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Ritual Action and Its Consequences: *Libai* (Ritualized Prostration) in Medieval Daoist Rituals

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Abstract: Chinese Buddhists in the Eastern Han initially employed the term *libai* to denote a supreme ritual performed by believers and disciples when meeting the Buddha. Deeply rooted in an Indian ritual greeting tradition, *libai* consisted of the action of touching the ground with the forehead. Buddhist *vinayas* regulated the performance of *libai* for senior or sick samgha members. In accordance with the ritual rationale of *pūjā*, *libai* was frequently used, along with other ritualized actions, for worshiping Buddhist statues and *sūtras*. The Daoists appropriated *libai* as a ritual technique in complicated ways. Several pre-5th century texts appeared to apply the term to describe a solemn greeting ritual for high-ranked deities. Since the 5th century, Numinous Treasure and Celestial Master Daoists have provided divergent understandings and usages of *libai* in their rituals. Specifically, Lu Xiujing considered *libai* to be a major part of the retreat that functioned to cultivate the body. The end of the 6th century witnessed the continuation of employing *libai* in the rituals worshiping the Daoist Three Treasures. Its diversity and significance were acknowledged by the early Tang Daoist monastic codes. The lawful performance of *libai*, interpreted by Zhang Wanfu, associated the body with the mind, and manifested the utmost sincerity.

Keywords: *libai*; Daoism; Chinese Buddhism; ritual; prostration

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1. Introduction

In his groundbreaking article investigating the Daoist borrowings from Chinese Buddhism, Zürcher classified the "hard" and the "soft" areas in the Daoist system. The former were well established and immune to outside influences, whereas the latter were much more vulnerable. He further explained that the "hard" areas, including meditation, the human body, and stages of saintliness, "since the beginning had enjoyed so much attention and therefore had crystallized into well-developed 'closed' structures" (Zürcher 1980, p. 121). Daoist ritual certainly displays the characteristics of the "hard" areas. As early as the formative period of the religion, communal rituals had been one of the most outstanding features of Celestial Master Daoism. Meditation and knowledge of the body are permanent components in Daoist rituals. On the other hand, Daoist and Buddhist ritual experts did provide services that were often quite indistinguishable. Far from being immune to outside influences, Daoist rituals share a wide range of similar functions and contents with their Buddhist counterparts (Yoshioka 1959, pp. 369–411; Orzech 2002, pp. 213–34; Mollier 2008; Lü 2020, pp. 119–26). Because of the coexistence of both "hard" and "soft" elements within it, Daoist ritual provides us with valuable data from which a more nuanced view of Buddho–Daoist interactions can be drawn.[1]

Ritual interaction does not take place systematically. That is, it was always beyond the capability and willingness of religious agents to borrow or imitate ritual in full. Appropriated parts or even fractions were the most common flows between religious traditions. One of the most immediate appropriations occurs in ritual technique: open and utilitarian action with the aid of ritual technologies such as talismans, incantations, effigies, and icons. Ritual technique does not set itself apart from other mental and intellectual elements in a

ritual, but consistently entails and reflects ideas, doctrines, and theories. It may function solely in or be associated with other techniques in a larger ritual framework.

A ritual action originating from Chinese Buddhism, *libai* 禮拜 (ritualized prostration), was, and still is, widely employed by major Chinese religious traditions. Its usages in the mainstream rituals of Chinese Buddhism and Daoism are common and early. Significant as it is, there is a lack of deep study of the term. Only a few entries in Buddhist dictionaries touch on the topic (Mochizuki 1960–1963, pp. 4946–47; Ryūkyū 1976, pp. 4463–64; Durt 1979, pp. 371–80). Despite its frequency in Daoist texts, on the other hand, there has been little agreement on what *libai* means. The translations are divergent, such as "make obedience", (Kohn 1995, p. 117) "ritual and worship", (Bokenkamp 2011, p. 107) or "worship", (Kleeman 2016, p. 199), not to mention none of them recognizes the Buddhist origin of the action.

The aim of the present paper has therefore been to provide an initial examination of *libai* as defined in the Eastern Han Buddhist translations and in several early medieval texts produced by major Daoist traditions, with an emphasis on the writings of Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477) and Zhang Wanfu 張萬福 (fl. 710–13), the two greatest ritual masters who taught and innovated Daoist ritual practices by mediating ritual techniques within and beyond Daoism. Specifically, I will attempt to analyze the meaning and action of *libai* in its Buddhist origin, its impact on the Chinese religious landscape, and how, in different and dynamic ways, it was appropriated by the Daoists. The paper ends with a reflection on how the investigation of *libai* contributes to deepening the understanding of Buddho–Daoist interactions.

2. The Buddhist Provenance of Libai and Its Usages in Early Buddhist Communities

There is barely a trace of *libai* used in the indigenous Chinese texts that date prior to the mid-2nd century. In contrast, the term frequently appears in the corpus of translations produced by a wide range of Buddhist communities in the Eastern Han and the Three Kingdoms periods. Significant translators in the north and south, including An Shigao 安世高 (fl. 150–170), Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 (fl. 194–199), Zhi Qian 支謙 (fl. 220–252), etc., had similarly applied *libai* to describe the greeting ritual for paying the utmost respect to the most highly esteemed persons, deities, or their representations, and particularly to the Buddha. The textual evidence does not only attest to the Buddhist provenance of *libai* but also suggests that the introduction of the term into Chinese Buddhist literature must have been even earlier.

A disyllabic verb, *libai* consists of two morphemes. Both *li* and *bai* were employed verbally by the Han people. *Bai*, the gestures of bowing, varied from simple bowing of the upper body to prostration, whereas *li* referred to the etiquette and expected social behaviors appropriate to one's family standing, social rank, or official position, and to their very performance. Since *li* has a broader connotation, it functions in the binome as a modifier, regulating *bai*, that forms the nucleus of the predicate.[2] The rendering of certain bowings and prostrations as *li* explained to the Chinese audience that, regardless of their exotic origin, these actions too had the symbolic meaning of respectfulness and subservience in Indian society.

What specific action did *libai* denote, and under what circumstances was the action considered to be ritualized? In his investigation of the glossary of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* 道行般若經, translated by Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖 (fl. 2nd century), Karashima explains the entry of "zuoli" 作禮 with its Chinese usages and corresponding Sanskrit words (Karashima 2010, p. 679).[3] Its meanings can be classified into four groups:

(1) pay homage (Skt. *vanditvā namaskṛtya*): 天上四天王天上諸天人索佛道者，往到彼所，問訊，聽受般若波羅蜜。作禮，遶竟已，去 The four heavenly kings and devas who are seeking the way of the Buddha come to his place, make salutations, and listen and receive the *prajñāpāramitā*. Having saluted and paid homage to him, they left;

(2) salute at the Lord's feet with the head (Skt. *pādau śirasā vanditvā*): 一切皆來到佛所。前，爲佛作禮 All come to the Buddha's place, move in front of him, and salute at the Lord's feet with their heads;
(3) place the right knee on the ground and salute with folded hands (Skt. *dakṣiṇaṃ jānumaṇḍalaṃ pṛthivyāṃ pratiṣṭhāpya yena bhagavāṃstenāñjaliṃ praṇamya*): 有優婆夷從坐起，前至佛所，爲佛作禮長跪，白佛言 An upāsikā rose from the seat, came to the Buddha's place, placed the right knee on the ground, and saluted with folded hands, saying that…;
(4) bent in the direction of (Skt. *prāṇata abhūvan*): 悉傾曲躬，爲曇無竭菩薩作禮 All bent in the direction of Dharmodgata.

Lokakṣema did not randomly assign the meaning of *li* to these actions in his translation. Although Buddhists were often critical of prevailing religious practices and social institutions in South Asia, they did share many common beliefs and practices with native religious practitioners. The Indian Buddhists did not only explicitly acknowledge that others have rituals, but also enjoined or permitted the coexistence of the practices of others and the rituals specific to their tradition itself (Granoff 2000, p. 401). A consultation of Indian ritual codes shows that the actions listed above have deep roots in Indian indigenous traditions. Major *Dharmaśāstras* distinguish five forms of ritualized greeting:

1. *pratyutthāna*: rising from one's seat to receive person;
2. *abhivādana*: saluting without touching the feet;
3. *upasaṃgrahaṇa* or *pādopasaṃgrahaṇa*: saluting by clasping the feet of the teacher or another with one's hands;
4. *pratyabhivāda*: the answering greeting, which should accompany *abhivādana*;
5. *namaskāra*: bowing (Kane 1968, vol. 2, p. 335).

Much effort is made here to distinguish between *abhivādana* and *namaskāra*. In the former, one does not only bow but also utters words such as '*abhivādaye*, etc.', whereas in the latter, one only bows and folds one's hands. *Namaskāra* is performed only to images of gods, brāhmanas, saṃnyāsins (renouncers), and the like. Moreover, one should not perform *abhivādana* to a brāhmana, but should only perform *namaskāra* in all public assemblies, in sacrifices, in palaces, or in royal courts. The hand gesture of joining the hands in *namaskāra* is compared to the shape of a she-goat's ear (Kane 1968, vol. 2, p. 346).

