

Empresses, Religious Practice and the Imperial Image in Ming China: The Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang (1493)

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St Catherine's College

DPhil

Trinity 2010

The *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang* (1493) in the San Diego Museum of Art, a highlight at the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition in 2000, is an unusual object among surviving visual material from Ming dynasty China (1368 – 1644). At over twenty-seven metres long, the scroll contains meticulously painted images and a detailed inscription that records the Daoist ordination of Empress Zhang (1470 – 1541), consort of the Hongzhi emperor (r. 1488 – 1505) by the Orthodox Unity institution. The event it documents, which elevates the empress into the celestial realm, would be unknown to history if not for the fortuitous survival of this scroll. This dissertation is an in-depth study of the *Ordination Scroll* that also considers its implications for understanding the activities of empresses and their representations during the Ming dynasty.

The first three chapters of this dissertation closely examine the material, visual and textual aspects of the *Ordination Scroll*. Chapter One considers the unusual physical features and visual format of the scroll in order to situate it within Ming visual and material culture. Chapter Two is an iconographic study of the scroll that identifies the celestial beings depicted and explores the significance of their inclusion and groupings. Chapter Three studies the inscriptions in the scroll with particular attention to their connection to Daoist documents and practices. The remaining two chapters situate the scroll within the broader activities of Ming empresses. Chapter Four relates the event to imperial ordinations and the life of Empress Zhang, while the final chapter explores the scroll as a court painting and an example of the portrayal of Ming imperial women in religious guises. A complete translation of the main inscription in the scroll is provided in the appendix.

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The *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang* (1493) in the San Diego Museum of Art, a highlight at the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition in 2000, is an unusual object among surviving visual material from imperial China. At over twenty-seven metres long, the scroll contains meticulously painted images and a detailed inscription that records the Daoist ordination of Empress Zhang (1470 – 1541), consort of the Hongzhi emperor (r. 1488 – 1505) by the Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi) order. It is a rare material trace of an imperial ordination, revealing an aspect of the lives of Ming imperial women previously unknown to history. It is also the most elaborate example of a Daoist ordination document known and includes the portrayal of the empress as a priestess.

The reasons for studying the *Ordination Scroll* in this dissertation are, on the one hand, because there are many questions concerning the work's content and place in Chinese visual and material culture that remain unanswered. On the other hand, the scroll presents an opportunity to consider a number of marginalised aspects in Chinese art history and the history of the Ming dynasty: It contains meticulously painted figures and is part of Daoist visual and material culture, both of which are areas that are only beginning to receive more scholarly attention. In addition, it is an object that portrays and is focused upon a Ming empress. Ming imperial women are poorly studied compared to their European and Islamic counterparts due to their minor presence in official sources such as *Ming shi* (History of the Ming) and *Ming shilu* (Veritable Records of the Ming), and because of the assumption of their relative political weakness and cultivation. The *Ordination Scroll* offers a focal point for investigating alternative narratives about Ming imperial women.

The purpose of this dissertation is thus threefold: firstly, it aims to make sense of the content of the *Ordination Scroll*. Secondly, it demonstrates that the scroll is not an isolated creation by situating it within the visual culture and religious practices of the Ming dynasty. Thirdly, by focusing on the significance of the *Ordination Scroll* to Empress Zhang and representations of Ming consorts, it attempts to re-claim spaces for these women in Ming history and visual culture.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first three chapters focus on the material, visual and textual aspects of the *Ordination Scroll*. The remaining two chapters situate the scroll within Ming history and representations of Ming empresses. In order to establish the foundations for the discussion of the work and its broader implications, it is important to understand the information contained within the scroll itself. As a result, this dissertation devotes considerable effort to the study of both the images and text in the scroll and their connection to other surviving material.

Chapter One closely examines the material and visual features of the *Ordination Scroll*. It clarifies the physical construction of the scroll and identifies missing sections in its composition. The chapter studies the unusual features of the scroll, including the use of colour notations and the depiction of Empress Zhang on a separate piece of paper that was pasted on to the scroll surface. Given these peculiar elements, it is likely that the *Ordination Scroll* was one version of Empress Zhang's ordination document that may not have been presented to her. The remainder of the chapter then studies the overall visual format of the scroll by comparing it to those of other surviving imperial and religious images. It is found that the scroll evokes elements of imperial documents and documentary images and may be part of a wider production of scrolls containing images and texts that were produced for Daoist rituals during the Ming dynasty.

Chapter Two presents an iconographic study of the sixty-one figures that remain visible on the *Ordination Scroll*, including the image of Empress Zhang. This is necessary even though the figures have official titles written in gold next to them since many of them are not immediately recognisable. This chapter identifies all the celestial beings depicted and deciphers their grouping in the procession by referring to descriptions in Daoist texts and other images from the Ming dynasty. It also speculates on the figures that were once portrayed in the missing sections in the scroll. This chapter shows that the *Ordination Scroll* contains a mixture of well-known celestial beings with typical iconographic attributes as well as more obscure figures. The latter celestial beings appear to be connected to the female gender of Empress Zhang and contemporaneous events during the Hongzhi reign, which suggests that the scroll was personalised to an extent. Furthermore, iconographic study of the figures in the scroll reveals an emphasis on the pantheon of thunder rites and the Divine Empyrean, which is a sect of Daoism that developed from the Song dynasty. This corresponds to developments in the Orthodox Unity order as it appropriated other lineages of Daoism during the late imperial period.

After discussing the images in the *Ordination Scroll* in detail, Chapter Three turns to the inscriptions. Firstly, the chapter considers the meaning of the two large inscriptions and their location in the scroll. It then concentrates on the main inscription in the middle section of the scroll written by Zhang Xuanqing (d. 1509), the forty-seventh patriarch of the Orthodox Unity order. The first complete translation of this inscription is provided in the appendix. This chapter pays attention to elements in the language and structure of the text that connect it to other kinds of Daoist documents. Zhang Xuanqing's inscription is shown to be not purely invented but is composed within the framework of Daoist ritual documents. Furthermore, the chapter considers the classification of the *Ordination Scroll* as an "ordination certificate". It highlights the ambiguity in the category and the inappropriateness of the conventional definition of "ordination certificate" as a government-issued permit for understanding the scroll. Instead, by considering examples found in a Ming ritual compendium, the chapter shows that the scroll is a kind of certificate that is transmitted within the Orthodox Unity order. Such documents should be physically destroyed upon the death of their owner so that they can be used in the afterlife. This corroborates the argument presented in Chapter One that the *Ordination Scroll* was most likely one version of Empress Zhang's ordination document since the scroll presented to her would have been burnt or buried upon her death. Finally, the chapter studies the scriptures and registers listed in the main inscription that were transmitted to Empress Zhang. It is found that these texts belong to different corpuses and of different ranks, a fact that does not conform to the Daoist protocol of progressive ordinations. This indicates that, contrary to previous assumption, Empress Zhang was most likely not ordained as a ritual performer but as a lay devotee.

Chapter Four considers the ways that Empress Zhang's ordination may be situated in history, despite the absence of direct corroborating information about it. The chapter begins by locating the empress' ordination within the history of imperial ordinations, particularly the ordinations of imperial women. Precedents can be found in the lay ordinations undertaken by Song empresses and successive Ming emperors. However, these earlier examples appear to be connected to imperial investiture and issues of political legitimacy, while there is no evidence from Empress Zhang's early career at court to suggest that she was interested in rulership at the time the *Ordination Scroll* was produced. Instead, this chapter considers the *Ordination Scroll* as a marker of the rise of Empress Zhang and her family in terms of dynamics in the imperial family hierarchy. In particular, the focus on Empress Zhang in the *Ordination Scroll* is contrasted to an act of temple patronage by the empress together with the emperor and their young son in the same year. Lastly, this chapter considers the involvement of the emperor and the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing in Empress Zhang's ordination by

focusing on government policies towards ordinations in the early part of the Hongzhi reign.

In the fifth and final chapter, the *Ordination Scroll* is studied as an imperial image firstly as a work produced by court painters and secondly as a portrayal of a Ming empress. The images on the scroll bear obvious similarities to examples of court-commissioned religious images. However, this chapter questions the assumption that the scroll is a “court painting” by highlighting the ways that boundaries blurred between court-employed painters of religious images and professional painters working in the marketplace. The second half of the chapter examines more closely the portrayal of Empress Zhang in the *Ordination Scroll*. This image of the empress is very different to the few surviving examples of portraits of Ming empresses in a formal commemorative mode. Instead, it may be connected to other representations of imperial figures in a religious guise. Furthermore, this chapter attempts to understand the image of Empress Zhang in relation to the concealed and non-discursive nature of Ming imperial portraiture. Within this discussion, the *Ordination Scroll* emerges as an early surviving example of religious representations of imperial women, the possibilities for which expanded in the late Ming period with the deification of Empress Dowager Li (1546 – 1614) and Liu (d. 1615), mothers of the Wanli (r. 1573 – 1619) and Chongzhen (1627 – 1644) emperors respectively.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship as the first in-depth study of the *Ordination Scroll*. It inserts the scroll within Ming visual and material culture and highlights its significance as a Daoist document, a historical record and a representation of an empress. By focusing on these aspects, this dissertation draws attention to complications within established categories, including the definition of ordination certificates and the assumptions underlying “court painting”. It further challenges expectations concerning the isolation and invisibility of Ming imperial women. It shows that through religious practice and acts of patronage, these women were involved in self-representation and cultural production within the Ming court and beyond it. Through these discussions, this dissertation participates in the emerging re-evaluation of the place of empresses within Ming history.

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Introduction

In late 2000 and early 2001, the exhibition *Taoism and the Arts of China* was held at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.¹ This was the first major exhibition on the contributions of Daoism to the development of visual and material culture in China.² Among the 151 objects on display was an enormous horizontal scroll measuring over twenty-seven metres long and around half a metre in height (fig. 1). The scroll is filled with text and images of celestial beings painted with fine outlines and bright colours. Apart from being physically and visually impressive, the work is remarkable as it records the ordination of a Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644) empress by a Daoist patriarch, revealing a side of Ming imperial women otherwise unknown to history.³

Titled the *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang* at the exhibition, the scroll belongs to the San Diego Museum of Art collection. It consists of a long inscription in the middle section framed on both ends by two further inscriptions in large characters and processions of celestial beings facing the right hand side. The scroll is dated by inscription to 1493, indicating that the imperial recipient of the ordination is Empress Zhang 張 (1470 – 1541), wife of the Hongzhi 弘治 emperor, Zhu Youtang 朱祐樑 (r. 1488 – 1505). She appears in the guise of a Daoist priestess near the right end of the scroll (fig. 2). In front of her is an image of the Daoist master Zhang Xuanqing 張玄慶 (d. 1509) who was the forty-seventh patriarch of the Zhengyi 正一 (Orthodox Unity) order and the overseer of Empress Zhang's ordination (fig. 3).

¹ Exact dates of the exhibitions are 4 November 2000 to 7 January 2001 and 21 February to 13 May 2001 respectively.

² Previously there had been smaller scale exhibitions on the theme, such as *Realms of the Immortal: Daoism in the Arts of China* at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1988, also organised by Stephen Little.

³ See entry on the scroll in Stephen Little, ed., *Taoism and the Arts of China (TAC)* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 208-13, no. 57.

The *Ordination Scroll* was donated to the then Fine Arts Society of San Diego in 1961 by the couple John and Helen B. Jeffers who lived in La Jolla.⁴ Prior to this, the scroll was in the hands of the Californian dealer in Chinese and Japanese art objects, John C. Bentz, who showed the work to John Lodge, curator at the Freer Gallery of Art, in early 1933.⁵ From 1901, Bentz owned a shop in Pasadena designed by Henry Greene who, together with his brother Charles, was an important architect of the American Arts and Crafts Movement.⁶ John Bentz was known to have travelled with his wife Louise directly to China and Japan to source objects.⁷ It may have been on one of these trips that he came to acquire the scroll. The Ming dating of the *Ordination Scroll* will be verified throughout the dissertation when it is compared and linked to a range of texts and images from the period.

The choice to study the *Ordination Scroll* stems from an interest in marginalised categories in Chinese art history that are embodied in the work. For a long time, images like those in the *Ordination Scroll* had no place within art historical discourse. Meticulously painted figures do not fit into the traditional view of Chinese painting defined by performative, self-referential brushwork in monochrome ink.⁸ In *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (1997), Craig Clunas explains that this

⁴ According to records of the San Diego Museum of Art, Helen Jeffers made several other gifts of Chinese and Japanese objects to the Society, mostly textiles. She was later re-married to Harold Rhody Witherbee.

⁵ Letter in the San Diego museum records dated 17 January 1933.

⁶ John Bentz is credited as one of sources who introduced the Greene brothers to oriental art. His two brothers Nathan and Philip were also dealers in oriental art, who owned shops in Santa Barbara and San Francisco. See Randell L. Makinson, *Greene and Greene: Architecture as a Fine Art* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1977), 55; Edward Bosley, *Greene and Greene* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 2000), 42, 86, 154.

⁷ This is mentioned in letters in the Viles-Hosmer Family Papers, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia, dated April 1909 (f. 176), 19 January 1912 (f. 183) and 4 September 1927 (f. 98). In a letter dated 7 January 1915, Bentz also mentions that he has a “Chinese room” (f. 198).

⁸ For instance, Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th – 14th Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; London: Yale University Press, 1992).

essentialist view of Chinese painting, first theorised by Chinese writers, was adopted by Western scholars who situated it against European painting defined by mimesis.⁹ The binary framework of China versus the West dominated the discourse of Chinese art history until the 1980s. Since then, the field has expanded to include the study of a much larger body of material. This development has been facilitated by the emergence of the visual culture paradigm, which has helped to break down boundaries between canonical art forms and visual and material culture.

The *Ordination Scroll* is also a record of Daoism (or Taoism), a religion indigenous to China. Daoist visual and material culture is a new area of study that only emerged in the past decade, thanks to the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition.¹⁰ The reason for the belated scholarly interest in this area lies partly in the uncertainty over how to define Daoism itself. A common misconception of Daoism is that it is essentially a philosophy based upon texts included in *Daode jing* 道德經 (Scripture of the Dao and Its Virtue) and the stories of *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Book of Master Zhuang) from the Warring States period (475 BC – 221 BC). This was the view of some early Chinese art historians who used an amorphous notion of the Dao to argue for the mystical and spiritual qualities of Chinese painting.¹¹ The backlash against this can be summed up by a statement from James Cahill, “less *Tao*, please, more painting”.¹² While the study of philosophical Daoism has continued in scholarship, there is now greater

⁹ Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visibility in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 9-24.

¹⁰ Since the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition, there have been further exhibitions on the theme in Hong Kong, Paris and cities in Japan. These are *Shuzhai yu daochang: Daojiao wenwu* 書齋與道場 : 道教文物 (The Studio and the Altar: Daoist Art in China) at the Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2008; *Dōkyō no bijutsu* 道教の美術 (Taoism Art) at Mitsui Kinen Bijutsukan, Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan, Nagasaki Rekishi Bunkan Hakubutsukan from 2009 to 2010; *La Voie du Tao: Un Autre Chemin de l'Être* at Galeries Nationales, Grand Palais, Paris in 2010.

¹¹ For instance, Maimai Sze, *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting* (New York: Pantheon, 1956).

¹² James Cahill, review of *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting*, by Maimai Sze, *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959), 241.

recognition of Daoism as an on-going tradition of doctrines and diverse practices.

These doctrines and practices are broadly unified by the belief that they originated from the Dao 道 (the Way), a multifaceted concept that refers to “spiritual realities”.¹³

Although Daoism drew upon early texts, it took form as an organised religion from the second century onwards, attaining a sense of unity by the fifth century with the compilation of the first Daoist Canon and the beginnings of imperial support.¹⁴

Progress in the field of Daoist studies has now made it possible to discuss the relationship of visual and material culture to the practices of Daoism with greater confidence. Research in this area has been much facilitated by the publication of important reference works and materials made available online.¹⁵ It is now much easier to navigate the Ming Daoist Canon, which is the main body of text and some images for Daoist studies, consisting of *Zhengtong Daozang* 正統道藏 (Daoist Canon of the Zhengtong reign) (1444 – 1445) and *Xu Daozang* 續道藏 (Supplement to the Daoist Canon) (1607). There is also a growing body of literature that focuses on Daoist visual culture.¹⁶ In particular, Susan Huang’s 2002 dissertation on a Southern

¹³ Fabrizio Pregadio, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Taoism (EOT)* (London: Routledge, 2008), xiv-xv; also 304-309 for an explanation of the complex meanings of the Dao.

¹⁴ *EOT*, 5-10. A useful introduction to the formation of Daoism remains Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). Also see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). On the history of the Daoist Canon, see Chen Guofu 陳國符, *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (Studies on the origins and development of the Daoist Canon) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963).

¹⁵ In particular, Hu Fuchen 胡孚琛, ed., *Zhonghua Daojiao da cidian* 中華道教大辭典 (Dictionary of Chinese Daoism) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995); Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A History Companion to the Daozang* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004); *EOT*. Useful online sources include the Daoist studies website (www.daoiststudies.org) and *Daojiao xueshu zixun wangzhan* 道教學術資訊網站 (<http://www.ctcwri.idv.tw/godking.htm>).

¹⁶ PhD dissertations in the West include Arthur Pontynen, “The Early Development of Taoist Art” (University of Iowa, 1983); Anning Jing, “Yongle Palace: The Transformation of the Daoist Pantheon during the Yuan Dynasty, 1260 – 1368” (Princeton University, 1994); Liu Yang, “Manifestation of the Dao: A Study in Daoist Art from the Northern Dynasties to the Tang (5th – 9th Centuries)” (School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1997); Shih-shan Susan Huang, “The Triptych of Daoist Deities of Heaven, Earth and Water and the Making of a Visual Culture in the Southern Song Period (1127 – 1279)” (Yale University, 2002); Chuiki Wan, Maggie, “Ceramics in Context: Interpreting Subject Matters of Official Porcelain in the Jiajing Court (1522 – 1566)” (University of Oxford, 2006); Noelle

Song triptych of the Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, provides a precedent for this dissertation as an in-depth study of one particular work within a broader scope.

However, there are still many areas that await further study in Daoism. Particularly pertinent to the *Ordination Scroll* is the development of Daoist ordinations. The term “ordination” is used here to broadly denote initiation rituals that involve the ceremonial transmission of empowering texts and / or objects. The most detailed study on this topic is Charles Benn’s research into the ordination of two Tang dynasty (618 – 907) princesses in 711.¹⁷ Vincent Goossaert has also conducted research on the training and ordination of clerics in the late Qing and Republican periods.¹⁸ Yet, the development of ordination rituals throughout much of imperial China in their various forms (for monastic clergy, ritual masters, the laity and for members of different social groups in different regions), as well as the objects and documents used, are not well understood. As Ding Huang explains, reasons for this include the

Guifrida, “Representing the Daoist God Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior, in Late Imperial China” (University of Kansas, 2008); Lennert Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court: A Study on the Iconopraxis of Daoist Temple Painting” (Leiden University, 2008). Some publications related to Daoist visual culture are: Lothar Ledderose, “Some Daoist Elements in the Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties,” *T’oung Pao* 70 (1984), 246-278; Lin Shengzhi 林聖智, “Mingdai daojiao tuxiangxue yanjiu: Yi ‘Xuantian ruiying tu’ wei li 明代道教圖像學研究: 以‘玄天瑞應圖’為例” (Research on Ming dynasty Daoist iconography: Using ‘Picture of Auspicious Responses from the Dark Heaven’ as an example), *Meishu shi yanjiu jikan* 美術研究集刊 (Taida Journal of Art History) 6 (1999), 133-191; Wang Yucheng 王育成, *Mingdai caihui Quanzhen zongzu tu yanjiu* 明代彩繪全真宗祖圖研究 (Research on Ming Dynasty Coloured Images of the Lineage of the Complete Perfection Order) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003); Hu Wenhe 胡文和, *Zhongguo daojiao shike yishu shi* 中國道教石刻藝術史 (History of the Art of Daoist Stone Carvings in China) (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004); Liu Xun, “Visualizing Perfection: Daoist Paintings of Our Lady, Court Patronage, and Elite Female Piety in the Late Qing,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 64, no.1 (June 2004), 57-115; Franciscus Verellen, “Dynamic Design: Ritual and Contemplative Graphics in Taoist Scriptures,” in *Daoism in History: Essays in Honour of Liu T’sun-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (London: Routledge, 2006), 159-186. Books by Lennert Gesterkamp and Susan Huang on Daoist temple painting and Daoist visual culture respectively are forthcoming.

¹⁷ Charles Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission: A Taoist Ordination Rite of A.D. 711* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Vincent Goossaert, “The Quanzhen Clergy, 1700 – 1950,” in *Religion and Chinese Society: The Transformation of a Field*, ed. John Lagerway (Paris: Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2004), 699-771, esp 719-722; *The Taoists of Peking, 1800 – 1949: A Social History of Urban Clerics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 97-107.

fragmentary nature of surviving ordination records and uncertainty regarding their use in ritual.¹⁹ Furthermore, ordinations and documents transmitted are kept secret between the ordinand and the masters involved in the ceremony, and are inaccessible to outsiders. Ding Huang refers to records on ordinations from the late imperial and modern periods that lie outside of the Daoist Canon.²⁰ The *Ordination Scroll* can be considered an important addition to this body of material. It is a rare trace of an imperial female ordination and evidence of the actual practice of ordinations during the Ming dynasty. This dissertation will take seriously the Daoist content of the *Ordination Scroll* by situating it within records of religious practices from that period.

Finally, the *Ordination Scroll* is relevant to the study of women in the early modern world. Since the 1970s when Joan Kelly-Gadol posed the question “Did women have a Renaissance?”, the study of women in European history has become a popular and legitimate area of enquiry.²¹ For instance, aristocratic women such as Isabella d’Este (1474 – 1539) and Maria de’Medici (1573 – 1642) have been highlighted for their role as patrons of art.²² In the past decade, there has also been important work on royal women in Islamic societies.²³ The study of Ming imperial women in this

¹⁹ Ding Huang 丁煌, “‘Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu’ chuyan ‘正一大黃預修延壽經籙’初研” (Initial Study into ‘Scripture and Register that Prolongs Longevity for Preparatory Cultivation of Great Yellow of Orthodox Unity’), *Haixia liang’an daojiao wenhua xueshu yantaohui lunwen* 海峽兩岸道教文化學術研討會論文 (Papers from the Cross-Strait Symposium on Daoist Culture) 2 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1995), 797.

²⁰ Ding, “‘Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu’ chuyan” continues in *Daojiao xue tansuo* 道教學探索 (Investigation into the Study of Daoism) 9 (1995), 199-380 and 10 (1997), 342-362.

²¹ Joan Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women have a Renaissance?,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. R. Bridenthall and C. Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 137-164. Also see Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987), 326-357; Evelyn Welch, “Engendering Italian Renaissance Art – A Bibliographic Review,” *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 68 (2000), 201-216.

²² For instance, Cynthia Lawrence, ed., *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors and Connoisseurs* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Geraldine Johnson, “Pictures Fit for a Queen: Peter Paul Rubens and the Marie de’Medici Cycle,” *Art History* 16 (1993), 447-469.

²³ D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

equivalent timeframe, however, lags far behind. The most in-depth study of the topic remains Ellen Soullière's 1987 dissertation.²⁴ Empress Dowager Li 李 (1546 – 1614), the Wanli 萬曆 emperor's (r. 1573 – 1619) mother, has received some attention from historians as a patron of Buddhist temples and monasteries.²⁵ However, there is as yet little detailed study on Ming empresses comparable to the research on powerful imperial women in other dynasties, notably the Song.²⁶

Research into Ming empresses and lower-ranked consorts has to contend with historical judgement on the majority of them as politically weak and more isolated than their counterparts from previous dynasties.²⁷ Hsieh Bao Hua describes the women who inhabited the inner court of the imperial palace as a “haram”, thereby

²⁴ Ellen Soullière, “Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty: 1368 – 1644” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1987).

²⁵ Yan Chongnian 閻崇年, “Cisheng taihou yu Yong'an shou ta 慈聖太后與永安壽塔” (Empress Dowager Cisheng and the Pagoda of Eternal Peace and Longevity), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 1 (1995), 3-13; Chen Yunü 陳玉女, “Ming Wanli shiqi Cisheng huangtailou de chongfo – jianlun fo dao liang shili de duizhi 明萬曆時期慈聖皇太后的崇佛 – 兼論佛道兩勢力的對峙” (Empress Dowager Cisheng's Worship of Buddhism during the Ming Wanli Period – With Discussions on the Conflict Between the Two Powers of Buddhism and Daoism), *Guoli chengong daxue lishi xuebao* 國立成功大學歷史學報 (Cheng Kung Journal of Historical Studies), no. 23 (1997), 195-245; Yan Chongnian 閻崇年, “Cishou ta zhi renwen jiazhi 慈壽寺塔之人文價值” (The Humanistic Value of the Temple of Compassion and Longevity Pagoda), *Beijing shehui kexue* 北京社會科學 (Beijing Social Science), no. 4 (1997), 40-6.

²⁶ For instance, relevant art historical scholarship includes: Shen Fu, trans. and adapted by Marsha Weidner, “Princess Sengge Regi: Collector of Painting and Calligraphy,” in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 55-80; Hui-shu Lee, “The Domain of Empress Yang (1162 – 1233), Art, Gender and Politics at the Southern Song Court” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1997); Patricia E. Karetzky, “Wu Zetian and Buddhist Art of the Tang Dynasty,” *T'ang Studies*, nos. 20-21 (2002-2003), 113-150; Liu Heping, “Empress Liu's Icon of Maitreya: Portraiture and Privacy at the Early Song Court,” *Artibus Asiae* 63, no. 2 (2003), 129-90; Qiang Ning, “Gender Politics in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Art: Images of Empress Wu at Longmen and Dunhuang,” *Oriental Art* 49, no. 2 (2003), 28-39; Tsang Ka Bo, “In Her Majesty's Service: Women Painters in China at the Court of the Empress Dowager Cixi,” in *Local / Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 35-57. Hui-shu Lee's book, *Empress, Art, and Agency* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010) was not yet available when this dissertation was written. One exception for the Ming is Marsha Weidner, “Images of the Nine-Lotus Bodhisattva and the Wanli Empress Dowager” (in Korean), *Chungguksa yongu* (The Journal of Chinese Historical Researches), no. 35 (April 2005), 245-278.

²⁷ Zhao Xiuli 趙秀麗, “Mingdai huanghou zhuangtai yu houquan de shiwei 明代皇后生存狀態與后權的式微” (The State of Existence of Ming Empresses and Decline in the Power of Empresses), *Wuhan daxue xuebao* 武漢大學學報 (Wuhan University Journal), no. 3 (2008), 363-7.

conjuring a vision of their sequestered lives defined by the “pleasure principle”.²⁸

Official texts, such as *Ming shilu* 明實錄 (Veritable Records of the Ming), compiled throughout the dynasty, and *Ming shi* 明史 (History of the Ming), completed in 1736, provide information on women in relation to events of relevance to the maintenance of the imperial order, such as the births of children, birthdays, funerals and their occasional involvement in affairs of state.²⁹ While this is useful for seeing women as part of the imperial design, little of their personal interests and activities are recorded in these texts. The same could be said of men, but, unlike men, the voices of imperial women are largely absent from unofficial writings as well. Indeed, historical opinion of Ming empresses has been coloured by biases in texts such as *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Unofficial gleanings from the Wanli Era) (1619) by Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578 – 1642). As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Shen presents a particularly negative view of Empress Zhang that has been unquestioningly adopted as fact in later scholarship.

