on specific occasions, such as flood, drought and harvest, by the imperial court envoys (Wang 1960, 33.356–66, 34.367–71). The rituals of praying for rain and sun to these deities were recorded in the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code* (Xiao 1972, 67.350). The local governments also conducted the sacrifices to all deities of mountains and waters within their administrative units, which were not limited to those famous ones mentioned above (Li 1988, 5.288–301, supplement 11.885–88). While the sacrifices organized by the imperial court followed the strict institutional rules, these local sacrifices seemed to be flexible and diverse.

In terms of the sacrifices to mountain and water spirits, what deserves more attention is the reconstruction of the relationship between the monarchical power and these natural spirits. Such relation could be observed in the way of how the emperor treated the ceremonial tables (Zhuban 祝版) on which the prayer texts (Zhuwen 祝文) were written. The prayer text not only expressed the wish to receive the blessing from the deities but also indicated the relationship between the subject and object of the sacrifices. The emperor called himself "Son of Heaven and Subject, X" (X = the emperor's given name) (Tianzi Chen

Mou 天子臣某), “Son of Heaven, X” (Tianzi Mou 天子某) and “Son of Heaven” (Tianzi 天子), respectively, in the prayer text when worshipping the natural deities of the major, middle and minor sacrifices. He called himself “Emperor and Subject, X” (Huangdi Chen Mou 皇帝臣某), “Emperor, X” (Huangdi Mou 皇帝某) and “Emperor” (Huangdi 皇帝), respectively, in the prayer text when worshipping the ancestors and human deities of the major, middle and minor sacrifices. The only two exceptions were the Shidian 釋奠 sacrifices, which were offered to Confucius and his disciples and to Qi Taigong 齊太公 (d.1015 BCE) and other military celebrities. In these two sacrifices ranked as the middle sacrifices, the emperor called himself “Emperor” (Kaneko 2006, pp. 1–28). In preparation for the major and middle sacrifices, except the Shidian sacrifices, after signing his given name on the prayer tablets, the emperor should face north and then bow down to the tablets twice. The emperor was stipulated to call him “Son of Heaven, X” in the prayer texts and bow down to the prayer tablets in the state sacrifices to Yuezhen Haidu, which belonged to the middle sacrifices.

During the reign of Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705), the situation changed. In 695, in a memorial submitted to the throne, some concerned officials suggested the emperor not bow down to the tablets after signing her given name in the sacrifices to Yuezhen Haidu. Their textual evidence is “the Five Peaks shi the Three Counsellors of State, and the Four Waterways shi the regional lords” 五岳視三公，四瀆視諸侯 in the Confucian canon, *Book of Rites*. Traditionally, the character “shi” 視 in this sentence was interpreted as “being equivalent to” by the most authoritative classics master Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, whose exegesis on *Book of Rites* was accepted into *Five Classics with Orthodox Commentary* (*Wujing Zhengyi* 五經正義) issued in 653. According to Zheng Xuan, this sentence means that the sacrificial animals and vessels used in the sacrifices to the Five Peaks were equivalent to those used by the Three Counsellors of State for meals or sacrifices, and the sacrificial animals and vessels used in the sacrifices to the Four Waterways were equivalent to those used by the regional lords for meals or sacrifices (Zheng and Kong 1980, 12.1336). However, in 695, the concerned officials attempted to interpret this sentence differently, diverting from the widely accepted interpretation provided by Zheng Xuan. In their opinion, the meaning of “shi” was “being regarded as”. Therefore, the deities of the Five Peaks and Four Waterways were regarded as the Three Counsellors of State and regional lords, respectively, which were obviously subjects of the emperor. Superior to the mountain and water spirits in the hierarchy, the emperor should not bow down to the prayer tablets (Shuerbubai 署而不拜). This suggestion was accepted by Wu Zetian (Wang 1991, 22.417).

The way of how the emperor addressed himself in the prayer texts changed temporarily in the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762). In 721, the officials of the court of Imperial Sacrifices 太常寺 submitted a memorial. Based on the relationship between the emperor and the mountain and water spirits constructed by reinterpretation in 695, their proposal is that the emperor should call himself “emperor”, which was used in the two Shidian Sacrifices, rather than “Son of Heaven, X”, and as a matter of course, he should not sign his given name on the prayer tablets (Wang 1991, 23.416). Apparently, the mountain and water spirits were totally treated as subjects of the emperor. This pattern was accepted by Xuanzong intermediately, but it was abandoned in the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code* that was issued in 732 (Xiao 1972, 35.200). However, keeping the superior status over the mountain and water spirits, the emperor did not bow down to the prayer tablets any longer after 695.

After the restoration of the middle and minor sacrifices, which were suspended by the An Lushan Rebellion, the debate on whether the ritual officers should bow down to the prayer tablets emerged in the Zhenyuan 貞元 period (785–805). In the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code*, the ritual officers should bow down to the prayer tablets twice (Xiao 1972, 35.199–200). Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818) insisted that ritual officers should abide by this rule. According to him, considering that the emperor did not bow down to the prayer tablets, ritual officers should not be excluded from paying honor to the mountain and water spirits (Dong 1983, 488.4987–88). Pei Kan 裴堪 (d.825), in support of Quan Deyu, regarded the mountain and water spirits not as the real courtiers of the emperor but as the

chamberlains of heaven and earth. Nonetheless, he approved the way the emperor treated the prayer tablets after 695 (Wang 1991, 22.498–99). Though historical sources did not tell us the result of this debate, it is likely that the imperial court persisted in the regulation of the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code*. The opinion of Quan Deyu and Pei Kan demonstrates that the dominance of monarchical power over the mountain and water spirits was generally accepted. This debate could be understood as the extension of the reconstructed relationship between the emperor and the mountain and water deities in 695. Same as the mountain and water spirits that were also regarded as subjects of the emperor hierarchically, the ritual officers questioned whether they should bow down to the prayer tablets twice. Through the debates in the Kaiyuan 開元 (713–741) and Zhenyuan period, the superiority of monarchical power over the mountain and water spirits remained unchanged and was even strengthened. In the Song Dynasty, the emperor called himself “Emperor X” in the prayer texts of the sacrifices to mountain and water spirits (Ouyang 2002, 11.393; Zheng 1983, 4.146). The Song rulers did not act in the same way as Xuanzong, who called himself “Emperor” in the prayer texts of these sacrifices from 721 to 732. Nonetheless, this activity indicated that the personification of these natural deities moved on, and it solidified the monarch–subject relationship between the emperor and these deities.

The bestowal of nobility on the mountain and water spirits shared the same logic with the change of how the emperor addressed himself/herself in the prayer texts and whether he/she needed to bow down to the prayer tablets. Rather than imposing power merely on the human world, the emperor attempted to improve his/her position in the realm of deities. However, different from the normal monarch–subject relationship, the relationship between the emperor and these deities was not so strictly hierarchic. Deeply believing that these deities had formidable force, the emperor revered them.

3. Bestowal of Noble Titles on Mountain and Water Spirits before the an Lushan Rebellion

The bestowal of nobility upon the mountain and water spirits originated on the eve of Wu Zetian’s enthronement. During this period, the cult of mountain and water was deployed as a proof of policy rectification. As a part of the propaganda project to legitimate her enthronement, Mount Song and Luo River were given extraordinary treatment. In the fourth month of 688, Wu Chengsi 武承嗣 (649–698), a cousin of Wu Zetian, forged an auspicious stone, on which the words “The holy mother has come to earth, and will flourish the emperor’s achievement” 聖母臨人, 永昌帝業 were inscribed. He asked Tang Tongtai 唐同泰, a person from Yongzhou 雍州, to submit it to the imperial court, alleging that it was obtained in Luo River. Wu Zetian called this stone “precious illustration” (Baotu 寶圖). In the fifth month, Wu Zetian entitled herself “Sacred Empress Dowager” (Shengmu shenhuang 聖母神皇). The “Precious Illustration” was then revised as the “Precious Illustration Bestowed by Heaven” (Tianshou Baotu 天授寶圖). Luo River was renamed as “Prosperity Forever” (Yongchang 永昌), and so was the newly established county where this stone had been found. Receiving the noble title Duke Xiansheng and the prestigious title Lord Specially Advanced (Tejin 特進), the spirit of Yongchang was offered the same sacrifice as that of the Four Waterways. Neighboring Yongchang, Mount Song was called “Sacred Peak” (Shenyue 神岳) and was conferred several titles, including Grand Preceptor (Taishi 太師), Commissioned with Extraordinary Powers (Shi Chijie 使持節), Commander-in-Chief of Sacred Peak (Shenyue Dadudu 神岳大都督) and King Tianzhong. Grass cutting and grazing at Mount Song were forbidden (Liu 1975, 24.924–25). Since then, the bestowal of noble titles upon the mountain and water spirits was followed until it was prohibited by Emperor Taizu 太祖 (1328–1398) of the Ming Dynasty in 1370.

After the establishment of the Wu Zetian regime, the noble title of Mount Song was upgraded. In 696, after Wu Zetian successfully conducted the Feng and Shan ceremonies, Mount Song was bestowed the title “Emperor Shenyue Tianzhong”.³ The wife of the Mount Song spirit was promoted to Empress Tianzhong (Tianzhong Huanghou 天中皇后), from Consort Ling (Lingfei 靈妃) that had been conferred on her in 695 (Liu 1975, 23.891). The prominent status of Mount Song could be traced back to the reign of Emperor Gaozong

高宗 (628–683). Timothy H. Barrett pointed out that the destiny of Gaozong lay in the hands of Mount Song according to his birth year (Barrett 1996, pp. 44–45). In addition, political situation also contributed to the prestige of Mount Song. The imperial court, located in the Guanzhong 關中 area, suffered from a shortage of material supply. Therefore, Luoyang was no less important than Chang'an. When residing in Luoyang, Gaozong put the emphasis on the neighboring mountains. In the first month of 683, he sent the envoys to offer the sacrifices to the mountains, including Mount Song (Liu 1975, 5.110). In the eleventh month, having accepted the suggestion of Wu Zetian, Gaozong intended to run the Feng and Shan at Mount Song (Liu 1975, 23.889). Unfortunately, he failed to host them because of the deterioration of his health conditions. Mount Tai had been the only option to accommodate the Feng and Shan ceremonies in the Tang era. After the establishment of the Tang regime, Mount Song became an alternative option for the first time. Courtiers requested Emperor Taizong 太宗 (598–649) to host the Feng and Shan at Mount Tai in 631. While Taizong modestly declined it, he complained about why Mount Song was not regarded as the appropriate place for accommodating the Feng and Shan ceremonies (Wang 1991, 7.96). However, during the reign of Taizong, in the two failed attempts to host the Feng and Shan, following the ritual tradition, imperial court still preferred Mount Tai rather than Mount Song. After accomplishing the Feng and Shan at Mount Tai in 665, Gaozong considered placing the Feng and Shan at Mount Song. Although he was too ill to host the Feng and Shan at Mount Song, this measure was practiced by Wu Zetian in 696. That Mount Song became an alternative place for the Feng and Shan and was the first to receive the noble title among the mountain and water spirits demonstrates that the imperial court attached importance to it.

After claiming the throne, Xuanzong favored Mount Hua in a way similar to how his grandparents treated Mount Song. Though he arranged several imperial tours away to Luoyang, he spent most of his ruling time in Chang'an, benefiting from the improvement of goods transportation from the east of the country to Guanzhong. The promotion of Mount Hua resulted from the reestablishment of the political center in Chang'an significantly. In 713, Mount Hua was bestowed King Jintian. In the edict, which announced this decision, stressing Mount Hua's significance in guarding Chang'an, Xuanzong wished to obtain spiritual protection from it. He sent an eminent Daoist, Ye Fashan 葉法善 (616–722), who was skilled in the magic arts, to offer the sacrifice to Mount Hua (Song 1959, 74.418).

The cult of Mount Hua was imprinted by Xuanzong's personal feature. He was born in 685, which was the year of Yiyou 乙酉 in accordance with the Sexagenary Cycle (Ganzhi 干支). Yiyou belonged to the Gold in the theory of Five Phases, and so did Mount Hua as the Western Peak. It means that the destiny of Xuanzong lay in the hands of Mount Hua. In 713, the deity of Mount Hua was named King Jintian (Golden Heaven) (Liu 1975, 23.904). The relationship between Xuanzong and Mount Hua was praised repeatedly by Xuanzong and his officials (Dong 1983, 41.447; Qiu 1979, 24.2160). The climax of the cult of Mount Hua could be observed in the proposals of conducting the Feng and Shan there. In 735, the prime minister, Xiao Song 蕭嵩 (d.749), suggested Xuanzong conduct the Feng and Shan at Mount Song and Mount Hua (Wang 1991, 8.162). Though Xuanzong rejected this proposal, the ministers looked upon these two peaks, adjacent to Chang'an and Luoyang, as the suitable place for the Feng and Shan ceremonies. In 750, an attempt to run the Feng and Shan at Mount Hua was put into discussion again. In a memorial, Cui Qiao 崔翹 (683–751), the Minister of Rites (Libu Shangshu 禮部尚書), used both the governmental accomplishment of Xuanzong and the relationship between Mount Hua and the emperor to justify this proposal (Wang 1960, 36.405). Xuanzong then enthusiastically ordered the Censor-in-Chief (Yushi Dafu 御史大夫), Wang Hong 王 (d.752), to build the sacrificial altars and other subsidiary facilities on Mount Hua. Unfortunately, the preparation was terminated by a fire disaster (Liu 1975, 23.904).

During the reign of Xuanzong, the serialization of the noble titles of mountain and water spirits deserves attention as well. Mount Tai, next to Mount Hua, was the second peak to receive the noble title. In the first half of the Tang era, it was not taken for granted

that only at Mount Tai should the Feng and Shan be conducted, but the status of Mount Tai was still the most distinguished among the Five Peaks. As for all Feng and Shan which were conducted throughout the Tang, one was at Mount Song and two at Mount Tai. In 725, after accomplishing the Feng and Shan at Mount Tai, Xuanzong bestowed King Tianqi upon the deity of Mount Tai. The meaning of Tianqi is “on a par with heaven”; therefore this noble title was highly prestigious. He commanded that the sacrificial standard of Mount Tai should be higher than that of the Three Counsellors of State (Liu 1975, 8.188–89). As mentioned above, since 695, the Five Peaks had been regarded as the Three Counsellors of State. Thus, Mount Tai was treated distinctively among the Five Peaks.

It seems that Xuanzong was not inclined to bestow the noble titles on a large number of mountain and water spirits, except Mount Hua and Mount Tai, during the first part of his reign. After changing his reign title from Kaiyuan to Tianbao 天寶 (742–756), he intentionally assigned the specific noble titles upon Yuezhen Haidu, in terms of the differential among these deities. In 746, Xuanzong bestowed the noble titles upon Mount Song, Mount Heng and Mount Heng in an edict (Wang 1991, 47.977).⁴ The Four Waterways received the noble titles in 747, while the Four Strongholds and Four Seas did so in 751 (Wang 1991, 47.977).

In 751, along with the bestowal of nobility on the Four Strongholds, Mount Huo received the noble title as well, although it was not appointed the Central Stronghold until the Northern Song. The deity of Mount Huo was a part of the mythology of state establishment in the Tang era. When the troop of Li Yuan 李淵 (566–635) was in trouble, an old man dressed in white, claiming that he was ordered by the deity of Mount Huo, showed them the way to capture Huoyi 霍邑 (Liu 1975, 1.3). In 702, the army of Eastern Turkic approached Taiyuan 太原, and Wu Zetian dispatched Yin Yuankai 尹元凱 (d.727) to run a sacrifice to obtain the spiritual protection of the deity of Mount Huo to help the Tang to beat them off (Zhang 1992, 25.228). The retreat of the enemy strengthened the image of Mount Huo as a guardian angel. In 723, Mount Huo was looked upon as a regional lord, who was offered the same sacrifice as the Four Strongholds (Wang 1960, 33.358). Equivalent to the Four Strongholds, Mount Huo was conferred the noble title simultaneously in 751.

Daoism became the most powerful religion during the second half of the reign of Xuanzong. The endorsement of Daoism was not only triggered by the religious purpose but also by political concern so as to integrate it into the ideology of the empire and to secure its political order. Mount Zhaoying and Mount Taibai, though neither had a long-lived tradition nor a preeminent reputation, were titled nobility due to the supernatural events of Daoism, around the same time as the serialization of the noble titles of Yuezhen Haidu. In 748, Laozi 老子, who was identified as the remote ancestor of the Tang rulers, allegedly appeared on the Huaqing 華清 Palace, Huichang 會昌 County. Xuanzong, a devout believer in Daoism, viewed this event as the blessing of ancestors. Huichang County and Mount Huichang were renamed Zhaoying 昭應 County and Mount Zhaoying, respectively. The meaning of Zhaoying is fulfillment of prophecy. Moreover, Mount Zhaoying was bestowed Duke Xuande, which means profound virtue, and a shrine temple was constructed there. Li Hun 李渾, who came from Mount Taibai, declared that an immortal descended into the Jinxing 金星 Cave and left a jade inscribed with “the emperor will live forever” 聖上長生久視. The Censor-in-Chief, Wang Hong, upon the request of Xuanzong, came into the cave and found the jade. On account of this auspicious event, Laozi and the successive emperors of the Tang were added the honorific titles. Mount Taibai was conferred Duke Shenying, which means telepathy from deities (Liu 1975, 24.927).

4. Bestowal of Noble Titles on Mountain and Water Spirits after the an Lushan Rebellion

After the An Lushan Rebellion, the noble titles were no longer bestowed upon the mountain and water spirits on a large scale. Only a few deities were titled nobility.

As a part of the project of state rebuilding, the imperial court deployed the state rituals to communicate with the various deities, pray for their blessing and express the monarchical perception. The rulers did care about their own position in the spiritual world, even though

their power of governing the actual empire was restricted severely. In other words, the imagined power did not keep pace with the actual power. For instance, after recapturing Chang'an, the Tang was eager to restore the Suburban Rites to justify the legitimacy of the surviving regime and demonstrate the authority of the central government (Jiang 1996, pp. 442–58; Wu 2006, pp. 112–19). Though less important than the Suburban Rites, the cult of mountain and water spirits was utilized as an effort to revive the Tang.

By conciliating the rebel forces, Emperor Daizong 代宗 (727–779) ended the An Lushan Rebellion. However, with the collapse of the political order shaped in the first half of the Tang era, the regime was in deep crisis. Marked as the guardian angel after Li Yuan rose in arms, the deity of Mount Huo was a supernatural ally from which Daizong sought spiritual protection. In 764, less than two years after enthronement, he sent the envoys to conduct the sacrifice to it. In the edict, he firstly recalled how this mountain had shown its benevolence to his ancestors and then earnestly expressed the hope that it could continuously protect the royal clan and consolidate his own power (Wang 1960, 34.367–68).

With the popularity of the cult of mountain and water spirits, the bestowal of the noble titles on these spirits continued. Located in the perilous area in the vicinity of Chang'an, Mount Zhongnan was titled nobility during the reign of Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (809–840). In an edict promulgated in the fourth month of 837, the significance of Mount Zhongnan was emphasized in two aspects. One is that it could bring a favorable temperature by generating rain and cloud. The other is its critical geographical location (Wang 1991, 47.978). The imperial court conferred Duke Guanghui on this mountain in the ninth month of the same year.

Although the intention to strengthen the monarchical power conceptually, through the state rituals, and consequently reshape the political order was effective, it was conversely restricted by the current political situation to a certain extent. The imperial court paid attention to the sacrifices to mountain and water spirits, but the influence from the emperor was in decline, with the erosion of monarchical power from some powerful ministers. When running the sacrifices to the important mountain and water spirits on behalf of the emperor, those ministers played a dominant role. For instance, in the “Notes on the Shrine Hall of Mount Wu” (Wushan Citang Ji 吳山祠堂記), the author, Yu Gongyi 于公異 (d.792), mainly depicted the relationship between Mount Wu and a meritorious general named Li Sheng 李晟 (727–793). In 769, after Li Sheng was assigned to pray for rain at Mount Wu, a bumper harvest was brought to the locality. He regarded it as an auspicious omen. In the first years of the reign of Emperor Dezong 德宗 (742–805), Li Sheng resisted the attacks from the Tibetan on Jiannan 劍南 and suppressed the rebellions of the Hebei 河北 and Shuofang 朔方 Frontier Defense Commands (Fanzhen 藩鎮). He attributed his own success to the blessing of Mount Wu. In 783, upon the request of Li Sheng, who was by then promoted to the Minister of Education (Situ 司徒) and Secretariat Director (Zhongshu Ling 中書令), Dezong sent a eunuch named Meng Xijia 孟希價 to bring the brocade robes and belts to Mount Wu. The “Notes on the Shrine Hall of Mount Wu”, which was written for this sacrifice, was full of the praise of the contribution of Li Sheng to the Tang (Dong 1983, 513.5218–19). This event resulted from the pressure of Li Sheng on a large scale.

The ministers exerted their influence on the bestowal of nobility upon the mountain and water spirits. On his way to assume the post of the Military Commissioner of Western Shannan Circuit (Shannanxi Dao 山南西道), Wen Zao 溫造 (766–835) encountered heavy rain. He then prayed for sun to Mount Jiwen, and the weather cleared up in a while. Wenzong heard about it. In 833, Wen Zao was appointed the Censor-in-Chief. He told this story to Wenzong, and the emperor conferred a noble title on Mount Jiwen (Liu 1975, 165.4318).

At the end of the Tang era, the political situation became highly unstable. Imperial court attempted to both obtain spiritual protection and demonstrate the authority of sovereignty by bestowing the noble titles upon the mountain and water spirits. After the force of Huang Chao 黃巢 (820–884) occupied Chang'an in 880, Emperor Xizong 僖宗 (862–888) spent four years in exile in Chengdu 成都. In the next year, Xizong accepted

the suggestion of an outstanding Daoist named Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933) and conferred Duke Xiyi on Mount Zhangren, adjacent to Chengdu, to take advantage of its magic power to prolong the rule of the Tang (Dong 1983, 88.923, 89.937). Thanks to Du Guangting, Daoism thrived once again during the reign of Xizong, after being overlooked for more than three decades (Barrett 1996, pp. 93–94). He was so actively engaged in the sacrifice to Mount Zhangren that this sacrifice was performed in the form of Daoism rather than Confucianism.

Meanwhile, facing the chaotic political situations, the Frontier Defense Commands also resorted to the help of mountain and water spirits. In 885, the troops from Lulong 盧龍, Chengde 成德 and Yunzhong 雲中 attacked the Yiwu 義武 Army, whose Military Commissioner was Wang Chucun 王處存 (813–895). Wang Chucun was loyal to the Tang and allied with the Military Commissioner of Hedong 河東 named Li Keyong 李克用 (856–908) (Sima 1956, 256.8321). When Li Keyong came to rescue Wang Chucun, they conducted a sacrifice at the Northern Peak Temple. After reaching a temporal compromise with the enemy, Li Keyong withdrew troops to Hedong. When passing through the Northern Peak Temple, he conveyed thanks to the deity of Mount Heng (Wu 2000, pp. 210–11).

The Frontier Defense Commands not only treated the spiritual protection of the mountain and water spirits seriously but also interposed in the bestowal of nobility upon them. In 895, the troop of Han Jian 韓建 (855–912), the Military Commissioner of Hua 華 Prefecture, allied with that of Li Maozhen 李茂貞 (856–924), the Military Commissioner of Fengxiang 鳳翔, and Wang Xingyu 王行瑜 (d.895), the Military Commissioner of Bin 邠 Prefecture, was garrisoned in Chang'an. It resulted in the tangled fights between the supporters of Xizong and his opponents, and Xizong had to leave Chang'an. On his way to Hezhong 河中, Xizong was detained by Han Jian and moved to the Hua Prefecture. Han Jian imposed coercion upon Xizong and his favorite courtiers (Xue 1976, 15.204). Even though Xizong was released to Chang'an, he was still controlled by Han Jian until Han Jian surrendered himself to Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852–912) in 901. In 898, Mount Shaohua, located southeast of Zheng County in the Hua Prefecture, was nominated Marquis Youshun. The Hua Prefecture was the birthplace and headquarter of Han Jian. He sought political benefits by bestowing nobility on Mount Shaohua. In the "Panegyric on the Stele of Marquis Youshun, Mount Shaohua", written by Fang Ye 房鄴, Han Jian was extolled as a loyal general who rescued the Tang. Han Jian's Conquer of Chang'an and control of Xizong were represented as heroic undertakings of eliminating evil ministers around the emperor and consolidating the Tang power (Dong 1983, 819.8629–30). The edict of this conferment was promulgated in the name of Xizong, but this event was dominated by the warlord.⁵ At the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, as regents of the emperor, warlords actually controlled the political practices.

5. Epilogue

In the Tang era, three ritual codes were promulgated. Among the *Zhenguan Ritual Code* (Zhenguan Li 貞觀禮), *Xianqing Ritual Code* (Xianqing Li 顯慶禮) and *Kaiyuan Ritual Code*, only the last one was completed after the deities of Mount Song, Mount Hua and Mount Tai were titled nobility. In the *Kaiyuan Ritual Code*, their noble titles were not mentioned at all, even in the prayer texts. At the end of the eighth century, *Record of Suburban and Temple Observance for the Great Tang* (Datang Jiaosi Lu 大唐郊祀錄) was compiled by Wang Jing 王溥. In this collection of the routine rituals, the noble titles of Yuezhen Haidu were referred to in both the survey and the prayer texts (Wang 1972, 8.787–88). However, the bestowal of nobility imposed few effects on the whole procedure of the state sacrifices to the mountain and water spirits, and so did the sacrificial grades. Ranked middle, the Five Peaks and Four Seas were conferred kings, and the Four Strongholds and Four Waterways were only conferred dukes. Ranked minor, Mount Taibai, Mount Zhaoying, Mount Yanzhi and Mount Zhangren were titled dukes, but it did not help to promote their sacrificial grade to middle. Only Mount Zhongnan received annual sacrifices with reference to the Four Strongholds after 838, in response to the suggestion of the Ritual Academy (Taichang

Liyuan 太常禮院). Since then, this sacrifice was conducted on one of the last eighteen days of the sixth month (Jixia Tuwang Ri 季夏土王日), on which Mount Song, the Central Peak, was offered the regular sacrifice (Wang 1991, 47.978). Therefore, Mount Zhongnan was treated as “the Central Stronghold” by the standard of middle sacrifice in some way. This change was realized not by the bestowal of nobility but by the specific edict.

The state sacrifices to the mountain and water spirits and the bestowal of nobility on them were two aspects of the official cult of these deities from 688 to 1370. Tangled with a long history, the former was a standardized system. The latter resulted from the interference from the political power. Though sometimes interweaved, these two aspects ran parallel in most cases.

From the end of the Tang era on, the regional deities, including the mountain and water ones, received the noble titles. For instance, Lake Dongting and Lake Qingcao were conferred Marquis Lishe and Marquis Anliu in 905 (Liu 1975, 20.797). This trend became more prevalent in the Song Dynasty. A large number of regional deities received the noble titles and plaques that were signed by the emperors (Hansen 1990, pp. 79–95). During the reign of Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (1048–1085), Wang Gu 王古 (d.1106), an Erudite of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (Taichang Boshi 太常博士), suggested the emperor clarify the relative status of the noble titles of the various deities. The final goal was to “control the deities in order” 錫命馭神, 恩禮有序 (Toqto’a 脱脱 1977, 105.2561). In the Song Dynasty, the Five Peaks were titled emperors. The noble titles of the Five Strongholds and Four Waterways were promoted to kings. These titles continued to exist in the Jin and Yuan Dynasties. Although owning the titles of emperors, the Five Peaks were not equal with the real emperors. Bestowed the titles by the imperial court, these deities were still treated as vassals.

Taizu of the Ming Dynasty opposed the bestowal of noble titles upon the mountain and water spirits. In his opinion, Yuezhen Haidu were ruled by the grace of heaven. Their identities and undertakings were controlled by heaven. The bestowal of noble titles upon these deities transgressed the boundary between the realm of deities and that of the human world. Therefore, Taizu removed the noble titles from the mountain and water spirits and resumed their original names (Yang 1962, 53.1034–35). It means that the ruler gave up the idea of dominating the realm of deities. In addition to the mountain and water spirits, the noble titles of city gods, loyal officials and martyrs of the previous dynasties were revoked. These activities met the requirements of rectifying the state rituals and reconstructing the relationship between the deities and humans.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The Five Peaks, Four Strongholds, Four Seas and Four Waterways are abbreviated to Yuezhen Haidu 岳鎮海濱 below.
- ² The implement of the official sacrifices to the South Sea, see (Wang 2021).
- ³ The noble title of Mount Song was degraded back to “King Tianzhong” after the downfall of the Wu Zetian Regime.
- ⁴ This edict mentioned that Mount Song had no noble title. It implied that the noble title, which was conferred on Mount Song, had been canceled or derecognized.
- ⁵ Similarly, the suburban rites and ancestral temple rites during this period were intervened by Han Jian and Zhu Wen (Wu 2006, pp. 119–21).

References

- Barrett, Timothy H. 1996. *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion and Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History*. London: The Well-sweep Press.
- Chao, Fulin 晁福林. 1990. Lun Yindai Shenquan 論殷代神權 [The Theocracy of the Shang Era]. *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue 中國社會科學 [Social Sciences in China]* 1: 99–112.
- Dong, Gao 董誥, ed. 1983. *Quantang Wen 全唐文 [Complete Prose Works of the Tang]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Dudbridge, Glen. 1995. *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China: A Reading of Tai Fu's Kuang-I Chi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hansen, Valerie. 1990. *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ikeda, On 池田溫, ed. 1997. *Tōrei Shūi Ho 唐令拾遺補 [Supplement of the Collected Acts of the Tang]*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Jia, Erqiang 賈二強. 2002. *Tangsong Minjian Xinyang 唐宋民間信仰 [Popular Religions in Tang and Song China]*. Fuzhou: Fujian People's Publishing House.
- Jiang, Boqin 姜伯勤. 1996. *Dunhuang Yishu Zongjiao Yu Liyue Wenming 敦煌藝術宗教與禮樂文明 [Arts, Religions, Rituals and Music of Dunhuang]*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Kaneko, Shūichi 金子修一. 2006. *Chūgoku Kodai Kōtei Saishi No Kenkyū 中古代皇帝祭祀研究 [Study on the Sacrifices of Emperors in Ancient China]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Kong, Yanzhi 孔延之, ed. 1983. *Kuaiji Huiying Zongji 會稽會英總集 [Complete Prose Works of Kuaiji]*. Taipei: Commercial Press of Taiwan.
- Lei, Wen 雷聞. 2009. *Jiaomiao Zhiwai: Suitang Guojia Jisi Yu Zongjiao 郊廟之外：隋唐國家祭祀與宗教 [Out of the Suburban and Ancestral Temple Rites: State Sacrifices and Religions in the Sui and Tang Dynasties]*. Beijing: Joint Publishing.
- Li, Fang 李昉, ed. 1966. *Wenyuan Yinghua 文苑英華 [Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Shangyin 李商隱. 1988. *Fannan Wenji 樊南文集 [Collected Works of Li Shangyin]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Liu, Xu 劉向. 1975. *Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ma, Qichang 馬其昶. 1986. *Han Changli Wenji Jiaozhu 韓昌黎文集校註 [Collation and Exegesis of Collected Works of Han Yu]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Ouyang, Xiu 歐陽脩. 2002. *Taichang Yingde Li 太常因革禮 [Evolution of State Rituals]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Qiu, Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲. 1979. *Dushi Xiangzhu 杜詩詳注 [Detailed Annotation of the Poems of Du Fu]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Sima, Guang 司馬光. 1956. *Zizhi Tongjian 資治通鑑 [History as a Mirror]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Song, Minqiu 宋敏求, ed. 1959. *Tang Da Zhaoling Ji 唐大令集 [Collection of Edicts of the Tang]*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Toqto'a 脫脫. 1977. *Song Shi 宋史 [Song History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Chang 王昶, ed. 1982. *Jinshi Cuibian 金石萃編 [Refined Collection of Inscriptions on Bronzes and Steles]*. Taipei: Shin Wen Feng Printing Company.
- Wang, Jing 王溥. 1972. *Datang Jiaosi Lu 大唐郊祀錄 [Record of Suburban and Temple Observance for the Great Tang]*. Tokyo: Kyuko Shoin.
- Wang, Pu 王溥. 1991. *Tang Huiyao 唐會要 [Collection of Institutions of the Tang]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Wang, Qinruo 王欽若. 1960. *Cefu Yuanguai 冊府元龜 [References to Governance]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2006. *Guojia Jisi Yu Haishang Silu Yiji: Guangzhou Nanhaishenmiao Yanjiu 國家祭祀與海上絲路遺跡：廣州南海神廟研究 [State Sacrifice and the Relics of Ocean Silk Road: Study on the Temple of the South Sea Spirit in Guangzhou]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2021. The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China. *Religions* 12: 960. [CrossRef]
- Wu, Gang 吳綱, ed. 2000. *Quan Tangwen Bubian 全唐文補編 [Supplement of Complete Prose Works of the Tang]*. Xi'an: Sanqin Publishing House, vol. 7.
- Wu, Liyu 吳麗娛. 2006. Lizhi Biange Yu Zhongwantang Zhengzhi 禮制變革與中晚唐政治 [Reform of State Rituals and Politics of the Mid and Late Tang]. In *Zhongwantang Shehui Yu Zhengzhi Yanjiu 中晚唐社會與政治研究 [Studies on the Society and Politics of the Mid and Late Tang]*. Edited by Huang Zhengjian 黃正建. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Xiao, Song 蕭嵩. 1972. *Datang Kaiyuan Li 大唐開元禮 [Kaiyuan Ritual Code of the Great Tang]*. Tokyo: Kyuko Shoin.
- Xue, Juzheng 薛居正. 1976. *Jiu Wudai Shi 舊五代史 [Old History of the Five Dynasties]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Yang, Shiqi 楊士奇. 1962. *Ming Taizu Shilu 明太祖實錄 [Veritable Records of Emperor Taizu of the Ming Dynasty]*. Taipei: Institute of History and Philology.
- Zeng, Yimin 曾一民. 1991. Tangdai Guangzhou Nanhaishenmiao Tansuo 唐代廣州南海神廟探索 [Study on the Temple of the South Sea Spirit in Tang Guangzhou]. In *Tangdai Wenhua Yantaohui Lunwenji 唐代文化研討會論文集 [Proceeding of the Culture in Tang China]*. Taipei: Wenchin Publishing House.
- Zhang, Yue 張說. 1992. *Zhang Yangong Ji 張燕公集 [Collected Works of Zhang Yue]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House.
- Zheng, Juzhong 鄭居中. 1983. *Zhenghe Wuli Xinyi 政和五禮新儀 [New Code of the Five Categories of State Rituals of the Zhenghe Period]*. Taipei: Commercial Press of Taiwan.
- Zheng, Xuan 鄭玄, and Yingda Kong 孔穎達, eds. 1980. *Liji Zhushu 禮記注疏 [Exegeses on the Records of Ritual]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhou, Fujun 周復俊, ed. 1983. *Quanshu Yiwen Zhi 全蜀藝文志 [Monograph on Literature of the Whole Shu Area]*. Taipei: Commercial Press of Taiwan.

Article

Daoism and Sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks in Tang China (618–907)

Wen Lei ^{1,*} and Luying Zhao ^{2,†}¹ School of History, Beijing Normal University, Beijing 100875, China² School of International Letters and Cultures. Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA; lzha063@asu.edu

* Correspondence: 11112021040@bnu.edu.cn

† This paper is a modified translation of a book chapter of [Lei Wen. 2009. *Jiaomiao zhitwai: Suitang guojia jisi yu zongjiao* 郊廟之外: 隋唐國家祭祀與宗教. Beijing: Sanlian Press]. The paper was first published in [Rong Xinjiang. (Eds.) 2003. *Tangdai zongjiao xinyang yu shehui* 唐代宗教信仰與社會. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe]. The first author, Lei Wen, has the right to republish the paper in other journals.

Abstract: The five sacred peaks had both political and religious significance in traditional China. Daoism profoundly impacted the state sacrifice to the sacred peaks in the medieval era. Through examining related stone inscriptions, we argue that the establishment of the Shrines for the Perfected Lords of the five sacred peaks, the Shrine for the Elder of Mount Qingcheng, and the Temple for the Envoy of the Nine Heavens at Mount Lu were in debt to the suggestions of the Daoist master Sima Chengzhen during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756). The constructions of the shrines manifested Daoist masters' efforts to transform the state sacrifice system. Nevertheless, the shrines were not able to replace the state sacrifice system but functioned as Daoist abbeys to pray for the state, the emperor, and the people. In the late Tang dynasty, the imperial authority in turn permeated the Daoist sacred geographic system. Interestingly, the elevated status of Daoist Perfected Ones and Transcendents was widely recognized in Tang folklore.

Keywords: Daoism; five sacred peaks; Tang China; Sima Chengzhen; shrines for the perfected lords of the five sacred peaks

Citation: Lei, Wen, and Luying Zhao. 2022. Daoism and Sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks in Tang China (618–907). *Religions* 13: 398. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050398>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 11 February 2022

Accepted: 23 April 2022

Published: 26 April 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Sacrifices to the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五岳) originated from the worship of mountains and rivers in ancient China. Records of ancient people worshipping and offering sacrifices to mountains and rivers can be found in the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas), which features a rich shamanic connotation. After the Shang and Zhou (ca. 1600–256 BCE) states, sacrifice to mountains and rivers became a state-level ritual. These sacrifices had both religious and political functions. The notion of five sacred peaks developed from a mere concept in the pre-Qin period to a reality in the era of the unified Qin and Han empires (221 BCE–220 CE). Regular rituals were eventually systematized in the period of Han Emperor Xuan (r. 74–48 BCE), by which time religious constructions such as *yuemiao* 岳廟 (temple for sacred peak) were erected. Since then, the five sacred peaks were not only geographical concepts but also an enormous coordinate system that transcended its natural characteristics, as well as a set of cultural symbols that manifested imperial legitimacy and governmental capacity (Gu 1963, pp. 34–45; Tang 1997, pp. 60–70; Tang 2000).

During the Sui (581–618) and Tang dynasties (618–907), two significant developments in state sacrifice to the *yuedu* 岳瀆 (sacred peaks and waterways) took shape. On the one hand, iconographic practices were adopted in the sacrifices. This form was officially protected by the state although it differed from prescriptions in the Confucian classics. On the other hand, mountain and river deities, including the five sacred peaks and four waterways,

were granted ranks of nobility in the human realm, which was an implementation of the Confucian ideal that “offering sacrifice to the five sacred peaks is on a par with the Three Dukes” (*wuyue shi sangong* 五岳視三公) in state institutions (Lei 2009, pp. 42–43).

We suggest that a gradual Daoist involvement in the implementation of state sacrifices to mountains and rivers was seen in the Sui and Tang dynasties.¹ This Daoist involvement was a more profound development, and it laid the foundation for the Daoization of the five sacred peaks in later times. The establishment of the Shrines for Perfected Lords (*zhenjun* 真君) of the five sacred peaks during the reign of Tang Emperor Xuanzong marked the formation of a deep connection between the Daoist and *yuedu* sacrifices. The Daoist priest Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735), the twelfth patriarch of the Shangqing lineage, created the theoretical basis for and initiated the construction of the shrines.

Officials of Confucian rituals also participated in certain state sacrifices reformed with Daoist ideas. What was the historical and religious background of their cooperation? What were the impacts made on popular beliefs? In order to answer these questions, this paper also explores the interactions between Daoist beliefs and state sacrifices and, at last, briefly introduces the acceptance of Daoist ideas into popular beliefs.

This study intends to investigate the profound Daoist development by utilizing extant historical and Daoist texts and under-studied stele inscriptions from the Tang dynasty to restore a timeline and the details of the establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines and the other two sacred shrines at Mount Qingcheng and Mount Lu. These close readings of the historical and Daoist writings can also help us understand the historical and religious context for Sima Chengzhen’s utilization of Shangqing Daoist ideas in the formation of the sacred shrine system.

2. Daoist Traditions and Sacrifices to the Five Sacred Peaks from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589) to the Tang Dynasty

Since the Northern and Southern dynasties, Daoism had shown a strong interest in participating in state sacrifices, and this was particularly evident in the Northern dynasties, during which many rituals of the new Celestial Master Daoism established by Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448) were closely integrated with state sacrifices. Starting from Emperor Taiwu (r. 423–452), every Northern Wei (386–534) emperor had to receive Daoist talismans and registers when ascending to the throne. Furthermore, after Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) relocated the capital to Luoyang (493), he established Daoist altars in the Southern Suburb where sacrifices to heaven were held (Wei 1974, 114.3052-55; Wei 1973, 35.1093). The sacrifices to the five sacred peaks were deeply influenced by Daoism as well. In the “Houwei zhongyue Songgao lingmiao bei” 後魏中岳嵩高靈廟碑 (Stele of the Spiritual Temple of the Lofty Song, the Central Sacred Peak, of the Later Wei Dynasty) erected in the Taiyan reign period (435–440) of Emperor Taiwu, it is recorded that the Northern Wei dynasty sent Daoist priests to build the Temple of the Central Sacred Peak (Zhongyue miao 中岳廟) for Kou in recognition of his assistance to the Perfected Lord, Emperor Taiwu, in bringing peace to the human realm. Although the stele has been severely damaged, fortunately, a clear rubbing survives (Shao 1962; Shao 1965). From the rubbing we can see that, first, in addition to building the shrine of the central sacred peak for Kou, the Northern Wei imperial court also built shrines for other sacred peaks, such as the Shrine of Mount Hua. Second, those responsible for constructing the new shrines were Daoist priests. Last, the sacrifice was “a ritual that makes offerings, offers prayers to deities in spring, and recompenses in autumn” 奉玉帛之禮, 春秋祈報, which is similar to traditional Confucian ritual. These traits are very similar to the “Da Dai Huayuemiao bei” 大代華岳廟碑 (Stele of Mount Hua of the Great Dai) that was erected at the same time.²

The integration of Daoist rituals with Southern Suburb ceremonies in the Northern Wei was abolished in the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577), but the Daoist influence on the sacrifices to the five sacred peaks was to some extent inherited by the Sui dynasty (581–618). According to the *Suishu* 隋書 (Sui History), “in the fourteenth year of the Kaihuang reign (594), [Emperor Wen (r. 581–604)] was going to offer sacrifices to Mount Tai; hence, he

ordered the commissioner to deliver stone statues to the place where offerings are made to deities” 開皇十四年，將祠泰山，令使者致石像神祠之所 (Wei 1973, 22.621). In the first month of the fifteenth year (595), “on the *gengwu* day, due to a great drought, the emperor offered sacrifices to Mount Tai to apologize for his offense and fault. A Great Amnesty for all-under-heaven was granted” 庚午，上以歲旱，祠太山，以謝愆咎。大赦天下 (Wei 1973, 2.39). We know very little about the ritual that Emperor Wen employed to offer sacrifices to Mount Tai. However, prominent Daoist elements can be found in the ritual that offered sacrifices to the northern sacred peak, Mount Heng (Hengshan 恆山), in the eighth month of the fourth year of the Daye reign (608) made by Emperor Yang of the Sui (r. 604–617). The *Suishu* records that “in the mid-Daye period, Emperor Yang visited Jinyang and thus offered sacrifices to the sacred peak, Mount Heng. The ceremony notably adopted the rituals used by Emperor Gaozu when making offerings to Mount Tai. The emperor commanded two additional altars to be established and ordered tens of Daoist priests and priestesses to set up the *jiao* ritual within the short wall surrounding the altar. In the tenth year (614), the emperor visited the eastern capital and passed by and offered sacrifices to Mount Hua. A ritual space was set up beside the temple” 大業中，煬帝因幸晉陽，遂祭恆岳。其禮頗采高祖拜岱宗儀，增置二壇，命道士女官數十人，於壇中設醮。十年，幸東都，過祀華岳，築場於廟側 (Wei 1973, 7.140, 3.71). Thus, Daoist priests participated in sacrifices to Mount Tai by Emperor Wen and the rites to Mount Heng and Hua made by Emperor Yang. Furthermore, the *zhaijiao* 齋醮 liturgies were employed in the sacrifice.³ The early Tang historians who composed the *Suishu* criticized this matter from a Confucian stance: “These events are not in accordance with the Confucian classics, and they are not rituals established by the pertinent bureaus” 事乃不經，蓋非有司之定禮也。

Compared with the previous dynasties, the state’s management of the sacred peak temples was significantly enhanced in the Tang dynasty. The *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History) records that “in temples of the five sacred peaks and four waterways, there is one Director who ranks 9a (upper class), thirty Gentlemen for Retreat and three Supplication Scribes in each temple” 五岳四瀆廟，令各一人，正九品上。齋郎三十人，祝史三人 (Liu 1975, 44.1924). Thus, the rank of Directors of Sacred Peak Temples was greatly promoted compared with the Sui. In the Sui, “a medium in the vicinity was responsible for the maintenance of sacred peak temples” 側近巫一人主知灑掃, but in the Tang, they were replaced by Court Gentlemen for Retreat and Supplication Scribes within the state sacrifice system. As for Court Gentlemen for Retreat, “the middle male children in the household who were above sixteen years old should be used and sent back at the age of twenty” 取年十六以上中男充，二十放還, miscellaneous taxes and corvées were also exempted (Tianyige Museum and Institute of History of Chinese Academy of Social Science 2006, pp. 393, 432). As a state institution in charge of sacrifice, sacred peak temples enjoyed all the privileges provided by the bureaucratic system. The five sacred peak temples each took possession of one *qing* of the government-owned land (*gongxietian* 公廩田), and the directors, according to their official rank, were each entitled to 1.5 *qing* of land (*zhifentian* 職分田) (Li 1992, 3.75–76).

In the ceremonial system of the Tang, sacrifices to sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways (*yue-zhen-hai-du* 岳鎮海瀆) were ranked as middle-level sacrifices: “The five sacred peaks and four strongholds should be offered sacrifice once a year at the five suburbs on the day that greets the seasonal *qi*” 其五岳四鎮，歲一祭，各以五郊迎氣日祭之 (Ouyang 1975, 15.380). The locations were: Qianfengxian 乾封縣 of Yanzhou 兗州 for Mount Tai, Hengshanxian 衡山縣 of Hengzhou 衡州 for Mount Heng 衡山, Huayinxian 華陰縣 of Huazhou 華州 for Mount Hua 華山, Quyangxian 曲陽縣 of Dingzhou 定州 for Mount Heng 恆山, and Dengfengxian 登封縣 of Luozhou 洛州 of Mount Song. These were regular sacrifices in the ritual codes. In the Tang, sacrifices were frequently offered because of major events such as floods and drought, foreign invasions, grand ceremonies in the suburbs, and the enthronement of new emperors. Daoist aspects were gradually incorporated into these rituals.⁴

3. The Perfected Lord Shrines of the Five Sacred Peaks and State Sacrifices in the Tang

Tang Emperor Gaozong's (r. 649–683) period was critical in shaping religious policy in the Tang, and the *fengshan* sacrifices (i.e., sacrifices to heaven and earth) to Mount Tai were an epoch-making event in this process. For the first time, Laozi was granted honorific titles in Gaozong's period (Liu 1975, 5.90), and Daoism was henceforth accorded a special status. Lei Wen adequately discussed Daoist factors manifested in Gaozong's *fengshan* rituals (Lei 2009, pp. 138–53). Barrett has also considered the Gaozong period a turning point for Tang's policy on Daoism, which led to the full development of theocracy (Barrett 1996, pp. 29–30). The close connection between Daoism and sacrifices to sacred peaks and waterways reached its pinnacle during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756), marked by the establishment of the Wuyue Zhenjun 五岳真君 (Perfected Lords of the Five Sacred Peaks) Shrines. The *Jiu Tangshu* biography of Sima Chengzhen states:

In the ninth year of the Kaiyuan reign (721), Emperor Xuanzong furthermore sent a commissioner to escort [Sima Chengzhen] to the capital. The emperor received the ritual register in person from him and bestowed handsome rewards on him before and after. In the tenth year (722), the emperor returned to the western capital. Chengzhen requested to go back to Mount Tiantai again, and Xuanzong composed a poem to send him off. In the fifteenth year (727), Xuanzong summoned him to the capital once again. The emperor asked Chengzhen to choose an advantageous location on Mount Wangwu to build altars and chambers to reside in. Chengzhen hence reported: "Now the gods' shrines on the five sacred peaks are all for the gods of mountains and forests. They are not legitimate and true deities. There are cavern bureaus in the five sacred peaks; in each of them there is a perfected being who descended from Upper Clarity to take the post. Mountains, rivers, winds, rains, *yin* and *yang*, and the order of *qi* are all governed by them. The official headgear, attire, and the assistant gods and Transcendents all have their names and numbers. I request to establish separate shrines for making retreats and rituals". Xuanzong approved his request and hence issued an edict for erecting a Shrine of the Perfected Lord on each of the five sacred peaks. Chengzhen was ordered to examine Daoist scriptures and creatively work out the images [of the deities] and the style of the shrines accordingly. 開元九年，玄宗又遣使迎入京，親受法籙，前後賞賜甚厚。十年，駕還西都，承禎又請還天台山，玄宗賦詩以遣之。十五年，又召至都。玄宗令承禎于王屋山自選形勝，置壇室以居焉。承禎因上言：“今五岳神祠，皆是山林之神，非正真之神也。五岳皆有洞府，各有上清真人降任其職，山川風雨，陰陽氣序，是所理焉。冠冕章服，佐從神仙，皆有名數。請別立齋祠之所”。玄宗從其言，因敕五岳各置真君祠一所。其形象制度，皆令承禎推按道經，創意為之。(Liu 1975, 192.5128)⁵

Most of the historical sources on the establishment of Perfected Lord Shrines on the five sacred peaks during the reign of Xuanzong were so incomplete that historians in the Song dynasty no longer knew much about it. For instance, the colophon written by Ouyang Fei 歐陽棐 (1047–1113) for the rubbing of the “Huayue Zhenjun bei” 華岳真君碑 (Stele of the Perfected Lord of Sacred Peak Hua) he collected, which is included in his *Jigu lumu* 集古錄目 (Catalogue of Collection of the Antiquities), states that the stele was “composed by Tao Han, Assistant Magistrate of Huayin, and written by Wei Teng. In the nineteenth year of the Kaiyuan reign (731), deities of the five sacred peaks were bestowed the divine title of Perfected Lord. The shrine was built, and the stele was erected at that time”. 華陰丞陶翰撰，韋騰書。玄宗開元十九年加五岳神號真君，初建祠宇，立此碑 (Shike shiliao xinbian 1977, 24.17976). In fact, the alleged “bestowing of titles” is a complete misunderstanding of the matter. Although contemporary scholars of Daoist history have paid some attention to it, they have mostly skirted over it as merely an achievement by Sima Chengzhen (Chen 1963, p. 56; Imaeda 1987, p. 175). Further research is therefore needed on the causes and consequences of this event, the relationship between Perfected Lord Shrines and state sacrifices in the sacred peak temples, and the deeper context it reflects. As a matter of fact,

the establishment of Perfected Lord Shrines was accompanied by the erection of the Shrine of the Elder at Mount Qingcheng (Qingchengshan Zhangren ci 青城山丈人祠) and the Temple of the Nine-Heavens-Envoy at Mount Lu (Lushan Jiutianshizhe miao 廬山九天使者廟). Therefore, this was a holistic event reflecting the endeavors of Daoist representatives to transform the state sacrificial system with their own theories.

3.1. The Related Stone Stele Inscriptions

Materials documenting this event are very sporadic. In addition to the “Biography of Sima Chengzhen” in the *Jiu Tangshu*, there are also the “Annals of Xuanzong” in the *Jiu Tangshu*, the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature), the *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Record of the Social Institutions of the Tang), the *Yuhai* 玉海 (Sea of Jade Encyclopedia), the *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel), and so on.⁶ Although these texts have minor discrepancies, they should derive from the same historical source. Thus, we only have a very limited amount of material to work with. Fortunately, stone inscriptions can provide a wealth of information. The inscriptions are listed in Table 1.

Unfortunately, only the full texts of the inscriptions about Mount Hua, Mount Qingcheng, and Mount Lu have survived. The *Jinshilu* 金石錄 (Records of Stone and Bronze) preserves only the titles of the inscriptions for the northern, southern, and eastern sacred peaks, or mentions them in the preface or colophon of other inscriptions. The newly published entombed epitaph of Tian Tui, a Daoist priest in the High Tang era, references the Perfected Lord Shrine of the central sacred peak. From the epitaph, we learn that the person who went to set up the shrine on Mount Song was Tian Tui, who was then the eminent priest of the Jinglong Abbey. He was accompanied by Secretarial Court Gentlemen Wei Zhi (Lei 2019). These stone inscriptions are crucial for our comprehensive understanding of this event.

Table 1. Stele inscriptions recording the event of building shrines on the sacred peaks.

Name	Built Time	Commissioner from Central Government	Local Official	Writer and Scribe	Note
“Daiyue guan bei” 岱岳觀碑 (Stele of the Daiyue Daoist Abbey)	11th m., KY 19th y. (the 11th month of the 19th year of Kaiyuan, 731 CE); 2nd m., KY 20th y (732).	Zhang Youwu 張遊霧, Abbot of the Dahongdao Abbey in Chang’an; Yang Wan 楊琬, Eminent Priest of the Jinglong 景龍 Daoist Abbey in Luoyang. Hu Ji 胡寂, Imperial Commissioner and Palace Receptionist Directorate of the Palace Domestic Service; Ning Jun’ai 寧君愛, Administrative Assistant, Work Supervisor of the Female Services Office.	Officials of Specialized Duties: Shangguan Bin 上官賓, Gentleman for Closing Court (prestige title), Assistant Magistrate of Qufu; Wang Qufei 王去非, Court Gentleman for Promoted Service (prestige title), District Defender of Qianfeng xian.		“Dongyue Zhenjun bei” 東岳真君碑 is only mentioned in the preface of “Daiyue guan bei”, no stele preserved. The Imperial Commissioner dispatched in the 20th year seems to be the same event. See Chen (1988, p. 114) .
“Tang Beiyue Zhenjun bei” 唐北岳真君碑 (Stele of the Perfected Lord of the Northern Sacred Peak of the Tang) “Tang Huayue Zhenjun bei” 唐華岳真君碑 (Stele of the Perfected Lord of Sacred Peak Hua of the Tang) (Lei 2005, 2:76–88).	1st m., KY 20th y (732). After the 2nd m., KY 20th y (732).		Wei Yan 韋衍, County Magistrate of Huayin.	Written by Fang Feng 房鳳, transcribed in the <i>bafen</i> 八分 calligraphy style. Written by Tao Han, Assistant Magistrate of Huayin; transcribed by Wei Teng from the capital region.	Zhao (1985, 6.107) . Jigu lumu . See Shike shiliao xinbian (1977, 24.17976) .

Table 1. Cont.

Name	Built Time	Commissioner from Central Government	Local Official	Writer and Scribe	Note
“Tang Nenyue Zhenjun bei” 唐南岳真君碑 (Stele of the Perfected Lord of the Southern Sacred Peak of the Tang)	10th m., KY 20th y (732).		Yuan Zhi 元暉 (courtesy name Guangda 光大), Assistant Prefect of Hengzhou.	Written by Zhao Yizhen 趙頤真, transcribed in standard writing by Xiao Cheng 蕭誠.	Zhao (1985, 6.107). See the colophon mentions this inscription in Zhao (1985, 26.478).
“Qingcheng shan Zhangren ci miaobei” 青城山丈人祠廟碑 (Temple Stele of the Shrine for the Elder at Mount Qingcheng)	1st m., KY 20th y (732).		Yang Liben, Prefect of Shuzhou; Xue Yi 薛倚, County Magistrate of Qingcheng.	Written by Xu Taiheng 徐太亨; transcribed by Gan Yirong 甘遺榮 in the <i>bafen</i> style.	Dong (1983, 351.3560–61); Zhao (1985, 6.107).
“Zhangren ci ji furui jie” 丈人祠紀符瑞碼 (Stele Inscription Record of Auspicious Omens at the Elder Shrine)	?			Transcribed by Gan Yirong in the <i>bafen</i> style.	Wang Xiangzhi’s 王象之 <i>Yudi beijimu</i> 輿地碑記目 (Catalogue of Stele Inscriptions of the Realm) See <i>Shike shiliao xinbian</i> (1977, 24.18564).
“Jiutianshizhe miao bei” 九天使者廟碑 (Stele of the Temple of the Nine-Heavens-Envoy)	25th day, 1st m., KY 20th y (732).	Zhang Fengguo 張奉國, Commissioner of Establishing the Shrine, Official of the Inner Palace; Zhang Pinggong 張平公, Commissioner of Arranging Retreat.	Dugu Zhen 獨孤禎, Prefect of Jiangzhou; Yang Chuyu 楊楚玉, Prefect Aide; Hungfu Chuyu 皇甫楚玉, Adjutant; Wei Chang 魏昌, County Magistrate of Xunyang.	Written by Li Zi 李玘 (or Pin 玘), transcribed by Zhou Jiabin 周嘉賓.	Chen (1988, pp. 114–16); Dong (1983, 373.3792–94).
“Tang shizhe zhengxiang ji” 唐使者徵祥記 (Record of Auspicious Omens of the Envoy)	8th d., 3rd m., KY 20th y (732).			Written and transcribed by Pan Guan 潘觀 (or Hui 翻) in standard writing.	Dong (1983, 397.4050); Zhao (1985, 6.107).
“Tang Jinglongguan weiyi jianjiao xiugongde shi Tian Zunshi muzhiming” 唐景龍觀威儀檢校功德使田尊師墓誌銘 (Entombed Epitaph of the Venerable Master Tian, the Disciplinarian and the Commissioner for the Cultivation of Merit and Virtue of the Jinglong Daoist Abbey of the Tang)	Tianbao 6th y (747).	Tian Tui 田僊, Eminent Daoist priest of the Jinglong Abbey; Wei Zhi 韋陟, Secretarial Court Gentlemen.			Tian Tui and Wei Zhi went to the central sacred peak to construct the Perfected Lord Shrine together. See Lei (2019).

3.2. The Textual Verification of Related Historical Facts

3.2.1. The Timeline

There should be no problem dating the establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines, as the inscriptions mentioned above indicate that these events undoubtedly occurred between the nineteenth and twentieth years of Kaiyuan (732). However, the discrepancies in the relevant texts, especially the ambiguous record of the time in the “Biography of Sima Chengzhen” in the *Jiu Tangshu*, have led many modern scholars of Daoism to continue to follow the erroneous claim that the establishment of the shrines was in the fifteenth year. Chen Guofu’s *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (Examination of the Origin of Daozang Scriptures) adopts this claim. In addition to the biography, Chen also bases his claim on the *Nanyue xiaolu* 南岳小錄 (Lesser Record of the Southern Sacred Peak) written by Li Chongzhao 李冲昭, a Daoist priest in the late Tang (Chen 1963, p. 56). Noguchi Tetsuro and Ishida Kenji argue that the Perfected Lord Shrines should have been erected in the fourteenth year, while the Shrine for the Elder at Mount Qingcheng and the Temple for the Envoy of the Nine Heavens at Mount Lu were built in the twentieth year (Noguchi

and Ishida 1983, p. 56). This assertion is problematic since they divide a single event into two parts. As late as 1996, in his book *Taoism under the T'ang*, Barrett still followed Chen's statement, arguing that the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan still seemed too late even for implementing the construction, and cited the *Nanyue xiaolu* as the basis for his argument as well (Barrett 1996, pp. 54–55). Therefore, there is still a need to examine this issue.

The extant historical materials include three different dates for Emperor Xuanzong's acceptance of Sima Chengzhen's proposal to establish the Perfected Lord Shrines: the ninth (721), fifteenth (727), and nineteenth (731) years of Kaiyuan. Records in the "Annals" of *Jiu Tangshu*, the *Zizhi tongjian*, and the *Yuhai* are identical; namely, the official edict of building the shrines was issued on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731). As for the record in the *Cefu yuangui*, both the year and date accord with the other materials, except that the phrase "the fifth month" (*wuyue* 五月) becomes "the first month" (*zhengyue* 正月). This is probably due to the similarity in the forms of the characters "五" and "正". The month and date (the fifteenth day of the fifth month) in the *Nanyue xiaolu*, which Chen Guofu and Barrett cite as evidence, are also consistent with the *Zizhi tongjian* and the *Jiu Tangshu*, except that the year is given as the "fifteenth year". This is a discrepancy that may still be due to an error in the process of reprinting—the words "nine" (*jiu* 九) and "five" (*wu* 五) are also easily confused. Regarding the "twelfth month of the ninth year of Kaiyuan (721)" recorded in the *Tang huiyao*, I suspect that it is a mistake of "the second month of the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731)", which is the time that Sima Chengzhen's proposal was sent—it is not difficult to see with the aforementioned inscriptions that Xuanzong issued the edict to establish the Perfected Lord Shrines on the fifteenth day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731). It is hard to imagine that Sima Chengzhen's proposal was made ten years earlier. The following is a brief timeline of the establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines, the Elder Shrine, and the Envoy Temple.

- A. In the second month of the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731), Sima Chengzhen made the proposal.
- B. On the *renxu* day, the fifteenth day, of the fifth month same year (731), Emperor Xuanzong issued the edict of building the Perfected Lord Shrines of the Five Sacred Peaks.
- C. On the twenty-first day of the eighth month, the emperor issued an imperial order: set up the Elder Shrine of Mount Qingcheng and the Envoy Temple of Mount Lu (Xu 1983, 351.3651).
- D. On the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month, the emperor issued an imperial order: the Elder Shrine and the Envoy Temple should follow the convention of the Perfected Lord Shrines—pick five outstanding Daoist priests for burning incense and making offerings.
- E. In the eleventh month, the Perfected Lord Shrine of the eastern sacred peak was established. Fasting was performed for three days and three nights.
- F. In the first month of the twentieth year of Kaiyuan (732), the Perfected Lord Shrine of the northern sacred peak and the Elder Shrine were completed. Steles were erected for commemoration.
- G. On the twenty-fifth day of the first month of the same year (732), the Envoy Temple was completed. People set a vegetarian feast, performed the *zhaijiao* ritual, and erected a stele for commemoration.
- H. After the second month, the Perfected Lord Shrine of the western sacred peak was completed. A stele was erected for commemoration.
- I. In the third month, moreover, the stele of the "Zhengxiang ji" was erected at the Envoy Temple.
- J. On the *jiyou* day of the fourth month, the emperor ordered: "Since the Perfected Lord Shrines were firstly built on the five sacred peaks, the emperor had prayed for the fortune of the common people. Thus, it is suitable to have the Commissioner for Mountain Sacrifice select extremely faithful Daoist priests and set up *jiao* rituals

according to time. The temples of the Envoy and the Elder are allowed to have this sacrificial ritual as well". (Li 1988, p. 862)

- K. In the tenth month, the Perfected Lord Shrine of the southern sacred peak was completed. A stele was erected for commemoration.

It should be acknowledged that this timeline is not comprehensive. First, the date of Sima Chengzhen's proposal is still speculative. Besides, the completion time of the Perfected Lord Shrine of the central sacred peak is not available for examination. In addition, the reason for the long construction period of the southern sacred peak's Perfected Lord Shrine is unknown. All these questions remain to be investigated further.

3.2.2. The Shrine for the Elder at Mount Qingcheng and the Temple for the Envoy of the Nine Heavens at Mount Lu

Although the Shrine for the Elder at Mount Qingcheng and the Temple for the Envoy of the Nine Heavens at Mount Lu are not mentioned in the "Biography of Sima Chengzhen" in the *Jiu Tangshu*, it is noteworthy that they were built on the basis of Sima's suggestion as well.

According to the *Luyi ji* 錄異記 compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933), the establishment of the Elder Shrine and the Envoy Temple came from Sima Chengzhen's interpretation of a miraculous dream by Emperor Xuanzong (Du 1988a, pp. 856–57).⁷ As mentioned above, the bases of Du Guangting's account are the "Jiutianshizhe miao bei" erected on Mount Lu in the first month of the twentieth year of Kaiyuan (732) and the "Tang shizhe zhengxiang ji" erected in the third month, which are credible evidence. However, the claim that "temples were erected on each of the five sacred peaks and the three mountains" cannot be fully confirmed. This is because in both stone inscriptions and extant texts, no record has been found of the establishment of the Jiutiansiming 九天司命 (Director of Destinies of the Nine Heavens) Temple at Mount Qian in the Kaiyuan period (713–741). In the "Jiutian Shizhemiao bei", in the description of the relationship between the two shrines at Mount Qingcheng and Mount Lu with the Perfected Lord Shrine, there is no mention of the Qianshan Simingzhenjun 潛山司命真君 (Perfected Lord of Directing Destinies of Mount Qian). The earliest known stele inscription of the Perfected Lord Temple of Mount Qian is the "Tang Siming Zhenjunmiao bei" 唐司命真君廟碑 (A Tang Stele of the Temple for the Perfected Lord of Directing Destinies) erected in the eighth year of the Dali period (773) of Emperor Daizong (r. 762–779). Judging from its content, this temple was established in the ninth year of Tianbao (750), nearly 20 years after establishing the shrines of the five sacred peaks, Mount Qingcheng, and Mount Lu (Lei 2008).

Evidently, Sima Chengzhen attempted to transform or even replace the state ritual system with Daoist theories. He not only contributed to the establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines of the five sacred peaks but also used the opportunity of interpreting Emperor Xuanzong's dream to bring about the construction of the Elder Shrine of Mount Qingcheng and the Envoy Temple of Mount Lu. According to the *Lushan Taipingxingguo gong Caifang Zhenjun shishi* 廬山太平興國宮採訪真君事實 (Veritable Facts Concerning the Perfected Lord Investigator of the Taiping Xingguo Temple of Mount Lu), at that time, "emperor [Xuanzong] ordered Wu Daozi (685–758) to paint a portrait [of the Perfected Lord], and commanded Zhang Fengguo, Eunuch Official of the Inner Palace, and Zhang Pinggong, Ritual Master, to bring the image to Jiangzhou. The emperor ordered the Prefect, Dugu Zheng(zhen), and the Magistrate, Wei Chang, to establish the shrine at the north side of Mount Lu" 乃詔吳道子肖貌,敕內供奉張奉國及法師張平公等,齋像詣江州,命刺史獨孤正(禎),縣令魏昌建祠於廬山之陰 (Ye 1988, p. 662). The "Feng an yuce ji" 奉安玉冊記 (Record of Placing the Jade-Slips upon Imperial Order), erected on Mount Lu in the first year of the Chonghe (1118) era of the Song Emperor Huizong's reign, recorded that "[the emperor] commanded Wu Daozi to paint [a portrait of the Perfected Lord] and dispatched an Eunuch Official in the Inner Palace to bring the true image of the Envoy and to construct a temple on the north side of the mountain. Emperor Xuanzong bestowed the hall plaque, and himself wrote the calligraphy in the *miuzhuan* style for the plaque. The text on the

plaque reads ‘The Hall of the Envoy of the Nine Heavens,’ while it does not contain the deity’s title of ‘Caifang.’ The plaque is still there” 命吳道子寫之，遣內供奉持使者真圖建立祠廟於山之陰。明皇帝親書繆（篆）殿額以賜之，其文曰‘九天使者之殿’，而無‘採訪’之稱。其榜固在也 (Ye 1988, p. 687). If this is true, the image of the Envoy was painted by Wu Daozi, and the calligraphy for the plaque was written by Emperor Xuanzong—the significance speaks for itself.

3.2.3. Basic Information and Primary Functions of the Seven Shrines

At this point, we have a general understanding of the basic process of setting up shrines on the five sacred peaks and the two mountains, namely Mount Qingcheng and Mount Lu. First, Sima Chengzhen made the blueprint of the shrines and sketches of the deities’ statues according to the Shangqing scriptures (the sketch of the Envoy’s statue probably was made by Wu Daozi). Then, palace eunuchs served as Commissioners for Establishing Temples (Zhimiao shi 置廟使) and eminent Daoist priests from the two capitals served as Commissioners for Arranging Retreats (Shezhai shi 設齋使) went to the mountains to guide the establishment of shrines. Site selection, construction, and other work was the responsibility of local administrations. After completion, there were usually vegetarian feasts, circumambulation rituals, and the *toulong* sacrifice, as we saw in the “Daiyueguan bei” and the “Jiutian Shizhemiao bei”. Finally, steles were erected for commemoration.

The specific locations of the Perfected Lord Shrines on each sacred peak are not recorded in historical sources. The entry “Sima Chengzhen” in Shen Fen’s 沈汾 *Xuxi-anzhuo* 續仙傳 (Supplementary Biographies of Transcendents) says that “an imperial order was issued to construct a temple for transcendent officials on the summit of each of the five sacred peaks” 詔五岳於山頂別置仙官廟 (Zhang 2003, 113.2507), which is probably unfounded. Based on the materials available today, some sites are not far from the sacred peak temples, and both the Perfected Lord Shrine of the southern sacred peak and the Sitian Huowang 司天霍王 (Heaven Governor King Huo) Temple (i.e., Hengyue Temple 衡岳廟) located at the foot of Huagai Peak (Huagai feng 華蓋峰), and they are very close to each other (Li 1988, p. 862). Some shrines are farther away from the sacred peak temples, such as the Perfected Lord Shrine of the northern sacred peak at the foot of Jiahe 嘉禾 Mountain, 10 miles northeast of Hengyang 恆陽 County in Dingzhou 定州, and the shrine at the foot of Mount Heng (Hengyue 恆岳) located 40 paces west of the county (Li 1983, 18.514–15). The locations of the Perfected Lord Shrines of the other three sacred peaks are lost today.

The Qingcheng Elder Shrine is located east of Mount Zhangren (lit. elder) at the foot of Mount Guicheng 鬼城. It was renamed Jianfu 建福 Palace upon the imperial order in the Song dynasty, but it appears to have been moved from the old site on Mount Tianguo 天國, which is at a deeper location in Mount Qingcheng. Du Guangting’s *Daojiao lingyanji* 道教靈驗記 (Evidential Miracles in Support of Daoism) records: “The Perfected Lord’s image in the Daoist Abbey of the Elder at Mount Qingcheng wears the crown that canopies heaven, the robe of vermilion luster, and the seal of three *ting*, to dominate the five sacred peaks and to overawe and control myriad deities. In the middle of the Kaiyuan period (713–741), Emperor Xuanzong dreamed of him. Hence, he ordered to make the image of the lord and deliver it to the mountain. The Daoist abbey was moved to its current location from the shrine on Mount Tianguo. It is probably because people make offerings to the mountain in every spring and autumn, and Mount Qingcheng is slightly closer to the county while Mount Tianguo is too far away” 青城山丈人觀真君像，冠蓋天之冠，著朱光之袍，佩三亭之印，以主五岳，威制萬神。開元中，明皇感夢，乃夾紵制像，送於山中。自天國祠宇，移觀於今所。蓋取春秋祭山，去縣稍近，以天國太深故也 (Du 2003, 118.2594–95). It is evident from the above text that, first, by the late Tang and the Five Dynasties, the Elder Shrine had been called the Elder Daoist Abbey. Second, the Elder Shrine had already existed before and was moved to the present site in the middle of the Kaiyuan period. This may be the reason why Yang Liben 楊勵本, Prefect of Shuzhou, was going to “comply with the imperial order, respectfully pondered over the spiritual temple, painted the plan by himself, and changed the construction” 奉遵宸旨，恭惟靈廟，親畫規模，改興版築, as stated in the “Qingchengshan

Zhangrenzi miaobei” 青城山丈人祠廟碑 (Stele Inscription of the Elder Shrine of Mount Qingcheng). Third, not only were the plans of the shrines sent from Chang’an, but so was the image of the Perfected Lord, which proves the inscription’s description of the deity’s image: “[Its] divine posture is gorgeous and beautiful just like it has descended afar from the Nine Heavens; the splendid brilliance of the ravishing statue will long live in the three *shu* regions” 神姿麗美，遠降於九天。麗像昭輝，長存於三蜀。 Last, the Daoist abbey was moved to facilitate the annual spring and autumn sacrifices to the mountain for Qingcheng County. According to the *Tang liudian* 唐六典 (Compendium of the Sixfold Administration of the Tang Dynasty), “Mount Zhangren of Qingcheng County in Shu Prefecture shall be offered vegetarian delicacies in every spring and autumn. The Magistrate is entrusted to conduct [the rites]” 蜀州青城丈人山，每歲春秋二時享以蔬饌，委縣令行 (Li 1992, 4.123). The location where mountain sacrifices were held is the Elder Shrine. As for the Envoy Temple of Mount Lu, according to the aforementioned Du Guangting’s *Luyiji*, it was located at the northwest of the mountain. The *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 (Record of the Superb in the Yu Realm) states that “the Envoy Temple is thirty *li* south of the prefecture and it is also known as the Taipingxingguo Palace” 使者廟，在州南三十里，即太平興國宮也 (Wang 1992, 30.1313). The more specific location needs to be further examined.