The prescription of the greeting rituals is useful to deepen our understanding of the ritualized actions in items one and two of the *libai* entry.[4] *Namaskāra* shares the same morphemes, that is, *namas* +$\sqrt{kr}$, with *namaskṛtya* in item one. Therefore, in addition to the meaning of "paying homage", as Karashima suggests in the glossary, "namas$\sqrt{\text{kṛ}}$" also signifies the action of bowing. Secondly, *abhivādana* is used interchangeably with *upasaṃgrahaṇa*. In the Toyikā story of the *Divyāvadāna*, *abhivādana* is differentiated from *vandana* (venerating), which requires one to venerate with the head at the feet of the Blessed One when one meets the Buddha. Similar to *upasaṃgrahaṇa*, this act is not conducted at a distance, but entails physical proximity and does require a touching of the feet (Rotman 2008, p. 116). Therefore, in saluting at the feet of the respected with the head (*pādau śirasā vanditvā*), as described in item two, clasping the feet was originally required. Indeed, some other early Chinese Buddhist translations provide phrases that are literally closer to this meaning, such as *jiezu zuoli* 接足作禮 (T26.460b14) or *toumian jiezu* 頭面接足 (T196.157b11).[5] Having been introduced into the Chinese samgha, as noticed by Yijing 義淨 (635–713), the action of clasping the feet vanished, because it was not Chinese custom to bare the feet (T2125.223a24). Therefore, it is more precise to conceive of *zuoli* as the practice of greeting rituals.

The corresponding Sanskrit of the actions in items one and two in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* are disparate: *vanditvā namaskṛtya* and *pādau śirasā vanditvā*, respectively. This divergence is confirmed by a later Chinese translation. In his translation of their parallel texts in the fourth and fifth assemblages of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* 大般若波羅蜜多經, as already suggested by Karashima, Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) applied two sets of words, that is, *libai* was used to translate *vanditvā namaskṛtya*, whereas *dingli shuangzu* 頂禮雙足,

toumian zhuodi 頭面著地, and *lizu* 禮足 corresponded to *pādau śirasā vanditvā*. Xuanzang's rendering fits Sanskrit grammar neatly, in which *libai* is a verbatim rendition of the phrase *vanditvā namaskṛtya* (having saluted and bowed).[6]

Nevertheless, the Eastern Han Chinese Buddhist translations explicitly render the prostration with the head at the feet of the Buddha, i.e., *pādau śirasā vanditvā*, as *libai*. In the *Sumāgadhāvadāna* 須摩提女經 translated by Zhi Qian, Sumāgadha 須摩提, a daughter of Anāthapiṇḍada 給孤獨, is sent to be betrothed to the son of a family adhering to a non-Buddhist religion. In the ceremony of serving brahmans with meals, her father-in-law knelt down, moved forward, and respectfully paid homage to them 膝行前迎恭敬作禮. Being required to do the same courtesy, Sumāgadha rejected that "I am indeed not able to take on the duty of performing *libai* in their direction" 實不堪任向作禮拜 (T128.838c2). Among the actions of *zuoli* described above, only the prostration prescribed in item two entails the action of kneeling down.

Elsewhere in a sūtra translated by Kang Senghui 康僧會 (?–280), this particular action of *libai* is described appositively to *qishou* 稽首 (touching the head on the ground) (T152.38b27). Similar appositions are abundant in early Chinese Buddhist translations. For instance, among the wide range of expressions made by Zhi Qian to describe the prostration performed in front of the Buddha, we find "touched head to ground at the Buddha's feet and sat down to one side" 稽首佛足一面坐 (T87.911a2). In his translation of the *Mahānidānasūtra*, An Shigao describes the greeting paid by Ānanda to the Buddha by "making obeisance at the Buddha's feet" 爲佛足下禮 (T14.241c28–9).[7] Two recensions of the scripture in the *Longer Āgama* 長阿含經 translated by Zhufojian 竺佛念 (fl. 3–4th century) and in the *Middle Length Āgama* 中阿含經 by Samghadeva (fl. late 4th century), respectively, describe the greeting as "made obeisance at the Buddha's feet with the head" 頭面禮足 (T1.60b4–5) and "touched his head to the ground at the Buddha's feet" 稽首佛足 (T26.578b11–13).

The locus classicus of *qishou*, in which it is prescribed as one of the nine kneeling greeting bowings, is in the Senior Supplicator 大祝 under the Office for Spring 春官 in the *Rites of Zhou* 周禮. The first three, namely *qishou*, *dunshou* 頓首, and *kongshou* 空首, are the main forms. *Qishou* is used to show the greatest respect and the most hierarchical distance between the one greeting and the one being greeted. It should be performed before people of higher political status, particularly the ruler. Other significant occasions in which *qishou* is used are sacrifices and funeral salutations. The entire procedure of performing *qishou* includes: (a). kneeling down on the knee; (b). folding the hands at breast level; (c). stretching them beyond the knees; and (d). touching the head to the ground.

The performance of *dunshou* is the same as that of *qishou*, except that one strikes, instead of touching, the head on the ground. Practiced slightly more rapidly, *dunshun* is allowed to be performed by those who are of the same generation or social status. *Kongshou*, *baishou*, and *bai* are equivalent. They conventionally function the preliminary stage of *qishou* and *dunshou*, i.e., the steps (a) and (b) listed above, and require one to bend the head over the folded hands. There are salutations practiced twice (*zaibai* 再拜), while both *qishou* and *dunshou* are done only once.[8]

Pādau śirasā vanditvā and *qishou* share highly similar physical features and symbolic meanings. The two ritual actions with symbolic gestures of obeisance and subordination constitute the supreme homage, whether presented alone or as part of a ceremony comprising other salutations (Durt 1979, pp. 378–80). Despite the fact that *pādau śirasā vanditvā* originally contained the important gesture of clasping the feet of the respected, Chinese Buddhists still preferred to employ the indigenous ritual terms to interpret imported Indian rituals. Kumārajīva (344–413), for example, used Chinese ritual terms to explain three kinds of Indian Buddhist greetings, in ascending order: *yi* 揖 (louting), *gui* 跪 (bowing), and *qishou*. He further explains that saluting at the Lord's feet with the head, i.e., *qishou*, is the utmost way of paying reverence (T1509.131a1–2). Of the nine Indian greetings recorded by Xuanzang, prostration is ranked as the second most solemn ritual and is equivalent to

"elbows and knees on the ground"五輪俱屈. It is only inferior to the most solemn "whole body prostration" (五體投地; Skt. *pañca-mandala-namaskara*) (T2087.877c12–15).

Because of its solemnness, *libai* constituted a significant part of the *vinayas* and communal rituals. According to Yijing, the objects to whom *libai* should be addressed are of two kinds: the Tathāgata and the elder *bhikṣus* (T2125.221c13). One of his translations, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事, prescribes that the disciple should perform *libai* to the master and wish him good health three times a day (T1451.382a19). The prostration is also indispensable when expressing sympathy with the sick members of samgha (T1428.765b26–c09). Whether the same courtesy should be paid to secular rulers to show reverence raised heated debate in Chinese society. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the famous text *On Monks Should Not Pay Homage to Kings*沙門不敬王者論 and its consequences. Suffice it to say here that *libai* must have been observed and well known by the Chinese people. As the scholar-official Xi Zaochi 習鑿齒(?–383) once commented, the solemnity and self-content of the samgha manifested by the performances of *libai* and other salutations had deeply impressed Chinese society (T2059.352c13).

In addition to its praxis in the samgha, *libai* was practiced by the Buddhists to worship the Buddha. It is against this backdrop that *libai* became influential enough to make an impact on the Chinese religious landscape. The *Sūtra of Ánanda's Questioning of the Weal and Woe, Spoken by the Buddha* 佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經 says:

> The Buddha told Ánanda: there are those who serve the Buddha [and are able to] follow wise masters, never neglect the endowed precepts, diligently preserve what is transmitted, from dawn till dusk practice *libai* and respectfully burn the lamps, and are never weary of the precepts…… There are also those who serve the Buddha but do not encounter good teachers, do not understand the teaching of the scriptures, and do not have a solid intention of faith. They uphold the precepts in name only and transgress the correct laws. They do not establish images or statues, nor do they burn incense, light lamps, and reverently prostrate [to the images and statues if they have] (T492.753a10)
>
> 佛告阿難：有人奉佛，從明師，受戒不失，精進奉行所受，朝暮禮拜恭敬燃燈，齋戒不厭……有人事佛，不值善師，不見經教，信意不堅，亦有戒名違犯正律，既無形像亦不燒香然明作禮。

Contrasting activities are given here to illustrate what typical devoted and uncommitted Buddhist adepts are like. *Libai*, we are informed, is practiced daily. It should be performed in front of an image or a statue of the Buddha, along with other significant actions, including burning incense and lighting lamps. The other Chinese version of the sūtra makes even more explicit the close relationship between the worshiping and the actions: "[the unfaithful] do not pay reverence and respect to the image, nor do they burn incense, light lamps, or practice *libai*" (T492.754c15). The *Ṣaṭ-pāramitā-samgraha* 六度集經 translated by Kang Senghui records a story in which a very similar practice is proposed. The Buddha was once, in his previous life, the wife of a scholar. One night she prayed to learn from the god surpassing all other gods, i.e., the Buddha. The next day, she found a stone stupa erected in her court, inside which a golden statue of the Buddha was shining and inscriptions of sūtra were carved on the wall. The woman then prostrated herself, circumambulated the stupa three times, scattered flowers, burned incense, lit lamps, and hung tabby silks. From dawn till dark, she was respectful and faithful to the statue, reverently touched her head on the ground, and voluntarily took refuge in the Buddha (T152.38b21–27).