The *Ordination Scroll* poses a challenge to surviving textual sources on Ming empresses since the ordination of Empress Zhang is not mentioned in them. The scroll also portrays the empress with an identity that is not part of her formal image. It draws attention to histories that lie outside of conventional narratives of the Ming and presents an opportunity to reconsider existing information on empresses from the period. Furthermore, the *Ordination Scroll* is an example of alternative records on the activities of Ming imperial women, which include other religious paintings and woodblock printed scriptures known to have been commissioned by consorts and

²⁸ Hsieh Bao Hua, “Empress’ Grove: Ritual and Life in the Ming Palace,” *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History*, no. 11 (Dec 2003), 99-187. On the meanings of “haram”, see Lal, *Domesticity and Power*.

²⁹ *Ming shilu* 明實錄 (Veritable Records of the Ming) (repr. Nangang: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1962-1966); Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al, *Ming shi* 明史 (History of the Ming) (MS) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974).

princesses.³⁰ A breakthrough in the past decade has been the identification of temple stele inscriptions as a rich source of information on the imperial family and its networks. Susan Naquin's extensive study of this material in Beijing reveals the "palpable impact" that Ming imperial women had on the capital through their contributions to the construction, restoration and maintenance of temples.³¹ Using similar sources, He Xiaorong also acknowledges the patronage by Ming empresses of Buddhist temples in Beijing.³² Information from stele records has helped to change the way that Ming empresses are viewed. Through the *Ordination Scroll*, this dissertation participates in the re-evaluation of the role of Ming empresses in cultural production at the imperial palace and beyond.

The purpose of this dissertation is threefold: firstly, it aims to make sense of the material, visual and textual elements of the *Ordination Scroll*. Secondly, it demonstrates that the scroll is not an isolated creation by situating it within the visual culture and religious practices of the Ming dynasty. Thirdly, by focusing on the significance of the *Ordination Scroll* to Empress Zhang and representations of Ming consorts, it attempts to re-claim spaces for these women in Ming history and visual culture.

³⁰ Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良, "Mingdai huangdi, guifei, gongzhu yinshi de ji ben fojing 明代皇帝貴妃公主印施的幾本佛經" (Several Buddhist sutras printed for donation by Ming emperors, consorts and princesses), *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics), no. 8 (1987), 8-11. Apart from examples given by Barnhart, also see Marsha Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850-1850* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 60-62. A painting of Marshal Wang dated 1542 commissioned by an imperial concubine is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. See *TAC*, no. 88.

³¹ Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400 – 1900* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2000), esp. 153-161, quote from 154.

³² He Xiaorong 何孝榮, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan xiujian yanjiu* 明代北京佛教寺院修建研究 (Research on the Restoration and Building of Temples and Monasteries in Beijing during the Ming Dynasty), vol. 1 and 2 (Tianjin shi: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 2007).

Literature Review

The *Ordination Scroll* entered the San Diego Museum of Art collection in 1961 where it remained unstudied for several decades. It was first mentioned by Richard Barnhart in *Painters of the Great Ming* (1993).³³ At the time there was still no reproduction of the work and Barnhart may not have had a chance to study the work closely, so there was some incorrect information in his writing. He states that the scroll is a Buddhist painting produced for an empress dowager dated 1492, when in fact it is a painting of Daoist deities for an empress dated to 1493. Nevertheless, it is significant that Barnhart includes the scroll within his wider project of rehabilitating paintings of the Ming court in the history of art. He refers to the scroll as an example that imperial women also commissioned paintings from court-appointed artists who may have also worked for temples and monasteries in the capital. Although he does not elaborate on this point, it directs attention towards the role of Ming imperial women as patrons and towards the organisation of painters in the court system, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

In 1999, the scroll was reproduced for the first time in a catalogue published by the San Diego Museum of Art on Chinese art objects in its collection.³⁴ A detail of the scroll was also used for the cover of the catalogue (fig. 4). Written by the Museum's retired Curator of Far Eastern Art, Sung Yu, the catalogue entry was the first focused discussion on the work, referred to as "Empress Chang Blessed by Taoist Deities". Sung Yu states that the scroll was "commissioned to depict the empress's conversion

³³ Richard Barnhart et al, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), 119.

³⁴ Sung Yu, *Selections from the Chinese Collection: The San Diego Museum of Art* (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art, 1999), 136-9.

to Taoist beliefs” and that a six-month long ritual took place at the Forbidden City.³⁵

Only a few of the more well known deities were identified. Sung Yu concludes that the scroll was painted by anonymous court painters.

The scroll was made known to a wider audience in 2000 when it was exhibited at the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition in Chicago. It also appeared on the cover of the exhibition catalogue, which highlighted its significance (fig. 5). The exhibition catalogue contains a clear, fold-out reproduction of the work, while Stephen Little’s entry provides a more in-depth study of the scroll, including its Daoist content.³⁶ The scroll was given the title “Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang”, which I have borrowed in this dissertation. Little describes some of the unusual material features of the work and more of the celestial beings are identified. Significantly, Little provides a summary of the main inscription in the middle of the scroll. He also gives biographical information on Empress Zhang and Zhang Xuanqing. Little’s entry offers a solid foundation for further research on the scroll. In particular, two points that he raised about the scroll will be looked at in greater detail in this dissertation: Firstly, the empress was ordained as a “Taoist priestess”; secondly, the scroll is her “ordination certificate”. It is also notable that Little does not mention court painters in the entry, leaving the production of the scroll ambiguous.

Around the time of the 2000 exhibition, Stephen Little also mentions the scroll in an article on “Daoist Art”, in which he adds that the scroll was presented by Zhang Xuanqing to the empress on the occasion of her ordination ceremony that lasted for six months.³⁷ Shawn Eichman, another organiser of the exhibition, published a paper

³⁵ Yu, *Selections from the Chinese Collection*, 137.

³⁶ *TAC*, 208-13, no. 57.

³⁷ Stephen Little, “Daoist Art,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 736-7.

about Daoist images in which he notes the visual format of the scroll.³⁸ By comparing it to other representations of deities in procession, he suggests that the procession was portrayed in a format that was “befitting an official imperial document”.³⁹ This point that links the visual elements of the scroll to imperial documents will be further developed in Chapter One. Eichman also makes an interesting speculation regarding the missing opening section of the scroll, which I will refer to in Chapter Two.

Subsequent to the 2000 exhibition, the San Diego Museum of Art published an updated catalogue of its whole collection. This includes a revised entry on the scroll that is based upon Stephen Little’s work.⁴⁰ The scroll in this publication is titled “The Ordination of Empress Zhang”. Scholars of Daoism have also mentioned the work as evidence of historical practice. Richard Wang, for instance, cites the scroll as an example of imperial ordinations in the Ming.⁴¹ He repeats information from Little, including the assumption that Empress Zhang was ordained as a Daoist priestess. Livia Kohn connects Empress Zhang’s ordination to the well-studied Daoist ordinations of two Tang dynasty princesses. She sees the scroll as evidence that splendid ordination ceremonies were performed for imperial relatives in later dynasties, although the inscription does not actually describe the ritual performed.⁴²

Another focused discussion on the scroll was presented by Lydia Thompson for a panel at the Association for Asian Studies conference in 2002.⁴³ Thompson’s paper is

³⁸ Shawn Eichman, “The Art of Taoist Scriptures,” *Orientalism*, no. 10 (Dec 2000), 42-3.

³⁹ Eichman, “The Art of Taoist Scriptures,” 42.

⁴⁰ Polly Cone, ed., *San Diego Museum of Art: Selected Works* (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art, 2003), 44-5.

⁴¹ Richard Wang, “Ming Princes and Daoist Ritual,” *T’oung Pao* 95 (2009), 75.

⁴² Livia Kohn, “Medieval Daoist Ordination: Origins, Structure, and Practice,” *Acta Orientalia* 56 (2003), 394.

⁴³ Lydia Thompson, “The Empress’ New Clothes: A Daoist Ordination Scroll and the Projection of Female Authority in the Ming Dynasty,” unpublished paper. I would like to thank Dr Thompson for

of interest as it presents a specific argument regarding the function of the scroll. She sees the scroll as a projection of Empress Zhang's authority and evidence of her "political maneuverings", comparable to the use of Buddhism by Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 692 – 705), the only female emperor in Chinese history, to legitimise her rule. According to Thompson, the scroll and the empress' ordination are public events that implicitly challenge the male dominated imperial power structure. The issue of whether Empress Zhang's ordination is concerned with rulership is addressed in Chapter Three.

More recently, Craig Clunas mentions the scroll in *Empire of Great Brightness* (2007) using a different perspective: He situates it within a discussion of Ming dynasty "cultures of direction and movement", observing that the deities and the empress in the scroll are depicted as moving rather than static beings.⁴⁴ From this, he notes that Ming empresses in pictorial form "enjoyed privileges of movement that transcended their gender as well as their other bodily limits".⁴⁵ Clunas' use of a different way to situate the scroll in Ming visual and material culture particularly informs my discussion of imperial portraiture in Chapter Five.

While there has been more scholarly interest in the scroll since the 2000 exhibition, there are still many basic questions concerning it that have not been fully investigated.⁴⁶ All the deities and the texts have not previously been identified. The

making this paper available online. The paper has since been removed from the site: blog.thompsonandmartinez.com/

⁴⁴ Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368 – 1644* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 69-70.

⁴⁵ Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness*, 70.

⁴⁶ I am only aware of one brief mention of the *Ordination Scroll* in Chinese scholarship as an example of court painting. See Peng Yuxin 彭喻歆, "Beijing fangke banhua zhi qipa – Ming Hongzhi 'Xinkan dazi kuiben quanxiang canzeng qimiao zhushi Xixiang ji 北京坊刻版畫之奇葩 – 明弘治'新刊大字魁本全相參增奇妙註釋西廂記'版畫研究" (An Outstanding Beijing Workshop Print – Research into

function of the scroll and its significance in the Ming context remains unclear. Thus, it has been necessary to devote a considerable part of this dissertation to address these issues in detail.

Overview of Chapters

There are five chapters in total in this dissertation. The first three chapters are a detailed study of the work itself, its characteristics and content. These initial chapters form the basis for the remaining two chapters, which situates the scroll within broader contexts.

Chapter One examines closely the material and visual features of the *Ordination Scroll*. It clarifies the physical construction of the scroll and identifies missing sections in the work. Unusual features in the scroll, including the depiction of Empress Zhang on a separate piece of paper, will be examined and possible explanations for them will be offered. The chapter also identifies the distinctive visual features of the scroll without going into the identity of the deities or the meaning of the inscription. These features will be compared to those of other surviving imperial and religious images in order to connect the work to a broader field of visual and material culture.

Chapter Two examines the content and representation of the images in the *Ordination Scroll*. There are sixty-one figures depicted in the scroll, including the empress. Although their official titles are written in gold next to them, many are not

the Ming Hongzhi 'Originally Annotated West Chamber' Prints) (MA diss., National Taiwan Normal University, 2009), 107.

immediately recognisable. This chapter conducts an in-depth iconographic study into these deities based upon Ming texts and images. In addition to determining their identities, the structure of the processions will also be investigated. This detailed discussion is necessary to understand the significance of the inclusion and representation of particular deities. Does the *Ordination Scroll* present a Daoist pantheon made up of well-known deities with recognisable iconographic attributes? Or are there individualised elements and relatively obscure deities that are not widely venerated? If so, can they be explained in relation to Empress Zhang or contemporaneous events during the Hongzhi reign? This chapter will also consider the missing sections in the *Ordination Scroll* and the possible figures once depicted in them.

After discussing the images in detail, Chapter Three turns to the inscriptions in the *Ordination Scroll*. Firstly, it will consider the content of the two inscriptions with large characters, the way that they are written and their location in the scroll. In particular, the opening inscription is depicted in cloud-like forms and provides the formal title of the scroll. Does this title offer any information concerning the function of the work? The chapter then concentrates on the main inscription composed by Zhang Xuanqing, a full translation of which is given in the appendix. Attention will be paid to elements of the language and structure in the text that connect it to other Daoist documents. In particular, the issue of whether the scroll is an “ordination certificate” will be explored. This chapter clarifies the kind of certifying documents that the *Ordination Scroll* is related to, which has implications for the function of the scroll according to Daoist ritual protocol. Finally, the scriptures and registers that are listed in the main inscription will be studied separately. The chapter identifies

references to them in surviving Ming textual sources and discusses the implications of the particular grouping of texts for Empress Zhang's ordination.

Chapter Four considers the ways that the ordination of Empress Zhang may be situated in history. Firstly, the chapter explores other examples of ordinations in the Ming dynasty and in earlier periods for both men and women of the imperial household. While the reasons for ordination varied, the ordination of rulers is closely connected to the ritual of imperial investiture and political legitimacy. Could Empress Zhang's ordination have also carried political significance? To explore this issue further, this chapter situates the event in the biography of Empress Zhang. Focusing not only on official textual sources on the empress' life, but also miscellaneous notes, gazetteer records and temple stele inscriptions, this chapter suggests other ways that the ordination may have been meaningful to the empress. Furthermore, this chapter considers the place of the Hongzhi emperor and the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing in relation to Empress Zhang's ordination, focusing in particular on government policies towards ordinations in the early part of the Hongzhi reign.

In Chapter Five, the *Ordination Scroll* is studied as an imperial image in two senses: firstly as an image produced by court painters and secondly as an example of an imperial portrait. The assumption that the scroll was made by court painters can be found in early discussions on the work. This chapter compares the scroll to examples of court commissioned religious images. However, it questions the premise upon which the *Ordination Scroll* is classified as a "court painting" by highlighting the ways boundaries blurred between court-employed painters of religious images and professional artists working in the marketplace. In the second half of the chapter, the unusual depiction of Empress Zhang in the *Ordination Scroll* will be considered.

Empress Zhang's image is very different to the few surviving examples of portraits of Ming empresses in a formal commemorative mode. Instead, it may be connected to representations of imperial figures in a religious guise. By locating the scroll within the discourse on Ming imperial portraiture, this chapter considers possible alternatives for the visual representation of Ming empresses during the Ming and early Qing periods.

This dissertation will refer to the scroll as the *Ordination Scroll* in accordance with the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition catalogue since it is from that exhibition that the scroll is most well known. For Daoist terms and titles I have consulted Pregadio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* (2008) in two volumes. I have also referred to translations in Schipper and Verellen, ed., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* (2004). Both publications, together with Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (2000), are also my main sources for the dating of Daoist texts. All references to the Daoist Canon (DZ) follow the numbering system in Kristofer Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang: Titres des Ouvrages* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1975).

This chapter will begin by examining the condition of the *Ordination Scroll*. Through close visual analysis, it will attempt to make sense of the unusual physical features of the work and to reconstruct some of the processes that have resulted in the scroll in its current form. The chapter will then examine the overall visual format of the scroll in order to relate it to other visual material from the Ming dynasty. It is important to address these basic issues in the first instance in order to establish the foundations for further discussions.

Physical Condition

The *Ordination Scroll* in its current form measures 54.6 cm by 2,743.2 cm (fig. 6). Its enormous size is created by joining large sheets of paper together. The length of each sheet of paper varies. The longest uninterrupted sections measure around 160 cm; the shortest is a vertical strip measuring roughly 15 cm that is located after the second large inscription. Overall, most of the sheets of paper range from around 100 cm to 160 cm in length. Some but not all sheets are shorter because of missing sections in the scroll, which will be discussed below. These measurements fall comfortably within the range of paper sizes available in the latter half of the Ming dynasty. According to R. H. van Gulik, a “small” sheet of late Ming paper produced by manufacturers measured 6 by 3 *chi* 尺 or roughly 186 x 93 cm.¹ The size of an

¹ Robert H. van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 252-3. The sizes of “large” and “small” are relative. van Gulik notes that the value of measure varied according to period and locality, and does not specify the equivalent measurement for *chi* used here. According to Alfred Schinz, one *chi* in the Ming averages 30.99 cm. See table in Alfred Schinz, *The Magic Square: Cities in Ancient China* (Stuttgart; London: Axel Menges, 1996), 421.

uninterrupted section of paper used for the *Ordination Scroll* could thus conceivably be a “small” sheet of paper halved lengthwise.

Based upon visual observation, the paper surface of the scroll is backed by a layer of white paper that has been mounted on to yellow-brown paper (fig. 7). On top of this, it appears that a final translucent layer of paper has been added as an overall backing to the scroll. In some areas, additional layers of paper are observable, which are probably part of subsequent conservation treatment. A narrow strip of fabric is pasted all along the upper and lower edges of the scroll, both front and back (fig. 8). This corresponds to the component of mounting known as *taobian* 套邊, which is normally a strip of brown paper or dark silk that is pasted on to the edge of the scroll and then folded over.² In the *Ordination Scroll*, the strip is neither paper nor silk but something coarser, probably linen. Also, the two sides are separate strips, which may be a result of the fold splitting over time. There is evidence of conservation treatment on the fabric: sections have been replaced using similar material but of smaller weave. The older fabric has hardened, probably due to the paste used to glue it on to the paper, so that it does not bend well. This has led to cracks and breakages that at places extend into the body of the scroll. It can be deduced that the replacement fabric was added after the scroll was remounted since the newer material covers breakages in the paper. The older textile edge was probably part of the scroll quite early on, given that red pigment from the outer line demarcating the border has bled on to the fabric at various points of the scroll.

² Feng Pengsheng 馮鵬生, *Zhongguo shuhua zhuangbiao gaishuo* 中國書畫裝裱概說 (Survey on the mounting of Chinese calligraphy and painting) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1980), 56-57.

On the whole, the *Ordination Scroll* is in good condition. Apart from some loss of pigment and tearing along the borders, the colouring of the figures has remained remarkably fresh after five hundred years. However, there are some notable points of damage. In contrast to the rest of the scroll, the large inscription at the right end of the scroll is in fragile condition: crumpling, creasing and paper loss can be observed (fig. 9). Furthermore, parts of the scroll are missing, which will be discussed below. These are partially concealed by the current mounting, which has re-joined the scroll with consideration for the motifs along the border.

The current mounting of the *Ordination Scroll* is unusual. It situates a plain wooden roller with protruding knob on the right end of the scroll, and a wrapper with stave, brocade band and a jade pin (broken) attached to its left end (fig. 10). As a result, the scroll opens from left to right, which is opposite to convention.³ Yet, the poor condition of the right end of the scroll clearly indicates that that it was originally the opening section where it had a higher chance of being unrolled and hence damaged. This is confirmed by the directionality of the content of the scroll, which will be discussed later. It is likely that the current mounting was created to protect the fragile right end of the scroll. In other words, this unusual element does not derive from the work itself and hence does not have bearing upon how it was originally conceived.

According to records of the San Diego Museum of Art, the *Ordination Scroll* underwent one conservation treatment in August 2000 in preparation for the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition.⁴ Treatment was focused on the right-end of the

³ One exception is Qing dynasty imperial documents written in both Manchu and Chinese. Manchu, the official language of the Qing court, was read from left to right, so such documents were mounted to open in that direction. For an example see Evelyn Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors 1662 – 1795* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), no. 64.

⁴ Examination notes and treatment report from museum file.

scroll: Its edges were relaxed and set down; damaged areas were reinforced from the back with Japanese paper, and toned paper inserted on the front to conceal paper and fabric losses. On the whole, however, there was no major change to the appearance of the scroll, which means that the current mounting was created prior to its entry into the collection in the 1960s.

Missing Sections

Three sections are clearly lost from the first part of the procession. These breaks are located at the start of the procession (fig. 11), directly following a group of female attendants (fig. 12), and before the first military figure (fig. 13). There is a fourth break at the start of the second large inscription (fig. 14). It is less obvious than the other breaks, but it remains noticeable from the imperfect matching of the motifs in the border, and from the space between the first character of the inscription and the edge right of the paper, which is narrower than its equivalent on the left end.

The first break in the scroll is irregular, in a slight “s” shape. It appears that the left sheet of paper was overlapped on to the right in order to match the bodies of the dragons in the border. The edge of the break is clean at places and rough at others.

The other breaks are clean and straight with little overlapping of the papers, and again the motifs on the borders are matched. It is possible that the person who later mounted the work trimmed the edges of the breaks in order to better conceal them. The spacing of the missing sections suggests that they were not a result of external damage on the scroll when it was rolled up. Given the irregularity of the first break, it may have been caused by damage. Yet, the disappearance of the section compared to the survival of the opening inscription suggests that it was ultimately removed (perhaps after it was

damaged). The other missing sections are located at places in otherwise good condition. They are also situated further into the scroll, which would require unrolling the scroll in order to reach them. These factors suggest that they were also deliberately removed.

One way of estimating the size of the missing sections is by counting the sequence of dragons in the border of the scroll. The colours of the dragons follow a basic sequence (starting from the first horizontal dragon on the right) of green, white, black, blue and red separated by *ruyi* clouds. The pattern is the same in the upper and lower horizontal borders. There are some places of uninterrupted paper where this pattern of colour is mixed up; for instance, at one point near the latter part of the inscription, the pattern becomes green, white, *red*, black, blue and red. However, overall, the basic sequence is followed unless the paper is cut, such as where the inscription is inserted. As the length of one dragon with a cloud motif is approximately 35 cm while one figure takes up roughly 23 cm, it is possible to get some sense of the length of paper and hence the minimum number of figures missing from the scroll.⁵

Unfortunately, the first break at the beginning of the procession happens to be a point where the pattern is not followed. Just before the break, where usually a black dragon follows a white one, here it is followed by a red one. Based on the above example, this change in pattern may have been rectified so that the next dragon would be black in colour in order to continue the sequence. Given that the first dragon after the break (with its head missing) is blue in colour, this means that at least one black dragon is missing, or it will take another six dragons (black, blue, red, green, white, black) to

⁵ Here I am working with a ratio of 1 cm of reproduction in the *Taoism and the Arts of China* catalogue equals 10.5 cm of the actual work (since the width of the reproduction is 5.2 cm while the actual work's is 54.6 cm).

complete one cycle of the sequence. This would translate into 35 cm or one figure for the first scenario and around 210 cm or nine figures for the second.

In the second missing section, most of a black dragon is shown before the break while half a blue dragon is shown after the break. This could mean that the sequence has not been broken and only the two halves of the existing dragons are missing. This would roughly equate to the space of one dragon with a cloud motif, which is 35 cm. To repeat one cycle of the colour sequence, it will take around five and a half dragons or 192.5 cm, which could accommodate eight figures.

In the third missing section just before the depiction of military figures, there is half a green dragon before the break and half a black dragon after it. Again, if the sequence of red, green, white, black and blue is followed, then there is one white dragon absent plus the missing parts of the existing dragons, so roughly the space of two full dragons or 70 cm. This could accommodate three figures.

The final break located at the start of the second large inscription separates a red and black dragon. This means that two further dragons, one green and one white, are missing from the border, which equates to 70 cm.

To summarise, by following the sequence of dragons in the border, it may be roughly estimated that a minimum of 210 cm of paper is missing from the scroll, most likely more. The content of these missing sections will be speculated upon in Chapter Two.

Wrapper

The protective wrapper in the *Ordination Scroll* consists of two separate sides pasted on to mounting paper. The outside is a painting on paper that has been tinted yellow-brown (fig. 15). It depicts two large dragons, one blue and one green, circling a flaming pearl. Around them are coloured clouds in *ruyi* 如意 (wish-granting) form. It has a border along the outer three sides that is also decorated with clouds and dragons in alternating colours. The dragons on the wrapper match those on the general border of the scroll. There is considerable loss of pigment on the outer wrapper, most noticeably the blue colouring on the bodies of the dragons (fig. 16). This is probably due to the application of an overly thick alum solution to those areas of colours. A treatment of alum is used to stop thicker pigments, such as mineral blue, from running in the process of mounting.⁶ If the alum is too thick, then it will cause the pigment to turn dark and become brittle.⁷ The brownish rings around the blue dragon are a further indication that an overly thick alum solution was applied. The overall blotchy appearance of the paper wrapper may also be a result of discolouration from solutions used in mounting.

Instead of paper, the inside of the wrapper is made of fabric that appears coarser than silk (fig. 17). It is probably linen fabric, similar to the kind used for the border of the scroll. Like the outer wrapper, the inner wrapper also depicts a scene of dragons and clouds. However, contrary to the description in the *Taoism and the Arts of China* catalogue, the images are painted on to the fabric in gold and are not woven textiles.⁸ The painter has cleverly left a thin gap between the outline and the colouring so that

⁶ Van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, 72-3.

⁷ Feng, *Zhongguo shuhua zhuangbiao gaishuo*, 24.

⁸ TAC, 208.

the darker colour of the fabric surface remains visible as additional delineation. The compositions of the inner and outer wrappers are very similar with minor differences, such as the moustache of the green dragon, which in the former flows upwards instead of downwards as in the latter. Given their close resemblance, the two images were probably copied from the same textile pattern. A modern example of creating a painted copy of a woven fabric is the facsimile version of the *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies*, attributed to Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (c. 345 – 406). Commissioned by the British Museum, the replica was produced by Japanese craftsmen between 1911 and 1913. It included identical copies of the inner and outer silk wrappers, on which were painted the originally woven peony and geometric and floral designs.⁹

Since the scroll reads from right to left, the wrapper would have originally been attached to the right end of the scroll. In such a case, it is likely that the inner and outer positions of the two sides of the wrapper were reversed. In other words, the wrapper in textiles was on the outside and the paper wrapper was on the inside. This is because both sides of the wrapper only have a border along three of their edges and it would make more sense that the borderless edge is attached to the body of the scroll, as they do in the current mounting. It also seems reasonable that the more durable fabric was originally used on the outside of the scroll instead of paper. There are signs of abrasion and discolouration along the edge of the wrapper in textiles, so it is conceivable that it was once placed on the outside.

⁹ Described by Sydney Thomson, “The Conservation History and Condition of the Admonitions Scroll,” in *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll*, ed. Shane McCausland (London: The British Museum Press, 2003), 299. On the creation of the copy see Charles Mason, “The Admonitions Scroll in the Twentieth Century,” in *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll*, ed. Shane McCausland (London: The British Museum Press, 2003), 290-1.

In between the fabric wrapper and the paper of the *Ordination Scroll*, there is an extra vertical piece of salmon-coloured fabric made of finer weave (fig. 18). It is painted with cloud motifs and two dragons, one above the other, in gold and the same style as the inner wrapper. The top dragon has its head facing the front, while the bottom one faces the left. The addition of this piece of fabric is reminiscent of the mounting component known as *jieling* 界綾 or *gejie* 隔界, which are pieces of silk or paper separating the body of the scroll from the opening inscription and the colophons at the end.¹⁰ It is likely that this was also once located at the right end of the scroll together with the wrapper.

The inclusion of paper mounting components in the *Ordination Scroll* that emulate the appearance of fabric raises the question of whether the scroll in its current form would have been appropriate for presentation to Empress Zhang as a document of her ordination. Indeed, other unusual elements found on the scroll surface, discussed below, suggest that the purpose of the scroll may need to be reconsidered.

Paper Added to the Scroll Surface

One of these unusual features is the addition of pieces of paper that have been pasted on to the surface of the *Ordination Scroll*, such as on the opening phrase that is written in large talismanic script. Each character of the phrase is pasted with a square piece of paper at its centre written with the character's transcription in regular script (fig. 19). This is except the first character of the phrase for which the piece of paper is lost. Without these transcriptions, the phrase would be incomprehensible to the

¹⁰ Van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, 68.

uninitiated. It is thus possible that the slips of paper were added after the scroll was finished to help lay readers understand the talismanic writings.