These seven shrines were all Daoist abbeys, so they needed Daoist priests to live in them for maintenance. Although the scale of the buildings was not small, the number of Daoist priests was very limited, only about five priests per abbey. For instance, the “Qingchengshan Zhangrenzi miaobei” records that “according to the imperial edict issued on the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of [the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan], the Qingcheng Elder Shrine should pick five outstanding Daoist priests for burning incense and making offerings, in accord with the regulations of the Perfected Lord Shrines” 又奉[開元十九年]八月二十五日敕，青城丈人廟准五岳真君廟例，抽德行道士五人，焚香供養。 The “Jiutian Shizhemiao bei” also states that “on the twenty-first day of the eighth month of the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731), an imperial order was issued to have the Elder Temple of Mount Qingcheng and the Envoy Temple of Mount Lu follow the regulations of the Perfected Lord Temples of the five sacred peaks and to select five outstanding Daoist priests for burning incense and making offerings. Officials who oversee this matter should select and place Daoist practitioners who have splendid religious attainments and report their ages and names to related bureaus” 開元十九年八月二十一日降明旨曰：青城山丈人廟，廬山使者廟，宜准五岳真君廟例，抽德行道士五人，焚香供養。仍委所管揀擇灼然道行者安置，具年名申所由。 Moreover, as recorded in the *Cefu yuangui*, on the *jiyou* day of the fourth month, the emperor ordered: “Since the Perfected Lord Shrines were first constructed on the five sacred peaks, I continued to pray for the benefit of the common people, it is suitable that the Commissioner for Peak Sacrifices select extremely faithful Daoist priests and arrange the *jiao* rituals according to the proper time. The Envoy Temple and the Elder Shrine are allowed to have this sacrificial ritual as well” 五岳先制真君祠廟，朕為蒼生祈福，宜令祭岳使選精誠道士，以時設醮，及廬山使者，青城丈人廟，並准此祭醮 (Wang 1982, 53.590). Thus, resident priests were selected by both local officials and the Commissioner of Mountain Sacrifices dispatched by the central government, and the lists were to be reported to and recorded by the central government. “Zhang Chongji, the Daoist priest of the Gateway of Mystery, and others” mentioned in the last part of the “Jiutianshizhe miao bei” should refer to the selected priests for the Envoy Temple. Their primary function was to pray for the emperor, the state, and the people with Daoist *jiao* rituals on specific days. The establishment and main functions of the temple both strongly show the government’s involvement.

It is not surprising that shrines and temples of the five sacred peaks and two mountains would have a privileged status in the local religious community. Take the northern sacred peak as an example, an official sacrifice to the sacred peak is recorded in the “Datang Bolingjun beiyue Hengshan feng Antianwang zhi ming” 大唐博陵郡北岳恒山封安天王之銘 (Stele Inscription of Conferring the Title of Heavenly King of Peace to Mount Heng, the Northern Sacred Peak, of Boling Prefecture of the Great Tang) (Shike shiliao xinbian 1977,

2.1486) erected on the twenty-fifth day in the seventh year of Tianbao (748). The list of those who participated in the sacrifice inscribed on the back of the stele includes “Liu Chuyi, former imperial attendant, who jointly refined the elixir of hundred-blossom-syrup for the emperor, Daoist priest of the Three Caverns of the Perfected Lord Temple of the Northern Sacred Peak” 前供奉合煉百花漿北岳真君廟三洞道士劉處一 in addition to various officials of Heng Prefecture and Hengshan County, the director of the sacred peak temple on Mount Heng, and supervisor of the temple. The participation of the Daoist priests of the Perfected Lord Temple in the state ceremonies highlights the status of this temple in the local religious community. Until the late Tang dynasty, the Perfected Lord Temple of the northern sacred peak continued to receive official patronage. For example, the temple’s two reconstructions done in the fifteenth year of the Xiantong era (874) and the second year of the Qianfu era (875) were recorded in the “Beiyue zhenjun xusheng jian zaixiumiao ji” 北岳真君敘聖兼再修廟記 (Narrative of the Sage, Perfected Lord of the Northern Sacred Peak, and Record of the Reconstruction of the Temple) erected in the fourth year of the Qianfu (877) in Emperor Xizong’s reign (873–888). The second reconstruction was made upon the imperial order (Chen 1988, p. 185).⁸

3.3. Sima Chengzhen and the Theoretical Basis of the Establishment of Perfected Lord Shrines

What was the theoretical basis for Sima Chengzhen, the key figure in the establishment of shrines and temples for the five sacred peaks and the two mountains? As is well known, Sima was the patriarch of the Shangqing tradition after Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), Wang Yuanzhi 王遠知 (528–635), and Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (585–682), and he played an essential role in the religious and political arena in the high Tang.⁹ He said in the aforementioned memorial presented to Xuanzong: “There are cavern mansions in the five sacred peaks, in each of them there is a perfected one of the Upper Clarity descended to take the post. Mountains, rivers, winds, rains, *yin* and *yang*, and the order of *qi* are all governed by them”. The “Tang Huayue zhenjun bei” clearly indicates that “preserving essence derives from the images and numbers [in the *Book of Changes*], establishing blessings is based on divine plan. [Emperor Xuanzong] clarified the lost writs of the Great Cavern, and verified the ancient aspirations of Shangqing” 儲精出乎象數, 建福本乎神機。澄大洞之逸文, 驗上清之舊志。Evidently, Sima Chengzhen based his ideas on notions from the Shangqing tradition. Most of the Transcendents and Perfected Ones enshrined in the seven temples can be found in Tao Hongjing’s *Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈位業圖 (Table of the Ranks and Functions in the Pantheon) (Tao 1988, pp. 276–77), which is probably the source for Sima Chengzhen’s so-called “the perfected ones of Shangqing”. However, in the divine genealogy of the *Zhenling weiye tu*, the five sacred peaks, Mount Qingcheng, and Mount Lu are not an organic whole. What integrates them into one system are texts of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五岳真形圖 (Chart of the True Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks) system.

Kristofer Schipper and Yamada Toshiaki have studied this Chart and its associated beliefs in depth (Schipper 1967; Yamada 1987). Cao Wanru and others have pointed out that, in terms of the presentation and content of its ancient version, the *Wuyue zhengxing tu* found in the *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist Canon) probably evolved from sketch maps of specific mountains, namely, a practical map provided for Daoist priests to collect herbs and inquire into Daoist matters at the five sacred peaks (Cao and Zheng 1987). Zhang Xunliao’s study innovatively combines the Chart with Daoist artifacts such as the *Wuyue zhenxing jing* 五岳真形鏡 (Mirror of the Perfected Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks) and the *Shangqing hanxiang jing* 上清含像鏡 (A Shangqing Mirror that Contains Images) (Zhang 1991; Zhang and Bai 2006, pp. 1751–833). Zhang believes that the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, similar to *Hanwudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (Inner Traditions of Han Emperor Wu), which has the earliest record of the Charts, was a work by Ge Hong 葛洪 (ca. 284–363) using a pseudonym, or “a work created together by Ge with his teacher, father-in-law, and wife”. The reasons for this are: “First, the earliest texts documenting the materials of the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* are all attributed to Ge Hong, and some of them are intentionally fabricated by using predecessors’ names. Second, except for some fictitious characters and ungrounded materials, the Charts were

transmitted through a single line down from Ge Hong to his disciples and then gradually promoted (Zhang and Bai 2006, p. 1756)". There are two versions of *Wuyue zhenxing tu* preserved in the *Daozang*. One is the *Dongxuan lingbao wuyue guben zhenxing tu bingxu* 洞玄靈寶五岳古本真形圖并序 (Ancient Manuscript of the Perfected Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks with Preface, a Dongxuan Lingbao Scripture) (*Dongxuan lingbao wuyue guben zhenxing tu bingxu* 1988, pp. 735–43), although this text probably was written in a later time.¹⁰ The other one is the *Wuyue zhenxing xulun* 五岳真形序論 (Preface and Discourse of the Perfected Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks) collected in the *sheng* section of the *zhengyi* division (*Wuyue Zhenxing Xulun* 1988, pp. 628–36). Schipper has dated this text to the late Six Dynasties (220–589). The *Wuyue zhenxing xulun* consists of four kinds of texts. The first text is the story about the West Queen Mother bestowing the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* to the Han Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE); the second text includes two documents for the ritual of transmission of the talisman; the third is the *Baoshi peishiyong* 鮑氏佩施用 (Instructions for Use by Mr. Bao [Jing]), and the fourth is the *Wuyue tuxu* 五岳圖序 (Preface to the Image of the Five Sacred Peaks), which was attributed to Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (ca. 161–93 BCE) (Schipper and Verellen 2005, pp. 265–66). The *Wuyue tuxu* records:

The lord of the eastern sacred peak, Mount Tai, leads five thousand and nine hundred deities, is in charge of life and death, and is the chief commander of hundreds of ghosts. He is the one who those blood-eating temples revere . . . The lord of Mount Tai dons an azure robe, bears the dark emerald crown of seven *cheng*, and carries the seal of peace that penetrates *yang*. 東岳泰山君，領群神五千九百人，主治死生，百鬼之主帥也，血食廟祀所宗者也 . . . 泰山君服青袍，戴蒼碧七稱之冠，佩通陽太平之印。

... ..

Qingcheng Elder was appointed by the Yellow Thearch and is in charge of earth Transcendents. He is the superior officer to the five sacred peaks and oversees various officials. The Elder leads ten thousand transcendent officials. Daoist priests who enter the mountain see him donning a robe of vermilion luster, bearing the crown that canopies heaven, and carrying the seal of the Three Courts. He rides a carriage without a canopy and comes with various spirits to welcome the Daoist priests. 青城丈人，黃帝所命也，主地仙人，是五岳之上司，以總群官也。丈人領仙官萬人，道士入山者，見丈人服朱光之袍，戴蓋天之冠，佩三庭之印，乘科車，從衆靈而來迎子。

The Envoy of Mount Lu was appointed by the Yellow Thearch. His official rank equals the Court Censor, and he directs all the transcendent posts as he is the surveillance officer of the five sacred peaks. When Daoist priests enter the mountain, the Envoy will don a dark vermilion robe, bear the cap of peaceful blossom, and carry the seal of the true form of the Three Heavens to welcome the Daoist priests. 廬山使者，黃帝所命，秩比御史，主總仙官之位，蓋五岳之監司。道士入其山者，使者服朱緋之袍，戴平華之冠，佩三天真形之印，而來迎子。

Descriptions about Mount Huo, the crown prince for the southern sacred peak, and Mount Qian, the second crown prince, are listed after that of the Envoy of Mount Lu. In addition to the five sacred peaks, the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* also includes Mount Qingcheng, Lu, Huo, and Qian.¹¹ The *Wuyue zhenxing tu xu* explains the reason for their inclusion with the five sacred peaks: "[The Yellow Thearch] . . . thus presented a memorial to the Most High Lord of the Dao of the Three Heavens to command Mount Huo and Mount Qian to be crowned princes. His request was approved. Thus, the Yellow Thearch built the mountains and painted the images by himself to attach at the end of the Charts of the Five Sacred Peaks. Moreover, he commanded to promote Mount Qingcheng as the Elder and appointed Mount Lu as the Envoy. The images were attached in the proper order. This method started with the Yellow Thearch" [黃帝] . . . 乃章詞三天太上道君，命霍山潛山為儲君。奏可，帝乃自造山，躬寫形像，連五圖之後。又命拜青城為丈人，署廬山為使者，形皆以次相續，此道始于黃帝耳。

It is worth noting that the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* records the numbers of “various deities”, “transcendent officials”, and “jade maidens”, and gives detailed descriptions of the robes, crowns, and seals of the lords of the five sacred peaks, the Elder of Mount Qingcheng, the Envoy of Mount Lu, and the Crowned Princes Mount Huo and Qian. As mentioned above, Sima Chengzhen states in his memorial that the Shangqing perfected ones who were sent to govern the five sacred peaks all have distinct prescribed clothing and servants. The records in the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* seem to be the basis of Sima’s statement. Taking the description of Qingcheng Elder in the “Qingchengshan Zhangren ci miaobei” as an example: “Yellow Thearch appointed him as Elder of the Five Sacred Peaks, and thus he was addressed as such. He dons a robe of vermilion luster, bears the crown that canopies heaven, and carries the seal of the Three Courts. He rides a carriage without a canopy and is in charge of the five sacred peaks” 黃帝拜為五岳丈人，因以為稱。服朱光之袍，戴蓋天之冠，佩三庭之印，乘科車，主五岳。 This is almost identical to the description in the *Wuyue zhenxing tuxu*. However, in Sima Chengzhen’s plan to reshape the state’s sacrifices to the five sacred peaks using Daoist ideas, he did not intend to build temples on Mount Huo and Qian. This probably is because Mount Qingcheng and Mount Lu were the superiors of the five sacred peaks, while Huo and Qian were only the crown princes of the southern sacred peak, which means they were not at the same level.

In his study on the worship of the Envoy of the Nine Heavens of Mount Lu, Florian Reiter has suggested that some relatively ancient traditions, such as the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, had a new prevalence in the Tang (Reiter 1988, p. 275). The *Zhenguan gongsi huashi* 貞觀公私畫史 (History of Official and Private Paintings from the Zhenguan Era) compiled by Pei Xiaoyuan 裴孝源 (fl. 627–649) in the thirteenth year of Zhenguan (639) lists the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* in one fascicle. Pei comments that these paintings are “extremely fine and marvelous. They were obtained by seeking and inquiring in private households since the Sui (581–618)” 甚精奇，隋朝以來，私家搜訪所得 (Pan and Yugang 1999, p. 19). The *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, the *Wuyue gongyang tu* 五岳供養圖 (Charts of Making Offerings to the Five Sacred Peaks), and the *Wuyue zhenxing tu xu* were listed in the *Lingbao zhongmeng jingmu* 靈寶中盟經目 (Scripture Catalogue of Middle Covenant of Lingbao) in fascicle 4 of the *Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 (Regulations and Precepts for Daoist Practices in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns, a Dongxuan Lingbao Scripture) by Jinming Qizhen 金明七真 in the early Tang as ritual texts that Dongzhen Ritual Masters must acquire (Jinmingqizhen 1988, p. 758).¹² Furthermore, the *Wuyue zhenxing tu* is also listed as a ritual register conferred on Daoist priests in the renowned Daoist ritual master Zhang Wanfu’s 張萬福 *Chuanshou sandong jingjie falu lueshuo* 傳授三洞經戒法錄略說 (Brief Explanation of the Transmission of Scriptures, Precepts, and Ritual Texts of the Three Caverns) (Zhang 1988, p. 190).¹³ As a master of scriptures of the Three Caverns and various schools, Sima was undoubtedly well-versed in the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*.

Sima Chengzhen authored the *Dongxuan lingbao wuyue mingshan chaoyi jing* 洞玄靈寶五岳朝儀經 (Dongxuan Lingbao Scripture of Ritual Protocol of the Five Sacred Peaks and Renowned Mountains) in one fascicle in length and now lost.¹⁴ Judging from the title of the book, it seems to be a scripture dedicated to sacrifices to the five sacred peaks. His work, the *Shangqing tiandi gongfu tujing* 上清天地宮府圖經 (Shangqing Scripture of Charts of Palaces and Mansions in the Heavens and on Earth), is a systematic study summarizing the notions of *dongtian* 洞天 (cavern-heaven) and *fudi* 福地 (blissful-realm),¹⁵ in which he specifically discusses the names of the deities and Transcendents who have descended to the cavern-heavens in the five sacred peaks. For example, among the “ten great cavern-heavens”, there is the “fifth cavern-heaven in Mount Qingcheng. Its perimeter is two thousand *li*, and it is called ‘the cavern-heaven of nine chambers of treasured transcendent.’ It is located in Qingcheng County, Shuzhou, and governed by the Qingcheng Elder” 第五青城山洞，周回二千里，名曰寶仙九室之洞天，在蜀州青城縣，屬青城丈人治之。 The cavern-heavens of the five sacred peaks are listed among the “thirty-six lesser cavern-heavens”:

The second is the cavern in the eastern sacred peak, Mount Tai. The perimeter is one thousand *li*. Its name is Pengxuan Cavern Heaven. It is in Qianfeng County, Yanzhou, and is governed by Child Shantu. 第二東岳太山洞。周回一千里，名曰蓬玄洞天，在兗州乾封縣，屬山圖公子治之。

The third is the cavern in the southern sacred peak, Mount Heng. The perimeter is seven hundred *li*. It is called Zhuling Cavern Heaven. It is located in Hengshan County, Hengzhou, and is governed by the Transcendent Shi Changsheng. 第三南岳衡山洞。周回七百里，名曰朱陵洞天，在衡州衡山縣，仙人石長生治之。

The fourth is the cavern in the western sacred peak, Mount Hua. The perimeter is three hundred *li*, and it is called Zongxian Cavern Heaven. It is located in Huayin County, Huazhou, and governed by the perfected one, Huiche zi. 第四西岳華山洞。周回三百里，名曰總仙洞天，在華州華陰縣，真人惠車子主之。

The fifth is the cavern in the northern sacred peak, Mount Chang. The perimeter is three thousand *li*. Its name is Zongxuan Cavern Heaven. It is located in Quyang County of Changshan, Hengzhou. The governor is the perfected one Zheng Zizhen. 第五北岳常山洞。周回三千里，名曰總玄洞天，在恒州常山曲陽縣，真人鄭子真治之。

The sixth is the cavern in the central sacred peak, Mount Song. The perimeter is three thousand *li*. It is named Sima Cavern Heaven and is located in Dengfeng County of the eastern capital, Luoyang. The governor is the Transcendent Deng Yunshan. 第六中岳嵩山洞。周回三千里，名曰司馬洞天，在東都登封縣，仙人鄧雲山治之。

According to the “Dili zhi” 地理志 (Treatise on Administrative Geography) of the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New Tang History), Hengshan xian “originally was affiliated with Tanzhou. It became a part of Hengzhou in the third year of the Shenlong era (707)” 本隸潭州，神龍三年來屬[衡州] (Ouyang 1975, 41.1071). Accordingly, the *Shangqing tiandi gongfu tujing* was written after this date. Therefore, it is conceivable that Sima’s statements about the cavern-heavens, the descent of Transcendents and Perfected Ones, and their functions are based on his own work; and that the five Transcendents and Perfected Ones, including Child Shantu and Shi Changsheng, are “Shangqing perfected ones” whom he believed to have descended on the five sacred peaks. Although these five perfected ones have already appeared in Tao Hongjing’s work, there is no mention of them governing the five cavern-heavens.¹⁶ Therefore, their association with the five sacred peaks is probably Sima Chengzhen’s own creation.

Sima also provided specific guidance on the construction of temples and deity images, as is indicated in his biography in the *Jiu Tangshu*. He was able to do this, first of all, because he was conversant with Daoist literature and various institutions. After a long period of development, a wealth of experience had been accumulated in the construction of Daoist palaces and abbeys by the Tang dynasty. For instance, detailed instructions about establishing abbeys and making images are presented in the *Sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* (Jinmingqizhen 1988, pp. 744–49). Sima Chengzhen’s “creativity” was thus not just a figment of his imagination, as he must have consulted the experience and achievements of his predecessors. Due to our limited materials, we do not know the architectural plan of the seven shrines of the five sacred peaks and two mountains. However, from the description of the “Jiutianshizhe miaobei”, it seems that this temple at least included the Court of Assiduous Meditation (Jingsi yuan 精思院), the Court of Pure Precepts (Jingjie yuan 淨戒院), a Scripture Tower, a kitchen, and so on. Its design is very close to the regulations in the *Sandong fengdao kejie yingshi* about the setup of Daoist abbeys. Perhaps this was a typical design of Daoist abbeys in the early Tang, which Sima must have known very well.¹⁷

Secondly, Sima’s creativity is also inseparable from his profound artistic skills. Chengzhen was adept in poetry, music, painting, and calligraphy. For example, he was ordered to “make the ‘Daoist Music of Mysterious Perfect’” 製玄真道曲 (Ouyang 1975, 22.476), which made him more compatible with Emperor Xuanzong, who knew music well and had

personally composed the music of *Buxu* 步虛 (pacing the void). In terms of calligraphy and painting, he was “erudite and literate, adept in seal script, and had established his own style. His seal scripts were praised as the ‘writing of golden scissors’” 博學能文, 攻篆, 迴為一體, 號曰‘金剪刀書’ (Shen 2003, 113.2505). He painted the mural in his residence on Mount Wangwu (Zhang 1964, 9.186) and wrote the *Shangqing di shichen Tongbo Zhenren zhentu zan* 上清帝侍晨桐柏真人真圖贊 (Encomium of the Perfect Image of the Shangqing Perfected Tongbai, Aide of the Thearch) in one fascicle (Sima 1988, pp. 157–63). Although Chengzhen was not the painter of the paintings in the encomium, it is undoubtedly that this book contains the paintings. He also composed the *Shangqing hanxiang jian jian tu* 上清含象劍鑿圖 (Shangqing Chart of the Mirror and Sword of Containing Images) and cast swords for Xuanzong. He simplified the *Zhenxing tu* that mapped the geographic features of the five sacred peaks into an artistic symbol and placed it in the center of the mirror. His creation made a significant impact on later materials of the *Zhenxing tu*.¹⁸

In conclusion, Sima Chengzhen’s fundamental ideas for establishing temples of the five sacred peaks derived from concepts of the Shangqing tradition and were combined with the notions in the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*. Thanks to his mastery of Daoist scriptures on the one hand and his artistic skills on the other, he creatively constructed his theories of cavern-heavens and blissful-realms.

4. State Sacrifices, Daoist Beliefs, and Popular Worships

It is evident that the Tang Daoists put a great effort into participating in and reforming state sacrifices to the five sacred peaks, judging from the Daoist elements in Emperor Gaozong’s *feng* and *shan* sacrifices and the establishment of Perfected Lord Temples on the five sacred peaks and two mountains. In fact, the close relationships between Daoism and the state manifested in many other aspects. For instance, when Emperor Xuanzong endowed the title of Jintianwang 金天王 (Gold Heavenly King) on the deity of Mount Hua in the eighth month of the second year of the Xiantian era (713), he commanded “Ye Fashan 葉法善 (616–720), a Daoist priest at the Jinglong Abbey, who enjoys the same status as Chief Minister of the Court of State Ceremonial for Foreigners, and Duke of Yue Kingdom, to prepare for the ceremony and offer sacrifices” 景龍觀道士, 鴻臚卿員外置, 越國公葉法善, 備禮告祭 (Song 1956, 74.418). Confucian ceremonial officials were often involved in the *toulong* rituals that the Daoist priests were ordered to perform, such as the event held on the seventh day of the sixth month in the eighteenth year of the Kaiyuan era (730). At this event, Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, Wei Tao 韋瓘, who specialized in managing the Five Rituals, together with Wang Xianqing 王仙卿, Abbot of the Dongming Daoist Abbey of Chang’an, went to Mount Qingcheng to set up the *jiao* ritual and made the *toulong* sacrifice (Chen 1988, p. 111). Confucian ceremonial officials of the time did not see any fault with the close relationship between Daoism and state sacrifices. What is the historical background of this phenomenon? What was the impact on popular cults in the Tang dynasty?

4.1. The Daoist Opposition to Blood Sacrifice

According to traditional Confucian rituals, state sacrifices, such as the *sheji* 社稷 sacrifices to the gods of soil and grain, the five sacrifices, and sacrifices to the five sacred peaks should be “blood sacrifices” (*xueji* 血祭). This tradition was honored by past dynasties, and sacrifices to the five sacred peaks in the Tang were no exception. Based on the *Tang liudian*, *tailao* 太牢 (ox, goat, and pig) were to be prepared as the offerings for regular sacrifices, while only *teniu* 特牛 (ox) should be used for praying for rain and a clear sky (Li 1992, p. 128). In the *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮 (Ritual Code of the Kaiyuan Era in the Great Tang), there are very detailed regulations on the types of animals and body parts to be used for sacrifices to sacred peaks and strongholds (Xiao 1972, 35.199).

Popular cults in China were often deemed “illicit cults” (*yinsi* 淫祀) by the officials. The *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Rituals) states: “regarding sacrifices, those who have been abolished should not be promoted; those that have been promoted should not be abolished. Offering

worship to those who should not be worshiped is called illicit sacrifice. There will be no blessings for illicit sacrifices” 凡祭, 有其廢之, 莫敢舉也; 有其舉之, 莫敢廢也。非其所祭而祭之, 名曰淫祀, 淫祀無福 (Sun 1989, 6.152–53). In the Tang, it was considered that “even if on sacred peaks, seas, strongholds, waterways, renowned mountains, great rivers; even if they are emperors, kings, and past worthies, if temples are built at improper locations, or they are not in the classics, sacrifices to them are deemed illicit. [Sacrifices] to men who have no laudable merits and virtues, nor have done righteous deeds to be awarded, are deemed illicit sacrifices” 雖岳海鎮瀆, 名山大川, 帝王先賢, 不當所立之處, 不在典籍, 則淫祀也; 昔之為人, 生無功德可稱, 死無節行可獎, 則淫祀也 (Zhao 1991, 5.497). This shows that during the Tang, ordinary people without significant merit and deeds of integrity could not receive offerings. Even sacrifices to great men and significant geographic landmarks were considered illicit if they were performed at improper locations. The most prominent feature of illicit sacrifices is that they were not included in ceremonial codes and were not recognized by the state. However, the boundary between these sacrifices and state sacrifices is rather vague, and they have one major common feature: both require blood sacrifice. Therefore, Terry Kleeman considers state religion and popular worship as two aspects of the same religion which he calls the “blood-eating realm” (Qi 1996, p. 551).

As Kleeman has pointed out, both Buddhism and Daoism rejected the notions of mutual influence and communication between the human and divine realms advocated by state religion and popular worship. Moreover, Buddhism strongly opposed killing and blood-eating due to the concept of *saṃsāra* and retribution, and thus attempted to reform popular gods who accepted bloody offerings. Yan Yaozhong has shown that Buddhist monks in the Tang dynasty had integrated illicit sacrifices to various gods (such as mountain gods) in the Jiangnan region. He has pointed out that, as a result, Buddhism became much closer to the people, and illicit sacrifices became one of the bonds between the two (Yan 1996, pp. 51–62). Daoists also severely criticized blood sacrifice, for they believed that gods who receive bloody food are the “old *qi* of the Six Heavens” (*liutian guqi* 六天故氣), while the Daoist deities that reside in the heavens of the Three Clarities above the Six Heavens are the orthodox deities formed by the pure *qi* of the Dao. According to the *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens) completed in the Liu Song dynasty (420–479), Zhang Daoling 張道陵 had an agreement with officials of the Han empire, the Three Officials, and the stellar deity Taisui 太歲: “The people shall not falsely offer illicit sacrifices to other ghosts and gods so as to make them not able to drink and eat . . . The people shall only make offerings to deceased relatives, ancestors, and parents on the five auspicious *la* days; in the second and eighth month, they can offer sacrifices in the shrines to the gods of soil and stove. Those not belonging to the orthodox rituals of the Three Heavens and the perfected Dao of various heavens are all old *qi*” 民不妄淫祀他鬼神 . . . 民人唯聽五臘吉日祠家親宗祖父母, 二月八月祠祀社灶。自非三天正法, 諸天真道, 皆為故氣 (Xushi Santiandizi 1988, p. 414; see also Ren 1995, pp. 950–51). However, Daoism held a more reserved attitude toward the state sacrifices that required the slaughtered livestock for blood-eating deities. Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406–477) in his *Lu xiansheng Daomen kelue* 陸先生道門科略 (Master Lu’s Codes of the Daoist Portal, Abridged) states: “[The appropriate rituals] only include the son of heaven offering sacrifices to heaven, the three dukes offering sacrifices to the five sacred peaks, marquises offering sacrifices to mountains and rivers, and commoners giving offerings to ancestors on the five *la* days and to the gods of soil and stove in the second and eighth months. Other than these rituals, one should not make offerings. Giving offerings to ancestors not on the five auspicious *la* days or offering sacrifices to the gods of soil and stove not on the *she* days in spring and autumn are all transgressions of making illicit sacrifices” 唯天子祭天, 三公祭五岳, 諸侯祭山川, 民人五臘吉日祠先人, 二月八月祭社灶, 自此以外, 不得有所祭。若非五臘吉日而祠先人, 非春秋社日而祭社灶, 皆犯淫祠 (Lu 1988, p. 779).

Although Daoism has sought to reform state sacrifices, sacrifices to heaven and earth and those to ancestral shrines are too difficult to reform since they are directly related to the legitimacy of the dynasty. Therefore, it was easier to start the transformation from sacrifices

to sacred peaks and rivers. Since the Northern and Southern dynasties, Daoists began to actively participate in the state's sacrificial activities of sacred peaks, and consequently, these rites increasingly adopted Daoist aspects. Sima Chengzhen's proposal to erect shrines for the Perfected Lords of the five sacred peaks was a continuation of this effort. He directly expressed his aversion to the "blood-eating gods" and advocated that Daoist Perfected Ones and Transcendents were superior to the deities of the five sacred peaks who took blood sacrifices, signaling his intention to transform state sacrifices.

4.2. The Toulong Sacrifice for Sacred Peaks and Waterways in the Tang Dynasty

A deeper reason for Emperor Xuanzong's acceptance of Sima Chengzhen's proposal to establish shrines on the five sacred peaks and two mountains, in addition to his respect for Daoism, was the tendency to Daoize sacrifices to the five sacred peaks since the Northern and Southern dynasties. This tendency was even more evident in the *toulong* activities in the early Tang. By the time of the erection of the Perfected Lord Shrines, the fruit of Daoization was ripe for taking.

The earliest *toulong* activity in the Tang was held on Mount Mao by Wang Yuanzhi in the ninth year of Zhenguan following imperial order: "In the fourth month of the ninth year, he arrived at Mount Mao. An imperial edict was issued to dispatch Xue Yi 薛頤 (?–646), Director of the Astrological Office, Zhang Daoben 張道本, Editor of the Imperial Library, Huan Fasi 桓法嗣, Aide of Left Inner Guard Command of the Crowned Prince, and others, to deliver fragrant oils, colored silks, gold dragon figurines, and jade discs to the abbey to pray for blessings for the state" 貞觀九年四月至[茅]山, 敕文遣太史令薛頤, 校書郎張道本, 太子左內率長史桓法嗣等, 送香油, 鎮彩, 金龍, 玉璧於觀所, 為國祈恩 (Chen 1988, pp. 51–54).¹⁹ Since then, *toulong* activity seems to have become regular. In the second year of the Xianheng era (671), Lu Zhaolin 盧照鄰 (?–689) wrote a stele inscription for Gentleman Li, abbot of the Zhizhen Daoist Abbey 至真觀 in Yizhou 益州, which reads: "Riding the clouds and driving the *qi* day and night on mountain ridges; offering jade discs and casting gold dragons year by year to sacred peaks and waterways" 乘雲御氣, 日夕於關山; 薦璧投金, 歲時於岳瀆 (Lu 1994, 7.416). This kind of ritual activity had apparently been regularized. By the time of Xuanzong, activities that promoted Daoism reached a climax: "On renowned mountains in the realm, Daoist priests and palace eunuchs were ordered to jointly refine [elixir] and hold the *jiao* sacrifices repeatedly. They cast dragon tokens, offered jades, built temples, and picked herbs. Perfected instructions and transcendent traces increased every month and year" 天下名山, 令道士, 中官合鍊醮祭, 相繼於路. 投龍奠玉, 造精舍, 採藥餌, 真訣仙蹤, 滋於歲月 (Liu 1975, 24.934). The imperial court even issued special rules for the *toulong* ritual. Dunhuang manuscript P.2354 is an example of such a text. It is noteworthy that jade discs used in traditional state sacrifices to sacred peaks and waterways were added to the *toulong* ritual during the Tang, which demonstrated the convergence of Daoist and state rituals since the original *toulong* ritual in the Six Dynasties only had gold dragons, jade-slips, emerald ribbons, and gold knobs (Zhou 1999).

According to my preliminary statistics, most *toulong* activities were held on the eastern sacred peak. Nineteen of the rites were held on the eastern sacred peak, twice on Mount Song, once on Mount Heng, three times at Ji Waterway 濟瀆, and once at Huai Waterway 淮瀆 (Lei 2009, pp. 207–10). These are surely not all the *toulong* rituals on the five sacred peaks and four waterways during the Tang, yet evidently, *toulong* rites were considerably frequent by the time of Gaozong. Both the emperor and the public had long been accustomed to this. In this context, Emperor Xuanzong gladly accepted Sima Chengzhen's suggestion, which led to the establishment of the shrines on the five sacred peaks and the two mountains.

4.3. The Interactions between State Sacrifices, Daoist Beliefs, and Popular Worshipships

The establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines of the sacred peaks, the Elder Shrine of Mount Qingcheng, and the Envoy Temple of Mount Lu indicate that the Tang court had partly accepted Daoist theories of sacrifices to the five sacred peaks. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Daoist system replaced the traditional state sacrificial system of the five

sacred peaks. On the contrary, the two coexisted to a certain degree. Each of the five sacred peaks had its own administrative institution, and even after establishing the Perfected Lord Shrines, their functions were never challenged. Moreover, the deities of the five sacred peaks were crowned as kings successively during Emperor Xuanzong's reign. In terms of rituals, sacrifices to the five sacred peaks were still held at the best location, *yuemiao*, and the nature of blood sacrifice remained unchanged. In the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, which was compiled almost simultaneously with the establishment of the Perfected Lord Shrines, the different types of livestock used in sacrifices were still specified in detail. Although the establishment of the shrines was based on Sima Chengzhen's intention of transforming the tradition of blood sacrifice, Xuanzong did not necessarily see it as such. Essentially, the primary function of the shrines was still to set up the *jiao* ritual for the state, the emperor, and the people to pray for blessings.

More importantly, from Sima Chengzhen to Du Guangting in the late Tang and the Five Dynasties (907–960), the notions of cavern-heavens and blissful-realms were instead profoundly influenced by the authority of the state. Du Guangting's *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 洞天福地岳瀆名山記 (Records of Cavern Heavens, Blissful Realms, Sacred Peaks, Waterways, and Renowned Mountains) displays a significant change in the description of the five sacred peaks compared with Sima's *Tiandi gongfu tu*. Sima puts the ten great cavern-heavens at the top of the list while placing the five sacred peaks among the thirty-six lesser cavern-heavens, emphasizing their domination by Shangqing perfected ones. In doing so, Sima implies that Daoist Transcendents and Perfected Ones are superior to the blood-eating gods of state sacrifices. However, Du Guangting's *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* treated the five sacred peaks as follows:

The mountain deity of the eastern sacred peak, Mount Tai, is King Tianqi who leads ninety thousand transcendent officials and jade maidens. The mountain's perimeter is two thousand *li*, and it is in Fengfuxian of Yanzhou. Mount Luofu and Kuocang serve as Assistants of the Mandate. Mount Meng and Dong serve as Assistant Managers. 東岳泰山, 岳神天齊王, 領仙官玉女九萬人。山周回二千里, 在兗州奉符縣。羅浮山, 括蒼山為佐命, 蒙山, 東山為佐理。

The mountain deity of the southern sacred peak, Mount Heng, is King Sitian who leads thirty thousand transcendent officials and jade maidens. The mountain's perimeter is two-thousand *li*. Mount Huo and Qian are the Crowned Princes; Mount Tiantai and Juqu are the Assistant Governors. 南岳衡山, 岳神司天王, 領仙官玉女三萬人。山周回二千里, 以霍山, 潛山為儲副, 天台山, 句曲山為佐理。 (Du 1988b, p. 56)

...

Apparently, concerning the identification of the five sacred peaks' deities, Du Guangting not only accepted the titles of the five sacred peaks given by the imperial court (namely the ranks of nobility endowed by Emperor Xuanzong) but also sought to have the so-called "blood-eating gods" of Sima Chengzhen's writings lead transcendent officials and jade maidens. Thus, it is clear that state authority has permeated Du's interpretations of cavern-heaven and blissful-realm. To a certain degree, Du Guangting had given up on transforming the state sacrificial system with Daoist theories, which demonstrated a completely different purpose from that of Sima Chengzhen.

However, the idea that Daoist Transcendents and Perfected Ones were superior to sacred peak deities in the state sacrificial system promoted by Sima Chengzhen made a significant impact on popular worship in the Tang. In some *chuanqi* 傳奇 ("Transmitting the Strange") tales, an ordinary Daoist priest is able to have the mountain deity of Mount Hua wait for and greet him as far as thirty *li* outside of the Tong Pass (Li 1961, 35.221). Even a common Daoist priestess could make the southern sacred peak's deity greet and pay respect in front of her horse (Duan 1981, 8.83–84). A story in Dunhuang manuscript S. 6836, *Ye Jingneng shi* 葉靜能詩 (Ye Jingneng's Poem), also faithfully reflects this idea. In the thirteenth year of Kaiyuan (725), Ye Jingneng, a Daoist priest, prayed for rain following an

imperial order but in a manner of commanding the deities of the five sacred peaks (Huang and Zhang 1997, p. 337). Ye can call the deities hither and thither, implying that Daoist Celestial Masters were superior to the sacred peak deities. In a late Tang story titled “Liu Yuanjiong” 劉元迥, a magician persuaded Li Shigu 李師古 (?–806), Military Commissioner of Pinglu 平盧, to change the head of King Tianqi, the deity of Mount Tai, with gold in order to defraud him of money. He even said directly: “Although Tianqi is called a noble deity, he actually belongs to the ghost kind” 天齊雖曰貴神，乃鬼類耳 (Li 1961, 308.2440). This is in line with Sima’s idea of “blood-eating gods”. There is a narrative pattern in Tang folklore: the son of the sacred peak deity (sometimes the deity himself) snatches a beautiful woman from the human realm, but the woman is saved by a transcendent master or eminent Daoist priest with a talisman (Jia 2000; Lei 2009, pp. 214–15). These stories can be used as footnotes to what Sima stated: “Nowadays on famous mountains, sacred peaks, and waterways, most sacrifices are to blood-eating deities. The Most High worries that they would exercise power arbitrarily to harm the multitude”. In addition to Daoist priests, these stories also include “wuzhe” 巫者 (sorcerers) or “shushi” 術士 (magicians), who eventually perform the magic to save the snatched women from the deities. These people undoubtedly played an important role in the dissemination of popular worship. With the circulation of such stories, sacred peak deities were no longer unreachable and exalted objects of state sacrifice but entered the personal lives of the people and their world of belief, although their relationship was not always pleasant.

5. Conclusions

Daoism, based on its opposition to blood sacrifice, endeavored to transform state sacrifices. From the Northern and Southern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang, the connection between Daoist *toulong* rituals and state sacrifices was evident. Various Daoist elements were clearly seen in Emperor Gaozong’s *feng* and *shan* rituals. This tendency reached its climax by the time of Emperor Xuanzong. Following the suggestion of Sima Chengzhen, the Shrines for Perfected Lords of the five sacred peaks, the Shrine for the Elder at Mount Qingcheng, and the Temple for the Envoy of the Nine Heavens at Mount Lu were constructed. However, they did not replace the state sacrificial system but mainly were utilized as Daoist abbeys to pray for the state, the emperors, and the people. Moreover, from Sima Chengzhen to Du Guangting, the descriptions of the five sacred peaks in the writings about cavern-heavens and blissful-realms changed significantly, demonstrating that the state authority had significantly impacted Daoist ideas. Meanwhile, Daoist Transcendents and Perfected Ones became more exalted than the sacred peak deities in many Tang folktales. The destruction of the superior status of sacred peak deities, lofty gods who were worshipped in state sacrifices, greatly increased their proximity to the lives and beliefs of the masses. Essentially, the state tended to manifest its legitimacy by strengthening its sacrality. The convergence of sacrifices to the five sacred peaks with Daoism and the circulation of related folk tales remarkably reinforced the sacrality of state power, and the sacrificial activities thus took on a strong symbolic significance.

Author Contributions: Writing—original draft preparation, W.L.; Writing—review & editing, W.L., L.Z.; Writing-Translation, L.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 Yoshikawa Tadao had briefly touched upon this topic in his earlier research (Yoshikawa 1991, pp. 213–82). Lucas Weiss notices the influence of imperial power on Daoist cavern-heavens. He especially investigates Mount Wangwu's function as the center of the Daoist sacred geographic system, and focuses on the roles of the five sacred peaks and the cavern-heavens as sacred spaces in gaining imperial recognition of ritual authority, arguing that Sima Chengzhen adapted the cosmology revered by the imperial authority to that of the Shangqing tradition by reforming the sacrifices for the five sacred peaks (Weiss 2012). Regarding the development in later Tang, Lennert Gesterkamp contends that Du Guangting synthesized sacred sites of various Daoist traditions including the Celestial Masters, Shangqing, and Lingbao. Additionally, many of the sacred sites Du Guangting added were sites for official state sacrifices, thus creating a convergence between the sacred sites of Daoism and the state (Gesterkamp 2017).
- 2 The original stone stele has long been lost. Ouyang Fei's 歐陽棐 (1047–1113) *Jigu lumu's* 集古錄目 [Catalogue of Collection of the Antiquities] colophon in *juan* 3 states: "The writer's name was not written on the stele. It was transcribed by Liu Yuanming, General of Pacifying the West, Duke of Lueyang, and Attendant Gentleman. In the middle of the Taiyuan era, the temple was moved to a new place. Daoist priests were used for serving the temple. In the spring, they pray; in the autumn, they reward [deities]. If there are major events, they report. The stele was erected in the fifth month of the fifth year of the Taiyan era (439)" 不著撰人名氏, 後魏鎮西將軍略陽公侍郎劉元明書。太延中, 改立新廟, 以道士奉祠, 春祈秋報, 有大事則告。碑以太延五年五月立 (Shike shiliao xinbian 1977, 24.17959).
- 3 Also, according to the late Tang Dunhuang manuscript S.5448 *Dunhuang lu* 敦煌錄 (Records of Dunhuang): "Stone Grease Hill is on the peak of the Black Mountain which is located at 256 *li* north of the prefecture. [It was named because] grease oozed out of the hill rocks. In the nineteenth year of the Kaihuang era (599), the Black Mountain turned white. The interior of the mountain was examined, and it turned out that it was not false. Daoist priest Huangfu Decong and the other six people were dispatched to perform the *jiao* ritual there. Since then, the mountain looked like a snowy peak when gazing from afar" 石膏山, 在北二百五十六里烏山峰, 山石間出其膏。開皇十九年, 烏山變白, 中驗不虛, 遣道士皇甫德琮等七人祭醮, 自後望如雪峰。If it is true, in the period of Emperor Wen of the Sui, Daoist priests were sent to offer sacrifices to mountains on the state borders as well, which indicates that it was surely not a sole phenomenon of Daoist participation in sacrifices to the five sacred peaks. Li Zhengyu contends that this text is credible. See Li (1998, pp. 299–325).
- 4 Buddhists in medieval China performed rituals on the behest of emperors at the five sacred peaks as well. James Robson's groundbreaking work *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (nanyue) in Medieval China* offers a thorough investigation of the Buddhist impact on the southern sacred peak. See Robson (2009).
- 5 The main source of this material is the "Wangwushan Zhenyi Sima xiansheng" 王屋山貞一司馬先生 (Master Sima, whose sobriquet is Zhenyi, from Mount Wangwu) in the *Zhenxi* 真系 (Genealogy of Perfected Ones) composed by Li Bo 李渤 (773–831) in the late Zhenyuan period (785–805). See Zhang (2003, 5.82–83).
- 6 See the entry of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731) in "Annals of Xuanzong" in *juan* 8 of the *Jiu Tangshu*, *juan* 213 of the *Zizhi tongjian*, *juan* 53 of the *Cefu yuangui*, *juan* 50 of the *Tang huiyao*, *juan* 102 of the *Yuhai*.
- 7 "Seeing Auspicious Omens" in *juan* 1 of the *Lushan Taipingxingguo gong Caifang Zhenjun shishi* has an accurate date for Xuanzong's dream: the fifteenth day of the second month in the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan (731). See Ye (1988). It is worth noting that this date is exactly the time when Sima proposes to build the Perfected Lord Shrines as I argued above.
- 8 About the situation of the Perfected Lord Temple of the northern sacred peak in the late Tang, see Gao Feng's 高飆 (fl. 934–966) "Datang Taishilingong Taiyuangong chongxiu Zhenjun miao zhi bei" 大唐太師令公太原公重修真君廟之碑 [Stele of the Perfected Lord Temple Reconstructed by Duke of Taiyuan, Grand Preceptor of the Great Tang] in Chen (2005, 94.1155–57).
- 9 See Chen (1963, pp. 52–59) for more information about Sima Chengzhen. See also Kroll (1978, 6:16–30), and Kohn (1987).
- 10 Kristofer Schipper suggests that the dating of this text can be as late as the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). See Schipper and Verellen (2005, pp. 1236–37).
- 11 Mount Huo and Qian are the same mountain, which is also known as Mount Tianzhu 天柱, but they are often deemed as two mountains in ancient texts. See Wu (1984, pp. 108–29).
- 12 The completion time of this text is controversial. Scholars nowadays generally agree that the completion time should be the early Tang. See Kohn (1997, 13–14:91–118), Reiter (1998).
- 13 About this text, see Benn (1991).
- 14 The title can be found in the "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 (Treatise on the Arts and Refined Writings) of the *Xin Tangshu* (see Ouyang 1975, 59.1522). It can also be found in the "Yiwen lue" 藝文略 (Digest of the Arts and Refined Writings) of *Tongzhi* 通志 (Comprehensive History of Institutions), see Zheng (1995, p. 1622). This book was lost in the Yuan dynasty and the title is collected in the *Daozang quejing mulu* 道藏闕經目錄 [Catalogue of Missing Scriptures in the Daozang] completed in the twelfth year of Zhiyuan (1352) (Daozang quejing mulu 1988, p. 504).
- 15 The main body of this text is preserved in *juan* 27 of *Yunji qiqian* and is entitled *Tiandi gongfu tu bingxu* 天地官府圖並序 [Charts of Palaces and Mansions in the Heavens and on Earth, with Preface]. See Zhang (2003, 27.608–631).
- 16 Franciscus Verellen also points out that the cavern-heavens and the five sacred peaks are essential elements in the sacred geographical system of the Tang. See Verellen (1995).

- 17 About the layout of Daoist abbeys in early medieval times, see [Kohn \(2000\)](#), pp. 79–106.
- 18 See [Zhang and Bai \(2006\)](#) for information about the mirror. See also [Wang \(2000a, 2000b\)](#).
- 19 This stele was erected in the sixteenth year of Zhenguan (642).

References

- Barrett, Timothy Hugh. 1996. *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion & Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History*. London: The Wellsweep Press.
- Benn, Charles D. 1991. *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission: A Taoist Ordination Rite of A.D.711*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Cao, Wanru, and Xihuang Zheng. 1987. Shilun Daojiao de Wuyue zhenxing tu 試論道教的五岳真形圖 [Study on the Daoist Wuyue Zhenxingtu]. *Ziran Kexueshi Yanjiu* 自然科學史研究 [Studies in the History of Natural Sciences] 6.1: 52–57.
- Chen, Guofu. 1963. *Daozang Yuanliu Kao* 道藏源流考 [Examination on the Origin of Daozang Scriptures]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Chen, Yuan, ed. 1988. *Daojia Jinshi Lue* 道家金石略 [Collection of Daoist Epigraphy]. Collated by Chen Zhichao and Zeng Qingying. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Chen, Shangjun. 2005. *Quan Tangwen Bujian* 全唐文補編 [Supplementary Section of the Quan Tangwen]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Daozang quejing mulu* 道藏闕經目錄 [Catalogue of Missing Scriptures in the Daozang]. *Daozang* 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. 1988. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1430. vol. 34.
- Dong, Gao, ed. 1983. *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 [Comprehensive Collection of Tang Literature]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Dongxuan Lingbao wuyue guben zhenxing tu bingxu* 洞玄靈寶五岳古本真形圖并序 [Ancient Manuscript of the Perfected Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks with Preface, a Dongxuan Lingbao Scripture]. *Daozang* 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. 1988. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 441. vol. 6.
- Du, Guangting. 1988a. *Luyi Ji* 異記 [Record of Marvels]. *Daozang* 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 591. vol. 10.
- Du, Guangting. 1988b. *Dongtian Fudi Yuedu Mingshan Ji* 洞天福地岳瀆名山記 [Records of Cavern Heavens, Blissful Realms, Sacred Peaks, Waterways, and Renowned Mountains]. *Daozang* 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 599. vol. 11.
- Du, Guangting. 2003. *Daojiao Lingyan Ji* 道教靈驗記 [Evidential Miracles in Support of Daoism]. Yunji Qiqian 雲笈七籤 [Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel]. Edited by Zhang Junfang. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Duan, Chengshi. 1981. *Youyang Zazu* 西陽雜俎 [Miscellaneous Morsels from the South Slope of You Mountain]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Gesterkamp, Lennert. 2017. The Synthesis of Daoist Sacred Geography: A Textual Study of Du Guangting's Dongtian fudi yuedu ji (901). *Daoism: Religion, History and Society* 9: 1–40.
- Gu, Jiegang. 1963. Siyue yu wuyue 四岳與五岳 [Four Marchmounts and Five Marchmounts]. In *Shilin Zashi Chubian* 史林雜識初編 [Miscellaneous Learnings of the Groove of History, First Edition]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, pp. 34–45.
- Huang, Zheng, and Yongquan Zhang. 1997. *Dunhuang Bianwen Jiaozhu* 敦煌變文校註 [Collation and Exegesis on Dunhuang Bianwen]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Imaeda, Jirō. 1987. Shiba Shōtei nitsuite 司承について [On Sima Chengzhen]. In *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化 [Daoism and Religious Culture]. Edited by Akizuki Kan'ei. Tokyo: Hiraikawa Shuppansha, p. 175.
- Jia, Erqiang. 2000. Tangdai de Huashan xinyang 唐代的華山信仰 [Worship to Mount Hua in the Tang Dynasty]. *Zhongguo Shi Yanjiu* 中國史研究 [Journal of Chinese Historical Studies] 2: 90–99.
- Jinmingqizhen. 1988. *Dongxuan Lingbao Sandong Fengdao Kejie Yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始 [Regulations and Precept for the Practice of Daoism in Accordance with the Scriptures of the Three Caverns, a Dongxuan Lingbao Canon]. *Daozang* 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1125. vol. 24.
- Kohn, Livia. 1987. *Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima Chengzhen's Zuowanglun*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag-Wort und Werk.
- Kohn, Livia. 1997. The Date and Compilation of the Fengdao kejie, The First Handbook of Monastic Daoism. *East Asian History* 13–14: 91–118.
- Kohn, Livia. 2000. A Home for the Immortals: The Layout and Development of Medieval Daoist Monasteries. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung* 53: 79–106. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Kroll, Paul W. 1978. Szu-ma Ch'eng-chen in T'ang Verse. *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions* 6: 16–30.
- Lei, Wen. 2005. Tang Huayue zhenjun bei kaoshi 唐華岳真君碑考釋 [Study and Exegesis of the Stele of the Perfected Lord of Sacred Peak Hua of the Tang]. *Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 [Palace Museum Journal] 2: 76–88.
- Lei, Wen. 2008. Tangdai Qianshan de xinyang shijie: Yi shike cailiao wei zhongxin 唐代潛山的信仰世界——以石刻材料為中心 [World of Belief of Mount Qian in the Tang Dynasty, Centered on Stone Inscription Materials]. *Dunhuang Xue* 敦煌學 [Dunhuang Studies] 27: 223–38.
- Lei, Wen. 2009. *Jiaomiao Zhitwai: Sui Tang Guojia Jisi yu Zongjiao* 郊廟之外: 隋唐國家祭祀與宗教 [Beyond Imperial Shrines: State Sacrifice and Religions in the Sui and Tang]. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore.
- Lei, Wen. 2019. Guifei zhi shi: Xinchu Jinglongguan weiyi Tian Tui muzhi suojian shengtang daojiao 貴妃之師: 新出《景龍觀威儀田貴墓誌》所見盛唐道教 [Master of the Imperial Consort: Daoism in High Tang, Seen from the Newly Excavated Entombed Epitaph of Tian Tui, Disciplinary of the Jinglong Daoist Abbey]. *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 [Journal of Chinese Literature and History] 1: 325–48.
- Li, Fang, ed. 1961. *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Records in the Taiping Era]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

- Li, Jifu. 1983. *Yuanhe Junxian Tuzhi 元和郡縣圖志 [Maps and Records of Prefectures and Counties from the Yuanhe Period (806-820)]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Chongzhao. 1988. *Nanyue xiaolu 南岳小 [A Little Record of the Southern Marchmount]*. Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 453. vol. 6.
- Li, Linfu, ed. 1992. *Tang liudian 唐六典 [Compendium of the Sixfold Administration of the Tang Dynasty]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Zhengyu. 1998. *Guben Dunhuang Xiangtuzhi Bazhong Jianzheng 古本敦煌土志八種箋證 [Annotation of the Eight Ancient Manuscripts of Dunhuang Gazetteers]*. Taipei: Xinwenfeng Press.
- Liu, Xu. 1975. *Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Lu, Xiujing. 1988. *Lu Xiansheng Daomen Kelue 陸先生道門科略 [Master Lu's Codes of the Daoist Portal, Abridged]*. Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1127. vol. 24.
- Lu, Zhaolin. 1994. *Yizhou Zhizhengan zhu Lijun bei 益州至真觀主黎君碑 [Stele for Gentleman Li, the Abbot of Zhizhen Daoist Abbey of Yizhou]*. In *Lu Zhaolin ji jianzhu 盧照鄰集箋註 [Annotated Collection of Lu Zhaolin]*. Annotated by Zhu Shangshu. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, pp. 415–16.
- Noguchi, Tetsurō, and Kenji Ishida. 1983. *Dōkyō nenpyō 道教年表 [Chronology of Daoism]*. In *Dōkyō 道教 [Daoism]*. Edited by Fukui Kōjun. Tokyo: Hiraikawa Shuppansha, vol. 3, p. 341.
- Ouyang, Xiu, ed. 1975. *Xin Tangshu 新唐書 [New Tang History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Pan, Yungao, and Li Yugang, eds. 1999. *Tang Wudai hualun 唐五代畫論 [Discussion on Paintings from the Tang and Five Dynasties]*. Changsha: Hunan Meishu Chubanshe.
- Qi, Tailu. 1996. *You jisi kan Zhongguo zongjiao de fenlei 由祭祀看中國宗教的分類*. In *Yishi, Miaohui yu Shequ: Daojiao, Minjian Xinyang yu Minjian Wenhua 儀式、廟會與社區：道教、民間信仰與民間文化 [Rituals, Temple Fairs, and Communities: Daoism, Folk Beliefs, and Folk Culture]*. Edited by Li Fengmao and Zhu Ronggui. Taipei: Preparatory Office of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, pp. 547–56.
- Reiter, Florian. 1988. *The "Investigation Commissioner of the Nine Heavens" and the Beginning of His Cult in Northern Chiang-hsi in 731 A. D.* *Oriens* 31: 266–89.
- Reiter, Florian. 1998. *The Aspiration and Standards of Taoist Priests in the Early T'ang Period*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Ren, Jiyu. 1995. *Daozang tiyao 道藏提要 [Synopsis of Daozang Scriptures]*. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe.
- Robson, James. 2009. *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (nanyue) in Medieval China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Schipper, Kristofer. 1967. *Gogaku shinkeizu no shingō 五岳真形圖の信仰 [Belief of the Wuyue Zhenxingtu]*. *Dōkyō kenkyū 道教研究 [Daoist Studies]* 2: 114–62.
- Schipper, Kristofer, and Fransiscus Verellen, eds. 2005. *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shao, Mingsheng. 1962. *Ji Mingqian ta Beiwei zhongyue Songgao lingmiao bei 記明前拓北魏中岳嵩高靈廟碑 [On the Stele of the Spiritual Temple of the Lofty Mount Song, the Central Sacred Peak of the Northern Wei Dynasty, Rubbing Taken before the Ming]*. *Wenwu 文物 [Cultural Relics]* 11: 17–28.
- Shao, Mingsheng. 1965. *Mingqian ta Beiwei zhongyue Songgao lingmiao bei buji 明前拓北魏中岳嵩高靈廟碑補記 [Complementary Record on the Stele of the Spiritual Temple of the Lofty Song, the Central Sacred Peak of the Northern Wei Dynasty, Rubbed before the Ming]*. *Wenwu 文物 [Cultural Relics]* 6: 46–47.
- Shen, Fen. 2003. *Xuxianzhuàn 續仙傳 [Supplementary Tradition of Transcendents]*. *Yunji qiqian 雲笈七籤 [Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, vol. 113.
- Shike shiliao xinbian 石刻史料新編 [Historical Materials from Stone Inscriptions, A New Compilation]. 1977. Compilation 1. Taipei: Xinwenfeng Press.
- Sima, Chengzhen. 1988. *Shangqing Dishichen Tongbai Zhenren ZHENTU zan 上清帝侍晨桐柏真人真圖贊 [Encomium of the Perfect Image of the Shangqing Perfected Tongbai, Aide of the Tearcher]*. Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 612. vol. 11.
- Song, Minqiu. 1956. *Tang dazhaoling ji 唐大詔令集 [Collection of Major Tang Edicts]*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Sun, Xidan. 1989. *Liji Jijie 禮記集解 [Collective Annotations of the Book of Rites]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Tang, Xiaofeng. 1997. *Wuyue dili shuo 五岳地理 [Geographical Theories of the Five Sacred Peaks]*. *Jiuzhou 九州 [Nine Precincts]* 1: 60–70.
- Tang, Xiaofeng. 2000. *Tiguojingye: Shishu Zhongguo gudai de wangchao dilixue 體國經野——試述中國古代的王朝地理學 [Planning the State and Measuring the Field: Discussion on Imperial Geography in Ancient China]*. *Ershiyi shiji 二十一世紀 [Twenty-first Century]* 8: 82–91.
- Tao, Hongjing. 1988. *Dongxuan Lingbao Zhenling Weiye Tu 洞玄靈寶真靈位業圖 [Table of the Ranks and Functions in the Pantheon, a Dongxuan Lingbao Scripture]*. Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 167. vol. 3.
- Tianyige Museum, and Institute of History of Chinese Academy of Social Science, eds. 2006. *Tianyige Cang Ming Chaoben Tianshengling Jiaozheng, Fu Tangling Fuyuan Yanjiu 天一藏明抄本天聖令校：附唐令原研究 [Collation of the Ming Transcription of the Tiansheng Statutes Collected by Tianyige, with Studies on Restoration of Tang Statutes]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

- Verellen, Franciscus. 1995. The Beyond Within: Grotto-heavens (dongtian) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology. *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 1: 265–90. [CrossRef]
- Wang, Qinruo, ed. 1982. *Cefu Yuanqiu 冊府元龜 [Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Xiangzhi. 1992. *Yudi Jisheng 輿地紀勝 [Record of the Superb in the Yu Realm]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yucheng. 2000a. Sima Chengzhen yu Tangdai Daojiao jing shuozheng 司馬承禎與唐代道教鏡證 [Study on Sima Chengzhen and Daoist Mirrors from the Tang]. *Zhongguo Lishi Bowuguan Guankan 中國史博物館館刊 [Journal of National Museum of China]* 1: 30–40.
- Wang, Yucheng. 2000b. Tangdai Daojiao jing shiwu yanjiu 唐代道教鏡實物研究 [Research on the Material Object of Daoist Mirrors from the Tang]. *Tang Yanjiu 唐研究 [Journal of Tang Studies]* 6: 27–56.
- Wei, Zheng. 1973. *Suishu 隋書 [Sui History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Shou. 1974. *Weishu 魏書 [Wei History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Weiss, Lucas. 2012. Rectifying the Deep Structures of the Earth: Sima Chengzhen and the Standardization of Daoist Sacred Geography in the Tang. *Journal of Daoist Studies* 5: 31–60. [CrossRef]
- Wu, Yifeng. 1984. Heng Huo jinbian 衡霍今辨 [A Modern Discrimination of Mount Heng and Huo]. In *Tianzhushan zhi 天柱山志 [Gazetteer of Mount Tianzhu]*. Hefei: Anhui Jiaoyu Chubanshe, pp. 108–29.
- Wuyue Zhenxing Xulun 五岳真形序論 [Introductory Treatises to the Image of the True Form of the Five Sacred Peaks]. *Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]*. 1988. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1281. vol. 32.
- Xiao, Song, ed. 1972. *Datang Kaiyuanli 大唐開元禮 [Rites of the Kaiyuan Era of the Great Tang]*. Tokyo: Kyōkosho.
- Xu, Taiheng. 1983. Qingchengshan Zhangren ci miaobei 青城山丈人祠廟碑 [Temple Stele of the Shrine of the Elder at Mount Qingcheng]. In *Quan Tangwen 全唐文 [Comprehensive Collection of Tang Literature] (Juan 351)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, pp. 3560–61.
- Xushi Santiandizi. 1988. *Santian Neijie Jing 三天解經 [Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens]*. *Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]*. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1205. vol. 28.
- Yamada, Toshiaki. 1987. Futatsu no shinpu: Gogaku shinkeizu to Reihō gofu 二つの神符——“五岳真形圖”と“靈寶五符” [Two Spiritual Talismans: Wuyue Zhenxingtu and Lingbao Wufu]. *Tōyō gaku ronsō 東洋學論叢 [Bulletin of Orientology]* 12: 147–65.
- Yan, Yaozhong. 1996. Tangdai Jiangnan de yinsi yu Fojiao 唐代江南的淫祠與佛教 [illicit Worships and Buddhism in the Jiangnan Region of the Tang]. *Tang Yanjiu 唐研究 [Journal of Tang Studies]* 2: 51–62.
- Ye, Yiwen, ed. 1988. *Lushan Taipingxingguo Gong Caifang Zhenjun Shishi 廬山太平興國宮採訪真君事實 [Veritable Facts Concerning the Perfected Lord Investigator of the Taiping Xingguo Temple on Mount Lu]*. *Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]*. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1286. vol. 32.
- Yoshikawa, Tadao. 1991. Gogaku to saishi 五岳と祭祀. In *Zero bitto no sekai ゼロビットの世界 [The World of Zero Bit]*. Edited by Tetsurō Shimizu. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, pp. 213–82.
- Zhang, Yanyuan. 1964. *Lidai Minghua Ji 代名畫記 [Accounts on Renowned Paintings in Past Dynasties]*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe.
- Zhang, Wanfu. 1988. *Chuanshou Sandong Jingjie Falu Lueshuo 傳授三洞經戒法錄略 [Transmission of the Scriptures, Rules, and Registers]*. *Daozang 道藏 [Daoist Canon]*. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, no. 1241. vol. 32.
- Zhang, Xunliao. 1991. Daojiao Wuyue zhenxing tu he youguan liangzhong gudai tongjing cailiao de yanjiu 道教五岳真形圖和有關兩種古代銅鏡材料的研究 [Research on the Daoist Wuyue Zhenxingtu and the Related Two Kinds of Materials of Ancient Copper Mirrors]. *Nanfang Minzu Kaogu 南方民族考古 [Southern Ethnology and Archaeology]* 3: 91–112.
- Zhang, Junfang, ed. 2003. *Yunji Qiqian 雲笈七籤 [Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhang, Xunliao, and Bin Bai. 2006. Jiangsu Mingmu chutu he chuanshi guqiwu de Daojiao Wuyue zhenxing fu yu Wuyue zhenxing tu 江蘇明墓出土和傳世古器物所見的道教五岳真形符與五岳真形圖 [Daoist Talismans and Tableaus of the Perfected Forms of the Five Sacred Peaks Unearthed from the Ming Tomb in Jiangsu Province and that Seen in Extant Antiquities]. In *Zhongguo Daojiao Kaogu 中國道教考古 [Daoist Archeology of China]*. Beijing: Xianzhuang Shuju, pp. 1751–833.
- Zhao, Mingcheng. 1985. *Jinshilu Jiaozheng 金石校正 [Collation of the Records of Bronze and Stone]*. Collated by Jin Wenming. Shanghai: Shanghai Shuhua Chubanshe.
- Zhao, Lin. 1991. Yinhua lu 因話 [Records of Chats]. In *Xijing Zaji (Wai Ershiyi Zhong) 西京雜記 (外二十一種) [Miscellaneous Accounts of the Western Capital, and the Other Twenty-One Texts]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Zheng, Qiao. 1995. *Tongzhi Ershi Lue 通志二十略 [Twenty Digests of the Comprehensive History of Institutions]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhou, Xibo. 1999. Dunhuang xiejuan P.2354 yu Tangdai Daojiao toulong huodong 敦煌寫卷P.2354與唐代道教投龍活動 [Dunhuang Manuscript P. 2354 and Daoist Dragon-Casting Activities in the Tang]. *Dunhuang Xue 敦煌學 [Dunhuang Studies]* 22: 91–109.

Article

Daoism and the Operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in the Late Imperial China

Zhaojie Bai ^{1,*} and Teng Yao ²¹ Institute of Philosophy, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai 200051, China² Department of History, Xinzhou Teachers University, Xinzhou 036199, China; xztuyaoteng@163.com

* Correspondence: bzj@sass.org.cn

Abstract: The sacrificial ritual to Mount Yi (Yishan 沂山) or the Eastern Stronghold (Dongzhen 東鎮) was included in the traditional Chinese state ritual system to mountain and water gods, and therefore, originally, it was a Confucian ritual. The Eastern Stronghold Temple was operated by officers and clerks appointed by the government. However, during the late imperial period, the situation changed and the Eastern Stronghold Temple became virtually operated by Daoism, mainly because of the government's difficulty in maintaining the temple, the growth and power of Daoism, especially the Complete Perfection Daoism popular in northern China, and the further integration of Confucianism, Daoism, and folk beliefs. Daoist priests, who were named "temple guardians", took responsibilities for guarding temple property, coordinating central and local government's sacrificial rituals, administrating the daily operation of the temple, conducting reconstruction projects, and incorporating local people's beliefs. As a result, the temple not only served as an official place of worship but also gained the functions and identity of a Daoist abbey and folk temple. As the first article discussing the Eastern Stronghold Temple in a western language, this study mainly applies the rediscovered source of stone inscriptions preserved in the temple to describe Daoism's contributions to this religious-political-cultural symbolic site and the complicated relationship between governmental officials, Daoist priests, and local people.

Keywords: Mount Yi; Eastern Stronghold Temple; state sacrifice; Daoism; Complete Perfection Daoism

Citation: Bai, Zhaojie, and Teng Yao. 2022. Daoism and the Operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in the Late Imperial China. *Religions* 13: 159. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020159>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 7 January 2022

Accepted: 7 February 2022

Published: 11 February 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Mount Yi (Yishan 沂山), located in today's Weifang 濰坊 city of Shandong 山東 province, was also named the Eastern Stronghold (Dongzhen 東鎮) and included in the traditional Chinese state ritual system to mountain and water gods, namely, the Five Sacred Peaks (Wuyue 五岳), Five Strongholds (Wuzhen 五鎮), Four Seas (Sihai 四海), and Four Waterways (Sidu 四瀆) (Jia 2021). Since the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907), the Eastern Stronghold Temple (Dongzhenmiao 東鎮廟) was established on Mount Yi and became the sacred site for holding sacrificial rituals to the god of Mount Yi (Zhang 2011; Liang 2013).

The state sacrificial system to mountain and water spirits was originally a Confucian ritual, and, as a national sacrificial temple with symbolic significance of political rule, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was originally operated by officers and clerks appointed by governmental authorities. However, recent studies have pointed out that since the Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan dynasties (1271–1368), Daoists played important roles in the maintenance of the five national stronghold temples (Ma 2011, pp. 15–16; Lin 2017, pp. 105–11), including the Eastern Stronghold Temple. Officially, the temple retained the title of "national sacrifice site", but the daily operations were left to the care of Daoist priests, who were named "temple guardian". The reasons for this important change may be observed from three aspects. First, Daoism had developed strongly and permeated people's daily life, especially the Complete Perfection Daoism in northern China. Second, the imperial government both restricted

and used Daoism for political purposes. Third, the religious–cultural integration of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and folk beliefs had further developed during the late imperial period.

As far as the above issues are concerned, the daily operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple is an exemplary case study, which provides the opportunity to see the role Daoism played in such a major national sacrifice temple. What kind of position did it occupy? What changes had it brought to the functions of the national sacrifice beyond the expectations of the imperial court? In order to uncover reliable answers to such questions, it is first necessary to retrace the historical details of Daoism at the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

There have been some studies of the Eastern Stronghold, but mostly they have focused on the official ritual system and sacrificial practices, and few scholars have devoted their time to the subject of guardian Daoist priests. Presumably, the main reason for this is the lack of first-hand successive references and the available sources are too fragmented. The records of Daoism at the Eastern Stronghold in local chronicles are quite scattered. Thus, given the insufficiency of available materials, it is necessary to find new materials to get a fresh perspective in the study on Daoism. Fortunately, in recent years, new findings and compilations of the stone inscriptions preserved in Mount Yi have made it possible to further study the history of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold (Zhao and Gong 2011). These stone inscriptions were mainly inscribed during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. It is believed that there were more than 360 ancient steles in the temple until 1904, but there are now only about 145 left (Zhang 2009, pp. 14–15; Zhang and Wang 2001, pp. 41–42). Still, compared with other available materials, these inscriptions reveal a lot about Daoism of the Eastern Stronghold. Based on the evidence of these inscriptions, combined with local chronicles and official histories, this paper first discusses the essential situation of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. It then uses the construction and reconstruction cases of the Eastern Stronghold Temple as examples to demonstrate the contributions of Daoism to the maintenance of the temple and its manifold influence in general.