There are several common characteristics between the two records. The first is that *libai* and a series of actions are closely related, including burning incense, lighting lamps, or scattering flowers. Secondly, Buddha, or his representation as a statue, functions as the object to which *libai* is performed. The very principle on which these characteristics are grounded can be found in the famous passage of Lokakṣema's *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 道行般若經:

> [The Bodhisattva Dharmodgata said,] "…Just like after the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, people have made his images and statues. Anyone who sees a Buddha image or a statue kneels down and serves it with offerings. The statue shows a noble and beautiful countenance, thus being no different from the real Buddha. All who see it in no case would not extol and praise it and would not make offerings to it with flowers, incense, and tabby and colorful silks. O Wise One, would you say that the spirit of the Buddha is in the statue?" The Bodhisattva Sadāparudita replied, "It is not there. The reason for making Buddha statues is merely to have people acquire merit from doing it."[9] (T224.476b17–22; cf. Karashima 2011, pp. 525–26)
>
> "……譬如佛般泥洹後，有人作佛形像。人見佛形像，無不跪拜供養者。其像端正姝好，如佛無有異。人見莫不稱歎，莫不持華香繒綵供養者。賢者，呼佛神在像中耶？"薩陀波倫菩薩報言："不在中，所以作佛像者，但欲使人得其福耳。"

The actions are defined as *pūjā* (Chin. *gongyang* 供養), the ritual of worshiping "an idol or an aniconic form of a deity as well as of any other object which is considered as possessing special power and being sacred" (Bühnemann 1988, p. 29). Not only was *pūjā* widely practiced by most religious groups in South Asia, but it was also performed by "lay people", even women—at various places. Its flexibility is further manifested by the fact that its forms were extremely open and there were no unambiguous rules for performing the ritual. Although the procedure for a *pūjā* might vary according to the school, the region, and the time, *pūjā,* in general, comprised sixteen standardized ritual acts, including the offerings of flowers, incense, and light, as well as performances of greeting and circumambulation.[10] In return, the practitioner of *pūjā* obtained religious merit (Skt. *puṇya*), worldly advantages (Skt. *bhukti*), and a special form of favor from the deity (Skt. *prasāda*) or his protection (Skt. *śaraṇa*) (Michaels 2016, pp. 247–58). All of the aspects described here by Lokakṣema characterize a *pūjā* ritual.

Although the passage rejects the notion of the presence of the spirit of the Buddha (*foshen* 佛神) in an image, it conversely suggests that the notion did in fact matter to the contemporaneous Buddhists; some Buddhists might even believe or suspect that the spirit of the Buddha resided in his iconic likeness (Rhi 2005, p. 204). This hypothesis can be demonstrated by a record in Chinese Buddhist hagiography. The monk Huida 慧達 (fl.373–375) was known for performing *libai* before statues of the Buddha. Propitious omens, which were believed to be direct responses from the Buddha, often manifested from the statues (T2059.409b13–410a07).

The image or statue was not, however, the only object to which *pūjā* was performed. From early on, Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists fully developed the "cult of the book", a cult "in which sacred texts functioned not as sources of information but as sacred objects and sources of power that were to be ritually approached, handled, and recited" (Schopen 2005, p. 348). As regards the ritual worship of the *Prajñā-sūtra*, one is first required to have the book well copied, and then:

> One should take refuge in, honor, revere, and serve it with fine incense, pounded and mixed incense, fragrant ointments, tabby and colorful silks, a floral canopy, banners, and streamers. All of them are exactly what there is in heaven. Incenses are placed in sesame oil, and [one should prepare] purified oil and fine lamp-wicks. One takes refuge in [the sutra], touches the ground with the head, steps back, lights the lamp-wicks, respects, pays homage, and serves [the sutra]. (T224.478b5–9; cf. Karashima 2011, p. 539)
>
> 當自歸，承事，作禮，供養好香、成搗雜香、澤香、繒綵、華蓋、旗幡，悉如天上所有。香著油麻中，所淨潔油麻，好燈炷。自歸，頭面著地；却，然燈炷，加敬；作禮；承事。

When addressed to Buddha, the deep greeting of the head and the taking of refuge are often alluded to as going hand in hand in Chinese Buddhist texts (Durt 1979, p. 374).

Along with presenting various items, a series of actions are taken. Specifically, prostration is performed in order to take refuge in the sūtra.

Theoretically, actions may play a similar important role as offerings in the *pūjā* ritual. According to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* 妙法蓮華經, people perform *libai*, or only join their palms, or even hold high but one hand, or slightly lower the head. By means of these actions to pay reverence to the status of Buddha, they are able to gradually see a limitless number of buddhas (T262.9a19–21). The *pūjā* of virtuous roots (*shan'gen gongyang* 善根供養), for example, requires one to conduct good actions physically and mentally towards Buddha, including prostration, circumambulation, praise, having confidence in the teaching, etc. (T1509.276c23–a3). Under certain circumstances, the performance of good actions is considered to be more valuable than presenting offerings (T1509.744b20–2).

To conclude, Chinese Buddhists performed *libai* to pay respect to either supreme deities, their representations, and sacred objects, or to eminent leaders in the samgha. As a concrete way of communicating with the gods, *libai* enabled its performants to fundamentally differ from indigenous spiritual mediums, in that it did not rely on offering sacrifices (Wei 1974, 114.3025). *Libai* was accompanied by other ritualized actions to form a *pūjā* ritual. Burning incense was the most common action, so much so that the two actions together were considered the most representative ritual of Buddhism (T2059.385c12).

This, however, did not make *libai* complicated to perform because, unlike the indigenous prostrations that were repeated multiple times, it was only performed once. Perhaps due to its extreme "purity and simplicity"[11], the practice had created an impact on the Chinese religious landscape. As noticed by a Daoist reformist in the early 5th century, some of his fellow Celestial Master Daoists, who did not follow the tradition of having a ritual place or providing a kitchen-feast (*chuhui* 廚會), only burned incense and performed *libai* to a jar of water, wherein they believed the Dao really existed (DZ 1205 Santian neijie jing, 1.7b).[12] The ritual rationale of the followers is clearly grounded in the practice of *libai* analyzed above. As we will see in the next sections, the impact generated by the Buddhist *libai* was not limited to the cult of worshiping pure water but penetrated all major Daoist traditions.

3. Libai Employed by Major Early Medieval Daoist Traditions

3.1. General Usages of Libai in the Pre-5th Century Daoist Communities

By the end of the Eastern Han, when it had spread among Chinese Buddhists, *libai* seemed to have already generated some immediate influence on Daoist literature. According to the first *juan* of the *Scripture and Instructions for the Divine Alchemy of the Nine Cauldrons* 九鼎神丹經訣, before ingesting the elixir of Danhua 丹華 (Florescence of Elixir), the Daoists were required to take a five- or seven-day fast, burn incense, and perform *libai* (DZ 885, 1.5a). However, it is not clear in what context the initial borrowing took place. The confusion is made even worse by the fact that the main audience of the scripture, i.e., the followers of the Masters of Esoterica (*fangshi* 方士), were notoriously in support of using sacrifice, which deviated from the basic ritual rationale of *libai*.

In the formative era of the Celestial Master Daoists (*Tianshidao* 天師道) from 191 to 215, the regulation of conduct and the appeal for good deeds were major topics. Repeated references were made to the cultivations that benefit the body and its vitality, such as "pure stillness" (*qingjing* 清淨), "preserve the feminine" (*shouci* 守雌), etc. According to the general description provided by official scholars and the texts in inner circulation, prostration seems not to be a favored action in the rituals of early Celestial Master Daoism, except that *The Demon Code of Nüqing* 女青鬼律 has contained an ambiguous instruction for the seed people, who are told to escape from net and snare and to prostrate before the Lord Lao (DZ 790, 5.1b).