Slips of paper could serve another purpose, which is to act as prompts for the producers of the scroll. Paper slips are a tool that may be used in model drawings (*fenben* 粉本). Nie Chongzheng has identified four scrolls in monochrome ink as model drawings for *The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour* (*Qianlong nanxun tu* 乾隆南巡圖) (1764 – 1770) and paintings in celebration of the birthday of the Qianlong emperor's mother (fig. 20).¹¹ According to the writer, one of the drawings, which shows the emperor crossing the Yellow River with his entourage, has a yellow slip pasted near the end written with the characters *tianshui pu* 甜水鋪 (sweet soup shop) in reference to one of the shops depicted.¹² In another drawing, there is a yellow slip identifying the name of a bridge. The randomness and rarity of these pasted slips suggest that they were probably the lucky surviving traces of a memory aid that were meant to be removed once they have served their function. Perhaps the pieces of paper on the opening phrase of the *Ordination Scroll* were also meant to be temporary additions, but for some reason the characters in regular script were never transferred on to the scroll.

In fact, there is evidence that many more pieces of paper were once pasted on the work. Throughout the painted procession, there are traces of narrow rectangular areas of discolouration located to the left of the titles of each celestial being written in gold (fig. 21). At some places, remnants of paper can actually be seen. Dark ink outlines

¹¹ Nie Chongzheng 聶崇正, "Qingdai gongting huihua gaoben shu kao 清代宮廷繪畫稿本述考" (Investigation into Sketches of Qing Court Paintings), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 3 (2004), 84-91. The four scrolls of sketches were shown at auction in Beijing in 2002.

¹² Nie, "Qingdai gongting huihua gaoben," 89.

often stop short of these areas, leaving gaps that were later filled in. This indicates that slips of paper were pasted on to the scroll and kept there until later stages of painting. Given the location and size of the slips, evident from the areas of discolouration, it is likely that they were once written with the titles of the celestial beings. Once the titles were written in gold on the scroll, the slips of paper were no longer needed and were removed.

In addition to the slips of paper on the opening phrase, there is another, more striking, use of pasted paper on the *Ordination Scroll* that has remained in place. There is a sheet of paper found near the beginning of the first procession that covers a blank space of corresponding size. It carries the image of a figure dressed as a Daoist priest who, as will be explained later, is the representation of Empress Zhang (fig. 23).

There is a gap between the image and the surrounding painting, and the outlines of the clouds on them are not linked. However, the style of painting and the use of colours on the empress' image closely resemble the rest of the scroll, so they should have been produced by the same hands.¹³

The image of Empress Zhang is damaged. There is a clear diagonal tear in the paper that crosses between her feet and extends to the edges. It reveals the blank paper beneath, indicating that a space on the scroll was left for such an image and that no other image was previously in place. Furthermore, the edges of the image are ragged, the surface is wrinkled and there is discolouration along its borders, which may be due to the glue used to paste it on to the scroll. The image appears to have been pasted twice. Near the top, the paper has been torn and the whole sheet has been moved slightly to the right so that it overlaps the torn corners (fig. 22). This suggests that the

¹³ This is also the view of Stephen Little, see *TAC*, 208.

image of the empress was once ripped from the scroll and then sloppily re-pasted. Perhaps the empress' image was meant to be removed so someone else could insert their picture into the procession, but when its clean removal was not possible, it was re-pasted on to the scroll.

Based on the above, it appears that painters of the *Ordination Scroll* deliberately left a blank space where the image of Empress Zhang was supposed to be included. There could be different reasons for this; for instance, the painters may not have had access to her image or they may not have been allowed to paint her image due to ritual taboo. When the empress' image did become available or imperial authorisation was granted, it was then added to the scroll. However, the depiction of the empress' image on a separate piece of paper presents a complication. If the *Ordination Scroll* was meant to be presented to Empress Zhang as her ordination document, then why was her image not painted directly on to the scroll? The consistent style between the empress' image and the rest of the scroll suggests that they cannot be conceived of as two separate projects. Instead, it may be speculated that the image of the empress was the portrayal that was officially authorised. In addition, perhaps the image was copied or removed from another version of the empress' ordination document that no longer survives. The likelihood the *Ordination Scroll* is one version of Empress Zhang's ordination document is further suggested by other traces of production found on the scroll surface discussed below.

Sketches and Colour Notations

Although the *Ordination Scroll* is carefully painted with rich pigments and ornament in gold, the initial drawings in ink for the figures and the motifs on the border are still

visible on the scroll. On the whole, the drawings were closely followed by the painters with only minor adjustments to positioning. The only noticeable instance where changes were made to the sketch is in the headdresses of two generals at the start of the second procession (fig. 24). They were originally supposed to have a protruding extension like the final three Celestial Stalwarts, but these were abandoned in the final version.

Another surviving trace of the production process is abbreviated terms for colours written on the clothing of many of the figures depicted in the scroll (fig. 25). These were probably written by a master painter of a workshop, perhaps the same one who made the initial drawings, to serve as guidelines for other painters responsible for colouring. The abbreviations used in the *Ordination Scroll* and their equivalent colours are as follows (given with the closest resembling characters):

七	blue
卅	yellow
六	green
玉	light green
子	purple
工	red
二六	dark green
水工	pink
小工	salmon

On several occasions, light green is used where the character 六 is written. This is the case on the encircling ribbon of two of the directional generals and one of the jade maidens. Light green and green are used to show the front and back of the ribbon fabric. As the colours are similar, it seems that it was possible to adjust their relative positions after the abbreviations were written.

The terms for yellow, light green, purple and red used in the *Ordination Scroll* are basically the same as those listed by Yu Fei'an as notations commonly used by professional painters.¹⁴ 工 is shorthand for *hong* 紅 (red). The addition of the terms *shui* 水 (water) and *xiao* 小 (little) to the character indicates lighter tones of the colour. 𠂇 is also a shorthand, taking only the top part of the character *huang* 黃 (yellow). *Zi* 子 is a homonym for *zi* 紫 (purple). Homonyms may also explain *liu* 六 and *qi* 七, which sounds similar to *lǜ* 綠 (green) and *qing* 青 (traditional term for blue). 二 in the context of 二六 probably means *er* or “second”, referring to a different, darker tone of green. *Yu* 玉 for light green may be a reference to the colour of jade, which is the meaning of the character.

Among the figures in the costumes of officials at the start of the procession, only the first visible figure has a notation written on him: 二六 or dark green on the lower under-dress (fig. 26). This is perhaps because some of these figures, as we shall see, have known iconographies and established colourings, so no written prompt is needed. In the subsequent group of figures in priestly attire, most have notations written on them, mostly on their lapels and less often on their outer robes, which suggests that it may be the smaller areas that require explanation for the painters. Many more of the martial figures in the rest of the processions have a range of notations written on them, usually located on the outer short robe, the encircling ribbon and the underskirt. This is to be expected given the greater complexity of their costumes. Yet, not all the martial figures have colour notations, while some have fewer notations than others.

¹⁴ Yu Fei'an 于非闇, *Zhongguo hua yanse de yanjiu* 中國畫顏色的研究 (Research on Colours in Chinese Painting) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1961), 42-3. Translated by Jerome Silbergeld and Amy McNair in Yu Fei'an, *Chinese Painting Colors* (Hong Kong University Press, University of Washington Press, 1988), 49.

This may in part be explained by an internal logic of the colouring, which is to avoid repetition and to use contrasting colours where possible for the details of the attire. Given a limited palette, once the colours for some of the figures have been decided, it may have been possible for the painters to extrapolate the possible combination of colours for the remaining figures.

There are three more notations on the scroll that do not seem to be related to colours. Written in ink next to the fifth and sixth military figures from the left of the second procession are the terms *shiba* 十八 (eighteen) and *shiqi* 十七 (seventeen) (fig. 27). Also, written near the feet of the eighth figure from the left of the first procession is the term *shiwu* 十五 (fifteen). These numbers do not correspond to the location of the figures in the procession. One possible explanation is that they are used to mark the order of the sheets of paper, since they are all located next to paper breaks. However, the reasons for the particular numbers and their placement in only three spots remain a mystery.

Written notions for colours were already in use during the Tang dynasty. For instance, a mandala sketch in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France carries terms for colours such as “yellow ground” (*dihuang* 地黃) and “blue-green ground” (*dqing* 地青) (fig. 28). According to Sarah Fraser, these notations were “instructions for visualization, not painting production”, so that the painter used “verbal rather than pictorial means to convey information”.¹⁵ However, it is unlikely that the colour notations on the *Ordination Scroll* were meant as tools for visualisation because the scroll is richly coloured. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of these notations on the scroll surface

¹⁵ Sarah Fraser, *Performing the Visual: The Practice of Buddhist Wall Painting in China and Central Asia, 618 – 960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 152-153.

does not seem well-suited to the purpose of instruction. Alternatively, colour notations, like slips of pasted paper, could appear on model drawings that were part of the trade of professional painters. Examples of their later use can be found in a rare collection of Qing dynasty model drawings in the collection of the Shanxi People's Art Museum that depict genre, historical and religious subject matter (fig. 29).¹⁶ On these drawings, painters added terms for colours among the clothing and objects depicted in the composition, similar to the way that they are employed in the *Ordination Scroll*.

The argument that the *Ordination Scroll* functioned as a preliminary version of the empress' ordination document would help to explain the various unusual elements found on the scroll that have been discussed so far. However, it seems unsuitable to describe the scroll as a preliminary version in the sense of a sketch when it is clearly a highly finished work. This is evident in the use of gold for decorations and inscriptions as well as the partial concealment of the notations by bright colours. Yet, it is conceivable that the scroll could be both a preliminary version as well as an object to be appreciated in its own right. To clarify this point, it may be useful to compare the scroll to an album previously kept at Chongshansi 崇善寺 (Temple of Lofty Kindness) in Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi province, founded in 1383 (fig. 30).¹⁷ This album of brightly coloured images, dated a century after the founding of the temple, depicts stories in the life of the Buddha and Sudhana or Child of Wealth (*Shanci tongzi* 善財童子). According to conventional belief, the album was commissioned by

¹⁶ Bo Songnian 薄松年, "Zhenxi de Shanxi minjian huagong fenben 珍稀的陝西民間畫工粉本" (Precious and Rare Cartoons by Shanxi Folk Artisans), *Zhongguo shuhua* 中國書畫 (Calligraphy and painting in China), no. 4 (2004), 26-31.

¹⁷ Chai Zejun 柴澤俊 and He Dalong 賀大龍, *Shanxi fosi bihua* 山西佛寺壁畫 (Wall Paintings at Buddhist Temples in Shanxi) (Beijing: Beijing wenwu chubanshe, 2006), 58-9, no. 162-4. Clearer images can be found in Zhang Jizhong 張紀仲 and An Ji 安笈, *Taiyuan Chongshansi wenwu tulu* 太原崇善寺文物圖錄 (Illustrated catalogue of cultural relics from Chongshan Temple at Taiyuan) (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1987). The album is now in the Shanxi Provincial Museum.

clerics at the temple to record its fading mural paintings.¹⁸ Yet, the preface in the album on the life of the Buddha written by the King of Jin 晉 states that the clerics of the temple:

Wanted to have new adornments and colouring [for the wall paintings], firstly a rectangular album was formatted, to model its appearance.

欲新妝彩，先裁方冊，以模其儀。¹⁹

Mo 模 in the above statement has normally been interpreted as “copying” (*mo* 摹) but the character used actually means “model”. The statement also makes clear that the images were produced prior to the re-painting of the murals. This suggests that they were probably shown to the patrons of the temple to help them decide upon how the wall paintings should be renovated. As carefully produced works, these images also functioned as records of the temple wall paintings, which were destroyed in the late Qing dynasty. In other words, the Chongshansi album is an example of a set of model paintings that is highly finished with refined details and colourful pigments. In addition, it is valued as an independent work that is kept within a temple collection. Similarly, the *Ordination Scroll* could have functioned as a detailed preliminary version that was used for presentation to its prestigious patron, Empress Zhang, while also existing as an independent finished object. Yet, there is also one further possibility, which is that the *Ordination Scroll* was produced based on the document that was presented to Empress Zhang. According to this view, the use of elements such as paper slips and colour notations can be interpreted as memory aids for painters to record the appearance of the version intended for the empress.

¹⁸ Also see Julia K. Murray, “The Evolution of Pictorial Hagiography in Chinese Art: Common Themes and Forms,” *Arts Asiatiques* 55 (2000), 89; Peng, “Beijing fangke banhua zhi qipa,” 73-5.

¹⁹ Chai and He, *Shanxi fosi bihua*, 58.

In either case, it is highly probable that the *Ordination Scroll* was one version of the Empress Zhang's ordination document. Yet, if the scroll was not the version that was ultimately given to the empress, then to whom would such an object be of value to? The most likely candidate would be the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing whose presence looms large in the scroll as the writer of the inscription and whose image appears next to Empress Zhang's in the procession (see Chapter Two). While this is purely speculative, the *Ordination Scroll* could have served as a record for the Celestial Master of the empress' ordination by the Orthodox Unity church and thus his privileged connection to the imperial court.

Visual Format of the Scroll

As one version of an ordination document, the *Ordination Scroll* possesses a distinct visual format that is worth exploring in detail before its individual celestial beings are discussed in Chapter Two. By focusing on the compositional features of the scroll, it can be related to other types of images and documents. This will help to situate the scroll in a wider context of visual and material culture as well as lay the foundations for studying more specifically what kind of document is the *Ordination Scroll* in Chapter Three.

To begin with, the *Ordination Scroll* is framed by a border outlined in red and decorated with dragons separated by *ruyi* cloud motifs (fig. 10). It gives the appearance of a mounted border even though it is painted on the same sheet of paper as the body of the scroll. This type of decorated border that is added on to the same surface as the body of the work resembles examples of imperial official documents.

The National Museum of China has published a number of Ming-dynasty imperial decrees with this feature, including an edict on paper from the Hongzhi emperor dated 1491 (fig. 31).²⁰ This document on paper measuring 42 x 112.5 cm carries instructions to an Assistant Administrative Commissioner regarding silver mines in Yunnan. The text and the seal of the emperor are framed by a printed double-lined border in monochrome showing dragons separated by *ruyi* clouds meeting in the middle. This type of border is probably based on woven models of edicts in textiles, examples of which have survived from the beginning of the dynasty.²¹ Furthermore, the connection between borders with dragon motifs and imperial decrees would have been widely promulgated by steles erected on temple courtyards recording imperial patronage (fig. 32). Borders with dragon motifs commonly frame inscriptions carved on such steles, which would have been readily seen by temple visitors in the Ming dynasty.²² The inclusion of a similar border in the *Ordination Scroll* evokes the visual format of imperial documents, which is appropriate in a work recording an empress' ordination.

The celestial beings in the *Ordination Scroll* are shown in sequence divided into two parts, one before the main inscription and one at the end of the scroll (fig. 1). The first procession presents both civil and military figures. Those near the front are dressed as

²⁰ Zhongguo guojia bowuguan 中國國家博物館, ed., *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guan cang wenwu yanjiu congshu. Mingqing dang'an juan. Mingdai* 中國國家博物館館藏文物研究叢書. 明清檔案卷. 明代 (Studies of the Collections of the National Museum of China. Ming-Qing Archives Volume. Ming Dynasty) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 16-17, no. 7. This type of border continued to be used in Qing imperial decrees, see examples from 1679 and 1701 respectively reproduced in Lin Boyou 林泊佑 and Su Qiming 蘇啟明, eds., *Long wenhua tezhan 龍文化特展* (The Beauty of Dragons) (Taipei: Guoli lishi bowuguan, 2000), 246; National Museum of Chinese History, *A Journey into China's Antiquity, IV: Yuan Dynasty, Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty* (Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1997), no. 172.

²¹ Zhongguo guojia bowuguan, ed., *Mingqing dang'an juan. Mingdai*, no. 1-2. Also, Yan Xing mentions an imperial document for postal riders woven in silk from 1427 in the National Museum of History, Taipei. See Yang Xing 晏星, *Zhonghua youzheng fazhan shi 中華郵政發展史* (History of Postal Services in China) (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1994) 190-1.

²² On the typical location of commemorative stele at temples in Beijing, see Naquin, *Peking*, 27-8.

highly ranked civil officials and Daoist priests. They are all holding ceremonial tablets and are depicted with halos. Included in this group is the pasted-on image of Empress Zhang surrounded by female attendants. Following the civil officials, the procession continues with military figures carrying different objects and weapons. The second procession, on the other hand, consists entirely of military figures. The formats of both sections are the same: The figures stand in a straight line and are turned towards the right-hand side. Also, as will be explained in detail in the Chapter Two, the celestial beings are organised in groups according to their position and responsibilities. These visual features are reminiscent of a category of images that Lennert Gesterkamp calls “Heavenly Court Painting” or representations of the Daoist pantheon as “a court audience of celestial officials”.²³ In Chinese, such images may be called *chaoyuan tu* 朝元圖 (picture of an audience with the Origin). The mural paintings of the Hall of the Three Purities (*Sanqing dian* 三清殿) at Yongle gong 永樂宮 (Palace of Eternal Joy), Shanxi province, is referred to in modern scholarship as a representative example of the *chaoyuan tu* subject matter (fig. 33).²⁴ Produced in 1325, the paintings depict a vast pantheon of deities lining the walls around an altar space that once stood sculptures of the Three Purities (*sanqing* 三清), the highest deities in the Daoist pantheon. Similar to the *Ordination Scroll* procession, the deities in the Yongle gong wall paintings are presented as celestial officials, many holding ceremonial tablets and some with haloes. They are facing the same general direction towards the supreme deities and are organised in groups.²⁵

²³ Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court,” 15.

²⁴ For instance, Meng Sihui 孟嗣徽, “Xinghuasi bihua yu Jinnan Yuandai bihua de ji ge wenti 興化寺壁畫與晉南元代壁畫的幾個問題” (Several Questions on the Murals in Xinghua Temple and Groupings of Yuan Dynasty Mural Paintings from Southern Shanxi), *Gugong xuekan* 故宮學刊 (Journal of Gugong Studies), vol. 3 (2006), 291-292.

²⁵ The Yongle gong murals have been extensively studied. In particular, see Jing, “Yongle Palace”; Paul Katz, *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lü Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999); Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court”. There are also large albums with clear reproductions and short essays, more recently Jin Weinuo 金維諾, ed., *Yongle gong bihua*

The *chaoyuan tu* category is derived from titles recorded in Song dynasty painting catalogues. For instance, *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Painting catalogue of the Xuanhe era) mentions paintings by Wang Qihan 王齊翰 and Wu Zongyuan 武宗元 titled *Changsheng chaoyuan tu* 長生朝元圖 (Picture of the Long Life [emperor] in audience with the Origin) and *Chaoyuan xianzhang tu* 朝元仙杖圖 (Picture of transcendents and seniors in audience with the Origin) respectively.²⁶ This latter work has been matched with a scroll in the C. C. Wang collection in New York since the Yuan dynasty (fig. 34).²⁷ Painted with ink outlines on silk, the scroll shows a procession of richly adorned deities on a bridge over a lotus pond. Xu Bangda and others have suggested that the scroll is copied from a section of a mural painting.²⁸ Like the *Ordination Scroll*, the deities in the C. C. Wang scroll are labelled with their names written in standard script in individual cartouches next to the figures.²⁹

quanji 永樂宮壁畫全集 (Complete Collection of Wall Paintings from the Palace of Eternal Joy) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, 1997); Xiao Jun 蕭軍, ed., *Yongle gong bihua* 永樂宮壁畫 (Wall paintings from the Palace of Eternal Joy) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008).

²⁶ *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Painting catalogue of the Xuanhe era) (c. 1120, repr. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), *juan* 4, pp. 40, 47.

²⁷ The attribution was made by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254 – 1322) in a colophon on the scroll. See TAC, no. 74; Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court,” 50. There is a smaller version on paper in the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, Beijing, that does not carry the same inscription.

²⁸ Xu Bangda 徐邦達, “Cong bihua fuben xiaoyang shuo dao liang juan Song hua – ‘Chaoyuan xianzhang tu’ 從壁畫本小樣說到兩卷宋畫 – ‘朝元仙杖圖’” (From Mini-plans of Wall Paintings to Two Song Scroll Paintings – “Picture of Transcendents and Seniors in Audience with the Origin”), *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics), no. 2 (1956), 57-8; Huang Miaozi 黃苗子, “Wu Zongyuan he Chaoyuan xianzhang tu 武宗元和朝元仙杖圖” (Wu Zongyuan and Picture of Transcendents and Seniors in Audience with the Origin), *Zhongguo hua* 中國畫, no. 2 (1982), 56-62. Sarah Fraser suggests that the scroll may have circulated as an independent object in studios. See Fraser, *Performing the Visual*, 114-9.

²⁹ For a recent discussion on the identity of the deities in the scroll, see Wu Yu 吳羽, “Chuan Bei Song Wu Zongyuan ‘Chaoyuan xianzhang tu’ zhushen zuhe kaoshi – jian lun qi Tang Song daoguan diantang bihua de guanxi 傳北宋武宗元‘朝元仙杖圖’主神組合考釋 – 兼論其唐宋道觀殿堂壁畫的關係” (Investigation into the Arrangement of Main Deities in “Picture of Transcendents and Seniors in Audience with the Origin” Attributed to Northern Song Wu Zongyuan – with Discussions on Its Relationship to Wall Paintings of Tang and Song Daoist Temple Halls), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 10 (2008), 80-159.

Wu Yu points out that the meaning of *chaoyuan tu* is ambiguous in Song catalogues, and does not stand for a set category of representation.³⁰ However, the portrayal of an elaborate gathering of hierarchical celestial officials in audience with the highest deities of Daoism had become an established pictorial format by the Yuan dynasty.³¹ This is evident in the compositional format of Yongle gong that is shared by other temple wall paintings of the period in Shanxi province. Furthermore, the wider dissemination of this type of representation is verified by its appearance in print form in the frontispiece of the scripture *Yushu baojing* 玉樞寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot), traditionally dated to 1333 (fig. 35).³² It depicts the original revelation of the scripture from Jiutian yingyuan leisheng puhua tianzun 九天應元雷聲普化天尊 (Celestial Worthy Who Transforms All of the Sound of Thunder Responding to the Primordial of the Nine Heavens). The Celestial Worthy is depicted larger than the other figures, seated on a throne behind an altar, while the Daoist master who receives the scripture kneels before him. The event is witnessed by groups of civil and martial deities standing in rows to the front and side of the high deity. A similar frontispiece in gold on indigo can be found in *Taishang xuanling beidou yansheng miao jing* 太上玄靈北斗延生妙經 (Wondrous Scripture that Prolongs Life of the Northern Dipper of the Mysterious and Numinous of the Most High), dated 1568 (fig. 36). It shows the deified Laozi seated on a throne flanked by guardians as a priest kneels before him surrounded by perfected beings.³³

³⁰ Wu Yu 吳羽, “Wenxian suo zai Tang Song shidai ‘Chaoyuan tu’ kao lue 文獻所載唐宋時代‘朝元圖’考略” (Investigation into Textual Records of ‘Pictures of an Audience with the Origin’ in the Tang and Song Periods), *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究 (Art Research), no. 3 (2008), 46-8.

³¹ Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court,” 29-87.

³² *TAC*, 237-9, no. 73.

³³ *TAC*, 246-7, no. 77.

The depiction of celestial officials in audience with one or several supreme deities can be found not only in horizontal format, but also in vertical scroll paintings, which are hung to create ritual spaces. Comparable images are displayed in the Water-and-land Assembly (*Shuilu daochang* 水陸道場), a Buddhist ritual for universal salvation, which attempts to encompass the complete pantheon and all social groups including Daoist figures.³⁴ In the vertical format, groups of celestial beings may be presented diagonally in overlapping rows to give the effect of a procession (fig. 37). The celestial court audience format was also used in Buddhist images showing homage to the Buddha, such as the Ming-dynasty wall paintings of Fahaisi 法海寺 (Temple of the Sea of Dharma) in Beijing (see Chapter Five) (fig. 38). By the late imperial period, deities shown in audience with incarnations of the Buddha could even be depicted in the guise of officials bearing ceremonial tablets, such as sculptures created in 1438 located at the main hall of Dajuesi 大覺寺 (Temple of Great Enlightenment), also in Beijing.³⁵

The processional format of celestial officials in the *Ordination Scroll* is thus derived from an established model of representing deities and perfected beings. Significantly, the above examples suggest the likelihood that the missing section at the beginning of the scroll once depicted a single or group of supreme deities accompanied by guardians and attendants. The identity of the deities once depicted and their arrangement are points for conjecture and more will be said about this in Chapter Two. Stephen Little proposes that the Three Purities as the highest Daoist deities may have been portrayed, while Shawn Eichman suggests that it could have presented an

³⁴ On this ritual, see Daniel B. Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformations in the History of the Shuilu fahui, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land,” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 30-72.

³⁵ Sun Rongfen 孫榮芬 et al, *Dajue chan si* 大覺禪寺 (Chan Temple of the Great Enlightenment) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2006), 126-135.

elaborate celestial court scene like the frontispiece of *Yushu baojing* that is distinct from the procession.³⁶ Eichman's idea stems from the visual similarities between the scroll's procession and a sequence of individually labelled deities that comes after the frontispiece in *Yushu baojing* (fig. 39). Although this suggestion is intriguing, it seems unlikely that the *Ordination Scroll* also had a separate celestial court scene in the opening section given the difference in format between the two works. *Yushu baojing* is mounted as a narrow book in accordion format, which encourages the depiction of one deity (occasionally two) per page or discrete scenes across pages. The *Ordination Scroll*, on the other hand, is in a horizontal scroll format that facilitates greater flow in the composition.

Yet, Eichman does point out a distinctive feature of the *Ordination Scroll* that differs from other representations of the celestial court discussed so far. The deities in the scroll are in a single file, evenly spaced, all turned towards the right. Two figures in the scroll have a frontal profile, but they are the exceptions in a procession that emphasises uniformity of appearance and posture. The effect can become repetitious, notably in the section of perfected beings in ritual vestments (fig. 40). The sense of uniformity is further accentuated by the repeated patterns of *ruyi* clouds that fill the space all around the figures in both sections of the procession. In comparison, other examples discussed so far show deities overlapping in multiple rows and with greater variety in the postures and costumes of the figures. The Yongle gong mural paintings, for instance, even includes one figure facing away from the viewer, which creates visual interest in the composition (fig. 41). One could argue that the spacing of figures in the *Ordination Scroll* is due to the mundane reason of the painter's need to fill a very long horizontal surface. Yet, why would a long horizontal surface be necessary in

³⁶ TAC, 208; Eichman, "The Art of Taoist Scriptures," 41-2.

the first place? Furthermore, how does the scroll's visual features relate to its function as a document of Empress Zhang's ordination?