2. Overall Situation of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple

At sacrifice sites of sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways in the Tang and Song dynasties, temple directors or other post-holders were instructed on duty, and the sacrificial works were carried out by county magistrates, retired state officials, or county directors. However, according to the current information available, the daily affairs of the Eastern Stronghold Temple were managed by Daoist priests from the Jin Dynasty. In 1173, the temples of the mountain and water gods were then converted to be left under the care of Daoist priests (Liang 2013, p. 50; Zhao 2020, pp. 51–55). The Daoist management of these temples originated from a reform carried out in the Zhongyue 中岳 Temple (Middle Sacred Peak, Mount Song 嵩山) to prevent low-ranking officials from misappropriating the charitable donations of common people intended for blessings and prayer. From then on, “The sacrificial rituals of the Middle Sacred Peak Mount Song follow the old way and order of Daoist priests from Chongfu Palace to preside over” 嵩山中岳祈依舊令本處崇福宮道士看守, according to an official reaction of the imperial court, which later became an example for any other temples of mountain and water gods “supervised by two prominent Daoist priests selected by the local government from where the temples belonged” 委所隸州府選有德行名高道士二人看管 (Ren 2019, 34.337). During the Mingchang 明昌 period (1190–1196), the central Government bestowed the gods of the strongholds and waterways with the titles of king after accepting the advice of the Daoist priest Yang Daoquan 楊道全. (In particular, the God of the Eastern Stronghold was titled Donganwang 東安王, the East-Protection King). Yang was from Mount Yi (Toqhtō 1975, 34.810) whose cave the stele partly quoted in the “Shenyougong ji” 神祐宮記

(Account of Divine Protection Palace) of the Eastern Stronghold Temple. In this quotation, the Daoist priest was signed as “Yang Daoquan, the Daoist priest and preaching master who was in charge of the Temple” 知廟道士傳度師楊道全 (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 8). Therefore, we know that the Eastern Stronghold Temple was indeed handed over to the Daoist priests by this time. In 1173, there were only two Daoist priests entrusted with guardian positions, but the number was soon allowed to be expanded because of the overloading of affairs (Ren 2019, 34.337). According to the record of stele inscriptions, it is known that the number of Daoist priests in the temple increased rapidly after the establishment of the Temple. For example, inscriptions such as “Dongzhen Yishan Yuande Donganwangmiao Shenyougong ji” 東鎮沂山元德東安王廟神佑宮記 (Account on the Divine Protection Palace of the Temple of Prime-Virtue Eastern-Protector King of Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold, and abbreviated as the “Account of Divine Protection Palace”), carved in 1322, “Chongxiu Dongzhen Yishan miaoji” 重修東鎮沂山廟記 (Account on Reconstruction of Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold Temple), carved in 1614, the “Chongxiu Dongzhenmiao luochengji” 重修東鎮廟落成記 (Account on the Completion of the Reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple), carved in 1663, and the Yellow Booklet (Registration Manual of Populations) during the Qianlong 乾隆 period (1736–1795) of the Qing Dynasty, and so forth (Qin 2014, p. 193), all serve to illustrate this point. There were at least 36 Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple from 1573 to 1620 during the Ming Dynasty. However, the number of Daoist priests continuously decreased during the Qing Dynasty. In the early years of the Qianlong period, there were at most 16 Daoist priests, but only a few were still there after the Guangxu 光緒 period (1875–1908). The obvious fluctuation in the number of Daoists reflects the historical trend of the rise and fall of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple. At the same time, it also indicates the rise and fall of the court’s attention to the local temples that once symbolized its dominance.

2.1. Sect Affiliations of the Daoists in the Eastern Stronghold Temple and Their Relationship with Local Daoist Bureaus

Zhao Weidong 趙衛東 has paid attention to the Daoist inscriptions in the Eastern Stronghold, especially those referring to a master–apprentice relationship, such as Tang Jiaoyu’s 唐教玉 tombstone and Zhao Shoushen’s tombstone. After he compared the sect-names with the Daoists of the Complete Perfection Dao (Quanzhendao 全真道) recorded in the *Zhuzhen zongpai zongbu* 諸真宗派總簿 (General Book of All Daoist Sects), Zhao believed that the Eastern Stronghold Daoists during the Yuan Dynasty belonged to the Complete Perfection, but their sub-branching sect is still unknown. From the end of the Jiajing 嘉靖 Period of the Ming Dynasty (1522–1566), it was obvious that the Mount Hua Sect (Huashanpai 華山派) and Patriarch Qiu’s Extra Sect (Qiuzu youpai 丘祖又派) coexisted in the temple, and the latter was established by Tang Jiaoyu, who was once a disciple of the former sect (Zhao 2014b, pp. 274–89).

According to the information aforementioned, during the Jin Dynasty, the Daoist priest Yang Daoquan from the Eastern Stronghold was titled as a “preaching master” (chuandushi 傳度師). Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that the Eastern Stronghold Daoists belong to Zhengyi Dao 正一道 and that the Complete Perfection Daoists came to the Eastern Stronghold Temple probably from the time of the Yuan Dynasty. The “Account of Divine Protection Palace”, dated from 1322, is rich in information and worth close attention. According to the inscription, Mei Daoyin 梅道隱 once served as the Abbot (tidian 提點) of the Eastern Stronghold Temple. After the Official Sacrifice in 1298, Mei was rewarded as the Arch-Abbot of the Extreme Void Palace (Taixugong 太虛宮) of Yidu 益都 Circuit (in present-day Qingzhou 青州, Shandong). When he was promoted, Mei recommended Zhang Dexian 張德顯 to be the abbot of the Eastern Stronghold Temple and to hold his previous position (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 8). The next year, the Grand Master President of National Daoism (zhangjiao dazhenren

掌教大真人) formally appointed Zhang Dexian as “Daoist on Duty of the Divine Protection Palace in Eastern Stronghold of Mount Yi, in Charge of the Temple of Prime-Virtue Eastern-Protector King” 東鎮沂山神佑宮提點勾當, 知元德東安王廟事. During his official term, Zhang Dexian actively built the Divine Protection Palace, but died soon after. As his successor, the abbot of the Extreme Void Palace, Tang Zhiqian (唐志遷), took charge of temple affairs and presided over the completion of the construction project. After his promotion to Extreme Void Palace, Mei Daoyin, who once served as an abbot in the Eastern Stronghold, was bestowed with the titles of Master of Tranquil Perfection and Pure Virtue (zhenjing chunde dashi 真靜純德大師), the Provincial Daoist Magistrate (benlu dadaolu 本路都道錄), and both the Abbot of the Eastern Stronghold and Extreme Void Palace. However, Mei’s name can still be found in the inscription of “Tuohuan Cai Wenyuan zhaogaobei” 脫歡, 蔡元淵昭告碑 (Tuohuan and Cai Wenyuan’s Proclaiming Stele) dating from 1313, which hints that after he was promoted to the Extreme Void Palace in 1298, Mei once again served as a guardian Daoist in the Eastern Stronghold Temple for some time (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 6). As Zhao Weidong said, this inscription shows the close relationship between the Divine Protection Palace, the Extreme Void Palace, and the Eastern Stronghold Temple (Zhao 2014a, p. 3; 2014b, p. 285). Based on the inscription “Qingxu chunde fujiào zhenren citang ji” 清虛純德輔教真人祠堂記 (Account of the Ancestral Hall of the Realized Person of Clear Void, Pure Virtue, and Doctrinal Promoter Daoist), the Complete Perfection Daoist Patriarch Qiu Chuji 丘處機 once performed his monastic practice in the Extreme Void Palace of Qixia (present-day Qixia 棲霞, Shangdong), while the Extreme Void Palace of Yidu 益都 Circuit (present-day Qingzhou, Shandong) was built by Qiu Chuji’s disciple Fan Quansheng 范全生, who purchased Magistrate Xu’s residence and reconstructed it into a Daoist temple. Accordingly, the two Extreme Void palaces might have formed a relationship between the superior and subordinate (Wang 2005, pp. 40–41). Since the reign of Kublai Khan (1260–1294), a customized system of Daoist management had been in place, including the Daoist Registration Bureau (daosusi 道錄司) set under the circuit (lu 路) government, the Daoist Direction Bureau (daozhengsi 道正司) at the prefecture level, and the Prestige Bureau (weiyisi 威儀司) under the county (Cheng 2012, pp. 122–30). Based on the information seen so far, it is speculated that the Daoist Registration Bureau of the Yidu Circuit during the Yuan Dynasty was likely located in the Extreme Void Palace. Given the administrative relationship between the Extreme Void Palace of the Yidu Circuit and the Eastern Stronghold Temple, this palace could send Daoist priests to the Eastern Stronghold Temple, and even entrust Daoists to run the National Sacrifice. However, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was a national-level sacrifice site, and it was impossible for the Extreme Void Palace to be formally accepted as its own subordinate temple; consequently, the construction of an exclusive Daoist Hall in the temple had become a convenient measure for Daoist priests to live and manage.

Therefore, the intervention of the Extreme Void Palace and Daoist Registration Bureau of the Yidu Circuit could be seen as a watershed in the history of the development of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple, while the establishment of the Divine Protection Palace could be regarded as a symbol of the extensive development of Daoist groups in the Eastern Stronghold Temple. The institutional relationship between the temple and the palace was the necessary foundation that allowed the Complete Perfection Daoism of the Extreme Void Temple to spread smoothly in the Eastern Stronghold Temple, which ultimately led to the conversion of the Eastern Stronghold Temple to Complete Perfection Daoism. After 1369 (the second year of the Hongwu 洪武 period of the Ming Dynasty), the existing Eastern Stronghold inscriptions show that the temple was no longer related to the Extreme Void Palace. According to the *Jiajing qingzhoufu zhi* 嘉定青州府志 (gazetteer of Qingzhou compiled in the Jiajing Period), the Extreme Void Palace had already been changed to a Confucian temple (Feng 2014, 7.32). From 1406 to 1465, during the early Ming Dynasty, the priests from the

Daoist Assembly Bureau (daohuisi 道會司) took the place of Extreme Void Palace to participate in the official sacrificial activities of the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

The Daoists Assembly Bureau was a county-level Daoist administrative organization established in 1382 (Liu 2017, pp. 73–84). The Daoists Assembly Bureau of Linqu County, during the early Ming Dynasty, was placed in the Ziwei Guan 紫微觀 (Purple Sublimity Abbey), built in the Zhongtong 中統 period (1260–1264) of the Yuan Dynasty, and the local Daoist Bureau was set up inside it during the Yuan Dynasty. From the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the Daoists Management Bureau of Linqu had been settled in this abbey for a long time (Wang 2002, 2.14 and 4.27; Yin 2002, 1.50 and 2.54). By the end of the 19th century, during the reign of Guangxu (1875–1908), there was not a permanent temple of operations for the Daoist Assembly Bureau of Linqu (Yao 2002, 5.147). Moreover, no signatures of the Daoist Assembly Bureau priests can be found in the stone carvings of the Eastern Stronghold Temple from 1467 (the third year of the Chenghua 成化 period of the Ming dynasty) to the end of the Qing Dynasty. The absence of the signatures, however, does not mean that the Daoist Assembly Bureau of Linqu County disappeared completely; rather it shows that the Bureau's power had declined in influence and status, while at the same time the Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple had restored their self-governing positions.

2.2. Political Status of Daoist Priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple

From the Yuan Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the political status of Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple gradually declined. As mentioned previously, from the Yuan Dynasty to the Hongwu period (1368–1398) of the Ming Dynasty, the Eastern Stronghold Temple may have been entrusted to the Extreme Void Palace, and some of the Daoists in charge of the Eastern Stronghold Temple had a relatively high political status. Take Mei Daoyin as an example, whose name appears in numerous carved records of the Yuan Dynasty, including two stele inscriptions in particular, “Chongjian haotiangong bei” 重建昊天宮碑 (Rebuilding the Haotian Palace) (Zhao and Zhuang 2010, p. 349) and “Dayuan jiang yuxiang zhiji” 大元降御香之記 (Account of Bestowing Incense by Great Yuan) (Zhao and Zhuang 2010, p. 350), both of which were memorial monuments to the Eastern Stronghold. In addition, Mei also participated in the Daoist activities in Qingzhou as the Daoist Judge (daopan 道判) and the Daoist Register (dudaolu 都道錄) of Yidu Circuit. Throughout the Ming Dynasty, although there are no material records of the Eastern Stronghold Daoist priests being local Daoist officials, the Eastern Stronghold abbots could still formally participate in the official sacrificial activities and engrave their names on the relevant inscriptions. During the reign of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1662–1722) of the Qing Dynasty, Daoists in the Eastern Stronghold Temple could still keep their positions as they had during the Ming Dynasty. In any event, after Kangxi's reign there were no longer Daoist priests of the Eastern Stronghold Temple who signed their name on a large number of official sacrificial inscriptions. This phenomenon reflects the intention of the rulers of the Qing Dynasty to exclude Daoism from the national sacrificial rites and suppress the power of Daoism more generally.

As is well known, the Daoist priests had a certain obligation to maintain the Eastern Stronghold Temple but could not get direct economic benefits from official sacrifices. In 1335, Liu Sicheng 劉思誠 recorded that on the eve of offering sacrifices to the Eastern Stronghold, “(The government officials) ordered Daoists to ring bells and drums, to arrange the ceremony with setting sacrificial utensils and presentations” 遂命道士鳴鐘鼓，列樽俎醮事焉 (Wang 2003, 4.138). Since there are some sacrificial utensils, such as iron pots, tables and chairs, preserved in the Eastern Stronghold Temple (Wang 2003, 1.124), it is reasonable to speculate that Daoist priests had been involved in the national sacrifices for a long time. However, taking as an example the prescribed cost of sacrifice in the Eastern Stronghold given by the local chronicles of

Linqu in the Qing Dynasty, we find that the annual expenditure on sacrifice allocated by the county government was only about 10 taels of silver (Qingzhou Prefecture Authority, Shandong Province 2003, p. 228; Yao 2002, 6.157). Obviously, based on such a small amount, the Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple could not have gotten any profit from it. From the point of view of the governmental authorities, the Daoist priests mainly acted as the voluntary guardians of the official temple of the mountain.

Based on the evidence above, the evolution of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple and the attitude of the central government towards this Daoist group in different periods have both been sufficiently demonstrated. The new information is essential for understanding how the Daoist group operated the Eastern Stronghold Temple. Divergent from the rising trend of Daoism in the Eastern Stronghold Temple during the Yuan Dynasty, the lack of daily management and marginalization of Daoists during the Ming and Qing dynasties prompted the move toward self-operation. While the Daoists assumed more and more responsibility for the temple, they also gained the power and ability to freely interpret and practice Daoism in this temple. This point has been partially demonstrated in several important construction activities in the history of the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

3. Government, Daoists, and Local People: Guardian Daoist Priests and Constructions of the Eastern Stronghold Temple

As the most important official sacrifice in Linqu and even Qingzhou, the Eastern Stronghold Temple should have been paid special attention to by local governments, but it was often unable to be preserved for various reasons. Words similar to those in “Linquxian chongxiu dongzhenmiao ji” 臨朐縣重修東鎮廟記 (Account on Rebuilding the Temple of the Eastern Stronghold in Linqu County) in 1569 are common:

Our Ming dynasty has bestowed Yishan with an appropriate title, offered sacrifices with piety, reconstructed the temples and made them magnificent in scale. However, after many years, the wooden buildings began to brake and were hard to repair. Since *xinmao* year of Jiajing (1531), the temple has been nearly in ruins, and the orthodox regulations were also abandoned. Because of the lack of finances, it remains only a small room for the god, which is far from fitting the regulations. 我明厘正封號，虔祀有加，廟貌崇嚴，規制大備。第時久就廢，修建維艱。入嘉靖辛卯以來，廢殆極矣，而正典亦廢。絀于財力，僅成類小室者以奉主位，大不稱制。(Wang 2003, 4.144–145)

According to *Linquxian fuyi quanshu* 臨朐縣賦役全書 (Comprehensive manual of Linqu taxes and corvée; 1657) and the *Linqu xianzhi* 臨朐縣志 (Chronicles of Linqu County; 1884), the financial revenue of Linqu County did not have a budget specifically used to maintain the construction of the Eastern Stronghold. One reason for the lack of efforts on the part of the Linqu government may have been that the location of the Eastern Stronghold Temple was too remote. The Eastern Stronghold Temple is located in the foothills of Yi Mountain, which is nearly a hundred *li* 里 (Chinese miles) away from Linqu city. For the Linqu government, this national sacrifice temple was not only located on the outer edge of space but also on the edge of society. Negligence had become a reasonable strategy to save on the cost of governance. In fact, during the Ming Dynasty, according to “Chongxiu weisushan dongzhen xingong ji” 重修委粟山東鎮行宮記 (Account on Rebuilding the Residence of the Eastern Stronghold on Weisu Mountain), it was precisely because the Eastern Stronghold Temple was so far away that the people of Linqu County built the Eastern Stronghold Residence on Weisu Mountain, approximately three *li* northeast of the county town, around 1580, to avoid undue the hardship of a long journey (Wang 2003, 4.145–146). As it was far away from the protection of the county government, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was often harassed by bandits who gathered in Yishan. The fear of bandits who often appeared in the Yishan area and that temples might be ransacked and de-

stroyed also deepened the local government's misgivings about subsidizing the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

Obviously, the maintenance of the Eastern Stronghold Temple needed to rely on other forces outside the government. In fact, the people most concerned about the appearance of the Eastern Stronghold Temple were likely the temple-guarding priests who lived there. Judging from the inscriptions of the steles in the temple, the Daoists certainly hoped that the authorities would give enough support to ensure the integrity of the temple, but when the authorities were unable to meet their requirements, it became more pragmatic to join forces with the local folk forces, including the elders and gentry. At the same time, the local people had a belief in the God of Mount Yi and were willing to participate in the maintenance of the temple as much as they could, so as to win divine protection for themselves and their community, strive for honor and "semi-official" power, and achieve the goal of strengthening community cohesion and local power.

As a result, the Eastern Stronghold Temple, where Daoist priests maintained the operations, had become a field of intertwined relationships between the central government, local governments, and Daoist and folk organizations, and the temple construction activities themselves had become a typical situation representing these complex relationships. The following examples show how Daoist priests played an important role in the construction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

3.1. The Construction of the Divine Protection Palace in Yuan Dynasty

According to the "Account of Divine Protection Palace" of 1298, the god of Yishan was bestowed with the title of Prime-Virtue Eastern-Protector King by the central government. Those who participated in the bestowal-sacrifice are found named on an old stele in the temple, which records that "the Divine Protection Palace on the right of the temple, is the place where Daoist priests of the temple attend and worship" 廟之右神佑宮者, 乃知廟道士參禮之所也 (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 8). In the next year, 1299, Zhang Dexian was officially appointed to be responsible for the management of the Eastern Stronghold Temple and Divine Protection Palace. This appointment was by Zhang Zhixian 張志仙, the President Daoist (zhangjiao 掌教) in charge of National Complete Perfection Daoism (1224–ca. 1308; his term of office was 1285–1307) (Cheng 2012, p. 29). The President Daoist in the Yuan Dynasty was privileged to offer sacrifices to mountain and water gods as the deputy of the monarch and also obtained the power to appoint the person in charge and the temple abbots (Cheng 2012, p. 127). After his appointment, Zhang Dexian started the restoration of the Eastern Stronghold Temple and the construction of the Divine Protection Palace, but unfortunately died soon after. Then, Tang Zhiqian 唐志遷 was appointed to become his successor and eventually led the reconstruction to its completion.

According to the main content on the front of the stele, although this repairing activity got a little support from local officials, it was mainly a project conducted by Daoists in the Eastern Stronghold Temple and the Extreme Void Palace. On the back of the stele, numerous local common people's names were engraved following the signatures of the stonemason and calligraphy writers whose names should be at the end of this stele. It suggests that the inscriptions on the stele were carved at least twice, and the local people, inspired by Daoists, actively participated in the construction of the Divine Protection Palace and the Eastern Stronghold Temple. Moreover, on the steles of "Li Mu daisi bei" 李木代祀碑 (Sacrifice Hosted by Deputy Li Mu), of 1465, "Chongxiu Dongzhenmiao jibei" 重修東鎮廟記碑 (Account of Reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold), of 1467, and "Li Xi'an daisi bei" 李希安代祀碑 (Sacrifice Hosted by Deputy Li Xi'an), of 1470, the term "abbot of Divine Protection Palace" 神佑宮住持 was replaced by "abbot of this temple" 本廟住持 (Zhao and Gong 2011, pp. 32, 35, 37). In light of the fact that there was no longer any mention of the Divine Protection Palace appearing in the local chronicles and stone inscriptions of Yishan and Linqu

during the Ming and Qing dynasties, it could potentially be concluded, or at least speculated, that the Divine Protection Palace was abolished before the Chinghua period (1465–1487) of the Ming Dynasty.

3.2. The Constructions in 1556–1561 and 1614 of the Ming Dynasty

The bandit problem in Yishan was serious, so it became a special function of Yishan God to help the official forces in suppressing the bandits with divine power. The “Dongzhen xiuwadian ji” 東鎮修瓦殿記 (Account of Building the Brick Hall in the Eastern Stronghold), in 1159, recorded a miracle: during the Fuchang 阜昌 period (1130–1137) of the Puppet-Qi Administration, the fierce outlaw Lei Zhen 類臻 gathered his bandits in the mountain. However, after the local official Tian Shaozu 田紹祖 wrote a poem on the wall of the Eastern Stronghold Temple, the bandits were defeated by local forces (Yao 2002, 9.179). A similar story inexplicably occurred once again during the Ming Dynasty and may have been what led to the reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

According to Wang Juyi’s “Dongzhen miekou ji” 東鎮滅寇記 (Record of the Destruction of Bandits in the Eastern Stronghold), Zhao Ci 趙慈 and his bandits raised a rebellion in 1552. Zhao had consulted the divination lottery in the Eastern Stronghold Temple before attacking the city of Linqu, but all three lots presaged a disastrous result and he went away angry. No further than five kilometers from the temple he encountered government forces. During the battle, the wind changed suddenly, which was beneficial for the officials, and the bandits were roundly defeated. Later, the official army interrogated the captives, who said they saw the God of the Eastern Stronghold help the official army fight and this was the reason for their defeat (Wang 2003, 4.143; Fu 2003, 8.57). Perhaps the revelation of God on Mount Yi inspired the local people to rebuild the Eastern Stronghold Temple to repay his grace. For this reconstruction, Wang Juyi wrote the “Chongxiu Dongzhenmiao yuan buyin” 重修東鎮廟緣簿引 (Accounts of the Reasons for the Reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple). In this record, Wang said that the Eastern Stronghold Temple at that time was falling apart, the main hall, the dormitory, the corridor, and even the steles were in a dilapidated state (Wang 2003, 4.143–144). In fact, *Linqu biannianlu* 臨胸編年錄 (*Chronicle of Linqu*) mentions that a small hall had been built for the Eastern Stronghold Temple seven years before (1549) by Wang Jiashi 王家士, the Magistrate of Linqu County (Zhang 2003, 6.197). Wang Jiashi’s *Jiajing Linquxian zhi* 嘉靖臨胸縣誌 (*Linqu County Gazetteer*, compiled in the Jiajing period) also recorded his repair activities, saying that the Eastern Stronghold Temple was “decadent for a long time” 歲久傾頹, “but since giant wood is rare to find, and the sacrificial ceremony of the Stronghold Temple is different from other constructions, to renovate the temple has to wait for cooperative completion with neighboring counties in a harvest year” 但巨木難得。鎮廟祀典非他興作可擬，煥然鼎新，固有待於豐年鄰邑共成之力也 (Wang 2002, 2.13). It is clear that the Eastern Stronghold Temple was dilapidated, yet the local government was unable to maintain it, and this was a difficult problem that had existed for a long time. Wang Juyi attributed the crippling of the Eastern Stronghold Temple to the inaction of the government: “Likely those above were conservative in accordance with the rules, and thus those below abandoned their duties” 蓋上既狃于因循，斯下遂成夫玩愒。 “Although the grains in sacrificial utensils are pure in spring and autumn, the building no longer appears magnificent and glorious” 粢盛雖潔於春秋，壯麗難憑乎輪奐 (Wang 2003, 4.143–144). Obviously, Wang Juyi was criticizing the official use of the Eastern Stronghold Temple as an occasional place of sacrifice but did not care about the operation and renovation of the Temple. Disappointment with the local government made Wang Juyi and other local gentry who felt concerned about the temple turn to common people for help:

To accumulate little by little, we must ask for help from neighboring towns;
to cut the long to amend the short, we have to rely on people of all directions.

Therefore, we wholeheartedly pray for mutual assistance. No matter you are rich or poor, please contribute according to your own possessions; no matter wise or foolish, please help according to your own heart. 但積少成多, 必旁求乎列邑; 而絕長補短, 須仰賴於十方。為此, 竭誠專祈共濟。或貧或富, 量所有以相周; 無智無愚, 隨其心而協助。(Wang 2003, 4.143–144)

As recorded in the *Kangxi Linquxian zhi* 康熙臨朐縣誌 (*Linqu County Gazetteer*, compiled in the Kangxi Period), the reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in 1676 received a variety of sponsorship from the “righteous people” of Linqu County (Yin 2002, 4.87). The reconstruction began soon after Zhao Ci and his bandits were defeated by the local government. In any event, since the local government was still under pressure in terms of finances to maintain stability, it might have been unwilling to pay a high price to organize the engineering activity. However, the prevarication of the Linqu County government gave an opportunity for folk groups to enter the Eastern Stronghold Temple in an organized and large-scale manner. It is easy to understand that when the government was absent in its temple-managing responsibility, it transferred its privilege to the public. However, this reconstruction might not have been a substantial one because of the financial restrictions and the temporal proximity of the bandit disasters. Since the reconstruction happened only one year later, the local societies that had experienced outlaws attack also needed time to heal their wounds.

In 1558, the thirty-seventh year of the Jiajing period, the Daoist priest of the Eastern Stronghold Temple played the leading role in the year’s restoration. The “Chongxiu Dongzhenmiao timing ji” 重修東鎮廟題名記 (Record of the Names Signed on the Stele of Rebuilding the Eastern Stronghold Temple), which was established in 1561, indicates the fact of the event:

In recent years, the buildings in the Eastern Stronghold have been devastated by wind and rain, and the gods’ statues exposed to air. The Daoist abbot of this temple, Tang Jiaoyu, and other related Daoists once presented the situation to the county government, and the local government also informed the Military Defense Circuit Office, who issued the order to allow Daoists to raise donated money and food from people of all directions. And the two county governments of Linqu and Yishui served as supervisors and dispatched laborers to rebuild the residence hall of five columns using glazed tiles with forged beasts, two porticos of ten columns, and one Lingxing Gate. The reconstruction began in the thirty-seventh year and was completed in the fortieth year of Jiangjing Period. 東鎮廟宇, 近年以來, 風雨摧殘, 神像暴露, 本廟住持唐教玉等, 具呈到縣, 轉申本府兵備道給印信, □□緣募四方錢糧。臨朐沂水二縣城, 夫役督工, 修理寢殿五楹, 具用琉璃瓦獸, 兩廡十楹, 靈星門一座。自嘉靖三十七年起工, 至四十年落成。(Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 8)

The local governments, including Linqu County, Yishui County, and even the Qingzhou Superior Prefecture, seemed to encourage and support the restoration of Daoist Tang Jiaoyu. However, in addition to allowing the fund-raising behavior of Tang Jiaoyu, the local government mainly exercised the obligation of “supervision,” and those who authentically put their energy in the restoration were the group of Daoists, such as “Daoist Chen Chongjin, fund-raising abbot Tang Jiaoyu, Donators Du Jiaoyong, Huan Yilin, Wang Jiaohong, Li Jiaoyun, Meng Daosheng, Shen Daogui” 道士陳崇進, 募緣住持唐教玉, 助緣杜教用, 郇一林, 王教洪, 李教允, 孟道勝, 申道貴 and “abbot Cui Chongyou” 住持崔崇祐. The independent fund-raising behavior of Tang Jiaoyu showed that the Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold no longer placed all the obligations of maintaining their temple on the local government, but the official who “issued the order” could overlay the essentially non-governmental fund-raising activities with some sense of official support, and it was helpful to win the generous support of local officials and gentry. According to the inscription on this stone, the strategy achieved

the desired results, and many local officials participated, making donations in their personal capacity, while at the same time villagers in Linqu, Yishui 沂水, and Changle 昌樂 also unpacked their bags to donate.

Unfortunately, the four-year reconstruction still failed to completely solve the problems of the dilapidated Eastern Stronghold Temple. Meng Yangxing's 孟養性 "You Yishan ji" 遊沂山記 (Account of Visiting Yishan) recorded that, in 1562, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was "small and not fit for a divine residence" 殿宇狹小, 不稱神居. Regarding this situation, the Daoist priest in the temple explained: "according to the regulation, this temple should be a high-level building with big and wide space, and of construction almost equal to the temple of the sacred peak Taishan, but it has been dilapidated for a long time. Although the site is preserved, huge woods are hard to come by, and the labors needed are so large that it would be hardly restored without provincial level cooperation" 廟制高闊, 原見視泰岳, 歲久圯廢. 遺址虽存, 巨木难觅, 工役之大, 非通省协力莫能复也 (Wang 2003, 4.144). In any case, the reconstruction activities from 1558 to 1561 still reveal important information about the Eastern Stronghold Temple. Firstly, from an institutional view, the temple guardian Daoists had no obligation to make excessive efforts for the maintenance of the Eastern Stronghold Temple and it was to be the officials' duty to repair the national sacrifice temples. In reality, though, the government was often uninterested and incapable of properly dealing with the temples, so the Daoist priests who lived in them had to bear some of the responsibilities. While assuming responsibility, these guardian Daoist priests also reasonably gained the power to operate the Eastern Stronghold Temple with flexibility, as can be seen in their control over holding ritual offerings 醮 in the temple, which will be further discussed later. Secondly, the completeness or decay of the temple directly affected the living situation of the Daoist priests in the temple, but they did not have sufficient funds to maintain such a huge temple, so it was inevitable to strive for the sponsorship of the government and non-governmental forces. When there was no official support, the cooperation between temple guardians and folk forces became particularly important in maintaining the temple. At the same time, the folk forces—represented by the gentry and rural elders—also obtained an opportunity to enter the Eastern Stronghold Temple and made a far-reaching impact on the temple. It must be admitted: the reconstruction activities led by Tang Jiaoyu revealed that none of the officials, Daoists, or folk forces could provide proper protection for the Eastern Stronghold Temple for long, and for this reason the normal operation of the temple was barely maintained after the middle of the Ming Dynasty. The cooperation and prevarication among the three parties in the renovation effort and the change of actual control contributed to the uncertain identity of the Temple. For the purposes of different groups, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was not only a national temple to enjoy the institutional sacrifice of the court but also a legitimate Daoist abbey and a folk temple of local beliefs.

Since the reconstruction project at the end of the Jiaping period (1522–1566) of the Ming Dynasty, it had become regular practice for the government, Daoists, and folk elites to cooperatively repair the Eastern Stronghold Temple. Here, we can take the reconstruction record in 1614 as a case study. According to the "Chongxiu Dongzhen Yishanmiao ji" 重修東鎮沂山廟記 (Account of Rebuilding the Yishan Temple of the Eastern Stronghold) by Zhao Bingzhong 趙秉忠, the Eastern Stronghold Temple had once again fallen into a state of disrepair for an extended period of time (Zhang 2009, pp. 186–87; Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 87). In 1611, Ma Youchun 麻友椿 served as the governor of Linqu County, and when he offered sacrifice to the Eastern Stronghold Temple in autumn of that year, he found the temple dilapidated and hoped to repair it, but he was unable to support the production by himself and the county office alone. Later, under the petition of the local Confucian scholar Chen Zhigong 陳致恭, the elder aristocrat Wang Laipin 王來聘 and some other local gentry, the Linqu government and the local forces launched the fund-raising and reconstruction work

together. Due to a fortunate acquisition of giant woods for construction, the main hall was rebuilt within three months, and then the dormitory, bell, and drum towers, and other buildings were also restored. The reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple from this time is most obviously seen from the signatures on the back of the stele, which acknowledge the successful tripartite cooperation of local officials, Daoists, and folk forces. On the back of the stele, there are several clear categories on the donor list including the names of local aristocrats, Confucian scholars, officials, local elders, craftsmen, three temple abbots, and 33 ordinary Daoists.

3.3. The Constructions in 1663 and 1701 of the Qing Dynasty

When the Qing Dynasty replaced the Ming Dynasty, the temples of sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways were made into a symbol of the Qing Empire's ruling legitimacy and orthodoxy and their sacrificial rituals were paid attention to by the new government. As far as the Eastern Stronghold is concerned, from the description of "Li Rui daisi Dongzhen Yishan bei" 李蕊代祀東鎮沂山碑 (Stele of Sacrifice to Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold Hosted by Deputy Li Rui), we can see that by the third year of Shunzhi 順治 (1646) at the latest, the Qing court began to send envoys to worship Yishan at the Eastern Stronghold (Zhang 2009, p. 429). However, the first large-scale renovation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple during the Qing Dynasty did not begin until the second year of Kangxi (1662), and the temple-guarding Daoist priests once again played important roles in the project.

There are two original accounts of reconstruction activities in that very year, both written by Zhang Yinli 張印立, a Presented Scholar of Linqu County, namely, "Chongxiu Dongzhen Yishanmiao ji" 重修東鎮沂山廟記 (Account on the Reconstruction of Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold Temple) and "Chongxiu Dongzhenmiao luocheng ji" 重修東鎮廟落成記 (Account on the Completion of the Eastern Stronghold Temple). The "Account on Reconstruction" might have been written before the reconstruction project in 1662. It was emphasized in the stele that "the duty of the local government is to govern the people and sacrifice to the gods" 治民事神, 司土之責. That autumn, when the county magistrate Xie Cimu 謝賜牧 offered sacrifice to the Eastern Stronghold, the main hall of the temple began to leak and was drenched in rain, so the magistrate summoned the Daoist Zhu Quanzhou 朱全用 to propose a plan to rebuild it. At this time, they found that not only the main hall but also the dormitory hall and two affiliated halls needed to be repaired, and the Dragon Pavilion and Pavilion for Killing Sacrificial Victims had both been ruined as well (Yin 2002, 4.95). "Account on the Completion", written after the reconstruction, also mentioned the wish of Xie Cimu to renovate the temple in the autumn of 1662. The following spring (1663), Xie Cimu sacrificed in the Eastern Stronghold Temple to pray for rain to alleviate the drought. As soon as he finished the ritual, it began to rain. On this occasion, Xie Cimu formally proposed the reconstruction plan and took the lead in donating one-hundred-and-thirty gold coins, while other officials and the local elder gentry also responded positively to the call for donations. The reconstruction was proposed in the ninth month of 1662 and ended in the tenth month of 1663. According to the inscription, more than 50,000 tiles were added to the old temple, 70,000 *jin* (Approx. 4178 kg) of mud were used, and more than 1000 roof rafters were replaced. Finally, the temple became as clean as the Confucius Temple. The Dragon Pavilion and the Pavilion for Killing Sacrificial Victims were also renewed. The statue of the Sea God (haishen 海神) was restored and now solemnly stands in the hall with neat clothes and holding a ritual scepter (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 92).

The following records describe in detail the efforts made by the Daoist priests in the temple to rebuild the Eastern Stronghold Temple and at the same time show the complex relations between these Daoist priests. According to Zhang Yinli, a Daoist priest surnamed Cao 曹 in the Eastern Stronghold Temple hired people to dig outside the temple gate and found thousands of kilograms of lime. Cao in vain tried

to keep this a secret, but eventually the news leaked to everyone, yet none of the Daoists dared to be the first to reveal it. As a result, in the third month of 1663, the constructing supervisor ordered to dig the lime out, even though Cao denied it. Cao was probably Cao Zhenwei 曹真惟, whose name appeared in the Daoist signatures of “Chongxiu Dongzhen Yishan miao ji” 重修東鎮沂山廟記 (Record of Rebuilding the Temple of Yishan the Eastern Stronghold) in 1614. In Zhang Yinli’s record, there was another episode: in Niujiagou 牛家溝 village, Linqu County, a villager called Niu Si 牛四 had a big poplar tree in his own cotton yard. Daoist priests advised him several times to donate the tree for the reconstruction of the Eastern Stronghold Temple but Niu refused. Soon thereafter, Niu became seriously ill and his family donated the big poplar tree, but Niu did not recover in the end. From the above records, the temple-guarding Daoists raised funds through local folks to support the reconstruction projects.

Thirty-eight years later, the Eastern Stronghold Temple was renovated again. According to “Chongxiu Dongzhen miao beiji” 重修東鎮廟碑記 (Stele Record of Rebuilding the Eastern Stronghold Temple), written by Chen Tingwan 陳霆萬 in 1701, the Temple was in a dilapidated condition once again. In 1697, Zhang Zengyu 張曾裕, the county magistrate of Linqu, planned to repair the temple and “summoned Daoists to raise money” 召黃冠為疏以募資 (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 101). However, Zhang left office soon after in order to observe the mourning rites for his deceased mother. His successor Chen Tingwan, was the one who completed the project. According to Chen Tingwan, the essential works can largely be attributed to the director Daoist Wang Zhengwei 王正位. According to this stele, Wang was the abbot of the Eastern Stronghold Temple at this time. In 1702, there was another building activity in the Eastern Stronghold Temple. According to the “Chongxin Dongzhen shenxiang ji” 重新東鎮神像記 (Record of Remaking the Statue of the Eastern Stronghold God) by Chen Weiyin 陳維寅, the local Education Supervisor, when the idol figure in the temple was found to be defective, someone proposed to use the wooden name tablet to replace it. However, most of local people had a negative view of this plan because they believed that only a new statue could arouse the piety of ordinary people. So, under the leadership of two elder aristocrats, Zong Kai 宗煥 and Zhang Jie 張捷 of the local folk association, the idol statue was rebuilt (Zhao and Gong 2011, pp. 103–4). By the end of the record, the signatures show that, in addition to the local community, those who participated in the construction of the statue also included Xu Hefeng 徐和風, Liu Wuxiang 劉無祥, and other Daoist priests. A passage in this inscription provides us with a clue for local forces to enter the temple. It reads:

The god of Mount Yi presided in the East, the sons of Heaven (the emperors) always send officials to offer sacrifices, and the relevant governmental institutes greet him every Spring and Autumn. No matter whether there are floods, droughts, or epidemics, the god always answer prayers’ requirements. Thus, the temple is crowded with those who come here for incense-praying and ritual offering from near and far. 況沂山之神口鎮東方, 天子遣官致祭, 有司春秋告祀, 水旱口疫, 有禱必應, 遠近進香設醮者, 絡繹而至。 (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 103)

Regarding how the Eastern Stronghold Temple was to be used, not only did the government have a set of etiquette regulations for offering sacrifices but the folk groups, also, always kept their own rituals with regular belief practices, including incense-praying and ritual offerings. Some materials show that spring and autumn temple fairs appeared in Mount Yi during the Qing Dynasty or even earlier (Pan 1998, p. 19). While according to the remaining steles of “Renshouxiang Panyangshe xiujiao canbei” 仁壽鄉盤羊社修醮碑 (Fragmentary Stele of Offering Ritual by Panyang Community in Renshou Township) (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 132), “Quqiu Bolizhuang beiji” 渠丘泊里莊碑記 (Stele Record of Quqiu Boli hamlet) (Zhao and Gong 2011, p. 96; Zhang 2009, pp. 205–7), and *Notes of The Eastern Stronghold* (Zhang 2009, p. 205), during the

Kangxi reign, at the latest, the folk people were led by Daoist priests to set up festival offerings within the Eastern Stronghold Temple.

According to integrated studies on the constructions of the Eastern Stronghold Temple in generations (beyond the above cases), it is known that the central courts always showed some enthusiasm for the reconstruction and maintenance of the Eastern Stronghold Temple at the beginning of the establishment of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. This was probably because the Eastern Stronghold, as one of the sacrificial sites, symbolized the ruling legitimacy of the new dynasty. The measures to revitalize the Eastern Stronghold Temple were directly involved in the public performance promoting the destiny of the new dynasty. However, with the downward movement of the dynasty, official maintenance of the Eastern Stronghold Temple became less and less adequate, as can be noticed most prominently in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Although there were objective reasons for the neglect of the Eastern Stronghold Temple by the authorities (whether central or local), a deeper cyclical reason might be that when dynastic rule stabilized, the court would naturally pay less attention to the beliefs about the legitimacy of its governance. At the same time, the Daoist priests in the Eastern Stronghold Temple encountered the awkward situation of neither getting full support from the authorities nor easily being able to give up such a large-scale temple. Finally, they were forced to bear the responsibility for the daily operation of the temple to a large extent on their own. In order to maintain the Eastern Stronghold Temple and to maintain their own livelihood, the Eastern Stronghold Daoist priests sought more resources and cooperation from local society. As a result, the Daoists in the Temple gradually lost their “official identity” but transformed into the representatives of “local society”.

When official power diluted in the management and control of the Temple, Daoists obtained and expanded the operational authority of the Eastern Stronghold Temple by constantly participating in and presiding over the construction of it. From then on, the temple was not only a place for the spring and autumn sacrifices of the imperial court, and a place for local officials to ask for rain, it also became a general worshiping space for Daoism and folk shrines. It seems that there was a game of “rights and obligations” between the imperial officials and the “folk forces” represented by Daoist priests guarding the temple and giving up obligations was tantamount to the transfer of rights. As a result, the Eastern Stronghold Temple had the dual function of being both a place of official sacrifice and a Daoist–folk temple where the official etiquette in the temple went hand in hand with Daoist–folk rituals, although the two kinds of ceremonial activities did not occur simultaneously.

4. Conclusions

Through meticulous research of the literature, the true history of an important national temple in northern China was retraced by analyzing a number of stele materials. The daily state of the Eastern Stronghold temple presented in the study was completely different from the general expectation of this kind of temple as a “pure place of national sacrifice”. We find that under the operation of Complete Perfection Daoist priests, the Eastern Stronghold Temple as a national sacrificial temple had complex entanglements with the local society and beliefs.

As shown in this article, the multiple nature and functions of the Eastern Stronghold Temple had not yet appeared when the temple was first established but were the result of gradual coordination throughout the developing history with the exchange and operation of different people. In the context of the changes from the Yuan Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the Eastern Stronghold Temple is intertwined with a variety of opposing relations: national sacrifice and Daoist guarding, officials in the background and folk operation, etiquette regulations and local expediency, and so forth. As different people had different intentions when it came to care, operation, and participation, the temple presented a variety of cultural significance and social functions.

As a result, these seemingly opposing phenomena could be presented separately in the same temple.

Through interpretation of the existing steles and other materials, we have completed the reconstruction of the historical changes of the Eastern Stronghold Temple, and some cases which were most closely related to the guardian Daoists have been presented. It is not difficult to discover that, although disputes and struggles between different discourse and power systems might have arisen over the retention or abolition of an idol, more often than not, cooperation could still be reached among the officials, Daoists, folk people, and other forces, each taking what they needed. At the same time, under the superficiality of cooperation, there was a game of transferring obligations and power between the Daoists and the authorities. In such a staggered interaction, the Daoist priests played various roles. Obviously, Daoists were not “outsiders” who had nothing to do with this world but rather acted as “pragmatic” religious groups who spread their influence to all levels of society through various ways and means. They not only had a special network of religious life and social relations special to them as Daoists, they also became the actual executors of the daily operation of the Eastern Stronghold Temple through faithful actions.

In the dynamic communication, the authorities and the local forces represented by Daoists reached a tacit consensus that the government owned this sacred temple at the level of the imperial ritual system and symbolism, but Daoists and local people gained greater power of interpretation and use of the temple at the practical level. The national sacrificial temples, which were originally set up by the imperial government, could only be maintained with the support and collaboration of folk forces. The local forces, including Daoists and the common people, did not fully accept the interpretation of the temple system and meanings stipulated by Confucian and state ideology but tried to incorporate other beliefs and practices while participating in temple activities. Thus, the nominal national sacrificial temple also became at the same time a Daoist abbey and a folk temple in the local society.

Finally, it is worth noting how the actual operation of national beliefs were promoted by the imperial governments at the local level. This study has relevant reference value for understanding the central–local government relationship in ancient China, the political–religious relationship between the national belief and Daoism, and relations among the local society more generally. That having been said, for all the progress that has been made, further questions regarding the Eastern Stronghold Temple remain open and will require further efforts in the future.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Z.B. and T.Y.; methodology, Z.B.; validation, Z.B. and T.Y.; formal analysis, Z.B.; investigation, Z.B.; resources, Z.B.; data curation, Z.B.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.B.; writing—review and editing, T.Y.; supervision, Z.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Cheng, Yue 程越. 2012. *Jinyuan shiqi quanzhen dao gongguan yanjiu* 金元时期全真道宫观研究 [Study on Halls and Temples of Complete Perfection Daoism in Jin-Yuan Dynasties]. Jinan: Shandong Qilu Press.
- Feng, Weimin 冯惟敏 (1511–1578) etc. 2014. *Jiajing Qingzhoufu zhi* 嘉靖青州府志 [Gazetteer of Qingzhou Compiled in Jiajing Period Ming Dynasty]. In *Tianyige cang mingdai fangzhi xuankan* 天一閣藏明代方志選刊 [Gazetteers of Ming Dynasty Reserved in Tianyige]. Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian, vol. 56.

- Fu, Guo 傅國 (1576–1644). 2003. *Changguo yuhuang* 昌國餘艗 [Great Voyage of Changguo]. In *CPPCC Linqu Committee* 中國人民政治協商會臨朐委員會 ed., *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Xubian* 臨朐縣舊志續編 [Sequel of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Linqu: Shandongsheng Xinwenchubanju, pp. 1–119.
- Jia, Jinhua. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Sprits. *Religions* 12: 319. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Liang, Yong 梁勇. 2013. *Zhenmiao jianzhu yu jisi yanjiu* 鎮廟建築與祭祀研究 [Research on Temples and Sacrifice for Chief Mountains]. Master's Dissertation, Southeast University, Nanjing, China.
- Lin, Qiaowei 林巧薇. 2017. *Shilun Songshan zhongyue miao yu song yihou guojia jisi lizhi de guanxi* 論嵩山中嶽廟與宋以後國家祭祀禮制的關係 [On the Relations between Zhongyue Temple in Songshan Mount and the National Ceremony after the Song Dynasty]. *Shijie zongjiao wenhua* 世界宗教文化 [The World Religious Cultures] 3: 105–11.
- Liu, Kangle 劉康樂. 2017. *Mingdai daoguan zhidu yu shehui shenghuo* 明代道官制度與社會生活 [Daoist Official System and Social Life in Ming Dynasty]. Beijing: Jincheng Chubanshe 金城出版社.
- Ma, Xiaolin 馬曉琳. 2011. *Difang shehui zhong guanfang cimiao de jingji wenti: yi yuandai Kuaijishan Nanzhen miao wei zhongxin* 地方社會中官方祠廟的經濟問題：以元代會稽山南鎮廟為中心 [Economy of Official Temple in Local Society: Focus on Nanzhen Temple in the Kuaiji Mountain in Yuan Dynasty]. *zhongguo shehui jingji shi yanjiu* 中國社會經濟史研究 [The Journal of Chinese Social and Economic History] 3: 12–17.
- Pan, Xinde 潘心德, ed. 1998. *Dongzhen Yishan* 東鎮沂山 [Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold]. Jinan: Jinan Chubanshe.
- Qin, Guoshuai 秦國帥. 2014. *Shandong quanzhenjiao de jiaotuan guimo, fenzhi chapai yu diyu fenbu* (1368–1949) 山東全真教的教團規模、分枝分派與地域分佈 (1368–1949) [The Size, Branch Schools and Regional Distribution of Complete Perfection Daoism in Shandong Province (1368–1949)]. In *Quanzhendao yanjiu* 全真道研究 [Studies on Complete Perfection Daoism]. Edited by Weidong Zhao 趙衛東. Jinan: Shandong Qilu Press, vol. 3, pp. 188–247.
- Qingzhou Prefecture Authority, Shandong Province 山東省青州府. 2003. *Linquxian fuyi quanshu* 臨朐縣賦役全書 [Comprehensive manual of Linqu taxes and corvée]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Xubian* 臨朐縣舊志續編 [Sequel of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee. Linqu: Shandongsheng Xinwenchubanju, pp. 211–34.
- Ren, Wenbiao 任文彪. 2019. *Collated. Dajin jili* 大金集禮 [Collection of Rituals of Great Jin Dynasty]. Hangzhou: Zhengjiang University Press.
- Toqhtó 脫脫 (1314–1356) etc. 1975. *Jinshi* 金史 [History of Jin]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Jiashi 王家士 (fl. 1552). 2002. *Jiajing Linquxian zhi* 嘉靖臨朐縣誌 [Linqu Gazetteer compiled in Jiajing period Ming dynasty]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Huibian* 臨朐縣舊志彙編 [Compilation of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee. Weifang: Weifangshi Xinwenchubanju, pp. 1–39.
- Wang, Juji 王居易 (fl. 1586). 2003. *Dongzhen Yishan zhi* 東鎮沂山志 [Gazeteer of Mount Yi the Eastern Stronghold]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Xubian* 臨朐縣舊志續編 [Sequel of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee. Linqu: Shandongsheng Xinwenchubanju, pp. 120–68.
- Wang, Zongyu 王宗昱, ed. 2005. *Jinyuan Quanzhen jiao shike xinbian* 金元全真教石刻新編 [New Compilation of Stone Inscriptions of Complete Perfection Daoism in Jin and Yuan Dynasties]. Beijing: Beijing University Press.
- Yao, Yanfu 姚延福 (fl. 1905). 2002. *Guangxu Linqu xianzhi* 光緒臨朐縣誌 [Linqu Gazetteer compiled in Guangxu period Qing dynasty]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Huibian* 臨朐縣舊志彙編 [Compilation of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee. Weifang: Weifangshi Xinwenchubanju, pp. 113–363.
- Yin, Suolin 尹所澧 (fl. 1672) etc. 2002. *Kangxi Linquxian zhi* 康熙臨朐縣誌 [Linqu Gazetteer compiled in Kangxi period Qing dynasty]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Huibian* 臨朐縣舊志彙編 [Compilation of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee. Weifang: Weifangshi Xinwenchubanju, pp. 40–112.
- Zhang, Dunren 張敦仁 (fl. 1726–1733). 2003. *Linqu biannian lu* 臨朐編年錄 [Chronicle of Linqu]. In *Linqu Xian Jiuzhi Xubian* 臨朐縣舊志續編 [Sequel of Old Gazetteers of Linqu]. Edited by CPPCC Linqu Committee 中國人民政治協商會臨朐委員會. Linqu: Shandongsheng Xinwenchubanju, pp. 169–210.
- Zhang, Xiaoyou 張孝友, ed. 2009. *Yishan shike* 沂山石刻 [Stone Inscriptions of Mount Yi]. Jinan: Shandong Friendship Publishing House.
- Zhang, Mu 張目. 2011. *Gudai guojia zhenshan jisi geju chutan* 古代國家鎮山祭祀格局初探 [The Structure Investigation on Sacrifice of Ancient National Chief Mountains]. Master's Dissertation, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China.
- Zhang, Jinghua 張敬華, and Xuan Wang 王萱. 2001. *Dongzhenmiao beilin shike dangan* 東鎮廟碑林石刻檔案 [Stone Carving Archives of Stele Forest in Eastern Stronghold Temple]. *Shandong Dangan* 山東檔案 [Shandong Archives] 4: 41–42.
- Zhao, Weidong. 2014a. *Haotian gong de chuangli jiqi zongpai chuancheng* 昊天宮的創立及其宗派傳承 [Establishment of Haotian Temple and its sectarian inheritance]. *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 [Religious Studies] 4: 1–8.
- Zhao, Weidong. 2014b. *Yishan dongzhenmiao jiqi zongpai chuancheng* 沂山東鎮廟及其宗派傳承 [Eastern Stronghold Temple of Mount Yi and its sectarian inheritance]. In *Quanzhendao yanjiu* 全真道研究 [Studies on Complete Perfection Daoism]. Edited by Weidong Zhao. Jinan: Shandong Qilu Press, vol. 3, pp. 167–88.
- Zhao, Lei 趙磊. 2020. *Tangsong shiqi yuezhenhaidu guanli yanjiu: yi "miaoling" wei zhongxin* 唐宋時期嶽鎮海濱管理研究——以“廟令”為中心 [Research on Management of Mountain and Sea Temples in Tang and Song Dynasty—Temple Orders Centered]. *Shanxi datong daxue xuebao* 山西大同大學學報 [Journal of Shanxi Datong University] 2: 51–55.
- Zhao, Weidong, and Dejie Gong 宮德杰, eds. 2011. *Shandong daoiao beike ji: linqu juan* 山東道教碑刻集·臨朐卷 [Collection of Daoist Inscriptions in Shandong: Linqu]. Jinan: Shandong Qilu Press.
- Zhao, Weidong 趙衛東, and Mingjun Zhuang 莊明軍, eds. 2010. *Shandong daoiao beike ji: qingzhou, changle juan* 山東道教碑刻集·青州昌樂卷 [Collection of Daoist Inscriptions in Shandong: Qingzhou and Changle]. Jinan: Shandong Qilu Press.

Article

The Northern Stronghold Sacrifice and the Political Legitimacy of Ethnic Minority Regimes in the Late Imperial China

Chenxi Huang ^{1,*} and Siyu Chen ²¹ College of Philosophy, Anhui University, Hefei 230039, China² Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA; schen.ucs@gmail.com

* Correspondence: chenxihuang@ahu.edu.cn

Abstract: Traditional Chinese state sacrificial ritual represented a symbolic system of integrating religious belief, divine authority, and political legitimacy. The Northern Stronghold (Beizhen 北鎮, i.e., Mount Yiwulü 醫巫閭山) was equal in status to the other four strongholds, which, moreover, served as a strategic military fortress and represented the earth virtue in the early state sacrifice system. In the late imperial era of China, and during the Yuan (1279–1368) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties in particular, the Northern Stronghold swiftly achieved prominence and eventually became an instrument used by minority ethnic groups, namely the Mongolians and Manchus, when elaborating upon the legitimacy of their political regimes. During the Yuan dynasty, the mountain spirits of the five strongholds (*Wuzhen* 五鎮) were formally invested as kings and, as a result, were accorded equivalent sacrifices in comparison to those given to the five sacred peaks (*Wuyue* 五嶽). Given that the Northern Stronghold was located near the northeast of Beijing, the Yuan government considered it the foundation of the state. Thereafter, the Northern Stronghold was regarded as the most important of the five stronghold mountains. In the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the Northern Stronghold Temple (Beizhenmiao 北鎮廟) was reconstructed as both a military fortress and religious site, while its representation as a significant site for a foreign conquest dynasty diminished and its significance as a bastion of anti-insurgent suppression emerged. By the Qing dynasty, the Northern Stronghold was regarded as an integral component of the geographic origin of the Manchu people and thereby assumed once again a position of substantial political significance. Several Qing emperors visited the Northern Stronghold and left poems and prose written in graceful Chinese to present their high respect and their mastery of Chinese culture. The history of the Northern Stronghold demonstrates how the ethnic minority regimes successfully utilized the traditional Chinese state sacrificial ritual to serve their political purpose.

Keywords: Mount Yiwulü; Northern Stronghold; Beizhen; state sacrificial ritual; ethnic minority in northern China; legitimacy of political regime

Citation: Huang, Chenxi, and Siyu Chen. 2022. The Northern Stronghold Sacrifice and the Political Legitimacy of Ethnic Minority Regimes in the Late Imperial China. *Religions* 13: 368. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040368>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 9 March 2022

Accepted: 7 April 2022

Published: 15 April 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Stronghold mountain (*zhenshan* 鎮山) sacrifice was an integral part of the traditional Chinese state ritual system of sacrifice to mountain and water spirits, which included the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas (*sihai* 四海), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆). The earliest historical records of the “strongholds” date from the late Warring State period (403 BCE–221 BCE) to the early Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) in the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), which documented nine strongholds in nine precincts (*jiuzhou jiushanzhen* 九州九山鎮) (Zheng and Jia 2000, 33.1020–34) and four strongholds (*sizhen* 四鎮) (Zheng and Jia 2000, 22.697–98). According to Zheng Xuan’s commentary, the “nine strongholds” are divided into five sacred peaks and four strongholds. The four strongholds, namely Mount Guiji 會稽山, Mount Yi 沂山, Mount Yiwulü 醫巫閭山, and Mount Huo 霍山, were the foremost mountains in their respective administrative regions like the five sacred peaks in theirs (Zheng and Jia 2000, 22.697–98, 33.1020–34). From the Han dynasty to the Northern Song,

Zhouli's four strongholds were gradually added Mount Wu 吳山 to form five strongholds (Jia 2021).

According to the traditional interpretation, a “stronghold” not only refers to a great mountain but also serves to safeguard and bring stability to its nearby region (Zheng and Jia 2000, 33.1022; Wang 2019, 1a.23). Thus, the strongholds have a further military connotation than the five sacred peaks, in addition to the political and religious significance. Besides, since the Northern Stronghold (Beizhen 北鎮, i.e., Mount Yiwulü) is located in the northeastern region, where multiple ethnic minorities resided, the area had been ruled by ethnic minority regimes, such as Liao (907–1125), Jin (1115–1234), Yuan (1271–1368), and Qing (1636–1912). The Northern Stronghold was especially revered by the people of these regimes because they regarded this sacred mountain as the birthplace of their nationalities. On the other hand, because of Mount Yiwulü's frontier location, it had also been on the frontline of frequent military confrontations between the Han Chinese regimes and the minority regimes. Differences in the attitudes of the Chinese regime and ethnic minority regimes toward the northern stronghold, regardless of their similar reverence for the area, had developed because of various political, social, military, and religious reasons. While China preferred to regard the northern stronghold as a military fortress with a divine character, the minorities treated it as a source of political legitimacy for their regimes.

Previous scholarships on the Northern Stronghold have mainly involved the archaeological excavation of tombs and relics, the study of the Northern Stronghold history, and the analysis of specific stele inscriptions (Wang 2018, pp. 173–76; Wang 2019, pp. 661–69). In terms of archaeological research, studies mainly focus on two areas: The excavation of Liao-dynasty imperial tombs (Liaoning Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2016, pp. 34–54; Yu and Bai 2020, pp. 27–33; Si et al. 2021, pp. 50–62) and the Northern Stronghold Temple architecture (Zheng 1994, pp. 42–44; Zheng et al. 1995, pp. 15–17, 27; Jia 2008, pp. 95–96; Yu 2011, pp. 235–36; Sun 2018a, pp. 143–46, 154). The research on the history of the Northern Stronghold includes organization of the sacrificial ritual (Liu 2019, pp. 34–38; Chen 2018, pp. 147–49), discussions of the ethnic minorities' practice of sacrifice (Cui 2015, pp. 112–19), and studies of the culture and palace of the Northern Stronghold in Qing Dynasty (Sun 2018b, pp. 8–10, 62; Lu 1994, pp. 71–74; Li 2002, pp. 46–48). However, little academic research has been done in Chinese on the significant implications and the political purpose of the Northern Stronghold sacrifice, and its related scholarly work in English is almost non-existent.

Although a few scholars have paid attention to the sacrificial ritual of the minority regimes in the Northern Stronghold, the precious stele inscriptions preserved in the Northern Stronghold Temple have not been fully studied. A systematic investigation of the stele inscriptions from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties in the Northern Stronghold Temple helps to trace the causes, manifestations, and evolution of the different attitudes between Han and minority governments towards the Northern Stronghold, which contributes to reevaluating the position of the religious, military, and political status of the Northern Stronghold in Chinese history. This paper examines the developmental history of the sacrifice ritual to the northern stronghold based on historical documents and extant stele inscriptions, aiming to present a historical overview that sheds light on the changing interpretations of the northern stronghold in the state ritual system of sacrifice, particularly in Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties.

2. The Early History of the Sacrifice to the Northern Stronghold

Mount Yiwulü 醫巫閭山 is also called and written as Wulü 無慮, Yuweilü 于微闕, and lü 闕 with different Chinese characters and similar pronunciations. While Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) believed that the name “Yiwulü” was a transliteration of the name in the Eastern Barbarian (Dongyi 東夷) language (Xu and Duan 1988, p. 11), the explanatory sources of the derivation and specific connotations the names carry are yet to be found. Although *the Rites of Zhou* mentions Mount Yiwulü repeatedly, there was neither such a name “Beizhen” noted at that time nor any explicit record about sacrificial rituals for Mount

Yiwulü as early as the Warring States to Han Dynasty. The establishment of sacrifice for the five sacred peaks and four waterways was known to be formalized as a conventional state ritual in 61 BCE (Jia 2021, pp. 7–8), but historical records indicated that the stronghold’s sacrifice was only formally included in the state ritual system of sacrifice later in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–618; Wei 1973, 7.140; Jia 2021, p. 9). However, this does not undermine the importance of Mount Yiwulü before the Sui Dynasty.

The earliest mentions of the mountain range of the northern stronghold were found in the *Weishu* 魏书 (History of Wei), which indicates that the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534) rulers noticed this grand mountain located in the north. The *Weishu* records that Tuoba Jun 拓跋濬 (r. 452–465), the fifth emperor of Northern Wei, made a tour to the east in the year 460 during which the northern stronghold was the second stop of his trip. The emperor first went to Qianshan 桥山 (present-day Quwo, Shanxi) to worship the Yellow Emperor, and after Mount Yiwulü in western Liaoning, he returned to Shanxi to the northern sacred peak Mount Heng 北岳恒山, another sacrificial site. Since Mount Yiwulü was not in the territory of the Northern Wei at that time, Tuoba Jun performed a distant sacrificial ritual in western Liaoning to Mount Yiwulü (Wei 1974, 108a.2739). This was the earliest literary record of sacrifice to Mount Yiwulü. The Northern Wei Emperor’s personal visit to the border region to perform the mountain sacrifice was an indication that during the Northern and Southern dynasties, the northern minority regimes were looking to expand their political influences to the northeastern area, in addition to the sacrificial sites of the western and northern sacred peaks established in the northern territory. Tuoba’s tour was also an expression of the sovereignty of the northern minority regimes in northeastern Liaoning, although the state of Northern Wei did not have actual control there. Through the performance of state sacrifice, the Northern Wei regime tended to show they had the same or even higher legitimacy as the Southern regime, and they were the legitimate successor of the world under Heaven. Although Tuoba’s eastern tour had not reached Mount Tai, the route taken had referred to all the routes of previous emperors’ eastern tours for Mount Tai Sacrifice. As an ethnic Sienpi, Tuoba went so far as to model Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty’s sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor, the ancestor of the Han nationality. These are all signs that Tuoba was asserting his political legitimacy using ways of the Han regime, and it was done to compete with the regimes in the south. Besides the Northern regime of Wei, the distant sacrifices to Mount Yiwulü had also happened occasionally in the southern region. After ascending to the throne, Xiao Yan 萧衍, the Emperor Wu of Liang dynasty 梁武帝 (r. 502–549), began to gather Confucian scholars to formulate the national ceremonies, which determined the alternating offering sacrifices to Heaven in the southern suburbs and to Earth in the northern suburbs every other year. Sacrifices in northern suburbs included the rituals to the five sacred peaks, four waterways and four seas, as well as Mount Yi 沂山, Mount Huo 霍山, and Mount Yiwulü, among which the four strongholds had not been formalized in the national ritual system of sacrifice (Wei 1973, 6.108). Apparently, due to the constraints of the military confrontation between the north and south, sacrifices to mountains and waters which are located outside the border could only be performed from a distance. Emperor Wu of Liang thus reintegrated the state rituals and made numerous mountains and waters in the northern region the objects of sacrifice as the Southern court’s formal statement to legitimize their claim over the northern regions. Despite the conflicts, both rulers of the northern and southern regimes regarded Mount Yiwulü highly, although at times, neither of them had control over this area. The emphasis placed on Mount Yiwulü by both regimes had demonstrated their common recognition of the universal system under Heaven conceived in the *Zhouli*.

Following the unification of the country, the Sui dynasty set about consolidating the state ritual system of sacrifice in accordance with the perception of the Northern and Southern dynasties—the practice of performing state rituals based on the contents of the *Zhouli* was an important basis for the regimes to establish their political legitimacy during the previous dynasties. One of the more important initiatives was that the Sui incorporated the four strongholds’ sacrifices into the state ritual system for the first time.

In addition, the Sui also established temples on each of these stronghold mountains (Wei 1973, 7.140). This system continued throughout the successive dynasties. In the early years of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), the official court added the Central Stronghold (Zhongzhen 中鎮, i.e., Mount Huo) to the original four strongholds system and since then, the sacrifice system of the five strongholds had been formally formed. Additionally, the imperial court granted duke titles to the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, among which Mount Yiwulü was granted the title “Duke of Grand Peace” (Guangning Gong 廣寧公) (Toqto’a 1977, 102.2488; Jia 2021, p. 10). However, Mount Yiwulü at that time was in the territory of the Liao dynasty, so the Northern Stronghold Temple of Mount Yiwulü and several other temples, such as the North Sea Temple and West Sea Temple, were not within the sphere of control of the Northern Song dynasty. As a result, the rulers of Northern Song relocated the sacrifice site from the Northern Stronghold to the Northern Sacred Peak (Beiyue 北嶽) Temple in Dingzhou 定州 instead (Jia 2021, pp. 10–11). No record of sacrifice to the northern stronghold by the Liao court was found, which makes it impossible to trace the history of the Northern Stronghold Temple, now located in Beizhen City, Liaoning Province, back to the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

There is no direct evidence in existing historical documents indicating the Liao regime followed the state ritual system of sacrifice from the Chinese central regime, but Mount Yiwulü was more than just a site “defending the north” to the Liao because the northeastern region was the birthplace of the Khitan. After the Khitan had established the Liao state, the imperial family designated Mount Yiwulü as one of the sites for the imperial mausoleums. Among the five imperial mausoleums of the Liao dynasty, Xian mausoleums (Xianling 顯陵), Qian mausoleums (Qianling 乾陵) are located in the Mount Yiwulü area, where buried four of the nine emperors of Liao, as well as several empresses and princes (Yu and Bai 2020, pp. 27–33; Liaoning Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2016, pp. 34–54). From this point of view, Mount Yiwulü had indeed unparalleled importance to the Liao imperial family. The protection of the area around the Liao imperial mausoleums in Mount Yiwulü continued in the Jin dynasty. For example, in 1129, Wanyan Sheng 完顏晟, Emperor Taizong of Jin 金太宗 (r. 1123–1135), banned woodcutting around the Liao mausoleums to protect the areas around it (Toqto’a 1975, 3.60). However, because of the operation of the Liao regime in the area of Mount Yiwulü, the ritual system of sacrifice for the Northern Stronghold since the Sui and Tang Dynasties was not continued for over two hundred years, so the temples established during the Sui and Tang had also disappeared.

Unlike the Liao dynasty, the Jin dynasty, as a Jurchen regime, formally adopted the state ritual system of sacrifice from the central Chinese kingdom. Wanyan Yong 完顏雍, Emperor Shizong of Jin 金世宗 (r. 1161–1189), was the first Jin emperor to follow this system. In the sixth month of 1164, he resumed the sacrifice rituals to the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways (Toqto’a 1975, 6.134; 34.810). It is generally believed that the construction of the Northern Stronghold Temple, now located in Beizhen City, Liaoning Province, was built from this time. Like the Song dynasty, the Jin government sent officials to visit mountains and waters within the country to perform sacrifice rituals, such as the sacrificial ritual of Mount Yiwulü in Guangning 廣寧, and conducted distant sacrifices of mountains and waters outside the country’s borders. The Jin also sacrificed to the earth spirit in the suburb of the capital, as well as set up spirit tablets for mountains and waters (Toqto’a 1975, 29.712). The Jin dynasty also followed the old system of the Tang and Song dynasty, granting duke titles to these mountains and waters. In 1190–1196, the Daoists’ suggestion to follow the example of the Northern Song and confer the mountain and water spirits as Kings was adopted (Toqto’a 1977, 102.2488). Mount Yiwulü was then given the title “King of Grand Peace” (Guangning Wang 廣寧王) (Toqto’a 1975, 34.810).

The above materials from the pre-Qin to Song and Jin periods showed the earliest documentation of Mount Yiwulü as one of the four strongholds (later became the five strongholds). However, for hundreds of years after the Han dynasty, the mountain was not deemed eligible to enter the state ritual system of sacrifice until the Sui dynasty. The minority regimes’ special attitude towards Mount Yiwulü during this period was

revealed, on the other hand, because this region was under the control of the northern regimes for many years, and the sacrifice to this mountain was an important aspect in determining the system of a unified common world under Heaven mentioned in the *Zhouli*, which was a significant basis for declaring the legitimacy of their own regimes. Later, with the sinicization of the minority regimes in the north and the urgent desire to enter the Central Plains, the requirements for contending the political orthodoxy also increased. Through the Yuan and Qing Dynasties, this special attitude was further reinforced and contributed to a new connotation of Mount Yiwulü. In comparison, the Chinese regimes regarded Mount Yiwulü as a part of the entire sacrificial system and did not give it special treatment.

3. The National Root Place of Vitality: The Sacrifice of the Northern Stronghold in the Yuan Dynasty

According to historical documents, most of the references to the northern stronghold sacrifice are mentioned in conjunction with other mountains and waters, and there is not much said about the stronghold's particularity. Fortunately, more than fifty historical stele inscriptions in the Northern Stronghold Temple provide an important glimpse into the history of the sacrifice to the northern stronghold and its historical position, particularly after the Song dynasty. The earliest surviving stele inscription in the Northern Stronghold Temple is the "Monument of the Holy Commandment", which was erected in 1298. The inscription records the history that the five strongholds were granted the King title by Borjigin Temür 鐵穆爾, Emperor Chengzong of Yuan 元成宗 (r. 1295–1307). This edict was also made for stone steles and sent to the other four strongholds. According to the inscription, Temür believed that all the previous emperors before the Yuan dynasty had ennobled the five sacred peaks and four waterways (Song 1976, 72.1780; 76.1900), but did not perform sacrifices for the five strongholds. According to *Yuanshi*, 元史 (the History of Yuan Dynasty), Yuan Emperors did not go to the sacrificial site personally, but sent high-ranking officials accompanied by Han Confucian scholars and Taoist priests. This tradition began in 1261. In 1291, Kublai Khan 忽必烈 (r. 1260–1294) conferred the title of Emperor for the five sacred peaks and the title of King for the four waterways and four Seas, but did not confer the titles of the five strongholds (Song 1976, 72.1780; 76.1900). Therefore, Temür especially granted the title of king to the spirits of the five strongholds, and prayed that these strongholds could fulfill their duties of pacifying the people and nurturing the universe:

The five sacred peaks and four waterways had already been granted titles by emperors, but the five strongholds' sacrifice alone had not been recognized. This was indeed not meant to be for the worship of divinities . . . The emperor ordered relevant official departments seasonally perform sacrifices to the five strongholds together with the five sacred peaks and four waterways and formalized the standard, thus this edict was issued to inform the public. 五嶽四瀆，先朝已嘗加封，唯五鎮之祀未舉，殆非敬恭明神之義。 . . . 仍敕有司歲時與嶽瀆同祀，著為定式，故茲詔示，想宜知。(Borjigin 1298/2002, pp. 48–49)

The ritual system of sacrifice for the five strongholds was first proposed by the Northern Song and was continued in the Jin dynasty. However, as neither Northern Song nor Jin had control over the entire empire, the sacrifices to the five strongholds were never practiced as a matter of fact. Temür thus became the first emperor to successfully perform the investiture and ritual to the five strongholds as he desired to demonstrate that the Yuan had contributed to the unification of the country.

Since then, the Yuan government had sent ministers to the Northern Stronghold Temple on many occasions to make sacrifices. For example, the stele inscriptions show records of the sacrifice rituals performed in the temple in the year 1313, 1317, 1339, 1342, 1343, 1346, 1347, 1348, and 1357 (Wang 2002, pp. 51–55, 217–23; Yu 2009, pp. 9–60). The contents of these steles are primarily about worshiping the mountain spirit, praying for good harvest, and blessing the country with peace and prosperity. These continuous

sacrifices to Mount Yiwulü ended in the late Yuan when the official reverence for Mount Yiwulü began to differ from other strongholds.