It is worthwhile to note, however, that the rituals of the Celestial Masters became innovative when they encountered the rising Daoist tradition of Upper Clarity (*Shangqing* 上清) in the mid-4th century. The followers of the tradition believed that Wei Huacun, the goddess who initially revealed the Upper Clarity scriptures, had been a Celestial Master Libationer (*jijiu* 祭酒) before she obtained transcendence. Zhang Daoling, the first Celestial

Master, transmitted to her an instruction for the ritual of Entering the Oratory (*rujing* 入靜). Although *libai* is not used explicitly in the ritual, burning incense and prostration are the major constituents there (DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue*, 3.5b–11a). Since the ritual instruction was originally attached to the *Hagiography of Wei* that was made, used, and circulated by the followers of Upper Clarity, it is more reasonable to consider the nature of the ritual as a product of the accommodation of the two traditions rather than as a pure Celestial Master liturgy.

The Upper Clarity Daoists indeed consciously adopted *libai* as a discourse. They first and foremost carefully distinguished *libai* from *baili* 拜禮 (paying prostration as respect), a term referring to traditional Chinese prostrations. In the earliest revelation of the tradition, the Daoist medium Yang Xi 楊羲 introduced the example of Liu Shaoweng 劉少翁 who performed *baili* to Mt. Hua for years. His persistence caused the hierophany of the Elder of West Marchmount 西嶽丈人 (DZ 1016 Zhen'gao, 12.13b). The absence of explicit deity(s) in the praxis of *baili* contrasts sharply with that of *libai*. In the same text, a passage was revealed by the Middle Lord Mao to Yang Xi that the Azure Lad will descend to the Cavern Heaven of Huayang, where the West Queen Mother may also present herself. On this particular day, i.e., the 23rd day of the 1st month when the perfected gather, the Lord suggests that Xu Mi 許謐 should approach the countryside where the Mountain Mao is located and perform *libai* towards the numinous peak 禮拜於靈岫. Gazing afar at the mountain and prostrating towards it, explained Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536), is not climbing up the mountain. As the following part of the revelation shows, the prostration demonstrates sincerity, by which the performant always attains religious rewards, including personal communication with the deities (DZ 1016 Zhengao, 12.12b).

However, none of the Daoists accepted *libai* as a ritual technique. Even in Upper Clarity Daoism, its usage is sparse.[13] The mainstream rituals in the traditions analyzed above, with petition and visualization being the most representative, were immune to *libai* even at the rhetorical level. The most systematic appropriation into Daoism took place in the Numinous Treasure (*Lingbao* 靈寶) tradition.

3.2. Libai in the Numinous Treasure Rituals

The Numinous Treasure Daoists believed in the sacred origin of their scriptures. Originally in the shape of celestial script, the scriptures were enciphered by supreme deities and translated into the language of this world. In the same way as they were stored in heavenly gardens and platforms, the owners of the scriptures in this world preserved the texts in extremely careful ways and worshiped them. The *Precious Instructions on the Jade Scriptures* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣 envision a wide scope of Daoist scriptures. In preparation for the recitation of scriptures, the Daoists burn incense, put the ritual apparatus in order, and perform *libai* to unwrap the bookcase of the scriptures (DZ 425, 4a–b). In order to guard the body against demons and ensure the descent of celestial officials, the practitioners of the Perfected Script in Five Tablets should display them in the four directions and center of the Retreat Hall 齋堂, burn incense, and perform *libai* towards each of the talismans (DZ 352 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing*, 1.29a–b.).

The author(s) of the Numinous Treasure texts carefully distinguished *libai* from ordinary bowings. In a breathing exercise with regard to the Five Sprouts 五芽, one, in a successive order, visualizes the lords of the five directions descending and inhales the pneumas that they generate. Prior to this, one bows nine times, normally sits (*pingzuo* 平坐), and knocks the teeth. The second action of sitting normally refers to an unhurried sitting gesture of kneeling with the hamstrings on the back of the heels. Because of its leisureliness, it would be considered an arrogant and insolent position in a meeting. Moreover, as we may expect, the ritual does not entail burning incense or other worshiping actions (DZ 352, 2.5a–b).

The most sophisticated ritual that intensely appropriated *libai* was the retreat (*zhai* 齋), a communal ritual that aimed at providing universal salvation through abstinence and purification. *Libai* was first and foremost performed collectively in the retreat. The

responsibilities of at least two out of the six Retreat Officiants directly entails *libai*. It was one of the Leading Lecture's (*dujiang* 都講) duties to voice the order of *libai*. The Server of Incense (*shixiang* 侍香) must make the furnace ready to use prior to the retreat (DZ 524 *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guang zhu jie fa deng zhu yuan yi*, 13a–b). A detailed instruction on how to perform the retreat is provided in the *Instructions from All the Scriptures for the Ritual of the Numinous Treasure Retreat* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣. The whole ritual contains seven major ritual steps (DZ 532, 1b–7a):

1. Opening the furnace;
2. Sending off the officials;
3. Incantation;
4. Burning incense and making commitments;
5. *Libai* to the ten directions;
6. Transferring merit;
7. Circumambulation.

In this collective ritual, a ritual master (*fashi* 法師) leads the participants to make the commitments (*yuan* 願).[14] The three commitments share an identical beginning: "by burning incense, our bodies, spirits, and lives are relying on the Great Dao; by prostrating our faces and bodies on the ground, we are taking refuge in the Three Worthies of the Most High." The merit shall be transferred to seven generations of parents, to the lords and ministers, to the Daoist fellows and their families, and to the ritual participants. The ritual efficacy also goes to human beings, insects, birds, animals, and all sentient beings.

Having made this commitment and burned incense, the ritual master then leads the participants to perform *libai* to the east, praying that "your humble servants are taking refuge in the Celestial Worthies of Numinous Treasure in the East, may you impart the favor that our commitments will be fulfilled as expected, and what we pursue will be attained in the end." Similar actions and prayers are then successively conducted to the other three cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions, the zenith, and the nadir. Having finished the performance of *libai*, known as "making commitments to the ten directions", they prostrate twice to the four cardinal directions and pray for taking refuge in all the perfected beings who obtained the Dao and for accomplishing the commitment. Step six ends with the claim that the performance of *libai* to the Celestial Worthies in the ten directions is the very wonderful mystery of this great ritual 是為靈寶齋禮十方太上大法妙賾矣. As we will see in the following sections, this stands as the classical form of *libai* performance in early medieval Daoism.

The association between incense burning and *libai* suggests the ritual rationale of the retreat. While burning incense served as an invitation for the Buddha or other deities to descend on the ritual spot (Hou 2018, pp. 50–54), its Daoist counterpart here preceded a procedure in which the commitments were delivered to the celestial court. The Incense-Officiant Attendants, the Incense-Conveying Attendants, and the Dragon Lord and the Tiger Lord on the left and the right flank the incense burner. The Transcendent Lads and Jade Ladies of the Ten Directions 十方仙童玉女, who serve and guard the smoking incense, are responsible for reporting the commitments to the Jade Emperor of the Golden Porte. In addition to the arrayed divinities, the communication of the commitments to the celestial court depends on the Daoist body. As explained by the instruction, the objects in which the ritual participants take refuge are the worthies of the Dao, the scriptures, and the perfected. Generally known as the Three Ones (*sanyi* 三一), they exist also in the human body 通乎人身. Thanks to this doctrine, the Daoist body becomes identical with the objects for which the entire ritual is conducted.[15]

The idea of buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions was among the first concepts that Daoists borrowed from Buddhism to make sense of their own worldview and rituals.[16] The emphasis of *libai* performance here, however, is put on the action of prostration (DZ 532, 6b):

> All should walk at a peaceful and slow pace, being well-disposed and solemn. Males and females should not be mixed. If the awesome observances are performed in accordance with the celestial codes, then [the performance] will be completely admired by spirits and deities, be extolled by flying transcendents, and be imitated by the Three Realms.
>
> 皆當安徐雅步，審整庠序。男女不得參雜。令威儀合於天典，則爲鬼神之所具瞻，飛仙之所嗟歎，三界之所軌範也。

Like all the actions of the retreat, *libai* performance originates from the celestial code. The ritual's efficacy is grounded in the precise agreement between the performance and the code. It only requires, though, that the actions be conducted in an orderly and formal manner. Lu Xiujing, the eminent Daoist reformist who presented a proto-Daoist canon and promoted Daoist rituals, further explained the significance of *libai* as an indispensable part of the retreat:

> Therefore, the Most High Celestial Worthy opened the jade bookcases of Purple Tenuity in the Upper Palace of Mysterious Capital, and revealed the wondrous retreat of the Numinous Treasure. This is because the three passes of humans are in a state of tumult and turmoil and cannot be settled in peace. Their bodies are tossed and turned by murder and robbery; thus they are to be controlled by ritual prostration. Their mouths are full of malevolent words, flattery, false speech, and treachery; thus they are to be regulated by reciting the scriptures. Their hearts are full of greed and anger; thus they are to be employed through thinking of the deities. By using these three methods, their hearts will be cleaned and their actions purified. The full attainment of mental and physical perfection is the meaning of the retreat. (DZ 524, 3a; translation here follows Bokenkamp 2001, p. 190)
>
> 是故太上天尊，開玄都上宮紫微玉笈，出靈寶妙齋。以人三關躁擾，不能閑停，身為殺盜淫動，故役之以禮拜；口有惡言，綺妄兩舌，故課之以誦經；心有貪欲嗔恚之念，故使之以思神。用此三法，洗心淨行。心行精至，齋之義也。

Again, the sacred origin of the retreat is emphasized. Lu spent more effort, nevertheless, on reinterpreting its meaning for the people in this world from the perspective of its basic constituents. The retreat is by no means mystical. Instead, through mental meditation and physical performance, one is able to fulfill the ritual requirements. Specifically, *libai* works to counteract the disorder of the individual body. As Lu explicitly cited in the latter part of the text from the *Tablet of the Golden Register* 金籙簡文: among the practices of cultivation of the retreat, the most valuable is *libai* 齋之所修尊乎禮拜 (DZ 524, 17a).