Like the border with dragon motifs, the enormous size of the *Ordination Scroll* most likely carried imperial associations. Size and scale are common ways that rulers in China communicated grandeur and authority. During the Ming dynasty, the Yongle emperor took this strategy particularly seriously as he commissioned a series of large-scale projects, such as a gigantic bronze temple bell at 5.6 metres tall, weighing 46 tons, now housed at Dazhongsi 大鐘寺 (Great Bell Temple).³⁷ Another example of his large-size commissions is the *Miracles of the Mass of Universal Salvation Conducted by the Fifth Karmapa for the Yongle Emperor*, painted on silk at nearly fifty metres (fig. 42). Produced as a gift to the Tibetan lama Dezhen Dekpa, it commemorates the miracles that took place during ceremonies held in Nanjing in 1407 by the lama in honor of the emperor's deceased parents.³⁸ The monumental horizontal scroll format seems to be a preferred mode for documenting imperial events, judging from Ming and Qing examples. The two longest paintings in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, are *Departing from the Ming Forbidden City* and *An Imperial Procession to the Ming Tombs* (*Mingren chujing rubi tu* 明人出警入蹕圖) at twenty-six and thirty metres respectively (fig. 43). They form a set depicting the journey of the Wanli emperor (r. 1573 – 1620) to and from the imperial mausoleum surrounded by a massive retinue.³⁹ More examples of large horizontal scrolls

³⁷ James Watt and Denise Leidy, *Defining Yongle: Imperial Art in Early Fifteenth-century China* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 18.

³⁸ See discussion of this work by Patricia Berger, "Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa's Visit to the Chinese Capital," *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 145-169.

³⁹ The emperor has traditionally been identified as the Jiajing emperor. See Lin Lina 林莉娜, "Mingren 'Chujing rubi tu' zhi zonghe yanjiu 明人'出警入蹕圖'之綜合研究" (Summary research into 'Departing from the Ming Forbidden City and An Imperial Procession to the Ming Tombs'), *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 (The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art) 11, no. 7 (Oct 1993), 58-77 and no. 8 (Nov 1993), 34-41.; Na Chi-liang, *The Emperor's Procession: Two*

recording imperial occasions have survived from the Qing dynasty, such as a set of twelve scrolls (nine of which survive) of *The Southern Tour of the Kangxi Emperor* (*Kangxi nanxun tu* 康熙南巡圖), ranging from around fifteen to twenty-six metres (fig. 45). The enormous size of the *Ordination Scroll* at twenty-seven metres long is thus appropriate for a work that records the ordination of an empress.

In addition to size, orderliness is another visual feature that is observable in imperial documentary images. An example from the Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127) is the *Picture of the Imperial Guard of Honour* (*Lubu tu* 鹵簿圖) in the National Museum of China (fig. 44).⁴⁰ Painted on silk at around half a metre in height and nearly fifteen metres in width, it illustrates the Grand Carriage Procession (*dajia* 大駕) used for major state occasions. As Chen Pengcheng and Patricia Ebrey have convincingly argued, the scroll was one of several documents commissioned by early Northern Song emperors to serve as visual aid for the organisation of the procession.⁴¹ The impressive scene depicts thousands of officials, some on horseback, others on foot, with a vast array of ritual paraphernalia as well as text giving explanatory information. The complex composition is brought together by a symmetrical layout with precisely lined up figures and horses. The regularity of the composition not only serves its function as a visual aid, it also presents an ideal image of how the procession should

Scrolls of the Ming dynasty (Taipei: The National Palace Museum, 1970). However, this view has been convincingly refuted by Zhu Hong who has identified the sites depicted in the scrolls and reconstructed the journey taken by the emperor. See Zhu Hong 朱鴻, “‘Mingren chujing rubi tu’ benshi zhi yanjiu ‘明人出警入蹕圖’之本事研究” (Research on the Subject of ‘Departing from the Forbidden City and Imperial Procession to the Ming Tombs’), *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 (The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly) 22, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 184-213.

⁴⁰ National Museum of Chinese History, *A Journey into China’s Antiquity*, 238-243, no. 245.

⁴¹ Chen Pengcheng 陳鵬程, “Jiuti ‘Dajia lubu tushu. Zhongdao’ yanjiu – ‘Yanyou lubu’ niandai kao 舊題‘大駕鹵簿圖書. 中道’研究 – ‘延祐鹵簿’年代考” (Research into the old inscription ‘Illustrated document of the Imperial Guard of Honour. Middle path’ – Investigation into the dating of ‘The Imperial Guard of Honour of the Yanyou era’), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 2 (1996), 76-85; Patricia Ebrey, “Taking Out the Grand Carriage: Imperial Spectacle and the Visual Culture of Northern Song Kaifeng,” *Asia Major* 12, no.1 (1999), 33-65, see 42 note 20 for a summary in English of Chen’s arguments.

appear in an orderly world under the rulership of the emperor. While copies of *Lubutu* do not survive from the Ming, the subject is largely dealt with in the Wanli processional scrolls. In them, details of the imperial procession and the multitude of ceremonial paraphernalia are depicted with a comparable sense of balance between variety and overall order that is achieved by a repetition of form and ornamentation. More examples of imperial documentary paintings survive from the Qing dynasty that clearly exhibit this quality of order and ritualised formality (fig. 45).

While the visual format of the *Ordination Scroll* may be related to its connection to an imperial audience, there is another important aspect to consider: the scroll is not only a record of the elevation of Empress Zhang into the celestial pantheon but it also functions as a document of ordination. In fact, the second procession is more specifically the representation of a group of deities under the command of Empress Zhang as a result of her ordination. A list of protective deities or “register” (*lu* 籙) is one of the basic empowering documents that is transmitted to an ordinand in Daoist ordinations (see Chapter Three). Empress Zhang’s register is listed in the inscription of the scroll, which specifies that the deities are dispatched to protect her and all the powerful objects that she has received.

Many examples of registers can be found in the Daoist Canon printed in 1445, some with accompanying images. The principal deity of the register may be depicted at the beginning of the document with an entourage. One example of this is the depiction of the Emperor of the Northern Dipper in *Taishang beiji fumo shenzhou shagui lu* 太上北極伏魔神咒殺鬼籙 (Register that Kills Ghosts of Demon-subduing Divine Spells of the Northern Dipper of the Most High) (fig. 46).⁴² The image is like a small-scale

⁴² DZ 1215, 8a-9a.

procession in the manner of a celestial court scene. In other examples, the images of the deities may be located in the body of the register as they are introduced. For instance, in one of the registers compiled in *Taishang sanwu Zhengyi mengwei lu* 太上三五正一盟威籙 (Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High), three generals are individually represented, separated by lines of text describing their names, appearance, attributes and powers (fig. 47).⁴³ In other examples, one deity may be depicted to represent a group, such as in *Shangqing dantian sanqi yuhuang liuchen feigang siming da lu* 上清丹天三氣玉皇六辰飛綱司命大籙 (Great Register of Flying Steps of the Six Stars that Govern Fate of the Jade Sovereign of the Three Pneumata of the Cinnabar Heaven of Highest Clarity) where each jade maiden depicted stands for five hundred of her kind (fig. 48).⁴⁴ Notably, in this latter example, the bodies of the figures are turned towards the right and also separated by textual descriptions giving further information about them. Although the format of these images differs from the continuous flow of a procession, their visual effect may be comparable to the evenly spaced and labelled sequence of celestial beings in the *Ordination Scroll*.

However, fully visualised registers like the second procession in the *Ordination Scroll* are very rare. As far as I know, no other example has been identified from the imperial period. Alain Arrault and Michela Bussotti have located one modern example from 1942, found inside the cavity of a sculpture from Hunan province (fig. 49).⁴⁵ Printed on two sheets of paper in monochrome, the document depicts a series of talismans as well as a procession of military deities in two rows, some with their surnames written

⁴³ DZ 1208, 1.12b-15a.

⁴⁴ DZ 675, 7b-8a.

⁴⁵ Reproduced in Alain Arrault and Michela Bussotti, "Statuettes Religieuses et Certificats de Consécration en Chine du Sud (XVIIe – XXe siècle)," *Arts Asiatiques* 63 (2008), 50-1, fig. 18a-b. I would like to thank Prof Arrault for sharing this paper with me.

next to them. According to Arrault and Bussotti, the two sheets should be read side-to-side as a continuous register of deities under the command of a ritual master who is also depicted in the document.⁴⁶ This register does not exhibit the same strong sense of overall directionality found in representations of the celestial court, but it does share with the *Ordination Scroll* representations of evenly spaced, individual deities in a sequence.

It is possible that the portrayal of deities with individual labels and unobstructed by overlapping serves to assist the viewer in their proper identification. This feature is not only found in registers, but also in other representations, like *Yushu baojing*, that serve some didactic function. Yet, there is also indication that the depiction of a procession of evenly spaced deities may have become a standard format in certain Daoist documents during the Ming dynasty, regardless of the identification of individual figures. This is suggested by a late-Ming horizontal scroll known as *Investiture of a Local God* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 50).⁴⁷ The nine-metre long scroll (including colophon) presents a procession of evenly spaced celestial officials who are unlabelled and have few specific attributes, which leaves them unidentifiable to the viewer. It is another interesting work to have emerged from the *Taoism and the Arts of China* exhibition and provides an important comparison to the *Ordination Scroll* because of their notable similarities.

The *Investiture of a Local God* (the Metropolitan Museum scroll) records the elevation of a local god into the Daoist pantheon through the authority of the Orthodox Unity order. The practice of communities petitioning the Celestial Masters

⁴⁶ Arrault and Busotti, “Statuettes Religieuses et Certificats de Consécration,” 48-9.

⁴⁷ TAC, 256-7, no. 82; Alan Priest, “Li Chung Receives a Mandate,” *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 34, no. 11 (Nov 1939), 254-7.

and the imperial court to bestow official titles on their local gods became increasingly popular from the Song dynasty onwards.⁴⁸ As Vincent Goosseart explains, the process, which he calls canonisation (*daofeng* 道封), is the same in principle as ordinations involving the transmission of powerful scriptures and registers.⁴⁹ In the case of the Metropolitan Museum scroll, the recipient is a local god named Li Zhong 李忠, represented by a master called Li Daoqing 李道清. Like the *Ordination Scroll*, the details of the transmission are recorded in an inscription. According to this inscription, the scroll would have been produced in or before 1611 since transmission is requested from the fiftieth Celestial Master Zhang Guoxiang 張國祥 who passed away that year.⁵⁰ Also like the *Ordination Scroll*, the inscription is preceded by a long procession directed towards the right that includes celestial officials both civil and military. The civil officials have haloes and hold ceremonial tablets in a repeated pose that resembles the opening deities and perfected beings following Empress Zhang in the *Ordination Scroll*. The recipient of the transmission, the local god, is likewise included and depicted with attendants, even though the group is located at the back of the procession rather than the front (fig. 51). Notably, the entire scroll is similarly framed by a border outlined in red, decorated with coloured dragons and flaming pearls.

There are differences between the two works. Empress Zhang's procession is completely located in the celestial realm filled by clouds, while the Metropolitan Museum scroll shows a separation of figures located in the celestial court, followed

⁴⁸ TAC, 256; Vincent Goossaert, "Bureaucratic Charisma: The Zhang Heavenly Master Institution and the Court Taoists in Late-Qing China," *Asia Major* 17, no. 2 (2004), 139-141. On Song emperors giving honours to deities, see Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127 – 1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 80-4.

⁴⁹ Goosseart, "Bureaucratic Charisma," 139-141. Goossaert mentions this work as representative of the canonisation procedure used in the Qing and onwards.

⁵⁰ EOT, 983.

by a realm inhabited by human beings, then the local god and other celestial beings who appear to be related to the ritual of canonisation. Like Empress Zhang who is guided by Zhang Xuanqing, the local god is led by a figure, most likely Li Daoqing who petitioned the Celestial Masters on the god's behalf. The hierarchy of space is made clear by the depiction of a guarded red gate above and between the celestial court and the rest of the procession, as well as a messenger who descends from the celestial realm towards the local god. Temporally, this suggests two different points in the ritual process: The *Ordination Scroll* shows Empress Zhang as a member of the pantheon, which is the end-result, while the Metropolitan Museum scroll portrays the moment that the local god receives the celestial mandate of recognition prior to his inception into the celestial realm. Furthermore, the middle group of human beings in the Metropolitan Museum scroll are depicted in non-Han costume with pointed hats and bound trousers. Some of them carry a palanquin whose occupant is not visible but a tiger skin can be seen hanging from its door.

Despite these differences, the visual similarities between the two works are striking. It is also significant that both record the transmission of scriptures and registers to elevate an individual (a human being and a god) into the celestial pantheon. The *Ordination Scroll* is an example of a high-end document certifying an imperial ordination, while the Metropolitan Museum scroll was produced for a local community of patrons, as indicated in further inscriptions at the end of the scroll (fig. 52). Their similarities suggest that visual conventions for more elaborate records of transmission from the Orthodox Unity order may have been established by the Ming dynasty. As Mark Meulenbeld demonstrates, the practice of canonising local gods had

become a key part of Daoist liturgies from the Song dynasty onwards.⁵¹ By the Ming, canonisation was sufficiently commonplace that it was used as a narrative structure in novels, such as in *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Canonisation of the Gods) (late Ming) and *Sanbao taijian xiyangji tongshu yanyi* 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義 (Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean) (1597), which contains a scene of canonisation by Celestial Master Zhang.⁵² It is thus likely that documents like the Metropolitan Museum scroll was produced in far greater numbers than surviving examples attest. The visual format of the *Ordination Scroll* can be better understood in relation to this wider production of documents of transmission from the Orthodox Unity order.

This chapter uncovered information from the *Ordination Scroll* through a close study of its material and visual features. It identified unusual elements in the scroll and provided possible explanations for them. In particular, these unusual elements may indicate that the scroll was one version of Empress Zhang's ordination document that was probably not kept by the empress. Based on its visual format, it was found that the *Ordination Scroll* shares similarities with certain imperial and religious images and documents, which suggests that the scroll is not an entirely invented object but is constructed in reference to existing pictorial and textual conventions. This aspect of the scroll will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

⁵¹ See Mark Meulenbeld, "Civilized Demons: Ming Thunder Gods from Ritual to Literature" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2007).

⁵² Meulenbeld, "Civilized Demons," chaps 6 and 7; Wang Jianchuan 王見川, "Zhang Tianshi zhi yanjiu: Yi Longhushan yixi wei kaocha zhongxin 張天師之研究：以龍虎山一系為考察中心" (Research on Celestial Master Zhang: With the Mount Longhu Branch as the Focus of Investigation) (PhD diss., National Chung Cheng University, 2003), 116-7. The scene takes place in Luo Maodeng 羅懋登, *Sanbao taijian xiyangji tongshu yanyi* 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義 (Eunuch Sanbao's Records from the Western Ocean) (1597; repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), *juan* 4, p. 246.

This chapter focuses on identifying the deities and spirits depicted in the *Ordination Scroll*. These figures are part of the vast and fluid Daoist pantheon.¹ Although the Three Purities were established as supreme deities of the religion during the sixth century, the celestial beings that occupy the complex otherworldly bureaucracy changed over time.² Different branches of Daoism had their own perspectives on the pantheon. With consideration for the development of Daoism in the Ming dynasty, this chapter attempts to understand the internal logic of the procession in the *Ordination Scroll* and the significance of its particular inclusions and groupings of deities and spirits.

Procession I

The first part of the procession appears after a paper break following the title of the scroll in Daoist characters (see Chapter Two) (fig. 1). The figures near the front of this procession are dressed as civil officials and Daoist priests. They have haloes and are holding ceremonial tablets. After them are figures in military attire carrying different objects and weapons. The official titles of the celestial beings are written vertically in gold to their upper right (see list in Appendix A).

The first visible figure in the scroll wears the formal official ridged cap and a blue outer robe that is decorated with what appears to be a winged dragon (fig. 53). Most of his title in gold has survived. It reads “siming shangqing 司命上卿” (High official,

¹ On the Daoist pantheon, see *EOT*, 61-3.

² On the Three Purities, see *TAC*, 228-232; *EOT*, 840-4.

Director of Destinies) (A1). Only a short slanted stroke located left-of-centre remains of the one or two characters missing from the title. The Director of Destinies has power over the lifespan and general fate of human beings. Given that the ordination of Empress Zhang elevates her into the pantheon, the inclusion of a Director of Destinies in the procession is appropriate as an indication of the celestial bureaucracy's recognition of her change in mortal status and fate.

By the Ming dynasty, the most widely known Director of Destinies was probably the Stove God (Zaoshen 竈神 or 灶神). Originally serving as the deity responsible for food and drink, by the Han dynasty the Stove God had developed into a celestial monitor of human behaviour who adjusted an individual's fate and lifespan according to his or her merit and misdemeanours.³ In *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), reprinted based on a Ming edition, the Stove God is referred to as "Siming zaoshen 司命竈神" (Stove God, Director of Destinies).⁴ He is depicted as a high-ranking official, with a cap with long extensions and a tablet, accompanied by a fierce-looking attendant holding a brush and a scroll to record the fate of human beings (fig. 54). It is thus conceivable that the figure depicted in the scroll is the Stove God. However, when the Stove God is considered within a pantheon rather than as an individual deity during the Ming, he is usually grouped with miscellaneous deities venerated in everyday life. For instance, in a painting from a set of paintings commissioned by Empress Dowager Li in 1609 for the Water-and-Land Assembly, the Stove God and his wife are

³ Huang Yongfeng 黃永鋒, "Zaoshen xinyang chutan 灶神信仰芻探" (Rough Survey of the Belief in the Stove God), *Zhongguo dao jiao* 中國道教 (China Taoism), no. 5 (2006), 34-7.

⁴ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu soushen daquan* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全 (Illustrated Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural in the Origin and Development of the Three Religions) (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 158-9. This was printed from an edition published in 1909 that was in turn printed from a Ming edition, copies of which are in the National Library of China, Beijing, and the Shanghai Library.

represented as an elderly couple in ordinary robes together with the stellar deity Jupiter (Taisui 太歲), Five Dragon deities (Wulong 五龍) and the Earth God and Goddess (Tugong tumu 土公土母) (fig. 55).⁵ In an offering ritual addressed to a pantheon of Daoist deities recorded in the Ming compendium *Shangqing lingbao jidudacheng jinshu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書 (Golden Writings on the Great Achievement of Deliverance by the Numinous Treasure of Highest Purity; henceforth *Golden Writings*), the Stove God is not mentioned by name, but presumably appears in a group at the end of the list as “Six Deities of Earth, Director of Destinies and High Perfected to whom Incense and Candles are Offered at the Residence of the Patron of the Offering Ritual” (Jiaozhu jia feng xianghuo gaozhen Siming tudi liushen 醮主家奉香火高真司命土地六神).⁶ This title suggests that the Stove God as a Director of Destinies belongs with other household deities. Even though he was widely venerated, he does not appear to be highly ranked in the Ming celestial bureaucracy. It is thus doubtful that he is the Director of Destinies who appears together with elevated deities in the *Ordination Scroll*.

Apart from the Stove God, there are many deities who also have the title Director of Destinies in the Daoist pantheon.⁷ A Ming painting titled *Zhisheng Siming xiang* 至聖司命像 (The Most Saintly and the Directors of Destinies) from Baiyunguan 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery) depicts Confucius and his disciples as well as two Director of Destinies and their attendants (fig. 56). The two Directors of Destinies are

⁵ Mei Ninghua 梅寧華 and Tao Xincheng 陶信成, eds., *Beijing wenwu jingcui daxi. Fozaoxiang xia* 北京文物精粹大系. 佛造像下 (Gems of Beijing Cultural Relics Series. Buddhist Statues II) (Beijing: Beijing Publishing House, 2003), 13, no. 84.

⁶ In *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書 (Daoist Texts Outside the Canon) (repr. Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992), vol. 17, 35.53b, 40.20a.

⁷ The title appears many times in a vast offering ritual recorded in *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 39.1-52. For some of the more well-known examples see Chinese Daoist Association et al, *Zhongguo daojiao da cidian* 中國道教大辭典 (Great Dictionary of Daoism in China) (Taizhong shi: Dongjiu qiye youxian gongsi, 1996), 534-5.

portrayed as high-ranking civil officials directly resembling their counterpart in the *Ordination Scroll*. Based on the Song text *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds), they have been identified as Han Yuanxin 韓元信 and Zhang Ziliang 張子良, Left and Right Directors of Destinies (*Zuoyou Siming* 左右司命) and astral deities of the Wenchang 文昌 constellation.⁸

Another, and more probable, identification for the Director of Destinies in the scroll is Mao Ying 茅盈 (145BC – ?) who is the patriarch of the Highest Clarity tradition.⁹ Although he is conventionally portrayed in images as a perfected being in Daoist attire, he does appear in the guise of a civil official, such as in *Sanjiao soushen daquan* together with his two brothers (fig. 57).¹⁰ Mao Ying is most commonly associated with the title of “High Official” (*shangqing* 上卿) as a Director of Destinies. For instance, in *Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈位業圖 (Chart of the Ranks and Functions of the Perfected Numinous Beings), the first synthesised pantheon constructed by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456 – 536), Mao Ying is referred to as “Director of Destinies, High Perfected Official of the Eastern Peak, Perfected Lord of Great Prime” (*Siming duyu shangzhenqing taiyuan zhenjun* 司命東嶽上真卿太元真君).¹¹ He is also referred to as “High Official” in the name of his hagiography that partially survives in the Daoist Canon.¹² One variation of his title is “Director of Destinies of Highest Clarity” (*Shangqing siming* 上清司命), referring to his position as the patriarch of

⁸ DZ 1032, 24.14b-15a; discussed in Yau and Yau, eds., *Shuzhai yu daochang*, 154.

⁹ EOT, 733-4.

¹⁰ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 82. For depictions of Mao Ying in priestly attire, see Wang Shizhen 王世貞, *Liexian quanzhuan* 列仙全傳 (Complete Biographies of Ranked Transcendents) (1600), in *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan* 中國古代版畫叢刊 (Compendium of Ancient Chinese Prints), ed. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), vol. 3, 91, and a Qing painting of him and his brothers in Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹, ed., *Daojiao shenxian huaji* 道教神仙畫集 (Collection of Paintings of Daoist Deities and Transcendents) (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 1995), 96-97.

¹¹ DZ 167, 1.3b.

¹² *Taiyuan zhenren dongyue shangqing siming zhenjun zhuan* 太元真人東嶽上卿司命真君傳 (Biography of the Perfected Being of the Great Prime, High Official of the Eastern Peak, Perfected Lord who Directs Destinies) in *Yunji qiqian* (DZ 1032), 104.10b-20a.

the lineage.¹³ The water radical in the character 清 *qing* may provide an explanation for the short brushstroke remaining from the missing characters in the deity's title in the *Ordination Scroll*.

The next figure in the procession has the title “Sijiao Zhang zhenren” 嗣教張真人 (Inheritor of the Teachings, Perfected Being Zhang) (A2). As the inscription later makes clear, this title refers to the contemporary Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing. His sensitively rendered facial features in the procession suggest the possibility that this image was meant to be a portrait of him. He holds a tablet, wears a lotus crown with a *ruyi* top fastened with a pin, and a red ritual garment with a blue border and gold cloud decoration (fig. 58).¹⁴ This distinct type of vestment is known as “Robe of Descent” (*jiangyi* 絳衣 or 降衣), which is recognisable by its square cut that has no seams across the shoulders. Historical examples can come in different colours, usually showing images of the Daoist cosmology (fig. 59).¹⁵ The red of Zhang Xuanqing's vestment matches that of the Celestial Masters patriarch who is depicted later in the procession.

Behind Zhang Xuanqing is a group of nine women (fig. 60). They include eight celestial maids (*sichen bawei* 侍宸八位) and one figure in their midst with no written title (A3). This latter figure is also dressed in a Robe of Descent and has tied-up hair secured under a lotus crown (fig. 61). Her gender is evident from her white skin and the absence of facial hair. Her hands, which hold a tablet, are concealed under a piece

¹³ Such as in the title *Shangqing siming Mao zhenjun xiuxing zhimi jue* 上清司命茅真君修行指迷訣 (Instructions Pointing Out Errors in Practice, by the Perfected Lord Mao, Director of Destinies of Highest Clarity) DZ 832.

¹⁴ Lotus crown (*lianhua guan* 蓮花冠) as part of Daoist ritual vestments is described in Zhou Gaode 周高德, “Daoshi de fushi 道士的服飾” (Costumes of Daoists), *Zhongguo zongjiao* 中國宗教 (Religions in China) no. 2 (1999), 48-9.

¹⁵ Verity Wilson, “Cosmic Raiment: Daoist Traditions of Liturgical Clothing,” *Orientations* (May 1995), 42-49; TAC, 195-7.

of cloth. As the only figure in the procession with a retinue, she is identifiable as the recipient of the ordination ceremony, who is, according to the inscription, Empress Zhang. Her imperial status is confirmed by the apricot-yellow colour of her robe decorated with five-colour dragon motifs, which echo the decoration in the frame of the scroll. The blue border of the empress' robe is further embellished with *ruyi* patterns in gold. On the whole, the details of her costume are more carefully rendered compared to those of other figures, suggesting her distinguished status.

The depiction of Empress Zhang in ritual vestments is striking because her femininity is downplayed. Notably, her hair is partially revealed when it would normally be concealed under an elaborate phoenix crown that is the formal attire of a Ming empress.¹⁶ The image of Empress Zhang in the context of imperial portraiture will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Here, it should be noted that her portrayal in the *Ordination Scroll* involves a rejection of the common way of representing female deities as celestial imperial women, an example of which is Bixia yuanjun 碧霞元君 (Original Princess of the Jasper Mist) (fig. 62). Instead, she is presented in the *Ordination Scroll* in the guise of a ritual practitioner when, as shall be argued later on, she was not one in real life.

The eight celestial maids are richly adorned with jewelry, which contrasts the rather androgynous appearance of the empress. Their costumes are distinct for the ruffle and feather-like additions extending from their sleeves. Each of the celestial maids carries a different object. The two located in front of the empress carry a thick scroll and a plate holding a rock of unusual shape (fig. 63). The thickness of the scroll depicted is

¹⁶ The formal attire of Ming empresses is described in Li Dongyang 李東陽 et al, *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 (Collected Administrative Statutes of the Great Ming) (1587; repr. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1964), 60.32a-39b.

reminiscent of the *Ordination Scroll* itself and indeed it may be a representation of the work. Perhaps it is included as evidence of the empress' right to be present in the celestial realm among deities and perfected beings. The two maids directly behind the empress carry a round box in red, probably to indicate lacquer, as well as a plate holding a sculpture of a coiling dragon in gold (fig. 64). Flames appear to be emitting from the mouth of the dragon, so it may be an elaborate incense burner. The pair following carries pennants, one is a *jing* 旌 with multi-coloured plume hangings, the other is a *chuang* 幢 on which is depicted a blue dragon against a yellow background. The last pair carries a feathered fan and whisk. Many of these objects are typically displayed in ritual and depicted in images as attributes of celestial attendants.¹⁷ For instance, in the wall paintings of Yongle gong and Fahai Temple, there are female attendants among a pantheon of Daoist deities holding banners, fans as well as a round box like the one in the *Ordination Scroll* (fig. 65, 66).