In 1339, the sacrificial officials believed that Mount Yiwulü was supposedly the stronghold mountain of Youzhou 幽州, and the survival of the state was dependent on this mountain (Li 1339/1983, 255.5574). This is because Youzhou was not only a crucial military town for a long time, but also was the capital of the Yuan dynasty, so Mount Yiwulü located in Youzhou was related to the foundation of the country. The phenomenon of sacred sites changing in geographical and hierarchical significance is not unique. The Southern Sacred Peak had once been regarded as the most important sacred peak instead of the Eastern Sacred Peak (Robson 2009, pp. 57–89). Moreover, the stele inscription of 1346 (“Yuxiang daisi ji” 御香代祀記 (Record of Imperial Incense-offering and Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor)) clearly states that Mount Yiwulü was the place where the root vitality of the nation lied, and had a higher status than the other strongholds:

Until our grand Yuan dynasty, the Northern Stronghold was conferred with the noble title of Faithful Virtue King. Emperors held solemn sacrifices grander than all previous dynasties because the stronghold of Youzhou was closely related to the capital’s safety. The Northern Stronghold is the root place of our vital national force, which is more [three characters missing] than the other strongholds. 迨我皇元，崇秩貞德王號，列聖嚴禋，比之累代褒封欽重者，實主鎮幽州，皇都京畿係焉。乃我國家根本元氣之地，較之異方山鎮，尤為□□焉。(Zhang 1346/2002, pp. 219–20)

This is the first description in the available sources that made the status of the Northern Stronghold the most superior among the five strongholds, whereas previously, it was generally considered that the Eastern Stronghold Mount Yi was at the top of the hierarchy. These inscriptions were written by Han officials, and they used “I think” in writing to express their stance. These Han officials claimed the status of the Northern Stronghold by referring to both the Confucian canons and the Yuan emperor’s granting. The emphasis on their attitude and feeling highlighted the importance of the Han officials’ recognition of the political legitimacy of the Yuan dynasty. The reason for this change in the status of Mount Yiwulü is closely related to its geographical location. Mount Yiwulü was the gateway to the Yuan territory and one of the natural barriers that guarded the capital. In the stele inscription of 1347 (“Yuxiang daisi ji” 御香代祀記 (Record of Imperial Incense-offering and Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor)), the Northern Stronghold was described as the birthplace of the Yuan dynasty as they were both in the north (Zhang 1347/2002, pp. 220–21). In the stele inscription of 1357 (“Daisi zhibei” 代祀之碑 (Monument of Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor)), Mount Yiwulü was considered the cause of the exquisite change between heaven and earth, which has the meaning that the imperial power of the Yuan originated here (Yang 1357/2002, p. 223). Although the area of Mount Yiwulü was not the birthplace of Mongolia and was not closely related to the Yuan regime, it was the only stronghold that was associated with the northern minority regimes. As discussed above, from the Northern Wei, Mount Yiwulü began to be regarded highly by the ruling class. The Khitan royal family chose it as the site of the imperial mausoleums, and the Jin established a temple there for the first time.

In the last years of the Yuan dynasty, the rulers’ attitude towards Mount Yiwulü became more respectful. However, at that time, many incidents indicate that the country’s solid regime was beginning to disintegrate as uprisings constantly took place in the south. On the one hand, the Yuan government’s reaffirmation of the importance of the Northern Stronghold served to emphasize absolute control over the northern region, especially around the state capital (i.e., the military town Youzhou). As nomadic people in the north, the Yuan had almost swept away all threats from the north, thus the place was also the region where their power was most secure. On the other hand, it can also be implied that the Yuan government may have been considering various ways to strengthen the legitimacy of its domination in these turbulent times, one of which might be the secured

north represented by Mount Yiwulü, which stood for the cornerstone of the regime's power and the foundation that the regime had to secure and rely on.

4. The Frontier, Military Battlefield, and Head of the Five Strongholds: The Sacrifice of the Northern Stronghold in the Ming Dynasty

The exalted status of Mount Yiwulü ceased to exist with the establishment of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In the nearly three hundred years of the Ming, the Northern Stronghold once again became the frontline of the confrontation between the Chinese regime and the northern nomadic peoples, especially with the newly emerging Jurchen tribes (subsequent Manchurians). In addition to performing the same religious functions as other strongholds, the military status of the Northern Stronghold was given special emphasis throughout the Ming dynasty.

In the third year of Hongwu 洪武 (1370), Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, Emperor Taizu of Ming 明太祖 (r. 1368–1398), reformed the state religious system by removing all the “blasphemous” human titles of the five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, and added divine titles to them to show reverence. Since then, the specifications of the sacrifices to state mountains and waters had been raised to an unprecedented level. In the process, the Northern Stronghold no longer received special religious treatment as it had previously by the northern minority regimes but returned to being treated more equally as one of the five strongholds. However, with the Ming dynasty's northern expedition against the Mongolian remnants and the subsequent moving of the capital to Beijing to defend the country against the Mongolian invasion from the north, Mount Yiwulü, with its natural role as a military barrier, came into the view of the central authorities again. As the only connecting passage between the capital and Liaodong, and the last barrier outside the Shanhaiguan 山海關, Guangning, where the Northern Stronghold was located, was vital to the security of the capital and even the whole country. In view of this important military position, the Liaodong region withdrew all its original administrative organs from the beginning of the Ming and became a military organization, the Liaodong Commanders' Department (Liaodong Duzhihuishi 遼東都指揮使司), and Guangning became a heavily guarded place. It was also for this reason that all the sacrificial officials recorded in the existing Ming dynasty stele inscriptions from the Northern Stronghold Temple were all in important military positions.

Because of its importance after being tested by these historical incidents, the Northern Stronghold received special attention from the Ming court. Since the nineteenth year of Yongle 永樂 (1421) period, the official renovation of the Northern Stronghold Temple began and continued throughout the dynasty. As many as the six documented renovation programs have been made are enough to show how importantly the Ming government treated this only place of state sacrifice with military functions (Zhu 1421/2002, pp. 59–60; Zhang 1495/2002, pp. 226–27; Huo 1509/2002, pp. 228–29; 1606/2002, pp. 242–43). Thus, as mentioned in the “Beizhenmiao chongxiu ji” 北鎮廟重修記 (Record of the Restoration of Northern Stronghold Temple) in 1495, the Northern Stronghold was not only revered as a sacred mountain but also a reliable fortress at the border for defensive purposes:

The Northern Stronghold ranks the first among the stronghold mountains in the national sacrifice system, forever stabilizing the eastern land and benefiting the people living in the border areas, which is the same in merit as the five sacred mountains and four waterways. 北鎮禮秩居他鎮之首，永奠東土，御我邊疆，利我邊民，與五嶽四瀆同功。(Zhang 1495/2002, pp. 226–27)

This inscription also recorded that it was the first time the Ming dynasty had explicitly identified the status of the Northern Stronghold as the most important mountain to guard the northeastern territory, as it was the head of the five strongholds. The “Chongxiu Beizhenmiao beiji” 重修北鎮廟碑記 (Reconstruction of Northern Stronghold Temple Monument) in 1509 also expressed that the Northern Stronghold was related to the peace and stability of the whole country (Huo 1509/2002, pp. 228–29). In summary, it appears that

almost all the surviving Ming dynasty stele inscriptions referred to the importance of the military status of the Northern Stronghold.

Throughout the Ming dynasty, the area of Guangning, where the Northern Stronghold was located, was closely associated with the resistance to the northern minorities, first Mongolian and then Manchurian. It is apt to say that the survival of the entire country was related to the situation of Guangning, which, to a great extent, determined the national fate of the Ming and Later Jin Dynasties. For Manchuria, military control of the Guangning area was decisive for its access to Shanhaiguan and the eventual establishment of the Qing dynasty (Twitchett and Fairbank 2008, pp. 41–49, 52–57).

5. The Origin of Manchuria: The Sacrifice of the Northern Stronghold in the Qing Dynasty

The Qing dynasty's treatment of the Northern Stronghold had achieved the most glorious time in the Northern Stronghold's history. In the previous dynasties, emperors rarely went in person to the Northern Stronghold to perform the sacrifices, while the Liao dynasty had only chosen Mount Yiwulü as the imperial tomb. During the Qing dynasty, five emperors personally went to the Northern Stronghold eleven times in total to sacrifice the spirit of Mount Yiwulü. They performed national rituals there and repeatedly inscribed inscriptions and poems to express their reverence. It is precisely because of the special attention of the Qing dynasty imperial family that the Northern Stronghold Temple has been preserved to this day, becoming the only stronghold temple that preserved the Ming and Qing architecture. The reasons why the Qing emperors valued the Northern Stronghold are obvious. The Northern Stronghold was both one of the traditional sites of the state rituals of sacrifice for mountains and waters and the site where the ancestors thrived and were buried. As early as the Wanli 萬曆 period of the Ming dynasty (1573–1620), the ancestors of Aisin-Gioro Nurhachi 努爾哈赤 (r. 1616–1626) had already established a family mausoleum outside Hetu Ala 赫圖阿拉 (in present-day Xinbin County, Fushun City, Liaoning Province), which later became the Yong Mausoleum 永陵. From the third year of Tiancong 天聰 (1629) to the eighth year of Shunzhi 順治 (1651), Nurhachi's Fu Mausoleum 福陵 and Huang Taiji's 皇太極 (Aisin-Gioro Hong Taiji, r. 1626–1643) Zhao Mausoleum 昭陵 were inaugurated in Shengjing 盛京 (present-day Shenyang, Liaoning). The city of Hetu Ala and Shengjing served as the base camps of the Manchurian and enshrined their ancestors. For this reason, after the establishment of the Qing dynasty, the emperors had the habit of the eastern tour to worship their ancestors. Guangning, where the Northern Stronghold was located, was a designated stopping point for the Qing emperors on their way to sacrifice to their ancestors. Next door to the temple was the Guangning Palace, built for the emperor's temporary rest. According to historical records, there were five emperors of the Qing dynasty who personally visited the East to worship their ancestors. These tours were led by Emperor Kangxi 康熙帝 (Aisin-Gioro Xuanye 愛新覺羅·玄燁, r. 1662–1722) three times (1671, 1682, 1698), Emperor Yongzheng 雍正帝 (Aisin-Gioro Yinzhen 愛新覺羅·胤禛, r. 1723–1735) once (1721), Emperor Qianlong 乾隆帝 (Aisin-Gioro Hongli 愛新覺羅·弘曆, r. 1736–1795) four times (1743, 1754, 1778, 1783), Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶帝 (Aisin-Gioro Yongyan 愛新覺羅·琰, r. 1796–1820) twice (1805, 1818) and Emperor Daoguang 道光帝 (Aisin-Gioro Minning 愛新覺羅·旻寧, r. 1821–1850) once (1829). Some of their activities are also recorded on the stele inscriptions of the Northern Stronghold Temple. The "Yuji zhuwen" 御祭祝文 (Imperial Sacrifice Blessing Stele) in 1682 was written on the way of Kangxi's second ancestor worship, for which Kangxi sent his close courtiers to perform sacrificial rituals to the Northern Stronghold. With the successful suppression of a nearly decade-long rebellion, the country had regained peace, and the power of Emperor Kangxi was secured, this tour was significant. This inscription argues that Mount Yiwulü was not only the place where the Manchurian race was born and emerged, but also the place where the royal energy gathered. It was believed that with the blessing of the spirit of Mount Yiwulü that Emperor Kangxi was able to quell the rebellion and restore stability of the country:

The god stands majestically in the land of Yingzhou and the coast of Liaohai, which is the birthplace and foundation of our ancestors and a place filled with the kingly energy (qi). Blessed by the god, I put down the rebellions. 維神傑峙營州，雄幡遼海，發祥兆跡，王氣攸鍾。朕祇承神祐，疆宇蕩平。(Aisin-Gioro 1682/2002, p. 245)

This comment not only regarded Mount Yiwulü as the origin of the Manchurian race and Qing regime, but also as a symbol and source of imperial power, which further elevated the status of the Northern Stronghold. This evaluation continued until the end of the Qing dynasty, and the Northern Stronghold was praised by all the successive Qing emperors after Kangxi.

“Xinjian Beizhen Yiwulü shan zunshen bange xu” 新建北鎮醫巫閭山尊神板閣序 (Preface of Newly Built Sacrifice Pavilion of the Northern Stronghold Mount Yiwulü) in 1690 mentions the significance of Fengyi 丰邑 and Haoyi 鎬邑, the birthplaces of Zhou dynasty, to allude to the significance of Mount Yiwulü to Qing dynasty (Huang 1690/2002, pp. 245–46). Emperor Kangxi passed through Mount Yiwulü several times on his eastern tours, and often viewed beautiful clouds rising from the emerald green peaks, which are seemingly connected to Heaven. From this sight, the belief was formed that the cloud of Mount Yiwulü was the imperial energy descending from heaven, Mount Yiwulü was the place favored by heaven’s mandate, and the Manchurians, who originated in this area, had gained power in accordance with it (Aisin-Gioro 1708/2002, p. 249). Therefore, in 1703, Kangxi specially wrote a four-character plaque of “Lush and Auspicious Energy” (Yucong jiaqi 鬱蔥佳氣) for the Northern Stronghold Temple (“Yuji zhuwen bei” 御祭祝文碑 (Imperial Sacrifice Blessing Monument)) (Aisin-Gioro 1703/2002, pp. 247–48). Later, Kangxi ordered officials to reconstruct the temple with meticulous care, which took two years and four months (1706–1708). The “Yuzhi beiwen” 御製碑文 (Imperial Monument) in 1708, written in bilingual Manchu and Chinese by Kangxi himself, relates that Mount Yiwulü not only guarded the imperial spirit of the Qing dynasty, but also was an auxiliary and fence to the capital that consolidated the foundation of the imperial family for ten thousand years (Aisin-Gioro 1708/2002, p. 249). Kangxi was the first Qing emperor to openly express his admiration for the Northern Stronghold. In addition to emphasizing the political and military functions of Beizhen as well as the Yuan and Ming dynasties, emperor Kangxi’s praise of the Northern Stronghold was more based on national emotions. More notably, in comparing the Northern Stronghold to Feng and Hao, the birthplace of the Zhou dynasty, he also secretly compared himself and his ancestors to sage kings like the Kings of Zhou. Using the Northern Stronghold as the link, Emperor Kangxi skillfully connected the origin of his own nation with the legitimacy of the political power and compared it with the Zhou dynasty, the ideal blueprint of the Han political power in the Central Plains. In this way, to a certain extent, he was able to win the political identification of the Han literati, which proved his brilliant political skills. Qian Shixun 錢世勳, the governor of Guangning, was one of the Han literati who highly praised Kangxi as a wise and brilliant emperor. He wrote several inscriptions to pray for the emperor’s long life. He also hoped people would cherish the emperor with feelings of affection and gratitude (Qian 1712/2002, pp. 250–51; Qian 1715/2002, pp. 251–52). Kangxi’s reverence for the Northern Stronghold Temple was widely spread and received praise from people in the local area. He exemplified the attitude toward the Northern Stronghold Temple to be carried on by later emperors of the dynasty.

Emperor Yongzheng’s only ancestral worship took place in 1721 before he ascended the throne. To celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Kangxi’s reign, Yin Zhen 胤禛, the crown prince, was ordered to replace Kangxi on an eastern tour to worship ancestors, and this deed was recorded in “Yuzhi beiwen” 御製碑文 (Imperial Monument) in 1727 written in both Manchu and Chinese by Yongzheng himself. Yongzheng also made the decision to sponsor the renovation of the temple during this trip. Besides, after Yongzheng ascended the throne, he immediately ordered officials to spend four years repairing the temple again. The two repairs within just a few years show Yongzheng’s deep feelings

for the Northern Stronghold Temple. The inscription, written by Yongzheng himself, first summarized Kangxi's reverence for Mount Yiwulü for more than sixty years, then further confirmed that Mount Yiwulü was the birthplace of his people, and finally emphasized that the legitimacy of the Qing dynasty's regime came from the gathering of the "imperial energy" of Mount Yiwulü and the support of the mountain spirit. Emperor Yongzheng fully inherited and carried on Emperor Kangxi's reverence for the Northern Stronghold:

Mount Yiwulü is indeed the Northern Stronghold close to Xingjing [Hetu Ala], which guards the nearby areas. 醫巫閭山，實為北鎮，近接興京，翊衛關輔。

Our ancestors are established in the east of Shanhaiguan, like Feng and Qi of the Zhou dynasty, it is a region filled with kingly energy (qi). This place is blessed by the god with frequent miraculous happenings and laid the foundation for the great achievements of our nation permanently. 我祖宗發祥關右，豐、岐重地，王氣所鍾。惟神實為擁護，永奠鴻基，靈績頻昭。

With the intention of proper deference, I revere the deities from morning to night. Therefore, the god sent blessings, continuously revealing its great achievements. 朕懷允愜展敬之念，夙夜加虔。神其宏敷蕃祉，益顯豐功。 (Aisin-Gioro 1727/2002, p. 252)

Yongzheng constantly stressed that he sacrificed on behalf of his father as the prince in Kangxi's later years, which may be a declaration of the legitimacy of his succession after the fierce struggle for succession.

Although Emperor Qianlong did not leave any sacrifice inscriptions in the Northern Stronghold Temple during his four eastern ancestral tours, he did leave more than a dozen poems related to Mount Yiwulü and poetry stelae written by himself. Almost all the surviving poetic inscriptions in the Northern Stronghold Temple were works of Qianlong (except for one poem written in the shade of an inscription by Emperor Daoguang). Emperor Kangxi and Yongzheng also left poems written on Mount Yiwulü, though not as many as Qianlong's. Emperor Kangxi's work "Guo Guangning wang Yiwulü shan" 過廣寧望醫巫閭山 (Looking from afar at Mount Yiwulü when passing Guangning) expresses his desire to pass through Guangning and look at Mount Yiwulü from afar, and his desire to climb this mountain to cultivate himself. Emperor Yongzheng's "Wang Yiwulü shan" 望醫巫閭山 (Looking from afar at Mount Yiwulü) praises the ancestors' inheritance in Mount Yiwulü and emphasizes the legitimacy of the imperial power of the Qing, which he attributes to this mountain. Emperor Qianlong's poems, on the other hand, took on a more multifaceted appearance and brought out sentiments to the extreme.

Emperor Qianlong stayed in Mount Yiwulü every time he was on his eastern tours to worship the ancestors and left his own poems and erected monuments to commemorate them. Among the surviving inscriptions, there was one piece written in 1743, seven pieces in 1754, nine pieces in 1778, and eight pieces in 1783 (Wang 2002, pp. 450–51, 453–57; Yu 2009, pp. 158–95). In addition to some of these pieces depicting scenes of sacrifice, wishes for blessing, and the exploits of ancestors, most of them express personal feelings of the emperor. Some of these poems are about lingering on the beautiful scenes of Mount Yiwulü (Qianlong called them the "seven scenes") (Aisin-Gioro 1754c/2002, p. 451). In some of his works, Qianlong alludes to the emperors of the Liao dynasty who lived in seclusion but aimed at the world to convey his same aspirations (Aisin-Gioro 1754a/2002, p. 450; Aisin-Gioro 1778/2002, p. 455). In others, he describes the peaceful and tranquil village life in Mount Yiwulü (Aisin-Gioro 1743/2002, p. 450; Aisin-Gioro 1783/2002, p. 456), nostalgia upon imagining the ancient wars that took place in this area, reflection on the lessons from the fall of the Ming dynasty, and affirmation of the virtues and merits of the Qing dynasty (Aisin-Gioro 1754b/2002, pp. 450–51). Overall, compared to the Northern Stronghold described by the previous emperors, these poems present a broader scene, deeper historical reflections, more realistic images of life, and more personal feelings. Qianlong was the only emperor who expressed his personal emotions and feelings through the Northern Stronghold. Apart from the personality factors of emperor Qianlong, his tendency towards

the Northern Stronghold sacrificial rites also came from the confidence and relaxation brought by the stability of the regime and the prosperity of the country. In Qianlong's time, the problem of regime legitimacy had been basically resolved, and he no longer needed to elaborate on it. As a result, Emperor Qianlong turned his attention away from politics and focused instead on the local landscape and people's livelihood, as well as his personal feelings.

The last restoration of the Northern Stronghold Temple in Chinese imperial history took place in the eighteenth year of the Guangxu 光緒 (1892) period, and was recorded in a lengthy stele inscription. This "Chixiu Beizhenmiao bei" 敕修北鎮廟碑 (Monument of Imperial Reconstruction of the Northern Stronghold Temple) inscription detailed the historical evolution of Mount Yiwulü for more than 2000 years and the reconstruction of this temple in previous dynasties. This text argues that the spiritual vein of Mount Yiwulü is connected to Mount Changbai 長白山, the place of origin of the Manchus and the nearest natural barrier to Hetu Ala and Shengjing, which was crucial to the Manchus. The fact that all the emperors highly regarded and revered Mount Yiwulü demonstrated the importance of remembering one's origin in the Qing dynasty (Chen and Xu 1892/2002, pp. 289–91). In fact, the Qing dynasty regarded Mount Changbai as the original birthplace of its race, and Mount Yiwulü as the place where the emperor's foundation began to flourish and prosper. Therefore, the Qing dynasty had a tradition of performing sacrifices to Mount Changbai and Mount Yiwulü together (Zhao 1977, 83.2522). After Emperor Guangxu ascended the throne, he also added the divine titles of Mount Changbai and Mount Yiwulü, the former as "Protect the People" (Baomin 保民) and the latter as "Accurate Response" (Lingying 靈應) (Zhao 1977, 83.2523).

To sum up, the Qing dynasty promoted the Northern Stronghold for many reasons. The first is that the Qing dynasty, as an ethnic minority regime, was in urgent need of inheriting the state ritual system of sacrifice from the Chinese regimes like the Jin dynasty and the Yuan dynasty to confirm the legitimacy of its own rule. This ritual system concretized the source of legitimacy for the regime through rituals, entertainment, and prayers to gain the support of the gods in order to obtain good harvest, which were all representations of the mandate of heaven. Secondly, it comes from the decisive military victory of the Manchurians over the Ming dynasty. Guangning was at the border of conflicts between the Later Jin and Ming armies, and the two sides fought for decades. The Manchu army occupied Guangning and then soon overthrew the Ming dynasty. At the same time, Guangning was also the only access to the Liaodong region from Beijing, which showed the importance of its military status. Thirdly, the Manchurians regarded Mount Yiwulü as the place where the Qing dynasty was founded. The Manchu Later Jin regime built its capital in the city of Hetu Ala and Shengjing, both in the east of Mount Yiwulü. The Northern Stronghold was a natural barrier to the political center of the Later Jin, which gave the Manchu regime a respite and a chance to grow under the military pressure of the Ming dynasty. The Qing government combined the special significance of Mount Yiwulü to the Manchus with the state ritual system of sacrifice, which developed the understanding that Mount Yiwulü was the place where the heavenly mandate was given and kingly energy was gathered, further strengthening the legitimacy of its regime.

6. Conclusions

This article uses extant stele inscriptions preserved in the Northern Stronghold Temple to examine the history of the Northern Stronghold sacrifice, focusing on the special attitudes of the northern minority regimes to Mount Yiwulü. While the sacrifices of the five strongholds were incorporated into the traditional state ritual system of sacrifice as late as the early Song dynasty, the Northern Stronghold sacrifices were valued by the ruling class as early as the Southern and Northern Dynasties. Moreover, the ethnic minority regimes in the north regarded the Northern Stronghold higher than the Chinese central regimes. The Northern Wei, Liao, Jin, Yuan, and Qing dynasties all gave special treatment to the

Northern Stronghold sacrifice. The Yuan and Qing even regarded the Northern Stronghold as the head of the five strongholds. This positive attitude was formed for several reasons.

Firstly, Mount Yiwulü was associated with the origins and prosperity of many northern peoples, such as the Liao of the Khitan and the Qing of the Manchurians. Even though people of the Jurchen Jin dynasty and the Mongol Yuan dynasty did not regard it as the birthplace of their nation, they still highly worshipped it. Liao and Qing had a closer connection with the Northern Stronghold, so they had the highest regard for this mountain. While the rulers of the Liao dynasty built the imperial mausoleums there, the rulers of the Qing dynasty not only considered Mount Yiwulü as the source of its imperial power, five emperors also personally went to the Northern Stronghold Temple to perform sacrifices on the way back to Liaodong to worship their ancestors.

Secondly, the geographical location and military role were also realistic reasons that the Northern Stronghold was important. Youzhou, where the Northern Stronghold is located, has been an essential fortress in the north since ancient times. From the Jin dynasty onwards, many dynasties set their capitals in Beijing. Due to the obstruction of the Mongolian Plateau, the only link between Beijing and the north, especially the north-east, was the Guangning area. For this reason, since the Yuan dynasty, Mount Yiwulü had been regarded as a natural barrier to protect Beijing. The Later Jin, founded by the Manchurians, treated Mount Yiwulü as a natural obstacle to Shengjing 盛京. While in the late Ming dynasty, the military confrontation became intensified between the Ming government and the Manchurians, thus the stability of the Guangning area would decide the survival of the regimes. Naturally, Mount Yiwulü, which secured the tranquility of this place, had also been highly valued by all parties.

Finally, the existing research on the Northern Stronghold tends to pay more attention to the study of its religious rituals and cultural background in a specific dynasty. However, the Northern Stronghold's presentation of a systematic opposition between ethnic groups and how ethnic minority regimes skillfully adopted a national sacrificial system that was originally against them by establishing a connection between their nationalities and the sacrificial subject, like the Northern Stronghold, are often neglected by scholars. The system of a unified common world under Heaven mentioned in the *Zhouli* is one of the most important sources of political legitimacy of the Han dynastic regime. This system was initially designed to distinguish the Han Chinese from the barbarians, so one of its core concepts is "identity", which regarded the ethnic minorities in the frontier areas as enemies, rebels, or people to be pacified. In this system, stronghold mountains serve to guard the border and resist foreign nationalities, and because they maintain the Han regime's political legitimacy, the stronghold mountains' embodiment of the conflict between the Han and other nationalities is particularly severe. Due to historical and geographical reasons, this conflict is further reified by the Northern Stronghold.

However, under the continual operation of the northern minorities, the Northern Stronghold transcended the national sacrificial system based on the Han nationality and its regime's political legitimacy. The reason for such operation is that the system established by the *Zhouli* already encapsulated a sense of completeness. Rather than creating a new system, integrating itself into the system that it was excluded from was a better choice. The core operational means of ethnic minority regimes is still "identity". The act of binding one's identity to the Northern Stronghold, one of the symbols in the *Zhouli*, not only helped to integrate itself into the system but also transformed oneself from the enemy to the protected.

In this process, the minority regime's own statements are very important, but more important is the attitude of the Han officials. Therefore, we can see that in the stela inscriptions of the Yuan dynasty, the officials sent by the emperor to preside over the sacrifices were all Mongolians, while those who wrote the inscriptions to praise the virtues were all Han officials. In the Qing dynasty, the emperor wrote personally for the inscriptions. Under this influence, many local officials and scholars wrote inscriptions for the Beizheng Temple to express their support for the reestablished status of the Northern Stronghold in

the Qing dynasty. The actions and statements of Han officials are critical in justifying the legitimacy of these minority regimes, so they always occupied a significant place in the stele inscriptions.

Ming dynasty's attitude towards the Northern Stronghold reflected the Han regime's strong objection to the minority regime's manipulation of the identity of the Northern Stronghold. The Han regime once again stressed the military status of the Northern Stronghold, the purpose of which was to exclude ethnic minorities as enemies from the national sacrificial system established in the *Zhouli*. In this sense, the Northern Stronghold sacrificial system not only embodied the religious and cultural meaning in the other stronghold mountains but also added a layer of complexity to fighting for the power of speech between the Han and ethnic minority regimes. This is a distinctive aspect of the Northern Stronghold in the national sacrificial system, which provided a new theoretical dimension for the interpretation of the national sacrificial system.

Due to the mutual and combined effects of the above reasons, the Northern Stronghold was far more prominent than other strongholds as regarded among the minority regimes and was revered and cared for in particular manners by them. While these are phenomena that are hardly included in official history, the stele inscriptions preserved in the Northern Stronghold Temple serve to fill the gap in our knowledge, presenting the historical rise and fall of the Northern Stronghold over the past thousand years.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.H.; Data curation, C.H.; Formal analysis, C.H.; Investigation, C.H. and S.C.; Methodology, C.H.; Resources, C.H.; Supervision, C.H.; Validation, C.H. and S.C.; Writing—original draft, C.H.; Writing—review & editing, C.H. and S.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 愛新覺羅·弘曆 (1711–1799). 1743/2002. Guangning dao zhong zuo 廣寧道中作 [Poem Composed on the Way to Guangning]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang 王晶辰. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 450.
- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 1754a/2002. You Yiwulü shan zayong—daoyin gu 遊醫巫閭山雜詠·道隱谷 [Miscellaneous Poems Composed on the Tour to Mount Yiwulü—Dao Hidden Valley]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 450.
- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 1754b/2002. Guangning dao zhong zuo 廣寧道中作 [Poem Composed on the Way to Guangning]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 450–51.
- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 1754c/2002. You Yiwulü shan de wuyan sanshiyun shi 遊醫巫閭山得五言三十韻詩 [Five-character Thirty-rhyme Poem Composed on the Tour to Mount Yiwulü]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 451.
- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 1778/2002. Guanyingde jijing sishou-daoyin gu 觀音閣即景四首·道隱谷 [Four Poems of Guanyin (avalokitesvara) Pavilion Scene—Dao Hidden Valley]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 455.
- Aisin-Gioro, Hongli. 1783/2002. Guangning dao zhong zuoshi 廣寧道中作詩 [Poem Composed on the Way to Guangning]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 456.
- Aisin-Gioro, Xuanye. 愛新覺羅·玄燁. 1682/2002. Yuji zhuwen 御祭祝文 [Imperial Sacrifice Blessing Stele]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 245.
- Aisin-Gioro, Xuanye. 1703/2002. Yuji zhuwen bei 御祭祝文碑 [Imperial Sacrifice Blessing Monument]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 247–48.
- Aisin-Gioro, Xuanye. 1708/2002. Yuzhi beiwen 御製碑文 [Imperial Monument]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 249.

- Aisin-Gioro, Yinzhen 愛新覺羅·胤禛. 1727/2002. Yuzhi beiwen 御製碑文 [Imperial Monument]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 252.
- Anonymous. 1606/2002. Chongxiu Beizhenmiao ji 重修北鎮廟記 [Record of Reconstruction of the Northern Stronghold Temple]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 242–43.
- Borjigin, Temür 孛兒只斤·鐵穆爾 (1265–1307). 1298/2002. Shengzhao zhibei 聖詔之碑 [Monument of the Holy Commandment]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 48–49.
- Chen, Peng 陳鵬. 2018. Qingdai Yiwulü shan jisi kaolue 清代醫巫閭山祭祀考略 [A Study of the Sacrifice of Mount Yiwulü in Qing Dynasty]. *Jiamusi Daxue Shehui Kexue Xuebao 佳木斯大學社會科學學報 [Journal of Social Science of Jiamusi University]* 3: 147–49.
- Chen, Zhen 陳震, and Jingtao Xu 徐景濤. 1892/2002. Chixiu Beizhenmiao bei 敕修北鎮廟碑 [Monument of Imperial Reconstruction of the Northern Stronghold Temple]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 289–91.
- Cui, Xiangdong 崔向東. 2015. Lun Yiwulü shan wenhua neihan jiqi tedian 論醫巫閭山文化內涵及其特點 [A Study of the Cultural Connotation and Characteristics of Mount Yiwulü]. *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian 社會科學戰線 [Social Science Front]* 2: 112–19.
- Huang, Rujin 黃如瑾. 1690/2002. Xinjian Beizhen Yiwulü shan zunshen bange xu 新建北鎮醫巫閭山尊神板閣序 [Preface of Newly Built Sacrifice Pavilion of the Northern Stronghold Mount Yiwulü]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 245–46.
- Huo, Zhan 霍霖. 1509/2002. Chongxiu Beizhenmiao beiji 重修北鎮廟碑記 [Reconstruction of the Northern Stronghold Temple Monument]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 228–29.
- Jia, Hui 賈輝. 2008. Liaoning Beizhen Yiwulü shan simiao beiwen guqianyao gu'andao de xinfaxian 遼寧北鎮醫巫閭山寺廟碑文、古錢窯、古暗道的新發現 [New Discoveries of the Inscriptions, Ancient Coin Kiln and Secret Tunnels in Mount Yiwulü in Beizhen City, Liaoning Province]. *Dongbei shidi 東北史地 [Northeastern China Historical Geography]* 2: 95–96.
- Jia, Jinhua. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. [CrossRef]
- Li, Fengmin 李鳳民. 2002. Qing di Guangning xingong 清帝廣寧行宮 [Guangning Palace of Qing Emperors]. *Zijin Cheng 紫禁城 [Forbidden City]* 1: 46–48.
- Li, Qi 李齊. 1339/1983. Daisi Beizhenmiao bei 代祀北鎮廟碑 [Monument of Sacrifice to the Northern Stronghold on Behalf of Emperor]. In *Fengtian tongzhi 奉天通志 [Fengtian Chronicles]*. Edited by Shunan Wang 王樹楠 (1851–1936), Tingxie Wu 吳廷燮 (1865–1947) and Yufu Jin 金毓黻 (1887–1962). Shenyang: Dongbei wenshi congshu bianji weiyuanhui 東北文史叢書編輯委員會 [Editorial Board of Northeastern Chinese Humanities Series], 255.5574.
- Liaoning Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 遼寧省文物考古研究所 [Liaoning Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology]. 2016. Liaoning Beizhen shi Liaodai diling 2012–2013nian kaogu diaocha yu shijue 北鎮市代帝陵2012–2013年考古查与掘 [The Archaeological Survey and Trial Excavation of the Imperial Mausoleum of the Liao Dynasty in Beizhen City, Liaoning in 2012–2013]. *Kaogu 考古 [Archaeology]* 10: 34–54.
- Liu, Dan 劉丹. 2019. Jindai Beizhen Yiwulü shan xinyang yu jisi tanxi 金代北鎮醫巫閭山信仰與祭祀探析 [An Exploration on the Religious Belief and Sacrifice of Mount Yiwulü in Jin Dynasty]. *Bohai daxue xuebao 渤海大學學報 [Journal of Bohai University]* 3: 34–38.
- Lu, Xiuli 盧秀麗. 1994. Qing di dongxun yu Guangning xingong 清帝東巡與廣寧行宮 [The Eastern Tour of Qing Emperors and Guangning Palace]. *Neimenggu shehui kexue 內蒙古社會科學 [Inner Mongolia Social Sciences]* 2: 71–74.
- Qian, Shixun 錢世勳. 1712/2002. Wanshou beiting ji 萬壽碑亭記 [Record of the Pavilion of Long Life]. In *Liaoning beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 250–51.
- Qian, Shixun. 1715/2002. Chongxiu Beizhen chanlin ji 重修北鎮禪林記 [Record of Reconstruction of the Chan Buddhist Monastery in the Northern Stronghold]. In *Liaoning beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 251–52.
- Robson, James. 2009. *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue) in Medieval China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asian Center.
- Si, Weiwei 司偉偉, Lei Cui 崔蕾, Jiujiang Yu 于九江, Chang Liu 劉昌, and Jie Zhao 趙傑. 2021. Liaoning Beizhen Liaodai Yelü Hongyi mu fajue jianbao 遼寧北鎮遼代耶律弘義墓發掘簡報 [The Excavation of Yelü Hongyi's Tomb of the Liao Dynasty in Beizhen City, Liaoning]. *Wenwu 文物 [Cultural Relics]* 11: 50–62.
- Song, Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381). 1976. *Yuanshi 元史 [Yuan History]*. Beijing: Zh Toqto'a 托托 (1314–1356).
- Sun, Zijiao 孫子蛟. 2018a. Beizhen miao jianzhi yange buju kao 北鎮廟建置、沿革、佈局考 [Research on the Structure, History and Layout of the Northern Stronghold Temple]. *Jiamusi daxue shehui kexue xuebao 佳木斯大學社會科學學報 [Journal of Social Science of Jiamusi University]* 3: 143–46, 54.
- Sun, Zijiao. 2018b. Yiwulü shanyue wenhua chutan yi Qing di dongxun yuzhishi weili 醫巫閭山嶽文化初探——以清帝東巡御製詩為例. *Lanzhou jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao 蘭州教育學院學報 [Journal of Lanzhou Education College]* 5: 8–10, 62.
- Toqto'a 托托 (1314–1356). 1975. *Jinshi 金史 [Jin History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Toqto'a 托托. 1977. *Songshi 宋史 [Song History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

- Twitchett, Denis (1925–2006), and John K. Fairbank (1907–1991), eds. 2008. *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 9, Part One: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Jingchen 王晶辰, ed. 2002. *Liaoning beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe.
- Wang, Niansun 王念孫 (1744–1832), ed. 2019. *Guangya Shuzheng 廣雅疏證 [Exegeses on the Augmentation of Correct Words]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Zhigang 王志綱. 2018. Qingdai Qian Shixun Beizhen miao beiwen kao 清代錢世勳北鎮廟碑文考 [Research on the Stele Inscription of the Northern Stronghold Temple by Qian Shixun in Qing Dynasty]. *Zhongguo shufa 中國書法 [Chinese Calligraphy]* 16: 173–76.
- Wang, Zhigang. 2019. Beizhen miao Wanshou si beiwen yanjiu 北鎮廟萬壽寺碑文研究 [On the Inscription of Wanshou Temple in the Northern Stronghold Temple]. *Zhejiang Ligong Daxue Xuebao 浙江理工大學學報 [Journal of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University]* 42: 661–69.
- Wei, Shou 魏收 (507–572). 1974. *Weishu 魏書 [Wei History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Zheng 魏徵 (580–643). 1973. *Suishu 隋書 [Sui History]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Xu, Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–ca. 147), and Yucai Duan 段玉裁. 1988. *Shuowen jiezi zhu 說文解字注 [Commentary on the Origin of Chinese Characters]*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Yang, Hong 楊法. 1357/2002. Daisi zhibei 代祀之碑 [Monument of Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, p. 223.
- Yu, Chun 于春, and Gali Bai 白噶力. 2020. Liaodai diling kaogu faxian yu yanjiu shultie 遼代帝陵考古發現與研究述略 [A Review of the Archaeological Discoveries and Research on the Liao Emperors' Mausoleum]. *Wenbo 文博 [Relics and Museology]* 2: 27–33.
- Yu, Zhigang 于志剛, ed. 2009. *Beizhenmiao beiwen jixi 北鎮廟碑文解析 [Commentary and Analysis of Inscriptions in the Northern Stronghold Temple]*. Shenyang: Liaoning Minzu Chubanshe.
- Yu, Zhigang. 2011. Beizhenmiao qingong kancha baogao ji zhengzhi shuoming 北鎮廟寢宮勘察報告及整治說明 [The Archaeological Survey and Repairing Illustration of the Resting Palace in the Northern Stronghold Temple]. *Dazhong wenyi 大眾文藝 [Popular Literature and Art]* 23: 235–36.
- Zhang, Xiu 張岫. 1495/2002. Beizhenmiao chongxiu ji 北鎮廟重修記 [Record of the Restoration of the Northern Stronghold Temple]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 226–27.
- Zhang, Yuanmei 張元美. 1346/2002. Yuxiang daisi ji 御香代祀記 [Record of Imperial Incense-offering and Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 219–20.
- Zhang, Yuanmei. 1347/2002. Yuxiang daisi ji 御香代祀記 [Record of Imperial Incense-offering and Sacrifice on Behalf of Emperor]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 220–21.
- Zhao, Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844–1927). 1977. *Qingshigao 清史稿 [Qing History Draft]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zheng, Jingsheng 鄭景勝. 1994. Beizhenmiao de buju yu jianzhu tese 北鎮廟的佈局與建築特色 [The Layout and Architectural Features of the Northern Stronghold Temple]. *Gujian Yuanlin Jishu 古建園林技術 [Traditional Chinese Architecture and Gardens]* 2: 42–44.
- Zheng, Jingsheng, Zheng Yanping 鄭艷萍, and Liu Xudong 劉旭東. 1995. Beizhenmiao bihua yishu yu yishu tanjiu 北壁与技探究 [An Exploration on the Art and Technology of Wall Paintings in the Northern Stronghold Temple]. *Gujian Yuanlin Jishu* 3: 15–17, 27.
- Zheng, Xuan, and Gongyan Jia 賈公彦, eds. 2000. *Zhouli Zhushu 周禮注疏 [Exegeses on the Rites of Zhou]*. Beijing: Peking University.
- Zhu, Di 朱棣 (1360–1424). 1421/2002. Chi Liaodong dushi bei 敕遼東都司碑 [Stele of Imperial Liaodong Commanders' Department]. In *Liaoning Beizhi 遼寧碑誌 [Collection of Inscriptions in Liaoning Province]*. Edited by Jingchen Wang. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp. 59–60.

Article

The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China

Yuanlin Wang

College of Humanities, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou 510006, China; twyl@gzhu.edu.cn

Abstract: Previous studies on the Nanhaishen Temple 南海神廟 (Temple of the South Sea God) in Guangzhou in the Tang dynasty focus mainly on the South Sea God as the patron of the Maritime Silk Road, without thoroughly discussing the state ritual and the sacrificial right of the Tang government. This paper illuminates five new points concerning the ritual. First, the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God developed from the suburban rituals in previous dynasties into both forms of suburban and local rituals, which was also categorized as the medium sacrifice among the three major sacrifices in the state ritual system of the Tang dynasty. Second, the first commissioner who was sent by the central government to perform the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God was Zhang Jiuling, and henceforth the temporary assignment of court officials to the ceremonies became institutionalized. In the tenth year of Tianbao (751), the South Sea God was entitled Guangliwang 廣利王 (King Guangli), and the commissioner sent on this mission was Zhang Jiuzhang, Zhang Jiuling's third younger brother, rather than his second younger brother Zhang Jiugao as seen in some records. Third, most of the commissioners were dispatched by the central government in the early Tang, and therefore the sacrifice to the South Sea God was related to the state ritual system; but in the late Tang local officials became dominant in the ritual ceremonies, and thus good harvests and social stability in the Lingnan region became the major concern of the sacrifice. Fourth, the legend that the Buddhist Master Xiujiu 休咎禪師 took over the temple and accepted the South Sea God as his disciple reflected the reciprocity between Buddhism and the South Sea God belief. Last but not the least, the sacrificial ceremonies to the South Sea God established in the Tang dynasty and performed by the officials of both the central and local governments had a significant influence on the ritual in the following dynasties.

Keywords: South Sea God; state sacrificial ritual; Zhang Jiuling; Zhang Jiuzhang; Zhang Jiugao; Tang dynasty; Buddhism

Citation: Wang, Yuanlin. 2021. The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China. *Religions* 12: 960. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110960>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 31 August 2021

Accepted: 28 October 2021

Published: 2 November 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The Nanhaishen Temple 南海神廟 (Temple of the South Sea God) is one of the best-preserved temples that enshrine the spirits of the four seas in China as its location has not changed throughout the various dynasties since the 14th year of Kaihuang in the Sui dynasty (594). It is, thus, listed as a national cultural relic for further preservation. Since the South Sea God blesses people with safe voyages, a lot of scholars have studied the temple from the perspective of its status as a significant historical relic along the ancient Maritime Silk Road (Huang 2005; Huang and Yan 2011; Qiao 2015). However, similar to the designation of *yue-zhen-hai-du* 嶽鎮海瀆 (sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways),¹ the Nanhaishen Temple mainly served as a display of the sacrificial right and jurisdictional right of the dynasty from the perspective of state ritual. As a matter of fact, the local and central governments of all dynasties dispatched officials to perform the ritual to the South Sea God. Scholars have studied this topic (Wang 2006), but there are still many questions open for discussion: How were the suburban sacrifice and the local sacrifice to the South Sea God performed in the Tang Dynasty? Were there any differences in sacrificing to the deity in Guangzhou between the early and the late Tang? How did the ritual commissioners of the Zhang brothers play their role in this regard? How was the South Sea God related

to Buddhism? What were the influences exerted by the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God in the Tang dynasty upon the following dynasties? Taking these questions as points of departure, I aim to figure out what roles the sacrificial ritual of the South Sea God played at the national and local levels in the Tang dynasty, how the central and local officials officiated the ceremonies, and what legacies such a sacrificial ritual in the Tang dynasty left behind for the future generations.

2. Suburban Sacrifice and Local Sacrifice to the South Sea God in the Sui Dynasty

The Chinese sacrificial rituals to the renowned mountains and waters correlated with the development of the dynasties. The state sacrifice to rivers and seas, as well as to mountains and hills, begins with religious belief, geographical knowledge, and jurisdictional legitimacy. Some of the mountains and waters were not necessarily in the territory of the state, thus, the rulers offered sacrifices at the suburbs of the capital to worship all the gods and spirits. In this sense, suburban sacrifice was only a symbolic means in the state ritual culture, and what really mattered was the designation of the renowned mountains and waters that could demonstrate the power and territory of the state. In the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents), we can find the terms *sihai* 四海 (the four seas) (Kong and Kong 2000, 6.197, 204), *nanghai* 南海 (the South Sea) (ibid., p. 191) and others, and the territory then stretched into infinity. These seas were often used by the rulers of the Warring States period (770 BEC–221 BEC) to demonstrate their sovereignty, so a *Sihaici* 四海祠 (Shrine of the Four Seas) in Yongzhi 雍峙, which was at the suburbs of the capital of the Qin state (present-day Fengxiang, Shaanxi), was simply a nominal venue for sacrificial ritual rather than a display of jurisdictional and sacrificial rights claimed by the forthcoming unified regimes. It was not until 61 BCE that Emperor Xuan of the Han dynasty established the state ritual system of sacrificing to the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五嶽) and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆), and then the religious and judicial authorities came into being (Jia 2021, p. 319). During the late Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D.24), suburban sacrifice was the main ritual, though a *Haishuici* 海水祠 (Shrine of Seawater) was built by the local government in Linqu 臨 (present-day Linqu, Shandong) (Ban 1962, 25.1243–47; 28.1585). Wang Mang 王莽 reinvented the sacrificial scheme by associating the heaven (*tian* 天) with cosmos, and the earth (*di* 地) with geography according to the belief that “the heaven is like the round mound while the earth is like a square” 圓丘象天, 方澤則地 (ibid., 25.1266), in which “the earth” refers to *Tiantan* 天壇 (Heaven Altar) at the southern suburbs of the capital while “square” refers to *Fangzetan* 方澤壇 (Square Altar) at the northern suburbs. It then became the standard ritual of sacrificing to heaven and earth at the suburbs of the capital Chang’an 長安, where the sea gods were sacrificed to at the second grade. The emplacement of worshipping heaven and earth was relocated to the suburbs of the capital Luoyang 洛陽 in the early Eastern Han when the gods of the four seas were also sacrificed to at the second grade (Fan 2000, 97.3160). All in all, sea gods were sacrificed to at the second grade as the main ceremony was offered to the heaven at the Circular Mound Altar at the Southern Suburbs (*nanjiao yuankiu* 南郊圓丘) and to the earth at the Square Altar at the Northern Suburbs (*beijiao fangqiu* 北郊方丘) during the Han dynasty.

During the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420), the spirits of the four seas were only sacrificed to at the second grade with a monumental statue at the altar of sacrificing to the earth at the northern suburbs of the capital city Jiankang 建康 (present-day Nanjing). From the 11th year of Tianjian (512) of the Southern Liang dynasty onward, the number of monumental statues was increased to four to sacrifice to the East Sea, the South Sea, the West Sea, and the North Sea. These spirits of the four seas were also named and worshiped in the rest of the dynasty and throughout the Northern dynasty (386–581) (Wang 2006, pp. 42–49).

After the country was unified in the Sui dynasty (581–618), the five rites (*wuli* 五禮), i.e., auspicious rites (*jili* 吉禮), congratulatory rites (*jiali* 嘉禮), hosting rites (*binli* 賓禮), military rites (*junli* 軍禮), and inauspicious rites (*xiongli* 凶禮), were mainly inherited from

three sources. The first source was the rites from Liang 梁 (502–557) and Chen 陳 (557–589) regimes, the second from Beiwei 北魏 (386–557) and Beiqi 北齊 (550–577) regimes, and the last one from Xiwei 西魏 (535–556) and Beizhou 北周 (557–581) regimes (Chen 2011, p. 3). There were three levels in the state ritual system of sacrifice. The top level, called grand sacrifice (*dasi* 大祀), was to offer sacrifice to the heaven, the earth, and others, followed by medium sacrifice (*zhongsi* 中祀) to *yue-zhen-hai-du* and others, and small sacrifice (*xiaosi* 小祀) to the stars, winds, rain, and others. Three places of offering sacrifices at the suburbs to the four seas in the Sui dynasty were related to the South Sea God. Firstly, at the Huangdici 皇地祠 (Shrine of the Earth God) which was 14 km north of the capital city Daxing 大興, the rulers worshiped their ancestors, during which the Jiuzhoushen 九州神 (Nine Precincts Spirit), seas, rivers, forests, ponds, hills, marshes, and terraces were all sacrificed to at the second grade simultaneously (Wei 1973, 6.108). Secondly, at the Yutan 雩壇 (Altar for Praying for Rain) which was 13 km south of the capital, *yue-zhen-hai-du* were sacrificed to at the second grade. As drought tended to occur after the fourth lunar month, a ceremony was performed at the altar for seven days to pray for rain which was believed to be brought by *yue-zhen-hai-du*. If no rain showed up, the ceremony would continue for another seven days conducted by officials and scholars who had made a contribution to the state. If the supplication was still unanswered, the third slot of seven days would be employed to pray for rain in the ancestral and imperial temples of the rulers. Again, if it still did not rain, the altar would be renovated to accommodate the ceremony for the fourth seven days. If the drought continued after all these endeavors, there was nothing the central government could do but repeat the cycle of sacrificing all over again. The local governments at provincial, prefecture, and county levels followed the same ritual as they prayed for rain towards the direction of the capital city's gates. If three rounds of sacrificing failed, they continued to pray to the sacred peaks, mountains, seas, and rivers. If the drought still continued, they prayed at the temples and shrines by offering bulls, goats, pigs as sacrifices (ibid., 7.128). Thirdly, at the Wujiatou 五郊壇 (Five Suburbs Altar) a ceremony, called *zha* 蠶, was performed in the tenth lunar month to sacrifice to over a hundred spirits as a group. They included the gods of the sacred peaks, mountains, seas, and rivers, as well as the hills, forests, streams, and ponds. An additional spot was set along the one for the spirits of the sacred peaks, mountains, seas, and rivers. Therefore, a large number of spirits could be sacrificed simultaneously (ibid., 7.129–30). In this sense, the sacrifice rituals to *yue-zhen-hai-du* became a part of the suburban sacrificial institution at the capital during the Sui dynasty as the spirits were thought to be able to bring proper rain.

In addition to the suburban sacrificial ritual in the Sui dynasty, Donghaici 東海祠 (Shrine of the East Sea) was built by the coast of Kuaiji County 會稽縣 and Nanhaici 南海祠 (Shrine of the South Sea) was built in Nanhai town 南海鎮. Pines and cypresses were planted inside the shrines, and a priest called *wu* 巫 was appointed to maintain each shrine (ibid., 7.140; Wang 1960, 33.355). There are two reasons why the Shrine of the East Sea and the Shrine of the South Sea were singled out and set at the land of the previous regime Chen 陳, while the Shrine of Four Seas and the Shrine of the North Sea were not mentioned in the Sui dynasty. One reason is that such an arrangement was accorded with the geographical indication of the East Sea and the South Sea, and the other is that these two seas could defend the country as its territory expanded. The Shrine of the South Sea, therefore, is a perfect combination to indicate geography in a territorial and ceremonial way, and it remains the key venue enshrining the South Sea God for over 1400 years.

The Shrine of the South Sea erected in the Sui dynasty still stands at the Miaotou Village 廟頭村 in Huangpu District 埔區 in Guangzhou now, and its present name is the Nanhaishen Temple. Apart from building the shrine near the coast, the ancient rulers appointed priests in the neighborhood to clean the shrine, perform routine ceremonies, and adorn the yard by planting cypresses and pine trees which embodied the solemnity and reverence of the edifice. One year after the shrine was built, or in the third lunar month of the 15th year of Kaihuang (595) to be exact, Emperor Wendi “had imperial tours to the east and offered sacrifice to the five sacred peaks as well as the seas and waterways

at a distance” 至自東巡狩，望祭五嶽海濱 (Wei 1973, 2.40). About three months later, “a decree was passed to build shrines on famous mountains and great rivers that had not been sacrificed to yet” 詔名山大川未祀典者，悉祠之 (ibid.), which further extended the ritual scheme of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du*. In conclusion, a state ritual system of sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was established in the Sui dynasty at the local level, in which the suburban sacrifice and the local sacrifice to the Shrine of the South Sea both played a role.

3. A Dual and Well-Established Scheme of Suburban Sacrifice and Local Sacrifice to the South Sea God in the Tang Dynasty

Unfortunately, the records of the rituals sacrificing to the South Sea God in the Sui dynasty were rare because the dynasty did not last long. In the Tang dynasty (618–907), the *Zhenguanli* 貞觀禮 (Rituals in the Reign of Zhenguan) and *Xianqingli* 顯慶禮 (Rituals in the Reign of Xianqing) were compiled. In particular, the *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮 (Kaiyuan Ritual of the Great Tang), which consists of 150 *juan*, was compiled by the academician Xiao Song 蕭嵩 and others and was completed in 732. According to this classic, the five rites were stipulated with 152 sub-rituals in total. Among the 55 sub-rituals of *jili*, offering sacrifices to the five sacred peaks and the four sacred strongholds ranked 47th, whereas to the four sacred seas and the four sacred waterways ranked 18th, hence these two sacrificial rituals were not the same (Du 1988, 106.2761–2762; Xiao 2000, 36.201–202). In fact, all the sacrificial rituals were distinct and strictly defined, as shown in the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, “*Liyizhi*” 禮儀志 (Records of Rites) in the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History), “*Liyuezhizhi*” 禮樂志 (Records of Rites and Music) in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New Tang History) and other records. For instance, as the medium sacrifice, praying to *yue-zhen-hai-du* shared the same ranking of praying to the state and the stars. It was lower ranking than the imperial praying to the heaven and the earth, which was the grand sacrifice, but higher-ranking than praying to winds and rain and to the general mountains, forests, rivers, and marshlands which belonged to the small sacrifice. The South Sea God was sacrificed to at the suburbs of the capital city Chang’an and the east capital Luoyang as one of the four sea gods at a second grade. During such suburban sacrificial rituals, including offering sacrifice to *diqu* 地祇 (earthly deities) on the summer solstice and to hundreds of spirits as a group on the eighth day of the twelfth month, the spirits of the four seas were sacrificed to at a second grade (Xiao 2000, 36.201–202; Du 1988, 106.2761–2762; Liu 1975, 24.911–912; Ouyang and Song 1975, 11.311–319).

When the Tang Emperors made an inspection tour, they offered sacrifices to Mount Tai 泰山 and also “sacrificed to mountain and water spirits at a distance arranged by a special sequence” 望秩於山川 as is recorded in “Huangdi Xunshou” 皇帝巡狩 (Inspection Tours of the Emperors) in the *Datang Kaiyuanli* (Du 1988, 118.3056–3060). The sacrificial ritual ranked from mountains, strongholds, seas, waterways, peaks, forests, rivers, marshes, plains, hills, and low meadows. Because the spirits of the mountains and waterways alike were thought to be able to bring proper clouds and rain, ceremonies were performed to pray for rain to come when there were droughts and for the rain to go when there were floods, and these ceremonies all involved sea spirits and others in *yue-zhen-hai-du*. For example, the sacrificial ritual to the sacred mountains and strongholds was conducted in the northern suburbs when there was a drought while serving *yue-zhen-hai-du* and all the mountain spirits at the same time. If the drought continued, sacrifices would be offered to pray for the state first and then pray at the imperial ancestral temple, followed by the ritual of praying to *yue-zhen-hai-du* (Liu 1975, 24.911–912; Du 1988, 120.3056–3060). Another example is that the sacrificial ritual would be performed at capital city gates or the state gates if there was a flood. If the supplication was unanswered, the same rituals would be performed as the one described above, “plus offering wine and dry meat” 並用酒脯醢 (ibid.). In both cases, when the droughts and the floods ceased, ceremonies should be performed to thank and reward the spirits. However, the ceremonies coping with the natural disasters were only performed in the suburbs in an ad hoc manner, hence they were not on a par with the annual ritual in the local areas to sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du*.

The sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God was rather complete in the Tang dynasty as the venue, and the dates were clearly stated. During the periods of Wude and Zhenguan, there was an annual sacrifice to the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, each of which took place on the day called “greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five directions” (*wufang ying qi* 五方迎氣)² that was based on the five-phase cosmology and matched the five quarters of the mountains and waters with the five seasons. In particular, the day of greeting the seasonal *qi* for the South Sea God was on the summer solstice. The spirits of the four seas were respectively sacrificed to at the shrines in Laizhou 萊州 by the East Sea, in Guangzhou by the South Sea, in Tongzhou 同州 (present-day east of Dali 大荔, Shaanxi) by distant sacrifice, and in Luozhou 洛州 (present-day Luoyang, Henan) by distant sacrifice. During the ceremonies, the imperial sacrifices (*taizai* 太宰), i.e., bulls, goats and pigs, were offered to the spirits, and the Supervisor (*dudu* 都督) and the Prefect (*cishi* 刺史) at the local government served as the chief supplicants (Du 1988, 46.1282). Although the gods of the West Sea and the North Sea were sacrificed to at the second grade elsewhere, the ritual scheme of mountain- and water-directed state sacrifices was already formed at the central government and fully implemented in the local areas. In summary, the state ritual system in the Tang dynasty was better designed than the ones in previous dynasties, because it perfectly denoted the four seas in both a political-cultural and geographical sense. When the ritual was performed to sacrifice to the South Sea God on the summer solstice, top-ranking government officials were appointed to officiate the ceremony. It demonstrates that the Tang government attached more importance to the sea gods than the Sui government, as the latter only appointed a priest to officiate the ceremony.

It is worthy of remark that during the period of Wude, prayer-board (*zhuban* 祝版) was used when sacrifices were offered to the spirits above the ritual rank of sacred mountain- and water-directed ones, and Mount Hua 華嶽 was sacrificed to by the emperor in person. After Empress Wu Zetian changed the name of her reign in 695, the sovereign was not supposed to sacrifice in person to the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, four seas, and four waterways according to the old state ritual. In other words, the sovereign could only offer sacrifices in name rather than in person. After several decades, the imperial court approved of a petition from the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*taichangsi* 太常寺) in the first year of Kaiyuan (713) to change the old state ritual in which the Heir Apparent (*taizi* 太子) offered sacrifices to sacred mountain- and water-directed spirits by his name and by using prayer-boards. In accordance to the new ritual, “it was the emperor that sent a commissioner to offer sacrifices to sacred mountain and water spirits” 皇帝謹遣某乙，敬祭於某嶽瀆之神 and wrote down his name in person for the supplication (Du 1988, 46.1283). In the first year of Shangyuan (760), the use of prayer-boards was forbidden when sacrifices were offered to the spirits below the rank of medium sacrifice such as *yue-zhen-hai-du* (ibid.). It was not until the fourth year of Zhenyuan (788), when the old ritual was resumed, that the use of prayer-boards offered by the emperors in person was re-introduced (Wang 1960, 33.369).

Medium sacrifice in the Tang dynasty was prepared by following the procedure of divination, abstinence, furnishing, cleaning, and displaying sacrificial vessels, paying homage, and burying (Ouyang and Song 1975, 11.311–319). To begin with, an auspicious date was carefully chosen as divined, preceded by three days of partial abstinence (*sanzhai* 散齋) in the residence and two days of complete abstinence (*zhizhai* 致齋) in the temple. In the course of partial abstinence, routine administrative affairs, except signing documents of judging crimes and executing punishment, were allowed to be attended to, but mourning for the dead, making inquiries about the sick, listening to music, eating meat, having sex, and anything related to the ritually polluting were abstained from. In the course of complete abstinence, nothing but performing sacrificial rituals was attended to. When the temple was furnished for the ceremony, things should be set or done in a certain direction and in a prescribed order. For instance, an altar should be set when sacrificing to the sacred mountains and strongholds, whereas a pit should be dug when sacrificing to the seas and waterways. On the altar, a monumental tablet should be put at the north while facing the south, whereas in the pit water should be filled and a roughly 3.3-m monumental tablet

should be set with steps in four directions. Subsequently, temples enshrining *yue-zhen-hai-du* were built with the statues of the spirits erected before the 9th year of the Zhenyuan (793) period. The old sacrificial rituals were all kept, such as setting up the altars and paying homage to the statues (Wang 2000, 8.786–788).

Vessels of sacrificing to the South Sea God differed over different periods in the Tang dynasty. For example, four bamboo-made vessels (*bian* 篋) and four wooden vessels (*dou* 豆) were required in Wude and Zhenguan periods, while the number of both vessels was up to ten respectively at the ceremonies of medium sacrifice in the Xianqing period (Liu 1975, 24.911–912). Then in the Kaiyuan period (713–741), the sacrificial vessels for the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, four seas, and four waterways were specified as follows. Six bottles (*zun* 樽), ten bamboo-made vessels, ten wooden vessels, two round bowls (*gui* 鬲), two square bowls (*fu* 甗), two big plates (*zu* 俎) were needed, together with bulls, goats, and pigs which were slaughtered and cooked. The wine was offered in the bottles, grain in the round bowls, and rice in the square bowls. On the bamboo-made vessels were salt, dried fish, dates, corns, hazelnuts, water chestnuts, starches, dried deer meat, white pastry, and black pastry; and on the wooden vessels were leeks, meat paste, *jin* pickles, deer meat paste, fish paste, *pi cai* pickles, and pork. On the day before the ceremony, the temple should be cleaned and furnished with the altar, monumental tablet, prayer-board and so on and so forth, and the spots for the chief, the second and the last supplicants and the hymn singer should be marked out. The process of performing the sacrificial ritual was rather lengthy. The chief supplicant began with washing and presenting a jade, followed by the priest who held the prayer-board and delivered the oration. The supplicant prayed and took a glass of wine from the priest who finished presenting the prayer-board on the altar, and the supplicant prayed again, bowing and kneeling, offered the wine, and then drank it himself. The priest showed up again with his subordinates to present the meat offerings and then passed them to the supplicant to pray for blessings. The second and the last supplicants followed the same procedure one after the other. The ceremony ended with all the vessels buried and the prayer-board burnt (Du 1988, 112.2897–2903; Xiao 2000, 36.201–202). From this specimen, it is apparent that the entire ceremony was grand and solemn.

In a nutshell, the sacrificial ritual system in the Sui and Tang dynasties demonstrates the imperial perception of “all under heaven” (*tianxia* 天下), as well as the imagination and definition of the territory. As Shinichiro puts it, “The ritual of sacrificing to the heaven at the round mound and to the earth at the square altar is part of the ritual of sacrificing to the heaven and the earth and even to the entire universe. The Son of Heaven, or the Emperors, employed the sacrificial ritual to prove the sanctioned legitimacy of the country” (Shinichiro 2008, p. 138). According to such a system of sacrificing to the spirits, the four seas were located at each end of the state under the heaven, instead of at a specified marine location. The four seas in the late Western Han dynasty, which was sacrificed to at the southern suburbs together with other spirits, should be interpreted as a conception that placed China in the center of the world; nevertheless, the four seas in the Sui and Tang dynasties, which were sacrificed to at the northern suburbs secondarily to other spirits, should be interpreted as a political-geographical conception. Beginning from the mid Tang, the role of the spirits changed, from a sanctioned political legitimacy for the country to embody different specified blessings for people to pray for. For instance, the titles of the four seas conferred by the emperors varied, as the East Sea God blessed people with proper winds and rain, the South Sea God with prosperous voyages and good harvests of fish and salt, the West Sea God and the North Sea God with abundant rain to stop droughts (Lu 2017, 6.65–67).

Unfortunately, no extant documents in the Sui dynasty record how the state system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was implemented in the local areas. In contrast, the records in the Tang dynasty offered a paradigm for the coming generations to follow when sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du*. Moreover, the sacrifices to the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, four seas, and four waterways were ranked as the medium sacrifice of the imperial court,

so the rituals performed by the local government were entrusted by the imperial court and became the top-ranking sacrificial ceremony in the local areas. As far as the South Sea God was concerned, the emperors sent commissioners to Guangzhou to officiate the ritual ceremonies.

4. The Two Brothers Zhang Jiuling and Zhang Jiuzhang Were Appointed as Ritual Commissioners to the South Sea God during the Reign of Emperor Xuanzong

The Zhangs were the most renowned family in Lingnan as the three brothers Zhang Jiuling 張九齡, Zhang Jiugao 張九皋 and Zhang Jiuzhang 張九章 were all high-ranking officials in the imperial court in the Tang dynasty. Zhang Jiuling was the Secretariat Director (*zhongshu ling* 中令), Zhang Jiugao was the Director of the Palace Administration (*dianzhong jian* 殿中), and Zhang Jiuzhang was the Minister of the Court of Imperial Entertainment (*honglusi qing* 寺卿) (Liu 1975, 99.3098–3099; Ouyang and Song 1975, 126.4428). In addition, the Zhang family also took office in the local government in the Lingnan region. Moreover, Zhang Jiuling and Zhang Jiuzhang were both appointed to Guangzhou as commissioners to perform the sacrifice to the South Sea God.

Zhang Jiuling, who was then the Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*taichang shaoqing* 太常少卿), was sent to sacrifice to the South Mountain and the South Sea in the 14th year of the Kaiyuan period (726) as the country suffered from severe droughts (Wang 1960, 144.1752). As the name shows, the Court of Imperial Sacrifices was in charge of the sacrificial rituals to all the deities in the country, and the Vice Minister served as the aide with the fourth upper official rank, or rank 4a. He had been demoted to this rank due to his relationship with Minister Zhang Yue 張 who had been deposed (Liu 1975, 99.3098). He made his way in the sixth month of the year to complete the imperial mission, and then he visited his hometown. We can follow his footsteps in all the poems he wrote along the way, which were published in the third and the fourth *juan* of *Qujiangji* 曲江集 (Qujiang Anthology). The titles of his poems are as follows: “Ascending the Mount Yu in Lantian County from where I went South as a Commissioner” 奉使自藍田玉山南行 (Zhang 1986, pp. 183–84), “On My Way to the South Sea as a Commissioner on a Summer Day” 夏日奉使南海在道中作 (ibid., 185–86), “Heading to the South from the Xiang River” 自湘水南行 (ibid., 13), “Visiting Sima the Taoist Priest after Ascending the South Mountain” 登南嶽事畢謁司馬道士 (ibid., 195–96), and “Arrival at Guangzhou as a Commissioner” 使至廣州 (ibid., 270). Judging from the titles, we can conclude that he set out to the Southeast from Chang’an by way of Lantian, Xiangzhou 襄州 (present-day Xiangyang 襄陽, Hubei) and Jingzhou 荊州. After he reached Yuezhou (present-day Yueyang 岳陽, Hunan) along the Yangtze River 長江, he continued following the Xiang River 湘江 to Hengzhou 衡州 (present-day Hengyang 衡陽, Hunan). Then he arrived at Mount Heng 衡山 to offer sacrifices and headed south via the Qitian Mountain 騎田嶺 and the Gorge Zhenyang 溇陽峽 to his destination, Guangzhou. He described in one of the poems that “I travel over ten thousand *li* on the hottest days in midsummer” 緬然萬里路, 赫曦三伏時 (ibid., 185). When sacrificing to the South Sea God in Guangzhou, he openly admitted that “I finish my job with reverence and now I can attend to my personal matters” 肅事誠在公, 拜慶遂及私 (ibid., 185). As a matter of fact, he went back to his hometown to visit his family after the business, and then he returned to the North via the Dayu Mountain 大庾嶺 and the Gan River 贛江.

Unlike the eldest brother Zhang Jiuling who was sent to pray for ending the droughts, another Zhang brother was sent to sacrifice to the South Sea in the 10th year of Tianbao (751) for a different reason: to confer titles to the four seas on behalf of the emperor to acknowledge the divine standing of the spirits. The status of the sea spirits was raised together with the ones of the five sacred mountains and four waterways during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. In the 5th year of Tianbao (746), for instance, the emperor bestowed titles on all the five sacred mountains. He continued to confer the title of Duke (*gong* 公) to all the four sacred waterways in the next year (747) and the title of King (*wang* 王) to the four seas in the first month of 751. Interestingly, different names were conferred with the titles upon the four seas for special connotations: the East Sea God, Guangdewang 廣王

(King Guangde), meaning to teach good morals broadly; the South Sea God, Guangliwang, meaning to generate wealth massively; the West Sea God, Guangrunwang 廣潤王 (King Guangrun), and the North Sea God, Guangzewang 廣澤王 (King Guangze), both meaning to grant proper rain and waters. It is apparent that all these four names were related to the cultural and geographical situations in the local areas. For instance, the name “Guangli” was chosen because of the fact that Guangzhou could import a large number of foreign treasures by trade (Wang 2006, p. 67). Moreover, the titles of the spirits of the four seas were equal to the ones of the five sacred mountains, and were higher-ranking than the ones of the waterways.

There are conflicting records in the historical archives concerning who was sent to sacrifice to the South Sea God by the emperor in 751. I argue it is Zhang Jiuzhang who was the imperial commissioner based on the following records. In “Si Yuezhenghaidu” 祭嶽鎮海瀆 (Sacrificing to Yue-zhen-hai-du) in the *Datang Jiaosi Lu*, a correction is made to identify Zhang Jiuzhang, rather than Zhang Jiugao, as the commissioner (Wang 2000, 8.786–788). In other records, including “Liyizhi” in the *Jiu Tangshu* (Liu 1975, 24.934); “Chong Jisi” 崇祭祀 (Sacrificial Rituals), “Diwang Bu” 帝王部 (Section of the Emperors) in the *Cefu Yuangui* (Wang 1960, 33.365); “Fuzhai Beilu” 復齋碑 (Stele Inscriptions of Fuzhai) in the *Baoke Congbian* 寶刻叢編 (Anthology of the Inscriptions in the Song Dynasty) (Chen 2012, 19.1113); and “Ceji Guangliwang Ji” 冊祭廣利王記 (Records of Sacrificing to King Guangli) in the *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (Complete Prose Works of the Tang Dynasty) (Dong 1983, 987.1023), we find the same statement that Zhang Jiuzhang was sent to officiate the ceremony. In addition to these records, I have another three points of justification for my argument.

Firstly, the official rank of the commissioner. The three brothers finished mourning for their dead mother in the sixth month in 736, and then Zhang Jiuling recorded that “one of my younger brothers Jiugao was appointed to be the Palace Administrator (*dianzhongcheng* 殿中丞) while the other one Jiuzhang was Court Gentleman for Consultation of the Heir Apparent (*taizi siyilang* 太子司議郎)” (Zhang 1986, p. 578). As far as the official rank was concerned, Zhang Jiugao enjoyed a higher place than his younger brother Zhang Jiuzhang because he held the 5b1 rank while his younger brother held the 6a1 rank. We can also find all the ranks he held at different positions throughout his life in his epitaph, including the 5b1 rank as Director of the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu zhifang langzhong* 尚書職方郎中), the 4a2 rank as Governor (*junshou* 郡守) of Ankang 安康, an the 3b rank as Governor of Huai’an 淮安, Pengcheng 彭城, and Suiyang 睢陽 respectively (Li 1966, 899.4731–4733). However, none of them matches the 4b1 rank of Aide of the Princely Establishment (*wangfu zhangshi* 王府長史) of the commissioner who was sent to Guangzhou.