Lu Xiujing did not only theoretically talk about *libai*, but also employed it in real practice with significant modifications. His *Transmission Ritual of the Cavern Mystery and Numinous Treasure of the Most High* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 stands as the first lengthy ritual protocol for conveying the ordination rank of Numinous Treasure in the history of Daoism. The overall framework of the ritual consists of two portions: the conventional retreat, which lasts from the start to the presentation of incense and circumambulation (R. 2.11)[17], and the following transmission rite. The prescription here reveals many details of the classical *libai* performed to the Celestial Worthies in the ten directions.

The master should hold audience planks (*yeban* 謁版), proclaim to take refuge in the Celestial Worthies and their subordinates, and prostrate. The content of each plank is identical, as "the prior-born of such Thearch of such and such is paying respect twice and seeking audience 某帝先生姓氏名，再禮謁"[18]. Its format is exactly the same as that of the secular and religious audience planks widely used in this era (Wang 2003, p. 486). According to the Eastern Han scholar Liu Xi 劉熙, the plank functions as a request for an audience (Wang 1984, p. 299). Its employment here also indicates a formal interview with the Celestial Worthies. Having reported that the candidates have qualified for transmission, the master further announced that:

> We are inviting [the deities in] these Ten Heavens when the Three Pneumas are distributing glory. The awesome ordinances are laying out like clouds. In front of the Supreme High we are making the presentation. (DZ 528, 15b)
>
> 延茲十天，三炁流光，威式雲布，無上開陳。

Although deities do not instantly descend, the prostration and the announcement do symbolize the very commencement of the performant–deity communication. The master reiterates his request in the following step (R 2.10), in which he specifically invites the deities who guard the scriptures and supervise the transmission to descend on the platform. In step R. 2.19, the disciples prostrate nine times to the master, receive the transmitted items, and prostrate once more to each of the ten directions, visualizing the true form of the Celestial Worthies as being identical to their statues.

The rich forms of *libai* used here, as well as the way in which they are embedded in the entire ritual framework, are both what the Daoist scriptures prescribe and an invention of Lu's own. Here, the objects to which *libai* are consistently addressed are mainly of three groups: the Celestial Worthies and other deities, the transmitted items, and the master. They either literally or symbolically correspond to the Three Treasures in Daoism, i.e., the Dao, the scriptures, and the master.

Following the convention set by Chinese Buddhists, the Numinous Treasure Daoists also practiced *libai* for their masters. The *Tablets of the Jade Register* 玉籙簡文 prescribe dozens of rites for paying respect to the Daoist masters. In the very beginning of the scripture, it instructs the disciples to burn incense, visualize prostrating three times to the direction in which the masters reside, and make the commitment that both the master and the disciple obtain transcendence. When personally paying audience to the master, the disciples should be focused, fix their minds on the mysterium, and solemnly perform *libai* (DZ 530, 3a–b).

The innovation here, however, does not only lie in the flexibility with which the Numinous Treasure Daoists allowed both the mental and physical performance of *libai*, but also in how the *libai* played a significant role in the community in which early Daoist monasticism was born[19]. The praxis of *libai* in this tradition, including its diversity and innovation, makes an important contrast to the Celestial Master Daoists who have been long considered as almost entirely free from Buddhist elements.

3.3. Libai in the Celestial Master Communities

Celestial Masters basically accepted *libai* in two ways. They either directly invented rituals that involved the essential elements of *libai*, such as incense burning and prostration, or borrowed from the Numinous Treasure tradition. *Libai* first massively appeared in the *Commandment-Scripture of the Hymnal Rules of Lord Lao* 老君音誦誡經, the major product of the Daoist reformation movement led by Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448). As a ritualized action, *libai* is used by the Daoist citizens, the most basic level of the Celestial Master society, towards their masters, i.e., the Libationers. We are told that they should serve and pay *libai* 奉事禮拜 before them (DZ 785, 10a). In the same passage, the word is used interchangeably with *chaobai* 朝拜, originally a secular ritual action paid to the ruler. The relationship between the two communal groups is further compared to that between people and officials in real politics. Still, no specific instruction is given on how to perform this ritual.

While this usage seems to be metaphoric, strict instructions are given for the kitchen-feast entailing "incense and lamp" as well as *libai*. The ritual was often the only recourse for Daoist believers who encountered familial or communal problems (Kleeman 2016, p. 206). *Libai* appears twice in the instructions on how to offer a kitchen-feast. In one place, a series of solemn actions were performed in the banquet for the dead, including bowing, touching the head onto the ground, and smacking the cheeks. If there were too many participants, the prescription directs that they only performed *libai* (DZ 785, 15b). In another banquet for curing illness, the guests and host should both practice *libai* and burn incense for the sick (DZ 785, 16b). Under both circumstances, oral prayers (*qiuyuan* 求願) were indispensable. To some extent, the usage of *libai* in the scripture shows similarities with its Buddhist

counterpart. Burning incense was a necessary component. The master, and probably certain deities, were the principal objects to whom *libai* was addressed. Unlike the Chinese Buddhists who thought highly of *libai*, however, the Celestial Master Daoists here treated it as a lesser ritual because it was always used by ritual participants instead of ritual performants, and in minor ritual steps.

At approximately the same time, there were Celestial Masters who adopted the *libai* set by the rising Daoist traditions in the south. The *Scripture of Divine Incantations of the Abyssal Caverns* 洞淵神咒經 represents a Celestial Master community deeply influenced by the teachings of the Three Caverns (*sandong* 三洞) that consisted of the scriptural legacies of Upper Clarity, the Numinous Treasure, and the Three Sovereigns. The followers of the Numinous Treasure, Lu Xiujing in particular, played a significant role in canonizing and spreading the teachings of the Three Caverns. More than once, the *Scripture of Divine Incantations* calls for taking refuge in the Three Treasures through the performance of *libai* (DZ 335, 9.8b). Following the practice of the Numinous Treasure tradition, they place and worship the scripture on a high seat. Twice a month, they would burn incense and perform *libai* to the ten directions and the masters (DZ 335, 5.8b–9a).

The introduction of *libai* into the Celestial Master community thus resulted from the community's interaction with both Buddhism and other Daoist traditions. With full awareness, the Celestial Masters drew a distinction between *libai* and the ordinary prostration in their old rituals. For instance, the *Penal Code of the Mysterious Capital* 玄都律文 orders that on five particular days of a month, the communal members should only practice *libai*, cultivate, and recite scriptures, whereas the petition ritual is strictly forbidden. The Code also mentions that the Three Treasures stand as the object to which the Celestial Masters should perform *libai* (DZ 463, 11.13a).

It was also in their interaction with the Numinous Treasure Daoists that the Celestial Masters innovated their own Orthodox Teaching Retreat 旨教齋. The *Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* 三天內解經 shows the important characteristics of the retreat:

> Therefore, the Celestial Master left the teaching that: those who learn the Dao without practicing the retreat are mentally dull, as if walking at night without holding a lamp and candle. This retreat should be the premier in studying the Dao… There are several grades of study: those studying the great vehicle should satisfy the mind with stillness and calm, and think of the perfected and concentrate on the mysterium. Their exterior is like emptiness and their interior is like a golden [fortified] city. They burn incense to communicate with the pneuma and their mouth forgets utterance. Their minds are compassionate towards the sentient beings so that they fix their minds to save others before saving themselves. Completely they focus on transcendence, without thinking of money. They return the mind to pay homage with ritual prostration and to beg for indulgence without making the body deities labored. They first seek perfection inside, and then communicate with the mysterium. Their mind matches the Dao, which naturally does not require many statements. This can be called the inhalation and exhalation of the Six Coordinates, i.e., the whole world, and a complete vista of what has never been heard. Those who learn the lesser vehicle are not like this. They only regard excessive utterances as excellent, and abundant actions as diligent. They touch heads and faces onto the ground, which impairs the body deities. They compete in oral utterances; thus, their inner meditation cannot be concentrated. With three fingers they pick up incense, and state a myriad of things… (DZ 1205, 2.2b–3b)
>
> 故天師遺教：為學不修齋直，冥冥如夜行不持火燭。此齋直應是學道之首……學有數品，大乘之學，當怡心恬寂，思真註玄。外若空虛，內若金城。香以通氣，口以忘言。慈心眾生，先念度人，後自度身。悉在升仙，不念財錢。回心禮謝，不勞身神。求真於內，然後通玄。念與道合，自無多陳，可謂呼吸六合，歷覽未

> 聞。夫小乘之學，其則不然。唯以多辭為善，多事為勤，頭頰相叩，損傷身神，口辭爭競，內思不專，三指撮香，所陳億千……

The scripture was written as propaganda for the Celestial Masters, who were confronted with challenges within and beyond Daoist communities. This passage in particular attempts to redefine an innovative ritual of their own. The Celestial Masters believed that they were the first to create the retreat ritual, and that theirs was superior to the retreat(s) of other Daoist traditions. There are certain features that the Celestial Master retreat shared with other retreats, such as the use of incense and the proposal of universal salvation. The criticism of the lesser vehicle, i.e., the retreat of others, however, is grounded in their differences. That is, the Celestial Masters deplored the actions that were originally taken in the Numinous Treasure retreats. As the later part of the scripture condemns the practice of the lesser vehicle, the mouth is weary with the words of invitation, the body is weary with the pains of bending, the mind is troubled with excessive desires, and the spirit is laborious in its dealings. The actions that caused all these problems were not only indispensable in the praxis of the Numinous Treasure retreats, but also the core that Lu Xiujing made an effort to elaborate on in his ritual theory.