Following the retinue of Empress Zhang, another section of the scroll is missing. Just before the break, the title *Dugong lu zhong guanjiang eryuan* 都功錄中官將二員 (Two Middle Generals of the All Merit Register) is left visible, which indicates that at least two additional figures were depicted in this missing section (A4).¹⁸ A register (*lu* 錄) is a list of protective deities that its holder can command. *Dugong lu* 都功錄 (All Merit Register) corresponds to the title of *Taishang sanwu dugong jinglu* 太上三五都功經錄 (Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High), which is one of the sacred texts transmitted to Empress Zhang as listed in the inscription. The depiction of two generals in connection to this text confirms that the

¹⁷ On many of these items as ritual objects, see *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 25.13a-15b.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the term “zhongguan 中官” can mean “eunuchs”, which would be appropriate for attendants of the empress. However, it is not clear if this is the meaning here, since later on the title appears again in the sense of “Middle General”. Eunuch generals do appear in Daoist texts. See Liu Ts'un-yan, “Was Celestial Master Zhang a Historical Figure?,” in *Daoism in History: Essays in Honour of Liu Ts'un-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 232-8.

procession is a visual representation of the empress' elevation into the heavenly realm after the ordination ceremony or transmission had taken place. As will be explained later, the All Merit Register is a foundational text for novices, which is perhaps the reason why protective generals associated with this text are depicted closest to the empress in the procession.

After the missing section comes Jiutian Qingcheng Kehan zhangren 九天青城可韓丈人 (Kehan the Elder of Qingcheng of the Nine Heavens) (A5) and Jiutian caifangshi 九天採訪使 (Investigation Envoy of the Nine Heavens) (A6). They are both dressed as high officials with ridged caps like the Director of Destinies depicted earlier (fig. 67, 68). These two deities are associated with a later Daoist sect known as Divine Empyrean (Shenxiao 神霄). The Divine Empyrean sect was promoted by Song emperor Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1101 – 1125), following the teachings of Lin Lingsu 林靈素 (1076 – 1120), a master who could summon rain with his knowledge of Thunder Rites (*leifa* 雷法).¹⁹ The emperor pronounced himself the incarnation of the Great Emperor of Long Life (Changsheng dadi 長生大帝) who reigned supreme in the Divine Empyrean, the hitherto unidentified highest sphere of Heaven. He is joined by eight other rulers of the celestial realm, forming the Nine Monarchs (Jiuchen 九宸).²⁰ They are subordinate only to the Three Purities and Four Sovereigns (*siyu* 四御). This is explained in *Wushang jiuxiao yuqing dafan ziwei xuandu leiting yujing* 無上九霄玉清大梵紫微玄都雷霆玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Thunderclap of the Great Brahma Pole Star Dark Capital of the Highest Jade Purity Nine Empyreans), a

¹⁹ On the Divine Empyrean sect see *EOT*, 889-892; Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Li Yuanguo 李遠國, *Shenxiao leifa: Daojiao Shenxiao pai yange yu sixiang* 神霄雷法: 神霄派沿革與思想 (Divine Empyrean Thunder Rites: The Development and Thinking of the Divine Empyrean School) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2003); Chao Shin-yi, "Huizong and the Divine Empyrean Palace Temple-Network," in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, eds. Patricia Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 324-360.

²⁰ Li, *Shenxiao leifa*, chap 6.

text in circulation during the thirteenth century that provides an overview of the Divine Empyrean pantheon and rituals.²¹ It lists the titles of the Nine Monarchs as:

the Great Emperor of Long Life, the Perfected King of Jade Purity of the Supreme Divine Empyrean. Following on are the Great Emperor of Blue Efflorescence of the Eastern Apex, the Heavenly Worthy of Universal Transformation of the Sound of Thunder Responding to the Prime of the Nine Heavens, the Great Emperor of Ancestral Thunder of the Nine Heavens, the Great Heavenly Emperor Taiyi of the Jade Palace of Purple Tenuity of the Highest Clarity, the Great Emperor of Deep Cavern of Six Heavens, the Heavenly Emperor of Six Waves, the Divine Lord Kehan the Elder, and the Divine Lord of the Investigation Envoy of Nine Heavens.

高上神霄玉清真王長生大帝，其次則有東極青華大帝，九天應元雷聲普化天尊，九天雷祖大帝，上清紫微碧玉宮太乙大天帝，六天洞淵大帝，六波天主帝君，可韓司丈人真君，九天採訪真君...²²

Kehan and the Investigation Envoy are the last two of the Nine Monarchs. The above text gives them a clearly lower standing compared to the other deities as they are referred to as “Perfected Lords” (*zhenjun* 真君) rather than “Great Emperor” (*dadi* 大帝).

Kehan and the Investigation Envoy also appear in other guises.²³ Prior to their incorporation into the Divine Empyrean pantheon, Kehan and the Investigation Envoy were deities of Mount Qingcheng (Qingcheng shan 青城山) in Sichuan (as his title in

²¹ DZ 15.

²² DZ 15, 1.11a-b. The titles of the Nine Monarchs are also listed in the Ming dynasty text *Tianhuang zhidaotaiqing yuce* 天皇至道太清玉冊 (Jade Fascicles of Great Clarity on the Ultimate Way of the Celestial Sovereign) DZ 1483, 5.11a-b.

²³ Separately, the Investigation Envoy has been known by several different names. See Florian C. Reiter, “The Name of the Nameless and Thunder Magic,” in *Scriptures, Schools and Forms of Practice in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, eds. Poul Andersen and Florian C. Reiter (Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2005), 104-5.

the scroll suggests) and Mount Lu (Lushan 廬山) in Jiangxi respectively.²⁴

According to records in *Lushan taiping xingguo gong caifang zhenjun shishi* 廬山太平興國宮採訪真君事實 (Veritable Facts Concerning the Divine Lord Investigator of the Temple of the Peaceful and Prosperous Nation on Mount Lu), imperial rituals venerating the Investigation Envoy at Mount Lu continued to be performed until at least the late Yuan period.²⁵ However, if they are considered in a gathering of deities, it is much more likely that they would appear in their Divine Emyrean identities. This is verified by some of the figures depicted later in the procession.

The deities that follow in the procession are also elevated deities who administer different realms (fig. 69-71). They are Shangyuan tianguan dadi 上元天官大帝 (Thearch of the Office of Heaven of the Upper Prime) (A7), Zhongyuan diguan dadi 中元地官大帝 (Thearch of the Office of Earth of the Middle Prime) (A8), Xiayuan shuiguan dadi 下元水官大帝 (Thearch of the Office of Water of the Lower Prime) (A9). Commonly known together as “*sanguan* 三官” or the “Three Officials”, they are established deities in the Daoist pantheon, as veneration of them can be traced back to the second century, to the early Celestial Masters in Sichuan.²⁶ The deities were associated with the Festivals of the Three Primes by the fifth century.²⁷

Like the earlier figures in the procession, the Three Officials in the *Ordination Scroll* are portrayed as high officials wearing ornate ridged caps. They are dressed in robes of blue, yellow and black respectively with dragons decorated on them. Their colours

²⁴ See Du Guangting 杜光庭, *Luyi ji* 錄異記 (Record of Marvels) (921 – 925) DZ 591, 1.3a; *Guang Huangdi benxing ji* 廣黃帝本行記 (Expanded Annals of the Yellow Emperor) (881) DZ 290, 1.8a.

²⁵ DZ1286, 4.

²⁶ Ma Shutian 馬書田, *Huaxia zhu shen* 華夏諸神 (Chinese Gods) (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 1990), 58-63; *EOT*, 833-4.

²⁷ Discussed in Huang, “The Triptych,” 178-9. Also see Huang’s article, “Summoning the Gods: Paintings of the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water and Their Association with Daoist Ritual Performance in the Southern Song Period (1127 – 1279),” *Artibus Asiae* 61, no. 1 (2001), 5-52.

conform to pictorial conventions of their representation in painting. It is roughly evident in the triptych of the three deities datable to the twelfth century in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 72), and more clearly in a hanging scroll in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, attributed to Ma Lin 馬麟 (thirteenth century), but should date to the Ming period (fig. 73).²⁸ The association of blue with heaven matches the convention of *qingtian* 青天 (blue sky), while the pairings of yellow-earth and black-water conform to the system of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行).²⁹ The Three Officials in these examples similarly wear ridged caps, an attribute that is repeated in their printed image in *Sanjiao soushen daquan* (fig. 74).

However, the Official of Water in the *Ordination Scroll* is distinct in the group and from the above examples for his dark complexion and fierce expression. In the other images, the Three Officials are uniformly light skinned and benign-looking. Instead, the Official of Water in the *Ordination Scroll* is more closely comparable to his equivalent identified in the Yongle gong wall paintings who is unmistakably demonic in appearance (fig. 75). This alternative representation of the Official of Water suggests an extension in the conception of the deity, one that connects him not only with water, but also as an overseer of the underworld. In *Taishang sanyuan cifu shezui jie'e xiaozai yansheng baoming miaojing* 太上三元賜福赦罪解厄消災延生保命妙經 (Highest Precious Scripture of the Three Primordials that Grants Fortunes, Absolve Sins, Avert Calamities and Protect Lives) (Yuan dynasty or before), the Official of Water not only governs the realm of rivers and oceans, but he is also responsible for the registers of ghosts and spirits of the dead, and for recording the

²⁸ Here I follow Susan Huang's dating of the work in her 2002 dissertation on the triptych. For a discussion of the dating see Huang, "The Triptych," 5-6, notes 8 and 9. For the dating of the National Palace Museum painting, known as *The Excursion of the Three Officials* (*Sanguan chuxun* 三官出巡) see Huang "The Triptych," 497 and TAC, 235-6.

²⁹ The five phases are wood, fire, metal, water and earth; their corresponding colours are green/blue, red, white, black and yellow. See Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 1146-7.

merits and wrongdoings of mortals.³⁰ These additional responsibilities of the Official of Water overlap with those of the Kings of Hell who review the sins of the dead in the underworld. The concept of the Ten Kings of Hell, popularised in the tenth century, is of Buddhist origins but was later diffused into different religious systems.³¹ A set of Southern Song dynasty scrolls of the Kings of Hell by the workshop of Jin Dashou 金大受 show the infernal judges with magisterial attendants and scenes of torture (fig. 76).³² The kings wear regal costumes and although their complexions vary, they appear fierce, their faces typified by glaring eyes and furrowed brow, a depiction comparable to the Official of Water in the *Ordination Scroll*.

There is a clear change in the status of the figures at this point in the procession. Previously, apart from Zhang Xuanqing and Empress Zhang's group, the deities are dressed as high officials, reflecting their position as administrators of different spheres of the Daoist cosmology. The figures in the next section are instead dressed in priestly costume. Their appearance shows their status as human beings who had attained transcendence.

The four figures that follow have the titles Zu tianshi 祖天師 (Ancestral Celestial Master) (A10), Ge xianweng 葛仙翁 (Old Transcendent Ge) (A11), Xu zhenjun 許真君 (Perfected Lord Xu) (A12), Fuqiu zhenjun 浮丘真君 (Perfected Lord Fuqiu) (A13). They can be considered as a group as, to begin with, they are all transcendents who are associated with the founding of particular Daoist lineages (fig. 77-80). The

³⁰ DZ 1442, 4b-5a.

³¹ Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law*, 277. On the Ten Kings of Hell, see Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

³² Five of the scrolls are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, while four are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and one is in a private collection in Japan. See Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law*, no. 23 and 24; Lothar Ledderose, "The Bureaucracy in Hell," *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 162-185.

title of the first figure, Ancestral Celestial Master, refers to the patriarch of the Celestial Master sect, Zhang Ling 張陵 or Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (second century) (fig. 77).³³ According to legends, the deified Laozi (Taishang laojun 太上老君) revealed sacred teachings to him in 142 AD, based upon which he established his following in the Sichuan province. In addition to his role as the first Celestial Master, Zhang is also venerated as a popular exorcist whose image was customarily displayed during the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth day of the fifth month.³⁴ The depiction of him with glaring eyes, wild beard and hair and in a red robe was well-established by the Ming dynasty, evident in a painting by Zhang Chong 張翀 (fl. 1622 – 1644) of the patriarch dated 1639 in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 82). Similar depictions can also be found in woodblock prints such as in the Ming encyclopedia *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609 (fig. 83).³⁵

The next figure is distinctly portrayed in the handscroll with white beard and hair (fig. 78). His title, Old Transcendent Ge, normally refers to Ge Hong 葛洪 (283 – 343) who wrote *Baopu zi* 抱朴子 (Book of the master who embraces simplicity), a text on the early religious teachings and ritual practices of the Jiangnan region.³⁶ In a grouping of preeminent Daoist masters, however, the figure should be Ge Hong's granduncle, Ge Xuan 葛玄 (164 – 244), commonly known as Ge Xiangong 葛仙公

³³ On Zhang Daoling, see Holmes Welch, "The Chang Tien-shih and Taoism in China," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 4 (1957-1958), 188-212; Zhang Zehong 張澤洪, *Zhangtianshi* 張天師 (Celestial Master Zhang) (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1999); Ma Shutian 馬書田, *Zhongguo daojiao zhushen* 中國道教諸神 (Daoist Gods in China) (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 2002), 213-7; Liu, "Was Celestial Master Zhang a Historical Figure?" 189-253.

³⁴ Bo Songnian 薄松年, *Zhongguo menshen hua* 中國門神畫 (Pictures of Chinese Door Gods) (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 1998), 258. However, another exorcist Zhong Kui 鍾馗 increasingly replaced Zhang Daoling as the deity of the Dragon Boat Festival from the mid-Ming dynasty onwards. See Lin Shuxin 林淑心, ed., *Wuri Zhongkui hua tezhan* 午日鐘馗畫特展 (Chung K'uei Paintings on the Fifth Day of the Fifth Month) (Taipei: National Museum of History, 1996), 74.

³⁵ Wang Qi 王圻 and Wang Siyi 王思義, *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers) (1609; repr. Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), *renwu* 人物, 11.3a.

³⁶ *EOT*, 215-7, 442-3.

(Transcendent Duke Ge).³⁷ Accounts on Ge Xuan establish him as a patron of alchemical arts and as the first recipient of the Lingbao (Numinous Treasure) scriptures.³⁸

Following Old Transcendent Ge is Perfected Lord Xu (Xu zhenjun 許真君), a title referring to Xu Xun 許遜 (239 – 374), also known as Xu Jingyang 許旌陽 (fig. 79).³⁹ Xu Xun is honored as the patriarch of a Daoist sect known as the Pure and Bright Way of Loyalty and Filiality (Jingming zhongxiao dao 淨明忠孝道), which was established by the late thirteenth century with origins in the Tang.⁴⁰ Centered on mountains west of Nanchang 南昌, Jiangxi province, the sect was syncretic in nature with connections to Neo-Confucian teachings of the Song.⁴¹

The last figure in this group is Perfected Lord Fuqiu (Fuqiu zhenjun 浮丘真君) or Fuqiu liang 浮丘良 (fig. 80). Song dynasty hagiographies record his activities as a transcendent together with his disciples at Mount Huagai (Huagai shan 華蓋山), central Jiangxi province.⁴² Although Fuqiu is not venerated as a patriarch, he is linked with the founding of an influential tradition of exorcism known as Correct Method of the Celestial Heart (Tianxin zhengfa 天心正法) during the Song dynasty.⁴³

³⁷ EOT, 444-5. For instance, one biography of Ge Xuan is titled *Taiji Ge Xiangong zhuan* 太極葛仙公傳 (Biography of Transcendent Duke Ge of Taiji) DZ 450.

³⁸ Yamada Toshiaki, "The Lingbao School," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2004), chap 9.

³⁹ Ma, *Zhongguo daojiao zhushen*, 222-6; EOT, 1124-6.

⁴⁰ Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1115.

⁴¹ Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 63.

⁴² *Huagai shan Fuqiu Wang Guo san zhenjun shishi* 華蓋山浮丘王郭三真君事實 (Factual Account of the Three True Lords of Mount Huagai: Fuqiu, Wang, and Guo) DZ778, originally compiled in 1261; *Shangqing tianxin zhengfa* 上清天心正法 (Correct Method of the Celestial Heart, of the Highest Clarity Tradition) DZ 566, after mid-12th century.

⁴³ See Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Also see Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, 420-1; Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1065-7; EOT, 989-993.

The grouping together of four eminent Daoist masters appears to fit the category “Four Great Celestial Masters” (*Si da tianshi* 四大天師); here, *tianshi* 天師 is a reverential title for a Daoist master rather than a specific reference to the Celestial Master tradition. This category was popularised by the novel *Xiyou ji* 西游記 (Journey to the West), published during the sixteenth century, in which the Four Great Celestial Masters guarded the Hall of the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang dian 玉皇殿). However, in *Xiyou ji*, the grouping consisted of Zhang Daoling, Xu Xun, Ge Xuan and one Qiu Hongji 邱洪濟, a transcendent with no known hagiography, rather than Fuqiu.⁴⁴ Another grouping is depicted in a Qing-dynasty painting of the Four Great Celestial Masters reproduced in *Daojiao shenxian huaji* 道教神仙畫集 (Collection of Paintings of Daoist Deities and Transcendents) (fig. 84).⁴⁵ The fourth figure of the group has been identified as Sa Shoujian 薩守堅 (fl. 1141 – 1178?), a master of Thunder Rites.⁴⁶

The inclusion of Fuqiu in the *Ordination Scroll* suggests a different categorisation from the “Four Great Celestial Masters”. According to the Ming-dynasty manual *Tianhuang zhidao taiqing yuce* 天皇至道太清玉冊 (Jade Fascicles of Great Clarity on the Ultimate Way of the Celestial Sovereign; henceforth *Jade Fascicles*) by Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378 – 1448), Xu Xun, Ge Xuan and Zhang Daoling are administrators of the Thunder Ministry (*leibu* 雷部). They respectively govern the *Tai*, *Xuan* and *Du* Thunderclap Departments (*Leiting taixuandu sheng* 雷霆泰玄都省), while Fuqiu is meant to audit their affairs (*jianshi leiting san sheng shi* 僉事雷霆三省事).⁴⁷ This

⁴⁴ Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩, *Xiyou ji* 西游記 (Journey to the West) (repr. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985), 65, 1108.

⁴⁵ Zhang , ed., *Daojiao shenxian huaji*, 98-9.

⁴⁶ On Sa Shoujian, see *EOT*, 825-6.

⁴⁷ DZ 1483, 8.2b.

grouping is derived from the Divine Empyrean tradition that developed from the Song dynasty. It is explained in *Wushang jiuxiao yuqing dafan ziwei xuandu leiting yujing*, noted earlier, which further makes clear that these administrators of the Thunder Ministry are subordinate to the Nine Monarchs, discussed earlier.⁴⁸ The inclusion of this specific group of Daoist masters from the Divine Empyrean confirms the likelihood that Kehan the Elder and the Investigation Envoy are included in the procession as two of the Nine Monarchs.

The next three figures in the procession are also dressed in ritual vestments (fig. 85-7). They have the titles Scripture Master of Ancient Times (*Shanggu jingshi* 上古經師) (A14), Registration Master of Ancient Times (*Shanggu jishi* 上古籍師) (A15) and Ordination Master of Ancient Times (*Shanggu dushi* 上古度師) (A16). *Jingshi* 經師, *jishi* 籍師 and *dushi* 度師 are the titles of the three chief officiants of the Daoist ordination ceremony.⁴⁹ They are meant to be figures of virtue and knowledge, capable of interpreting the esoteric meaning of sacred texts, and who were responsible for the critical rites of the ordination ceremony.⁵⁰ The titles could also refer to specific historical or legendary figures. *Jade Fascicles* from the Ming defines the “Three Masters” (*sanshi* 三師) as Zhang Daoling, Zhang Heng 張衡 (? – 179) and Zhang Lu 張魯 (? – 215 or 216).⁵¹ Zhang Heng and Zhang Lu are conventionally referred to as Zhang Daoling’s son and grandson respectively.⁵² The definition given by *Jade Fascicles* does not fit the *Ordination Scroll* since Zhang Daoling has already appeared in the procession, while Zhang Heng and Zhang Lu are depicted later. Two

⁴⁸ DZ 15, 1.12a

⁴⁹ EOT, 19; Kohn, “Medieval Daoist Ordination,” 389.

⁵⁰ Benn, *The Cavern-mystery Transmission*, 40-1.

⁵¹ DZ 1483, 8.2b.

⁵² On Zhang Heng and Zhang Lu, see EOT, 1227-8, 1232-3.

further definitions are given in *Golden Writings*.⁵³ It explains that in the mortal realm, Ordination Master, Registration Master and Scripture Master stand for a novice's teacher, his teacher's teacher, and the latter's teacher respectively, while in the celestial realm, the terms refer to the Three Purities, the highest deities in the Daoist pantheon. However, neither definitions work in the *Ordination Scroll*. The three figures depicted cannot be Empress Zhang's chief ordination officiants since the master responsible for the empress' ordination, Zhang Xuanqing, is already depicted at the beginning of the procession. Moreover, the three figures portrayed in the scroll are referred to as masters of "ancient times" (*shanggu* 上古) and thus are not figures contemporaneous to the empress. They clearly cannot be the Three Purities: apart from the fact that they are not depicted with the iconographic features of the highest deities, it would not make sense for them to be presented as followers in a procession.

Given that the Celestial Masters lineage appears elsewhere in the procession, the reference here to officiating masters of ancient times should refer to transmissions from other early traditions. As will be seen in the inscription discussed in Chapter Three, the most prestigious scriptural corpus transmitted to Empress Zhang is *Shangqing dadong jinglu* 上清大洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity) of the Highest Clarity tradition. It is possible that the three officiating masters depicted are related to the transmission of this text. *Dongxuan Lingbao sanshi ji* 洞玄靈寶三師記 (Record of the Three Masters of Numinous Treasures), preface dated 920, specifically identifies the Scripture Master as Tian Yingxu 田應虛, the Registration Master as Feng Weiliang 馮惟良, disciple of Tian, and the Ordination Master as Ying Yijie 應夷節 (810 – 894), disciple of Feng.⁵⁴ The

⁵³ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 24.17a-b.

⁵⁴ DZ 444, 2a-9a.

text presents them as direct successors of the Highest Clarity lineage stemming from Tao Hongjing who have all reached the highest level of cultivation.⁵⁵ Notably, according to this text, the Ordination Master Ying Yijie was initiated in all the scriptural traditions, including Orthodox Unity by the eighteenth Celestial Master Zhang Shaoren at Mount Longhu.⁵⁶ He would serve as a bridge between the Highest Clarity and the Orthodox Unity lineages as well as an early example of a master who has successfully been initiated in a complete hierarchy of scriptures. As will be explained in Chapter Three, this latter point is particularly relevant to Empress Zhang's ordination. However, it should be noted that while the Three Masters represented in the *Ordination Scroll* may refer to the Highest Clarity lineage, their titles in the scroll seem deliberately vague. As such, they could also be a broad reference to the early transmission and hence the provenance of the various sacred texts that Empress Zhang receives.

The next group of figures in the procession constitutes the lineage of the Celestial Masters. They are similarly depicted in ritual attire with cloud decorations as the previous group. Since the patriarch of the order, Zhang Daoling, has already been depicted earlier in the procession, the group begins with Inheriting Master of Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi sishi* 正一嗣師) (A17), followed by Continuing Master of Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi xishi* 正一系師) (A18), Female Master of Orthodox Unity (*Zhengyi nüshi* 正一女師) (A19), Left servant, Perfected Being Wang (*Zuoshi Wang zhenjun* 左侍王真君) (A20) and Right servant, Perfected Being Zhao (*Youshi Zhao zhenjun* 右侍趙真君) (A21) (fig. 88-92). Inheriting Master and Continuing Master are the conventional titles for Zhang Daoling's son Zhang Heng and grandson Zhang

⁵⁵ See discussion in Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 417-8.

⁵⁶ DZ 444, 1.5b-6b.

Lu.⁵⁷ Perfected Beings Wang and Zhao refer to Wang Chang 王長 and Zhao Sheng 趙升, followers of Zhang Daoling who reached transcendence on the same day as their master.⁵⁸

The remaining figure the Female Master of Orthodox Unity is significant given that the scroll is a record of an empress' ordination (fig. 90). While the Orthodox Unity tradition of succession is patrilineal, textual sources and ritual guides do invoke the Female Master as part of the order's founding lineage. In earlier texts, there may be some variation in the order; for instance, in *Taishang jinshu yudie baozhang yi* 太上金書玉牒寶章儀 (Protocol for Precious Petitions of Jade Documents and Gold Writings of the Most High), the Female Master is located directly after the Ancestral Celestial Master and in front of the Inheriting and Continuing Masters.⁵⁹ An unusual example is Tao Hongjing's *Dengzhen yinjue* 登真隱訣 (Secret Instructions on the Ascent to Perfection) (492 – 514). In this text, the Succeeding Master is omitted, leaving the Celestial Master, the Female Master and the Continuing Master to form a trinity.⁶⁰ In offering rituals recorded in the Ming-dynasty *Golden Writings*, however, it is conventional to refer to the group as the “Three Perfected Beings, Inheriting, Continuing, Female Masters of Orthodox Unity” (*Zhengyi si xi nü sanshi zhenren* 正一嗣系女三師真人).⁶¹ Thus, the inclusion of the Female Master in the *Ordination Scroll* and her position in the Celestial Masters lineage is not unusual. Her presence in the procession legitimises the ordination of Empress Zhang by referring to the possibility for female transcendence from the earliest history of the Celestial Master tradition.

⁵⁷ Hu, ed., *Zhongguo daojiao da cidian*, 110.

⁵⁸ Hu, ed., *Zhongguo daojiao da cidian*, 254.

⁵⁹ DZ 806, 4b.

⁶⁰ DZ 421, 3.8a.

⁶¹ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 39.11a; 40.6b, 24b.

Given that the Celestial, Inheriting and Continuing Masters are all recognised as male members of the Zhang family, who then is the Female Master? There are different interpretations. *Wushang biyao* 無上祕要 (The Essence of the Supreme Secrets) of the late sixth century is clear upon her identity as Zhang Daoling's wife.⁶² The notion that those in the position of Celestial Master and Female Master were also husband and wife seemed to have been accepted during the sixth century.⁶³ Others have highlighted the pivotal role that Zhang Lu's mother, a shamaness, played in the garnering political support for the early Celestial Masters. For instance, Liu T'sun-yan suggests that she was the archetypal Female Master whose importance led to the emphasis on the position in such texts as *Dengzhen yinjue*, noted above.⁶⁴ An alternative identification of the Female Master as Zhang Daoling's daughter developed later.⁶⁵ It appears in *Qingwei zhaifa* 清微齋法 (Pure Subtlety Liturgies of Purification) from the fourteenth century, which includes Zhang Daoling's daughter, Zhang Wenji 張文姬, in the Orthodox Unity founding lineage, giving her the title *Taixuan shengmu nüshi* 泰玄聖母女師 (Female Master, Saintly Mother of Great Mystery).⁶⁶ *Qingwei zhaifa* is a ritual text of the Way of Pure Subtlety (Qingwei dao 清微道), a tradition of exorcism and therapy that was established in the thirteenth century. *Qingwei zhaifa* legitimises the Pure Subtlety lineage by relating it to other more established Daoist traditions. Notably, the text lists many female deities and

⁶² DZ 1138, 84.10b.

⁶³ In an annotation on the Female Master in *Dengzhen yinjue* noted above, Tao Hongjing states that the grouping of three masters, including one female master, had existed prior to the Han dynasty, except they did not have to be husband and wife or father and son. This indicates that during Tao's time, the Celestial Master and the Female Master were considered a couple. DZ 421, 3.8a.

⁶⁴ Liu, "Was Celestial Master Zhang a Historical Figure?," 200. There is suggestion that Zhang Daoling and Zhang Heng were Zhang Lu's inventions. See Barbara Hendrichke, "Early Daoist Movements," *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 139-141.