Secondly, the poem titled “Farewell to Zhang Sima of the Hanlin Imperial Academy on the Way to the South Sea” 送翰林張司馬南海勒碑 (Huang and Huang 1987, 19.735). Liang Quandao 梁權道, the Song scholar who edited the poems of Du Fu 杜甫, stated that the poem was written in the first year of Qianyuan (758) period, but Huang Xi 希 and Huang He 鶴, two scholars who added footnotes to the poems, found that there was no such a position called Commander (*sima* 司馬) in the Hanlin Imperial Academy when they checked “Baiguan Zhi” 百官志 (Record of Hundreds of Government Officials) in the *Xin Tangshu*, though there was a Commander in the suite of the commissioner who was sent by the emperor to sacrifice to the South Sea. They, therefore, believed that Zhang worked in the Academy without the title of Commander (ibid.). Judging from the life experience of Du Fu (712–770), I agree with Huang and Huang that the poem was not written in 758, but in 751 when Du Fu was at the Academy in the capital city. The poet probably got confused with the commissioner’s official rank as the Aide of the Princely Establishment and the Commander, both of which belonged to the fourth rank, but the former was still higher than the latter. It is also possible that Zhang Jiuzhang was just new to his position as the Aide of the Princely Establishment, which was not known to the poet yet, as we can find evidence in the epitaph, currently kept by the library of Luoyang Normal University, of his eldest son. The son was called Zhang Zhao 張招, and he passed away in 749 when

his father was still Aide of the Princely Establishment (Guo and Yang 2015, pp. 32–33). Therefore, Du Fu’s poem was dedicated to Zhang Jiuzhang.

Thirdly, the position of the commissioner at the local government. In “Ceji Guangliwang Ji”, we read “commissioner Zhang is the magistrate of Nanhai previously” 初, 張公作宰南海 (Dong 1983, 987.1023). As a matter of fact, Zhang Jiuzhang served as the magistrate of Nanhai County for a period of time, but Zhang Jiugao never did, though the latter served as the Prefect of Guangzhou and the Military Commissioner of Lingnan (*Lingnan jiedushi* 嶺南節度使) from 751 to 753 (Yu 2000, p. 3163). The two brothers both took part in the sacrificial ceremonies, but they represented different positions: one was an imperial commissioner and the other was a local government official, and the former one was undoubtedly Zhang Jiuzhang. The confusion is partly caused by the local chronicles in Guangdong as well as by *Boluo Waiji* 波羅外紀 (Stories of Boluo Temple) written by Cui Bi 崔弼 in the Qing dynasty. In fact, the stele inscriptions in the temple were all lost in 751, and, thus, Cui Bi mistakenly recorded Zhang Jiugao as the commissioner (Cui 2017, 6.92).

5. Differences of the Sacrificial Rituals to the South Sea God in the Early and the Late Tang Dynasty

Since the Nanhaishen Temple was far from the capital city in the Tang dynasty, the local government officials were, therefore, usually in charge of sacrificing to the deity. It is worth mentioning that in the early Tang, or before the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763), an imperial commissioner was usually sent to Guangzhou to officiate the ceremonies, demonstrating the implementation of state ritual system in the local areas. In the late Tang, however, local government officials usually sent their deputies to officiate the ceremonies due to the declining national power and social instability, and other problems in the Lingnan region.

Although it became a new norm for the local government officials to replace the imperial commissioners to officiate the sacrificial ceremonies to the South Sea God, the emperor also sent his commissioners to Guangzhou from time to time due to natural disasters and cultural reasons. Apart from the two Zhang brothers, a couple of other imperial commissioners were also sent to sacrifice to the South Sea God in the Tang dynasty (Wang 2006, pp. 462–68).

Emperor Xuanzong longed to be immortal, and therefore bestowed titles to the five sacred mountains in the Kaiyuan period and to the four sacred waterways and four sacred seas in the Tianbao period. As mentioned above, “the four seas were given the titles of King by the emperor” 四海並封為王 in the first month of 751, and Zhang Jiuzhang was dispatched to Guangzhou to confer the South Sea with the title “Guangliwang” on behalf of the emperor (Wang 1960, 33.365).

Emperor Xuanzong issued as many as 23 decrees to perform the rituals of a mountain- and water-directed state sacrifices in Kaiyuan and Tianbao periods. As far as the South Sea God was concerned, the Prefect of Guangzhou officiated the annual sacrificial ceremony on the summer solstice.

In addition to the annual ceremonies, the South Sea God was sacrificed to on an ad hoc basis at four occasions, as the *Cefu Yuangui* indicates as follows.

Firstly, at the occasion of praying to *yue-zhen-hai-du* for proper rain, particularly during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. For instance, in the first month of 730, the fourth month of 731, the fourth month and eleventh month of 732, the first month of 735, the first month of 747, the sixth month of 749, the first month of 751, and the second month of 753, sacrificial rituals were performed. Among these eight rituals, two were to confer titles to the four waterways in 747 and to the four seas in 751 respectively, while the rest were related to the emperor himself who was so “concerned with the myth of immortality” 尚長生輕舉之術 that he attached great importance to sacrificing to the spirits (Liu 1975, 24.934). His successors also ordered the rituals to be conducted, namely in the second month of 764, the sixth month of 770, the fourth month of 786, the first month of 807 and the sixth month of 827. At these five occasions, as well as the eight mentioned above, local government officials were usually the main supplicants to the water and mountain spirits which could

bringing proper winds and rain, while imperial commissioners were sent to officiate from time to time (i.e., in the years of 726, 731, 751, 770 and 786) (Wang 1960, 34.367–369).

Secondly, at the occasion of praying for ending the droughts and rewarding the deity for good harvests. Fifteen ceremonies were performed to pray for ending the droughts, which were prone to occur in spring and summer, including in the sixth month of 630, the second month of 669, the first month of 706, the fifth month of 715, the fifth month of 721, the sixth month of 726, the sixth month of 728, the tenth month of 737, the ninth month of 749, the second month of 751, the eighth month of 755, the third month of 759, the sixth month of 767, the third month of 790, and the seventh month of 803. As a result, *yue-zhen-hai-du* and other water and mountain spirits were sacrificed to for proper rain (ibid., 144.1764–1757). The local government officials were the main supplicants for these ceremonies, except the ones in 726 and 790 when imperial commissioners were sent to the local shrines. When the supplications were answered with good harvests or proper rain, the spirits were rewarded with gratitude at the ceremonies, such as the ones in the sixth month of 728, the sixth month of 734, the tenth month of 737, the twelfth month of 741, the fourth month of 744, the ninth month of 749, and the eighth month of 755 (ibid., 33.359–366).

Thirdly, at the occasion of the emperors taking the throne and changing their holy titles and the names of their reigns. Examples can be found in the fifth month of 748 and the seventh month of 821 when collective petitions were made by the imperial officials to suggest the emperors rename their holy titles, and *yue-zhen-hai-du* spirits were sacrificed to after the emperors approved of the petitions (ibid., 33.364, 34.364–369). Moreover, when the emperors changed the names of their reigns, such as in the first month of 724, the fourth month of 760, the first month of 765, the eleventh month of 766, and the fourth month of 785, *yue-zhen-hai-du* and other water and mountain spirits were sacrificed to (ibid., 33.361, 34.367–368). It is worth pointing out that Emperor Wenzong decreed to reward the five sacred mountains and four waterways and others by offering them sacrifices in the second month of 834 because he recovered from a disease. He celebrated his recovery by proclaiming a general amnesty and ordering the top officials at the local governments to offer thanksgiving sacrifices to the water and mountain spirits that had blessed him with good health (ibid., 34.369).

Fourth, at the occasion of conferring titles to the Heir Apparent. Examples can be found in the fourth month of 805 for Li Chun 李純 (who later became Emperor Xianzong) to be canonized, in the tenth month of 809 for Li Ning 李寧 (who died young), in the tenth month of 812 for Li Heng 李恆 (who later became Emperor Muzong), and so on. Prefects at local areas were assigned to officiate these ceremonies to inform and sacrifice to the water and mountain spirits (ibid.).

To summarize, state rituals of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du*, including the South Sea God, were conducted as the emperors made every attempt to maintain their supreme rules, particularly, when there were droughts, emperors changing the names of their reigns and their holy titles, and designating their successors. *Yue-zhen-hai-du* embodied the jurisdictional right of the country in the geographical and political-cultural sense. It is, nevertheless, necessary for us to demonstrate how the local government officials implemented the state sacrificial rituals.

It was a risky trip for the government officials to attend the annual ceremony at the Nanhaishen Temple on the summer solstice. They had to travel 80 *li* (i.e., 36 km) on a bobbing boat to the east of the city, which was then frequented by monsoons and typhoons, thus, their boats could be easily blown over, and they risked their lives as they were heading against the violent storms and the roaring waves. In the early Tang when the country was at its prime, the top official in Guangzhou was dispatched to be the chief supplicant to the South Sea God. In the late Tang when the country was waning and torn by warlords, however, the state ritual of sacrifice was often barely performed. The local officials in the late Tang were so scared of the risky boat trip that they declined to go either by lying that they were sick (Han 1986, 31.485–489), or they simply sent their deputies or assistants to

the ceremonies on their behalf (Liu 1975, 154.4098). But there was an exception. Kong Kui 孔戣, who took office as the Prefect of Guangzhou and Military Commissioner of Lingnan in the seventh month of 817, was determined to make his way to the temple on the day before the annual ceremony in 818 regardless of the stormy weather and the obstruction of his subordinates. Fortunately, he arrived safe and sound and spent the night there. When he woke up, the weather turned out to be fine, and, thus, the ceremony was held as grand as it should be. He and his colleagues all put on their best official robes to stand in lines, the sacrificial vessels were all clean and tidy, the offerings were all set in a good order, and the ritual music was echoed at the bustling temple. Interestingly, the rest of the year witnessed no more storms but an excellent harvest. Kong Kui continued officiating the ceremony in person the next year and ordered the temple to be enlarged and renovated. Again, for the third year in a row, he went with his colleagues to sacrifice to the South Sea God, which subsequently did bless the region with a good harvest. All his endeavors were fully described by Han Yu 韓愈, a famous contemporary writer, in his essay titled “Stele Inscription of the Temple of the South Sea God (Guangliwang)” 南海神(廣利王)廟碑 (Han 1986, 31.485–489).

The successors of Kong Kui did not sacrifice to the South Sea God as regularly as he did. Yet we can still find examples of the top officials in Guangzhou to officiate the ceremonies, such as Li Pin 李毗, who was in office from 847 to 848 (Wu 1980, p. 1036). It was recorded in the poem titled “Poem on Clan Uncle Lianggong’s Spring Sacrifice to the Temple of King Guangli” 涼公從叔春祭廣利王廟詩 written by Li Qunyu 李群玉 (Li 1987, p. 49). It is worth pointing out that this local ritual of sacrifice in spring shared the same goal as the imperial one on the summer solstice: to pray for a good harvest and peace of the dominion. Another example can be found in the fourth month of 864 when a rebellion broke out in the Lingnan region. Gao Pian 高駢 was hence appointed to offer amnesty and enlistment to rebels. Before setting off, he visited the shrine to pray for a safe voyage as he wrote in his work titled “The Temple of the South Sea God” 南海神祠 (Gao 1980, 598.6918). Apparently, the deity played an important role in maritime transportation in this case. To summarize, the South Sea God had increasing visibility in Lingnan, and the sacrificing to it in the late Tang was mainly related to its blessings for no disastrous storms, no poor harvests, and no social instability.

6. Reciprocity between the South Sea God Belief and Buddhism with the Establishment of Linghua Monastery to Calm Down the Stormy Sea

The bay by which the Nanhaishen Temple is built is rather turbulent. Located at the crossing of the sea and the Pearl River estuary, the funnel-shaped waterway is so narrow and long that boats are prone to be blown over by the strong winds and waves. As a result, people in ancient times blamed the hot-tempered deity that drowned many people passing by (Jiang 2007, 20.144). As it was the biggest religious event in Lingnan to sacrifice to the South Sea God in the Tang dynasty, some Buddhists appeared to take advantage of the so-called hot temper of the sea god to build a temple nearby by telling the legend that the god was converted to Buddhism.

In the first month of the second year of Yuanyou (1087) in the Northern Song dynasty, the Prefect of Guangzhou, Jiang Zhiqi 蔣之奇, paid homage to the Nanhaishen Temple. After that, he visited Linghua Monastery 靈化寺 and learned about the legendary relationship between Buddhist Master Xiujiu 休咎禪師 and the South Sea God by obtaining the ancient stele of Master Daoheng 道行大師 of the temple. Legend has it that, from the 6th year (790) to the 8th year of Zhenyuan (792),³ Li Fu 李復, the Prefect of Guangzhou and Military Commissioner of Lingnan, once sent a soldier called Li Yu 李玉 from Luofu Mountain 羅浮山 to Fuxu Town 扶胥鎮 on the southeast to welcome Buddhist Master Xiujiu. As they spent the night in the western chamber of the temple (which was then also known as Zhenhai General’s Temple 鎮海將軍廟), two young boys in a green dress came at midnight and asked the Buddhist master, “Why do you come here? Don’t you know the mighty power of the South Sea God?” A couple of hours later, there came a thunderstorm and the

South Sea God who was dressed in a purple and gold robe appeared. The master then confronted the deity and asked him to turn the temple into a Buddhist one, but his request was declined. Nevertheless, the deity offered the master another slot to build the Buddhist temple, which was subsequently turned into Linghua Monastery. The master learned that a large number of people had been drowned in front of the temple, and he, thus, wanted to save people's life by converting the hot-tempered deity into a gentle Buddhist. After he was converted, the South Sea God followed the Dharma to calm down the winds and waves on the sea, which encouraged people to believe in Buddhism as the mighty deity did (*ibid.*, 144–45).

The legend that Master Xiujiu converted the South Sea God into a Buddhist was recorded in the Song dynasty. For example, in the *Yudi Jisheng* 輿地紀勝 (Geographical Record) written by Wang Xiangzhi 王象之, we can find the same legend (Wang 1992, 97.3051–3052). Moreover, a famous general called Li Gang 李綱 wrote a poem titled “Visit to the Temple of the South Sea God” 謁南海神廟 as he passed by the Nanhaishen Temple in Guangzhou in the third year of Jianyan (1129) and recorded the same legend as well (Li 2004, 26.344). And the legend continued to be recorded in other documents such as “Linghuasi” 靈化寺 (Poem on Linghua Monastery) written by Fang Xinru 方信孺 to give credit to the master who converted the deity to stop the storms on the sea (Fang 2010, p. 38).

The above legend shows that Buddhists used the dialogue between the master and the deity to convert the latter as the former's disciple, which was a way to promote Buddhism. As a matter of fact, it is the Buddhists that took advantage of the South Sea God to promote the Dharma. On the one hand, the South Sea God was equal to the five sacred mountains spirits, and, thus, it enjoyed a great reputation in Lingnan. Buddhists took advantage of this reputation to empower their own religion. Since the master wanted to occupy the temple, it was in his interest to accept the deity as a Buddhist disciple whose temple would therefore become a Buddhist monastery. With the help of this legend, it was the second-best solution to build a Buddhist monastery near the deity. On the other hand, it shows that the South Sea God worshiped by the state was able to benefit from Buddhism, in having his “hot-tempered” reputation transformed by means of this new legend. After converting to Buddhism, the deity became so kind and docile that he stopped the turbulence on the sea. Moreover, there was no conflict but reciprocity between the deity and the master as they both had their own temples, particularly the latter who could use the legend to establish the Linghua Monastery in a legitimate way. As it is, the name of Linghua means “Numinous Transformation” of Buddhism and, thus, the temple became on a par with the Nanhaishen Temple.

It is worth mentioning that in the twenty-ninth year of Kaiyuan (741) Buddhist master Bukong 不空 visited Guangzhou for the second time when he was on his way to the Lion nation (present-day Sri Lanka). The Investigation Commissioner of Lingnan (*lingnan caifangshi* 嶺南採訪使) Liu Julin 劉巨麟 asked the master for Abhiṣeka, an enlightenment ceremony, to a large number of people at Faxing Monastery 法性寺 (present-day Guangxiao Monastery 光孝寺), which thus became a big event in the local area (Zan 1987, 1.7–8). Years later in Zhenyuan period, Li Fu invited Master Xiujiu to Guangzhou again. The two officials had the same reason for their invitation to the Buddhist masters: to set a local religious order and to maintain social stability.

7. Systematization of Ritual Sacrifice to Yue-Zhen-Hai-Du

In the early Tang, no state rituals were prescribed and, thus, the ritual was discussed ad hoc according to the *Zhenguanli* (which was composed of 138 articles in total, including 60 articles in the *Jili*, 4 in *Binli*, 20 in *Junli*, 42 in *Jiali*, and 11 in *Xiongli*) and to the *Xianqingli* (which was composed of 130 *juan*). All the practices of holding ritual ceremonies and sending ritual commissioners laid a theoretical foundation and offered case studies to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*. In the period of Kaiyuan, the ruler approved of the petition made by Zhang Yue to stipulate the state rituals by learning from the previous rituals in the periods of Zhenguan and Xianqing. He suggested that the state rituals should compromise all the

similarities and differences to re-edit *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Rituals). The 20th year of Kaiyuan (732) period witnessed the issuing of the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, which was initiated by Xu Jian 徐堅 and completed by Xiao Song and others. The 150-juan classic thus became the paradigm of the ritual system which included all the five rituals. People in later generations followed it with slight modification, as it was so well-established that no other works could surpass it (Ouyang and Song 1975, 11.309). The Tang scholar Du You 杜佑 took an excerpt from the classic into a new work titled *Tongdian* 通典 (General Institutions), and a similar approach was adopted in the compilation of the *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu* with footnotes and annotations. In the 9th year of Zhenyuan (793), Wang Jing 王溥 compiled the *Datang Jiaosi Lu*, also known as the *Tang Zhenyuan Jiaosi Lu* 唐貞元郊祀 (Suburban Sacrifices in Zhenyuan of Tang), which recorded the state ritual system of sacrificing to the spirits at the suburbs in the Tang dynasty based on the *Datang Kaiyuanli* which was conclusive, comprehensive, and systematic (Zhao 1994, pp. 87–91). With all the new texts in place, therefore, the five rituals in the early Tang became more prescriptive which subsequently led to the framework of state rituals in the late Tang. Such state rituals in the Tang dynasty, purposefully distinct from the ones in previous dynasties, embodied the power and prosperity of the country, the pursuit, and innovation of the emerging bureaucrats and scholars, the adaptation to the needs of the times, the authority of the emperors, and the function of guiding the politics at court and the social life of people. In short, as a superstructure ritual, it was synchronized with the development of the society and the economy, and its formation was highly purposeful and pragmatic (Wu 2005, pp. 73–94).

Subsequently, classics such as the *Kaiyuan Houli* 開元後禮 (Rituals after Kaiyuan) and *Qutai Xinli* 曲臺新禮 (New Rituals of Qutai) in the late Tang, *Taichang Yingeli* 太常因革禮 (Rituals in the Northern Song Dynasty) (Ouyang and Su 2002) and *Zhenghe Wuli Xinyi* 政和五禮新儀 (Five New Rituals of Zhenghe) (Zheng 1987) in the Northern Song dynasty, *Dajin Jili* 大金集禮 (Collection of Rituals in Jin) (Zhang 1985) in the Jin dynasty, and *Qinding Daqing Tongli* (1987) 欽定大清通禮 (Imperial Approved Rituals in the Great Qing), all inherited the rituals prescribed in the *Datang Kaiyuanli* whose scale and influence was still insurmountable. It is not only the paradigm of the ancient rituals in China but also a role model in East Asia with a significant impact on the local ritual system and legal regulations. According to Ikeda, the state ritual systems in Balhae, Silla, Japan, and Goryo all learned from the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, particularly Japan that copied the entire ritual system of the Tang dynasty. Moreover, the Tang classic offered abundant cases of decrees and laws, which are rare and precious historical materials in the legal history of the dynasty. Among them, the disputes about the classics and rituals are important materials for the study of the history of thoughts and classics in the Middle Ages. As Ikeda summarizes, the *Datang Kaiyuanli* provides a large number of data and a new perspective for scholars in the fields of history, anthropology, and culture (Ikeda 1992, pp. 165–93).

The same was true of the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du*. The dual scheme of suburban sacrifice and local sacrifice was implemented beginning from the Kaiyuan period. Though the places of the sacrifices to the East Sea, the North Sea, and the West Sea changed constantly, the one-off sacrifice to the South Sea never changed throughout the various dynasties. It was the only permanent venue among the ones of sacrificing to the four seas because it had always been within the territory ruled by the different emperors (except by the emperors of the Jin dynasty and of the Five Dynasties who failed to rule beyond the south to Qinling 秦嶺 and Huai River 淮河), which resulted in a lot of stele inscriptions and relics well preserved to the present. The rituals of suburban and local sacrifices to *yue-zhen-hai-du* were also preserved as they were the role models for people to look up to when worshiping the South Sea God, such as the tradition of sending a commissioner and assigning a top local official to officiate the ceremonies. The deity was worshiped commonly both by the imperial court and by the local people in general as it became increasingly popular in Lingnan (Wang 2006, pp. 98–444).

8. Conclusions

In this article, I have studied the state ritual system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* in general and sending commissioners to officiate the ceremonies worshiping the South Sea God in particular. My aim has been to reveal how such a well-established scheme was integrated with the implementation of the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, and how such a state ritual policy was carried out in the local areas with the Nanhaishen Temple as a case study. I conclude that the sacrificial ceremonies for the deity go beyond a mere form of official sacrifice and demonstrate the national geography in the “all under the heaven” sense, as well as the state political and cultural power in Lingnan. The state kept the religious right to sacrifice to the South Sea God, no matter whether it was the imperial commissioners or the local government officials that were sent, as they both officiated the ceremonies on behalf of the state.

Firstly, the state suburban sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was implemented in the local areas in the Sui dynasty and completed as a whole in the Tang dynasty. As far as the South Sea God was concerned, there was a change from a suburban sacrifice in the early Tang to a dual scheme of suburban and local sacrifices in the late Tang, which belonged to the medium sacrifice. On every summer solstice, the annual ceremony to worship the South Sea God was performed with the procedure of assigning prayer-board, abstinence, displaying sacrificial vessels, checking the vessels of presenting the three animal sacrifices, identifying the spots of the supplicants, praying to the deity with three rounds, playing the music, and burying all the sacrificial items. Every step at the ceremonies was strictly prescribed, which led to a well-established ritual scheme of sacrifice.

Secondly, the Zhang brothers who were famous in the Lingnan region were sent by Emperor Xuanzong to sacrifice to the South Sea God. In the sixth month of 726, Zhang Jiuling was sent to sacrifice to the South Mountain and the South Sea due to severe droughts in the country. After he finished this imperial mission, he visited his hometown in Guangdong. Unlike his eldest brother, Zhang Jiuzhang was sent in 751 to worship the four seas, including the South Sea, in order to confer titles to the spirits of the four seas and show the emperor’s reverence. There are confusing statements in historical records concerning whether it is Zhang Jiugao or Zhang Jiuzhang who was sent as the commissioner in 751, and I argue that the commissioner should be Zhang Jiuzhang as evidenced in the official titles, the epitaphs, and other records.

Thirdly, the officials who worshiped the South Sea God as the chief supplicant in the Tang dynasty were mainly the top local officials, i.e., the Prefect of Guangzhou. In the early Tang, the well-established state rituals of sacrifices were carried out effectively. In the late Tang, however, the officials were so scared of the turbulent winds and waves on the sea that they sent their deputies to attend the ceremonies. But there were exceptions, such as Kong Kui, Li Pin, and Gao Pian, who worshiped the deity in person. In the late Tang, the local officials offered sacrifices to the deity mainly for ending disastrous storms, poor harvests, and social instability. As the state ritual system of sacrifice was gradually carried out in Lingnan, the role of the South Sea God became more visible than ever before.

Fourth, there was reciprocity between the South Sea God belief and Buddhism in the Tang dynasty. Legend has it that Master Xiujiu converted the deity to turn the temple into a Buddhist monastery as the deity partially agreed by allotting another slot in the neighborhood to build the Linghua Monastery. In return, the deity, who was a Buddhist disciple then, had a better reputation for calming down the turbulent sea and thus stopping drowning people on their voyages. We can learn from the legend that Buddhism and the state ritual system of worshiping the deity had a reciprocal agreement as they could both bless people with safe voyages and social stability.

Lastly, it became usual in the Tang dynasty to conduct both suburban sacrifices to *yue-zhen-hai-du* as secondary to the main deities and local sacrifices to *yue-zhen-hai-du* as the main deities themselves. Moreover, the *Datang Kaiyuanli* improved the state ritual system, particularly the *jili*, and laid a solid foundation for the late Tang and the following dynasties of Song, Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing. As a matter of fact, the classic not only

became a paradigm for the future generations to sacrifice to the South Sea God but also exerted influence on the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* for more than one thousand years. Moreover, the changes of the sacrificial rituals to the South Sea God throughout dynasties reflect how the state ritual system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was implemented at the local level. In the end, as it was fully popularized and localized in Lingnan, the South Sea God was jointly worshiped by the government and by the general public.

Funding: National Social Science Fund of China: 15AZS009.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The term *yue-zhen-hai-du* 嶽鎮海瀆 refers to the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五嶽), five strongholds (*wuzhen* 五鎮), four seas (*sikai* 四海), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆) in a group, instead of the five sacred peaks and four waterways only. This term is used in the records of the ritual system in the Tang and other dynasties, such as the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New Tang History), *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History), *Datang Jiaosi Lu* 大唐郊祀 (Records on the Suburban Sacrificial Rituals in Tang), *Cefu Yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Song Dynasty Historical Encyclopedia) and so on. The term, therefore, is used by the author in this paper as well unless otherwise stated.
- ² For a detailed discussion of this ritual, see Niu (2017), pp. 105–12.
- ³ Jiang Zhiqi made a mistake in recording Li Fu as the Prefect of Guangzhou and Military Commissioner of Lingnan in the tenth year of Tianbao (753) in his works “Linghuasi Ji” 靈化寺記 (A Record of Linghua Monastery). Li Fu took his position of Military Commissioner of Lingnan in 790–792. See Yu (Yu 2000, p. 3168). Moreover, by comparing the life experiences of Li Fu (739–797) and Master Xiujiu (746–807), we can conclude that the former should entertain the latter during the Zhenyuan period instead of the Tianbao period.

References

- Ban, Gu 班固 (32–92). 1962. *Hanshu* 漢書 [Han History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Chen, Si 陳思 (1225–1264). 2012. *Baoke congbian* 寶刻叢編 [Anthology of the Inscriptions in the Song Dynasty]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Book Publishing House.
- Chen, Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890–1969). 2011. *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan luelungao* 隋唐制度淵源略論稿 [On the Origin of Sui and Tang Institutions]. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Cui, Bi 崔弼 (1747–1835). 2017. *Boluo waiji* 波羅外紀 [Stories of Boluo Temple]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People’s Publishing House.
- Du, You 杜佑 (735–812). 1988. *Tongdian* 通典 [General Institutions]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Dong, Gao 董誥 (1740–1818). 1983. *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 [Complete Prose Works of the Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fan, Ye 范曄 (398–445). 2000. *Hou hanshu* 後漢書 [History of the Late-Han Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fang, Xinru 方信孺 (1177–1222). 2010. *Nanhai baiyong* 南海百詠 [A Hundred Chants of Nanhai]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People’s Publishing House.
- Gao, Pian 高駢 (821–877). 1980. *Nanhai shenci* 南海神祠 [Shrine of the South Sea God]. In *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 [The Complete Collection of Poems in the Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Guo, Maoyu 郭茂育, and Qingxing Yang 楊慶堃. 2015. *Tang Zhang Zhao muzhiming bingxu* 唐張招墓誌銘並序 [A Concurrent Preface to the Epitaph of Zhang Zhao in Tang Dynasty]. *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 5: 32–33.
- Han, Yu 韓愈 (768–824). 1986. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注 [Han Yu’s Collected Works with Supplementary Notes]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Huang, Miao Zhang 森章. 2005. *Nanhai Shenmiao* 南海神廟 [The Nanhaishen Temple]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People’s Publishing House.
- Huang, Xi 希 (?–1177), and He Huang 鶴 (?–1216), eds. 1987. *Buzhu Dushi* 補註杜詩 [A Supplementary Note on Du Fu’s Poems], Siku quanshu 四全 ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Huang, Miao Zhang, and Xiaoqing Yan 曉青. 2011. *Nanhai Shenmiao and Boluodan* 南海神廟與波羅誕 [Nanhaishen Temple and Boluodan Festival]. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press.
- Ikeda, Atsushi 池田. 1992. *Tourei to Nihonrei—Tourei shuui ho hohennsann ni yo se te* 唐令と日本令—(唐令拾遺補) 編纂によせて [Tang Laws and Japanese Laws—On the Compilation of the supplement to the Tang order]. In *Chuugoku Reihou to Nihon Riisuryousei* 中國禮法と日本律令制 [Chinese Ritual Regulations and Japanese Laws and Regulations]. Tokyo: Oriental Bookstore, pp. 165–93.
- Jia, Jinhua 賈晉華. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. [CrossRef]

- Jiang, Zhiqi 蔣之奇 (1031–1104). 2007. *Linghuasi ji* 靈化寺記 [A Record of Linghua Monastery]. In *Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng* 廣東代方誌集成 [The Integration of Guangdong Local Chronicles]. Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Publishing House.
- Kong, Anguo 孔安國 (156 BCE–74 BCE), and Yingda Kong 孔穎達 (574–648), eds. 2000. *Shangshu Zhengyi* 尚書正義 [Correct Meanings of the Book of Documents]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Li, Fang 李昉 (925–996). 1966. *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 [Finest Blossoms in the Garden of Literature]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Gang 李綱 (547–631). 2004. *Ligang quanji* 李綱全集 [Complete Works of Li Gang]. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House.
- Li, Qunyu 李群玉 (808–862). 1987. *Lianggong congshu chunji guangliwangmiao shi* 涼公從叔春祭廣利王廟詩 [Poems on Clan Uncle Lianggong's Spring Sacrifice to the Temple of King Guangli]. In *Liqunyu shiji* 李群玉詩集 [Li Qunyu's Poems]. Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House.
- Liu, Xu 劉昫 (888–947). 1975. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Lu, Xiqi 魯西奇. 2017. Han Tang shiqi wangchao guojia de haishen jisi 漢唐時期王朝國家的海神祭祀 [Offerings to Gods of Sea in State Sacrifices during the Han and Tang Periods]. *Journal of Xiamen University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 6: 65–67.
- Niu, Jingfei 牛敬飛. 2017. Lun zhonggu wuyue jisi shijian zhi yanbian 論中古五嶽祭祀時間之演變 [On the Development of the Sacrificial Times to the Five Sacred Peaks in the Medieval Period]. *Studies in World Religion* 5: 105–12.
- Ouyang, Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), and Qi Song 宋祁 (998–1061). 1975. *Xin Tangshu* 新唐 [New Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ouyang, Xiu, and Xun Su 蘇洵, eds. 2002. *Taichang Yingeli* 太常因革禮 [Rituals in the Northern Song Dynasty], Xuxiu Siku quanshu 修四全. ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Qiao, Peihua 喬培華. 2015. *Nanhaishen Xinyang* 南海神信仰 [South Sea God Belief]. Guangzhou: Sun Yat-sen University Press.
- Qinding Daqing Tongli. 1987. *Qinding Daqing Tongli* 欽定大清通禮 [Imperial Approved Rituals in the Great Qing], Siku quanshu 四全. ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Shinichiro, Watanabe 渡邊信一郎. 2008. *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxiazhixu* 中國古代的王權與天下秩序 [Imperial Power and World Order in Ancient China]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Jing 王溥. 2000. *Datang jiaosilu* 大唐郊祀 [A Record of Suburban Rites in the Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House.
- Wang, Qinruo 王欽若 (1013–1095). 1960. *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 [Song Dynasty Historical Encyclopedia]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Xiangzhi 王象之 (1163–1230). 1992. *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 [Geographical Record]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2006. *Guojia Jisi Yu Haishang Silu Yiji*: Guangzhou Nanhaishenmiao Yanjiu 國家祭祀與海上線路遺跡: 廣州南海神廟研究 [State Sacrifice and the Relics of Maritime Silk Road: Study on the Temple of the South Sea God in Guangzhou]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Zheng 魏 (580–643). 1973. *Suishu* 隋書 [Sui History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wu, Liyu 麗. 2005. Yingzao shengshi: Datang Kaiyuanli de zhuanzuo yuanqi 營造盛世: 大唐開元禮的撰作起 [Creating a Prosperous Age: The Origin of Kaiyuan Ritual in the Tang Dynasty]. *Journal of the Study of Chinese History* 5: 73–94.
- Wu, Tingxie 廷燧 (1865–1947). 1980. *Tang fangzhen nianbiao* 唐方鎮年表 [Chronology of Fangzhen in Tang Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Xiao, Song 蕭嵩 (?–749), ed. 2000. *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮 [Kaiyuan Ritual of the Great Tang]. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House.
- Yu, Xianhao 邢賢皓. 2000. *Tang cishi kao quanbian* 唐刺史考全編 [Complete Collection of the Prefects of Prefecture in the Tang Dynasty]. Hefei: Anhui University Press.
- Zan, Ning 贊寧 (919–1001). 1987. *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 [Biography of Eminent Monks Compiled in Song Dynasty]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhao, Lan 趙瀾. 1994. *Datang kaiyuan li chutan*: Lun tangdai lizhi de yanhua licheng 《大唐開元禮》初探—論唐代禮制的演化程 [A Preliminary Study on Kaiyuan Ritual in the Great Tang—On the Evolution Course of the Ritual System in Tang Dynasty]. *Journal of Fudan University (Social Science Edition)* 5: 87–92.
- Zhang, Jiuling 張九齡 (678–740). 1986. *Qujiang ji* 曲江集 [Qujiang Anthology]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, Wei 張緯. 1985. *Dajin jili* 大金集禮 [Collection of Rituals in Jin]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zheng, Juzhong 鄭居中 (1059–1123). 1987. *Zhenghe wuli xinyi* 政和五禮新儀 [Five New Rituals of Zhenghe], Siku quanshu 四全. ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

Article

Evolution of the Sacrificial Ritual to the South Sea God in Song China

Yuanlin Wang ^{1,*} and Aiyun Ye ²¹ College of Humanities, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou 510006, China² School of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou 510006, China

* Correspondence: twyl@gzhu.edu.cn

Abstract: Previous studies on the Nanhaishen Temple 南海神廟 (Temple of the South Sea God) in Guangzhou in the Song dynasty focus mainly on its state sacrificial ritual and local temple fairs, without fully discussing the differences of the sacrificial ritual between the Southern and Northern Song dynasties or the changes of the sacrificial ritual in Lingnan after the Song dynasty. This paper aims to illuminate the following five points. First, after the reunification of the Northern Song dynasty, the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God in Guangzhou was advanced. Second, when the South Sea God and his temple were conferred with the holy titles for the fourth time, the god's role to bless local stability was further manifested, which means the imperial power gradually permeated into the Lingnan culture. Third, the blessing of the South Sea God was more prominent than ever before because of its geographical location in the southeast of the state during the Southern Song dynasty, and thus the Nanhaishen Temple Fair was the largest of its kind in Lingnan. Fourth, the stele inscription of *Liuhou Zhi Ji* 六侯之記 (Records of the Six Lords) shows that local people attempted to incorporate their folk beliefs into the canonized sacrifice to the South Sea God, and thus many religious spots were built in other places in Lingnan as detached palaces (*ligong* 離宮) of the god who was generally endorsed by the local officialdom. Fifth, the sacrifice to the South Sea God in Guangzhou in the Song dynasty had a far-reaching influence, as the god was worshipped by the later generations in the temples which also accommodated the worship of Buddhism and Daoism. In summary, the lengthy process for the South Sea God to evolve from a national god to a local patron is the result of the country's long-term implementation of the ritual system as far as the ritual culture is concerned.

Citation: Wang, Yuanlin, and Aiyun Ye. 2022. Evolution of the Sacrificial Ritual to the South Sea God in Song China. *Religions* 13: 939. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100939>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 6 September 2022

Accepted: 3 October 2022

Published: 9 October 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: the South Sea God; sacrificial ritual; national god; folk god; localization

1. Introduction

The Nanhaishen Temple 南海神廟 (Temple of the South Sea God) was one of the most important ritual places, and the sacrifice to the South Sea God constituted a significant part in the ritual system of political power in traditional China. However, most studies only examine the temple as a significant historical relic along the ancient Maritime Silk Road, though the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God at the temple was similar to the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* 嶽鎮海瀆 (sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways), which, as a state sacrificial ritual, displayed the central government's jurisdictional right to its vast territory and significant landmarks. Therefore, sacrifice to the South Sea God was initiated by central and local governments and was often performed by important officials. In retrospect, the South Sea God was a secondary sacrificial subject to many other *diqu* 地祇 (Earthly deities) in the state sacrifice ritual at the capital in the Han dynasty (202 B.C.–A.D. 220). In the Sui dynasty (581–618), temples were built for the spirits when the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was practiced at the local level. Regardless of the change of dynasty, the South Sea God kept his secondary position as one of the spirits worshipped at Ditan 地壇 (Earth Altar) near the capital suburbs, and the new locations of the capital

did not disrupt its actual sacrifice at the local level. Moreover, the South Sea God was one of the eighteen gods of the five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五嶽), five strongholds (*wuzhen* 五鎮), four seas (*sihai* 四海), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆). Amongst the gods of the four seas, the altar of the South Sea God (i.e., the Nanhaishen Temple) was the only one that never changed his location. How did such a national god of the South Sea evolve into a local patron? What cultural connotations can we draw from the many detached palaces (*ligong* 離宮), big and small, of the Nanhaishen Temple that still exist today?

Before answering these questions, we need to point out that the ancient Chinese gods can be roughly divided into two types according to their sources: the national gods and folk gods. However, through a series of ritual practices, the national gods can be endorsed by the local people and become their patrons, which was evidenced by the case of the South Sea God, whereas the folk gods can evolve from local patrons to national gods that were incorporated into the state sacrificial system, such as the goddess Tian Fei 天妃 (Heavenly Consort)¹. Previous scholarships have examined the beliefs of this type of gods that broke through geographical boundaries, the rituals of sacrifice to them, their temples, and their devotees. For example, in her book *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276*, American historian Valerie Hansen focuses on the change of gods in the Southern Song dynasty and their integration into the shifting markets and commodities. She summarizes that a large number of gods that used to be confined to a single area went beyond physical boundaries to exert their influence, and they can be categorized into local, regional, and national gods according to their influence (Hansen 2016, p. 7). Chinese historians Wang Jianchuan and Pi Qingsheng outline the process of Zhang Wang 張王, Wu Tong 五通, and other gods that constantly had their temples built and their influences disseminated, and the two historians analyze the forces of the dissemination of the influences (Wang and Pi 2010, pp. 150–201). Pi further summarizes four dissemination models and discusses the relationship between the disseminators and the origin of the ancestral faith, the composition of the disseminator groups, the relationship between the temporary ancestral temples and the ancestral temples, the social function of the temporary ancestral temples, and so on. Pi and Wang’s dissemination model, which is based on historical studies, reveals a macrotrend of the expansion and transformation of gods, i.e., the flow process from place A to place B. Pi’s research, however, does not investigate the relationship between religious beliefs and individual devotees (Pi 2008, pp. 208–24). In addition, the previous studies mainly focus on the local religious practice of the temples and shrines in the Song dynasty. Though national gods such as Zhenwu Shen 真武神 (True Martial God), Wenchang Dijun 文昌帝君 (Superior Lord King Wenchang, known as the God of Culture and Literature), and Guan Gong 關公 (Guan Yu, 160AD–220AD) are mentioned, these studies mainly take them as examples to prove the relationship between Daoism and the state power (Wang and Pi 2010, pp. 206–304) and, therefore, they rarely delve into the state ritual system of *yue-zhen-hai-du*. Chinese historian Wang Yuanlin, nevertheless, analyzes the similarities and differences between the South Sea God and Tian Fei in terms of their sacrificial procedure and title conferring in the Song dynasty (Wang 2006, pp. 101–26). Yet there are still many questions open for discussion: What is the connection between the constant manifestation of the South Sea God’s supernatural power and the localization of worshipping him in Lingnan? What are the similarities and differences in sacrificing to the South Sea God between the Southern and Northern Song dynasties? How do inscriptions, temple fairs, and legends prove the South Sea God as the patron of the local people? What were the influences exerted by the sacrificial ritual to the South Sea God in the Song dynasty upon the following dynasties? Taking these questions as points of departure, this paper utilizes ample textual evidence, including official archives, stele inscriptions, local gazettes, and other documents, to investigate the changes in the sacrificial rituals in the Nanhaishen Temple in the Southern and Northern Song dynasties. The purpose is to explore how the state sacrifice to the South Sea God was locally implemented in Lingnan, which was merely evidenced by the local governments building dispatched palaces in many counties, and yet it was an important step for the South Sea God to become a local patron.

2. Sacrificial Ritual to the South Sea God in the Northern Song Dynasty

As early as the Sui dynasty, temples were built in Lingnan to worship the South Sea God, but the state sacrifice to the god was only implemented in a physical form. It was not until the Tang dynasty that a dual system of suburban sacrifices near the capital and actual sacrifices in Guangzhou was established to worship the South Sea God. Since then, the central government began to attach importance to the local sacrifices and sent commissioners to supervise the sacrificial ceremonies in Guangzhou (Wang 2021). In the seventh month of the sixth year of Qiande (968), for instance, there was a petition that the South Sea God should be sacrificed in the traditional way in Guangzhou because the ritual system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* in the Northern Song dynasty did not conform to the system of the Tang dynasty (Ouyang 1996, vol. 49, p. 521). At that time, Guangzhou was still under the control of the Southern Han regime; thus, it was only possible for people to sacrifice to the god by looking from afar. In the second month of the fourth year of Kaibao (971), Liu Chang 刘鋹, the emperor of the Southern Han dynasty, surrendered to his rivals, and thus the unification of the Northern Song dynasty was completed. To ensure the ideological and cultural unification of the new regime, it was necessary to rectify the state ritual system, remove the titles of the South Sea God and his wife given to them by the Southern Han dynasty, and change the clothes that symbolized royalty to clothes of the first-rank officials of the Song court (Ouyang 1996, vol. 49, p. 521).

In the sixth month of the fourth year of Kaibao (971), when the reunification was completed, the central government dispatched Li Jifang 李繼芳 from the capital city Bianliang 汴梁 to Guangzhou to offer sacrifices to the South Sea God and to announce the reunification of the country. At the same time, the *Kaiyuanli* 開元禮 (Kaiyuan Ritual) of the Tang dynasty was revalidated (Li 1992, vol. 12, pp. 265–66). In the fourth month of the sixth year of Kaibao (973), the 200 *juan* of *Kaibao Tongli* 開寶通禮 (General Rituals in Kaibao) and the 100 *juan* of *Tongli Yizuan* 通禮義纂 (Collection of General Rituals) were compiled and promulgated nationwide (Li 1992, vol. 14, p. 299). Compilation of the state rites cannot exist without political legitimacy and the power of rulers in people's minds. Therefore, in the Northern Song dynasty, the ritual system of the Tang dynasty was restored, and the sacrifice to the South Sea God was implemented in the suburban and local areas, and the god was still called "Guangliwang 廣利王 (King Guangli)" (Ouyang 1996, vol. 49, p. 521).

In the early Song dynasty, the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was one of the nine medium sacrifices (*zhongsi* 中祀), and they were worshipped in the capital city and local areas according to the ritual scheme called "greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five directions" (*wufang ying qi* 五方迎氣). On the occasion of amnesty, local government officials also offered sacrifices to *yue-zhen-hai-du* by following the ritual system which stipulated the use of altars, animal utensils, jade and silk, food utensils, fasting, and others (Tuqto'a 1977, vol. 98, p. 2425). Meanwhile, the *Kaibao Tongli* was still in practice. From the years of Dazhongxiangfu 大中祥符 (1008–1016) to Tianxi 天禧 (1017–1021), during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of Song, when there was an outbreak of drought, locusts, and no snow, officials at the capital and in the local prefectures began to perform sacrificial rituals to the spirits of the four seas, including the South Sea God (Tuqto'a 1977, vol. 102, p. 2490).

Emperor Taizu of Song specified the management rules and personnel of the Nanhaishen Temple in Guangzhou, which can be seen in the following two cases during the period of Kaibao. The first case took place in the fifth year of Kaibao (971) when the emperor ordered the local District Magistrate (*xianling* 縣令) to serve as the temple magistrate and the District Defender (*xianwei* 縣尉) to serve as the temple premier of the Nanhaishen Temple, as other temples of *yue-zhen-hai-du* did. Thus, the local officials were in charge of the sacrificial ritual, as they were required to "constantly inspect the temple to ensure the temple was clean and to register the number of sacrificial utensils" 常加按視，務於蠲潔，仍籍其廟宇祭器之數, and "the head official of the Prefecture should inspect the temple once a month" 本州長吏每月一詣廟察舉 (Ma 2011, vol. 83, p. 2556). As the Nanhaishen Temple was located in Nanhai County 南海縣 (and Panyu County after the third year of Huangyou (1051)), its daily management was in the charge of the local and county-level officials,

instead of the Daoist priests and monks, in the subsequent dynasties. The second case took place in the sixth year of Kaibao (972) when the Nanhaishen Temple was renovated. The renovation was recorded in a stele inscription, and amazingly the stele is still standing to the west of the temple's front gate today. On one side of the inscription, it illustrates the achievements of the South Sea God; on the other, it also gives credit to Emperor Taizu of Song for unifying the country. The two sides stayed in harmony to praise the two masters, and it was part of the tradition in Lingnan to set inscriptions to praise the royal masters on Earth and the spiritual masters in Heaven. The stele was inscribed with the signatures of several officials, including Pan Mei 潘美, the highest official of Guangzhou, who was then the Transport Commissioner of Guangnan Circuit (*Guangnan zhuanyunshi* 廣南轉運使), the Magistrate of Prefecture (*zhizhou* 知州), and the Maritime Trade Commissioner (*shiboshi* 市舶使) of Guangzhou, Xie Chupin 謝處玘, who was in charge of "renovating temples" 修廟 as the Assistant Prefect (*tongpan* 通判) and the Administrative Assistant of Maritime Trade (*shibo panguan* 市舶判官) of Guangzhou, and others (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 24–26). The two examples embody the local government's emphasis on the renovation of the Nanhaishen Temple. In particular, the renovation was funded by the local maritime trade revenue, so the maritime trade officials were mainly responsible for the financing.

The above-mentioned two cases of sacrificing to the South China Sea God in Guangzhou during the Kaibao period had no precedent rituals to follow. Similarly, on the 12th day of the second year of Chunhua (991), during the reign of Emperor Taizong of Song, Li Zhi 李至, the Director of the Palace Library (*mishujian* 秘書監), proposed that sacrifices to *yue-zhen-hai-du* should be performed on the day of "greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five directions". Li also proposed to carry on the tradition in the Tang dynasty to offer sacrifice to the South Sea God in Guangzhou on the summer solstice, and the local officials served as the Suppliants of the Three Offerings (*saxian liguan* 三獻禮官)² (Tuqto'a 1977, vol. 102, p. 2498).

It was during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong of Song that a rigid sacrificial ritual system came into being. In the fourth and the tenth months of the second year of Xianping (999), it was stipulated that the sacrificial vessels and materials (i.e., all kinds of sacrificial supplies) should be clean, and the incantation should be correct (Xu 2014, p. 747). In the eighth month of the fourth year of Jingde (1007), the writing on the prayer tablet (*zhuban* 祝版) should be carefully proofread and the prayer tablet should be sealed in a wooden box on its way to the temple, and the local officials should perform the sacrificial ritual in a solemn way (Xu 2014, p. 749). In the sixth month of the first year of Dazhongxiangfu (1008), the model of choosing the sacrificial offerings was also stipulated (Xu 2014, p. 749). In the ninth month of the fifth year of Dazhongxiangfu (1112), "during the sacrificial ceremonies at all the temples of the sacred peaks, waterways and four seas, when the *jiao* 醮 (offerings to spirits) ceremony was set up, one should not only place the talisman but add the incantation on the divine tablet in the temples as well" 嶽瀆四海諸祠廟，遇設醮，除青詞外，本廟神位並增祝文 (Li 1992, vol. 78, p. 1788). In the fifth month of the seventh year of Dazhongxiangfu (1114), it was stipulated that the sacrificial wine was brewed separately and should not be mixed with regular wine, which stood testimony to the rigidity of the sacrificial ritual system (Xu 2014, p. 751). Moreover, in the fourth month of the sixth year of Xianping (1003), Emperor Zhenzong of Song announced that "those who sacrificed to the shrines and temples of the sacred mountains in a private manner cannot make imperial chariots, yellow tassels, saddle scarfs, or gather a crowd of people and carry arms, or they would be punished the same way they broke the laws" 民祠嶽者，自今無得造輿輦、黃纓繖、茜鞍帕及糾社衆執兵，違者論如律 (Li 1992, vol. 54, p. 1188). It thus distinguished the canonized sacrifice from the folk sacrifice.

It is noteworthy that in the first year of Zhihe (1054), there was a grand sacrifice to the South Sea God during which the Buddhist and Daoist singing sessions were held for ten days (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 37–39). Existing inscriptions of the Song dynasty suggest that the Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and government officials travelled together to the Nanhaishen Temple and inscribed characters on the temple, which could be found in

the steles inside the temple today. For instance, Han Yu's 韓愈 "Nanhaishen Guangliwang Miaobei" 南海神廣利王廟碑 (Stele in the Temple of the South Sea God King Guangli) is still standing on the east side of the main gate of the temple in Guangzhou. To be specific, in the second paragraph of the inscription, we can read that in the seventh month of the second year of Huangyou (1050), Zu Wuzhe 祖無擇, the Administrative Assistant of Transport Commissioner of Guangnan (*Guangnan zhuanyun panguan* 廣南轉運判官), and other government officials went together with the monks and priests to the temple to pay tribute to the god. Another record is that "He Kecong 何可從, a Daoist priest who played a musical instrument, inscribed characters" 彈琴道士何可從鐫字. Judging by the inscription, it is safe to conclude that the temple at the time was very large as it could accommodate a number of officials, monks, and priests when they attended the ceremony, and it must be a famous scenic spot in the region as well. Furthermore, in the third year of Huangyou (1051), Tian Yu 田瑜, a district magistrate, inscribed his name in the temple where one of his attendants "Monk Zongjing inscribed characters" 僧宗淨刻字 (Huang and Zhang 2014, p. 31). Again, in the first year of Zhihe (1054) and the fifth year of Huangyou (1052), "Monk Zongjing was the inscriber" 僧宗淨刻 on the "official documents used by the Secretarial Chancellery" 中書門下牒 (Huang and Zhang 2014, p. 39). This monk attended the ceremonies three times and inscribed characters twice, which symbolized his close relationship with the temple. This corroborates with the legend of the Buddhist Master Xiujiu 休咎禪師 in the Tang dynasty, who wanted to take the South Sea God as his disciple (Jiang 2007, vol. 25, p. 144). It can be seen that during the Tang and Song dynasties, Buddhist monks had a close relationship with the Confucian national god as they showed up from time to time in the worship of the South Sea God.

3. "Manifestation of Power" of the South Sea God and the Local Stability in Lingnan

It is said that the South Sea God responded to the prayers during an uprising led by Nong Zhigao 農智高, the biggest social unrest in Lingnan in the Northern Song dynasty. In the fifth month of the fourth year of Huangyou (1052), Nong Zhigao led his troops to attack Duanzhou 端州 (present-day Zhaoqing, Guangdong). On the 22nd day of the month, he left Duanzhou and fled to Guangzhou. Guangzhou officials and local people prayed to the South Sea God, who responded by ordering a storm to stop Nong and his troops. The storm was so fierce that it lifted the ladders and set his troops on fire, and the rain was so timely that people in the city could drink to quench their thirst. After this, people believed that the South Sea God had the power to protect the city. To reward the god as the people required, Yuan Jiang 元絳, the Transport Commissioner of East of Guangnan Circuit (*Guangnandonglu zhuanyunshi* 廣南東路轉運使), appealed to the court to entitle the god and his wife. In the fourth month of the fifth year of Huangyou (1053), an edict was issued to confer a special title "Nanhai Hongsheng Guangli Zhaoshunwang" 南海洪聖廣利昭順王 (Holy and Successful King of Facilitation in the South Sea) to the god and his wife, which lengthened the title even further to include six Chinese characters. Hence, a new plaque arrived along with the new title to display the honor. The emperor's edict, coupled with the supernatural power of the South Sea God, left an indelible impression in the minds of the people, and subsequently, the god became the local patron. Henceforward, the detached palaces of the god were built in various places and were generally named Hongshengwang Miao 洪聖王廟 (Temple of King Hongsheng) or Hongshengwang Ci 洪聖王祠 (Shrine of King Hongsheng); the title was derived from the name "Hongsheng" 洪聖, which the South Sea God had already been called by the people.

Since the South Sea God answered the prayers of local people and protected the city, as mentioned above, the general public in Guangzhou "all praised the South Sea God" 皆稱道南海神事 (Huang and Zhang 2014, p. 39). During the years of Xining in the reign of Emperor Shenzong of Song (1068–1077), the South Sea God again gave his blessings to the city construction in the west of Guangzhou, and people believed that it was the god that blessed them with good weather, proper rain, abundant crops, peace, and prosperity. Moreover, in the course of the city's construction, Hongshengwang Miao (later called the

West Temple) was built to the west of the Hanghaimen 航海門 (Gate of Navigation). The purpose of building the temple was not for the South Sea God to answer the prayers but to suppress the ominous atmosphere in the Huangyou War 皇祐戰爭 and eliminate the sense of killing (i.e., the original Nanhaishen Temple, 80 miles east of the city, was later called the East Temple). On the day the western city was built, a mirage suddenly appeared, and the new city remained in the water for a long time, which overwhelmed people along the coast so much that they were convinced of the power of the South Sea God (Huang and Zhang 2014, p. 222). In addition to blessing the city construction, the South Sea God also answered the prayers during the drought in Lingnan in the sixth year of Xining (1073) and the seventh year of Xining (1074). Therefore, Cheng Shimeng 程師孟 paid six visits to the Nanhaishen Temple (from the twelfth month of the sixth year of Xining, i.e., 1073, to the tenth month of the seventh year of Xining), where he prayed to the god for the rain (Wang 2006, pp. 150–51). During the years of Xining, Cheng once dreamed that the god answered his prayers. In addition, local people went to the Nanhaishen Temple to pray for retaining Cheng when he was about to leave office, and it turned out he was able to continue his service in the region, which strengthened people’s belief in the god (Huang and Zhang 2014, p. 222).

More importantly, the god managed to demonstrate his power in defending the regime. In the eleventh month of the eighth year of Xining (1075), Cochin 交趾 invaded Qinzhou 欽州 and Lianzhou 廉州, and in the first month of the following year, Yongzhou 邕州 was invaded as well. At the same time, the court of the Northern Song dynasty dispatched troops to fight back and sent commissioners to sacrifice to the South Mountain and the South Sea, which eventually led to the Southern Expedition (Tuqto’a 1977, vol. 15, p. 290). In this case, the worship of the South Sea God by the local people and by the central government should be understood through the cultural significance of the state ritual system in defending state power. The South Sea God was considered an essential sacrificial subject not only because he had manifested power to bless local prosperity and save people from distress, but also because the worship of the god was also considered important in the state ritual system.

The abovementioned Hongshengwang Temple, built to the west of the Gate of Navigation in Guangzhou, was the first building attached to the Nanhaishen Temple near the city. Due to the constant manifestation of the power of the South Sea God for eliminating disasters, more and more Hongshengwang Temples, or detached palaces of the god to be exact, were built in other prefectures and counties in Lingnan. Since then, the South Sea God had been considered more capable of answering people’s prayers, especially during the reign of Emperor Renzong of Song when the local people were protected, and the city was defended under the god’s blessings. Hence, the god gained more titles and honors bestowed by the court. As it is recorded that “shrines were constructed in all the towns and cities along the coast” 瀕海郡邑靡不建祠 (Guo 1994, vol. 9, p. 272), we have reason to believe that from the reign of Emperor Renzong of Song to the demise of the Northern Song dynasty, detached palaces were built in various parts of Lingnan to protect the local community. In this way, the South Sea God gradually expanded his influence from the high-level state ritual system to the lower-level local (or folk) practice, and as a result, a change can be observed from sending commissioners by the central or Guangzhou government to worship the god, to building shrines at the coastal counties for the local people to worship the god in Lingnan. These county-level projects of building shrines were initially funded by the local officials and built by the local people; therefore, they were the shrines shared by the official and the general public. For example, during the early reign of Xining, a Nanhaishen Temple was built in the eastern suburb of Dongguan County 東莞縣. In the first year of Chonghe (1118), Jiang Tuo 姜駝, the District Defender of Dongguan, relocated it to an island and expanded it in size. In Huizhou 惠州, a Nanhaishen Temple, which was called Guangliwang Temple at the time, was also restored from the first year of Yuanfeng (1081) to the fourth year (1084).

Another example of restoring the Nanhaishen Temple occurred in the eleventh month of the first year of Yuanyou (1086), when a rebel called Cen Tan 岑探 led a crowd of 2000 people to surround the city of Xinzhou 新州 (present-day Xinxing, Guangdong). Jiang Zhiqi 蔣之奇 fought back and finally sent Yang Xianzhi 楊先之 to beat the rebels (Tuqto'a 1977, vol. 343, pp. 10915–917). This time when Jiang Zhiqi supervised the restoration project, he ordered to rebuild the Nanhaishen West Temple, which was near the city of Guangzhou and the original Nanhaishen East Temple (Guo 2012, vol. 10, p. 385) in order to thank the god for suppressing the riot led by Cen Tan. Moreover, during the Zhenghe period (1111–1118), Fan Zhou'an 范周安 ordered the restoration of the East Temple (Guo 2012, vol. 10, p. 385). In all these cases, government officials played an important role in rebuilding the Nanhaishen Temple.

According to the *Songshi* 宋史 (Song History), “temples and shrines were granted imperial plaques and holy titles during the periods of Xining (1068–1077), Yuanyou (1086–1094), Chongning (1102–1106), and Xuanhe (1119–1125)” 故凡祠廟賜額、封號，多在熙寧、元祐、崇寧、宣和之時 (Tuqto'a 1977, 105, 2562), and the Nanhaishen Temple was included. In addition, the South Sea God's family members were entitled in the eleventh month of the sixth year of Xuanhe of Huizong (1124) as follows: his wife Mingshun Furen 明順夫人 (Lady Mingshun) was entitled Xianren Fei 顯仁妃 (Consort Xianren); his eldest son, Fuling Hou 輔靈侯 (Lord Fuling); his second son, Zanling Hou 贊靈侯 (Lord Zanling); and his daughter, Huiyou Furen 惠佑夫人 (Lady Huiyou) (Xu 2014, pp. 1030, 1085). The fact that the wife and children of the South Sea God were conferred proved the god's rising status and people's increasing devotion. To sum up, the acts of conferring titles, restoring temples, and building detached palaces during the Northern Song dynasty were closely related to the constant appearance of the South Sea God in maintaining the local stability, completing the construction of the western part of the city, and bringing proper rain. This might also be related to the fact that the state power took advantage of the South Sea God's appearance in the local area to reinforce the ruling and promote the culture. As an increasing number of local people believed in the South Sea God due to his constant appearance, the national god further established his status and became localized in Lingnan. At the same time, the state ritual extended its influence in the region.

4. The Nanhaishen Temple Fair: The Largest in Lingnan in the Southern Song Dynasty

Once the Southern Song dynasty was founded, the practice of worshipping the gods of the five directions was back in place in the four seasons of the year. To be specific, the South Mountain God and the South Sea God were both worshipped on the summer solstice. In this way, the previous state ritual system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* resumed (Tuqto'a 1977, vol. 102, p. 2496), and the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* was held in the suburb of the capital and at the local level. The geographical scope of the jurisdiction of the Southern Song dynasty was reduced to the entire southern part and some of the eastern part of the previous sovereignty. Therefore, the sacrifice to the gods in the South, particularly the South Sea God, gained special attention from Emperor Gaozong of Song. For instance, the Nanhaishen West Temple was restored from the third year (1133) to the fifth year (1135) of Shaoxing (Guo 2012, vol. 10, p. 385). In the ninth month of the seventh year of Shaoxing (1137), while the ritual system of building imperial constructions for sacrifice was restored, “the South Sea God was additionally conferred as the King of Hongsheng Guangli Zhaoshun Weixian” 加封南海神為洪聖廣利昭順威顯王 (Li 1986, vol. 114, p. 558; Xu 2014, p. 1030). Such a long title, composed of eight Chinese characters, embodied the eminence of the god. It was believed that the South Sea God blessed Lingnan by providing people living on the coast with sufficient fish and crabs, safe voyages, no floods, and no droughts. Therefore, the South Sea God deserved the new title, which was even longer than his former title (i.e., a six-Chinese-character title) during the years of Huangyou and Yuanyou, as well as the six-Chinese character title “Yuansheng Guangde Zhushun” 淵聖廣德助順 (Great Holiness, Vast Virtue, and Facilitation) bestowed to the East Sea God. This

unusual event is recorded in many sources. One source says that “since [Emperor Gaozong of Song] crossed the river, only the Nanhaishen Temple of the South Sea God had been granted incantations hand-written by the emperor and thus the officials in Guangzhou had been ordered to perform the rituals” 自渡江以後，惟南海廣利王廟歲時降御書祝文，令廣州行禮。Because “the state was stationed in the southeast, meaning the East Sea and the South Sea are within the territory” 國家駐蹕東南，東海、南海實在封域內，the gods of East Sea and South Sea were considered particularly important. Hence, in the fifth year of Qiandao (1169), the advice of Lin Li 林栗, the Vice Minister in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*taichang shaoqing* 太常少卿) was accepted, where an eight-Chinese-character title “Zhushun Fusheng Guangde Weiji” 助順孚聖廣德威濟 (Facilitation, True Holiness, Vast Virtue, Prestige, and Kindness) was bestowed to the East Sea God that helped to bless a victory of the war in Jiaoxi 膠西 in the years of Shaoxing, and the spot of sacrificing to the god was changed from Laizhou 萊州 (present-day Yexian, Shandong) in Northern Song dynasty to Mingzhou 明州 (present-day Ningbo, Zhejiang) (Ma 2011, vol. 83, p. 2560). Since then, the South Sea God and the East Sea God both had a new title, “Weixian” 威顯 (Prominence) and “Weiji” 威濟 (Prestige), as an attempt to bless the ruling of the Southern Song dynasty.

The reason why the gods were conferred with long titles is that Emperor Gaozong could only manage to rule the southeast part of China. A Qing scholar criticized that “a country that is content with its partial territory and unable to make efforts for prosperity, merely granting titles to spirits to expect a blessing, this is the so-called listening to the mandate of the gods” 國勢偏安，不克振作，徒以加封神號為望祐之舉，所謂聽命於神也 (Qin 1986, vol. 47, p. 51). Because the southeast was the land of prosperity for the Southern Song dynasty, performing sacrificial rituals to the East Sea and the South Sea undoubtedly was on the top of the agenda of the new rulers. They sent commissioners not only to the suburbs to sacrifice to the five mountains, four waterways, and the four seas, but also to the local areas to sacrifice to the South Mountain, the South Sea, and the South Waterway in different years, including the 13th year of Shaoxing (1143) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 30, p. 129), the 16th year of Shaoxing (1146) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 30, p. 133), the 25th year of Shaoxing (1155) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 31, p. 136), the 28th year of Shaoxing (1158) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 31, p. 138), the 32nd year of Shaoxing (1162) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 32, p. 140), the first year of Gandao (1165) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 32, p. 141), the sixth year of Gandao (1170) (*Zhongxing lishu* 1996, vol. 32, p. 148), and others.

Compared to the Northern Song dynasty, the sacrificial music played for the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du* in the suburbs in the Southern Song dynasty was more complex. According to “Lezhi Shiyi” 樂志十一 (The Eleventh Record of Music) of the *Songshi*, “there were forty-three pieces of music in the years of Shaoxing for the sacrifice to *yue-zhen-hai-du*” 紹興祀嶽鎮海瀆四十三首 (Tuqto’a 1977, vol. 136, pp. 3196–97), together with the addition of “sixteen pieces of music in the years of Chunyou for the sacrifice to the sea gods” 淳祐祭海神十六首 (Tuqto’a 1977, vol. 136, pp. 3201–3). As a result, the suburban sacrificial music was diverse with more pieces. Such special attention paid to sacrificial music manifested the importance attached to the sea gods by the court of the Southern Song dynasty.

While the court was actively initiating sacrificial ritual to the gods of the sea in the suburb of the capital, people in the local areas also frequently paid tribute to the South Sea God. Hong Kuo 洪適 was one of them. From the 11th month of the 17th year of Shaoxing (1147) to the 4th month of the 28th year (1158), Hong Kuo served as the Prefect of Military Prefecture of Jingmen (*Zhi Jingmen jun* 知荊門軍) and at the same time, he took care of his father Hong Hao 洪皓 for nine years and then observed mourning for his deceased father for three more years. During his twelve years in Lingnan, he wrote plenty of sacrificial and elegiac essays. For instance, in *Zhu Wen* 祝文 (Incantation), the 71st juan of *Panzhou wenji* 盤洲文集 (Essay Collection of Panzhou), we could find “Essay of Praying for Clear Days and the next twenty-seven essays are written on behalf of the chief official in Guangzhou” 《祈晴文》以下二十七首系代廣帥作。Among them, eight essays were directly related to ceremonies of sacrificing to the South Sea God (Hong 1986, vol. 71, pp. 720–23). In fact,

most of this kind of his writing was about sacrificing to the South Sea God, accounting for nearly thirty per cent of the total. From all these writings, we can conclude that in the middle and later years of Shaoxing, the chief official in Guangzhou was rigorous in organizing the sacrificial ceremonies on the summer solstice. He had to ensure the time was correct and the West Temple was also rebuilt. He prayed to the South Sea God for good harvests, pleasant weather, no pirates, no buglers, no maladies, and fewer lawsuits in Guangzhou during his term of office, and he also personally prayed for good health and a safe journey home for him and his family. Another example can be found in the summer of the third year of Qingyuan (1197) when the Guangdong government raised taxes on tea and salt, and Xu Anguo 徐安國 “sent people into (Daxi) Island to rob smuggled salt, which disturbed the islanders. As a result, more than a thousand islanders gathered to make a living by going to the sea and finally became pirates” 遣人入 (大奚) 島捕私鹽，島民不安，即嘯聚千餘人入海為盜 (Liangchao gangmu beiyao 1995, vol. 5, p. 81). Daxi Island 大奚島 is present-day Hong Kong’s Lantau Island, outside of the Pearl River estuary. Qian Zhiwang 錢之望, the newly appointed Prefect of Guangzhou, “wrote to the (South Sea) God” 即為文以告於 (南海) 神 to pray for pacifying the chaos and dispatched troops to fight with more than 40 ships from Daxi Island at Fuxukou 撫胥口 on the sea. During the combat, “the soldiers took the initiative to fight hard, shouting the name of the (South Sea) God to pray for protection” 軍士爭先奮擊，呼 (南海) 王之號以乞靈, setting fire to the pirates’ boats, capturing the head pirate Xu Shaokui 徐紹夔, and arresting the rest of the crowd. They all attributed the victory to “the power and blessings of the South Sea God who answered to the prayers of the official (i.e., Qian Zhiwang)” 益仰王之威靈，凡臣 (錢之望) 所禱，無一不酬. Subsequently, both the soldiers and the civilians appealed for granting the god a title and giving him a temple as a reward. Therefore, the official spent the government revenue to renovate the temple right away, and in the fifth month of the next year (1198), the Imperial Secretariat (*Shangshusheng* 尚書省) granted a plaque with the name Yinghu Miao 英護廟 (Yinghu Temple) to the South Sea God (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 43–44). This is another honor of the god after he had been conferred with the eight-Chinese-character title not too long prior, and this time it was his temple that gained the title.

Moreover, the rising status of the South Sea God was more due to his blessings for social stability than for safe voyages. The Nanhaishen Temple played an irreplaceable role, at both the local and the central level, in praying for victories in military combats, rain to end droughts, peace and stability, defending the country and the community, and ensuring safe voyages on the South Sea. In particular, in the first month of the ninth year of Xining (1076), the court sent commissions to sacrifice to the spirits of the South Mountain and the South Sea to bless the upcoming southern expedition to Cochinchina and other relevant actions, which were all supposed to happen within the scope of the South Sea God. As mentioned above, many combats, riots, and droughts ended after people prayed to the god; he was entitled as King three times and his temple was also once honored with a title. In this way, the South Sea God became an important sacrificial subject whenever there was a sacrificial offering to the gods at the central and local levels. Consequently, the folk sacrifice to the god and the temple fairs were in full swing. Relatively speaking, the rising status of the South Sea God was mainly because of his assumed capability to bless the stability of the local society, and his role in protecting maritime traffic was less significant.

Judging from the historical records, we can see that the Nanhaishen Temple was the largest scenic spot and the most important temple of official worship in the Song dynasty, as many officials and celebrities wrote about their visits to the temple and Yuriting 浴日亭 (Bathing Sun Pavilion) next to the temple. The first scene of the “Eight Sceneries of Yangcheng” (Yangcheng bajing 羊城八景) depicted in many Song literati’s writing was the “Bathing Sun Pavilion of Fuxu” (Fuxu yuri 扶胥浴日) (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 65). Su Shi 蘇軾, a famous writer in the Song dynasty, also wrote a poem “On the Bathing Sun Pavilion” 浴日亭 (Su 1986, vol. 22, p. 330). This poem is now as equally famous as the writing of Han Yu, which remains on the stele inscription of the Nanhaishen Temple in Guangzhou today.

All these writings and inscriptions of the officials and celebrities undoubtedly endowed cultural significance to the temple and thus attracted more visits from poets, scholars, dignitaries, and other cultural elites. The officials and the ordinary people participated in the annual temple fair on every summer solstice in a festive mood, turning the sacrificial event into an unprecedented carnival. Such a merry occasion was recorded by Yang Wanli 楊萬里 in his writing “Getting Up Early on the 13th Day of the Second Month to Visit the West Temple” 二月十三日謁西廟早起. On that day, Yang got up early to sacrifice to the South Sea God, as he described “when I finished getting up, washing face and getting dressed, burning incense, eating porridge for breakfast, the sun had not risen outside the window yet. Though it was said that spring nights were short, (on the day of sacrificing to the god) I found that night rather long when I heard the bell ringing at the fifth-period” 起來洗面更焚香，粥罷東窗未肯光。古語舊傳春夜短，漏聲新覺五更長 (Yang 1986, vol. 16, p. 168). We can find other evidence of the popularity of the temple fair in Liu Kezhuang’s 劉克莊 poem “Ten Spontaneous Poems” 即事十首: “Incenses are offered at every household in the second month of the year, and almost everyone left home to attend the temple fair of the Sea God” 香火萬家市，煙花二月時。居人空巷出，去賽海神祠 (Liu 1986, vol. 12, p. 127). In conclusion, the Nanhaishen Temple Fair was the largest of its kind in Lingnan in the Song dynasty, demonstrating that the South Sea God had gained popularity among the local people and thus had become a critical god worshipped by many.