Specifically, prostration was criticized because it distorted the body, which belabored and endangered the deities within. Body deities played a significant role in Celestial Master Daoism. They were considered as transformed pneumas and believed to reside in the key spots of the body. They directed and protected the functioning of the body, and enabled ritual performance. Their names and images were carefully written down in the registers, the most important religious document by which the Celestial Masters preserved for life. However, the antagonism toward prostration was by no means traditional. Prostrating actions were widely used in Celestial Master rituals, particularly in the petition. The term *bai* appeared both as the action performed in submitting documents, such as *baizhang* 拜章, *baibiao* 拜表, etc., and as the very respectful remarks within those documents.

In early medieval Daoism, the prohibition of prostration originated from either practical or doctrinal considerations. Those who were too weak and weary to perform corporeally, according to the instructions of the *Code of the Covenant with the Perfected* 明真科, would be allowed to prostrate in their mind (*xinbai* 心拜). Prostration performed with fatigue destroys the promised ritual efficacy (DZ 1411, 24b). The *Code of Grand Perfected* 太真科, an early 5th century Daoist communal ritual code that combined the traditions of the Celestial Masters and Upper Clarity, also allows the performance of prostration in the mind alone (DZ 1138 Wushang biyao, 56.7a). On the other hand, the practitioners of the Grand One, probably a branch of the Upper Clarity tradition, were strictly forbidden from touching the head to the ground. Even the slightest motion of the head, they believed, was a danger to the spirits who occupy the nine chambers in the brain. Those who practiced kowtow more than once would eventually lose their spirits. As a result, ill and malignant forces would come to reside in the body. Therefore, one only visualizes touching his head to the ground (DZ 1380 Shangqing taishang huangsu sishisifang jing, 11b–12a). In this way, the Celestial Masters here replaced physical action with visualization. Although the term "returning the mind", as they referred to the ritual technique for visualization, had been used (DZ1411, 16b; DZ 528, 33a), its denotation as motionless and soundless visualization was unprecedented.

4. *Libai in the Sui and Early Tang Daoist Rituals*

The *Imperially Composed New Rituals* 御製新儀 in the *Essence of the Supreme Secrets* 無上秘要 provides a protocol for performing the retreat rituals of major Daoist traditions. While each maintains features originating from its own tradition, these retreats have identical frameworks and steps. For instance, the three Grand Perfected Retreats 太真齋 in the Upper Clarity tradition contain the steps of entering the chamber, incantation, sending off body deities, presentations of incense, the performance of *libai*, and existing the chamber (Hirose 2015, pp. 87–113). As a major element in the Numinous Treasure retreat, *libai* is adopted in these retreats with adjusted forms. Not only are they all followed by chanting

hymns of the Upper Clarity style, but they are also made to deities in other directions than the ten directions used earlier. There are fifteen directions to which the prostrations are made in the retreats of the Lower and the Middle Prime, whereas the performants only prostrate to five directions in the retreat of the Upper Prime.

Modifications to *libai* can also be found in the retreats of the Numinous Treasure. Not only is the prostration to the ten directions placed in the later portion of the ritual, but each of the ten Celestial Worthies is also given an explicit title (DZ 1138, 39.8a–9a). Its source is claimed to be recited from a certain scripture of the Numinous Treasure. Although the titles cannot be found in the extant "ancient scriptures of Numinous Treasure", the Dunhuang manuscript P. 2383, *the Scripture of Life Spirits of Pure Land* 太上洞玄靈寶淨土生神經 does contain detailed descriptions of the Celestial Worthies, including their titles, subordinates, residences, etc. (Zhang 2004, vol. 4, pp. 197–206). The system was accepted by other Daoist traditions in the Sui and early Tang, including the famous Jinming qizhen 金明七真 of the 6th century (DZ 1125 Dongxuan lingbao sandong fengdao kejie yingshi, 6.1a–b).

Synthesized ritual techniques from different traditions were widely taught and learned, which was reinforced by the compilation of monastic manuals and rule books. The *Scripture on the Liturgy of the Zhengyi Masters* 正一威儀經, an early Tang imitation of the Tablets of the Three Registers, but with more regulations of monastic life, contains three articles prescribing how to perform *libai*. Accordingly, *libai* was widely used in performances such as the elaboration of scripture and repentance. We also learn that the scriptures of thirty-six sections, i.e., the Daoist canon, as well as the Dao of the three ages, were the objects of *libai*. There were Daoists who continued to insist on performing prostration in the mind (DZ 1352 Dongzhen taishang taixiao lang shu, 10.5b). The Celestial Master Daoists here, however, accepted *libai* performed both physically and mentally (DZ 791 *Zhengyi weiyi jing*, 11b).

In addition to the supreme deities, scriptures continued to be worshiped using *libai*. If the recipients of the *Scripture of Primordial Yang* 元陽經 should uphold, recite, copy, and explain the scripture, make respectful offerings, pay respectful homage, do ritual prostration in the morning and evening, and think of the transcendents, then they will know that at that time, the teaching will flourish and that there will be no end to the teaching (DZ 334, 6.24a). In a tale, the *Scripture of Sea-Space, the Reservoir of Wisdom* 海空智藏經 also describes the similar performance made by the recipients of the scripture (DZ 9, 5.9b).

Libai performed to the Three Treasures had been generally accepted by all the Daoist traditions by the early Tang. A series of Zhang Wanfu's works provide detailed guidance as to how to perform *libai* under various circumstances. Following the regulations set by Lu Xiujing, Zhang required Daoists to be dressed in ritual dress 法服 when performing or receiving *libai* (DZ 788 *Sandong fafu kejie wen*, 7b). Prior to the recitation and elaboration of scriptures, Daoists performed *libai* to the direction of three generations of their masters and visualized their appearances (DZ 445 *Dongxuan lingbao sanshi minghui xingzhuang juguan fangsuo wen*, 1a). Disciples who departed from the master should wear ritual dress and perform *libai* to him. The longer the disciple departed for, the more times the *libai* was repeated. If, for instance, a disciple had not met the master for more than a year, then he would first prostrate three times, inquire after his health, and again prostrate twice (DZ 178 *Sandong zhongjie wen*, 2b–3b).

One of Zhang's most elaborate instructions was given for the *libai* to the ten Celestial Worthies:

> In general, when practicing ritual prostration, the performants first recite aloud "I am taking refuge in [the Celestial Worthy] in the East with the utmost mind", and instantly concentrate attention on the east with the utmost mind. They bend the body and kneel down, calling out "of the Most High Numinous Treasure of the Infinite…", then slowly lower the upper body with their hands touching the ground. As soon as they call out "…the Celestial Worthy" altogether, they touch the head and face on the ground. Having heard the sound [of lithophone], they will rise together. Without being too slow or too hasty, they move appropriately.