⁶⁵ Zhang Daoling had four daughters according to *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian hou ji* 歷世真仙體道通鑒後集 (Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror of Transcendents who Embodied the Dao through the Ages) DZ 298, 2.14a-b.

⁶⁶ DZ 224, 1.10a.

perfected beings, such as Zhang Wenji, which may be an attempt to elevate the position of the Way of Pure Subtlety's own matriarch Zu Shu 祖舒 (fl. 889 – 904).⁶⁷

Judging by her youth, the Female Master in the *Ordination Scroll* is likely to be based on the last interpretation, as Zhang Daoling's daughter. She is dressed no differently from her male counterparts, except her robe is pinkish in colour, which distinguishes her from the others in the group wearing red, blue and green clothing. The resemblance between Empress Zhang and the Female Master in the *Ordination Scroll* creates a visual analogy that the empress has essentially become a Female Master of Orthodox Unity as a result of her ordination ceremony (fig. 93, 94). However, their portrayal in androgynous ritual attire is not unusual. A painting from a set of Water-and-Land paintings made for Baoningsi 寶寧寺 (Temple of Treasured Peace) in Shanxi province during the Ming dynasty shows a female Daoist dressed in this way (fig. 95). Another matriarch of the Way of Pure Subtlety, Wei Huacun 魏華存, is depicted with a similar costume in *Yushu baojing* (fig. 96).

After the Celestial Masters lineage, there are two figures depicted in the procession before another break in the paper (fig. 97, 98). These two figures have the title Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君 (Divine Lord of Zitong) (A22) and Perfected Being Qingluo (Qingluo zhenren 青羅真人) (A23). They are followed by a missing third figure for whom a title is visible: "...luo zhenren 羅真人" (A24). Only the right half of the first character of the title remains. From the structure of the brushstrokes, the incomplete character should be *yu* 鬱, which is a variation of the character *yu* 鬱. In other words,

⁶⁷ On Zu Shu see Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Three Pines, 2003), 132-3; Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, *Zhongguo daojiao shi* 中國道教史 (History of Daoism in China) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1990), 565-6.

the full title of the missing figure is Yuluo zhenren 鬱羅真人 (Perfected Being Yuluo).

The Divine Lord of Zitong is a multi-faceted deity who was widely popular by the late imperial period. Originally, the deity began as a storm-summoning serpent feared by the people of Zitong, a town in Northern Sichuan.⁶⁸ By the mid-eighth century, the deity was anthropomorphised as a protector deity, subsequently assimilating the astral god Wenchang, patron deity of the literary arts.⁶⁹ By the fifteenth century the deity was venerated nation-wide as the patron of the scholar-official elite.⁷⁰ He is usually depicted in two guises: One is as a prosperous official, such as in a 1596 painting by Ding Yunpeng 丁雲鵬 (1547 – c. 1628) in the British Museum that shows Zitong or Wenchang riding a horse with servants in the upper register and Kuixing 魁星, another god for literary success, in the lower part (fig. 99).⁷¹ A second common depiction of Zitong is as a scholar in a plain robe and a type of headscarf known as *futou* 幞頭 popular in the Tang and Song. This latter image of Zitong is portrayed in the *Ordination Scroll* and in sources such as *San cai tu hui* and *Huitu sanjiao soushen daquan* (fig. 100, 101).⁷²

Unlike Zitong, Perfected Beings Qingluo and Yuluo are not deities who enjoyed widespread popularity. However, according to some Daoist texts and ritual manuals, they held important roles in the celestial pantheon.⁷³ *Shangqing Lingbao dafa* 上清靈

⁶⁸ Terry F. Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale: The Book of Transformations of Wenchang, the Divine Lord of Zitong* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). The introduction provides an overview of the development of the Zitong cult.

⁶⁹ Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale*, 50.

⁷⁰ Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale*, 77.

⁷¹ TAC, 267, no. 89.

⁷² Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.6a. *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 37.

⁷³ Apart from the texts discussed below, Perfected Being Yuluo's name appear in offering rituals recorded in *Golden Writings*. The title "Perfected Being Qingluo of Highest Clarity" (*Shangqing Yuluo zhenren* 上清青羅真人) appears in the Great Offering for Universal Heaven (*putian dajiao* 普天大醮)

寶大法 compiled by Wang Qizhen 王契真 and transmitted in the Song clearly explains the responsibilities of Perfected Being Qingluo in the context of the “Method to Cure Disasters of the Eight Solar Terms and Nine Palaces” (*Jiugong bajie yuzai fa* 九宮八節愈災法). According to this text, he is:

in charge of predestined doom and the limits of calendric periods, the passing of the Seven Governors (sun, moon and five luminaries); [his] jurisdiction includes disasters of the people and adversities of the nation of the Lower Prime, eclipses of the sun and moon, changes in the five luminaries, loss of orbit, breaking open of the sky and earthquakes, demonic and ominous comets, strange luminaries and abnormal pneumas; [he is] also in charge of the disasters and auspiciousness of the nine states (ancient administrative divisions).

主劫數曆限，推遷七政，司括下元民災國厄，日月薄蝕，五星變易，失度差躔，天坼地震，妖彗凶孛，怪星異氣，亦主九土災祥。⁷⁴

In short, the Perfected Being Qingluo oversees all forms of inauspicious natural phenomena that lead to disasters. The above ritual and explanation is repeated in the Ming dynasty text *Lingbao wuliang duren shangjing da fa* 靈寶無量度人上經大法 (Great Rites of the Superior Scripture of the Numinous Treasure on Limitless Salvation).⁷⁵ The connection of Perfected Being Qingluo to calamities is further indicated in *Yuanshi tianzun shuo shiyi yao da xiaozai shenzhou jing* 元始天尊說十一曜大消災神呪經 (Scripture of the divine incantations of the eleven great luminaries for the elimination of disasters, Pronounced by the Heavenly Worthy of Original Commencement), produced before the end of the twelfth century.⁷⁶ In this text, Qingluo has an audience with the Heavenly Worthy of Original Commencement

among a large group of Highest Clarity perfected beings. It also appears in a offering memorial for the Office of the Stars (*Xingfu jiao du shu* 星府醮都疏). See *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 35.52b, 39.35a.

⁷⁴ DZ 1221, 12.12a.

⁷⁵ DZ 219, 33.7a-10b, esp. 8a.

⁷⁶ DZ 43.

who reveals incantations addressed to the Eleven Luminaries in response to disasters. The Perfected Being Qingluo is then able to transmit the teachings to the human realm.⁷⁷ This means that while Qingluo is associated with calamities, he also possess the power and compassion to save human beings from them.

Perfected Being Yuluo also appears in a text as a listener to the Heavenly Worthy of Original Commencement who then spreads the teachings he has learnt. This undated text is *Bixia yuanjun huguo bimin puji baosheng miaojing* 碧霞元君護國庇民普濟保生妙經 (Scripture of the Goddess of the Clouds of Dawn, for the Protection of the State and the Succor of the People, and for the Salvation of All Creatures), which explains the origins and powers of the goddess Bixia yuanjun.⁷⁸ It presents Yuluo as a transmitter of teachings that could save human beings from suffering. More specifically, the Perfected Being is ascribed with a clear position in *Lingbao wuliang duren shangjing da fa*. In this text, Yuluo is described as one of the original perfected beings who helped in the celestial compilation of fundamental sacred texts that were then revealed to human beings:

Perfected Being Zhending, Perfected Being Yuluo and Perfected Being Guangmiao compiled talismans and pictures of the thirty-six volumes of the True Scripture to form the Treasured Register of Middle Covenant; [they] used the writings of the thirty-six volumes of the True Scripture to form the Great Methods of Numinous Treasure. As a result [these sacred texts] were promulgated...

真定真人、鬱羅真人、光妙真人，集三十六部真經符圖，為中盟寶籙，以三十六部真經之文，為靈寶大法，因此流傳...⁷⁹

⁷⁷ DZ 43, 1.5b-6a.

⁷⁸ DZ 1445 1.1b, 6b, 7b.

⁷⁹ DZ 219, 2ab.

The role of Perfected Being Yuluo, together with Zhending and Guangmiao, as transmitters of the Numinous Treasure corpus is repeated in Wang Qizhen's *Shangqing Lingbao dafa*. In this text, they are known as Numinous Treasure Scripture Master (*Lingbao jingshi* 靈寶經師), Numinous Treasure Registration Master (*Lingbao jishi* 靈寶籍師) and Numinous Treasure Ordination Master (*Lingbao dushi* 靈寶度師) respectively, which are similar to the titles of deities that have already appeared in the procession.⁸⁰

While Zitong, Perfected Beings Qingluo and Yuluo do not form any obvious group, the rest of the procession suggests that the deities are most likely related to each other. In the ritual to overcome disasters recorded in *Shangqing Lingbao da fa* noted earlier, Qingluo and Yuluo actually both appear, together with other deities, in the altar setting in the “form to ward off disasters” (*Litan jierang shi* 立壇解禳式).⁸¹ Elsewhere, the text also specifies that, as a Scripture Master, Yuluo reveals texts in response to catastrophes in order to bring salvation to people (*Yingjie chushu, yi duren zhe* 應劫出書，以度人者).⁸² Deliverance from calamities may be the factor connecting the three deities, since Zitong is also known as a savior of mankind from natural disasters. This millenarian aspect of the deity was emphasised in *Zitong dijun hua shu* 梓潼帝君化書 (Book of Transformations of the Imperial Lord of Zitong) (preface 1194).⁸³ It was subsequently developed in *Yuanshi tianzun shuo Zitong dijun yingyan jing* 元始天尊說梓潼應驗經 (Scripture of the Responses and Proofs of the Divine Lord of Zitong, as Pronounced by the Heavenly Worthy of Original Commencement) and the

⁸⁰ DZ 1221, 10.6ab. Yuluo is known as Yuluo Qiao 鬱羅翹 in this text. They are also referred to in the Divine Empyrean and the Pure Subtlety texts as administrators of revealed texts to the mortal realm. See *Wushang jiuxiao yuqing dafan ziwei xuandu leiting yujing*, DZ 15, 1.13a; *Qingwei zhai fa*, DZ 224, 1.1b-2a.

⁸¹ DZ 1221, 12.16b-17a.

⁸² DZ 1221, 10.6a.

⁸³ DZ 170, see discussion in Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale*, 70.

related *Yuanshi tianzun shuo Zitong dijun benyuan jing* 元始天尊說梓潼帝君本願經 (Scripture of the Original Vow of the Divine Lord of Zitong, Pronounced by the Heavenly Worthy of Original Commencement), both compiled after 1194.⁸⁴ In the first text, Zitong seeks teachings from the supreme deity on the causes of human suffering and vows to rescue all living beings.⁸⁵ In the second text, the Heavenly Worthy recommends Zitong to be dispatched to save human beings from impending disasters. The deity's role as savior was well-established by the Ming, as indicated by a prayer written by Hu Ying 胡潑 (1375 – 1463), Minister of Rites in the early Ming, invoking the deity's power to “save men from kalpic disasters” as well as other aspects of his multifaceted identity.⁸⁶

The inclusion of a group of deities who address concerns for calamities would have had contemporary relevance. Natural disasters were especially prevalent and severe in China during the eighteen years of the Hongzhi reign.⁸⁷ According to a memorial from the seventh month of 1489, up to thirty reports on earthquakes, landslides, thunder storms and unusual weather phenomena had been presented since the beginning of the third month of 1488.⁸⁸ In the early months of 1493, the *Veritable Records* documents a series of ominous planetary movements that coincided with severe droughts in Shandong, Hunan and Hubei provinces, as well as earthquakes,

⁸⁴ DZ 28, DZ 29. For dating of the text see Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1206, 1207. Ding Peiren suggests a dating of 13th to 14th centuries for the first text and slightly later for the second. See Ding Peiren 丁培仁, “Ming Daozang youguan Wenchang Zitong dijun wenxian kaoshu 明道藏有關文昌梓潼帝君文獻考述” (Investigation into Texts on the Wenchang the Imperial Lord Zitong in the Ming Daoist Canon), *Daojiao yanjiu* 道教研究 (Research on Daoism), no. 3 (2004), 48.

⁸⁵ DZ 28.

⁸⁶ Jiang Tingxi 蔣廷錫 et al, *Qinding gujin tushu jicheng* 欽定古今圖書集成 (Complete Official Collection of Pictures and Writings from the Earliest to the Current Times) (repr. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1934), 490.21a-b. First cited in Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale*, 77-8.

⁸⁷ Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368 – 1644, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 356. The writer cautions that the large number of records on natural disasters from the Hongzhi period may be due to officials taking advantage of the issue to present reform in government to a receptive ruler.

⁸⁸ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 28.10a.

floods and pestilence in various parts of the country.⁸⁹ Official memorials in the first half of 1493 were dominated by concerns over these calamities and the human suffering that they caused. They discussed the provision of aid to the worst-hit areas and the planning of future prevention measures. Some officials also took the opportunity to remind the emperor of the correlative relationship between ruler and the cosmic principle. “Disasters and abnormal phenomena” (*zaiyi* 災異) was used as grounds to raise lists of corrective measures for rulership to the emperor.⁹⁰ The Hongzhi emperor himself contemplated this issue in a statement on the twenty-sixth day of the fourth month of 1493:

Since last winter there has been no snow, and now for several months there has been no rain. The emperor addresses civil and military officials: ... Since last winter, there has been a long drought. The fields are barren, the people are frightened. I am quite worried, and have tried purification and prayers in the open as well as dispatching officials to offer sacrifices to all the deities under heaven. In the past few days there have been fierce winds but little rainfall. Considering the cause, could it be that the manner of interaction between myself and civil and military officials has been in some way deficient?

自去冬無雪，至于是月不雨，勅諭文武群臣曰：...自去年冬迄今，亢旱踰時，田枯槁，民庶驚慌。朕甚憂懼，已嘗齋心露禱，及遣官祭天下神祇，而連日狂風屢作，雨澤少降，揆厥所由，豈朕與爾文武群臣交修之道，猶有所未至耶？⁹¹

One of the shortcomings for which officials criticised the emperor during this time was his indulgence in Daoist ritual practices. On the tenth day of the fifth month of 1493, one memorial argued that,

⁸⁹ In *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, earthquakes are recorded for instance in Shandong (72.10a), Shaanxi (73.2b, 75.11a), Ningxia (73.3a) and Henan (74.7a-b). Floods for instance in Jiangxi (72.2b), Jiangsu (76.1a) and Henan (76.16b). Pestilence in Liaoning and Shandong (74.7a-b).

⁹⁰ For instance, *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 75.16b-18a.

⁹¹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 74.13a.

When your Highest first ascended the throne and banned Daoist rituals, the rainfall and snowfall had not been irregular. Now because of the lack of rain and snow, [your Highest have ordered] the performance of purification and offering rituals. For several months these have taken place at great cost, yet they have not shown any sign of efficacy. Compared to the initial ban on such practices, rituals for blessings have no benefit and should be prohibited to repeal the harm they cause.

皇上臨御之初，禁止齋醮，雨雪未見愆期，比因雨雪不降，啟建禳禁齋醮，動經旬月，所費不貲，茫無應驗，以初時禁此較之，啟建祈福，誠為無益，仍絕以除姦蠱。⁹²

From officials' protests, it is known that the Hongzhi emperor had turned to Daoism in response to natural disasters. The inclusion of Divine Lord of Zitong, Perfected Beings Qingluo and Yuluo in the *Ordination Scroll* echo contemporaneous concerns in the mid-Ming for irregular astrological signs and calamities. It may be speculated that the reference to the deities in the scroll is an extension of the emperor's interest to seek help from Daoist rituals to solve these persistent problems.

Following the missing section of the scroll, there is a change in the figures in the procession – the figures are dressed in armour rather than official or priestly robes. The first four figures are Generals of the Cardinal Directions: Dongfang lingbing Du jiangjun 東方領兵杜將軍 (General Du who Leads the Troops of the East) (A25), Nanfang lingbing Wang jiangjun 南方領兵王將軍 (General Wang who Leads the Troops of the South) (A26), Xifang lingbing Fu jiangjun 西方領兵傅將軍 (General Fu who Leads the Troops of the West) (A27), and Beifang lingbing Kou jiangjun 北方領兵寇將軍 (General Kou who Leads the Troops of the North) (A28). Each of

⁹² *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 75.8a.

them holds a flag of a different colour to indicate their respective direction that largely corresponds to conventions of the Five Phases (fig. 102-5). They are also accompanied by tigers. It is evident from their titles that they are generals of the four directions. While there is no exact source for this group of generals, their identity may be determined from the eight figures following them (fig. 107-113). They are:

Zhengyi nezha wang Wu jiangjun 正一哪吒王吳將軍 (A29)

(General Wu, *Nezha* King of Orthodox Unity)

Manlei dawang Tang jiangjun 蠻雷大王唐將軍 (A30)

(General Tang, Great King of Savage Thunder)

Chijia dawang Tan jiangjun 持枷大王譚將軍 (A31)

(General Tan, Flail-holding Great King)

Xuanhe changsheng wang Wang jiangjun 烜赫長生王王將軍 (A32)

(General Wang, King of Fame and Longevity)

Fangui wang He jiangjun 魘鬼王何將軍 (A33)

(General He, Demon-searching King)

Xingei wang Lei jiangjun 興雷王雷將軍 (A34)

(General Lei, Thunder-initiating King)

Tongtian piandi wang Gong jiangjun 通天遍地王龔將軍 (A35)

(General Gong, Heaven and Earth-accessing King)

Jianghe huaiji wang Zhang jiangjun 江河淮濟王張將軍 (A36)

(General Zhang, King of Rivers)

Each of the above generals has an individualised title that also refers to them as king. They hold different weapons and some are depicted with demonic faces. This specific group of generals appears in a number of ritual texts for the exorcistic deity Marshal

Zhao (Zhao yuanshuai 趙元帥) or Zhao Gongming 趙公明 that are compiled in *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元 (Daoist Methods, United in Principle), a vast Ming-dynasty compendium of rites.⁹³ The ritual texts give instructions and documents needed to summon Marshal Zhao, who is depicted later in the scroll, and his many helpers. They include the above eight generals known together as “Eight Fierce Generals” (Bawang mengjiang 八王猛將), their numbers correlating to the eight trigrams.⁹⁴ Their full names, and in two texts the specific weapons that they carry, are given with minor variations.⁹⁵ The overall meanings of the titles of the generals listed in the texts correspond to those in the *Ordination Scroll*. The order of the figures also basically matches except General He is placed fifth in the scroll instead of last as in the texts. Furthermore, there is close correlation in the weapons that are associated with each general. In one text titled *Zhengyi xuantan Zhao yuanshuai bifa* 正一玄壇趙元帥秘法 (Secret rites of Marshal Zhou of the Black Altar of Orthodox Unity), the order of the weapons listed for the eight generals are: metal spear (*tieqiang* 鐵鎗), metal knife (*tiedao* 鐵刀), metal fork (*tiecha* 鐵叉), metal club (*tiebang* 鐵棒), metal chain (*tiesuo* 鐵鎖), axe (*yuefu* 鉞斧), sword (*jian* 劍) and halberd (*ji* 戟).⁹⁶ This is basically the same sequence of weapons that are depicted in the scroll. Some texts also mention the ferocious appearance of the generals and their unkempt hair, which are portrayed in the scroll.⁹⁷

In addition to the “Eight Fierce Generals”, Marshal Zhao’s helpers include military officers of the four directions or the five cardinal directions.⁹⁸ These figures offer a

⁹³ DZ 1220, 232-40; noted in Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1111.

⁹⁴ DZ 1220, 232.2a, 3a-b, 233.3a-b, 234.4a, 235.1b-2a, 236.3ab, 240.1ab.

⁹⁵ Their weapons are given in 232.3a-b and 235.1b-2a.

⁹⁶ DZ 1220, 232.3ab.

⁹⁷ For instance, DZ 1220, 233.3b.

⁹⁸ The texts that include generals of the four directions are DZ 1220, 232.3b-4a, 233.3b-4b. Those that include generals for the five cardinal directions are DZ 1220, 235.2b-3a, 236.4a-b, 239.1ab, 240.13ab.

plausible identification for the Generals of East, South, West and North in the *Ordination Scroll* described earlier. For instance, *Zhengyi xuantan Zhao yuanshuai bifa* lists “Fierce Generals of the Four Directions” (*Sifang mengjiang* 四方猛將), which consists of four generals and their second-in-command.⁹⁹ They are followed by seven more commanders for each direction, their total numbers corresponding to the twenty-eight constellations. The full title and name of the General of the East is given in the text as *Dongfang fabing buzhen qingmian jiangjun* Liu Yuanda 東方發兵布陣青面將軍劉元達 (Liu Yuanda, Blue-face General who sets up the battle formation and dispatches troops from the East). The remaining Generals of the South, West and North are called Liu Yuanbo 張元伯, Zhong Shiji 鍾士季 and Shi Wenye 史文業 respectively. Their titles are adjusted for directions and colours (red, white and black). Although their names are different from those of the four directional generals in the *Ordination Scroll*, their titles are comparable in that the generals “dispatch troops” or “lead troops” from a particular direction. Notably, the text includes the attribute of an accompanying tiger for each general, which is also depicted in the scroll.

Moreover, the surnames of the generals in the scroll, Du, Wang, Fu and Kou, may bear some relation to the names of the twenty-eight commanders who follow in the text. These commanders are also described as accompanied by tigers. Among the seven figures in the East, one finds the name Kou Xun 寇恂; in the West there are Wang Liang 王良, Du Mao 杜茂 and Fu Jun 傅俊, and in the North, Wang Ba 王霸. Except for Wang 王, the surnames of the generals are not very common. It is possible that variations existed for the names of the Generals of the Four Directions under the command of Marshal Zhao, and the *Ordination Scroll* presents one of these variations.

⁹⁹ DZ 1220, 232.3b-4b. The same figures are listed in 233.3b-4b.

Lastly, it should be noted that since there is a missing section of paper before this group in the scroll, it is possible that there was originally an additional General of Centrality depicted in the procession, so that the group corresponds to the five cardinal directions. The name of the General of Centrality is given in some texts as Fan Yuanjin 范元進 and the grouping may be referred to as *Changbing* 猖兵 (Ferocious Soldiers).¹⁰⁰

Procession II

As noted in Chapter One, the second procession in the scroll is a visualisation of Empress Zhang's register as listed in the inscription (fig. 113). Quoting from the inscription, the deities in the register are:

Mysterious Woman who Protects Correctness and Slays Evil of the Nine
Heavens;

General Tang who Transforms through the *Dao* of Upper Prime;

General Ge who Protects Correctness of Middle Prime;

General Zhou who Sets Resolve of Lower Prime;

Marshal Zhao of the Wish-granting Wand and Golden Wheel who Expands
Destiny and Supports Heaven;

Celestial Stalwart Fu of Great Brightness who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles
of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;

¹⁰⁰ There may be more than five figures in the group. For instance, DZ 1220, 235.2b-3a includes ten generals under the title *Wufang changbing zhu jiang* 五方猖兵主將 (Primary Generals, Ferocious Soldiers of the Five Cardinal Directions).

Celestial Stalwart Hu of High Character who Sets Destinies and Adds
Emoluments of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;
Celestial Stalwart Li of Great Fairness who Spreads Celebrations and Stores
Blessings of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;
Six *Ding* Spirit Maidens;
Six *Jia* Generals

九天斬邪護正玄女
上元道化唐將軍
中元護正葛將軍
下元定志周將軍
扶天廣運金輪如意趙元帥
高上神霄定爵增品大明傅天丁
高上神霄增祿定命上格胡天丁
高上神霄儲福衍慶大公李天丁
六丁神女
六甲將軍

There are some differences between this list of twenty deities and those depicted in the procession. Notably, the first figure in the above list, the Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens (*Jiutian xuannü* 九天玄女), is not found in the procession. Furthermore, the procession presents the deities with slightly different titles and arrangement.

It is understandable that the Mysterious Woman would be included in a register of protective military deities. She appears as a martial goddess in her biography

compiled by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850 – 933) in *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壙城集仙錄 (Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City), a compendium on female deities and saints.¹⁰¹ In this text, she is credited with helping the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) defeat his arch-enemy Chiyao 蚩尤 through the transmission of talismans and other divine tokens. This legend of the Mysterious Woman was disseminated in the Ming, for instance in *Guangbo wuzhi* 廣博物志 (Extensive Record of Things) by Dong Sizhang 董斯張 (1586 – 1628).¹⁰² Her martial identity would have been further popularised by the Ming novel *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin).¹⁰³ It contains two episodes where the Mysterious Woman likewise transmits sacred methods to the outlaw Song Jiang 宋江, which leads to military victory. As a deity associated with war, the Mysterious Woman can readily be grouped with other celestial generals and guards in Empress Zhang's register. Furthermore, the role that the goddess played in the transmission of sacred knowledge in the story of the Yellow Emperor and later novels has obvious relevance for the ordination of the empress. Like the Female Master of Orthodox Unity depicted earlier in the scroll, the Mysterious Woman also represents the possibility for female empowerment and women's active involvement in the formation of lineages.

Given the possible reasons for including the Mysterious Woman in the Empress Zhang's register, why then was she not depicted in pictorial form? There is no indication that the procession ever meant to include her since the clouds at the

¹⁰¹ The text survives in two versions: DZ 783 and in *Yunji qiqian*, DZ 1032, 114-6. Their entries on the Mysterious Woman is nearly identical, see DZ 783, 7.2a-4a and DZ 1032, 114.16a-18a. For study and translation of the DZ 1032 version, see Suzanne Cahill, *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood: Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City* (Magdalena: Three Pine Press, 2006).

¹⁰² Dong Sizhang 董斯張, *Guangbo wuzhi* 廣博物志 (Extensive Record of Things) (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyin she, 1987), 9.29b-32b.

¹⁰³ Shi Nai'an 施耐庵, *Shuihu quan zhuan* 水滸全傳 (Complete Water Margin) (repr. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), chap 42, 88.

beginning of the group look resolved and the dragon motifs on the border are uninterrupted. One possible factor may be due to a more problematic aspect of the goddess' identity, namely her association with sexuality. She appears in the Han-dynasty text *Sunü jing* 素女經 (Scripture of the Natural Woman), which survives in a tenth-century Japanese medical compendium, as one of three goddesses who discuss and teach the arts of the bedchamber to the Yellow Emperor.¹⁰⁴ She is also mentioned in this guise in the Inner Chapters (*Neipian* 內篇) of the fourth-century text *Baopu zi* by Ge Hong.¹⁰⁵ As Suzanne Cahill argues, Du Guangting in *Yongcheng jixian lu* deliberately omits this aspect of the Mysterious Woman in order to incorporate her into the framework of the cultivated Highest Clarity school.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps similar reservations led to her omission from the procession in the *Ordination Scroll*. However, the association of the Mysterious Woman with sexual practice was probably less well-known in the Ming than in the Tang dynasty since many of the early manuals on the arts of the bedchamber, like *Sunü jing*, were lost.¹⁰⁷ In addition, her appearance in popular novels noted above would have widely perpetuated her image as a military goddess.

Another consideration for the omission of the Mysterious Woman from the procession may be related to the visual strategy of the work. As noted earlier, the priestly attire of Empress Zhang equates her with the Female Master of Orthodox Unity. This adds legitimacy to the ordination ceremony, but at the same time it also gives her an androgynous appearance. This could present a difficulty to the designer(s) of the

¹⁰⁴ Robert Hans van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 75-6.

¹⁰⁵ DZ 1185, 6.10b; discussed in van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 94-5.