5. The South Sea God as the Local Patron and the Four Lords as the Auxiliary Gods

The local officials in Lingnan played an important role in continuously holding official sacrificial ceremonies for the South Sea God, petitioning the court for bestowing titles on the god and imperial plaques on his temple, and supervising restoration projects. It is precisely because of all the indoctrination and promotion of local officials that the god became increasingly popular with the local people. Generally speaking, it was a complicated process for the folk gods to become national gods. First, the gods must manifest enough supernatural power to make people’s prayers come true. Second, the gods must protect the country and the people with miracles, and the sacrificial rituals must conform to Confucian etiquette. When the court bestowed a title on the god and a plaque on his temple, it meant the god was supernaturally powerful. In order to be worshipped at the Nanhaishen Temple, the local gods must be popular enough in folklore to prove their power. Therefore, people in the local community did not hesitate to tell this kind of folklore to create different gods. In such a local god-creating campaign, the general public needed the engagement of government officials and cultural elites who believed in Confucianism to legitimize the folk gods. As a result, the local officials in Guangdong played a role in adding auxiliary gods to the South Sea God, and the inscription of *Liuhou Zhi Ji* 六侯之記 (Record of the Six Lords) is the best example in this regard.

In the 11th year of Shaoxing in the Southern Song dynasty (1141), Fang Jian 方漸 worshipped the South Sea God in Guangzhou and learned about the deeds of the Six Lords as the auxiliary gods when he read the inscription on the six tablets. He was worried that the deeds of the Six Lords would not be passed down, so he engraved them on the “Stele of the Record of the Six Lords” 六侯之記碑 (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 144–47). Nevertheless, Fang Jian only briefly recorded on the stele that the South Sea God’s eldest son was entitled Lord Fuling and his second son Lord Zanling, without illustrating other deeds of the two (Xu 2014, pp. 1030, 1085), and the rest of the four Lords were also briefly mentioned when full accounts were given to the Guangzhou officials and major events. Apparently, this was related to the god-creating campaign in the local community (Wang 2006, pp. 156–74).

The detailed narratives of the remaining four Lords are as follows. The first one is about the third Lord called Daxi Sikong 達奚司空 (Daxi, the Minister of Work). During the Qingli (1041–1048) period, Ruan Zun 阮遵 recorded that Bodhidharma 菩提達摩, the alleged founder of Chan Buddhism, brought his two younger brothers to China to spread Buddhism. One of the brothers was called Daxi, and he did not return home but instead

turned into a god figure in the Nanhaishen East Temple; this folktale is an example of mythicizing Daxi Sikong. In the middle years of Yuanfeng (1078–1085), Zeng Bu 曾布, the Prefect of Guangzhou (whose tenure was from the second month of 1077 to the eighth month of 1085), prayed to Daxi Sikong to stop the rain because it had been continuously raining in that autumn. Miraculously, the rain stopped. Zeng Bu then decorated the god's statue in the temple and entitled him Zhuli Hou 助利侯 (Lord Zhuli) as a gesture of thanks (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 144–47). Although there was no official record of Daxi Sikong being entitled as a Lord in the Northern Song dynasty, we can refer to the folklore to see how the government official helped the god to obtain legitimate status. Moreover, we are certain that in the Southern Song dynasty, the Zhuli Hou Temple 助利侯廟 was located next to the Nanhaishen Temple (Wang 2005, vol. 89, p. 3065), which is also the reason why the figure of Daxi Sikong was erected to the east of the main gate of the Nanhaishen Temple in the Ming dynasty (Guo 2012, vol. 10, p. 370). Daxi Sikong was the one with the most abundant miracles among the Six Lords of the South Sea God, and his apotheosis was thus the first narrative.

The second narrative is about the fourth of the Six Lords, Dugong Sikong 杜公司空 (Du Gong, the Minister of Work), who was elevated from an ordinary man to a god. It is said that during the mid-*Daozhong* (1032–1033) period, Dugong Sikong supervised the restoration of the Nanhaishen Temple. After the temple was built, he was willing to stay in the temple permanently to assist the South Sea God in managing the soldiers in the underworld, and thus countless bats flew out of the temple in fear. Then, amid the two rebellions led by Nong Zhigao in the mid of *Huangyou* period and by Cen Tan in the years of *Yuanyou*, Dugong was said to manifest his supernatural power in defeating the rebels (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 144–47). Apparently, a connection was deliberately made between the miraculous power of the South Sea God and Dugong Sikong.

In the third narrative, the fifth of the Six Lords was elevated from a navy general who used to patrol the sea. Because of his power to calm down the sea, his figure had already been established in the Nanhaishen Temple as early as the sixth year of Yuanfeng (1083), though his surname was unknown. In the fourth month of the sixth year of Yuanfeng (1083), Mei Jing 梅菁, the District Magistrate of Boluo County 博羅縣, was on his trip to the new post, and he encountered strong winds and waves in the *Fuxu* Sea in front of the Nanhaishen Temple. Right after he shouted to the South Sea God for help, he saw a god in gold armor and then the storm miraculously stopped. After the narrow escape, he arrived at his new office, wrote a thank-you note, and sent people to set up a memorial tablet for the god immediately. He then awarded the god by entitling him Jiying Hou 濟應侯 (Lord Jiying) (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 144–47).

In the last narrative, the Sixth Lord was also elevated from a navy officer and was the last to become a god. On the night of the 13th of the fifth month in the fifth year of *Yuanyou* (1090), Cai Bian 蔡卞, the Prefect of Guangzhou, dreamed of a very tall man wearing a purple robe and a gold belt. This man told him that he had just died the day before, and the South Sea God appointed him as a subordinate to patrol the sea. Therefore, he asked Cai to set up a tablet for him in the Nanhaishen Temple. The next day, Cai immediately set up a memorial tablet for the navy officer whose surname was said to be Pu 蒲 (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 144–47). The tale that a person surnamed Pu in Guangzhou became a god should be related to the large number of foreign traders who shared the same surname. Therefore, the foreign traders also participated in the local campaign of making auxiliary gods of the Nanhaishen Temple, and the government officials were the key to legitimizing the new folk gods.

Unlike the tales of the two sons of the South Sea God, the abovementioned tales of the remaining four Lords becoming gods were made up of various sources, as some were convincing while others were confusing (Wang 2006, pp. 173–74). It is obvious that the government officials helped to create the six folk gods on various occasions, and the inscription of Fang Jian's "Record of the Six Lords" assembled them together. In short, the essence of making the Six Lords gods is the local obedience to the national ritual system,

and the coexistence of the folk and the national gods in the Nanhaishen Temple proves that the officials and the people reached an agreement on whom they worshipped.

In addition, the fact that the Six Lords were incorporated into the state sacrifice at the turn of the Southern and Northern Song dynasties provides evidence for the localization of the South Sea God. The local community believed in the Six Lords, and they happened to be related to the South Sea God in the stories mentioned above, so they were listed as the auxiliary gods of the South Sea God. Similar to the story that Jiang Zhiqi in the Song dynasty believed that the South Sea God was a disciple of the Buddhist Master Xiujiu in the Tang dynasty (Jiang 2007, vol. 25, p. 144), the stories of the Six Lords shared the purpose of using the influence of the South Sea God to make the folk gods or masters and to enshrine them in the Nanhaishen Temple. Nevertheless, the results of the stories were not the same, as one was to be subordinated to the South Sea God and to share his temple while the other aimed to occupy the temple and finally ended up in a new spot nearby called Linghua Monastery 靈化寺. In these stories, we can see that Confucianism, Buddhism, and local beliefs were in contention for power. It was Confucianism that showcased its supreme importance given by the regime, as government officials submitted reports to turn the four local gods, which conformed to the ritual system, into the auxiliaries of the South Sea God.

6. Changes in the Sacrifice to the South Sea God in Lingnan after the Song Dynasty

As he became a folk god in the Song dynasty, the South Sea God held a dual status as both a national and a folk god and exerted significant influence in the following dynasties. The national sacrifice to the god was conducted as usual, whereas the local community kept making new stories about the god. In general, the following changes can be observed in the sacrifice to the god in Lingnan after the Song dynasty.

First, the state sacrifice to the South Sea God was still carried out in the Ming and Qing dynasties, but the ceremonial procedures were static, and the ceremonies were held mainly when the emperors and empresses celebrated their birthdays, conferred titles, prayed for giving birth to sons, and dealt with other personal affairs. Though these sacrificial ceremonies were also related to some major national events, most of them did not take place in Lingnan and only remained a part of the state ritual system of sacrificing to *yue-zhen-hai-du* (Wang 2010, pp. 73–77), standing in sharp contrast to the frequent manifestation of the god's supernatural power and bestowing imperial titles in the Song dynasty. The role of state sacrifice in the Ming and Qing dynasties is far less important than that in the Song dynasty. We can yet find sporadic references to the South Sea God answering their prayers, such as suppressing the rebellion in Guangxi 廣西 in the second year of Chenghua (1466) (Han 1986, vol. 15, pp. 805–6) and defeating a pirate called Liu Xiang 劉香 in the seventh year of Chongzhen (1634) (Huang and Zhang 2014, pp. 298–99), but these miracles were celebrated and recorded far less often than those in the Song dynasty.

Since the Northern Song dynasty, local officials had implemented the state sacrificial rituals, and on such a basis, local rituals advocated by Neo-Confucians were developed in the Southern Song dynasty (Faure 1999, pp. 65–72). As the ritual system was implemented locally, the concept of the state was accepted by local people who gradually sacrificed to the national gods as well. By bestowing titles and building temples, the state convinced the local people that their folk gods were officially recognized; as a result, the local gods became more and more supernaturally powerful, and with that, local people began to endorse the state gods. The temple fair, which was the biggest local sacrificial event, is the most typical example of local people's beliefs in the South Sea God. At the temple fair, the most significant officials in Guangzhou served as the Supplicants of the Three Offerings, and the sacrificial ceremonies were as grand as they could be. It was also through such official promotion and guidance that local people gradually honored the state ritual system and that the South Sea God eventually became the most powerful god in Lingnan.

Second, the detached palaces of the South Sea God in different areas of Lingnan in the Song dynasty symbolized that the god had been fully localized. This lengthy process can be traced to the Sui dynasty when the construction of temples was only a physical means to

worship the god. Then, in the Tang dynasty and the Southern Han dynasty, the localization of the god was not completed until the Song dynasty, when local people firmly endorsed the South Sea God as their patron. In detail, the localization process was composed of the following steps: the god showcased his supernatural power; local officials petitioned for bestowing titles to the god; the central government rewarded the title to the god and the divine plaque to his temple; the temple received a special honor; a detached palace was built; a grand temple fair was held, and finally the local officials and people both joined the sacrificial ceremonies. In this process, the construction of detached palaces was the key as more local people could visit the temples nearby to worship the national god. Hence, the South Sea God gained a dual status as a national and local god.

The sixteenth century was an important period in which Confucianism was gradually taught and eventually popularized among people in Guangdong to counterbalance the folk beliefs, as local people attached importance to worshipping their ancestors and building their family temples (Inoue 2003, pp. 41–51). In order to legitimize the worship of their ancestors, they donated lands and money to the South Sea God to bring their ancestors into the Nanhaishen Temple by building different family temples. Qugong Ci 屈公祠 (The Qu Family Temple), for instance, was built by Qu Jian 屈鑿 and Qu Huaiyi 屈懷義 in Shating Village 沙亭鄉 of Panyu 番禺 by donating their land to sacrifice to the South Sea God (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 62) and worshipping their ancestors inside the temple because their ancestors, similar to those of the other local big clans, had contributed to the sacrifice of the god. Another example was Qujue Chengong Ci 蘧覺陳公祠 (The Chen Family Temple of Qujue) built by Chen Dazhen 陳大震 (1228–1307), a cultural celebrity of Sha Village, Panyu County (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 65). These family temples demonstrate that the local clans gained sacrificial rights of legitimately worshipping their ancestors inside the temple at the cost of their land. In essence, it was an expression of their power as big local clans while honoring the state ritual system.

Third, local people kept inventing new sacrificial ceremonies, such as *shibaxiang feng hou* (十八鄉奉侯 Eighteen Villages Offering Sacrifices to the Lords) and *wuzi chao wang* (五子朝王 Five Princes Paying Tributes to Their Father King), while honoring the state ritual system. This demonstrates that local people were obedient to the ruling of the state and, thus, the belief in the South Sea God was expanded geographically.

Furthermore, in the second year of Hongwu (1369) during the Ming dynasty, the Nanhaishen Temple received the nickname of Boluomiao 波羅廟 (Boluo Temple) because there were boluo trees (i.e., pineapple trees) in front of the temple. Even though the ceremony of offering incenses in the temple was directed by a Daoist monk called Xiao Deyu 蕭德輿 from Yuanmiaoguan 元妙觀 (Yuanmiao Monastery), as it had been in the Yuan dynasty (Cui 2017, vol. 6, pp. 151–52), local people and chronicles kept calling the Nanhaishen Temple by its nickname Boluo Temple and the temple fair by the name Boluodan 波羅誕 (Boluo Dan Temple Fair). Therefore, at present, there is a folk saying: “Join the Boluo Dan Temple Fair this year, and you can get a wife next year” 第一遊波羅，第二娶老婆。People follow the tradition to buy an artefact *boluoji* 波羅雞 (Boluo Chicken) as a souvenir of good luck when they attend the fair (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 65). The localization could also be seen in the case of the wife of the South Sea God who received a surname of Cen 岑 (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 45).

During the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing dynasty, it was recorded that in Panyu County, “the villages in Xinjiao, Tangdu, Banqiao, Gangwei, and Xinting all sacrificed to the god on their own” 新茭、塘都、板橋、岡尾、新廳各鄉皆分祀之 (Wang 2007, vol. 14, p. 248). Among them, eighteen villages in Gangwei jointly built the Gangwei Temple of the South Sea God in Tanshan Village 潭山村. During the Qianlong period, every year, the temple fair was held in Guangzhou before the birthday of the god. People in these eighteen villages organized parades on *jiaori* 筊日³, and “each village took turns to run the parade by putting on their best performance for a couple of days until the temple fair was held. Theater performances and praying activities were held for seven days, though these annual local parades were not as grand as those at the Boluo Dan Temple Fair” 依仗執事春色，分

鄉輪值置辦，爭新鬥豔，周而復始。至誕期，演戲七日，歲時祈賽之盛亞於波羅 (Ren and Tan 2007, vol. 8, p. 117). In this way, the local sacrificial ceremonies were no longer solely organized by a single village or a single clan but by the joint forces of different villages. Eventually, the local forces were integrated to organize “the sacrificial ceremony for many villages” 多鄉之祀 and to continue the role of the shared structure of villages, towns, and militia clubs in the ceremony (Zhu and Liu 2017, p. 272).

The custom of worshipping the South Sea God in this new manner in many villages is the most critical evidence of the ultimate localization of the god. In *Boluo Waiji* 波羅外紀 (Stories of Boluo Temple), there is a similar story called “Eighteen Villages Offering Sacrifice to the Six Lords” 十八鄉各奉六侯. According to this story, eighteen villages near the Nanhaishen Temple, including Lubu 鹿步, Duntou 墩頭, and Fangyuan 芳園, each enshrined the statues of the Six Lords by placing them in the form of the guards of honor to the South Sea God (Cui 2017, vol. 2, p. 65). In addition to the written records, the folktale “Five Princes Paying Tribute to Their Father King” also proved the localization of the South Sea God in Lingnan. In the folktale, a small sacrificial ceremony was held every year, a medium sacrificial ceremony every three years, and a large sacrificial ceremony every five years, and local people took turns being in charge of the ceremonies every year. The folktale also says that every three villages enshrined one god statue who represented one of the five sons of the South Sea God, and the five sons had the following names, respectively: Da’an 大安, Yuan’an 原安, Shi’an 始安, Chang’an 長安, and Zu’an 祖安. Each of the sons’ names has two Chinese characters, and they both deserve some explanation. On the one hand, the first Chinese characters of the names all emphasize “first” and “foremost”, revealing the local community’s intention of sharing the blessings equally. The second character, “An” 安, on the other hand, is the same in each of the names, and it is interchangeable with the homonym “An” 案, which refers to the divine table in the sacrificial parade. Unlike the record of the “Eighteen Villages Offering Sacrifices to the Six Lords”, this folktale depicts the heroes as the six princes to show closer blood ties to the South Sea God, proving that the local gods were constantly changing in the local sacrificial system. However different they are, the written record and the oral folktale both demonstrate that since the mid-Ming dynasty, the local community had been seeking orthodoxy on the subject of the Nanhaishen Temple and the right to gain *shatianliyi* 沙田利益 (Shi 2021, vol. 8, pp. 72–82)⁴. In other words, local people constantly changed the discourse of the sacrifice to the South Sea God to set up their own sacrificial system. In addition to the sacrifices as mentioned earlier to the auxiliary gods related to the South Sea God, there were also local gods whose statues could be seen in the corridors of the Nanhaishen Temple, such as Jinhua Furen 金花夫人 (Lady Jinhua) in the east of the main gate of the temple today. People in subsequent generations followed suit and added their own interpretations to enrich and change the sacrificial ceremonies of the South Sea God over time.

Fourth, Buddhism and Daoism continued participating in state sacrificial ceremonies to the South China Sea in Guangzhou. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the Nanhaishen Temple was managed by Daoist priests, and in the Qing dynasty, Daoist priests and monks continued to supervise many affairs related to the god, thus turning the Haiguang Si 海光寺 (Haiguang Shrine) and Ningzhen Guan 凝真觀 (Ningzhen Monastery) into parts of the Nanhaishen Temple (Cui 2017, vol. 2, pp. 60–61). Though so many constructions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism shared the worship of the South Sea God, the central role of the Nanhaishen Temple was not weakened. Instead, the temple gained affluence because the monks and priests became rich in the Ming dynasty, and money was lent to people in the name of the South Sea God (Dong 1988, vol. 9, p. 237). In the Qing dynasty, there were two rooms in the Haiguang Shrine, east of the Nanhaishen Temple, in which some monks placed their calligraphy and paintings, inscriptions, posts, insects, fish, flowers, plants, and even sex tools and obscene pictures for sale, just right in front of the god status.

Moreover, it was believed that people could receive a son after they placed their hands on the navel of the reclining figure of Buddha. Buddhism was secularized to meet the needs

of the people, and so was Daoism. There was also a room in the Ningzhen Monastery, west of the Nanhaishen Temple, where the Daoist priests lived. They rented their room to the government officials and sold the inscriptions on the divine tablets for money. In fact, the Buddhist monks and Daoist priests jointly charged land fees and managed the temples (Cui 2017, vol. 2, pp. 60–61). All of these practices in the Yuan and Ming dynasties were completely different from those in Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties, when only the District Magistrate could manage the temples (Wang 2006, pp. 218, 220, 229, 253).

Fifth, the South Sea God and Tian Fei are both popular on the southeast coast of China today, which is closely related to their development trajectories after the Song dynasty. However, unlike Tian Fei who changed from a folk goddess to a national goddess, the South Sea God took the opposite path to be fully localized, as he was able to answer people's prayers, and the central court ordered the building of temples and conducted sacrifice ceremonies and activities in the local area. In the Song dynasty, for instance, the South Sea God was entitled and bestowed holy plaques to his temples four times, which showed the role of his blessings to the state and local stability. Amazed by his miraculous power, local people prayed to the god for better lives and livelihoods, safe trips and voyages, good rains and winds, peace, and prosperity, all to which the god answered, and thus he was endorsed as a local patron. The grand temple fairs in the Southern Song dynasty also proved how the South Sea God had become the most powerful god in Lingnan. On the contrary, Tian Fei originated from the folktale. Before gaining her first title Linghui Furen 靈惠夫人 (Lady Linghui), she was only one of the many local goddesses in Putian 莆田, Fujian. As foreign trade and diplomatic activities thrived in the Song dynasty, she became a national goddess in the fifth year of Xuanhe (1122) because she assisted the government troops in clamping down on an incident in Goryeo 高麗. As the record shows, "she was entitled to fifteen times since her first title as Linghui in the Song dynasty, including titles of Lady and Consort and so on" 宋自靈惠封十五次，更曰夫人、妃等 (Cheng 1986, vol. 4, p. 354).

As mentioned above, the South Sea God received the reward of the Yinghu Temple for he had manifested his power and granted blessing during the suppression of the rebellion on the Daxi Island in Guangdong in the third year of Qingyuan. In the same incident, Linghui Fei 靈惠妃 (Consort Linghui, later called Heavenly Consort) also helped by "ordering fog to blind the rebels" 以霧障之 (Zhang 2000, vol. 9, p. 185), which is obviously a miracle made up by later generations to prove her power. As similar miracles continued to appear with the blessings of Tian Fei on many other occasions, the folk belief spread to the southeast coast. In Lingnan, as Liu Kezhuang wrote, "the people in Lingnan worshipping the goddess are no different from those in Putian, so the goddess's power is far-reaching" 廣人事妃，無異於莆，蓋妃之威靈遠矣 (Liu 1986, vol. 36, p. 391). However, the Tian Fei Temple in Lingnan is still incomparable to the influence of the South Sea God. Although the worship of Tian Fei was performed in more places and had spread a wider influence than the worship of the South Sea God, the latter maintained his position as the most worshipped god in Lingnan (Wang 2006, pp. 183–96).

7. Conclusions

In this paper, focusing on the coherent theme of the evolution of the state sacrifice to the South Sea God in Guangzhou in the Song dynasty, we examine the localization of the South Sea God in his detached palaces in many counties in Lingnan. We argue that it is a crucial step for the national god to become a local patron, even though the local government officials merely supervised the construction of the detached palaces, because both the state ritual system and the local practice exerted an influence on the development of the Nanhaishen Temple. We indicate that the sacrificial ritual at the temple seemed to be merely an official ceremony, but in essence, it was a symbol of "all under Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下) in a geographical sense and of "orthodoxy" in a political and cultural sense. The sacrificial ritual was a symbol of state power in Lingnan, and it was also the result of the official implementation of the state ritual system in the local region. Five major arguments

and conclusions are drawn from the examination of the evolution in the Song dynasty, which affected the sacrifice to the South Sea God in later generations.

First, the state sacrifice to the South Sea God in the Northern Song dynasty was advanced, as the country was unified and the new ruler rectified the ritual system by following the precedents in the Tang dynasty. The suburban sacrifices near the capital and actual sacrifices in Guangzhou were both carried out as before, and local officials continued playing their role as supplicants at the special and usual sacrificial ceremonies and as supervisors at the projects of restoring the Nanhaishen Temple. The restorations were mainly funded by the Trade and Tax Revenue Departments in Guangzhou and sometimes by personal donations of some officials.

Second, state sacrifice became a critical way to defend the regime. The imperial titles were granted to the South Sea God during some major events, which was a cultural means of strengthening the ruling in Lingnan for the Song regime. Though the sacrifice to the South Sea God had been established in the Tang dynasty, it was in the Song dynasty that the god was localized in Lingnan. In the localization process, local officials played an important role. On the one hand, they were the most faithful promoters of the state ritual system, and on the other hand, they were the witnesses of local stability and prosperity. They served as a bridge to connect the central court with the local community, and thus they were crucial in the sacrifice to the South Sea God.

Third, as Lingnan was located at the southeast end of the Southern Song dynasty territory, the South Sea God had a more prominent function of defending the regime than his blessings of local stability and maritime trade. In particular, there were differences in sacrificing to the same god between the Southern and Northern Song dynasties. In the Southern Song dynasty, an eight-Chinese-character new title “Weixian” was bestowed to the god, together with the Yinghu Temple and a special selection of sacrificial music, crowns, clothes, and accessories, which were evidence of his increasing influence on the Lingnan. In addition, the Nanhaishen Temple Fair in Guangzhou was the largest of its kind in Lingnan, and both government officials and ordinary people participated with great joy.

Fourth, detached palaces of the South Sea God were built due to the proposal of government officials and the constant manifestation of the god’s power. Therefore, the god became the local patron as people were impressed by his blessings of defending the state and protecting the locals. Moreover, the stele inscription of “Stories of the Six Lords” proves that local people endorsed the state sacrificial ritual and created four auxiliary gods, such as Daxi Sikong, to the South Sea God.

Fifth, after the South Sea God became a local patron in the Song dynasty, people in later generations mainly sacrificed to the god in the East Temple while building many detached palaces in their neighborhood. By then, the state and local sacrifices were in harmony in the local community. In the subsequent dynasties, people in Lingnan interpreted their worship according to their own needs, which was important in localizing the official sacrifice in the Nanhaishen Temple. The new rituals of “Eighteen Villages Offering Sacrifices to the Lords” and “Five Princes Paying Tribute to Their Father King” prove that local people fought for *shatianliyi* and the sacrificial rights of the South Sea God. Local folklore also helped the continual localization of the god in Lingnan.

Overall, as this paper demonstrates, unlike Tian Fei who was elevated from a folk goddess to a national goddess, the South Sea God changed from a national god to a local patron, which cannot occur without the contribution of the government officials. Beginning in the Song dynasty, followers of Buddhism and Daoism participated in the state sacrifices to the South Sea God in Guangzhou. In the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the heads of the Nanhaishen Temple were Daoist priests. In the Qing dynasty, Daoist priests and monks continued to participate in many affairs of the South Sea God. As a result, the Nanhaishen Temple, the Haiguang Shrine, and Ningzhen Monastery were complementary to one another as important carriers in the sacrificial system of the South Sea God. However, the Nanhaishen Temple was still the key venue for state sacrifice, which displays the unchanged central role of Confucianism in the state ritual system.

Author Contributions: Writing—original draft, Y.W.; writing—review and editing, Y.W. and A.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Tian Fei is an official title of Mazu 媽祖, the Chinese patron goddess who is said to protect seafarers. In the past several decades, many scholars have made significant contributions to this field of research in many languages; see, for example, Li (1978), Xu and Chen (1998), Ruitenbeek (1999), Liao (2000), Lin and Zhang (2003), Takahashi (2009), Stewart and Strathern (2009), and Cai (2013).
- ² The term *sanxian liguan* 三獻禮官 refers to the three supplicants at the sacrificial ceremonies to *yue-zhen-hai-du*, namely, *chuxian* 初獻 (the First Supplicant), *yaxian* 亞獻 (the Second Supplicant), and *zhongxian* 終獻 (the Third Supplicant), who take turns to offer sacrifices to the gods in the numerical sequence. According to the Tang scholar Du You 杜佑, who took an excerpt from the classic into a new work titled *Tongdian* 通典 (Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions), an auspicious date was carefully chosen as divined, preceded by three days of partial abstinence (*sanzhai* 散齋) in residence and two days of complete abstinence (*zhizhai* 致齋) in the temple. The First Supplicant was normally the highest-level official in the local government, while the Second Supplicant and the Third Supplicant were also the senior local officials (Du 1988, vol. 112, pp. 2897–903). The sacrificial ritual to *yue-zhen-hai-du* in the Song dynasty was normally the same as in the Tang dynasty.
- ³ The term *jiaori* 筊日 refers to the day for people to throw the divining blocks in front of the god statue to ask for the god's permission in traditional China. Divining blocks are made of wood or sometimes bamboo. They are shaped similar to a crescent moon, with one side convex (also called *yin* 陰) and the other side flat (also called *yang* 陽). If the blocks fall with one flat, one convex, it means that the “sacred combinations” (*shengbei* 聖杯) are gained, and the god grants his permission. One should obtain three “sacred combinations” in a row to finish the ceremony, or he should throw the divining blocks again.
- ⁴ The term *shatianliyi* 沙田利益 literally means “the profits of sand fields”. Beginning in the Song dynasty, many dykes were built at the Pearl River Delta, causing a large amount of sediment in the Pearl River to be deposited and reclaimed to form sand fields. The newly silted sand fields can be used to plant crops and to harvest fish and shrimps, and thus to generate profits. As a result, disputes constantly occurred as people fought for the ownership and the profits of sand fields (see Qu 1985, pp. 51–54). In order to resolve disputes, people sometimes turned to the South Sea God for help. They either arranged negotiations in front of the god figure or held a sacrificial ceremony to throw the divining blocks so as to share the profits fairly.

References

- Cai, Xianghui 蔡相輝. 2013. *Mazu Xinyang Yanjiu* 媽祖信仰研究 [Study on Mazu Belief]. Taipei: Xiuwei Information Technology Company.
- Cheng, Duanxue 程端學 (1278–1344). 1986. *Jizhai ji* 積齋集 [Jizhai Collection]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Cui, Bi 崔弼 (1747–1835). 2017. *Boluo waiji* 波羅外紀 [Stories of Boluo Temple]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House.
- Dong, Yue 董說 (1620–1686). 1988. *Fengcaoan ji* 豐草庵集 [Fengcaoan Collection]. Congshu jicheng xubian 叢書集成續編 ed. Taipei: Xinwenfeng Publishing Company.
- Du, You 杜佑 (735–812). 1988. *Tongdian* 通典 [Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Faure, David 科大衛. 1999. *Guojia yu liyi*: Song zhi Qing zhongye zhuijiang sanjiaozhou difang shehui de guojia rentong 國家與禮儀：宋至清中葉珠江三角洲地方社會的國家認同 [State and Rituals: The Integration of Local Society into the Chinese State in the Pearl River Delta from Northern Song to Mid-Qing]. *Journal of Sun Yet-san University* 5: 65–72.
- Guo, Fei 郭霽 (1529–1605). 2012. *Lingnan mingsheng ji* 嶺南名勝記 [Record of the Famous Scenic Spots in Lingnan]. Xi'an: Santai Chubanshe.
- Guo, Wenbing 郭文炳, ed. 1994. *Kangxi Dongguan Xianzhi* 康熙東莞縣誌 [Dongguan Chronicle in the Reign of Kangxi]; Dongguan: General Office of the People's Government of Dongguan.
- Hansen, Valerie. 2016. *Bianqian zhishen: Nansong shiqi de minjian xinyang* 變遷之神：南宋時期的民間信仰 [Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276]. Translated by Weimin Bao 包偉民. Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company.
- Han, Yong 韓雍 (1422–1478). 1986. *Xiangyi wenji* 襄毅文集 [Essay Collection of Xiangyi]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Hong, Kuo 洪適 (1117–1184). 1986. *Panzhou wenji* 盤洲文集 [Essay Collection of Panzhou]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Huang, Zhaohui 黃兆輝, and Shuhui Zhang 張菽暉. 2014. *Nanhaishenmiao beike ji* 南海神廟碑刻集 [Collection of Stele Inscriptions in the Nanhaishen Temple]. Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House.
- Inoue, Toru 井上徹. 2003. *Weixiao de daohui yinciling yanjiu*: Guangdong minjian xinyang yu rujiao 魏校的搗毀淫祠令研究——廣東民間信仰與儒教 [Study of Wei Jiao's Ordinance on Extinguishing Yinci Popular Religion and Confucianism in Guangdong Area]. *Historical Review* 2: 41–51.
- Jiang, Zhiqi 蔣之奇 (1031–1104). 2007. *Linghuasi ji* 靈化寺記 [A Record of Linghua Monastery]. In *Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng* 廣東歷代方誌集成 [The Integration of Guangdong Local Chronicles]. Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Publishing House.

- Li, Tao 李燾 (1115–1184). 1992. *Xu zizhitongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Full Edition of History as a Mirror]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Xianzhang 李獻璋. 1978. 媽祖信仰的研究 [Study on Mazu Belief]. Tokyo: Tianshan Relics Press.
- Li, Xinchuan 李心傳 (1166–1243). 1986. *Jianyan yilai xinianyaolu* 建炎以來系年要錄 [Major Records of the Chronicle from the First Year of Jianyan]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Liangchao gangmu beiyao* 兩朝綱目備要 [Outline of the Two Dynasties]. 1995. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Liao, Disheng 廖迪生. 2000. *Xianggang tianhou chongbai* 香港天后崇拜 [Worship of Tianhou in Hong Kong]. Hong Kong: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Lin, Meirong 林美蓉, and Xun Zhang 張珣, eds. 2003. *Mazu xinyang de fazhan yu bianqian* 媽祖信仰的發展與變遷 [Development and Evolution of Mazu Belief]. Taipei: Taiwan Religious Association Press.
- Liu, Kezhuan 劉克莊 (1184–1269). 1986. *Houcun ji* 後村集 [Houcun Collection]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Ma, Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254–1340). 2011. *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 [A Companion of Literature]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ouyang, Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), ed. 1996. *Taichang Yingeli* 太常因革禮 [Rituals in the Northern Song Dynasty]. Xuxiu Siku quanshu 續修四庫全書 ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Pi, Qingsheng 皮慶生. 2008. *Songdai minzhong cishen xinyang yanjiu* 宋代民眾祠神信仰研究 [Study on the Popular Folk Gods of Temples in the Song Dynasty]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Qin, Huitian 秦蕙田 (1702–1764). 1986. *Wuli tongkao* 五禮通考 [General Study on the Five Rites]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Qu, Dajun 屈大均 (1630–1696). 1985. *Guangdong Xinyu* 廣東新語 [New Discourse of Guangdong]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ren, Guo 任果, and Cui Tan 檀萃, eds. 2007. *Qianlong panyu xianzhi* 乾隆番禺縣誌 [Panyu Chronicle in the Reign of Qianlong]. In *Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng* 廣東歷代方誌集成 [The Integration of Guangdong Local Chronicles]. Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Publishing House.
- Ruitenbeek, Klaas. 1999. Mazu, the Patroness of Sailors, in Chinese Pictorial Art. *Artibus Asiae* 58: 281–329.
- Shi, Mingli 史明立. 2021. Boluodan wuzhichaowang yu shibaxiang gefeng liuhou: Ming qing difang shehui zhengduo shatian liyi de jieguo 波羅誕“五子朝王”與“十八鄉各奉六侯”——明清地方社會爭奪沙田利益的結果 [“Five Princes Paying Tribute to Their Father King” and “Eighteen Villages Offering Sacrifices to the Six Lords” at the Boluo Temple Fair: The Result of Fighting for Shatianliyi in the Local Community in the Ming and Qing Dynasties]. *Collection of Beijing Folk Studies* 8: 72–82.
- Stewart, Pamela, and Andrew Strathern. 2009. Growth of the Mazu Complex in Cross-Straits Contexts (Taiwan, and Fujian Province, China). *Journal of Ritual Studies* 23: 67–72.
- Su, Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101). 1986. *Dongpo quanji* 東坡全集 [Complete Collection of Dongpo]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Takahashi, Seiichi 高橋誠一. 2009. Nihon ni okeru tenpi sinkou no ten kai to sono rekisi tiri gaku teki soku men 日本における天妃信仰の展開とその歴史地理学的側面 [Historic Geographical Profiles of the Belief in Voyage Goddess (Tenpi) in Japan]. *Higasi azia bunka kousyuu kenkyuu* 東アジア文化交渉研究 [Journal of East Asian Cultural Interaction Studies], 121–44.
- Tuqto'a 脱脱 (1314–1356). 1977. *Songshi* 宋史 [Song History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Jianchuan 王見川, and Qingsheng Pi 皮慶生. 2010. *Zhongguo jinshi minjianxinyang: Song yuan ming qing* 中國近世民間信仰：宋元明清 [Folk Worship in Contemporary China: Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Wang, Xiangzhi 王象之 (1163–1230). 2005. *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 [Geographical Record]. Chengdu: Sichuan University Company.
- Wang, Yongrui 汪永瑞. 2007. *Kangxi Guangzhou fuzhi* 康熙廣州府志 [Guangzhou Chronicle in the Reign of Kangxi]. In *Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng* 廣東歷代方誌集成 [The Integration of Guangdong Local Chronicles]. Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Publishing House.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2006. *Guojia Jisi Yu Haishang Silu Yiji: Guangzhou Nanhaishenmiao Yanjiu* 國家祭祀與海上絲路遺跡：廣州南海神廟研究 [State Sacrifice and the Relics of Maritime Silk Road: Study on the Temple of the South Sea God in Guangzhou]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Yuanlin. 2010. Mingqing guojia lizhi zhong de sihai jisi 明清國家禮制中的四海祭祀 [Sacrifice to the Four Seas in the State Ritual System in the Ming and Qing Dynasties]. *Exploration and Free Views* 4: 73–77.
- Wang, Yuanlin. 2021. Tangdai nanhaishenmiao jisiliyi yu guanyuan yanjiu 唐代南海神廟祭祀禮儀與官員研究 [The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China]. *Religions* 12: 960. [CrossRef]
- Xu, Song 徐松 (1781–1848). 2014. *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 [Draft of Song Institutions]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Xu, Xiaowang 徐曉望, and Yande Chen 陳衍德. 1998. *Aomen Mazu Wenhua Yanjiu* 澳門媽祖文化研究 [Study in Mazu Culture of Macau]. Macau: Macau Foundation Press.
- Yang, Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206). 1986. *Chengzhai ji* 誠齋集 [Chengzhai Collection]. Siku quanshu 四庫全書 ed. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Zhang, Xie 張燮 (1574–1640). 2000. *Dongxiyang kao* 東西洋考 [Study on the East and West Seas]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhongxing lishu* 中興禮書 [Book of the Zhongxing Ritual]. 1996. Xuxiu Siku quanshu 續修四庫全書 ed. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Zhu, Guangwen 朱光文, and Zhiwei Liu 劉志偉. 2017. *Panyu lishiwenhua gailun* 番禺歷史文化概論 [Introduction to the History and Culture in Panyu]. Guangzhou: Sun Yat-sen University Press.

Article

Water Spirits of the Yangzi River and Imperial Power in Traditional China

Hua Yang

The Center of Traditional Chinese Cultural Studies, History Department, Wuhan University, Wuhan 430072, China; horace48@163.com

Abstract: Most research on the water spirits of the Yangzi has focused on popular worship and paid little attention to the Confucian discourse and its major role in establishing imperial legitimacy. Yet it is a crucial aspect to understand traditional politics in China. The water spirits of the Yangzi River and its tributaries and lakes were venerated, offered imperial sacrifices, and incorporated into codes of state ritual in traditional China. The canonized sacrifices to the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin symbolized the religious–political legitimacy of the imperial regimes. When an imperial court offered sacrifice to the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin incorporated by previous dynasties, this action demonstrated that the current court directly connected to past regimes and inherited the authority of sacrifice passed down from the ancient and the orthodox tradition of Confucian ritual classics. Since the majority of dynasty capitals in traditional China were located in the north with fewer rivers, worshipping water spirits of the Yangzi River basin would imply recognition and blessing from southern divinities. The practice of granting noble titles and temple plaques to those water spirits would further demonstrate the imperial courts’ control over the divine power. By communicating with and managing the water spirits of the Yangzi River, the imperial courts would also symbolize their political and military administration over the south and they are united, rather than divided, regimes.

Keywords: the Yangzi River; water spirits; official sacrifice; codes of state ritual; imperial power

Citation: Yang, Hua. 2022. Water Spirits of the Yangzi River and Imperial Power in Traditional China. *Religions* 13: 387. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050387>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 14 March 2022

Accepted: 18 April 2022

Published: 22 April 2022

Publisher’s Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The Yangzi River 長江 or Jiangdu 江瀆 (Watercourse of Yangzi River) is one of the four watercourses (*sidu* 四瀆) that was included in the traditional Chinese state sacrificial ritual to mountain and water spirits. Moreover, since the Yangzi River basin has numerous tributaries and related lakes, its many major and minor water spirits had also been venerated, offered imperial sacrifices to, and incorporated into codes of state ritual (*sidian* 祀典) in traditional China. Similar to other codes of state ritual systems, the canonized sacrifices to the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin symbolized the religious–political legitimacy of the imperial regimes.

Documental records of water spirits were incomplete in the past and are insufficiently studied in the present. Academic studies on this topic can be roughly divided into three types. The first is the research on the popular worship of water spirits, mainly investigating folk cults and culture (Huang 1934; Li 1957, pp. 63–78; Wang and Li 2009, pp. 203–6; Wang and Qian 2014, pp. 5–11; Li and Li 2013, pp. 93–98). The second type is general studies on the four waterways, mainly discussing the formational process and some details of the four major water spirits (Xu 1989, pp. 340–42; Li 2015, pp. 89–116; Jia 2021). The third is to focus the study of water spirits on a specific dynasty or period (Hansen 2016; Yang 2012, pp. 287–312; Yang 2021, pp. 128–74; Tian 2011, pp. 47–70; Zhu 2007, pp. 71–124; Wang 2006, pp. 12–17; Chen 2009, pp. 193–95; X. Ma 2011, pp. 193–96; Qian 2000, pp. 237–58). Generally speaking, there seems to be a scholarly tendency on periodized, localized, and popular history of water spirits, which has neither paid much attention to examining the

overall situation of the state ritual codes 禮典 concerning water spirits of the Yangzi River nor reflected upon the symbolic significance of those ritual codes in terms of legitimating imperial power.

This article studies the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin located in south China, which is a topic that has not been systematically discussed by scholars. In particular, it focuses on those water spirits that had been incorporated into the codes of state ritual, that is, the parts of “ritual”; those water spirits active only in folk legends and cults, that is, the parts of “folklore”, are not our main concern. The article seeks to scrutinize how the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin were incorporated into codes of state ritual and how these ritual codes of official sacrifice were implemented to symbolize the religious–political legitimacy of the imperial power and the geographical unity of the dynastical regimes.

This article utilizes ample textual evidence, including official histories, veritable records, local gazettes, and Confucian classics, with the addition of newly excavated bamboo manuscripts from the Chu state, where the southern part of the Yangzi is located, during the period of Spring and Autumn and the Warring States.

2. The Incorporation of the Yangzi River into the Four Waterways and Codes of State Ritual

In addition to oracle bones and bronze inscriptions and bamboo and silk manuscripts (Liu 2017, pp. 509–43), the pre-Qin 先秦 literature, such as the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Book of Documents*), the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classic of Poetry*), the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary*), the *Yili* 儀禮 (*Classic of Ritual*), the *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Ritual*), and the *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Ritual of Zhou*), frequently mentions state sacrifices to mountains and waters. Only a selected few, however, actually make reference to the concept of the four waterways. The *Yili*, probably compiled between the fifth century BCE and the middle of the fourth century BCE by disciples of Confucius and later scholars (Shen 1999, pp. 1–54), says that “worshipping the sun outside the southern gate, worshipping the moon and the four waterways outside the northern gate, and worshipping the mountains and hills outside the western gate” 禮日于南門外，禮月與四瀆於北門外，禮山川丘陵於西門外 (Zheng and Jia 2021, pp. 844–45). Another text titled *Erya* 爾雅 (*Correct Words*), dated latest to the third century BCE (Cobin 1997, pp. 99–104), states that “the Yangzi River, the Yellow River, the Huai River and the Ji River are the four waterways with their own origins and flowing into the seas” 江、河、淮、濟為四瀆。四瀆者，發源注海者也 (Guo and Xing 2000, p. 409). The “Wangzhi” 王制 (*Royal Regulations*) chapter in the *Liji*¹ also records that “the son of heaven offers sacrifices to mountains and waters, and sees the five sacred peaks as dukes and the four waterways as regional rulers. The regional rulers make sacrifices to mountains and waters within their own kingdoms” 天子祭天下名山大川，五嶽視三公，四瀆視諸侯。諸侯祭名山大川之在其地者 (Zheng and Kong 2000, pp. 677–80). Although the completion date of this chapter remains dubious, it is almost certain that the concept of the four waterways had already existed within the Confucian discourse during the Warring States Period (ca. 481–221 BCE). Yet, since not a single state during the pre-Qin period had managed to govern all the four waterways (and the five sacred peaks), this geographical concept was more likely to be a version—or a vision—of an early Confucian construct².

There is ample evidence suggesting that only the Chu state 楚國 during the pre-Qin period established its four sacred rivers: the Yangzi River, the Han River 漢水, the Ju River 沮水, and the Zhang River 漳水. According to the *Zuozhuan*, when King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (r. 515–489 BCE) fell ill, he was reluctant to offer sacrifices to the spirit of the Yellow River 黃河; instead, he claimed that “the Yangzi River, the Han River, the Ju River, and the Zhang River are Chu’s renowned waters” 江、漢、沮、漳，楚之望也 (Yang 1981, p. 1636). Recent discoveries at Xincai 新蔡 in Henan province also corroborate the existence of these spirits in four sacred rivers. One of the bamboo manuscripts, for instance, specifically states that “from the Yangzi River, Han River, the Ju River, the Zhang River and extended to the Huai River, [we] offered sacrifices to Chu ancestors Laotong and Zhu Rong” 及江、漢、沮、漳，延至於淮，是日就禱楚先老童、祝[融] (Chen et al. 2009, pp. 403, 433).

River worship during the Qin dynasty paid less attention to the Guandong 關東 region (literally means “east of the Hangu Pass” 函谷關) and still centered around a few main streams located in the Guanzhong 關中 basin, northwestern China. According to the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*), the Qin generally offered sacrifices to two major parts of the Yangzi River: the Han River (also known as Mian River 沔水) and the headwaters in Sichuan 四川 region. Interestingly, the Han River actually preceded the Yangzi River, and both were toured by the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 247–210 BCE) after Qin’s wars of unification. In the early Western Han dynasty 西漢 (206 BCE–8 CE), the imperial court also greatly treasured the Han River. For instance, the Emperor Wen of Han 漢文帝 (r. 202–157 BCE) once “bestowed two jade wares” to the Yellow River and Han River, while the Yangzi River was not mentioned (Sima 1959, p. 1381; Ban 1962, p. 1212)³.

The formation of the concept of five sacred peaks 五岳 and four waterways as a political agenda can be dated to as early as the Western Han period. Emperor Wudi of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) traveled by the Yangzi River several times and visited all the five sacred peaks and four waterways (Sima 1959, p. 1403; Ban 1962, p. 1247). During the reign of Emperor Xuandi 漢宣帝 (r. 74–49 BCE), the imperial court officially established a regular state ritual system for the five sacred peaks and four waterways and “offer seasonal sacrifices to major rivers and seas and pray for a good harvest”. To be specific, this ritual was carried out by offering sacrifices to the Yellow River at Linjin 臨晉, the Yangzi River at Jiangdu 江都 (present-day Yangzhou, Jiangsu), the Huai River 淮河 at Pingshi 平氏, the Ji River 濟水 at Linyi 臨邑. The emperor would send off officials to temples dedicated to these rivers three times a year on average, five times for higher-ranked Mount Tai 泰山 and the Yellow River 黃河, and four times for the Yangzi River (Ban 1962, p. 1249). Since the Ji River and the Han River remained to be worshipped three times a year, it seems evident that the Yangzi River’s religious-political status was significantly promoted (Yang 2021).

Further specifications were added to this state ritual system by later imperial courts based on early Confucian theories. Spirits of the four waterways, along with the five sacred peaks, four strongholds, and four seas, were listed as earthly deities ranked only second to heavenly gods. Precisely because the five sacred peaks and four waterways represented the imperium, dismantling their associated temples was equally symbolic of destroying the imperial court’s ancestral temple and land. When the Jurchen tribes marched south, and Emperor Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1101–1125) and Emperor Qinzong 宋欽宗 (r. 1126–1127) were abducted, one major operation was simply to “burn down temples of former emperors and the five sacred peaks, four waterways, and other major mountains and rivers.” Shortly after reestablishing the Southern Song 南宋, the imperial court hurriedly issued an edict to rebuild all the damaged temples in the fourth year of Jianyan 建炎 (1130) (Xu 2014, p. 989).

It should be noted that the imperial court had exclusive authority over sacrifices to mountains and waters. Ordinary people and even noble families did not enjoy such privilege and would be seriously punished for violating the rule. According to a record during the Yuan dynasty 元朝 (1271–1386), “All the sacred peaks, strongholds, and famous mountains are timely offered sacrifices by the nation. Ordinary folks are forbidden to overstep the ritual to worship them. All the five sacred peaks, four waterways, and five strongholds are timely offered regular sacrifices by the nation. All princes, princesses, and princess consorts are forbidden to send persons to burn incense and offer sacrifices” 諸岳鎮名山，國家之所秩祀，小民輒僭禮犯義，以祈禱褻瀆者，禁之。諸五岳、四瀆、五鎮，國家秩祀有常，諸王、公主、駙馬輒遣人降香致祭者，禁之 (Song 1977, p. 2636). On the one hand, those mountain and water spirits that were included in the state ritual codes must be offered sacrifices timely and properly, and “if one neglects to worship mountain and water spirits, one’s land would be confiscated by the emperor” 山川神祇，有不舉者不敬，不敬者君削以地 (Zheng and Kong 2000, p. 638). On the other hand, offering sacrifices to mountain and water spirits without the emperor’s permission was a serious violation of imperial power and would be sternly punished. For example, according to the *Suishu* 隋書 (*Sui History*), ordinary people who dared to damage statues of the mountain and water spirits would be sentenced to death (Wei and Linghu 1973, p. 715). In 1297, Emperor

Chengzong of Yuan 元成宗 (r. 1294–1307) sternly punished the princes who privately made sacrifices to the five sacred peaks and four waterways (Song 1977, p. 411).

Sacrifices to the water spirits of the Yangzi River were not limited to the four waterways; rather, the sacrifices were quite hierarchical with the spirit of the Yangzi River on top, spirits of tributaries and related lakes of the Yangzi River that had been incorporated into codes of state ritual in the middle, and spirits that had not been part of any state ritual system but worshipped by common people at the bottom. The imperial court, of course, valued only the first two. The so-called “codes of state ritual” were at large a catalog of ritual ceremonies. The *Liji* specifically states that this catalog only contains two kinds of deities: natural spirits and personal spirits. The former includes “the sun, moon, and stars which people look upon” and “wooded mountains, valleys, and hills where people profit from”. The latter includes five categories: “[sacrifice offered] to those who had implemented laws to the people, to those who had devoted their lives to duties, to those who had contributed to the state with industry, to those who had successfully resolved calamities, and to those who had repelled demons” (Zheng and Kong 2000, pp. 2235–39). Many personal spirits included in the ritual codes were related to water, such as Gun and Yu 禹, who regulated rivers and watercourses, Xuan Ming 玄冥, who was a water official, and many others who resolved water-related disasters.

These codes of state ritual were not merely ceremonial; they often involved decision-making on establishing temples, costs of rituals, selection of priests, and regulating etiquette. This also explains why “excessive sacrifices” (*yinsi* 淫祀) and “profane rituals” (*duli* 黷禮) were always under attack by the imperial court. Similarly, granting noble tiles and plaques to temples of water spirits was essentially to incorporate these spirits into codes of state ritual and become “orthodox rituals” (*zhengsi* 正祀) approved by the imperial court; in short, it was an act of canonization⁴. Canonized spirits were naturally under protection and uncanonized ones were “not to be worshipped,” as seen in the edicts issued in the first year of Yanping 延平 (106 CE) during the Eastern Han 東漢 and the first year of Qinglong 青龍 (233 CE), during the Caowei 曹魏 period (Li 1972, p. 987; Fan 1965, p. 196; Fang 1974, p. 600).

3. The Water Spirits of the Yangzi River and the Succession of Imperial Powers

Official histories provide us with a general picture of the historical development, locations, and ceremonial details of sacrifices made to the water spirits of the Yangzi River (Du 1984; D. Ma 2011; Qin 2020; Xu 2014). According to our statistics based on these histories, from the Qin to Qing, there are more than three hundred records of imperial sacrifices to the Yangzi River. In general development, the first trend is that the frequency of sacrifices dedicated to the Yangzi River and the number of historical records increase over time. The second trend shows that those sacrifices tend to be very periodic during times of political stability and irregularly war-orientated during times of turmoil and division. The earliest was attributed to the First Emperor of Qin, and the latest date to the first year of the Xuantong 宣統 (1908) (Zhao et al. 1977, p. 969). In a similar manner to worshipping Confucius temples, imperial mausoleums, and the five sacred peaks and four waterways, the last emperor of China still kept the practice of sending off officials to offer sacrifices to the spirit of the Yangzi River in order to announce the legitimacy of his throne. In other words, the tradition of offering sacrifices to the Yangzi River has lasted as long as the history of imperial China.

One rudimentary concept of such tradition proposed in the *Liji* is that “one ought not to reestablish any sacrifice which has been officially repealed or to repeal any which has been so established” 凡祭，有其廢之，莫敢舉也；有其舉之，莫敢廢也 (Zheng and Kong 2000, p. 273). Once a code of state ritual was established, the later imperial courts would not dare to challenge it; otherwise, it would be deemed as an act of sacrilege. Therefore, one of the major cultural tasks of all imperial regimes was to establish laws and regulations; chief among them was to offer sacrifices to previous spirits.

For example, after the establishment of the Han regime by Emperor Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE), he immediately started to prepare continuing state rituals of the previous regime and issued an edict stating that “as for sacrifices to the Lord on High or for the worship of the mountains, rivers, or other spirits, let the ceremonies be performed in due season as they were in the past” 上帝之祭及山川諸神當祠者，各以其時禮祠之如故 (Sima 1959, p. 1378), and then “summoned all of the former ritual officials of the Qin dynasty and restored the posts of master of invocations and grand supervisor, ordering these officials to carry out the rites and ceremonies as they had in the past” 悉召故秦祀官，復置太祝、太宰，如其故儀禮 (Fang 1974, p. 164). Such act of restoring the “past” had been continuously practiced across all imperial dynasties, and whenever there was a change of dynasty, enthronement, confer of princes, and victory of war, commissioners were sent to offer sacrifices to the four waterways.

Wars and rebellions were major factors contributing to temple destructions. Whenever a national turmoil ended, the imperial court would immediately initiate sacrificial rituals to mountains and waters. When the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) reestablished its regime in the Jiangnan region, Emperor Mingdi 晉明帝 (r. 322–325) quickly announced a series of sacrificial rituals to mountains and waters, including the five sacred peaks, four waterways, and others “on the record of codes of state ritual” in the third year of Taining 太寧 (325) (Fang 1974, p. 164). This action was simply to symbolize the fact that Eastern Jin inherited the heaven’s mandate of the Western Jin to rule. Similar practices were also seen in the Song dynasty. In the ninth year of Kaibao 開寶 (976), Emperor Taizu 宋太祖 (r. 960–976) ordered the repair of the previous temples dedicated to the five sacred peaks and four waterways (Toqto’a 1977, p. 48). Eight years later, due to a breach of the Yellow River in Hua County 滑縣, the imperial court initiated a sacrifice to the river in Baima ford 白馬津 and thus formed a ritualistic custom. Then, the secretary Li Zhi 李至 submitted a memorial to the throne:

On the days of greeting the seasonal qi in the five suburbs, sacrifices were offered to all the sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways. Since the chaos of war, those who were outside the central territories started to ignore offering sacrifices. After the country was united, although they were ordered to offer sacrifices, they did not take it as a regular practice. I hope the old ritual to be followed, and officials of relevant prefectures to act as ritualists according to their ranks on the days of greeting the seasonal qi. 按五郊迎氣之日，皆祭逐方嶽鎮海瀆。自兵亂後，有不在封域者，遂闕其祭。國家克復四方，間雖奉詔特祭，未著常祀。望遵舊禮，就迎氣日各祭於所隸之州，長吏以次為獻官 (Toqto’a 1977, p. 2485).

With such principle of “following the old ritual tradition,” the Northern Song thus resumed the ritual of offering sacrifices to the sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways in the five quarters of east, south, west, north, and center on the days of greeting seasonal qi (the corresponding days of the beginning of spring, summer, autumn, winter, and the earth god (eighteen days before the beginning of autumn), which was framed with the five-phase cosmology.

The Jiangdu Temple, the temple of the primary water spirit of the Yangzi River, was built in Chengdu, which had been recognized by all imperial courts. Although it was located to the west of the capitals of some dynasties (such as Kaifeng 開封) in the Northern Song Dynasty and Lin’an (Hangzhou 杭州) in the Southern Song Dynasty, it was still largely considered a southern deity based on the five-phase cosmology, which partially explains why most sacrifices to water spirits were carried out at the beginning of summer.

In fact, all the capitals of the past dynasties had relentlessly tried to rebuild altars of mountains and waters and insisted on offering sacrifices to the spirit of the Yangzi River at the beginning of summer when greeting the seasonal qi. This was entirely caused by the concept of “following the old ritual tradition” and “revering ancient canonized codes” (Yang 2020). The worship and ceaseless succession of sacrifices to water spirits of the Yangzi River is first and foremost a symbol of the continuity of the Chinese ritual system and political legitimacy. For example, it is recorded in the *Jinshu* 晉書 (*Jin History*) that during

the reign of Emperor Mudi 穆帝 (r. 343–361) of Eastern Jin, after having established its political power in the south of the Yangzi River for more than half a century, the ritual officials were still emphasizing the importance of "revering previous ritual codes, [we] will wait for the imperial carriage to return to the north to examine ancient regulations and greatly correct the institutions" 崇明前典，俟皇北旋，稽古憲章，大厘制度 (Fang 1974, p. 598).

4. Conferring Titles to Water Spirits and the Control of Divine Power

The water spirits of the Yangzi River basin were commonly granted titles of "king" or "marquis" by the states and local governments in the past dynasties (at least 135 cases). These cases, in fact, were not "relatively random", as some scholars say (Zhu 2007, pp. 71–124; Zhu 2022), but had very specific political motives behind them and were one of the key measures for the imperial court to control the divine power.

In the first month of the sixth year of Tianbao 天寶 (747), Emperor Xuanzong of Tang 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756) conferred titles to the spirits of the four waterways:

Since the five sacred peaks were already conferred titles of king, the four waterways should be elevated to dukes. The Yellow River would be Duke of Numinous Source, the Ji River Duke of Pure Source, the Yangzi River Duke of Vast Source, and the Huai River Duke of Long Source. 五岳既已封王，四瀆當升公位，封河瀆靈源公，濟瀆清源公，江瀆廣源公，淮瀆為長源公 (Liu 1975, p. 221).

The emperor then ordered the local officials to offer sacrifices to these water spirits. This obviously exceeded the rank of "the four waterways are seen as maquis" in the *Liji*, and for the first time, the Yangzi River was elevated from the marquis class to the duke class (Qin 2020, p. 2031). Successive emperors conferred titles on water spirits of the Yangzi basin to demonstrate they received divine approval and protection, similar to the Wu 吳 regime of the Five Dynasties 五代 in the Jiangnan area, the Ma 馬 regime of the Five Dynasties in the Dongting Lake 洞庭湖 area, and Emperor Chengzu of Ming 明成祖.

The divine titles of water spirits had political, economic, military, and other practical functions. Such efforts were most commonly observed during the Song era, especially in the late Northern Song (23 times in the reign of Emperor Huizong) and the early Southern Song (25 times in the reign of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 and 14 in the reign of Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗). During the Song era (especially the Southern Song), since the fiscal revenue depended on Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and particularly Sichuan, the titles were conferred quite frequently on the spirits of the Min River 岷江, Tuo River 沱江, and Jialing River 嘉陵江 in the upper reaches of the Yangzi River. The Jialing River was titled the "Marquis of Benevolent Deliverance" (Shanjihou 善濟侯) because it was "a waterway for military transportation" and the economic lifeline and strategic channel of the Southern Song for fighting the Jin regime in the north (Li 2013). The Yanquan Guyong 鹽泉沽湧 (literally means the fountain of salt spring) in the Daning river of the Three Gorges 三峽大寧河 upstream was granted the "King" title by Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 and Gaozong for providing resources for local people and governments. Another case in point is the Hanzhong 漢中 area; as the front line against the Jin 金 army in the Southern Song, the local water spirits were also granted many titles. The assistance of the water spirits of the Yangzi River was considered as very vital in politics, and some regimes conferred titles to water spirits in return after the establishment of their states.

Madang 馬當 (present-day Pengze 彭澤 of Jiangxi Province), Caishi 采石 (present-day Maanshan 馬鞍山 of Anhui Province), and Zhenjiang 鎮江 (or Jinshan 金山), located in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi, were referred to as three guardians of waters 水府三官 due to their strategic location and rich in picturesque peaks and rocks. Naturally, there were many temples built in these three places, which attracted many pilgrims (Wang and Qian 2014, pp. 5–11). However, as fortresses separated the south and the north, their military significance was much more crucial. During the Five Dynasties period, Yang Fu 楊溥 (900–938), the emperor of the Southern Wu (the capital was founded in Jiangu 江都, now Yangzhou 揚州), greatly valued these three guardians of waters.

In the first month of the second year of Qianzhen (928), he granted a title to Madang as “Shangshuifu ningjiang wang” 上水府寧江王 (The Upper Water King of Pacifying the Yangzi River), Caishi as “Zhongshuifu dingjiang wang” 中水府定江王 (The Middle Water King of Fortifying the Yangzi River), and Jinshan as “Xiashuifu zhenjiang wang” 下水府鎮江王 (The Lower Water King of Guarding the Yangzi River) (Ouyang 1974, p. 758). For the first time, the three water spirits of Madang, Caishi, and Jinshan, along with other water spirits in Chengdu, were promoted as “Kings 王”. During Emperor Zhenzong’s 真宗 reign in the Northern Song, imperial patronage remained to be a continuous effort and the three water spirits received longer titles on the seventeenth day of the ninth month in the second year of Dazhongxiangfu (1009 AD): [the imperial court] granted the title of “Shangshuifu fushan anjiang wang” 上水府福善安江王 (The Upper Water King of Blessing, Benevolence, and Pacifying the Yangzi River) to Madang in Jiangzhou, “Zhongshuifu shunsheng pingjiang wang” 中水府順聖平江王 (The Middle Water King of Submission, Sacredness, and Fortifying the Yangzi River) to Caishi in Taiping, and “Xiashuifu zhaoxin taikang wang” 下水府昭信泰江王 (Lower Water King of Guarding the Yangzi River) to Jinshan in Runzhou (Toqto’a 1977, p. 2486). Because Emperor Zhenzhong had just held an imperial ritual by offering sacrifices to Mount Tai, granting titles to the three water spirits was just another religious act to prove the legitimacy of the throne and his capacity for dealing with domestic and foreign affairs (Tang 1995, pp. 9–13; Tang 2003, pp. 146–64). During the Southern Song, the Yangzi River in the south reach became particularly important to defend against the Jurchen troops. In the thirty-first year of Shaoxing (1161), Many counties in the lower reaches of the Yangzi River, such as Zhenjiang, Jiankang, and Taiping counties, were already frontlines. The Jurchen troops intended to cross the river from Dantu 丹徒 (present-day Zhenjiang in Jiangsu province) but eventually failed due to a fierce gale on the water. The scholar-officials of the Southern Song believed that they were protected by the water spirits’ “yinyou” 陰佑, which literally means “secrete protection”, so they immediately proposed to promote the ranks of Jinshan and Caishi and offer sacrifices. Some even suggested the title of “Di” 帝 (emperor). They finally reached a consensus by establishing a new temple in Jiankang (present-day Nanjing) with an imperial plaque titled “Deyou” 德佑 (Virtuous Protection), lengthening the titles of water spirits even further as “Zhaoling fuying weilie guang yuan wang” 昭靈孚應威烈廣源王 (Numinous, Prestigious and Formidable King of Numerous Streams), and granting the title of “Di” after recapturing the North. This is just one of many examples to show how the Southern Song expressed gratitude to the water spirits of the Yangzi River due to the military significance of the three waters (Li 2013, p. 3810). The Southern Song was grateful to the Yangzi River for its natural role of geographical location in resisting the southward march of Jin troops, while Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, Emperor Taizu of Ming, was grateful to the rivers, lakes, ports, and streams of the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi River for their help in subduing other rebel armies at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. The reason why the cult of the water spirit Xiao Gong 蕭公 in the Gan River 贛江 basin was able to grow was precisely because the Xiao clan used their incense money from Xiao Gong Temple to support the war against the Miao 苗 rebellion. In short, there seems to be a dynamic discourse centered around the concept of rewarding the water spirits of major rivers with noble titles for their military, economic, and spiritual assistance.

The imperial court’s conferral of titles on water spirits popular among common people was an expression of accommodating public opinions and appeased local societies. In the eyes of ordinary Chinese, water spirits could always suppress disturbance, defeat the evil, bless water travel, and bring good rains to agriculture. Keith Stevens studies a variety of water deities largely worshipped by popular cultures and local people in the Yangzi basin, including Dragon Kings 龍王, the Frog Spirit 水怪蛤蟆精, the Crab Spirit 水怪螃蟹精, the spirit of the lake 湖精, the Prince of the Golden Dragon 金龍大王, the Great Yu 大禹, Qu Yuan 屈原, Lu Ban 魯班 (patron deity of boat builders), Three Guardians of the Waters 水府三官, Yang Laoda 楊老大 (the spirit of the Yangzi), Xiang Yu 項羽 and many other deities (Stevens 2007). However, most of these were usually regarded as minor folk

religion water deities whose cults have spread across southern China; in other words, they were not incorporated into codes of state ritual and thus were not officially recognized by the imperial court. For example, Yang Si 楊泗, or Yang Laoda 楊老大, had no shrines dedicated to him. Similarly, there has been no textual evidence showing that Yang Si had been granted imperial titles, nor had his temples received any imperial plaque. In short, he was just a folk deity and only became popular during the Ming and Qing periods. Yet, it is undeniable that the imperial would have enlisted them into codes of state ritual when peasants, boatmen, fishermen, and whoever depends on harvests and the safety of waters regarded them as a protective deity of water transport, a patron of harvest, or a god of prosperity. Another example is the Dragon King cult. In contrast, there were many temples dedicated to Dragon Kings across China, and only a selected few received imperial plaques. One Dragon King temple located along the Gan River 贛江 and Poyang Lake 鄱陽湖 in the Jiangxi province, for instance, was commonly referred to as a place to worship the “Little Dragon” (Xiaolong 小龍). It was first granted the title as “Shunji hou” 順濟侯 (Marquis of Success and Facilitation). Later in the tenth month of the third year of Chongning during Emperor Huizong’s reign (1104), it received the title as “Yingling shunji hou” 英靈順濟侯 (Brilliant and Numinous Marquis of Success and Facilitation). In the next year (1105), it was promoted to be “Lingshun zhaoying anji wang” 靈順昭應安濟王 (Numinous and Successful King of Peace and Facilitation). The “Little Dragon” eventually became a very popular deity in the Poyang basin during the Song and Yuan dynasties. There was even a sub-temple of this Dragon Temple titled “Lingshun zhaoying anji huizewang miao” 靈順昭應安濟惠澤王廟 (Temple of Numinous and Successful King of Peace, Facilitation, and Kindness). It was located in Yiyang County 弋陽縣 along one of the tributaries of the southeast part of the Poyang Lake (Xin River 信江 or Shangrao River 上饒江). In the fourth year of Jianyan during the Southern Song (1130), this Xin River Dragon Temple inherited the title of “King” under imperial edict (Xu 2014, p. 1087).

The emperor’s compliance, in turn, actually enhanced the authority and credibility of the son of heaven. For example, in the second year of Huangyou 皇祐二年 (1050) during the Northern Song (Xu 2014, p. 988), local officials nationwide were asked to report to the imperial court all the spirits that were capable of blessing and had not been listed in codes of state ritual, in order to accommodate them into the codes. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of Ming 明宣宗, in the seventh year of Xuande 宣德七年 (1432), Chen Xuan 陳瑄 claimed that in the northwest of Gaoyou prefecture 高郵郡, there was a lake spirit and worshiping it would “travel by boat without worrying about drowning and invoke good rain whenever there is a drought” 舟行溺之患，旱熯有甘澍之。He asked the emperor to perform sacrificial rituals to the lake spirit in both spring and autumn. Emperor Xuanzong ordered Hu Ying 胡, the head of the Ministry of Rites, to check this matter: “Those spirits who benefit people should be accommodated into the sacrificial codes. If the spirit indeed presents auspicious sign as Chen Xuan reported, demanding relevant office to make timely sacrifice” 神有功德及民，應在祀典，果如瑄所言有應，其令有司以時致祭 (Taiwan Academia Sinica 1962, pp. 2120–21). That is to say, when local worship prevailed to a certain extent, the authorities would actively respond and incorporate it into codes of state ritual.

Running parallel in most cases, the bestowal of nobility and the official sacrificial system constituted the official cult of mountain and water spirits, which survived until the first years of the Ming Dynasty (Zhu 2022). Generally speaking, in traditional China, the title of the spirit of the Yangzi River became increasingly higher from “marquis” to “duke”, and then to “king”. Once there was even a proposal of using the title of “emperor”. The reason for this was to show the imperial court’s control over the divine power: on the one hand, the emperor wanted to express awe to water spirits; on the other hand, he placed water spirits among his ministers. For example, the water spirits were personified as historical figures, such as Wu Zixu 伍子胥, Qu Yuan 屈原, Xu Xun 許遜, Zhang Xun 張巡, or General Yuan 元將軍, articulating that they were inferior to the son of heaven. As Wang Gu 王古 said, during the reign of Emperor Shenzong of Song 宋神宗, the goal

was simply to “sanction and dominate spirits and establish a ritual hierarchy” 錫命馭神，恩禮有序 (Toqto’a 1977, p. 2561). Feng Ji 豐稷, also an official in Shenzong reign, wrote that if the state included a water spirit in ritual codes, it should clearly be recorded in the calendar, and officials should be sent to the temple to make sacrifices so as to show the court’s “way of control the spirit” (Xu 2014, p. 994). As Koichi Matsumoto and Takashi Sue have pointed out, by granting titles to these temples, the imperial court could achieve centralized governance, which was a way to reorganize the national sacrificial system (Jiang 1997).

There seems to be an assumption that conflicts prevail between the worship of spirits and the worship of imperial power in many civilizations dominated by religion. In other words, does the divine power undermine the authority of the emperor? This contradiction was solved in the Tang Dynasty when the water spirits were granted titles. According to the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (*Old Tang History*), if the five sacred peaks were regarded as dukes and the four waterways as vassals, how could the emperor kneel down to someone inferior? The ministers then suggested that the sacrificial prayers to the mountain and water spirits should be signed but not bowed (“The five sacred peaks and below should be signed, but not bowed” 五岳已下，署而不拜), and the emperor naturally accepted this suggestion (Liu 1975, pp. 914–15). Later, in the first year of Kaiyuan 開元 (713), the ritual officials came up with a more thorough and ingenious method. The emperor no longer signed his name on the sacrificial prayers to the five sacred peaks and four waterways but gave a statement indicating that “the emperor cautiously sends someone to reverently offer sacrifice to certain spirit of the sacred peaks and waterways” 皇帝謹遣某乙，敬祭于某嶽瀆之神. Sending people on behalf to offer sacrifices would certainly save the dignity of the emperor (Du 1984, pp. 1282–83). In the early and middle periods of the Tang Dynasty, the imperial power expanded, and the court was keen on granting titles to mountains and waters. In the fourth year of Chuigong 垂拱 (688), Empress Wu 武后 once named Songshan 嵩山 the “King of Heaven” (Tianzhongwang 天中王) (Niu 2021, pp. 140–41). It is then not surprising that in the first year of Zhengsheng 證聖 (695), ritual officials submitted a petition to change the way the empress signed her name for offering sacrifices to mountain and water spirits. By the time of Emperor Xuanzong, “since the five sacred peaks had been entitled kings, the four waterways should be promoted to dukes” 五嶽既已封王，四瀆當升公. Similar to Empress Wu, Xuanzong granted titles to the Yangzi River in the sixth year of Tianbao (747) without compromising his imperial authority.

5. Sacrifices to Water Spirits and the Unification of Nation

According to the saying of Confucian classics, “The son of Heaven needs to make sure his sacrificial ritual can reach all parts of his empire” 天子有方望之事，無所不通 (Zheng and Jia 2021, p. 446). However, not all dynasties in Chinese history were able to bring all major mountains and waters into their territory. What happens if an imperial court cannot achieve this? The solution was to adopt—and perhaps invent—flexible sacrificial methods for sacred mountains and waters. For example, in the third year of Taichang 泰常 of the Northern Wei (418), Emperor Mingyuan 明元帝 built a Temple of Five Sacred Peaks and Four Waterways (Wuyue Sidu miao 五岳四瀆廟) on the north bank of the Sanggan River 桑乾河 (Wei 1974, p. 2737). At that time, China was divided, and the Yangzi basin in the south was the territory of Eastern Jin, not under the jurisdiction of the Northern Wei. The Northern Wei court established this all-inclusive temple adopting the method of “worship in distance” (*wang zhi* 望秩); that is, worshiping sacred mountains and waters in distance. The Tuoba 拓跋 regime’s approach was sending officials to sacrifice within the jurisdiction of the state in the tenth month of each year and making worship remotely for the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin in the south.