> The five parts of the body accord with the law. They must not be restrained and restricted, nor insolent and unmannerly. Together, they rise and kneel down. Once completing prostration, all the participants must stand up and then kneel down, being lower in position. The rule does not allow one to sit at ease. The lithophone performer, until hearing the last word of calling "Celestial Worthy", must not strike the instrument. The reason why it is called ritual prostration is that awesome observances, including rising, prostrating, bowing, kneeling, etc., are peaceful, austere, and in accord with the law. I have extensively observed those with the utmost mind and found that they are all able to practice *libai*; and those who perform *libai* must have the utmost mind. If not by scrutinizing that the appearance is respectful, then how could one understand that the mind is sincere[20]. The means for repentance of sin and for praying for fortune all primarily depend on *libai*. (DZ 508 *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi*, 32.14a–b)
>
> 凡禮拜，始唱至心歸命東方，即至心注念東方。低身屈膝，呼"無極太上靈寶"，便靡靡而下，令兩手俱至地。呼"天尊"與聲齊，頭面著地。聽聲齊起，皆不遲疾，緩急得所。使五體合法，不得局促怠放。齊上齊下，每禮訖，合坐皆起立，然後坐如下方，例不得便坐。行磬，須聽唱"天尊"聲絶，然後打之。所以謂之禮拜者，謂起伏拜跪，威儀庠序合法故耳。徧觀至心者，必能禮拜。禮拜者，必有至心。君不察其形恭，何以達其心識。所以謝罪請福，皆以禮拜爲先也。

Because of its overall influence in Daoist communities, this classical form of *libai* drew attention from Chinese Buddhists. The official Zhen Luan 甄鸞 (fl. mid-6th century) had criticized the inconsistency of the direction in which *libai* commenced.[21] The importance of this passage, however, lies in that although the Chinese Buddhists long argued for the Buddhist provenance of the Celestial Worthy, they did not condemn *libai* performance as an illegal borrowing.

The passage represents a full picture of the *libai* performance in the medieval period. It was, first and foremost, practiced collectively. Despite entailing multiple steps, the actions of each performant must be uniform in terms of rhythm and amplitude. Mental focus on the Celestial Worthies and the action were equally employed here. Because of the associated mental and physical factors, *libai* was no longer, as Lu Xiujing once defined it, a mere cultivation of the body. By the same token, it integrated the performative and denotative meanings of the retreat.

According to the *Notes on Essential Rules, Observances, Precepts, and Statutes* 要修科儀戒律鈔, the *libai* was further classified into four categories by the Daoists in the early Tang: *qishou*, prostration 作禮, obedience to the law 遵科, and prostration in mind 心禮. Not only did *libai* constitute the most fundamental actions of Daoist rituals, but it also functioned as an indispensable training for Daoist apprenticeship (DZ 463, 9.4a–6b). This interpretation further acknowledged the diversity of *libai* and its importance in Daoist monastic communities.

5. Concluding Remarks

The examples examined in this paper provide us with a chance to rethink the Buddhist influence on Daoism. Scholars have generally agreed that in order to inquire into the topic, it is most important to ask how the Daoist agents actively appropriated the available material, intellect, and ritual resources. In other words, to borrow a recent reflection on Zürcher's theory, it is a matter of to "what uses authors put materials appropriated from other traditions, how they reframed and recontextualized them, and, where possible, why and to what effect they did so" (Campany 2012, p. 105). In the case of *libai*, we are able to identify both the Daoist agents and their activities.

First of all, the major Daoist traditions had introduced *libai* into their communities. Even for the Celestial Master Daoists, who had shown hardly any adoption of Buddhist elements, *libai* came to play an important role in their communal rituals.

Secondly, the ways in which the Daoists strategically employed *libai* were divergent. The early usage of *libai* may belong to what Zürcher proposed as "weak" borrowings of formal types. For instance, *libai* in both the *Divine Alchemy* followers and the early texts of Upper Clarity only refers to a solemn ritual for high-ranked deities without giving any detail of its performance. However, we do find "strong" borrowings in the Numinous Treasure retreats. Not only a coherent cluster of *libai* with its *pūjā* companions, burning incense being the most representative, stands at the core of the retreat, but other Buddhist notions, such as "taking refuge" and the transfer of merit, are also closely attached to *libai*. Within the Celestial Master Communities, not only were their appropriations of *libai* almost as early as those of the Numinous Treasure Daoists, but each community also used a particular strategy to appropriate the *libai*. The worshipers of the *Scripture of Divine Incantations of the Abyssal Caverns* followed the convention of the Numinous Treasure retreat, whereas the author of *the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* denied the legitimacy of the physical performance of *libai*.

Thirdly, the Daoists basically adopted the Buddhist functions of *libai*, i.e., respecting masters, communicating with deities, and worshiping texts and images. Like the Chinese Buddhists, they associated *libai* with incense burning or other ritual actions in the performance. However, Buddhist resources were not the mere inspiration from which the Daoists formulated and made sense of their own *libai* practice. For analytic convenience, we categorize two ritual contexts, i.e., the one in which *libai* functioned almost independently and the one in which *libai* was embedded in a larger ritual framework. The former includes the Celestial Master *libai* performed to the master, the Upper Clarity *libai* to the deities, etc., and the latter mostly takes place in the retreats.

In his correspondence on a request to perform *libai* to the West Queen Mother, Xu Mi promises that once fulfilling his duty in the capital, he would pay audience in person and prostrate to the deity (*chaobai* 朝拜) (DZ 1016, 4.2a). When meeting with their Libationers, as we have shown above, the Celestial Master Daoists, under the leadership of Kou Qianzhi, also used *libai* interchangeably with *chaobai*. The equivalence indicates that the Daoists understood the action and meaning of this *libai* in the same way as the secular prostration performed for the ruler. That is, its performance must entail *qishou*, and its efficacy brings direct, mostly face-to-face, communication with the master or deity.

The *libai* to the ten directions constantly underwent creative interpretation and reinterpretation by the author(s) of the Numinous Treasure scriptures and eminent Daoists. The Numinous Treasure Daoists performed the *libai* for various purposes, such as the transmission and recitation of the scriptures (DZ 532, 13b), making commitment, and repentance (DZ 330, 7b–14b; DZ 1411, 24b). While prostrations were the major actions throughout Lu Xiujing's transmission rite, the author did not make an effort to distinguish *libai* from other prostrations. Instead, he meticulously assigned repetitions to the different prostrations. The prostrations were further employed along with other traditional Chinese ritual actions. In Zhang Wanfu's prescription of *libai*, the action was coherently used along with other traditional Daoist ritual techniques.

In the dynamics of appropriations of *libai*, the Daoists sometimes emphasized the importance of action. However, they never ignored reminding the ritual performants that performance always had meaning within. Their rituals employing *libai* had no concern with the rigid dichotomy between meaning and action. Instead, they took pains to select the most proper action, including prostration, *pingzuo*, *changgui*, etc., under certain ritual circumstances. It was at this point that they strictly followed the rationale of indigenous Chinese ritual. The Daoist appropriation of *libai* is thus not limited to the mere sources of the two religions.

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Notes

1 Reviews of Buddho–Daoist interactions as an interdiscipinary field can be found in (Teiser and Verellen 2011; Hsieh 2012). As regards the latest review of Buddho–Daoist interactions, particularly from the perspective of ritual, see (Wu 2019).

2 As regards the use of verbal complements in the Eastern Han Buddhist translations, see (Zürcher 1977, pp. 183–85).

3 *Libai* also appears as an entry in a dictionary edited by Hirakawa. A number of corresponding Sanskrit words are given (Hirakawa 1997, p. 899), including *namaskāra*, √*vand*, *namaskṛta*, *pāda-vanda*, *pranāma*, *vandana*, *vandanā*, *vandanīya*, *vandita*, and *vandya*. However, the Chinese sources and contexts are totally missed there, which makes it less convincing than the work of Karashima.

4 We do not discuss the actions described in items three and four because they do not strictly fit the Chinese ritual context of *bai*, because one was never allowed to have but one knee onto the ground, and *bai* was always distinguished from the lesser act of bending the upper part of the body.

5 The abbreviation T stands for the number of works in the (Junjirō and Kaigyoku 1929–1934). This number is followed by the page and line number in the following form: page#(+register a, b, or c.).line#.

6 In addition to obeisance and salutation, the word *namas* also signifies the action of bowing, see (Apte 1890, p. 536).

7 Its corresponding account from the *Mahānidānasuttaṃ* (Digha Nikaya.15/(2)) reads "*Atha kho āyasmā ānando yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami, upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi*" (And the venerable Ānanda came to where the Exalted One was, bowed in salutation before him, and took a seat on one side). Mainly constituted by the prefix *abhi* (towards, on to) and the verb root √*vad* (to speak), the Pali gerund *abhivādetvā* literally means to speak out and denotes the sense of saluting, greeting, and honoring. However, the mere word does not clarify what action is taken by Ānanda towards his master here.

8 The interpretations of the greeting bowings in Confucian classics are too varied. Among the interpretations, including two recent modern studies (Zeng 2019; Tang and Liang 2022), here I choose to follow the theory provided by the eminent Qing scholar Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815), see the entry "shibai" 釋拜 in (Zhong 2008, pp. 135–44).

9 Zhi Qian's *Scripture of Grand Wisdom* 大明度經, another early prajñā sūtra, explains that the image of the Buddha is made only because one desires to have men bound with mental respect and self-admonitions, by which they can cultivate merit (T225.507a26).

10 The whole process is as follows: 1. invocation (*āvāhana*), 2. installation of the seat (*āsana*), 3. washing the feet (*pādya*), 4. welcome (*arghya*), 5. mouth-washing (*ācamanīya*), 6. bath (*snāna*), 7. clothing (*vastra*), 8. girding (*yajñopavīta*), 9. anointment (*gandha*, *anulepana*), 10. flowers (*puspa*), 11. incense (*dhūpa*), 12. light (*dīpa*), 13. feeding (*nivedana*, *naivedya*), 14. greeting (*namaskāra*), 15. circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*), and 16. gift (*dakṣiṇā*) or dismissal of deities (*visarjana*).