¹⁰⁶ Suzanne Cahill, "Sublimation in Medieval China: The Case of the Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 20 (1992), 91-102.

¹⁰⁷ A version of *Sunü jing* called *Sunü miaolun* 素女妙論 (Wondrous Discourse of the Natural Woman) was in circulation in the Ming dynasty, but it does not mention the Mysterious Woman. See van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 270-7.

scroll regarding how to most appropriately portray other female figures in the procession without lessening the prestige and femininity of the empress. Although the celestial maids surrounding Empress Zhang are dressed elegantly, their grouping and smaller size make clear their subordinate status that actually help elevate the empress who is flanked by them (fig. 60). The Female Master is dressed in priestly attire while the Jade Maidens or Spirit Maidens in the latter part of the procession, discussed below, wear armour. This leaves the Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens. From the time of Du Guangting, the goddess is described in textual sources as an aristocratic lady. In the *Water Margin*, she is glorified as a beautiful and dignified celestial empress who sits on a dragon throne, wears a crown of nine dragons and phoenixes, a robe of seven treasures, dragons and phoenixes, pearl slippers and holds a white jade tablet.¹⁰⁸ This imperial image of the Mysterious Woman is shown in a woodblock illustration from the Wanli edition of the novel showing the meeting of the outlaw Song Jiang 宋江 and the goddess at her temple (fig. 115).¹⁰⁹ If such a depiction was followed in the *Ordination Scroll*, the Mysterious Woman would have basically appeared as a second empress in the procession, one who was more aristocratic and feminine in appearance than the actual empress herself. Furthermore, her ancient association as a mistress of the Yellow Emperor may have led to awkward analogies to possible consorts for the Hongzhi emperor that would not be appropriate in a document meant for Empress Zhang. For these reasons, the Mysterious Woman may have been considered too problematic to be included in the scroll pictorially.

¹⁰⁸ Shi, *Shuihu quan zhuan*, 678-9, 1445.

¹⁰⁹ *Zongyi Shuihu zhuan chatu* 忠義水滸傳插圖 (Illustrations on the Loyal and Righteous Water Margin), in *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan* 中國古代版畫叢刊 (Compendium of Ancient Chinese Prints), ed. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), vol. 2.

With the absence of the Mysterious Woman, the first three figures depicted in the final procession are General Tang of the Upper Prime (Shangyuan Tan jiangjun 上元唐將軍) (A37), General Ge of the Middle Prime (Zhongyuan Ge jiangjun 中元葛將軍) (A38) and General Zhou of Lower Prime (Xiayuan Zhou jiangjun 下元周將軍) (A39) (fig. 116-8). Their titles written in gold are shortened versions of their full titles given in the inscription. They are then followed by Celestial Lord Zhao who Expands Destiny and Supports Heaven (Futian guangyun Zhao tianjun 扶天廣運趙天君) (A40, fig. 119). Again, his title in gold is shorter and slightly different from the one given in the inscription. Celestial Lord Zhao or Marshal Zhao is the title of Zhao Gongming 趙公明 who was mentioned earlier as commander of the Generals of the Eight Directions.¹¹⁰ Zhao Gongming is not usually grouped with Generals Tang, Ge and Zhou. Instead, he may be found together with other Prime Marshals (*yuanshuai* 元帥) in the Daoist pantheon.¹¹¹ However, in the *Ordination Scroll*, the four deities have been brought together under the title *Mingwei lu zhongguan jiang si yuan* 明威錄中官將四員 (Four Middle Generals of the *Mingwei* Register) written in gold at the very start of the procession (A37).

The term *mingwei* 明威 (literally, brightness and power) in the name of the register grouping the four deities should be a variation on *mengwei* 盟威 (Covenant with the Powers). For instance, the Daoist Canon edition of the *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (Scripture explaining the essentials of the Three Heavens), written around the fifth century, uses both *mingwei* and *mengwei* in the same context.¹¹² *Mengwei* refers to the covenant (*meng* 盟) established between the deified Laozi and Zhang Daoling,

¹¹⁰ Hu, ed., *Zhonghua dao jiao da cidian*, 1500.

¹¹¹ The common grouping is Zhao Gongming with Ma Lingyao 馬靈耀, Wen Qiong 溫琼 and Guan Yu 關羽. See Ma, *Huaxia zhushen*, 109-116.

¹¹² DZ 1205, 1.6a.

through which the teachings of Orthodox Unity were revealed.¹¹³ *Mengwei lu* 盟威錄 (Register of Covenant with the Powers) then should be the original sacred texts bestowed upon Zhang Daoling. The most detailed extant version of this corpus is titled *Taishang sanwu Zhengyi mengwei lu* 太上三五正一盟威錄 (Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High), most likely dated to the Song dynasty.¹¹⁴ It consists of twenty-four registers and their corresponding apotropaic talismans.¹¹⁵ The fourth register in this corpus, *Taishang Zhengyi yisan jiangjun lu* 太上正一三將軍錄 (Register of the Generals of the One and Three of the Orthodox Unity of the Most High), summons the Left, Right and Middle Generals (*Zuo you zhong san jiangjun* 左右中三將軍), and their numerous troops.¹¹⁶ These three generals have the names Tang Hong 唐宏, Ge Yong 葛雍 and Zhou Wu 周武 respectively.¹¹⁷

A description of each of the three generals, together with an image and the talismans used to summon them, are given in the register (fig. 120). According to the textual descriptions, the three generals and their soldiers function as body gods who could enter the initiate's body to improve his or her health: General Tang and Ge are associated with the left and right kidneys respectively, and General Zhou with the mid-section of the body (*shenzhong* 身中), hence the title they are given in the

¹¹³ For instance, the legend of Lord Lao's revelation to Zhang Daoling is told in *Lishi zhenxian tidaotongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑑 (Comprehensive Mirror of Transcendents who Embodied the Dao through the Ages) DZ 296, 18.

¹¹⁴ DZ 1208. For discussion on this text, see Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 971-2.

¹¹⁵ The series of registers are also listed in the Tang-dynasty texts *Chisong zi zhangli* 赤松子章歷 (The Petition Almanac of Chisong zi) (DZ 615, 4.22a-b), *Jiao sanding zhenwu wufa zhengyi mengwei lu lichen yi* 醮三洞真文五法正一盟威錄立成儀 (Complete Ritual for Offering to the Gods of Registers of the Three Caverns, the Five Methods, and the Covenant with Powers of Orthodox Unity) (DZ 1212, 13a-16b) and *Taishang sanwu zhengyi mengwei yuelu jiaoyi* 太上三五正一盟威閱錄醮儀 (Offering Ritual for the Inspection of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High) (DZ 796, 3b-6b).

¹¹⁶ DZ 1208, 1.12b-15a.

¹¹⁷ Generals Tang, Ge and Zhou are also specified in the registers listed in *Jiao sandong zhenwen wufa zhengyi mengwei lu lichen yi*, DZ 1212, 12b-13b.

register. Images of them in the register differ from the *Ordination Scroll* in that the deities are not dressed in armour and wear a box-shaped headdress instead of the ridged cap. However, it is notable that the objects they carry are the same. General Tang holds talismans in both hands. They are referred to as “gold talismans” (*jin fu* 金符) in the register, which has been emphasised in the *Ordination Scroll* where it has been enlarged into a tablet of orange and gold with carvings at the top. General Ge carries a halberd (*ji* 戟) with a banner or streamers hanging from it, while General Zhou holds a multi-tiered parasol-like object known as *jie* 節. This is a specific portrayal of the three generals that is not reproduced in *Sanjiao soushen daquan*.¹¹⁸ In the latter text, they are grouped together as Wuke san zhenjun 吳客三真君 (Three Perfected Lords, Sojourners of the Wu Kingdom) (fig. 121).¹¹⁹ The text explains that the three deities Tang Chong 唐寵 (rather than Tang Hong), Ge Yong and Zhou Wu were originally meritorious officials of the Western Zhou period who once assisted the Kingdom of Wu in battle but remained loyal to the Zhou ruling house. The Daoist Canon edition of *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (In Search of the Gods) further states that they received their formal titles associated with the Three Primes from the Song emperor Zhenzong.¹²⁰ The casualness of their appearance in the corresponding woodblock image reflects the three deities’ identity as sojourners. In comparison, the depiction of Generals Tang, Ge and Zhou in the *Ordination Scroll* seems to be specifically related to the representation of them as protective deities in the Orthodox Unity register. The close resemblance in attributes between the two versions suggests the possibility that the designer(s) of the images had access to or were aware of versions of the Daoist document.

¹¹⁸ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 102-3.

¹¹⁹ *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 103.

¹²⁰ DZ 1476, 2.8a-9b.

The fourth figure in the group, Zhao Gongming, is readily recognisable by his common attributes: He has dark complexion, bushy facial hair and wears a black outer robe; he is accompanied by a tiger, and carries a knotted steel whip or rod in one hand and a metal chain in the other (fig. 119). This appearance corresponds with textual descriptions of him in his ritual texts compiled in *Daofa yuanhui* discussed in relation to the “Eight Fierce Generals”.¹²¹ This is also the image of him, except without the chain, in *Sanjiao soushen daquan* (fig. 122).¹²² However, Zhao Gongming is not invoked in the extant version of *Zhengyi mengwei lu*. Instead, as previously noted, he emerged as a Prime Marshal of the Thunder Ministry, an extension of the Daoist pantheon developed from the twelve century onwards.¹²³ According to *Soushen ji*, he was initially deified as Deputy Marshal of the Divine Empyrean (*Shenxiao fushuai* 神霄副帥) before also becoming a deity of the Orthodox Unity order.¹²⁴ The appropriation and elevation of Zhao Gongming as a major exorcistic deity for the Celestial Masters is evident in ritual texts of the deity in *Daofa huiyuan* that formally address him as *Zhengyi xuantan yuanshuai* 正一玄壇元帥 (Prime Marshal of the Dark Altar of Orthodox Unity).¹²⁵ These texts as well as *Soushen ji* explain that the deity became the protector of the ritual arena of Mount Longhu after the Jade Sovereign dispatched him to protect Zhang Daoling while he cultivated elixirs.¹²⁶ The inclusion of Zhao Gongming with generals of *Zhengyi mengwei lu*, a fundamental Orthodox Unity text, in the *Ordination Scroll* is a clear statement of the Celestial Masters’ adoption of the deity and of Thunder Rites by the Ming dynasty.

¹²¹ For instance, DZ 1220, 233.1b.

¹²² *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 141.

¹²³ On his development from his early identity as a fever demon, see *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected) (499) DZ 1016, 10.17b; discussed in *EOT*, 66.

¹²⁴ DZ 1476, 4.10a-11b.

¹²⁵ For instance, DZ 1220, 232 has the title *Zhengyi xuantan Zhao yuanshuai bifa* 正一玄壇趙元帥秘法 (Secret Methods of Prime Marshal Zhao of the Dark Altar of Orthodox Unity). He is also addressed by this title in *Soushen ji*, DZ 1476, 4.10a-11b.

¹²⁶ DZ 1220, 232.1a-b; 236.1a-2a. Also *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 142-3.

From this point onwards, the order of figures depicted in the procession diverges from the inscription as Zhao Gongming is followed by Six *Ding* Spirit Maidens, referred to in the procession as Jade Maidens (玉女 *yunü*) (fig. 123-8), and Six *Jia* Generals (fig. 129-134). Each figure has an individualised title written in gold:

Dingmao Si *yunü* 丁卯司玉女 (Jade Maiden Si of *Dingmao*) (A41)

Dingchou Zhao *yunü* 丁丑趙玉女 (Jade Maiden Zhao of *Dingchou*) (A42)

Dinghai Zhang *yunü* 丁亥張玉女 (Jade Maiden Zhang of *Dinghai*) (A43)

Dingyou Shi *yunü* 丁酉石玉女 (Jade Maiden Shi of *Dingyou*) (A44)

Dingmo Zang *yunü* 丁未臧玉女 (Jade Maiden Zang of *Dingmo*) (A45)

Dingsi Cui *yunü* 丁巳崔玉女 (Jade Maiden Cui of *Dingsi*) (A46)

Jiazi Wang *jiangjun* 甲子王將軍 (General Wang of *Jiazi*) (A47)

Jiaxu Zhan *jiangjun* 甲戌展將軍 (General Zhan of *Jiaxu*) (A48)

Jiashen Hu *jiangjun* 甲申扈將軍 (General Hu of *Jiashen*) (A49)

Jiawu Wei *jiangjun* 甲午衛將軍 (General Wei of *Jiawu*) (A50)

Jiachen Meng *jiangjun* 甲辰孟將軍 (General Meng of *Jiachen*) (A51)

Jiayin Ming *jiangjun* 甲寅明將軍 (General Ming of *Jiayin*) (A52)

Jia 甲 and *ding* 丁 are two out of ten Celestial Stems that are combined with twelve Earthly Branches (*gan zhi* 干支) to mark sexagesimal cycles in the Chinese calendar.¹²⁷ While the Celestial Stems are normally associated with Yang force and the Earthly Branches with the Yin, the combinations starting with *jia* and *ding* also

¹²⁷ See discussion of *liujia* and *liuding* in EOT, 695-7.

came to be representative of the two forces respectively.¹²⁸ Ritual texts focused on spirits of the six *jia* and six *ding* such as *Shangqing liujia qidao mifa* 上清六甲祈禱秘法 (Secret Prayer Methods of the Six Jia of Highest Clarity) and *Lingbao liuding mifa* 靈寶六丁秘法 (Secret Method of Six Ding of Numinous Treasure) can be found in the Daoist Canon.¹²⁹ In the *Ordination Scroll*, however, the twelve spirits are further grouped together under the title of *Zhenwu lu zhong guanjiang shi'er yuan* 真武籙中官將十二員 (Twelve Middle Generals of the Register of the Perfected Warrior). The Perfected Warrior, also known as the Dark Warrior (Xuanwu 玄武) was originally the animal deity of the north, represented by a serpent coiled around a tortoise. He was subsequently venerated as an anthropomorphosised deity whose importance reached a peak in the Ming dynasty when he was worshipped as the protector of the empire.¹³⁰ The association of the Six *Jia* and Six *Ding* with the Perfected Warrior was already established in popular worship by the Song dynasty. In *Laoxue'an biji* 老學庵筆記, Lu You 陸游 (1125 – 1210) records seeing sculptures of the Six *Ding* Jade Maidens and Six *Jia* Generals in a temple of the Perfected Warrior in Fuzhou 撫州.¹³¹

The Register of the Perfected Warrior noted in the *Ordination Scroll* most likely refers to *Taishang xuantian zhenwu wushang jiangjun lu* 太上玄天真武無上將軍籙 (Register of the Supreme General, the Perfected Warrior of the Black Heaven of the Most High).¹³² The version of this register found in the Daoist Canon was distributed

¹²⁸ EOT, 696.

¹²⁹ DZ 584 and DZ 581.

¹³⁰ For introductions on Zhenwu, see EOT, 1266-7; TAC, 291-311. For in-depth discussions of Zhenwu, see for instance Chao Shin-yi, “Zhenwu: The Cult of a Chinese Warrior Deity from the Song to the Ming Dynasties (960 – 1644)” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2002); Noelle Giuffrida, “Representing the Daoist God Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior, in Late Imperial China” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2008).

¹³¹ Lu You 陸游, *Laoxue'an biji* 老學庵筆記 (Notes by the Master of Lao Xue Study) (Shanghai: Shanghai Yuandong chubanshe, 1996), 308.

¹³² DZ 1213.

by the forty-fourth Celestial Master Zhang Yuqing 張宇清 (d. 1427). It is centred on a protective talisman that can be used to summon the Perfected Warrior and his helpers, among whom are the Six *Jia* Generals and the Six *Ding* Jade Maidens.¹³³ While the register does not give the names of the twelve deities, one version found in the Ming encyclopedia *San cai tu hui* is basically the same as those listed in the *Ordination Scroll*.¹³⁴ The only difference is that two *Ding* Jade Maidens have swapped titles: Zang Wengong and Shi Shutong have become Maidens of *dingmo* and *dingyou* respectively.

San cai tu hui is further connected to the Six *Ding* and Six *Jia* of the *Ordination Scroll* by the association of the deities with the animals of the twelve zodiacs. In *San cai tu hui*, the deities are depicted as animals of the zodiacs dressed in military attire (fig. 135, 136). In the *Ordination Scroll*, the heads of the animals are shown on the headdresses of the Jade Maidens in the order of rabbit, ox, boar, rooster, ram and snake (fig. 137). These are followed by the headdresses of the male generals with rat, dog, monkey, horse, dragon and tiger. The Jade Maidens are rightly associated with the Yin zodiac signs of even numbers and the Generals with the Yang odd numbers. Interestingly, the order of animals of the Jade Maidens begins with the rabbit, the fourth animal in the zodiac, which translates to the year *xinmao* 辛卯 (1471), one year after Empress Zhang was born.

San cai tu hui and the *Ordination Scroll* presents a conflation of the Six *Ding* and Six *Jia* with the animals of the Twelve Zodiacs that does not appear in ritual texts such as *Shangqing liujia qidao mifa* and *Lingbao lauding mifa*, noted earlier. Visually, they

¹³³ DZ 1213, 4a.

¹³⁴ Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui*, *renwu*, 10.8-13.

are derived from a tradition of anthropomorphic representations of the zodiac animals, which were common burial objects from the mid-Tang to Song dynasties (fig. 138).¹³⁵ In the earlier periods, burial sculptures of zodiac deities usually have human bodies and animal heads, whereas later on they were wholly human deities with added animal motifs, such as on their headdresses. This type of headdress is also found in representations of the deities of the twenty-eight constellations that are separately associated with different animals. For instance, in the Yongle gong mural paintings, some of the constellation deities have animals depicted in a round disc in their caps (fig. 139), while others have caps with the top shaped as animals (fig. 140). These examples serve as pictorial precedence for the distinct portrayal of the Six *Ding* and Six *Jia* in the *Ordination Scroll*.

Apart from the animal associations, the portrayal of the Six *Ding* Jade Maidens in the *Ordination Scroll* is noteworthy because they are shown dressed in armour.

Conventional representations of Jade Maidens depict them as elegant ladies with ornate headdresses and flowing gowns, evident in *Shangqing qionggong lingfei liujia lu* 上清瓊宮靈飛六甲左右上符 (Left, Right and Upper Talismans of the Six Jia of Numinous Flight of the Jade Palace of Highest Clarity) (fig. 141).¹³⁶ This remains their image even when they are shown holding weapons, such as in *Shangqing dantian sanqi yuhuang liuchen feigang siming da lu* 上清丹天三氣玉皇六辰飛綱司命大籙 (Great Register of Flying Steps of the Six Stars that Govern Fate of the Jade

¹³⁵ Zhang Lihua 張麗華, “Shi’er shengxiao de qi yuan ji muzang zhong de shi’er shengxiao yong 十二生肖的起源及墓葬中的十二生肖俑” (The Origins of the Twelve Zodiac Animals and Sculptures of the Twelve Zodiac Animals in Burials), *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物 (Sichuan Cultural Relics), no. 5 (2005), 63-5; Zheng Yimo 鄭以墨, “Wang Chuzhi mu shi’er shengxiao fudiao chutan 王處直十二生肖浮雕初探” (Preliminary Study into the Relief Sculptures of the Twelve Zodiac Animals in the Tomb of Wang Chuzhi), *Wenwu chunqiu* 文物春秋 (Annals of Cultural Relics), no. 3 (2006), 49-52.

¹³⁶ DZ 84; also *Shangqing qionggong lingfei liujia lu* 上清瓊宮靈飛六甲 (Register of the Six Jia of Numinous Flight of the Jade Palace of Highest Clarity) DZ 1391.

Sovereign of the Three Pneumata of the Cinnabar Heaven of Highest Clarity) (fig. 142).¹³⁷ Pre-Qing portrayals of women in armour are rare in China but not unheard of. Notably, ten sculptures identified as female figures in military attire have been unearthed from Song dynasty tombs in Sichuan.¹³⁸ Perhaps the depiction of Jade Maidens in the *Ordination Scroll* represents a Ming continuation of an earlier tradition of depicting protective female deities in armour that was previously unknown.

One example of a female warrior found in Ming literature and theatre is the story of Mulan 木蘭 who joined the army in the guise of a man. Based on a Northern Wei poem, the story was popularised in play form by Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521 – 1593) in *Sisheng yuan* 四聲猿 (Four Howls of the Ape).¹³⁹ However, the earliest extant image of Mulan as a female warrior seems to belong to the collection of woodblock prints *Wushuang pu* 無雙譜 (Catalogue Without Compare) by Jin Shi 金史 dated between 1690 and 1699 (fig. 143).¹⁴⁰ The story of Mulan in Xu Wei's play has been

¹³⁷ DZ 675, 7b-8a.

¹³⁸ Zou Xidan 鄒西丹, "Luzhou Songdai wushi shike 瀘州宋代武士石刻" (Song Dynasty Stone Carvings of Warriors from Luzhou), *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物 (Sichuan Cultural Relics), no. 2 (2008), 84-7. Six of the sculptures are from Luzhou 瀘州, two from Guangyuan 廣元 and two from Pengshan 彭山. The latter four were located in the rooms of female occupants in couple tombs. Sichuan sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 四川省文物管理委員會, ed., "Nan Song Yugong zhu fufu hezang mu 南宋虞公著夫婦合葬墓" (Couple Tomb of Husband and Wife Yu of the Southern Song), *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 (Journal of Archaeology), no. 3 (1985) 119-138; Sichuan sheng bowuguan 四川省博物館, ed., "Sichuan Guanyuan shike Song mu qingli jianbao 四川廣元石刻宋墓清理簡報" (Excavation Report of the Song Tomb with Stone Carvings in Guangyuan, Sichuan), *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics), no. 6 (1982), 53-61. For the six from Luzhou see Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 四川省文物考古研究所, ed., *Luxian Songmu* 瀘縣宋墓 (Song Tomb in Lu County) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004).

¹³⁹ Sufen Sophia Lai, "From Cross-Dressing Daughter to Lady Knight-Errant: The Origin and Evolution of Chinese Women Warriors," in *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literary Tradition*, ed. Sherry Mou (Houndsmills: MacMillan, 1999), 77-107.

¹⁴⁰ Jin Shi 金史, *Wushuang pu* 無雙譜 (Catalogue Without Compare), in *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan* 中國古代版畫叢刊 (Compendium of Ancient Chinese Prints), ed. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1690 – 1699; repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), vol. 4, p. 427, also p. 429 for another female figure in armour.

highlighted for its transgression of gender boundaries.¹⁴¹ The danger inherent in cross-dressing women is further implied in the *Ming shi*, in an example more closely related to Empress Zhang. It records that Consort Wan 萬 (d. 1487), favourite of the Chenghua emperor (r. 1465 – 1487), used to dress in armour (*jiefu* 戎服) and ride at the front of the entourage when the emperor travelled.¹⁴² While this suggests the possibility for an imperial woman to dress in military attire, it is included in official history as one of the troubling aspects of Consort Wan's relationship with the emperor, together with their large age difference and the violence that she purportedly inflicted on other imperial consorts.

The Jade Maidens in the *Ordination Scroll* are thus not only a rare example of the representation of female warriors in the Ming but also a potentially subversive portrayal of normative gender roles. The masculinised Jade Maidens highlight their physical strength and their equal position to other generals in the register. This in turn speaks to the female power of Empress Zhang who can command the martial deities of her register as a result of her ordination ceremony. As part of the visual strategy of the scroll, the portrayal of Jade Maidens in military attire adds to the uniformity of the military section of the procession and further ensures that the femininity of Empress Zhang's image is not challenged by other female figures in the procession.

As the Six *Ding* Jade Maidens and the Six *Jia* Generals have been moved forward, the last three figures in the procession are Celestial Stalwart Fu who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles (*Dingjue zengpin Fu tianding* 定爵增品傅天丁) (A53), Celestial Stalwart Hu who Sets Destinies and Increases Emoluments (*Dingming zenglu Hu*

¹⁴¹ On Xu Wei's story of Mulan within a Confucian framework see Ann-Marie Hsiung, "A Feminist Re-Vision of Xu Wei's *Ci Mulan* and *Nü Zhuangyuan*, in *China in a Polycentric World: Essays in Chinese Comparative Literature*, ed. Zhang Yingjin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 73-89.

¹⁴² MS 113, p. 3524.

tianding 定命增祿胡天丁) (A54) and Celestial Stalwart Li who Spreads Celebrations and Stores Blessings (*Chufu yanqing Li tianding* 儲福衍慶李天丁) (A55) (fig. 144-7). Their titles written in gold are shortened versions of those given in the inscription, which specify that they are deities of the Divine Empyrean pantheon. The three Celestial Guards are given a further title of *Sanguan lu zhongguan jiang san yuan* 三官籙中官將三員 (Three Middle Generals of the Register of the Three Officials) (A53). Each of them carry different items: Celestial Guard Fu holds a ruler-like object, Celestial Guard Hu has a sword in one hand and points to a floating wheel in another, while Celestial Guard Li carries an axe.

Sanguan lu 三官籙 (Register of the Three Officials) is most likely related to one of the secret registers transmitted to Empress Zhang, *Taishang sanguan fuhua milu* 太上三官輔化秘籙 (Secret Register of the Three Officials who Assist Transformations of the Most High). As will be discussed in Chapter Three, a version of this register has survived as part of a set of scriptures and registers transmitted to a Taiwanese merchant in the first half of the twentieth century. According to a transcription made by Ding Huang, it is divided into three further registers addressed to the Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water.¹⁴³ The celestial helpers that the register of the Official of Heaven summons include *Dingjue zengpin gongcao* 定爵增品功曹 (Merit Officer who Sets Noble Titles and Adds Ranks), *Silu dingming gongcao* 司祿定命功曹 (Merit Officer who Controls Emoluments and Sets Destinies) and *Yanqing gongcao* 衍慶功曹 (Merit Officer who Spreads Celebrations).¹⁴⁴ *Gongcao* 功曹 (Merit Officer) is technically a different position from *tianding* 天丁 (Celestial Stalwart). The former is responsible for recording the merits of mortal beings and for bringing

¹⁴³ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu’ chu yan” 2.

¹⁴⁴ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu’ chu yan” 2, 261.

documents to the heavenly realm, while the latter is a military role.¹⁴⁵ However, they are both lower-level deities that are summoned to assist in rituals and can serve as protective deities. Moreover, the titles of the Merit Officers in the register are sufficiently close to those of the Celestial Stalwarts in the *Ordination Scroll* to suggest that the two are related.

Missing Sections

In Chapter One, the measurements of the lengths of paper missing from the scroll were calculated based upon the dragon motifs on the border. From this, the approximate number of figures in the missing sections was estimated.

The first break located at the start of the procession is estimated to be at least 35 cm long, which roughly equates to one figure. As noted in Chapter One, Stephen Little suggests that the opening section once depicted supreme deities facing the procession.¹⁴⁶ This is convincing given conventional representations of celestial officials in an audience. However, instead of depicting the Three Purities as Little suggests, the section probably portrayed the Jade Sovereign (*Yuhuang* 玉皇) who is the deity ranked directly below them and who is also independently venerated as a supreme deity.¹⁴⁷ This is suggested by the striking talismans in the inscription that refer to his authority. These talismans are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. A supreme deity would be flanked by attendants and guardians, which means that this missing section would have measured more than 35 cm in length. The Metropolitan Museum scroll discussed in Chapter One can give some idea of what this opening

¹⁴⁵ *EOT*, 446.