If the temple in the Sanggan River had some ritual characteristics of capital sacrifice, then the “remote worship” of the Yangzi River by the Jin and Yuan regimes before the unification of the south was more clearly “temporary” approach. The *Jinshi* 金史 (Jin History) records that in the fourth year of Dading 大定 (1164), Emperor Shizong 金世宗

issued a decree to offer sacrifices to sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways on the days of greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five suburbs. Since the Yangzi River was not within the territory of the Jin Dynasty, the South Sea and South Waterway (i.e., Yangzi River) were offered sacrifice in Laizhou 萊州 (present-day Laizhou, Shandong) on the day of the beginning of summer (Toqto'a 1975, p. 810; Song 1977, p. 1902). It is possible that a Jiangdu Temple was built in Laizhou, which was more than 2000 km from the actual Jiangdu Temple in Chengdu. This was obviously a "remote sacrifice". In the early Yuan Dynasty, there was also a modified sacrificial method. In the summer of the third year of Zhiyuan 至元 (1266), Kublai Khan 忽必烈 "set the rule of worshipping mountain and water spirits" 定歲祀嶽鎮海瀆之制 and stimulated "to offer sacrifices to the South Sea and Great River (i.e., Yangzi River) remotely in Laizhou boundary on the day of the beginning of summer" 立夏日遙祭南海、大江於萊州界. Of course, this was only a temporary method, and with the unification of the Yuan Dynasty, "remote sacrifice were terminated as the south was already seized" 既有江南，乃罷遙祭 (Song 1977, p. 1902).

In the fifth year of Xiande 顯德 (958) in the Late Zhou Dynasty 後周, the sacrificial ritual to the Yangzi River was held in Yangzhou 揚州. At the beginning of the Northern Song, this ritual was followed, but it was temporary. Once the Sichuan basin was included in the territory, in the sixth year of Qiande 乾德 (968), the sacrificial ritual to the Yangzi River was resumed in Chengdu (D. Ma 2011, p. 2556). After Emperor Taizu of Song took over Hunan, he immediately sent Li Fang 李昉 to offer sacrifices to Mount Heng 衡山, the Southern Sacred Peak. After the pacification of Guangnan 廣南, Li Jifang 李繼芳 was immediately sent to offer sacrifice to the South Sea and remove the titles of mountain and water spirits bestowed by the previous regime. The emperor issued an edict:

Order Li Fang, Lu Duoxun, Wang You, and Hu Meng to write stele inscriptions for temples of sacred peaks and waterways and emperors of previous dynasties, and send the editorial assistant of Hanlin Academy Sun Chongwang and others to the temples to engrave them on stones respectively. 命李昉、盧多遜、王祐、扈蒙等分撰嶽、瀆祠及歷代帝王碑，遣翰林待詔孫崇望等分詣廟，書于石。 (Toqto'a 1977, p. 2485).

The action of sending an official to the Jiangdu Temple to establish an engraved stele was a symbol of control over the Yangzi River basin. In the early Ming Dynasty, when the Sichuan basin was not included in the territory yet, Xiazhou 峽州 (present-day Yichang, Hubei province) was used as a temporary sacrifice site for the Yangzi River in a similar manner. In short, the exercise of the right of sacrifice was synchronized with the military advance and the expansion of territory.

Historically, some small regimes often ignored the rules of ritual and arbitrarily added titles to mountain and river spirits. The Qing scholar Qin Huitian criticized this matter severely: "A country that is content with its partial territory and unable to make efforts for prosperity, merely granting titles to spirits to expect blessing, this is the so-called listening to the mandate of the gods. How could such a country be lasting?" 國家偏安，不克振作，徒以加封神號為望佑之舉，所謂聽命於神也，其可久乎 (Qin 2020, pp. 2058–59). Although Qin's comment is reasonable, what Qin could not fathom was that the worship and bestowment by those imperial courts implied other profound meanings. On the one hand, as far as the practical function was concerned, the purpose was to pray to the spirits of distant places for their own use rather than the enemy. On the other hand, the legitimacy of the historical political system and geographical space of the dynasty was demonstrated through establishing the relationship with distant deities through remote offering and conferring and through sacrificing to the water spirits of the Yangzi River. In a sense, the latter is more important. The *Liji* states: "The ruler who owns the world offers sacrifices to hundreds of spirits, while the regional rulers offer sacrifices to the spirits within their lands and never to those outside their lands" 有天下者祭百神，諸侯在其地則祭之，亡其地則不祭. Kong Yingda's 孔穎達 commentary further explained, "If there are no such mountains and waters in its territory, the spirits cannot be sacrificed to" 其境內地無此山川之等，則不得祭也 (Zheng and Kong 2000, pp. 2217–19). The *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (*Gongyang's Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*) has a similar saying. The son of heaven could

offer sacrifices to the great mountains and waters in all the quarters, while regional rulers could offer sacrifices only to the mountains and waters within their territories (Zheng and Kong 2000, p. 446). In reality, however, small or new courts' worship of distant water spirits meant that in the future, they would be a unified, rather than divided, regime.

6. Conclusions

From the above discussions of the sacrifices to the water spirits of the Yangzi River basin in traditional China, we can draw several conclusions.

First, Chinese imperial courts offered sacrifices to the water spirits of the Yangzi River, which not only referred to the primary spirit enshrined in the Jiangu Temple in Chengdu but also included various water spirits in the tributaries and lakes along this great river. In the rich historical documents in China, there are more than 300 records of sacrificial rituals about the water spirits of the Yangzi River. From these records, we can see that the inclusion in the "codes of state ritual" is the main basis for offering official sacrifice to those water spirits in the past dynasties.

Second, the worship of the water spirits of the Yangzi River was an expression of the legitimacy of imperial power. The worship of the main Jiangu Temple and other temples of the Yangzi River basin established in the previous dynasties shows that the current court was directly connected to the previous regimes, which was the inheritance of the authority of worshipping water spirits, representing the orthodox tradition of the Confucian ritual classics.

Third, since the majority of capitals in imperial China were located in the north with fewer rivers, worshipping the water spirits of the Yangzi River would imply a blessing from the south. In particular, when holding the grand ceremony of establishing a new regime, the sacrifice to the Yangzi River was a must.

Fourth, granting noble titles and temple plaques to southern water spirits of the Yangzi River basin would further demonstrate the competency of the imperial court in controlling the divine power. In the ceremony of offering sacrifices to the water spirits, who had been given titles such as "marquis", "duke", and "king", the emperor first only signed his name and did not come on-site to worship, and later only stated, "the emperor sent somebody to worship certain mountain and water spirits reverently." Through these designs, the officials saved the emperor from the embarrassment of bowing to the water spirits, who were presumably ranked lower than him.

Fifth, according to the classical Confucian ritual design, the son of heaven could offer sacrifices to all mountains and rivers in the world, while regional rulers could only offer sacrifices to the mountains and rivers within their fiefs. However, all later small or new imperial courts offered distance sacrifices to the spirits of the Yangzi River outside of their territories in order to demonstrate that they could communicate with and manage those spirits, therefore further showing they had political and military control of southern China as geographically unified, rather than divided, regimes.

Funding: This research was supported by the Major Projects of National Social Science Foundation of China "the Study on Chinese General History of Traditional Ritual Culture", and the grant number is [18ZDA021].

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

¹ According to the evidence provided by Wang E 王鐸 (Wang 2007), the completion of this chapter dates to the middle of the Warring States period, though speculations on this matter also date to the time of Confucius, late Warring States period, Qin-Han transition period, and the reign of Emperor Wendi of Han 漢文帝 (180–157 BCE).

² Gu (1963) claimed that the concept of "four sacred peaks" already existed during the pre-Qin period and the term "five sacred peaks" was invented by Han Confucian scholars. Tian (2011) believed that this concept appeared during the middle and late Warring States period. Niu (2021), however, dated it to the Western Han, and only during the Eastern Han such concept became consolidated.

- 3 For the formation of the ritual system of the five sacred peaks and four waterways, see Jia (2021), which provides a quite comprehensive list of literature on this state ritual system.
- 4 Several scholars have made significant contribution to this field of research, including Koichi Matsumono 松本浩一, Noriyuku Kanai 金井德幸, Takahashi Sue 須江隆, Kojima Tsuyoshi 小島毅, Hamashima Atsutoshi 濱島墩俊, Jiang Zhushan 蔣竹山, and Valerie Hansen. See Jiang (1997), and Hansen (2016).

References

- Ban, Gu 班固 (32–92). 1962. *Hanshu* 漢書 [Han History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Chen, Wei 陳偉, Tianhong Li 李天虹, Hao Peng 彭浩, Yongfang Long 龍永芳, and Xuzin Liu 劉祖信. 2009. *Chudi Chutu Zhanguo Jiance* (Shisi Zhong) 楚地出土戰國簡冊(十四種) [Bamboo Manuscripts of Warring States Excavated from the Chu Area (Fourteen Texts)]. Beijing: Jingji kexue chubanshe.
- Chen, Xi 曦. 2009. Songdai jinghubeilu de shuishen Xinyang yu shengtai huanjing 宋代荆湖北路的水神信仰與生態環境 [Worship of Water spirits and Ecology at Jinghu beilu in the Song Dynasty]. *Hubei Shehui Kexue* 湖北社會科學 [Social Sciences of Hubei] 9: 193–95.
- Cobin, W. South 柯蔚南. 1997. A Introduction of Erya 爾雅. In *Zhongguo gudai dianji daodu* 中國古代典籍導讀 [Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide]. Edited by Michael Loewe 惟一. Translated by Xueqin Li 李學勤. Shenyang: Liaoning Jiaoyu Chubanshe.
- Du, You 杜佑 (735–812). 1984. *Tongdian* 通典 [Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fan, Ye 范 (398–445). 1965. *Houhanshu* 後漢書 [The Later Han History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fang, Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–648). 1974. *Jinshu* 晉書 [Jin History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Gu, Jiegang 顧頡剛. 1963. Siyue yu wuyue 四岳與五岳 [Four Sacred Peaks and Five Sacred Peaks]. In *Shilin zashi chupian* 史林雜識初篇編 [The First Article Collection of Miscellaneous Historical Studies]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Guo, Pu 郭璞 (276–324), and Bing Xing 邢昺. 2000. *Erya zhushu* 爾雅注疏 [Exegeses on the Correct Words]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Hansen, Valerie. 2016. *Bianqian zhishen: Nansong shiqi de minjian Xinyang* 變遷之神：南宋時期的民間信仰 [Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276]. Translated by Weimin Bao 包偉民. Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company.
- Huang, Zhigang 黃芝崗. 1934. *Zhongguo de shuishen* 中國的水神 [Water Spirits of China]. Shanghai: Shenghuo Book Company.
- Jia, Jinhua. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. [CrossRef]
- Jiang, Zhushan 竹山. 1997. Song zhi Qingdai de guojia yu cishen xinyang yanjiu de huigu yu taolun 宋至清代的國家與祠神信仰研究的回顧與討論 [Reflection and Discussion on Spirits of State Rituals from the Song to the Qing Dynasties]. *Xin shixue* 新史 [New Historical Studies] 8: 187–220.
- Li, Baiyao 李百藥 (564–648). 1972. *Beiqishu* 北齊書 [Northern Qi History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Ling 李零. 2015. Shuo yuezhenhaidu: Zhongguo gudai de shanchuan jisi 說岳鎮海濱：中國古代的山川祭祀 [On Sacred Peaks, Strongholds, Seas, and Rivers: Sacrificial Rituals to Mountains and Waters in Ancient China]. In *Dadaokuofu xiuhua zhen* 大刀關斧 秀花針 [Bold and Resolute Crevel Needles]. Beijing: Zhongxin chubanshe.
- Li, Sichun 李思純. 1957. Guankou dishen kao 灌口氏神考 [Study on the Deity of Di People in Guankou]. In *Jiangcun shilun* 江村十論 [Ten Articles of River Village]. Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe.
- Li, Xinchuan 李心傳 (1166–1243). 2013. *Jiannan yilai xinianyao lu* 建炎以來繫年要錄 [Major Records of the Chronicle from the First Year of Jiannan]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Li, Lin 李琳, and Ying Li 李英. 2013. Dongtinghu qu Yangsi Jiangjun xinyang de zaidihua yanjiu 洞庭湖區楊泗將軍信仰的在地化研究 [A Study on Localization of Folk Belief of General Yangsi in Dongting Lake Basin]. *Wenhua Yichan* 文化遺產 [The Cultural Heritage] 2: 93–98.
- Liu, Xu 劉昫 (888–947). 1975. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Liu, Zhao 劉釗. 2017. Tan chutu wenxian zhong youguan jisi shanchuan de ziliao 談出土文獻中有關祭祀山川的資料 [Sources of Sacrifice to Mountains and Rivers in Excavated Materials]. *Guwenzi yu gudai shi* 古文學與古代史 [Paleography and Ancient Chinese History] 5: 509–43.
- Ma, Duanlin 端臨 (1254–1323). 2011. *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 [A Companion of Literature]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ma, Xiaolin 曉琳. 2011. Guojia jisi defang tongzhi yuqi tuidongzhe 國家祭祀、地方統治與其推動者：論元代岳鎮海濱祭祀 [State Sacrificial Rituals, Local Governance, and Promoters: On the Sacrifice of Sacred Peaks, Strongholds, Seas, and Rivers in the Yuan Dynasty]. *Xinan daxue xuebao* 西南大學學報 [Journal of Northwestern University] 37: 193–96.
- Niu, Jingfei 牛敬飛. 2021. *Gudai wuyue jisi yanbian kaolun* 古代五嶽祭祀演變考論 [Evolution of Sacrificial Rituals of the Five Sacred Peaks in the Past]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Ouyang, Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072). 1974. *Xing Wudai Shi* 新五代史 [New History of the Five Dynasties]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Qian, Zhixi 錢志熙. 2000. Lun shanggu zhi qinhan shidai de shanshui chongbai shanchuan jisi jiqi wenhuaneihan 論上古至秦漢時代的山水崇拜山川祭祀及其文化內涵 [Study on the Cultural Implications of Sacrificial Rituals to Mountains and Waters from the Pre-Qin Period to the Qin and Han Dynasties]. *Wenshi* 文史 [Literature and History] 3: 237–58.
- Qin, Huitian 秦蕙田 (ca. 1702–1764). 2020. *Wuli tongkao* 五禮通考 [Study on Five Rituals]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

- Shen, Wenzhuo 沈文倬. 1999. Lüelun lidian de shixinghe yili shuben de zhuan zuo 略典的實行和儀禮書本的撰作 [Brief Discussion of Ritual Practice and the Composition of Ritual Books]. In *Zongzhou liyue wenming kaolun* 宗周禮樂文明考論 [Study on Western Zhou Ritual–Musical Culture]. Hangzhou: Hangzhou University Press.
- Sima, Qian 司馬遷 (b. ca. 145 BCE). 1959. *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Stevens, Keith. 2007. Yang Laoda, The Spirit of the Yangzi, and Related Gods of the Yangzi and Its Tributaries. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 47: 165–88.
- Song, Lian 宋濂 (1314–1356). 1977. *Yuanshi* 元史 [Yuan History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Tang, Guiren 湯貴仁. 2003. *Taishan fengchan yu jisi* 泰山封禪與祭祀 [Rites and Rituals of Offering Sacrifices to Heaven on Mount Tai]. Jinan: Qilu Shushe.
- Tang, Qiling 其. 1995. Dici Fengshan yu Beisong Daojiao de Xingsheng 滌恥封禪與北宋道教的興盛 [Retribution for disgrace, offering sacrifices to Heaven, and the flourishing of Daoism in the Northern Song Dynasty]. *Henan Daxue Xuebao* 河南大學學報 [Journal of Henan University] 35: 9–13.
- Taiwan Academia Sinica. 1962. *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 [Veritable Records of Ming]. Taipei: Academia Sinica.
- Tian, Tian 田天. 2011. Xihan shanchuan jisi gejukao: Wuyuesidu de chengli 西漢山川祭祀格局考: 五嶽四瀆的成立 [Study on the Patterns of Sacrifices to Mountains and Waters: Formation of the Five Sacred Peaks and Four Waterways]. *Wenshi* 文史 [Literature and History] 2: 47–70.
- Toqto'a (1314–1356). 1975. *Jinshi* 金史 [Jin History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Toqto'a (1314–1356). 1977. *Songshi* 宋史 [Song History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, E 王. 2007. *Liji chengshukao* 禮記成書考 [Formation of Records of Ritual]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, pp. 172–88.
- Wang, Yongping 王永平. 2006. Lun tangdai de shuishen chongbai 論唐代的水神崇拜 [On the Worship of Water Spirits in the Tang Dynasty]. *Shoudu shifandaxue xuebao* 首都師範大學學報 [Journal of Capital Normal University] 4: 12–17.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林, and Juan Li 李娟. 2009. Lishi shang Hunan Xiangjiang liuyu shuishen xingyang chutan 歷史上湖南湘江流域水神信仰初探 [A Primary Exploration on Traditional Water Sprits of Xiang River Basin]. *Qiusuo* 求索 [Seeker] 1: 203–6.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林, and Fengsheng Qian 錢逢勝. 2014. Changjiang sanshuifu Xinyang yuanliukao 江三水府信仰源流考 [Study on the Origin of the Three Water Bureaus of the Yangzi River]. *Anhui shixue* 安徽史 [Historical Study of Anhui] 4: 5–11.
- Wei, Shou 魏收 (507–572). 1974. *Weishu* 魏書 [Wei History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wei, Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), and Defen Linghu 令狐德棻 (583–666). 1973. *Suishu* 隋 [Sui History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Xu, Sanjian 徐三見. 1989. Jiangdu, Huaidu fenghao kao 江瀆、淮瀆封號考 [Study on the Titles of the Yangzi River and Huai River]. *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線 [Fronts of Social Sciences] 2: 340–42.
- Xu, Song 徐松 (1781–1848). 2014. *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 [Draft of Song Institutions]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- Yang, Bojun 楊伯峻. 1981. *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 [Annotation on Chunqiu and Zuozhuan]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Yang, Hua 華. 2012. Chudi shuishen yanjiu 楚地水神研究 [Study on the Water Spirits in Chu Area]. In *Guli xinyan* 古禮新研 [New Study on Ancient Rituals]. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.
- Yang, Hua 華. 2020. Libeng yuehuai xinlun: Jianlun zhonghua liyue chuantong de lianxuxing “禮崩樂壞”新論: 兼論中華禮樂傳統的連續性 [New Study on “Breakdown of Music and Ritual”: The Continuity of the Chinese Ritual-Music Tradition]. *Shehui kexue jikan* 社會科學輯刊 [Journal of Social Sciences] 1: 111–20.
- Yang, Hua 華. 2021. Qin Han diguo de shenquan tongyi: Chutu jianbo yu fengshanshu jiaosizhi de duibi kaocha 秦漢帝國的神權統一: 出土簡帛與封禪書郊祀志的對比考察 [The Unification of the Divine Power in the Empires of the Qin and Han: Comparative Study on the “Book of Feng and Shan” and Records of Suburban Rituals]. In *Guli zaiyan* 古禮再研 [Reexamination on Ancient Rituals]. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.
- Zhao, Erxun 趙爾巽, Shaomin Ke 柯劭忞, Quansun Liao 荃孫, Tingxie Wu 吳廷燾, Shijian Wu 吳士鑿, Yu Zhang 章, Fanzhao Jin 金兆蕃, Shusheng Qin 秦樹聲, Dajun Wang 王大鈞, Suntong Xia 夏孫桐, and et al. 1977. *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 [Draft of Qing History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zheng, Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), and Gongyan Jia 賈公彥. 2021. *Yili zhushu* 儀禮註疏 [Exegeses on Classic of Ritual]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zheng, Xuan, and Yingda Kong, eds. 2000. *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏 [Exegeses on the Records of Ritual]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zhu, Yi 朱溢. 2007. Lun Tangdai de shanchuan fengjue xianxiang: Jianlun Tangdai de guanfang shanchuan chongbai 論唐代的山川封爵現象: 兼論唐代的官方山川崇拜 [On the Cases of Granting Titles to Mountains and Waters in the Tang Dynasty: The Tang Official Worship to Mountains and Rivers]. *Xin shixue* 新史學 [New Historical Study] 8: 71–124.
- Zhu, Yi 朱溢. 2022. The Bestowal of Noble Titles upon the Mountain and Water Spirits in Tang China. *Religions* 13: 229. [CrossRef]

Article

The Sacred River: State Ritual, Political Legitimacy, and Religious Practice of the Jidu in Imperial China

Teng Li

College of Marxism, Shijiazhuang Tiedao University, Shijiazhuang 050043, China; liteng@stdu.edu.cn

Abstract: This paper focuses on the Jidu 濟瀆 (i.e., the Ji River 濟水), one of the four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆) in imperial China. Even though it vanished a long time ago, the Jidu had always been a part of the traditional Chinese ritual system of mountain- and water-directed state sacrifices. From the Western Han dynasty to the Qing dynasty, it continuously received regular state sacrifices. However, Western scholars have failed to notice it. Some modern Chinese and Japanese scholars have studied the development of the Jidu sacrifice, but its embodied political and religious significances for the state and local society were largely ignored. To remedy this neglect, I provide here, with new discoveries and conclusions, the first comprehensive study of the Jidu sacrifice in imperial China. Surrounding this coherent theme, this paper draws several original arguments from its four sections. The first section is a brief history of the state sacrifice to the Jidu. In the second section, I analyze the ideas of state authority, political legitimacy, religious belief, and cosmology, as these underlie the ritual performance concerning the Jidu. I argue that the Jidu was not only tightly associated with controlling water but was also a symbol and mechanism of political legitimacy. Relying on concrete official and local records, in the third section I further investigate the role that the Jidu God played in local society. I argue that after the Song dynasty, the Jidu God was transformed into a regional protector of local society and savior of local people in addition to an official water god. In the fourth section, I, for the first time, examine the interaction between the Jidu cult and other religious traditions including Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion.

Keywords: sacred river; Jidu; state ritual system; political legitimacy; religious practice; imperial China

Citation: Li, Teng. 2022. The Sacred River: State Ritual, Political Legitimacy, and Religious Practice of the Jidu in Imperial China. *Religions* 13: 507. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060507>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 7 March 2022

Accepted: 31 May 2022

Published: 2 June 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

An often-quoted sentence in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary*) reveals the significance of state sacrifice: “the two foremost matters of the state were those of sacrificial worship and war” 國之大事，在祀與戎 (Yang 1981, 8.861). State sacrifice was regarded as one of the events in traditional China most crucial to sustaining political legitimacy, ideological orthodoxy, bureaucracy, and social order. It was a huge and complicated ritual system. In this system, the sacrificial ritual concerning geographical features such as mountains, rivers, and seas were important components. From the earliest dynasties, mountains and rivers had been given political, cosmological meanings and were objects of divination. From the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE) to the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126), the Chinese imperial courts gradually formed a standardized official sacred geographical system which consisted of five sacred peaks (*wuyue* 五岳), five strongholds (*wuzhen* 五鎮), four seas (*sihai* 四海), and four waterways (*sidu* 四瀆) (Jia 2021, pp. 1–12). For imperial courts, the integration of rituals of these mountain and water spirits was an effective way to manage the territory of the empire by connecting the state to local society.

This paper focuses on the Jidu 濟瀆 (i.e., the Ji River 濟水), one of the four waterways. The character “du” 瀆, according to the *Erya* 爾雅 (*Correct Words*), was interpreted: “the four waterways refer to the Yangzi River 長江, the Yellow River 黃河, the Huai River 淮河, and the Ji River. Each has its own source and flows to seas separately” 江、河、淮、濟為四

瀆。四瀆者，發源注海者也 (Guo and Xing 2000, 7.225). Nowadays, the Yangzi, the Yellow, and the Huai rivers still play crucial roles in China. Unlike the other three rivers, the Ji River has long disappeared. Nonetheless, a lot of places that contain “ji” 濟 (for example, Ji’nan 濟南, Jiyuan 濟源, and Jining 濟寧) prove its existence. In transmitted Chinese texts, the four waterways also manifested as the Jiangdu 江瀆, the Hedu 河瀆, the Huaidu 淮瀆, and the Jidu. The gods of the four waterways are accordingly called the Jiangdu God, the Hedu God, the Huaidu God, and the Jidu God. Additionally, they were often associated with directions: the Jiangdu with south, the Hedu with west, the Huaidu with east, and the Jidu with north, according to their locations.

Although vanished, the Jidu had always been a part of traditional Chinese ritual system of mountain- and water- directed state sacrifices. From the Western Han dynasty to the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), it continuously received regular state sacrifices. In imperial China, the Jidu sacrifice was not only a religious activity but also a political institution. Any comprehensive study of the Jidu should take this dual function into account. However, Western scholars have failed to notice the Jidu sacrifice. Some modern Chinese and Japanese scholars such as Yao Yongxia 姚永霞, Sakurai Satomi 櫻井智美, and Xiao Hongbing 肖紅兵 have studied the development of the Jidu sacrifice, but its embodied political and religious significances for the state and local society were largely ignored (Yao 2014; Sakurai 2014; Xiao and Li 2019). To remedy this neglect, I provide the first comprehensive study of the Jidu sacrifice. Surrounding this coherent theme, this paper comprises four sections. The first section is a brief history of the state sacrifice of the Jidu. The second section focuses on analysis of the ideas of state authority, political legitimacy, religious belief, and cosmology, as these underlie the ritual performance concerning the Jidu. Relying on concrete official and local records, in the third section I investigate the role that the Jidu God played in local society after the Song dynasty. In the fourth section, I, for the first time, examine the interaction between the Jidu cult and other religious traditions including Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion.

2. A Brief History of the State Sacrifice to the Jidu

Inscriptions on oracle bones suggest that official and formal sacrifice to major rivers can be dated back to the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–ca. 1046 BCE), and the Yellow River received most of the sacrifices. Because the names of the five sacred peaks and four waterways were mentioned in the three Confucian ritual classics, the *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Ritual*), *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Ritual of Zhou*), and *Yili* 儀禮 (*Classic of Ritual*), some modern scholars have followed the traditional view that the composition of the four waterways was already completed in the Zhou dynasty. However, just as Jia Jinhua has pointed out, this view is unsubstantial because the date of compilation of these documents is questionable (Jia 2021, p. 3). By far, the earliest record of the sacrifice to the Jidu is found in the *Zuozhuan*:

Ren, Su, Xuju, and Zhuanxu, whose surname is Feng, take duty of the sacrifice to the Taihao and Ji River. 任，宿，須句，顓臾，風姓也，實司大皞與有濟之祀。(Yang 1981, 5.391)

The record in the *Zuozhuan* only implies who (Ren, Su, Xuju, and Zhuanxu) takes the duty of sacrificing to the Jidu but fails to provide any details of the ritual. With Qin’s unification, a new state sacrificial ritual system to integrate the mountain and river spirits was constructed. A detailed account of the process of this construction is preserved in the *Fengshanshu* 封禪書 (*Book of Feng and Shan Sacrifices*) in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*) by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE). The texts read:

When the First Emperor of Qin united the world, he instructed the officials in charge of sacrifice put into order the worship of Heaven and Earth, the famous mountains, the great rivers, and the other spirits that had customarily been honored in the past. According to this new arrangement there were five mountains and two rivers east of Xiao designated for sacrifice. The mountains were the Great Hall (that is, Mount Song), Mount Heng, Mount Tai, Mount Kuaiji and Mount Xiang. The two rivers were the Ji and the Huai. In the spring offerings of

dried meat and wine were made to ensure the fruitfulness of the year, and at the same time prayers were offered for the melting of the ice. In the autumn prayers were offered for the freezing of the ice, and in the winter prayers and sacrifices were offered to recompense the gods for their favor during the year. A cow and a calf were invariably used as sacrifice, but the sacrificial implements and the offerings of jade and silk differed with the time and place. 及秦并天下，令祠官所常奉天地名山大川鬼神可得而序也。於是自穀以東，名山五，大川祠二。曰太室。太室，嵩高也。恒山，泰山，會稽，湘山。水曰濟，曰淮。春以脯酒為歲祠，因泮凍，秋涸凍，冬塞禱祠。其牲用牛犢各一，牢具珪幣各異。 (Sima 1963, 28.1371; Watson 1993, pp. 15–16)

Qin's reconstruction of the state sacrifice to the mountains and rivers was not only a compulsory means of strengthening imperium but also the first attempt at clarifying the order of the mountains and rivers that were already sacrificed to. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that the Jidu had already been sacrificed to by some regional states in the Spring and Autumn period and in the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE), but there had not formed a standardized state sacrificial scheme of the four waterways.

In the early Western Han dynasty, the court basically followed the state sacrificial system and regulations of mountain and river spirits that were founded in the Qin dynasty. At the outset of his reign, Emperor Gaozu of Han 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE) issued an edict to restore the state sacrifice in 201 BCE:

I hold the places of worship in the highest regard and deeply respect the sacrifices. Whenever the time comes for sacrifices to the Lord on High or for the worship of the mountains, rivers, or other spirits, let the ceremonies be performed in due season as they were in the past. 吾甚重祠而敬祭，今上帝之祭及山川諸神當祠者，各以其時禮祠之如故。 (Sima 1963, 28.1378; Watson 1993, p. 19)

However, the real situation was that the kings of the principedoms were powerful and held the authority of sacrificing to the mountains and rivers in their territories. Upon the collapse of the principedoms of the Huainan 淮南 and the Qi 齊, Emperor Wendi of Han 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE) was able to resume his authority for sacrifice and again sent out the Grand Suppliant (*taizhu* 太祝) to perform the rituals. Like the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 247–221 BCE), Emperor Wudi of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) showed the greatest reverence in the sacrificial rituals of *feng* and *shan* (*fengshan* 封禪) on Mount Tai 泰山 (in 110 BCE and 106 BCE). After Wudi's offering of the rituals of *feng* and *shan* on Mount Tai in 110 BCE, his second-half imperial tour included all the five sacred peaks and four waterways (Sima 1963, 28.1403).

The integration of the five sacred peaks and four waterways as a state sacrificial scheme was accomplished during the reign of Emperor Xuandi of Han 漢宣帝 (74–49 BCE). In 61 BCE, Xuandi issued an edict of rearranging great mountains and rivers by making new adjustments to the offerings, as the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Han History*) records:

"The Yangzi River is the biggest of hundreds. But until now it had no temple to sacrifice to it. Therefore I (the emperor) command the officials in charge of sacrifice to take the sacrificial rituals into account and regard them as anniversary ceremonies. Sacrifice to the rivers of Yangzi and Luo at each of the four seasons to pray for harvests in the whole country." Since then, all the five sacred peaks and four waterways have had regular sacrifices. The eastern sacred peak (Mount Tai) is sacrificed to in Bo; the central sacred peak (Mount Taishi) is sacrificed to in Songgao; the southern sacred peak (Mount Qian) is sacrificed to in Qian; the northern sacred peak (Mount Chang) is sacrificed to in Quyang. The Hedu is sacrificed to in Linjin; the Jiangdu is sacrificed to in Jiangdu; the Huaidu is sacrificed to in Pingshi; the Jidu is sacrificed to in Linyi. All of them above should be sacrificed to by officials dispatched by the court with tally. Only Mount Tai and the Hedu are sacrificed to five times annually, while the Jiangdu is sacrificed to four times annually, and all the rest are prayed to once and sacrificed to three

times annually. “夫江海，百川之大者也，今闕焉無祠。其令祠官以禮為歲事，以四時祠江海雒水，祈為天下豐年焉。”自是五嶽、四瀆皆有常禮。東嶽泰山於博，中嶽泰室於嵩高，南嶽灂山於灂，西嶽華山於華陰，北嶽常山於上曲陽，河於臨晉，江於江都，淮於平氏，濟於臨邑界中，皆使者持節侍祠。唯泰山與河歲五祠，江水四，餘皆一禱而三祠云。(Ban 1964, 25.1249)

This Han edict not only clearly regulated the place (Linyi 臨邑, present day Dezhou 德州, Shandong), frequency (three times a year), and people (imperial commissioners) of sacrifice to the Jidu, but also confirmed a uniform practice of regular sacrifice to the five sacred peaks and four waterways.

During the period of division, one of the most significant developments was the formation of the five rites (*wuli* 五禮). The state ritual of the Jidu and other three waterways was a part of the auspicious rites (*jili* 吉禮). Many powers in this period had tried to continue or restore the practice of sacrificing to the five sacred peaks and four waterways. For example, in 221, Emperor Wendi of Wei 魏文帝 (r. 220–226) issued an edict to “sacrifice to the five sacred peaks and four waterways” 初祀五嶽四瀆 (Du 1988, 46.1281). In 399, Emperor Daowu of Northern Wei 道武帝 (r. 386–409) hosted the state sacrifices at the northern suburb of the capital city Pingcheng 平城 (present day Datong, Shanxi). The five sacred peaks and four waterways were sacrificed to symbolically: “the five peaks and other famous mountains were sacrificed to in the inner altar; the four waterways and other great rivers were sacrificed to in the outer altar” 五岳名山在中壇內，四瀆大川於外壇內 (Du 1988, 45.1260). In 418, the Northern Wei court erected a Temple of Five Sacred Peaks and Four Waterways (*Wuyue sidu miao* 五岳四瀆廟) on the south bank of the Sanggan River 桑乾水 near the capital city. According to the chapters of sacrifices in official histories during the period of division, almost all the powers had put the five sacred peaks and four waterways in the list of officially worshipped mountains and rivers, even though some were not located in their territories. It suggests that these mountains and rivers were not only geographical landscapes but also symbols of state unification and political legitimacy.

In 582, during the reign of Emperor Wendi of Sui 隋文帝 (r. 581–604), the Jidu Temple (*Jidu miao* 濟瀆廟) was established. Two years later, the Jiyuan district 濟源縣 was established. The name “Jiyuan” literally means “source of the Jidu”. Before the Sui dynasty, the directors of the temples of four waterways were the Grand Supplicant and shamans, who were religious officials. However, starting with the Sui dynasty, the manipulation of the Jidu Temple was taken over by administrative officials. The *Suishu* 隋書 (*Sui History*) records:

The magistrates of the five sacred peaks, four waterways, and Mount Wu . . . are ranked deputy eighth grade. 五岳、四瀆、吳山等令 為視從八品。(Wei 1973, 28.790)

The Tang court carried on the instalment of the Waterway Magistrate (*duling* 瀆令), but the bureaucratic ranking descended from the deputy eighth grade to ninth grade. According to the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (*New Tang History*), a complete operation team of the temple, then, consisted of thirty-four persons, comprising one Waterway Magistrate, three Supplication Scribes (*zhushi* 祝史), and thirty Court Gentlemen for Fasting (*zhailang* 齋郎) (Ouyang and Song 1975, 49.1321). In the Jidu Temple during the Tang dynasty, the magistrate of Jidu was the honest protector and operator of state sacrifice. His works varied from preparing sacrificial material to hosting the whole ceremony. As an official with a bureaucratic grade, he was the representative of the emperor and court.

The conferment of titles on the Jidu began during the Tang dynasty (Zhu 2007, 2022). In 747, each of the four waterways was conferred an official title. The Jidu was entitled Duke of Pure Source (*Qingyuan gong* 清源公); the other three waterways were also granted titles: the Jiangdu Duke of Grand Source (*Guangyuan gong* 廣源公), the Hedu Duke of Efficacious Source (*Lingyuan gong* 靈源公), and the Huaidu Duke of Long Source (*Changyuan gong* 長源公) (Liu 1975, 24.934; Zhu 2022, p. 2). In 751, Emperor Xuanzong of Tang 唐玄宗 (r. 712–756) issued an edict to dispatch some high-ranking officials to offer sacrifice to the sacred peaks, strongholds, waterways, and seas in each local temple (*ibid.*).

The tendency of granting titles to the four waterways originating from the High Tang continued in the Song dynasty. In 1040, all the four waterways were promoted from Duke (*gong* 公) to King (*wang* 王) and, accordingly, the Jidu was granted the title King of Pure Source (*Qingyuan wang* 清源王) (Toqto'a 1977, 102.2488). In 1125, the Jidu was given a new title: King of Loyal and Protective Pure Source (*Qingyuan zhonghu wang* 清源忠護王). The term “zhonghu” 忠護 literally means “loyal and protective”. Official documents failed to record this title, but I find it in the *Jiyuanxian Zhi* 濟源縣志 (*Jiyuan District Gazetteer*), which was compiled in the Qing dynasty. The local gazetteer kept the record of a Song edict originally carved on a stone. The stone is now missing. It narrates a story that tells how the Jidu God manifested his power to bring heavy rain to quell an invasion of bandits from a neighboring county, and the court therefore granted him this new title (Xiao 1976, 16.673)¹.

When the Yuan empire was founded, the Mongolian court imitated the Tang's and Song's continually granting of titles on the four waterways (Ma 2011). According to the *Yuanshi* 元史 (*Yuan History*), in 1291 the titles of each of the four waterways gained two more characters and the Jidu was granted the title Savior King of Pure Source (*Qingyuan shanji wang* 清源善濟王) (Song 1976, 76.1900).

In 1370, Emperor Taizu of Ming 明太祖 (r. 1368–1398) issued an edict to justify the liturgical reform of state rituals of the gods of sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways. One effect of this edict was to remove the titles that had been granted by previous regimes. This edict was carved on steles and sent to temples. One of them still stands in the Jidu Temple now; that is, “Daming zhaozhi bei” 大明詔旨碑 (Stele of the Imperial Edict of the Great Ming). The texts read:

The way of governing must be rooted in the rites. The granting of titles to the sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways was from the Tang and Song. For them, the brilliant and numinous material forces were concentrated to form their spirits, and who received the mandate from the High God. How can anything be added to them by investiture or the bestowal of honorific titles by the ruling house? In profanation of the rites, nothing could be more inappropriate than this. Now we follow the ancient regulations and deprive the titles which were granted in previous dynasties . . . The four waterways are called “God of the Eastern Waterway Great Huai,” “God of the Southern Waterway Great Jiang,” and “God of the Western Waterway Great He,” “God of the Northern Waterway Great Ji.” 為治之道，必本於禮。嶽鎮海瀆之封，起自唐、宋。夫英靈之氣，萃而為神，必受命於上帝，豈國家封號所可加？瀆禮不經，莫此為甚。今依古定制，並去前代所封名號 四瀆稱東瀆大淮之神，南瀆大江之神，西瀆大河之神，北瀆大濟之神。 (Zhang 1974, 49.1284; Feng 2012, pp. 7–9)

For Emperor Taizu, the official granting of titles on these earthly deities violated Confucian values. Therefore, he believed these titles must be stripped. This was a part of his religious reform. When Emperor Taizu ascended the throne, he soon launched many measures to re-evaluate and manage religions in general. He tried to involve Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religion in an officially controlled system. By reconstructing a religious system, state orthodoxy was established. Despite the fact that the official granting of titles was abolished, other aspects of the ritual, such as the date, place, procedures, and so on, remain unchanged.

By the Qing dynasty, in 1723 Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1722–1735) issued an edict to confer a new title to the Jidu. The Qing official histories failed to record the full name. Fortunately, it was mentioned in the 1723 imperial edict which was etched on a stele in the Jidu Temple. As the inscription records, the full title is “God of Forever Beneficial Northern Waterway Great Ji” (*Beidu yonghui daji zhishen* 北瀆永惠大濟之神) (Yao 2014, pp. 69–70). Even though it faced complicated external environment and internal crises, the late Qing court did not abolish the state ritual of the Jidu. State sacrifices were regularly performed in the local temples of the sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways. Stele inscriptions in the Jidu Temple show that, during the reign of Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (r. 1875–1908), the court still dispatched officials to offer the regular sacrifice to the Ji River. Upon the

collapse of the Qing dynasty, the two-thousand-year-old state ritual ultimately vanished as a practical concern.

Previous scholarship on Chinese religion attached much more attention on concrete cults and ritual practice in the local level. However, as shown earlier, the state sacrifice to the Jidu was granted political and symbolic meanings and therefore played an important role in imperial China. This section, by providing a historical account, not only clarifies the development of state sacrifice to the Jidu but also constructs a broader historical context for the following sections.

3. The Structure and Significance of the State Ritual of the Jidu

The Tang was a vital phase in the formation of a standardized imperial ritual of the Jidu. Starting with the Tang dynasty, the state ritual of the Jidu officially became a part of the auspicious rites and was leveled in the medium sacrifice (*zhongsi* 中祀). The Tang books of rites, particularly the *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮 (*Kaiyuan Ritual of the Great Tang*), standardized the place, date, procedures, participants, sacrificial offerings, words of prayer, and other elements (Xiao 2000). This sacrificial paradigm was inherited by successive dynasties. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, there are four sites of sacrificing to the Jidu: (1) suburbs of the capital city, including the northern suburb (*beijiao* 北郊) and southern suburb (*nanjiao* 南郊); (2) the palace; (3) Mount Sheshou 社首山; (4) the Jidu Temple (Xiao 2000, 36.201-202, 62.321-328, 64.338-345, 65.345-347, 66.347-349, 67.349-351). Now I introduce them in turn.

First, in a complete north suburban sacrifice in Tang China, the four waterways were regarded as gods subordinate (*congshi* 從祀) to the two first-leveled gods listed in the major sacrifice (*dasi* 大祀), the Grand Deity of Earth (*huangdiqi* 皇地祇) and Divine Land (*shenzhou* 神州). The annual ceremony of the Tang north suburban sacrifice was held on the day of summer solstice (*xiazhi* 夏至) in the square altar (*fangqiu* 方丘). The four waterways were also sacrificed to in the round altar (*yuankiu* 圓丘) of the southern suburb. This sacrifice is called La Sacrifice (*laji* 腊祭), which was held on the eighth day of the last month (*laba* 腊八). Unlike the north suburban sacrifice, the south suburban sacrifice was offered for Hundreds of Gods (*baishen* 百神), including the Jidu God (Wechsler 1985, pp. 118–20). Whether in the square altar or round altar, the statute of the Jidu God was arranged at the northern part of the outer wall (*waiwei* 外墻). In addition to the regular sacrifice, when there was a prolonged drought or continuous rain, the court would dispatch officials in charge of sacrifice to make a sacrifice to the Jidu to generate or to stop rain, mostly in the northern suburb.

Second, the Jidu was sacrificed to in the palace. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, a remote sacrifice to the mountains and rivers (not limited to the sacred peaks, strongholds, and waterways) was offered immediately when the emperor's imperial carriage returned from an imperial tour of inspection (Xiao 2000, 62.321).

Third, the *Datang Kaiyuanli* records a detailed sacrificial ritual of *shan* (*shanli* 禪禮) at Mount Sheshou. The ritual was held randomly as a part of the sacrificial rituals of feng and shan. The Jidu was sacrificed to during the ceremony of the sacrificial ritual of shan at the Mount Sheshou (*ibid.*, 64.338–345).

Fourth, from the Tang dynasty, the four waterways were sacrificed to once a year in their own local temples: the Jiangdu in Yizhou 益州 (present day Chengdu, Sichuan), the Hedu in Tongzhou 同州 (present day Dali 大荔, Shaanxi), the Huaidu in Tangzhou 唐州 (present day Tongbai 桐柏, Henan), and the Jidu in Luozhou 洛州 (present day Jiyuan, Henan). The date of performing the ritual was called “the days of greeting the seasonal *qi* in the five suburbs” (*wujiao ying qi ri* 五郊迎氣日). According to their directions and the theory of five phases (*wuxing* 五行), the Jiangdu is sacrificed to on the day of the start of summer (*lixia* 立夏), the Hedu on the day of the start of autumn (*liqiu* 立秋), the Huaidu on the day of the start of spring (*lichun* 立春), and the Jidu on the day of the start of winter (*lidong* 立冬).

3.1. The Structure of the State Ritual of the Jidu Held in the Jidu Temple

Of all the sacrifices to the Jidu, none was as important as those held in the Jidu Temple. As mentioned above, the state ritual of the Jidu leveled the medium sacrifice. However, only that was held in the Jidu Temple was qualified as medium sacrifice. As for the suburban sacrifices at the square altar and round altar, its level varied with the center god. The Tang court first promulgated a detailed ritual code for offering sacrifices in the Jidu Temple, which is mainly preserved in three Tang texts: *juan* 36 of the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, no. 72 of Ritual (*li* 禮) of the *Tongdian* 通典 (*Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions*), and a mid-Tang stele inscription written by Zhang Xi 張洗 (fl. late eighth century to early ninth century), who then was the District Governor of Jiyuan (*jiyuanxian yin* 濟源縣尹; Xiao 2000, 36.201-202; Du 1988, 112.2897-2903). The name of this stele inscription is “Jidumiao Beihaitan jipinbei” 濟瀆廟北海壇祭品碑 (Stele of the Sacrificial Offerings for the North Sea Altar and the Jidu Temple), which records a complete ritual of sacrifice to the Jidu and the North Sea (*beihai* 北海) in 797 (Wang 1985, 103.1733). These texts portray a colorful picture of the standardized annually regular sacrifice to the Jidu in the Jidu Temple.

According to these texts, there were six phases of the ritual. The six phases are outlined below:

1. Preparation for the ritual. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, ritual officials were required to take part in the ritual of abstinence (*zhai* 齋) to purify themselves before the ceremony began. The complete ritual lasted five days, including a three-day partial abstinence (*sanzhai* 散齋) and a two-day complete abstinence (*zhizhai* 致齋). During the three-day partial abstinence, the ritual officials could deal with routine administrative affairs as usual in the daytime and stay at home at night. However, that which was thought to be polluted should be forbidden, such as mourning for dead, visiting sick people, signing criminal documents, having sex, and so forth. The two-day complete abstinence was even stricter, and everything was forbidden but sacrificial matters. Ritual officials must stay at the temple and rehearse the ceremony. The Tang institution of abstinence was derived from the *Liji*. As written in the *Liji*, the purpose of abstinence was to purify the ritual officials’ heart-mind and body: “the abstinence is achieved when the highest degree of refined intelligence is reached. After this it is possible to enter into communion with the spirits” 齋者精明之至也，然後可以交於神明也² (Zheng and Kong 2000, 49.1575).
2. Preparation of the sacred space. After the ritual of abstinence, the Jidu Magistrate cleansed the temple and dug a deep pit (*kan* 塹) in the north one day before the ceremony. The pit was used for the burial of sacrificial offerings. An altar with many steps was built in the pit. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli* and *Tongdian*, the Jidu Magistrate was also obliged to arrange the positions of the ritual participants and major sacrificial wine and food vessels. Three Supplication Scribes stood at the southeast side of the altar, while facing toward the northwest; the Hymn Singer (*zanchangzhe* 讚唱者) stood at the southwest of the presenters; the Priest (*jiguan* 祭官) stood at the northwest side of the altar.
3. Cooking food for the god. On the eve of the ceremony day, the Court Gentlemen for Fasting slaughtered the sacrificial animals and put their blood and fur into the wooden vessels (*dou* 豆), and then placed them in the kitchen. At dawn on the ceremony day, the chef cooked these animals in the kitchen. A full banquet (*tailao* 太牢) was offered, including an ox, a pig, and a sheep. The color of ritual animals was black. In addition to animals, more than twenty kinds of dishes and four kinds of wines were offered (Wang 2021, p. 6). The offering of food and drink not only expressed sincere and deep respect for the gods but also showed the prosperity of an agrarian empire.
4. Getting ready for the ritual. As the officially appointed director in charge of temple affairs, the Jidu Magistrate must be prepared before the start of the formal ceremony in the morning. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, the Jidu Magistrate led the Supplication Scribes and the Court Gentlemen for Fasting to stand to the east of the altar. The statue of the Jidu God was then raised up in the middle of the altar. Four bottles

- (*zun* 樽) of wine, two pieces of jade with bottoms (*lianggui youdi* 两圭有邸), one piece of black silk, and a prayer tablet (*zhuban* 祝版) were arranged in their correct positions. When the Hymn Singer was ready, the Supplication Scribes and bearers of wine and food approached the altar, waiting for the ritual of Three Offerings (*sanxian* 三獻).
5. The Three Offerings. In the morning, the ritual began. The Receptionist (*zanlizhe* 贊禮者) guided the ritual officials to wait outside the altar. About half an hour later, these officials were led to their stations. The Hymn Singer intoned: “kowitz twice” (*zaibai* 再拜). All the participants kneeled to kowitz. Then the Receptionist went to the left side of the First Suppliant (*chuxianguan* 初獻官) and instructed him to perform the First Offering (*chuxian* 初獻). Afterwards, the Receptionist guided the First Suppliant to enter the altar and to stand in front of the statue of the Jidu God. Then, the jade and silk were presented. After that, the First Suppliant returned to his station and the sacrificial food was presented. The First Suppliant was led to wash hands and clean winecups, then proceeded to the statue of the Jidu God. He kneeled again, took up the winecup of sweet wine, and drained it. After that, he descended from the altar. The Supplication Scribes ascended the altar holding the prayer tablet, kneeled, and read the prayer words on the tablet. Once finished, the tablet was put under the statue of the Jidu God, and the First Suppliant drank a cup of pure wine. The Receptionist then guided the Second Suppliant (*yaxianguan* 亞獻官) to wash hands and winecups. The Second Suppliant then ascended to the altar from the east side and was led to the front of the statue of the Jidu God. He then kneeled, faced north, and drained the cup of wine. Then another cup of pure wine was delivered to him. He drank it and returned the winecup. The Second Offering (*yaxian* 亞獻) was completed. Once finished, the Receptionist guided the Second Suppliant to his station. The Third Offering (*zhongxian* 終獻) was offered by the Third Suppliant (*zhongxianguan* 終獻官), following the same procedure as that of the Second Suppliant.
 6. Sinking the silk and burning the prayer tablet. After the Three Offerings, the Jidu Magistrate and the Court Gentlemen for Fasting sank the silk and ritual animal blood. Then the Hymn Singer sang: “ritual ends”. All participants kneeled and kowitz for the last time. They then returned to the place of abstinence (*zhaisuo* 齋所). The prayer tablet was burned as the final phase.

In the sacrificial ceremony, the most important participants were the Three Suppliants. As recorded in the “Jidumiao Beihaitan jipinbei”, the First Suppliant was the Regional Inspector, the Second Suppliant was Zhang Xi himself, the District Governor of Jiyuan, and the Third Suppliant was the Vice Magistrate of Jiyuan. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli* and *Tongdian*, the numbers of sacrificial vessels, ritual animals, offerings, dishes of food, and wine strictly followed a hierarchy. Sacrificial vessels presented to the Jidu included six bottles, ten bamboo-made vessels (*bian* 簋), ten wooden vessels, two round bowls (*gui* 簋), two square bowls (*fu* 簋), and three big plates (*zu* 俎). The ritual animals included one ox, one pig, and one sheep. The offerings consisted of two pieces of jade and some black silk. More than twenty dishes of food were offered (Xiao 2000, 36.201). In addition, three kinds of wine were provided: one bottle of sweet wine (*liqi* 醴齊), one bottle of rice wine (*angqi* 盎齊), and one bottle of pure wine (*qingjiu* 淸酒).

3.2. Communicating with the God: The Significance of the Ritual

In imperial China, especially after Confucianism had been officially accepted as the state ideology in the Han dynasty, the notions of ritual, kingship, power, state religion, and political legitimacy were found to be closely interdependent, and these were all engaged in the sacrificial ceremony. By extracting and developing some essential issues from the Confucian classics (especially from the three ritual classics, the *Zhouli*, *Liji* and *Yili*), the newly standardized rituals were regarded as the most effective means of connecting mortals and gods, or terrestrial and celestial realms. The purpose of the ritual was to establish some direct connections with the celestial realm. Therefore, during the process of the state ritual

of the Jidu, all the concrete procedures and sacrificial items in use were given religious and political significance.

On the day of sacrifice, the whole process of the state ritual of the Jidu was performed at the altar in a deep pit. According to the Tang ritual code, the gods of the four waterways were categorized in the group of Earthly Deity (*diqu* 地祇); thus, the shape of the sacrificial altar was square. This follows from the primary principle in ancient Chinese cosmology: “the heaven is round and the earth is square” (*tianyuan difang* 天圓地方). Unlike the disordered folk rituals in the local community, state ritual created an orderly, sacred place that was independent of outer geography. The altar was designed with many steps (*bi* 陛), which were seen as a symbol distinguishing the human and spiritual worlds. The supplicants ascended the steps from the bottom to the peak of the altar, implying their transcendence of the terrestrial world to the celestial world. To fit themselves for attendance in the celestial realm, the supplicants must participate in the ritual of abstinence to purify themselves physically and mentally and to show sincerity.

The various ritual vessels, as Wu Hung argues, not only have their practical function as implements for food and wine, but also embodies ritual codes and political power as ceremonial paraphernalia for specific ritual purposes (Wu 1993, p. 24). On the one hand, the number of the sacrificial vessels suggests a hierarchy of the gods. On the other hand, the sacrificial offerings also had special religious meanings. Food, including the meat, fish, cereals, and vegetables, were media of communication between gods and humans. Even in China today, sacrificial food is never wasted. Chinese people believe that they will receive good fortune if they eat sacrificial food. This belief implies that the food which is used to feast gods has been “delivered” to the spiritual world and “returned” to the human world with a little remnant power and good fortune from the gods.

Wine was another way of feasting gods and deities in the Tang ritual. As mentioned earlier, there were three kinds of wine provided in the sacrificial ritual to the Jidu. Different wine was offered for different purposes: the sweet wine and the rice wine were used to feast the god, while the pure wine was prepared for the supplicants. This distinction, in Roel Sterckx’s words, is “securing a balance between the entertainment of spirits with food and drink and the desire for convivial celebration by ritual participants” (Sterckx 2011, p. 98).

Jade and silk were offered to the gods and deities in most of the imperial rituals. In ancient Chinese philosophy, jade was viewed as one of the purest natural products. Silk, produced by silkworms, was regarded as a gift from nature. Therefore, the ancient Chinese believed that they were able to connect heaven, earth, and human, viewing them as symbols of the “unity of human and heaven” (*tianrenheyi* 天人合一).

In the state ritual of the Jidu, the tablet was a knot directly binding human emperors and spiritual gods. When making a tablet, one must follow strict standards of material, length, width, and height (Ouyang and Song 1975, 12.332). Prayer words were carved on the tablet, and the tablet was offered to the Jidu God at the end of the ceremony. It was used to deliver information from the emperor to the god. According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, each waterway had its own prayer words. The prayer words for the Jidu God read:

For the Northern Waterway Great Ji: “You have a pure source, fertilize the far and near regions, flow four kinds of energies, and discipline the area. Offer sacrifice to you in the winter according to the state rites. 北瀆大濟云：維神泉源清潔，浸被遐邇，播通四氣，作紀一方，玄冬肇節，聿修典制。 (Xiao 2000, 36.202)

As mentioned earlier, the first official title granted to the Jidu was Duke of Pure Source. From the Tang dynasty, the most significant feature of the Jidu was “pure”, as the prayer words summarized. In the ritual, the prayer words were not only used to inform the Jidu God that the offerings were well prepared, but also to propitiate him with highly praised characters.

According to the *Datang Kaiyuanli*, the jade and silk were sunk in the river after the last offering by the Jidu Magistrate and the Court Gentlemen for Fasting (*ibid.*). The symbolic purpose was to deliver the sacrificial offerings to the god in the water. The last step of the

whole ritual was to burn the prayer tablet at the place of abstinence (ibid.). The tablet was seen as a medium of delivering information from the human world to the heavenly realm, as the smoke produced by burning the tablet was thought to reach Heaven.

In the context of the Tang state ritual code, the state ritual of the Jidu was two-fold: suburban and regular sacrifice in the Jidu Temple. In general, the latter was a simplified version of the former in respect to ritual procedure and basic sacrificial elements. The ritual in the Jidu Temple had more functions and meanings than did suburban counterparts. All sacrificial offerings were imbued with religious meaning. Political legitimacy and the emperor's authority were also emphasized through the ritual. Although emperors never participated in local sacrifice, prayer tablets sealed by them were taken as an effective substitute for their presence.

In this section, I, for the first time, clarify the six phases of the state ritual of Jidu that were held in the Jidu Temple by relying on three Tang texts, and then analyze the ideas of state authority, political legitimacy, religious belief, and cosmology, as these underlie the ritual performance concerning the Jidu. I argue that the Jidu was not only tightly associated with controlling water but was also a symbol and mechanism of political legitimacy. The next section will take up the legendary stories of the Jidu God looking at the role he played in local religious life.

4. Divinity on the Stele: The Jidu God in Local Society

Located in Jiyuan, Henan Province, the Jidu Temple impresses tourists for its magnificent ancient halls and pavilions. With over 30 buildings constructed from the Song to Qing, the Jidu Temple is the only surviving and largely intact architectural structure connected to sacrifice to the four waterways. Historically, it was the site of sacrifice to the Jidu and North Sea. As mentioned earlier, the Jidu Temple was established in the Sui dynasty. Unfortunately, there are no Sui and Tang architectural structures remaining except for a broken wall. Extant structures were mostly built in the Ming and Qing dynasties, while the earliest can be dated back to the Song dynasty. Like the majority of traditional Chinese temples, it is composed of rectilinear complexes of building all cardinally orientated to the south (Wheatley 1971, pp. 147–58).

Inside the Jidu Temple, there are more than 160 inscribed steles (from the Tang dynasty to Republican period). In addition, the *Jiyuanxian Zhi* and *Xu Jiyuanxian Zhi* 續濟源縣志 (A Supplement of Jiyuan District Gazetteer) also preserve some lost stele inscriptions (Xiao 1976; He 2013). In general, according to the contents, preserved stele inscriptions in the Jidu Temple and local records can be divided into five types:

1. Imperially composed invocations (*yuzhi jiwen/zhuwen* 御制祭文/祝文). These official edicts were addressed to the Jidu God on behalf of the emperor. Most of them were carved in the Ming and Qing dynasties.
2. Records of the ritual of tossing dragons and tablets. There are at least six stele inscriptions picturing this ritual. Interestingly, all of them are dated in the Yuan dynasty.
3. Records of the restoration of the Jidu Temple by missionary or local officials.
4. Legendary and efficacious stories of the Jidu God.
5. Steles commemorating the merit and virtue (*gongdebei* 功德碑) of local people for their donation to the Jidu Temple.

According to these stele inscriptions and local records, since the Tang dynasty, the Jidu God was not only regarded as the most reliable official water god but also as symbol of political legitimacy, regional protector of local society, and savior of local people. I shall now discuss these divine functions in turn.

Making rain was the most important divine function of the Jidu God. Almost all the Ming–Qing imperially composed invocations concerning the Jidu God were issued as a prayer for rain. For example, in 1527, because of a prolonged drought, Emperor Shizong of Ming 明世宗 (r. 1522–1566) ordered the major local officials of Henan to sacrifice to the Jidu God for rain. Here is the inscription of this event:

The state will turn to offering sacrifice to the gods and ghosts when disasters and famines happen. This follows the rite. From last winter to this spring, it did not snow or rain at all in north and south banks of the Yellow River the wheats were not fully grown, which led to a poor harvest. Seeding was particularly hard, and people are still starving. Officials had made sacrifice to all gods. . . . God of the pure Ji River which originates from Mount Wangwu fertilizes the lands and benefits the people with great merits. Sacrifices to you in past years always gained good results. Now, I (the emperor) reverently ordered the official [five characters missing] to offer the silk to you. You enjoy sacrifice in this quarter and it is your duty to solicitude and protect the district. Hope you silently operate your transformative power to make great rains, so that [three characters missing] the people could rely on you. 國有兇荒索鬼神而祭之，禮也。顧惟大河南北，自冬俱春雪雨全無，. . . . 麥未成既歉，自穀播種尤艱，下民嗷嗷，有司用，靡神不舉. . . . 惟神清濟之流，發源王屋，利澤生民，功莫大焉。往歲事禱，恆獲嘉應，茲特敬恭，竭誠官告幣昭假於神。享祀一方，殫恤捍禦，神之職也。尚其默運化機，沛以井雨，俾侍民庶攸賴。(Yao 2014, p. 220)

According to the inscriptions, the Ming emperor tried to sustain an emperor–minister relation for the sake of ordering the Jidu God to bring rain. After the Jidu God was bestowed noble titles, the emperor was obliged to issue an imperial edict to order him to control water. Words such as “it is your duty 神之職也” and “to make great rains 沛以井雨” frequently appeared in imperial edicts. The emperor, in the name of the Son of Heaven, was bound up with the system of sacrifice and maintenance of dynastic continuity and in his person was located the vital link between the divine cosmos and humanity (Campany 2009, p. 199).

In imperial China, the Jidu God was also used to promote imperial indoctrination, which secured him a political function. A Song stele inscription titled “Chongxiu Jidumiao bei” 重脩濟瀆廟碑 (Inscription of Restoration of the Jidu Temple) clearly points out:

The [Jidu] God follows the mandate of heaven and silently promotes imperial indoctrination. The God takes responsibility for fertilizing lands and controlling rain. It is also the God’s power that makes a good harvest. The god resonates to our benevolent government and enjoys our sacrifices, so that the people have a peaceful and rich life. 惟神上應天命，陰助皇化，膏澤調順，神之職也；多稼豐登，神之力也。感我德政，歆我祀事，故生民泰然。(Xiao 1976, 16.665–666)

This stele was erected in 973 and was written by the early Song politician Lu Duoxun 盧多遜 (934–985). In Lu’s words, the Jidu God was not only a water god in charge of favorable weather and good harvest but also a god who helped to promote imperial indoctrination and political legitimacy. The purpose of Lu’s inscription was to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the Song after the conquest of the state of Southern Han 南漢.

In the Song dynasty, the Jidu God was regarded as a protector who quelled banditry and secured local people by controlling rain. As shown earlier, it won him an officially granted title of “King of Loyal and Protective Pure Source”. Here is the story:

The King of Pure Source in the Jidu Temple takes advantage of his great power to benefit the local people. When the bandits of the neighboring county prepared to invade the border of Jiyuan County, local people ran to pray to you, the Jidu God. Thunder and rain arrived very quickly. The Qin River immediately had an inaccessible stronghold. Orderly banners suddenly appeared at the south bank, which looked like a strict troop. It seemed that all the bandits were deprived of their soul, and they fled away. People in communities kept undisturbed and then celebrated the victory. A memorial was presented to the emperor. The good efficacy was so obvious that the emperor sighed with pleasure. In order to commemorate this event, the emperor ordered a great title be bestowed to the god for repaying his miraculous help and consoling the people’s hearts. The god descends down to enjoy the sacrifice and the people along the river reply on him. The god shall be granted King of Loyal and Protective Pure Source. 濟瀆廟清

源王，利澤溥博，陰福吾氏屬者。寇發鄰郡，將犯縣境，邑人奔走禱于爾大神，雷雨迅興。沁河有湯池之險，旌旗歛列南岸，象羽林之嚴。賊徒褻魄以咸奔，閭里按堵而相慶。奏函來上，休應昭然，嘉歎不忘，宜崇美號，庶荅靈睨，式慰民心，來格來歆，一方水賴，可特封：清源忠護王。(Xiao 1976, 16.673; Yao 2014, p. 208)

In this story, the Jidu God was regarded as a territory protector by the Jiyuan people. It reveals a trend that official water gods such as the Jidu God descended from the state ritual code to local society from the Song dynasty onward.

In the Yuan dynasty, the Jidu God was offered sacrifices by the Mongolian court for the sake of exterminating a locust plague. According to the stele inscription of “Huangtaizi Yanwang sixiang beiji” 皇太子燕王嗣香碑記 (Record of Pilgrimage of the Crown Prince of Yan), in 1272 the crown prince of Yan, Borjigin Zhenjin 孛兒只斤·真金 (1243–1285) sent Daoist priests to practice the Great Ritual Offerings to the All-Embracing Heaven (*luotian dajiao* 羅天大醮) in the Jidu Temple (Chen 1988, p. 1102). To borrow the great supernatural power to fight against the serious plague of locusts from the Jidu God, this ritual was exclusively offered to him. The locust plague usually occurred because of severe drought. Therefore, the real intention of offering sacrifice to the Jidu God was to pray for rain to relieve the drought.

According to these stories, I argue that since the Song dynasty, the Jidu God had been transformed into a regional protector and savior of local people in addition to an official water god. Through a continuous stream of legendary, miraculous intervention, including relieving drought, bringing rain, quelling flood, fending off bandits, and subduing disasters, the Jidu God renewed his bond to the local communities and secured people’s devotion.

5. The Jidu Cult in Other Religious Traditions

From the Tang dynasty there were obvious interactions of official sacrifice and institutionalized religions such as Daoism and Buddhism. Daoist priests transformed the cults of the sacred peaks, strongholds, seas, and waterways by involving them in the Daoist pantheon and rituals. With the spread of Daoism, these transformed rituals were gradually accepted by the common people and merged with folk belief. They were also absorbed into Buddhist ritual. This section examines religious beliefs and practices of the Jidu God beyond the state ritual code by looking at it in multiple religious dimensions.

In medieval China, the most flourishing Daoist ritual regarding the Jidu was tossing the dragons and tablets (*toulongjian* 投龍簡). This ritual, developed in the fifth century, was for the sake of praying for blessing and eradicating disasters.³ According to the ritual site, there were normally two methods of performing the ritual: burial and sinking. Daoist priests buried the written prayer on the tablets with the green silk threads (*qingsi* 青絲), golden dragons (*jilong* 金龍), and golden rings (*jinniu* 金紐) in the mountains, grotto heavens (*dongtian* 洞天), and blessed places (*fudi* 福地). In the rituals that were performed at the waterways and lakes, Daoist priests threw these ritual objects into the water and sank them.

Extant stele inscriptions suggest that the Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets began to be performed in the Jidu Temple during Empress Wu’s 武后 reign (690–705). In 691, only one year after Empress Wu’s ascension to the throne, she sent a Daoist priest, Ma Yuanzhen 馬元貞 (fl. eighth century), who was abbot of the Jintai Abbey 金臺觀 in the capital city Chang’an 長安 (present day Xi’an, Shaanxi), to perform the rituals at the five sacred peaks and four waterways for the purpose of obtaining merits (Lei 2009, pp. 153–66). From 691 to 692, two of Ma Yuanzhen’s disciples (Yang Jingchu 楊景初 and Guo Xiyuan 郭希元), and two officials from the court (Yang Junshang 楊君尚 and Ouyang Zhicong 歐陽智琮) performed the rituals. With an obvious intention of political propaganda designed to secure legitimacy, the rituals were performed for fulfilling Empress Wu’s political ambitions. Therefore, as “Fengxianguan Laojun shixiang bei” 奉仙觀老君石像碑 (Inscription of the Stone Statue of the Elderly Lord in the Fengxian Abbey) records, after Ma Yuanzhen and his disciples erected a statue of the Grand Supreme Elderly Lord (*Taishang Laojun* 太上老君),

there were auspicious signs: a crane flew around and auspicious clouds were manifested (Chen 1988, p. 80).

There were three kinds of tablets: the mountain tablet (*shanjian* 山簡), water tablet (*shuijian* 水簡), and earth tablet (*tujian* 土簡). The water tablets were tossed in the auspicious springs, seas, and the four waterways (Lingbao yujian 1988, p. 0333). The only extant water tablet thrown in the Jidu was discovered at the Jidu Temple in 2003. It is a piece of rectangular jade tablet with a few lines of prayer. The text reads:

The great Song son and subject of Heaven (one character missing) . . . twenty-one persons opened (two characters missing) the Golden Register Fasting Ceremony . . . Throwing the golden dragons and jade tablets into the Water Bureau, wish the Gods, the three officials, the Nine Emperors of Water Bureau . . . present to the Nine Heavens. Cautiously reach the golden dragon station of the Water Bureau dispatch the information. On the wushen day of the fourth month in the first year of the Xining (1068). 大宋嗣天子臣口 三七人開啓口天口金篆道場 水府投送金龍玉簡，願神願仙，三元同存，九府水帝 奏，上聞九天。謹詣，水府金龍驛傳。熙寧元年太歲戊申四月。(Yao 2014, p. 55)

From the fragmentary inscriptions, we can tell that this piece of jade tablet was tossed into the Jidu after a Golden Register Fasting Ceremony (*jinzhuhaiyi* 金篆齋儀). According to the date, the ritual was performed just after Emperor Shenzong of Song 宋神宗 (r. 1067–1085) ascended to throne. The emperor tried to declare his emperorship and to present this information to Heaven through the ritual.

After the Song dynasty, emperors of the Jin and Yuan dynasties continued the Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets. As the stele inscriptions in the Jidu Temple show, it was performed even more frequently. During this period, Confucian officials and Daoist priests were frequently sent by the court to practice the rituals (Ma 2011). However, from the Ming dynasty on, as the decreasing number of stele inscriptions concerning the ritual in the Jidu Temple suggests, the Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets was gradually decreased by the imperial courts.

The Jidu God was also absorbed in the Chinese Buddhist Water–Land Ritual (*shuilu fahui* 水陸法會) from the late Tang dynasty. According to the ritual text *Fajie Shengfan Shuilu Shenghui Xiuzhai Yigui* (1975) 法界聖凡水陸勝會修齋儀軌 (*The Fasting Rite of the Most Excellent Ceremony in Which All Enlightened and Unenlightened Beings of Land and Water Share a Great Meal to Aid Liberation*), the Jidu God and other three gods of waterways were invited to the inner hall during the first night. In the ritual, they were called Source Dukes of the Four Waterways (*Siduyuan gong* 四瀆源公) (X. 1497.3a). As mentioned earlier, this title was conferred by the Tang court, which reveals a medieval framework of the Buddhist Water–Land Ritual.

For the imperial courts, the gods of four waterways were regarded as quasi-officials in the divine bureaucratic system of the celestial realm such as the God of Earth (*tudishen* 土地神) and the City God (*chengchuangshen* 城隍神). However, for the common people they were defined as water gods by their function of controlling waters. “In China, divinity is a responsibility like a public function: the title endures not those who hold it succeed one another They are functionary gods who receive a position, who lose it, who are promoted or demoted” (Maspero 1981, p. 87). Therefore, the image of the Jidu God was reshaped in folklore and popular literature.

According to one of the most significant and influential works of folk religious literature, *Sanjiao Yuanliu Soushen Daquan* 三教源流搜神大全 (The Comprehensive Collection of Investigations into the Divinities of the Three Doctrines since Their Origin), each of the four waterways had its correlative god (Qin 2012, p. 60). Here, the gods of four waterways were categorized in the group of Confucian Gods (*rujiaoshen* 儒教神). They shared a title of “Gods of the Four Waterways (*sidushen* 四瀆神)”. All were real historical figures who devoted themselves to the state. More importantly, they were all ministers with high bureaucratic rankings. The Hedu God was Chen Ping 陳平 (d. 178 BCE), the Western Han Counselor-in-chief. The Jiangdu God was Qu Yuan 屈原 (340–278 BCE), one of the

most famous politicians and poets in Chinese history. The Huaidu God was Pei Du 裴度 (765–839), the mid-Tang Grand Councilor.

The Jidu God was Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484 BCE). He was a general and politician of the Wu State 吳國 during the Spring and Autumn period, who was famous for his loyalty. According to the *Shiji*, not long after Wu Zixu was forced to commit suicide, the Wu people began to worship him (Sima 1963, 66.2180). The local people of the Wu State built him a shrine not only in honor of his contribution but in sympathy with his sufferings. In the *Sanjiao Yuanliu Soushen Daquan*, Wu Zixu was also worshipped as the God of Tide (*chaoshen* 潮神). The cult of Wu Zixu was particularly popular in the Jiangzhe area 江浙地區. However, he had nothing to do with the Jidu. He neither took the office in the ancient Ji River area nor left a legendary story there. It is likely that the compilers of the folk religious literature deliberately fabricated a connection of Wu Zixu and the Jidu. However, the Jidu God had his political significance. Worship of these prestigious officials, as John Shryock stated, “has been encouraged by the government, since it holds up examples of good men for public emulation and encourage virtue by keeping alive the memory of great deed. Doubtless there is also the feeling that benefit may accrue to the worshipers from the increased power of the hero in the next world” (Shryock 1931, p. 45).