11 The comment is made by Strickmann for the salvation ritual in the Grand Sūtra of Consecration that consists of burning incense, scattering flowers, and prostrating to the buddhas of the ten directions (Strickmann 1990, p. 98).

12 The abbreviation DZ stands for the number of scriptures in the Daoist canon (*Daozang* 道藏 1988), as they are cited according to their place in (Schipper and Chen 1996). This abbreviation is followed by page number information in the form chapter.page (a = recto, b = verso).

13 In DZ 1372 the *Superior Scripture on the Emanations from the Labyrinth of Phoenix Terrace* 上清高上玉晨曲素上經, those who are transmitted with the scripture are required to visualize the Five Thearchs on auspicious days every month. Having bathed and purified the body, the practitioner successively recites the Hymns of Joy and Sorrow of the Most High Yuchen and performs *libai* before the Jade Perfected, i.e., the Five Thearchs. The passage, however, reads "pay respect in audience twice to the Jade Perfected" 再禮朝玉真 in two early excerpts of the scripture, DZ 1457 the *Hymns of Joy and Sorrow of the Most High Jade Constellation* 高上玉宸憂樂章 and DZ 608 the *Hymns of All the Perfected of the Supreme Purity* 上清諸真章頌.

14 I follow Stephen Bokenkamp to translate the term *yuan* in the Daoist context as commitment (Bokenkamp 2004, pp. 317–39).

15 It is worthy to note here that the prostration was ready to be used along with the action of slapping the cheeks for repentance. In the *Supreme Scripture with Essential Explanations* 真文要解上經, a method entitled repentance by retreat in eight nodal days is revealed by the Lord of Great Dao to expel one's transgressions in this life and save parents in past generations. Its major action of repentance, according to the instruction, appears in the ritual step of repenting towards the ten directions 懺謝十方. The practitioner first faces to the east, burns incense, expresses a long confession, prostrates, and slaps their cheeks (DZ 330, 7b–14b). Many of the transgressions listed here have divergent origins and no specific committer. The content of a transgression is highly related to the fixed items of sin in the Numinous Treasure scriptures. Elsewhere in the performance of the Retreat of Mud and

Ashes, the performants actually imitate the sufferings of others by displaying these kinds of "confession formulas" with self-degrading actions. In return, they attempt to offer themselves in place of the others and offer merit to them (Bokenkamp 2005, p. 44). The same logic can be applied here to understand the symbolic meaning of slapping in other Daoist retreat rituals. That is, merit is created through moral uprightness in suffering. As an instruction of the *Code of Covenant with the Perfected* 明真科explains, by the actions of bending, prostrating, kowtowing, and slapping, one pays submission and apology. Once sincerity and suffering are fathomed, then the spiritual resonance will spontaneously be responded to (DZ 1411, 24b).

16 (Bokenkamp 1983, pp. 468–71). In addition to the example of Zhi Qian examined by Bokenmkamp, the idea was introduced into Chinese Buddhism in other Eastern Han Buddhist translations and had multiple purposes in ritualized actions/rituals. According to the *Śrgālavādasūtra* 尸迦羅越六方禮經 translated by An Shigao, one prostrates to the ten directions as a means of taking refuge in buddhas (T16.251c23). Elsewhere, in his other translation, the Buddha teaches a method of repentance by which one prostrates and utters his penitence to the ten directions six times a day (T1492.1090a13–4). A similar performance is prescribed in the *Consecration Sūtra* 灌頂經 for the salvation ritual. By burning incense, scattering flowers, and prostrating to the buddhas of the ten directions, one, on behalf of the deceased, repents for all their transgressions to make the dead obtain deliverance (T1331.512c2-4).

17 R stands for the ritual steps reconstructed in Lü Pengzhi's synopsis (Lü 2018, pp. 35–37).

18 The *Protocol of the Ritual Pledges on Receiving the Registers* 受籙次第法信儀, a Tang Daoist ritual manual of transmission rites, records the content as well, in which it reads "paying respect" as "touching the head on the ground". DZ 1244, 13b.

19 With regard to how early Daoist monasticism is reflected in the Numinous Treasure scriptures, see (Bokenkamp 2011, pp. 95–124).

20 Read *shi* 識 for *cheng* 誠.

21 According to *the Scripture of the Ten Commandments and the Fourteen Rules for Self-Control*, one pays ritualized prostration to the north. Beginning with the north, one turns eastward and finishes paying ritualized prostration to the ten directions. Then, one visualizes the true form of the Most High. Your humble servant laughs and says, as the *Biography of the Master of Commencement of Culture* says: Laozi and Yin Xi wander in heaven. Yin Xi wanted to pay audience to the Most High. Laozi replies that "the Most High resides at the Mountain of Jade Capital in the Grand Veil Heaven. The mountain is extremely remote and far away. You can pay respect to its lofty towers from afar." Thus, they returned without having paid audience to the Most High. According to this description, the Mountain of Jade Capital in Mysterial Metropolis is the residence of the Most High. Since this is located above, then why do the Daoists not give priority to the upward direction but thoughtlessly prostrate to the north? In addition, "the Dao is born in the east, which is *yang*". Why, then, do they not begin with the east? "The Buddha is born in the west, which is *yin*", and the north also belongs to yin. Previously condemning this, the Daoists yet pay respect and go head to prostrate [to the north]! Moreover, the *Chapter of the Roots of Guilt* says, the Lord of the Most High touched his head on the ground in front of the Celestial Worthy of the Primordial Commencement in the Hall of Penetrating Yang, requesting the ten goodnesses and other rules. Since the commandments are spoken by the Celestial Worthy, how do the Daoists not pay respect to the Celestial Worthy but visualize paying audience to the Most High? (T2103.149c14–25).

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Works in the Taishō Buddhist Canon and Daoist Canon

T 1 *Chang A'han jing* 長阿含經
T 14 *Foshuo ren ben shengyu jing* 佛說人本欲生經
T 16 *Foshuo shijialuoyue liufang li jing* 佛說尸迦羅越六方禮經
T 26 *Zhong A'han jing* 中阿含經
T 87 *Foshuo zhai jing* 佛說齋經
T 128 *Xumoti nü jing* 須摩提女經
T 152 *Liudu ji jing* 六度集經
T 196 *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經
T 224 *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經
T 225 *Damingdu jing* 大明度經
T 262 *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經
T 492 *Foshuo A'nan wen shifojixiong jing* 佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經
T 1331 *Foshuo guanding qiwan erqian shenwang hu biqiu zhoujing* 佛說灌頂七萬二千神王護比丘呪經
T 1428 *Sifen lü* 四分律
T 1451 *Genben shuo yiqieyou bu pinaye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事
T 1492 *Foshuo shelifu huiguo jing* 佛說舍利弗悔過經
T 1509 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論
T 2059 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳
T 2125 *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸内法傳
DZ 9 *Taisheng yisheng haikong zhizang* jing 太上一乘海空智藏經
DZ 178 *Sandong zhongjie wen* 三洞眾戒文
DZ 334 *Taishang lingbao yuanyang miaojing* 太上靈寶元陽妙經
DZ 335 *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經

DZ 352 *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經
DZ 421 *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣
DZ 425 *Shangqing taiji yinzhu yujing baojue* 上清太極隱注玉經寶訣
DZ 445 *Dongxuan lingbao sanshi minghui xingzhuang juguan fangsuo wen* 洞玄靈寶三師名諱形狀居觀方所文
DZ 463 *Yaoxiu keyi jielü chao* 要修科儀戒律鈔
DZ 530 *Dongxuan lingbao yulu jianwen sanyuan weiyi ziran zhenjing* 洞玄靈寶玉籙簡文三元威儀自然真經
DZ 532 *Taijizhenren fu lingbao zhaijie weiyi zhujing yaojue* 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣
DZ 524 *Dongxuan lingbao zhai shuo guangzhu jie fa deng zhuyuan yi* 洞玄靈寶齋說光燭戒罰燈祝願儀
DZ 785 *Laojun yinsong jiejing* 老君音誦誡經
DZ 788 *Sandong fafu kejie wen* 三洞法服科戒文
DZ 790 *Nüqing guilü* 女青鬼律
DZ 791 *Zhengyi weiyi jing* 正一威儀經
DZ 885 *Huangdi jiuding shendan jing jue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣
DZ 1016 *Zhen'gao* 真誥
DZ 1125 *Dongxuan lingbao sanding fengdao kejie yingshi* 洞玄靈寶三洞奉道科戒營始
DZ 1138 *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要
DZ 1205 *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經
DZ 1352 *Dongzhen taishang taixiaolang shu* 洞真太上太霄琅書
DZ 1380 *Shangqing taishang huangsu shisishi fang jing* 上清太上黃素四十四方經
DZ 1411 *Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiuyou yugui mingzhenke* 洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉匱明真科

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