6. Conclusions

In this paper, focusing on the coherent theme of comprehensively understanding the rich implications of the Jidu sacrifice in imperial China, I have examined the history, structure, and significance of the state sacrificial ritual of the Jidu, as well as the Jidu cult in local society and other religious traditions. Four original, major arguments and conclusions are drawn from the examination.

First, I indicate that in imperial China the Jidu was not only tightly associated with controlling water but was also a symbol and mechanism of political legitimacy by analyzing the ideas of state authority, political legitimacy, religious belief, and cosmology, as these underlie the ritual performance concerning the Jidu. The state ritual of the Jidu held in the Jidu Temple was the most important Jidu sacrifice during imperial times.

Second, this paper provides the first detailed analysis of the six phases of the state ritual of the Jidu held in the Jidu Temple, which is a new discovery. Performing the ritual was thought to be an effective means of connecting mortals and gods, or terrestrial and celestial realms. All the ritual procedures and sacrificial offerings were imbued with religious and political meaning.

Third, the Jidu Temple acted as a node connecting the state and local society. Political legitimacy and the emperor’s authority were preached through regular sacrifice and the participation of imperial commissioners, local bureaucrats, ritual specialists, and people. The stele inscriptions in the Jidu Temple suggest that the imperial courts had always tried to impose official water gods such as the Jidu God in local society by holding frequent and regular sacrificial ceremonies. The Jidu God was therefore worshiped in local society. From the Song dynasty, in addition to acting as an official water god in the state ritual code, the Jidu God was transformed into a territory protector by local people and often manifested his divine figure when there was a need.

Fourth, I, for the first time, examine the religious beliefs and practices of the Jidu God beyond the state ritual code by looking at it in multiple religious dimensions. From the late Tang dynasty, the Jidu and the Jidu God began to be associated with various religious traditions. They became involved in the Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets and the Buddhist Water–Land Ritual. Particularly when Daoist priests were trusted by the Jurchen and Mongolian rulers during the Jin and Yuan dynasties, they often undertook imperial missions to offer sacrifices to the Jidu. From the Song dynasty, the Jidu God was more widely acknowledged and attracted more believers. The prestigious bureaucrat Wu Zixu, who conformed to orthodox Confucian values, became the Jidu God in folk religious literature. This not only implies that the Jidu cult was widely shared by the common people, but also reveals a process of reproduction from high culture to low culture.

Overall, as this paper has demonstrated, in imperial China the Jidu and the Jidu God meant many things to different people. For the imperial courts, the Jidu not only satisfied the need to control water in an agrarian empire but was also a political symbol and mechanism of imperial legitimacy. For the Daoist priest, the Jidu was a sacred site to practice the Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets. For the Buddhist clergy, the Jidu God acted as one of the protective deities in particular rituals. For the people in local society, the Jidu God was thought to be a territory protector. Thus, although the Jidu sacrifice has been largely ignored in previous scholarship, it was crucial to imperial China's politics and played an important part in the history of Chinese religion. It deserves further and deeper explorations. **Funding:** This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 I shall discuss this story in the fourth section.
- 2 The Chinese character *qi* 齋 is often used in the sense of *zhai* 齋 (abstinence) in traditional texts.
- 3 More precisely, just as Édouard Émmanuel Chavannes (1865–1918) observed, the most flourishing period of practicing the ritual of tossing dragons and tablets was from the 7th century to the 14th century. See (Chavannes 1919, pp. 53–220). According to the objects to be tossed, the *tou longjian* literally means tossing (or casting) dragons and tablets. See (Wang 2012, p. 51). In this ritual, both golden dragons and tablets will be cast in the end. They are two different objects, but some scholars mistake it as “tossing the dragon tablets”. For example, see (Huang 2012, p. 234; Raz 2010, p. 421). Chavannes first noticed this Daoist ritual and its religious functions in medieval China in the early 20th century. However, only recently have Chinese and Japanese scholars begun to pay attention to it again. See (Chavannes 1919, pp. 53–220; Kamitsuka 1992, pp. 126–34; Zhou 1999, pp. 91–109; Lei 2004, pp. 73–80; Lei 2009, pp. 153–66; Liu 2007, pp. 235–70; Zhang 2007, pp. 27–32; Huang 2012, pp. 234–39; Xie 2018, pp. 228–46; Yi 2018, pp. 132–73; Lü 2019, pp. 91–101).

References

- Ban, Gu 班固 (32–92). 1964. *Hanshu* 漢書 [Han History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Campany, Robert. 2009. *Making Transcendent: Ascetics and Social Memory in Early Medieval China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Chavannes, Edouard. 1919. Le jet des dragons. *Mémoires concernant l'Asie orientale*, 53–220.
- Chen, Yuan 陳垣, ed. 1988. *Daojia Jinshi Lue* 道家金石略 [Abbreviated Collection of Daoist Epigraphy]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Du, You 杜佑 (735–812). 1988. *Tongdian* 通典 [Compendium of Comprehensive Institutions]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Fajie Shengfan Shuilu Shenghui Xiuzhai Yigui 法界聖凡水陸勝會修齋儀軌 [The Most Excellent Ceremony in Which All Enlightened and Unenlightened Beings of Land and Water Share are Invited to Attend a Great Meal to Aid Liberation from Samsāra without Restriction or Discrimination]. 1975. Taipei: Xinwenfeng.
- Feng, Jun 馮軍. 2012. Daming zhaozhibeikaozheng 大明詔旨碑考證 [The Textual Research of Daming Imperial Edict Tablet]. *Journal of Jiyuan Vocational and Technical College* 2: 7–9.
- Guo, Pu 郭璞 (276–324), and Bing Xing 邢昺 (932–1010). 2000. *Erya Zhushu* 爾雅注疏 [Exegeses on the Correct Words]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- He, Xingfang 何荇芳 (fl. 1813). 2013. *Xu Jiyuanxian Zhi* 續濟源縣志 [A Supplementary of Jiyuan District Gazetteer]. Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chubanshe.
- Huang, Shih-shan. 2012. *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jia, Jinhua. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. [CrossRef]
- Kamitsuka, Yoshiko 神塚淑子. 1992. Dokyo gishiki to doragon: Riku cho to ocho no to ryu kan o megutte 道教儀禮と龍—六朝・唐代の投龍簡をめぐって [The Daoist Ritual and Dragon: The Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets in the Six Dynasties and Tang Dynasty]. In *Hinaka bunka kenkyu* 日中文化研究 [Study on Japanese and Chinese Culture]. Tokyo: Bensei.
- Lei, Wen 雷聞. 2004. Daojiaotou Ma Yuanzhen yu Wuzhou geming 道教徒馬元貞與武周革命 [Daoist Priest Ma Yuanzhen and the Wuzhou Revolution]. *Chinese History Studies* 1: 73–80.
- Lei, Wen. 2009. *Jiaomiao Zhiwai: Suitang Guojia Jisi Yu Zongjiao* 郊廟之外：隋唐國家祭祀與宗教 [Beyond Suburban Rites and Imperial: State Sacrifices and Religions in Sui-Tang China]. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Lingbao yujian 靈寶玉鑿 [Jade Mirror of the Numinous Treasure]. 1988. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.
- Liu, Xu 劉昫 (888–947). 1975. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [Old Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Liu, Zhaorui 劉昭瑞. 2007. *Kaogu Faxian Yu Zaoqi Daojiao Yanjiu* 考古發現與早期道教研究 [Archeological Discoveries and Early Daoist Study]. Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe.

- Lü, Bo 呂博. 2019. Benming yu Jiangdan: Tangdai Daojiao 'Toulongjian' zaidu 本命與降誕: 唐代道教“投龍簡”再讀 [On the Birthyear and Birthday: Rereading Daoism Toulongjian in the Tang Dynasty]. *Studies in World Religion* 2: 91–101.
- Ma, Xiaolin 馬曉林. 2011. Yuandai Yuezhenhaidu jisi kaoshu 元代岳鎮海濱祭祀考述 [Study of Yuan Sacrifices to the Yue-zhen-hai-du]. *Chinese History Studies* 4: 131–144.
- Maspero, Henry. 1981. The Mythology of Modern China. In *Taoism and Chinese Religion*. Translated by Frank A. Kierman Jr.. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Ouyang, Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), and Qi Song 宋祁 (998–1061). 1975. *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 [New Tang History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Qin, Zijin 秦子晉, ed. 2012. *Huitu Sanjiao Yuanliu Soushen Daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全 [The Comprehensive Collection of Investigations into the Divinities of the Three Doctrines since their Origin with Images]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Raz, Gil. 2010. Ritual Theory in Medieval Daoism. In *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual: Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*. Edited by Axel Michaels. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Sakurai, Satomi 櫻井智美. 2014. Yuandai de yuedu jisi: Yi jidumiao wei zhongxin 元代的岳瀆祭祀: 以濟瀆廟為中心 [The Yuan Sacrifice to the Sacred Peaks and Waterways: Centered on the Jidu Temple]. In *Yuanshi Luncong* 元史論叢 [The Study of Yuan History]. Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe.
- Shryock, John. 1931. *The Temples of Anking and Their Cults: A Study of Modern Chinese Religion*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- Sima, Qian 司馬遷 (b. ca. 145 BCE). 1963. *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Song, Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381). 1976. *Yuanshi* 元史 [Yuan History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Sterckx, Roel. 2011. *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Toqto'a 脫脫 (1314–1356). 1977. *Songshi* 宋史 [Song History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wang, Chang 王昶 (1725–1806), ed. 1985. *Jinshi Cuibian* 金石萃編 [Dense Collection of Bronze and Stone Inscriptions]. Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian.
- Wang, Gang. 2012. *The Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wang, Yuanlin 王元林. 2021. The Sacrificial Ritual and Commissioners to the South Sea God in Tang China. *Religions* 12: 960. [CrossRef]
- Watson, Burton. 1993. *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wechsler, Howard. 1985. *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the Tang Dynasty*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wei, Zheng 魏徵 (580–643). 1973. *Suishu* 隋書 [Sui History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Wheatley, Paul. 1971. *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wu, Hung 巫鴻. 1993. *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Xiao, Hongbing 肖紅兵, and Xiaobai Li 李小白. 2019. Huangquan wei yi yu shen zheng heliu: Gudai Jidu cisi zhidu bianqian kaolun 皇權儀與神政合流: 古代濟瀆祠祀制度變遷考論 [The Imperial Authority and the Combination of Divinity and Politics: A Study on the Change of Jidu Sacrificial System in Ancient China]. *Dong Yue Tribune* 40: 48–60.
- Xiao, Song 蕭嵩 (d. 749), ed. 2000. *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮 [Kaiyuan Ritual of the Great Tang]. Beijing: The Ethnic Publishing House.
- Xiao, Yingzhi 蕭應植 (fl. 1761). 1976. *Jiyuanxian Zhi* 濟源縣志 [The Jiyuan District Gazetteer]. Taipei: Chengwen Chubanshe.
- Xie, Yifeng 謝一峰. 2018. Tangsongjian guojia Toulongyi zhi bianqian 唐宋間國家投龍儀之變遷 [The Development of the State Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets during the Tang and Song]. In *Songshi yanjiu luncong* 宋史研究論叢 [The Study of Song Dynasty]. Edited by Xidong Jiang 姜錫東. Baoding: Hebei University Press.
- Yang, Bojun 楊伯峻. 1981. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳註 [Exegeses on the Zuo's Commentary in Spring and Autumn]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Yao, Yongxia 姚永霞. 2014. *Wenhua Jidu* 文化濟瀆 [The Cultural Jidu]. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Guji Chubanshe.
- Yi, Hong 易宏. 2018. Daojiao Toulongjianyi yuanliu luekao 道教投龍簡儀源流略考 [Draft on the Origin of Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets]. In *Zhongguo bentu zongjiao yanjiu* 中國本土宗教研究 [Studies on Chinese Indigenous Religions]. Edited by Ka Wang 王卡 and Guiping Wang 汪桂平. Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press.
- Zhang, Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672–1755). 1974. *Mingshi* 明史 [Ming History]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zhang, Zehong 張澤洪. 2007. Tangdai Daojiao de Toulong yishi 唐代道教的投龍儀式 [The Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets in the Tang Dynasty]. *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University* 36: 27–3.
- Zheng, Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), and Yingda Kong 孔穎達 (574–648), eds. 2000. *Liji Zhengyi* 禮記正義 [Correct Meanings on the Records of Ritual]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zhou, Xibo 周西波. 1999. Duhuang xiejuan P. 2354 yu Tangdai Daojiao Toulong huodong 敦煌寫卷P. 2354與唐代道教投龍活動 [Dunhuang Manuscript P. 2354 and Tang Daoist Ritual of Tossing Dragons and Tablets]. *Studies in Tun-Huang* 22: 91–109.
- Zhu, Yi 朱熹. 2007. Lun Tangdai de shanchuan fengjue xianxiang: Jianlun Tangdai de guanfang shanchuan Chongbai 論唐代的山川封爵現象—兼論唐代的官方山川崇拜 [The Conferment of Noble Titles on Mountains, Rivers, Lakes and Seas, and their Official Cult in the Tang Dynasty]. *New History* 18: 71–124.
- Zhu, Yi. 2022. The Bestowal of Noble Titles upon the Mountain and Water Spirits in Tang China. *Religions* 13: 229. [CrossRef]

Article

A Constant Cascade: Ancient and Medieval Verse on the Four Waterways

Nicholas Morrow Williams

School of International Letters and Cultures, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA; nmwill14@asu.edu

Abstract: The literary representation of China's great rivers has repeatedly been transformed by changes in religious belief and ritual. In the *Book of Songs*, rivers figure primarily as political boundaries and figures of separation. Though they may already play a role in religious rites, their geographical identity is paramount. However, in the "Nine Songs" of the *Elegies of Chu*, they appear in a new guise as sites of divine encounter and shamanistic flight. Their treatment in later works may be regarded as a peculiar synthesis of these two traditions. Once the Four Waterways were designated as the object of state ritual in the Western Han, their divine status was widely accepted, along with explicitly political ramifications. For instance, the god of the Yellow River was honored as a participant in flood control and imperial governance writ large. Meanwhile, the tradition of the epideictic *fu* also celebrates the awesome scale of China's waterways, reaching a culmination not long after the fall of the Han in Guo Pu's (286–324) "Rhapsody on the Yangzi River". However, it is noteworthy how often the *fu* tradition eschews material description of rivers in favor of celebrating their numinous powers and divine inhabitants. Because of this turn towards the divine in the medieval literary tradition, it is no accident that one of the most prominent subjects of fluvial verse in the Tang is not body of water at all but rather the Sky River, or Milky Way.

Keywords: early Chinese poetry; medieval Chinese poetry; rivers; *fu* (rhapsody); Milky Way

Citation: Williams, Nicholas Morrow. 2022. A Constant Cascade: Ancient and Medieval Verse on the Four Waterways. *Religions* 13: 166. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020166>

Academic Editor: Jinhua Jia

Received: 3 January 2022

Accepted: 5 February 2022

Published: 14 February 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. A Land of Rivers

There is a rich scholarly literature on China's sacred mountains, with landmarks in Western sinology, including Edouard Chavannes' monograph on Mount Tai 泰 and James Robson's work a century later on Mount Heng 衡.¹ As Jia Jinhua has recently reminded us (Jia 2021), the veneration of mountains in China was only established through a long historical process, one that included state designation of certain mountains as objects of worship, alongside certain bodies of water as well. The emblematic role of China's rivers needs no introduction since the distinctive ways in which the Yellow and Yangzi rivers sustained millet and rice agriculture, respectively, have shaped and determined much of China's history. In modern times, the drama of the Yellow River's incessant floods served as the central metaphor of the 1988 documentary "River Elegy" (He shang 河殇), with its critical reflections on China's traditional culture.

From a comparative point of view, rivers such as the Nile, the Ganges, and the Rhine are not just geographical landmarks but sites of civilizational resonance. The rivers that divide and demarcate our landmasses, while also providing an indispensable means of communication and exchange, are natural objects of attention, devotion, even reverence. When Melville's narrator Ishmael is attempting, in the course of his self-introduction, to explain his own lifelong itch to ride upon the waves, he asserts self-assuredly: "why is almost every robust, healthy boy with a robust, healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why, upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity and make him the own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning. Still deeper

is the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. However, that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life, and this is the key to it all" (Melville 2002, pp. 19–20).

Though the prompt to Melville's discussion here is of course the appeal of the ocean, to explain this phenomenon he conceives of bodies of water in general as the images of something desperately desired. The mirroring surface of a body of water, which conceals depths that are inaccessible and dangerous, acts as a physical correlative to human narcissism, in which we find the images of our own desires and aspirations in the natural world.

China's great rivers too have provided an "image... of life" throughout the ages, a concentrated reflection of some of the abiding concerns of the times. However, what is striking as one looks through early Chinese verse on rivers is how abruptly the preoccupations of the writers shift and how rarely they linger on any facet of the rivers themselves. Instead, China's rivers have from the beginning served primarily a symbolic, and later a religious, role. In ancient times, their significance was tied to their actual geographical role, demarcating the key territories of the civilized world. However, increasingly in imperial China they would take on an explicitly religious function in the culture, as signified *inter alia* by the inclusion of the Four Waterways as objects of state sacrifice in the Western Han. In keeping with this increasingly divinized role, by the Tang dynasty they come to figure most prominently not as terrestrial rivers at all but as the counterparts of that great celestial body, the Milky Way.

The Four Waterways (*sidu* 四瀆) are the Yellow River (He 河), Huai 淮 River, Ji 濟 River, and Yangzi River (Jiang 江). They had been designated as the object of state ritual in the Western Han, along with the Five Sacred Peaks, and their cultural importance was echoed in literary representation long after (Jia 2021, p. 4). However, their specific appeal to the literary imagination would evolve over time, and by the Tang had shifted beyond their terrestrial extension to encompass their intimations of celestial bodies as well. Three of the waterways already figure prominently in the *Book of Songs* (the exception is the Ji river). Typically, they are employed as symbols of the vast and unattainable, and the ninth poem in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs), "The Han Is Broad" or *Shijing* 9, already refers to the Han and Jiang rivers in its powerful chorus. The Han 漢 is technically a tributary of the Jiang 江 or Yangzi River. I will generally refer to the Yangzi as the Jiang, in order to maintain consistency in discussing these rivers by their contemporary names. The two terms Jiang and He 河 would later become generic terms for waterways, but that in early China they were simply proper nouns, and it is important to recognize that they have never been generic rivers but singular toponyms. "The Han Is Broad" is essentially about the Jiang, the great southern river which, from the perspective of the *Shijing* poets, marked the remote south (Mao et al. 2000, pp. 1C.63–67; Nie et al. 2009, pp. 20–23):²

The Han Is Broad 漢廣

南有喬木	In the South there are tall trees,
不可休思	But you may not rest there. ³
漢有游女	On the Han there are ladies roaming
不可求思	But you may not pursue them there!
漢之廣矣	For the Han is broad indeed,
不可泳思	You cannot dive across it.
江之永矣	For the Jiang is vast indeed,
不可方思	So you cannot navigate it.
翹翹錯薪	Overgrown above is the wood,
言刈其楚	I would prune its brambles.
之子于歸	This girl is going to be wed,

言秣其馬 I would get fodder for my horse.
 漢之廣矣 For the Han is broad indeed,
 不可泳思 You cannot swim across it.
 江之永矣 For the Jiang is vast indeed,
 不可方思 So you cannot ford it.
 翹翹錯薪 Overgrown above is the wood,
 言刈其蕒 I would prune that mugwort.
 之子于歸 This girl is going to be wed,
 言秣其駒 I would get fodder for my stallion.
 漢之廣矣 For the Han is broad indeed,
 不可泳思 You cannot swim across it.
 江之永矣 For the Jiang is vast indeed,
 不可方思 So you cannot ford it.

There are multiple levels of meaning and more than one plausible interpretation to this famous poem, but here I would like to focus simply on the role of the rivers, the Han and the Jiang.⁴ One view of the significance of these rivers is that of Marcel Granet (1884–1940), that the poem is describing marriage rituals located on the riverbanks (Granet 1919, pp. 129–42). However, this misses the key point that the rivers are being referred to as a metaphor for other kinds of barriers and cannot be interpreted as solely physical landmarks. There may or may not have been contemporaneous worship of these rivers, but it is clearly not the point of the song. Similarly, the Lu 魯 and Han 韓 school interpreted the roaming ladies as water goddesses, which again is a possible undertone but hardly evinced in the poem itself (Wang 1987, p. 1.51).

The Han and Jiang rivers lay beyond the southern borders of the central Chinese states in which the poems were authored and thus marked the boundaries among human domains. This dimension of the poem is key to one of the earliest interpretations of the poem, that of the preface in the Mao 毛 version of the anthology, variously attributed to Confucius' disciple Zixia 子夏, to Mao Heng 毛亨 (early Western Han), or other Han scholars (for an overview see van Zoeren 1991, pp. 90–93). The Mao preface offers a Confucian interpretation that also better suits the literary rhetoric of the poem: "It tells of how far the breadth of virtue attained" 德廣所及也 (Mao et al. 2000, p. 1C.63). This is closer to the spirit of the poem since it is evidently using the impassable breadth of the river as a symbol of other vast expanses. Though Zhu Xi was of course sometimes critical of the Mao commentary, he accepted this same interpretation here. Morally speaking, the Mao preface seems to miss the point that the poet's sympathies are likely to lie with the thwarted lovers, but as a matter of literary representation, rivers' primary significance was as a symbol of separation. In the vast territory that shared in the culture of the Zhou, substantial geographical and political barriers pertained, and the Han and Jiang were two of these.

As so often within the *Shijing*, the proper way to examine these lines is in dialogue with other poems of the anthology. *Shijing* 61, "The He Is Broad" 河廣, almost appears to have been composed as a response to "The Han Is Broad", merely substituting for the southern Han rivers the northern Yellow River or He 河 (Mao et al. 2000, pp. 3C.282–84; Nie et al. 2009, pp. 127–28):

The He Is Broad 河廣
 誰謂河廣 Who says the He is broad?
 一葦杭之 A single raft may navigate it.
 誰謂宋遠 Who says that Song is far?
 跂予望之 On tiptoes I may gaze at it.
 誰謂河廣 Who says the He is broad?

曾不容刀 It could not even hold up a light vessel.⁵
 誰謂宋遠 Who says that Song is far?
 曾不崇朝 It is not even a full day's journey.

According to the Mao commentary, this is a poem about how “The mother of Duke Xiang of Song had married into Wei. Longing for her home without cease, she thus composed this poem”. 宋襄公母歸于衛，思而不止，故作是詩也。 A refinement of this interpretation is proposed by Zheng Xuan, who states that the mother had for some reason been expelled from Song and longed for her son there. Alternatively, Hung Kuo-liang argues (Hung 2015) that even though by the reign of Duke Xiang (d. 637 BCE), the capital of Wei had moved south to the same side of the Yellow River as that of Song, Zheng Xuan's interpretation remains correct because the Yellow River is used purely as a metaphor. Though different scholars may disagree with the historical identification, the basic nature of the poem seems clear: a speaker employing the Yellow River as a symbol of political barriers that make travel impossible. The speaker tells of the bittersweet knowledge that the home she misses is not physically far, and yet there is no way to travel there.

In the contrast of these two poems on rivers and longing, we see an outline of a fluvial diagram of ancient China, a great realm both unified and divided by its network of rivers. Rivers figure frequently throughout the *Shijing* in similar fashion, demarcating what belongs inside and what beyond the borders of the political realm. From this point of view, it is possible to interpret more obscure cases such as *Shijing* 208 (Mao et al. 2000, p. 13B.942; Nie et al. 2009, pp. 398–400; Chen 2007, pp. 242–43):

Striking the Bell 鼓鍾

鼓鍾將將 Strike the bell, clang!
 淮水湯湯 The waters of the Huai are churning.
 憂心且傷 I am anxious and sick at heart.
 淑人君子 That honorable one, that gentleman,
 懷允不忘 How I long for him and do not forget.
 鼓鍾喑喑 Strike the bell, cling clang,
 淮水潛潛 The waters of the Huai are murmuring.
 憂心且悲 I am anxious and sad at heart.
 淑人君子 That honorable man, that gentleman,
 其德不回 His virtue does not go astray.
 鼓鍾伐磬 Strike the bell, beat the great drums,
 淮有三洲 There are three islets in the Huai.
 憂心且妯 I am anxious and despairing.
 淑人君子 That honorable man, that gentleman,
 其德不猶 His virtue is beyond compare.
 鼓鍾欽欽 Strike the bell, ding dong,
 鼓瑟鼓琴 Play the zithers, play the zitherns,
 笙磬同音 The organ chime in harmony.
 以雅以南 Playing the canons, playing the anthems,⁶
 以籥不僇 The transverse flute is not discordant.

The Mao preface interprets this as a critique of King You 幽 performing the royal music away from the capital, on the Huai river, and some modern scholars affirm this interpretation (Nie et al. 2009, p. 399). King You completed the covenant (*meng* 盟) ritual at Taishi 太室 (modern Songshan 嵩山, Henan province), upon which the Rong and Di tribes revolted (Zuozhuan, Duke Zhao, Year 4; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1373). Taishi is located near the Ying 潁 river, which feeds into the Huai (Zhu 2002, pp. 4.20a/b, also cited by

Nie et al. 2009, p. 399). So, this interpretation is not impossible but does seem strained. Perhaps Xu Wenjing 徐文靖 (1667–?) offers a better explanation, showing that King Xuan 宣 actually did make a campaign to the Huai (Xu 1998, p. 7.127).⁷

What seems evident is that the latter half of each stanza is celebratory, praising the virtuous man and the royal music fitting to him, in particular the *ya* 雅 and *nan* 南, which are central to the *Shijing* itself. Yet, the first three stanzas all express the speaker's sorrow and concern, which goes unexplained in the poem except, perhaps, for the reference to the Huai River. Thus, we see the Huai presented as a signifier of the marginal region on the borders of the realm. Throughout the commentarial tradition, readers have found different ways of making sense of the poem's contrasting elements, but they all rely on the significance of the Huai River at the bounds of the realm and yet within the territory traversed by certain of its kings.

2. The Yellow River and Its God

Although the three poems discussed above present rivers as key components of the natural landscape and correlative elements of the cosmos, they do not quite describe them as objects of veneration. Yet, at least some of China's rivers were already inhabited by deities in antiquity, as already alluded to briefly in regard to "The Han Is Wide". Though there have been attempts to identify aquatic rites in the *Shijing* itself, I believe that in general these are misplaced. There is no need to assume that there was some discrete object of analysis that can be identified as "early Chinese religion". Instead, we ought to distinguish the different cultural strata represented by different corpora. In particular, the *Shijing* and *Chuci* represent different religious backgrounds and should not be assimilated to one another.⁸

The religious culture of Warring States Chu as represented in the *Chuci*, and not only there but also in recently excavated materials from Warring States Chu, foregrounded shamanistic elements (Guo 1997; Yan 2010; Williams 2020). The *wu* 巫 figure would by means of special rites impersonate the divinity and, in a spiritual form, fly off into the Heavens or traverse the four directions at will. In the *Chuci* anthology, at least, it was possible to divide the soul into two, the earthsoul (*po* 魄) and skysoul (*hun* 魂), and this soul duality has also been common in other shamanistic religions (Paulson 1958).⁹ The latter of these is a term that does not occur in the received text of the *Shijing* yet is prominent in several of the *Chuci* poems, representing the soul that can be detached from the physical body and rapidly traverse the realm. Fittingly, the Chu religion features a distinctive pantheon, including the goddesses of the Xiang 湘 river and the god of the Yellow River, the Hebo 河伯, all of which are honored in the "Nine Songs" 九歌 (Waley 1955).

Hebo is mentioned in the oracle bones and the "Heavenly Questions" 天問 in the *Chuci*, and appears in an episode in the *Shiji*, in which official Ximen Bao 西門豹 ends an old custom of throwing women into the Yellow River as brides of Hebo (Sima 1963, pp. 126.3211–13). However, he appears again, somewhat contravening geographical logic, in the "Nine Songs", as an alluring partner in romantic encounter. In his classic article "Looking for Mr. Ho Po", Whalen Lai presents a Jungian, comparative interpretation of these myths, in which Ximen Bao is literally a leopard (*bao*) god meeting the Hebo in mythic union (Lai 1990). However, the point of interest here is simply that our perspective is orthogonal to that of the *Shijing* poems examined above. Our speakers do not stand on one side or another of rivers that demarcate the territory of a vast realm; they do not stand in a horizontal plane at all but rather are arrayed vertically, with their primary trajectories being upwards to the highest peak, or deep below the waves (text Huang 2007, pp. 3.932–48):

Sire of the Yellow River 河伯

與女遊兮九河	Together with you I will roam—the Nine Rivers,
衝風起兮橫波	While the gale wind raises—torrential waves.
乘水車兮荷蓋	Let us ride a water carriage—with lotus canopy,
駕兩龍兮驂螭	Driving twin dragons—and triple wyverns.

登崑崙兮四望 Ascending Mount Kunlun—and looking in all four directions,
 心飛揚兮浩蕩 My heart flew up—exhilarated and alive.
 日將暮兮悵忘歸 Now as day nears dusk—I am bitter and unwilling to return.
 惟極浦兮寤懷 What longing I feel—nostalgia for the farthest shore.
 魚鱗屋兮龍堂 Your chambers are of fishscales—in dragon sanctums,
 紫貝闕兮朱宮 towers of violet molluscs—in vermilion palaces:
 靈何為兮水中 What is that god about—here beneath the waves?
 乘白龜兮逐文魚 Riding a white sea tortoise—chasing the dappled fish,
 與女遊兮河之渚 Together with you I will roam—on the reefs of the Yellow
 River;
 流漸紛兮將來下 Adrift in the currents—coming down together.
 子交手兮東行 Clasp your hand—to depart for the East,
 送美人兮南浦 I will send you off, my Beauty—to the southern shore.
 波滔滔兮來迎 The waves surge and swell—in welcome,
 魚鱗鱗兮媵予 fish shoal upon shoal—escorting us home.

The Nine Rivers in the first line sound like they might be designating a kind of fluvial net that covers some large expanse of China's plains but instead appear to refer to the subterranean rivers beneath Mount Kunlun (Chübach 1989, pp. 20–22; identified as “mythical geography” in Waley 1955, p. 47). The remainder of the poem traces a love affair that takes place in “dragon sanctums” and with the “fish shoal upon shoal” but also atop Mount Kunlun. It is the prerogative of the shaman to fly to so many remote places with unmatched freedom.

We are thus in a totally different speculative universe from that of the *Book of Songs*. But for Han readers and scholars, it was necessary to make sense of all of these texts. Just like modern scholars peering back at remote antiquity, they did not receive these fragments of the past properly dated and classified but all at once in a totality. Thus, the commentary of the *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句, the Han version of the anthology that is the primary source of all our received texts, glosses the first line of this poem as follows (Huang 2007, p. 3.932): “The He is the leader of the Four Waterways, so its status is regarded as like that of a grandee. Qu Yuan was a grandee of Chu, and wanted to befriend an official, so he calls him ‘you’ 河為四瀆長，其位視大夫。屈原亦楚大夫，欲以官相友，故言女也。¹⁰ This explanation is so fanciful and irrelevant to the original poem that it required a high degree of creativity in itself and in my view should not be considered an interpretation of the original line so much as a response to it. What is clear is that, without directly repudiating the traditional lore regarding the Hebo, the Han commentary reframes the poem entirely in yet another context: that of the Four Waterways.

The Four Waterways are significant in that they impose hierarchy on the diverse forms of aquatic ritual and symbolism that pertained in antiquity. The *Chuci zhangju* identifies the Yellow River not just as one of the four but the supreme one. The hierarchy of rivers then serves as a model for the relations of Qu Yuan with other courtiers. This transitivity of symbolism does not make much sense as synchronic belief system, but it does represent a clever attempt at converting the mythico-shamanic symbolism of the “Nine Songs” into a bureaucratic schema appropriate to a Han scholar.

As Jia 2021 shows, even though sacrifices had been offered to the rivers in various specific contexts, many of the ancient classics do not refer to the Four Waterways as such, and they seem to have been established in the Warring States and Han period, together with five-phase theory. This is more obvious with regard to the Five Sacred Peaks, which match the five phases explicitly, but applies *eo ipso* to the Four Waterways as well. Jia identifies the first datable mention of both the Five Peaks and Four Waterways in the *Xinyu* 新語 of Lu Jia 陸賈 (240–170 BCE) (Jia 2021, p. 4). One of the earliest sources to identify the

Four Waterways is a quotation from the *Book of Documents* in the *Shi ji* 史記, which is absent from the received text of the *Documents* (Jia 2021, p. 5). The full passage reads:

In ancient times, Yu 禹 and Gaoyao 皋陶 labored long in the exterior. They had achievements for the people, and the people were thus at peace. In the east was the Jiang, in the north was the Ji, in the west was the He, and in the south was the Huai. Once the Four Waterways were constructed, the myriad people then had a place to abide. Lord Millet brought down the way of planting, and agriculture nourished the hundred grains. The Three Dukes all had achievements for the people, and so the Sovereign was established. Long ago Chi You 蚩尤 and his ministers caused trouble for the common people, and the High Lord did not approve of such a situation. The past kings said: one must strive!

古禹、皋陶久勞于外，其有功乎民，民乃有安。東為江，北為濟，西為河，南為淮，四瀆已修，萬民乃有居。后稷降播，農殖百穀。三公咸有功於民，故后有立。昔蚩尤與其大夫作亂百姓，帝乃弗予，有狀。先王言不可不勉。(Sima 1963, p. 3.97)

Here, the Four Waterways are placed explicitly in context of great rulers and culture heroes of the past and understood as one important phase in the establishment of Chinese civilization. This passage helps to contextualize the commentary to “Sire of the Yellow River” as well. The Yellow River had been relocated to a position within the official hierarchy of historic names, whether personal or geographic.

If the Four Waterways had in earlier times been viewed in two different religio-cosmological perspectives (either geographically, in relation to the realm as a whole, or as the sites of shamanic flight), one might at first expect that the establishment of the Han sacrificial system would mean that the values reflected in the *Shijing* had triumphed: the rivers had become elements within a bureaucratic geography of the realm. In reality, though, an examination of the later literary tradition suggests the opposite. It was the vertical conception of the rivers as the site of spiritual flight that became more dominant in the literary tradition. That is to say, whether because of the official rites established in the Han, or due to other correlative cultural transformations, medieval poetry on rivers continues to be explicitly religious, even if not quite in the same manner as the “Nine Songs”.

The Sire of the Yellow River himself appears in one memorable historical episode from the Western Han. The Calabash Dike (Huzi 瓠子, south of Puyang 濮陽 county, Henan) was breached in 132 BCE, early in the reign of Han Emperor Wu 武 (r. 140–87 BCE). According to the *Shiji* 史記, in 109 BCE Emperor Wu personally went to lead the construction to repair the dike and even had his high officials participate in filling the gap (Sima 1963, pp. 29.1412–13; see also Li 1989, pp. 24.2027–30). Then, fearing the work would not be completed, Emperor Wu sang the following two songs:¹¹

Calabash Song I

Now the Calabash has been breached—what to do?

With tremendous, immeasurable force—the village lanes are utterly made rivers.

Utterly made rivers—so the earth cannot have peace,

The labor has no finishing point—till Mount Yu is leveled.¹²

Mount Yu is leveled—and Lake Juye is overflowing,

The fish teem in multitudes—the waters near the winter sun.

The proper channels all opened up—departing the standard current,

Flood dragons ride—free in their far roaming.

Returning to the old riverbed—divine indeed its torrential flow,

Without the enfeoffment and succession sacrifices—who knows what else will come?

Tell me of the Hebo—why is he not kind,
 Permitting the flood not to cease—causing sorrow to our people?
 Niesang is floating—the Huai and Si rivers are full,¹³

A long time till it was restored—and the waters ease again.

瓠子決兮將奈何？皓皓盱盱兮閭殫為河。

殫為河兮地不得寧，功無已時兮吾山平。

吾山平兮鉅野溢，魚沸鬱兮柏冬日。

正道弛兮離常流，¹⁴蛟龍騁兮方遠遊。

歸舊川兮神哉沛，不封禪兮安知外。

為我謂河伯兮何不仁，泛濫不止兮愁吾人。

鬻桑浮兮淮泗滿，久不反兮水維緩。

Calabash Song II

The Yellow River's waters are turning, churning—rapidly gushing and rushing forth,

The northern crossing is muddied—and hard to clear the flow.

Carrying over the long grasses—and sinking the precious jade,

The Hebo will permit us—but the wood is not sufficient.

The wood is not sufficient—and the people of Wei are to blame,

Scorched dry and scarce—alas! How can they block the waters?

The ruined forests of bamboo—the beams and rocks ruined,

Only when the dam is completed—will the myriad blessings come.

河湯湯兮激漉漉，北渡污兮浚流難。

寧長芟兮沈美玉，河伯許兮薪不屬。

薪不屬兮衛人罪，燒蕭條兮噫乎何以禦水。

積林竹兮榷石菑，宣房塞兮萬福來。

These two poems are in the Chu song form, with lines of two three-character hemistiches divided by the rhythmic particle *xi* 兮 (represented by the en-dash in my translation), joined together in rhyming couplets. Unlike most other forms of Chinese poetry, all the lines rhyme, but the rhymes change with each couplet. This happens to be very close to the rhythm of the “Nine Songs”, though it is more regular than those.

The first poem opens with a description of the He's unstoppable force, represented by the evocative but very rare (almost a *hapax legomenon*) alliterative compound *haohan* 皓盱, further reduplicated as *haohaohanhan*. When the dike is restored and the river returns to its old path, its flow is described in the memorable expression *shen zai pei* 神哉沛, which may call to mind the third of the “Nine Songs”, “Lady of the Xiang River” 湘君: “Swiftly I ride—on my osmanthus-scented vessel” 沛吾乘兮桂舟. In the earlier piece, the deity is careening down the river, but in Emperor Wu's song the river itself has become the subject.

The second poem is less dramatic, scolding the people of Wei for burning too much of the local forests to provide wood for dams. It also opens with an evocative description of the river's force: “The Yellow River's waters are turning, churning—rapidly gushing and rushing forth” 河湯湯兮激漉漉. The reduplicative compound *shangshang* describes rapid torrents, just as in *Shijing* 208 above. *Chanyuan* 潺湲 similarly describes the gushing flow of rivers as in “Mistress of the Xiang River” 湘夫人 in the “Nine Songs”. Collectively, the two songs borrow from an already well-established conventional rhetoric of fluvial potency. The scale of the Yellow River then implicitly affirms the power of the Emperor, who is able by his command and personal involvement to tame even the Hebo, the Sire of the Yellow River.

The songs attributed to Emperor Wu and other Han rulers form an interesting corpus, particularly when one reflects on the thorny problems of attribution that afflict most early Chinese poetry. As Knechtges notes, this song is singular even among these pieces because “it is the only piece of Wu-ti’s poetic corpus in which the poet actually speaks in the imperial voice” (Knechtges 2014, p. 67). Thus, in these two songs we have a well-documented piece composed by a known, historical figure at a specific location and date but addressed to the God of the Yellow River. The “Calabash Songs” thus resemble the “Nine Songs” in meter and also in their treatment of the river itself as a personified deity and yet emerge from an utterly different cultural universe. While the “Nine Songs” seem to be liturgical texts dealing in shamanistic encounters that rise out of the terrestrial plane into other realms, the “Calabash Songs” are documents of political persuasion composed within a distinct hierarchy of governance. They reflect the imperial standardization of rites that has already occurred, even while borrowing from the more open-ended religious materials as the “Nine Songs”.

The breaching of the Calabash Dike recurs not too long afterwards in a *fu* 賦 poem from the Jian’an 建安 (196–220) period by one of the Jian’an Pleiades, Ying Yang 應瑒 (d. 217). This piece may be the first *fu* taking the Yellow River as its subject. As with the *Shijing* poems discussed above, it may originate in a military campaign, that of Cao Cao 曹操 against Liu Bei 劉備, in the course of which he would have crossed the Yellow River in 208. The poem survives only in fragments, but the title is already clear enough: the poem is about a river that possesses divine capabilities:

On the Numinous He 靈河賦

Truly the numinous stream has a source far away—On the sacred mount of Kunlun.

Crossing the dark crannies of the Tiered Palisade—¹⁵Relying on the subterranean flows of Sovereign Earth.

Swallowing up the gathered boulders, precipitously piled—Splitting the mountain foot and further overflowing.

The Yellow Dragon surges up and proceeds southward—Coiling its great swan-like form and following the current.

Crossing the ford at Luo to Banquan—¹⁶It disseminates the nine circuits from the central province.

Flooding forth pell-mell and charging onwards—Ever progressing, ever proceeding, it continues forth.

From the first riding loftily and traveling rapidly—The Marquis of Yang is timid and startled by it.

But during the middle era of the Han,

The Gold Dike crumbled and the Calabash collapsed.¹⁷

Leading ten thousand chariots and personally laboring,

He led the various lords and came for the construction.

They brought low the lush bamboo of the Lacquer Garden,

And threw in the jade discs, and sank the very stars.¹⁸

And there are also

the tall conifers and towering catalpas,

verdant juniper and fragrant oak.¹⁹

Adventitiously arrayed, densely distributed,

Shimmering in the waters, they shade the dike.

When those full branches stir and are refreshed in the breeze,

The bright sun appears and shows an unlike radiance.

咨靈川之遐原兮，于崑崙之神丘。凌增城之陰隅兮，賴后土之潛流。銜積石之重險兮，披山麓而溢浮。蹶龍黃而南邁兮，紆鴻體而因流。涉津洛之阪泉兮，²⁰播九道乎中州。汾澗涌而騰驚兮，恆壘壘而徂征。肇乘高而迅逝兮，陽侯怖而振驚。有漢中葉，金隄隕而瓠子傾。興萬乘而親務，董羣后而來營。下淇園之豐籜，投玉璧而沈星。若夫長杉峻檣，茂栝芬樞，扶疏灌列，暎水蔭防。隆條動而颯清風，白日顯而曜殊光。(Zhao and Yang 2010, pp. 30–34)²¹

During the course of the Han, then, we see a cultural transformation working in two opposite directions at once. On the one hand, the great waterways of the empire are tamed, in some cases literally by means of dams and dikes, but also by means of the proper ritual sacrifices instituted by Emperor Wu. At the same time, the imperially-sanctioned worship of these deities also seems to augment their power, insofar as it is reflected in the textual record, at least.

This can be seen in the supreme masterwork of the poetic tradition on rivers, Guo Pu's 郭璞 tremendous "Rhapsody on the Yangzi River" 江賦. This poem, which does survive in full, sums up the vast scale of the river in numerous sections. Beginning by placing it within the geography of the realm, the poem then describes its gushing rapids in a flood of onomatopoeia, and then goes on to catalog the fish, shellfish, and amphibians that populate its depths. Further cataloging the rocks within it and the birds that play over and upon its surface, the poem then details the flora along its shores and finally describes the human fishermen who make their living upon it. This gradual progression from the river itself, through the flora and fauna of it, up to the human realm, then leads naturally beyond that to describe the Daoist immortals who vanish submerged in its depths.

The great poem concludes (translation Knechtges 1987, pp. 349–51, notes omitted; text Xiao 1986, pp. 12.572–73):

The spiritual essence of the Min Mountains cast its luster into the Eastern Well,
 Lord Yang concealed his form in the great waves;
 Qixiang obtained the Way and lodged her spirit here,
 To match her numinous clarity with the Xiang beauties.
 The frightful yellow dragon that lifted the boat
 Understood Lord Yu's sighs to heaven.
 Bold was Jing Fei who captured the krakens!
 He generated his power from the Taie sword
 Magnificent the forms that flow from the Great Clod,
 Which blends the myriad things, returning them to a single hollow.
 To ensure that its water is never depleted and ever constant,
 It receives a great pneuma from numinous concord.
 If we examine the most wondrous sights among rivers and waterways,
 Truly none is more illustrious than the Jiang and the He.
 若乃岷精垂曜於東井，陽侯邈形乎大波。
 奇相去得道而宅神，乃協靈爽於湘娥。
 駭黃龍之負舟，識伯禹之仰嗟。
 壯荊飛之擒蛟，終成氣乎太阿。

 煥大塊之流形，混萬盡於一科。
 保不虧而永固，稟元氣於靈和。
 考川瀆而妙觀，實莫著於江河。

The great Jiang originates from the "spiritual essence" (*jing* 精) back at Mount Min 岷, and its brilliance extends to the Eastern Well of Heaven. According to the weft text

Hetu kuodi xiang 河圖括地象 quoted by Li Shan, Mount Min's essence literally ascended to become the Well constellation. However, the deity Lord Yang also hides under the waves, and the goddess Qixiang 奇相 abides within. Yet, all of these are just the individual manifestations of the power arising from the Great Clod, the shaper of all the transformations, all of which meet in "numinous concord", in the harmony of the spirits.

In other words, the diverse sources of river lore and worship of river deities together flowed into the deification of rivers in Han literature and its immediate successor in the poetry of the erudite Guo Pu. The "Rhapsody on the Ocean" 海賦 by Mu Hua 木華 (fl. 290) likewise portrays the ocean primarily as the habitat of the transcendentals. Throughout this literature we can see the gradual triumph of a vision of these great bodies of water as "the image of the ungraspable phantom of life", as objects of worship and as divinities having their own agency and power, champing at the bit to escape their terrestrial confines. It is not a coincidence, then, that in the later literary tradition, one of the outstanding guises in which rivers appear is not aquatic at all but rather as the form of the Milky Way.

3. River to the Sky

In the ritual etiquette established in the Han, we have seen the Five Sacred Peaks paired with the Four Waterways, and speaking of Chinese poetry we often refer to the literature of "mountains and waters", 山水. However, this collocation obscures the essential difference between a mountain and a river. Even though both look similar in being geographical markers that are stable and long-lasting (if not actually permanent), in fact it is only mountains that remain the same, while rivers are always in flux, as Confucius remarked beside a river: "The transience of things is such as this!" 逝者如斯 (*Analects* 9/17). A mountain remains the same mountain, but a river is never the same river. This distinction is reflected in the literature, as mountain lore accretes gradually, filling out a rich tradition that spans the boundaries among religious traditions (Robson 2009), but rivers seem instead to be wax and wane, to be inhabited in succession by different deities and to change their shape even while preserving the same name.

Considering the even greater expanse of the Tang's cosmopolitan empire, one might expect to see a flood of new compositions in the vein of Guo Pu's *fu* poem. However, if we take the great Song anthology *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 as a guide, we find that out of a total of 150 *juan* of *fu* poetry, including nine full *juan* on aquatic topics (numbered 32–40), very few of these are devoted to rivers *per se*. Prominent themes include seasonal transformations such as droughts or water freezing into ice; the metaphor of "like a stone falling into water" 如石投水; and various notable springs and ponds; but few rivers. Only a single *juan*, number 34, is explicitly devoted to oceans and rivers, and primarily for allegorical purposes, such as the "Myriads Waterways All Return to the Ocean" 衆水歸海賦 by Fan Yangyuan 樊陽源 or the traditional theme of the clear and muddy rivers, such as the "Jing and Wei Rivers Merge their Streams" 涇渭合流賦 by Dugu Shou 獨孤綬. In other words, it is immediately clear that neither Guo Pu's nor even Ying Yang's more modest example originated a broader tradition of fluvial poetry in the Tang. Rivers were rarely regarded in their own right as a natural topic for poetry.

However, the 34th *juan* of *Wenyuan yinghua* does contain a clue as to how rivers were most prominently represented in Tang literature. This is the "The Wei River Resembles the Sky River" 渭水象天河賦 by Liu Xun 劉珣. Far from being a picturesque fancy of a single poet, it is the correspondence between terrestrial rivers and their celestial counterpart that dominates the fluvial imagery of Tang poetry. While the torrential flow of China's rivers had remained as impressive as ever, their interest for Tang poets had shifted onto a new axis, so that one "river" that garners particular admiration and figures in several exquisite poems is not a river at all but the Autumnal River (Qiuhe 秋河), another name for the Milky Way.

The correspondence of the Milky Way and China's rivers was ancient and well attested. The Milky Way was already described as the "Cloudy Han [River]" 雲漢 in *Shijing* 258. As Edward Schafer has noted, "By Han times, at least, the sky river was regarded as a

mysterious emanation from the great rivers of China, congealed on the celestial dome" (Schafer 1974, p. 403). Moreover, according to a famous story, a man traveled so far on the ocean that he ended up with the Weaving Maid and the Oxherd in Heaven. He returned home and asked astronomer Yan Junping 嚴君平, who told him that on the exact date he had reached that foreign destination, a traveling star had trespassed on the Oxherd constellation (Schafer 1974, pp. 404–5; source in Zhang 2014, p. 10.111). This story recurs frequently in all varieties of Tang poetry, and it is the Sky River rather than the terrestrial ones that is the source of inspiration for Tang poets.

As we have seen, the *Wenyuan yinghua* barely contains any *fu* poetry on specific rivers or the Four Waterways. However, among its twenty *juan* of *fu* on celestial phenomena, the tenth *juan* alone contains several poems devoted entirely to the Milky Way. We may conclude this study with just one representative piece among these. The poem belongs to the Tang efflorescence of the regulated *fu* (*lü fu* 律賦), one of the most neglected areas of Chinese literature.²² Probably much of the prejudice against the genre is based in its close relation with the examination *fu*, and it is fair to say that many of the shorter *fu* compositions of the mid- and late Tang were shaped by the expectations of the civil service examinations, in which *fu* compositions played a large part: by the assumption of a large audience, and the goal of impressing the official examiners. If we relax our requirements for authenticity or protest and turn in other directions, we soon find moments of literary brilliance in the minor *fu* of the ninth century. Moreover, they show not divergence but continuity with the grand tradition going back to the *Book of Songs* and the *Elegies of Chu*, finding in the natural world an "image of life" worth exploring. Even while the scale of *fu* poetry narrowed from the classic pieces on the imperial capitals, the genre retained symbolic and structural connections to the origins of the form. For instance, the regulated *fu* continues to employ certain extrametrical phrases to arrange the structure of the piece, dividing a text into distinct paragraphs that focus on distinct topics. Beyond these more tangible echoes of the Han *fu*, the regulated *fu* also delights in symbolically abbreviated representations of more grandiose scenes, whether mythological, celestial, or imperial.

The following regulated *fu*, while it may appear to stand outside the tradition of Tang poetry with which we are most familiar, can from another perspective be seen as the natural successor to the fluvial verse examined in this paper. In eight delicately balanced stanzas, it limns the Milky Way as the image of terrestrial rivers transported to the Heavens, as a symbol of celestial permanence and also of human ambition to ascend those heights:

Fu on Observing the Autumn River at Dawn 曙觀秋河賦²³

by Wang Sunzhi 王損之 (*jinsshi* 798)

Remote is that slanted sheet, the Han,

Fixed in the midst of the Heavens.

At this moment when the fair evening has already ended,

It combines in brightness with the pure sunlight.

Its contour is that of luminosity revolving,²⁴

Now lying askew and reflecting from afar;

Then just when all is still and silent,

It floods forth and yet is suspended aloft.

Limpidly it splits far off,

Wistfully I peer up towards it.

Brilliantly glittering and gleaming, those wafting colors,

Concealed in the cerulean sky but drawing forth its radiance.

The lone stars drift far away,

Forming pearls sunken in pristine shallows.²⁵

The decrescent moon nears it obliquely,

Like the fishing hook hanging in the azure waves.
Its soft radiance forms a dense veil,
The far-off sunlight sparse and scant.
Some hues are hidden and others are refracted,
Its light concentrated in the infinite expanse;
Modeled on the "sheet of spray" (waterfall) but not falling;²⁶
Resembling the weightless clouds about to disperse.
The night's illumination (the moon) about to part,
The clear radiance (the sun) is about to dawn.
Enfolded in the Cyan Net, whirling without cease,²⁷
Fading in the sunny skies, it is indiscernibly distant.
Clambering upwards you cannot reach it,
Separated by a single water that makes the heart distant;
Gazing far off in vain effort,
It is distant as the Nine Heavens and one's yearnings are as remote.
Originating where there is no border,
It crosses the void without tilting.
Collecting the clear and bright dawn colors,
It contains the brisk air, chill and refreshing.
Is it a sheet of silk stretched taut in a form far away?
How awesome that vanishing rainbow with gossamer body.
Conceiving of the oxherd in its separate location,
Gradually I lose sight of that far-off shape;
Elsewhere I think of that weaving maid,
But do not hear her loom's click-clacking.
That luminescent energy gradually being revealed,
The fog and dust are swept utterly away.
It would rather take up its shape upon the earth,
Overflowing Heaven till it hangs up its shadow.
It might play with the pure light,
And dally with the lingering brilliance.
Its divided halo is clean and bright,
Facing the dawn's colors, it stands up straight;
Its distant force runs rampant,
Encircled by an autumn gleam that is resplendent.
How glorious, these suspended images,
How lofty, that blue empyrean!
Reflecting the astral transit in its pristine precision,
Departing from the nubilous road with its brilliant gleam.
Imagining it has just begun to bore a hole,
It is remote and hard to measure;
Investigating the very beginning of its streams,
They are as faraway as can be.
Thus, we know that it does not originate from human work,

Truly was it set down by Heaven.
Forming the mental image out of pure absence,
Defining its vast contours so that it could shine distinctly.
When the idea pours forth at the very margin of Heaven,
It is as far off as a rippling wave;
Imagining the surreptitious flow within the sky,
It is remote as a guttural sobbing.
You must approach that transparency,
Decant that limpidity:
If the road to Heaven can be ascended,
Then you can match the purity of those pristine undulations!

邈彼斜漢，麗於中天。遇良宵之已艾，與清景而相鮮。勢則昭回，既闌干而遠映。時方蕭瑟，亦汎濫而高懸。

的爾遙分，淒然仰眺。澄奕奕之浮彩，隱蒼蒼而引耀。孤星迴泛，狀清淺之沉珠。殘月斜臨，似滄浪之垂釣。

輕暉冪冪，遠景蕭蕭。色分隱映，光凝沆寥。擬瀑布而下落，似輕雲之欲銷。

夜景將分，清光向曉。縈碧落以廻薄，澹晴空而縹緲。躋攀不及，限一水以心遙。曠望空勞，邈九霄而思杳。

發跡無際，凌虛不傾。積曙色之牢落，涵爽氣之淒清。疑曳練而勢遠，訝殘虹而體輕。遠想牽牛，漸失迢迢之狀。遙思弄杼，無聞軋軋之聲。

景氣潛昭，氛埃遠屏。寧在地以為狀，信滔天而掛影。可以翫清光，狎餘景。分暉爽亮，向曉色而亭亭；遠勢縱橫，帶秋光之耿耿。

偉茲垂象，倬彼青霄。映星躔之的的，出雲路以昭昭。想穿鑿之初，悠然莫測。稽源流之始，邈矣方遙。

則知匪自人功，實惟天設。自虛無而想像，界寥廓而昭哲。意天邊之橫注，遠若波瀾；想空裏之潛流，遙疑嗚咽。宜其臨清泚，挹澄澈。儻天路之可昇，與清漪而比潔。

The entire poem revels in the double nature of the sky river. Right in the opening stanza we read: "It floods forth and yet is suspended aloft": it is a flood of water in motion and also a pattern fixed in the sky. And again in the second stanza, the moon's approach is compared to "the fishing hook hanging into the azure waves". In the third stanza, it is compared to waterfall that does not fall; in the fourth, it is a river of separation in the sky just as it is far removed from the viewer below as well. The poet pointedly asks why he does not hear the sound of the loom with which the Weaving Maid works, as if to remind us that these are playful resemblances, and in the sixth stanza the poet imagines that the river has rinsed away the dust and grime from the sky, even while recognizing that it is all a pattern of light. Finally, "How glorious, those suspended images!" The poet sighs in awe at the spectacle of the Milky Way vanishing into the dawn radiance.

Finally, as the poet observes the Sky River rushing past the edge of the sky and beyond, he suggests it is also a pattern of the imagination while also wishing nonetheless that he might rise up into Heaven and let his fingers play in the rippling waves. In these lines, there is implicit hope that the poet will "ascend" to higher position in the official hierarchy as well, with the recurring identity of the celestial and imperial realms. Ultimately, both river and Milky Way are identified as decorative motifs within the all-encompassing background of Heaven, fixed and unmoving. The figure of the celestial river, scintillating in place but never moving, "set down by Heaven" from time immemorial, is a sort of inversion of the Indian myth in which the river Ganges has a celestial origin.²⁸ The Yellow River and its counterpart in Heaven remain in place, mirroring and echoing one another. However, it would not be fitting for the Milky Way to descend to earth, since it belongs to the ever

immobile court of the Emperor as well. One of the main elements of verbal play in this *fu* is the gentle encomium to the Son of Heaven, glorious and glittering with starlight.

There is more to be said about the contours of the celestial realm in Tang literature, but for our purposes here it is enough to observe how far we have wafted away from the *Shijing* poems with which we began. Rather than markers of territorial divisions across the realm, we have turned our gaze upwards to the Heavens, and the poet devotes much ingenuity to describing the simulacrum of rippling waves that he finds in the great pathway between the stars. At the same time, though, we have sketched the trajectory of cultural development that has led from terrestrial waterways to their celestial counterparts. Even the *Shijing* rivers were imbued with symbolism of the unattainable, so it was not so much of a surprise to find the Sire of the Yellow River lurking within them. It is surprisingly hard, in fact, to find naturalistic description of the Four Waterways because they are so frequently divinized, being seen as sites of spiritual ascension. Additionally, it is that religio-cultural context, so evident in the use of rivers within the grand epideictic *fu*, that makes our concluding piece on the Milky Way seem a logical outflow of the earlier poetic tradition. Rivers seem to be accorded less of the calm, abiding devotion with which Chinese people long worshiped their sacred mountains; throughout the medieval verse tradition, we do not hear the same loving detail about the bends of the Jiang and He that we do regularly of each of the Sacred Peaks, of Kunlun, of Tiantai. A river is not so fitting a symbol of fidelity to one's liege or of imperial grandeur. Yet the Four Waterways also loom large in traditional Chinese cosmology: rather than making a frontal assault on the empyrean and poking their crests directly through the cloud barrier, rivers suggest a more cunning route of ascension, arriving in Heaven by means of an instantaneous transformation, as subtle as a simile. As Goethe wrote, "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis": everything that does not last is merely a likeness. The course of rivers, though constantly shifting across the landscape, leads ultimately to the stars.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to the incomparable Jinhua Jia for organizing this pathbreaking Special Issue, the three anonymous reviewers for their corrections and suggestions for improvement, and to my students at ASU for struggling through the regulated *fu* with me in fall 2021.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ (Chavannes 1910; Robson 2009). For the literary representation of mountains, see (Kroll 1983; Knechtges 2012).
- ² In that sense, this poem anticipates the medieval literary discourse of the Southland, as discussed from various points of view in (Wang and Williams 2015).
- ³ Text follows Han 韓 variant of the rhythmic particle *si* 思 for *xi* 息.
- ⁴ See also the insightful discussion of the hermeneutical tradition surrounding this poem in (Hu 2012), *passim*, arguing that the Mao interpretation has dominated the discussion of this poem precisely because it preserves the conflict inherent in the poem.
- ⁵ *Dao* 刀 may be a loan for *dao* 舫, a small boat.
- ⁶ *Ya* 雅 and *nan* 南 are key terms for the *Shijing* as a whole, of course, but here appear to be used in older, musicological meanings. For more on both, see (Chen 2007), *passim*.
- ⁷ Arthur Waley suggests tentatively: "It is possible that this song is a lament for someone who lost his life during the southern campaigns of the late western Zhou. But this is very uncertain" (Waley 1996, p. 193).
- ⁸ This is my fundamental objection to the otherwise highly stimulating study, (Chow 1986).
- ⁹ Recent scholarship has also emphasized the variety of alternative views on the soul that existed in early and medieval China, which should not be overlooked. Apart from the discussion in (Williams 2020), see, e.g., (Brashier 1996; Lo 2008).

- ¹⁰ This is followed by an identification of the Nine Rivers based on the *Erya* 爾雅. The commentary is attributed to Wang Yi 王逸 but may have included text by other scholars as well, so I consider its authorship undetermined.
- ¹¹ (Knechtges 2014, pp. 66–67) introduces these two songs in context of Emperor Wu’s extensive production of poems in the Chu song form. His translation of two key passages has also been helpful. An earlier survey of the role of poetry in Han historiography is (Kern 2004), treating these curious textual artifacts in light of the artificial dichotomy of the “written word” vs. “song culture”.
- ¹² Perhaps suggesting that the only way to fill the breach would be to level the nearby hills.
- ¹³ Niesang 鬻桑 is a location in modern Shanxi province, west of Ji 吉 county.
- ¹⁴ Here, I follow the *Shuijing zhu* text of 正 for 延 in *Shiji*.
- ¹⁵ One of the peaks of Mount Kunlun.
- ¹⁶ Banquan is prominent in mythic geography as the site where the Yellow Emperor vanquished the Fie Emperor (Yandi 炎帝).
- ¹⁷ Two famous dikes of history. The former was located east of modern Hua 滑 county, Henan, and the latter south of Puyang 濮陽 county, Henan.
- ¹⁸ In the same passage of the *Shiji* mentioned above, it is said that Emperor Wu sank “white horses and jade discs” 白馬玉璧 into the Yellow River as offerings to the river god. Here, Ying Yang refers to stars perhaps because he is conflating these actual white horses with the Heavenly Horses of the constellation Wangliang 王梁 (Schlegel 1875, p. 329). Alternatively, Zhao and Yang read 星 as a phonetic loan for 牲, but I find this an overly aggressive emendation of the *lectio difficilior*.
- ¹⁹ For these trees see (Stuart 1911).
- ²⁰ *Yiwen leiju* variants are 洛:路 and 阪:峻.
- ²¹ There is also a quatrain apparently from another part of the *fu*, which simply describes the boats filling the river:
Dragon skiffs and white carp,
Yue ships and Shu vessels.
Sailing back up they cover the waters,
Sails and rudders like a forest.
龍艘白鯉，越艇蜀舸。沂游覆水，帆柁如林。
- ²² A recent anthology, (Zhan et al. 2015), has also made the field more accessible than ever in the 20th century. The untimely death of Professor Zhan Hanglun 詹杭倫 last year was a great loss for the field. The best survey in English remains (Kroll 2000–2001), though it barely allots a few pages to this subgenre of the Tang *fu*.
- ²³ For text, see (Li et al. 1966, pp. 10.57b–8a; Jian and Li 2011, pp. 22.2027–28; Zhan et al. 2015, pp. 80–81).
- ²⁴ “Brilliance revolves” 昭回 comes from *Songs* 258/1 on the Milky Way.
- ²⁵ The “pristine shallows” (*qing qian* 清淺) is a term for the Milky Way as well. See the “Old Poem”, “The He and Han are pristine and also shallow” 河漢清且淺. See (Lu 1983, p. 331).
- ²⁶ For this literal translation of *pubu* 瀑布, normally “waterfall”, see (Kroll 1998, p. 70).
- ²⁷ For this reading of *biluo* 碧落, a Daoist term for the heavens, see (Bokenkamp 1991).
- ²⁸ According to a popular version, it “... fell from heaven to earth in order to restore the bodies of the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara who had all been burned to ashes by the fierce gaze of the sage Kapila” (Eck 2012, p. 138).

References

- Bokenkamp, Stephen. 1991. Taoism and Literature: The *Pi-lo* Question. *Taoist Resources* 3: 57–72.
- Brashier, K. E. 1996. Han Thanatology and the Division of Souls. *Early China* 21: 125–58. [CrossRef]
- Chavannes, Edouard. 1910. *Le T'ai Chan: Essai de Monographie d'un Culte Chinois*. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Chen, Zhi. 2007. *The Shaping of the Book of Songs: From Ritualization to Secularization*. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica.
- Chow, Tse-tung 周策縱. 1986. *Gu Wuyi Yu “Liushi” Kao: Zhongguo Langman Wenxue Tanyuan 古巫醫與「六詩」考：中國浪漫文學探源 [Investigation of Ancient Shaman-Physicians and the Six Principles of Poetry: A Study of Chinese Romantic Literature]*. Taipei: Lianjing.
- Chūbachi, Masakazu 中鉢雅量. 1989. *Chūgoku No Saishi to Bungaku 中国的祭祀と文学 [Chinese Rituals and Literature]*. Tokyo: Sōbunsha.
- Durrant, Stephen, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg. 2016. *Zuo Tradition: Zuozhuan 左傳*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Eck, Diana L. 2012. *India: A Sacred Geography*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Granet, Marcel. 1919. *Fêtes et Chansons Anciennes de la Chine*. Paris: Éditions Ernest Leroux.
- Guo, Changbao 過常寶. 1997. *Chuci Yu Yuanshi Zongjiao 楚辭與原始宗教 [Elegies of Chu and Primitive Religion]*. Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe.
- Hu, Qiulei. 2012. Reading the Conflicting Voices: An Examination of the Interpretative Traditions about “Han Guang”. *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 34: 1–13.
- Huang, Linggeng 黃靈庚. 2007. *Chuci Zhangju Shuzheng 楚辭章句疏證 [Subcommentary and Verification of the Chapter-and-Verse Commentary of the Elegies of Chu]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

- Hung, Kuo-liang 洪國樑. 2015. Shijing—Wei feng—He guang xintan 《詩經·衛風·河廣》新探. In *Shijing, Xungu Yu Shixue* 詩經、訓詁與史學. Taipei: Guojia Chubanshe, pp. 83–105.
- Jia, Jinhua. 2021. Formation of the Traditional Chinese State Ritual System of Sacrifice to Mountain and Water Spirits. *Religions* 12: 319. [CrossRef]
- Jian, Zongwu 簡宗梧, and Shiming Li 李時銘. 2011. *Quan Tang fu* 全唐賦 [Complete Tang Rhapsodies]. Taipei: Liren Shuju.
- Kern, Martin. 2004. The Poetry of Han Historiography. *Early Medieval China* 10–11: 23–65. [CrossRef]
- Knechtges, David R. 1987. *Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*. vol. 2: Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, alaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Knechtges, David R. 2012. How to View a Mountain in Medieval China. *Hsiang Lectures on Poetry* 6: 1–56.
- Knechtges, David R. 2014. The Emperor and Literature: Emperor Wu of the Han. In *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*. Edited by Frederick P. Brandauer and Chun-chieh Huang. Seattle: University of Washington, pp. 51–76.
- Kroll, Paul W. 1983. Verses from on High: The Ascent of Mount T'ai. *T'oung Pao* 69: 223–60. [CrossRef]
- Kroll, Paul W. 1998. Lexical Landscapes and Textual Mountains in the High T'ang. *T'oung Pao* 84: 62–101. [CrossRef]
- Kroll, Paul W. 2000–2001. The Significance of the fu in the History of T'ang Poetry. *T'ang Studies* 18–19: 87–105.
- Lai, Whalen. 1990. Looking for Mr. Ho Po: Unmasking the River God of Ancient China. *History of Religions* 29: 335–50. [CrossRef]
- Li, Daoyuan 鄺道元. 1989. *Shuijing Zhushu* 水經注疏 [Classic of Rivers, with Commentary and Subcommentary]. Commentary by Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會真. Nanjing: Jiangsu Guji Chubanshe.
- Li, Fang 李昉, Bai Song 宋白, Xuan Xu 徐鉉, and et al. 1966. *Wenyuan Yinghua* 文苑英華 [Prime Blossoms from the Garden of Literature]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Lo, Yuet Keung. 2008. From a Dual Soul to a Unitary Soul: The Babel of Soul Terminologies in Early China. *Monumental Serica* 56: 23–53. [CrossRef]
- Lu, Qinli 遼欽立. 1983. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao Shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Mao, Heng 毛亨, Xuan Zheng 鄭玄, and Yingda Kong, eds. 2000. *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 [Correct Meanings of the Classic of Poetry with Mao Heng's Annotation]. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Melville, Herman. 2002. *Moby-Dick*. Edited by Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Nie, Shiqiao 聶石樵, Sangui Luo 雒三桂, and Shan Li 李山. 2009. *Shijing Xinzhu* 詩經新注. Jinan: Qi Lu Shushe.
- Paulson, Ivar. 1958. *Die Primitiven Seelenvorstellungen der Nordeurasischen Völker: Eine Religionsethnographische und Religionsphänomenologische Untersuchung*. Stockholm: The Ethnographical Museum of Sweden, Monograph Series, Publication No. 5.
- Robson, James. 2009. *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue 南嶽) in Medieval China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Schafer, Edward. 1974. The Sky River. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94: 401–7. [CrossRef]
- Schlegel, Gustave. 1875. *Uranographie Chinoise*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Sima, Qian 司馬遷. 1963. *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Stuart, George A. 1911. *Chinese Materia Medica: Vegetable Kingdom*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press.
- van Zoeren, Steven. 1991. *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Waley, Arthur. 1955. *The Nine Songs: A Study in Shamanism in Ancient China*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Waley, Arthur. 1996. *The Book of Songs*. Edited with additional translations by Joseph R. Allen. New York: Grove Press.
- Wang, Ping, and Nicholas Morrow Williams, eds. 2015. *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Wang, Xianqian 王先謙, ed. 1987. *Shi sanjia yi jishu* 詩三家義集疏 [Collected Subcommentaries on the Three Schools of Interpretation for the Book of Songs]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- Williams, Nicholas Morrow. 2020. Shamans, Souls, and Soma: Comparative Religion and Early China. *Journal of Chinese Religions* 48: 147–73.
- Xiao, Tong 蕭統. 1986. *Wen Xuan* 文選 [Selections of Refined Literature]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.
- Xu, Wenjing 徐文靖. 1998. *Guancheng Shuoji* 管城碩記 [Major Notes of the Brush]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Yan, Changgui 晏昌貴. 2010. *Wugui Yu Yinsi: Chu Jian Suo Jian Fangshu Zongjiao Kao* 巫鬼與淫祀——楚簡所見方術宗教考 [Shamans, Specters, and Excessive Rites: Religious Practices and Techniques as Seen in the Bamboo Strips Excavated from Chu]. Wuhan: Wuhan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Zhan, Hanglun 詹杭倫, Shirong Shen 沈時蓉, and et al. 2015. *Lidai Lüfu Jiaozhu* 歷代律賦校注 [Regulated Rhapsodies of Various Dynasties, Collated and with Commentary]. Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe.
- Zhang, Hua 張華. 2014. *Botwu zhi jiaozheng* 博物志校証 [Monograph on Various Objects, Collated and Edited]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- Zhao, Kuifu 趙逵夫, and Xiaobin Yang 楊曉斌. 2010. *Lidai Fu Pingzhu: Wei Jin Juan* 歷代賦評注：魏晉卷 [Rhapsodies of Various Dynasties, with Evaluation and Commentary: Wei and Jin Volume]. Chengdu: Ba Shu Shushe.
- Zhu, Youzeng 朱右曾. 2002. *Shi Dili Zheng* 詩地理徵 [Verification of Geography in the Classic of Poetry]. Xuxiu Siku Quanshu 續修四庫全書. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe.

MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel
Switzerland
Tel. +41 61 683 77 34
Fax +41 61 302 89 18
www.mdpi.com

Religions Editorial Office
E-mail: religions@mdpi.com
www.mdpi.com/journal/religions



MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel
Switzerland

Tel: +41 61 683 77 34

www.mdpi.com



ISBN 978-3-0365-5828-8