¹⁴⁶ *TAC*, 208.

¹⁴⁷ *EOT*, 1197-8.

section would have looked like (fig. 147). It shows a single supreme deity seated with other deities around him. Among them is Zhenwu, identifiable by his untied hair. It is likely that he would have depicted in the missing opening section of the *Ordination Scroll* as well since his assistants are represented elsewhere in the scroll.

The second missing section is located between the empress' retinue and Kehan the Elder. The gap is estimated to be also at least 35 cm long. Given the title "Two Generals of the Register of All Merit" visible just before the break, at least two figures were once depicted, which should require more space than 35 cm. To form another sequence of dragons in the border would take 192.5 cm or eight figures. In other words, apart from two generals, there were once an additional six celestial beings located at this point of the procession. Since Kehan the Elder and the Investigation Envoy appears after the break, it is possible that the missing figures are members of the remaining seven Divine Empyrean Monarchs. Given the limited space, perhaps the Great Emperor of Long Life and the Great Emperor of Blue Efflorescence were omitted as they are sometimes venerated separately from the rest of the Nine Monarchs.¹⁴⁸

The final break is found after the title of the Perfected Being Yuluo. It was estimated that the section of missing paper measured at least 70 cm or roughly three figures long. One of them would have been the image of Yuluo. The remaining two may have been other perfected beings, such as Zhending and Guangmiao who are commonly associated with Yuluo, discussed earlier.¹⁴⁹ Another possibility is that more military figures were portrayed. One of the spots may be taken up by a General of Centrality

¹⁴⁸ Listed in the Southern Song text *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* 無上黃籙大齋立成儀 (Standardised Rituals of the Supreme Yellow Register Retreat) DZ 508, 15.9a-b.

¹⁴⁹ DZ 1221, 12.16b-17a.

so that the deities appearing after the break form a group of Generals of the Five Cardinal Directions. If the missing section of paper were longer, it may have included additional helpers of Marshal Zhao, such as Assistant Marshals, Thunder Generals of the Five Directions (Wufang leijiang 五方雷將) and Great Deities of the Six Poisons (Liudu dashen 六毒大神).¹⁵⁰

Summary of Procession

In conclusion, the celestial beings in the first procession can be broadly divided into the following groups:

1. Figures connected to Empress Zhang's ordination. These include the empress herself and her retinue, Zhang Xuanqing, the three officials of ordination and the lineage of the Celestial Masters. The Director of Destinies may be included in this group since he records the change in Empress Zhang's status as a result of her ordination.
2. High-level administrative deities. They are two of the Nine Monarchs, the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water, and the four overseers of the Thunder Ministry.
3. Figures concerned with natural disasters and salvation from them. They are Divine Lord of Zitong, Perfected Beings Yuluo and Qingluo

¹⁵⁰ A list of Marshal Zhao's helpers are given in *Soushen ji*, DZ 1476, 4.11a; also variations of assistants can be found in the ritual of texts of Marshal Zhao in *Daofa huiyuan*, DZ 1220, for instance, 235.1a-3b.

4. Marshal Zhao and his military assistants who are the four directional generals and the eight fierce generals.
5. Military helpers from three registers, two of which are requested by Empress Zhang. They are *Zhengyi mengwei lu* and *Sanguan lu*. The third register is *Zhenwu lu*.

It is evident that the procession in the *Ordination Scroll* consists of both well-known groupings of celestial beings and more obscure ones. In particular, the inclusion of the Perfected Beings Yuluo and Qingluo, together with Zitong, appears to be personalised selections aimed at addressing contemporaneous concerns at the Ming court. The unusual and potentially subversive depiction of Jade Maidens in armour further suggests an effort to personalise the scroll for Empress Zhang.

Notably, the procession reveals an emphasis on the Divine Empyrean and thunder rites. The Divine Empyrean deities included are the Nine Monarchs and the three military figures from *Sanguan lu*. In addition, four Daoist masters, including the Orthodox Unity patriarch, are grouped together as overseers of the Thunder Ministry. The military figures in the scroll are dominated by Marshal Zhao and his assistants who are also linked to thunder rites. The categorisation of Marshal Zhao in the scroll as a deity of *Zhengyi mengwei lu*, even though he does not appear in the text, is indicative of his absorption into the Orthodox Unity order. On the whole, the procession reflects the appropriation of thunder rites by the Celestial Masters from the Song dynasty onwards. This is clearly shown in the image of Zhang Daoling found in *Sanjiao soushen daquan*, which depicts him holding a scroll with the title *leiling* 雷

⚡ (thunder command).¹⁵¹ As Mark Meulenbeld shows, the ability to control the deities of thunder was an important asset for Daoists wishing to gain imperial favour by the Ming dynasty.¹⁵² He demonstrates that imperial support for Daoism was “a structural aspect of Ming imperial rule. In all this, the demonic rituals of thunder occupied a central position.”¹⁵³ This culminated in the Jiajing emperor who had an imperial temple built exclusively for thunder rites.¹⁵⁴ The analysis in this chapter has shown that the visual representation of deities in the scroll corresponds to Meulenbeld’s understanding of the significance of thunder rites in Daoist practices in connection to the Ming court.

¹⁵¹ *Huitu sanjjiao yuanliu*, 319.

¹⁵² Meulenbeld, “Civilized Demons,” on the Ming esp. 169-265. For the appropriation of thunder rituals by civil officials in earlier periods, see Judith Boltz, “Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in Battles with the Supernatural,” in *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China*, eds. Patricia Ebrey and Peter Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 241-306.

¹⁵³ Meulenbeld, “Civilized Demons,” 215.

¹⁵⁴ Meulenbeld, “Civilized Demons,” 258-265.

Having considered the images in the *Ordination Scroll*, I will now turn to examine its text. There are two large inscriptions, one at the right end of the scroll and one before the second procession. There is also a long inscription located in the middle of the scroll, the complete translation and transcription of which are given in Appendices B and C. Stephen Little provides descriptions of these texts in the *Taoism and the Arts of China* catalogue. In the following, I will delve deeper into their meaning and what they can tell us about Empress Zhang's ordination. In particular, the discussion will attempt to connect the format of the inscriptions to other kinds of Daoist documents, which has implications for understanding the function of the *Ordination Scroll*.

Large Inscription I

This inscription located at the start of the scroll is made up of eight large characters in talismanic script (fig. 149). Coloured in yellow, each character is located within a blue circle surrounded by clouds in *ruyi* form. These distinctive characters are written in “cloud-seal script” (*yunzhuan* 雲篆).¹ It is talismanic writing that is believed to have emerged from the crystallisation of cosmic energies and concretisation of divine patterns.² Like all sacred Daoist texts, they are said to have existed in the celestial realm before they were transcribed and revealed to human beings.³ Cloud-seal script is usually written in wavy lines to suggest their nebulous original form.⁴ In the *Ordination Scroll*, the strokes have been enlarged so that the cloud-like appearance of

¹ TAC, 208.

² Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 633-4.

³ EOT, 24-6. Also see Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley, L.A., London: University of California Press, 1997), 20-1.

⁴ For instance in *Yunzhuan duren miaojing* 雲篆度人妙經 (Marvelous Book of Salvation in Cloud Seal Script) (DZ 80) where the whole scripture has been transcribed using cloud seal script.

the characters is emphasised. As noted earlier, transcriptions of the phrase using regular script written on small pieces of paper have been pasted on to the centre of each character, except for the first character for which the piece of paper is missing. Stephen Little has deciphered this first characters to be *san* 三 (three).⁵ Together, the phrase reads *Sandong chiwen zongzhen xianjian* 三洞赤文總真仙簡.

Little also translated the phrase as “Tablet of the Transcendent Who Superintends Reality, Red Writ of the Three Caverns”. I would offer an adjustment to this translation. While *xian* 仙 can be read independently as “transcendent”, the term *xianjian* 仙簡 actually refers to celestial records of the name and rank of a transcendent. For instance, in the hagiography *Zhoushi mingtong ji* 周氏冥通記 (Records of Mr Zhou’s Communication with the Unseen) written by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456 – 536), the master Zhou Ziliang 周子良 receives celestial rank by having his named carved on to a *xianjian* (*keming xianjian* 刻名仙簡) that is made of purple jade (*ziyu zhi jian* 紫玉之簡) with text in gold (*chijin wei wen* 赤金為文).⁶ Given this meaning, *xianjian* may be translated as “tablet of transcendence”. The jade material of *xianjian* is metaphoric in the case of the *Ordination Scroll*, which is produced on paper. It is appropriate to call the scroll a “tablet of transcendence” since it records Empress Zhang’s inception into the celestial realm and the ranks that she receives through her ordination ceremony.

What do the remaining terms in the phrase mean? *Sandong* 三洞 (Three Caverns) refers to the fundamental tripartite system of organisation used in the Daoist Canon

⁵ TAC, 208.

⁶ DZ 302, 3.11b.

and other aspects of Daoist doctrine and practice.⁷ The next two characters *chiwen* 赤文 (red script) refer to sacred texts that are even more prestigious than cloud seal script since they are cosmic writings purified by heavenly fire that, by their spontaneous emergence, initiated the Original Commencement.⁸ The term *zongzhen* 總真 is more ambiguous. It could mean “superintending reality” as Little suggests. Another meaning may be “gathering the perfected”, which corresponds to the congregation of celestial beings and sacred objects in the *Ordination Scroll*. Yet, the term could also mean an overall state of perfection. This is suggested in the name of one of the ten major Grotto-Heavens (*dongtian* 洞天), *taixuan zongzhen tian* 太玄總真天 (*zongzhen* [Grotto-]Heaven of Great Mystery).⁹ Grotto-Heavens are places in mountains populated by earthly transcendent. Compared to the names of other Grotto-Heavens, such as *qingxu tian* 清虛天 ([Grotto-]Heaven of Clear Emptiness), *kongming tian* 空明天 ([Grotto-]Heaven of Empty Brightness) and *jizhen tian* 極真天 ([Grotto-]Heaven of Most Perfected), it is clear that *zongzhen* describes the perfect state of the Grotto-Heaven. Consequently, I would suggest translating the term as “totality of perfection”.

Taken as a whole, the opening inscription of the *Ordination Scroll* may be translated as “Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection in Red Script of the Three Caverns”. The terms “Three Caverns”, “red script” and “totality of perfection” communicate the profundity and sacred status of the scroll described. The significance

⁷ The three components are *dongzhen* 洞真 (Cavern of Perfection), *dongxuan* 洞玄 (Cavern of Mystery) and *dongshen* 洞神 (Cavern of Spirit), which came to be associated with different scriptural lineages. See Schipper and Verellen, ed., *The Taoist Canon*, 14-6; *EOT*, 33-5.

⁸ The term *chishu* 赤書 (red writings) is derived from Numinous Treasure texts dated to the 5th century. See Robinet, *Taoism*, 151; Schipper and Verellen, ed., *The Taoist Canon*, 215-6.

⁹ The names are listed in *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 洞天福地嶽瀆名山記 (Record of the Grotto-Heavens, Blissful Lands, Holy Mountains and Marshes, and Famous Mountains), dated 901 (DZ 599, 3b-4b) and *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds) (DZ 1032, 27), dated to the Song. On Grotto-Heavens, see *EOT*, 368-370.

of the scroll as a “tablet of transcendence” will be explored further in the section on “Ordination Certificates” in this chapter.

Large Inscription II

Following the main inscription in the middle of the scroll, there is an auspicious phrase in large regular characters that reads: “Yilong wanshou yutian changcun 益隆萬壽與天長存” (Increasing Prosperity and Ten Thousand Longevities, Existing as Long as the Heavens) (fig. 150). As will be seen, the well-wishes of this inscription echo sentiments expressed in the main inscription.

Like the opening phrase in cloud seal script, the individual characters in this inscription are coloured in yellow and located in separate frames situated among clouds. Instead of round frames, here they are square and green, although a circular outline around the characters remains visible within each frame. The location of this inscription is very unusual. Normally, a phrase in large font would only be located at the beginning of a scroll, usually consisting of four and no more than eight characters. One possible explanation for the unusual format is that this inscription is the opening section of a different scroll that was later inserted into the *Ordination Scroll*. This would make sense of the strange order of the current work. As will be noted later, the main inscription mentions a second scroll that was transmitted to Empress Zhang. Perhaps this inscription was taken from it.

Furthermore, the phrase is followed by a blank section that consists first of a narrow vertical strip then a long horizontal sheet of paper. The shape and location of the narrow strip of paper is reminiscent of the mounting element known as *gejie*

discussed earlier, which are inserted in handscrolls between sections of inscriptions and images. It is unlikely that the longer blank sheet of paper that follows once contained an extension of the second procession. This is because the cloud motifs at the right end of the procession are resolved. It is more likely that the blank section of paper was originally intended for an inscription to be added separately from the images.

Main Inscription

The inscription in the middle section of the scroll is written in neat clerical script, which is normally used for official documents. It is unsigned and carries no seals, but the content makes clear that the composer of the text is Zhang Xuanqing, the forty-seventh Celestial Master (fig. 151). His name appears in a number of painting catalogues. *Minghua lu* 明畫錄 (Catalogue of Ming Painters) (1673) records that he was particularly good at painting orchids, bamboos and rocks.¹⁰ *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜 (Encyclopedia of Calligraphy and Painting Commissioned by the Kangxi Emperor) (1708), citing earlier sources, adds that he is erudite, able to write and is good at poetry and painting.¹¹ It is thus entirely feasible that Zhang Xuanqing had the skill to write the long inscription in regular script in the *Ordination Scroll*.

Building on Stephen Little's summary in *Taoism and the Arts of China*, the inscription can be broken down into the following parts (see Appendices B and C):¹²

¹⁰ Xu Qin 徐沁, *Minghua lu* 明畫錄 (Catalogue of Ming Painters), in *Huashi congshu* 畫史叢書 (Collected Writings on Painting History), ed. Yu Anlan 于安瀾 (1673; repr. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), vol. 3, *juan* 7, p. 96.

¹¹ Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 et al, *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜 (Encyclopedia of Calligraphy and Painting Commissioned by the Kangxi Emperor) (1708; repr. Beijing: Beijing shi Zhongguo shudian, 1984), vol. 4, *juan* 58, p. 1592.

¹² *TAC*, 208, 213.

1. “Ministry of Supreme Mystery Metropolis” (1)
2. Account of the celestial origins of scriptures and registers (2-10)
3. Introduction of Zhang Xuanqing (10-17)
4. Transcription of Empress Zhang’s edict requesting transmission of nine scriptures and registers and other items (17-47)
5. Reference to ritual procedures and well-wishes for Empress Zhang (47-63)
6. List of ritual documents for each of the nine scriptures and registers requested (63-99)
7. List of celestial ranks and titles conferred upon the empress for each of the nine scriptures and registers requested (100-131)
8. Register of twenty protective deities (132-144)
9. Three Jade Talismans graphically shown in red (145-148)
10. Request for the empress’ acceptance of objects and ranks transmitted (149-153)
11. Reiteration of the powers of scriptures and registers (154-165)
12. Recommendation of the empress and her pledge (165-174)
13. Further well-wishes for the empress (174-179)
14. Date (180)

Section (1) consists of the title “*Taixuandu sheng* 泰玄都省” (Ministry of the Supreme Mystery Metropolis) in large characters (fig. 152). As Xie Conghui explains, this Ministry is the central agency responsible for receiving, forwarding and editing official documents, which may be dispatched from the celestial realm to a lower sphere or vice versa.¹³ Reference to the function of the Ministry can be found in

¹³ Xie Conghui 謝聰輝, “Tainan diqu Lingbao daotan ‘Wushang jiuyou fangshe gaoxia zhen ke’ wenjian de xiancao mingcheng yu wenti geshi kaolun 台南地區靈寶道壇‘無上九幽放赦告下真科’文檢的仙曹名稱與文體格式考論 (The Study of the Titles of Transcendents and Formats of the

various texts in the Daoist Canon. *Daomen dingzhi* 道門定制 (Regulations for the Daoist Community) (preface 1188) states that the Ministry oversees “official dispatches” (*wenyi* 文移) in the celestial bureaucracy.¹⁴ *Shangqing Lingbao da fa* 上清靈寶大法 (Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure of Highest Clarity) by Wang Qizhen 王契真 (fl. c. 1250) further specifies that the Ministry not only receives documents but checks their content before they are forwarded to their address in the celestial realm.¹⁵ According to *Wushang jiuxiao yuqing dafan ziwei xuandu leiting yujing* 無上九霄玉清大梵紫微玄都雷霆玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Thunderclap of the Mystery Metropolis of Purple Tenuity of Great Brahma of Jade Purity of the Supreme Nine Empyreans), Zhang Daoling is the director of this office, in addition to his duty as one of the administrators of the Thunderclap Ministry discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁶ The position is recognised by the ritual seal of the Ministry of the Supreme Mystery Metropolis (*Taixuandu sheng yin* 泰玄都省印; *taixuan* may also be written as 太玄) that is carried by the Celestial Masters since the Southern Song dynasty.¹⁷

Manuals compiled in the Daoist Canon give examples of model documents that are addressed to the Ministry. For instance, *Daomen dingzhi* provides several documents opening with “*Taixuandu sheng xingtang* 太玄都省行壇” (Travelling branch of the Ministry of the Supreme Mystery Metropolis) that request the Ministry to dispatch

‘Authentic Code for Notifying Below of Absolution from the Supreme Nine Shades’ at the Numinous Treasure Daoist Altar in Tainan,” *Guowen xuebao* 國文學報 (Bulletin of Chinese) 40 (Dec 2006), 88-91. The writer relates the function of the Ministry to the Executive Office of the Department of State Affairs (*Shangshu dusheng* 尚書都省) of the Tang dynasty.

¹⁴ DZ 1224, 1.2a.

¹⁵ DZ 1221, 61.

¹⁶ DZ 15, 7ab.

¹⁷ For a discussion of this particular seal and Daoist ritual seals in general, see Ren Zongquan 任宗權, *Daojiao zhangbiao fuyin wenhua yanjiu* 道教章表符印文化研究 (Research on the Culture of Daoist Petitions, Talismans and Seals) (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2006).

messengers so ritual petitions may quickly and safely arrive at their destinations.¹⁸

The Ministry is also initially invoked for petitions addressed to the underworld seeking the deliverance of the dead.¹⁹ The latter type of document in this format is still used by the Orthodox Unity order in Taiwan today.²⁰ Xie Conghui reproduces two modern examples that have the name of the Ministry written in large characters at the start, as in the *Ordination Scroll*.²¹ It is matched with an invocation of the formal title of the Celestial Master also in large characters at the end of the documents. The same format is found in an example more closely related to the scroll – in an ordination certificate that was conferred to an initiate in 1981 at Putian, Fujian province, discussed by Kenneth Dean (fig. 153).²² The relationship of the scroll to “ordination certificates” will be examined in a later section. These examples demonstrate that the invocation of the Ministry of the Supreme Mystery Metropolis at the beginning of the inscription in the *Ordination Scroll* conforms to one of the formats used for Daoist official documents. Furthermore, it is possible that the inscription originally ended with a complementary line in large characters addressing the Celestial Master that was subsequently trimmed.

Section (2) begins the inscription proper with a statement on the celestial origins of Daoist scriptures and registers. It explains that sacred texts were formed and promulgated after the appearance of the Celestial Worthy of Original Commencement in the era of Draconic Magnificence (*longhan* 龍漢), one of several eons before this

¹⁸ DZ 1224, 2.12b-16a.

¹⁹ *Daomen dingzhi* contains several examples, see DZ 1224, 2.16b-20b. A more elaborate petition is found in Wang Qizhen’s *Shangqing Lingbao dafa*, DZ 1221, 44, transcribed in Xie, “Tainan diqu Lingbao daotan,” 104-106.

²⁰ Xie, “Tainan diqu Lingbao daotan,” 88-9, 103.

²¹ Xie, “Tainan diqu Lingbao daotan,” 88-9, fig. 1 and 2.

²² Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults in Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 53-8.

time.²³ The inscription then describes the power of Real Numinous Beings (*Zhenling* 真靈) to protect the state and the perpetuity of Heaven as well as to develop culture (*jiyu siwen* 際遇斯文) and bring blessings. This opening statement indicates the broader benefits of receiving scriptures and registers, which will not only empower Empress Zhang personally but also benefit the state. It alludes to the political dimension of Daoist ordinations – an issue that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.²⁴

Section (3) introduces the forty-seventh Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing, giving his full celestial title and name. The title is written in the first person, as Zhang Xuanqing refers to himself as “subject” (*chen* 臣). This self-address is repeated later in the inscription. Thus even though there is no signature, Zhang Xuanqing is presented as the writer of the text. His deference is directed at the “Great Ming Empress of the Central Palace” (Da Ming zhonggong huanghou 大明中宮皇后) whose edict (*yizhi* 懿旨) is given in section (4).²⁵

Zhang Xuanqing’s extended title resembles the appellations of the forty-second, forty-third and forty-fourth Celestial Masters, presented as Scripture, Registration and Ordination Masters respectively, in Ming dynasty registers such as *Taishang xuantian Zhenwu wushang jiangjun lu* 太上玄天真武無上將軍籙 (Register of the Supreme General, the Perfected Warrior of the Black Heaven of the Most High) and *Taishang*

²³ Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 381; *EOT*, 545-6.

²⁴ For the political aspects of early Daoist transmissions, see Anna Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments – Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein*, ed. Michael Strickmann (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1983), vol. 2, 291-371.

²⁵ In ritual petitions to high deities such as the Polestar, a priest would address himself as “subject”. For a guideline on when a priest should refer to himself as “subject” in petitions, see *Daomen dingzhi*, DZ 1224, 1.1b.

Zhengyi yansheng baoming lu 太上正一延生保命籙 (Register that Protects Destiny and Prolongs Life of the Orthodox Unity of the Most High).²⁶ The title highlights the supremacy of the Celestial Masters as leaders of Daoist teachings, in charge of the Highest Clarity and Numinous Treasure canons, as prescribed by imperial decree in 1304.²⁷ It also indicates the appropriation of newer lineages. The appellation “Heavenly Great Ritual Master” (*Dutian da fazhu* 都天大法主) is derived from the Correct Method of the Celestial Heart (*Tianxin zhengfa* 天心正法) sect of exorcism that emerged in the Song dynasty.²⁸ The title also incorporates Pure Tenuity (*Qingwei* 清微), a tradition concerned with Thunder Rites that developed in late thirteenth-century Fujian.²⁹ These inclusions are consistent with the development of Daoism in the late imperial period whereby all the different lineages were united under the Orthodox Unity order with the exception of the monastic Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen* 全真) tradition.³⁰

Section (4) is a transcription of Empress Zhang’s edict (fig. 154). This is evident from the use of the term *miaogong* 眇躬, which is the polite self-appellation for emperors and empresses.³¹ The section also finishes with *qinci* 欽此, which is typical for imperial decrees.³² The edict requests the transmission of sacred texts and objects from the Celestial Master. It begins by providing information about the empress’ birth date. Interestingly, only the empress’ natal star has been filled in, while blank spaces

²⁶ DZ 1213, 1.7b; DZ 1216, 1.7b-8a.

²⁷ EOT, 1258-9.

²⁸ This is discussed in relation to a type of seal bearing this title in Wang Yucheng 王育成, ed., *Daojiao yinfa lingpai tanao* 道教法印令牌探奧 (Investigation into Daoist Ritual Seals and Command Placards) (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2000), 100-2.

²⁹ For introductions to the Pure Tenuity sect see Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1095-6; EOT, 804-5.

³⁰ EOT, 1258-9; Hu, ed., *Zhonghua dao jiao da cidian*, 561.

³¹ Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 (Unabridged Dictionary of Sinitic) (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2001), vol.7, 1168.

³² Luo, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 6, 1454.

remain for the date and time. This suggests that Zhang Xuanqing may not have been privy to detailed information about the empress when composing this text. It is reminiscent of the empress' image, which, by the fact that it was pasted on, was probably not available to the painters when the scroll was first produced. These factors once more point to the possibility that the scroll was a preliminary version of the record of Empress Zhang's ordination.

The edict makes a grand claim for the Daoist institution. Echoing the opening statement in section (2), it aligns the fortunes of the empire to the powers of revealed texts and hence to the Celestial Masters who mediate them. It presents the empress as a strong supporter of Daoism. How this relates to her biography and the circumstances of the Orthodox Unity order will be discussed in Chapter Four. The edict continues with the empress' request for transmission:

Formerly on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month in the sixth year of the Hongzhi reign, the Upper Prime Festival, a time when the Official of Heaven bestows good fortune, at the blissful land, Dragon Tiger Mountain, Ancestral Altar of Ten Thousand Methods, follower of the Perfected Ancestral Celestial Master, please transmit...

昨於弘治六年正月十五日，上元令節，天官賜福之辰，于福地龍虎山，萬法宗壇，祖天師真君門下，請授...

This section is particularly informative as it offers a date: the fifteenth day of the first lunar month of the sixth year of the Hongzhi reign (1493). This date and another given at the end of the inscription (also 1493 but with a different month) are the basis for identifying the ordained empress in question as Empress Zhang. As the inscription specifies, the date falls on the Shangyuan 上元 (Upper Prime) Festival, which is the

birthday of the Official of Heaven.³³ On this day, all the deities and transcendents of the celestial realm gather in celebration, thus ensuring that the ordination ritual would be blessed and the objects transmitted would be of the greatest efficacy.³⁴ The inscription makes clear that the request for transmission was made “formerly”, which indicates that Zhang Xuanqing’s inscription was written after the date given here. In addition, the edict includes a location – Longhu shan 龍虎山 (Dragon Tiger Mountain), in Guixi 貴溪 county, Jiangxi province. This is the central training and ordination institution of the Orthodox Unity order.³⁵ It is referred to as “Ancestral Altar of Ten Thousand Methods” in acknowledgement of the leadership of the Celestial Masters over various lineages since the Yuan dynasty.³⁶ However, as will be seen later, naming Mount Longhu as the site for ordination does not necessarily mean that the ritual took place there.

The empress then requests the transmission of five sets of scriptures and registers (*jinglu* 經籙) and four secret registers (*bilu* 秘籙). These will be discussed separately at the end of the chapter. In addition to these items, the empress also requests:

Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection with Jade Talismans of the Three Heavens of the Most High, official document of contract tallies, one of each

太上三天玉符總真仙簡、合同環券文牒各一階

³³ There are texts in the Daoist Canon that give detailed guidance on which days of the year are auspicious for conducting ordination ceremonies for specific sacred texts. See for instance, *Dongxuan lingbao daoshi shou sandong jingjie falu zherili* 洞玄靈寶道士受三洞經誡法籙擇日曆 (Calendar for Selecting the Days on which Daoist Priests should Receive Scriptures, Precepts and Liturgical Registers of the Three Caverns) DZ 1240.

³⁴ Yuan Zhihong 袁志鴻, “Daojiao Zhengyi pai shoulu yu Quanzhen pai chuanjie zhi bijiao yanjiu 道教正一派授籙與全真派傳戒之比較研究” (Comparative Research on the Ordinations of the Orthodox Unity and Complete Perfection Orders of Daoism), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 (Research on World Religions) no. 4, (2003), 85.

³⁵ Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 30.

³⁶ Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 561.

Stephen Little interprets this line as one single object that is the *Ordination Scroll*.³⁷ However, later in the inscription when the contents of the transmitted items are listed, the above is written in two lines (98-99), which indicates that they are two separate items. The first item refers to “Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection”, which is an abbreviation of the formal title of the scroll. “Jade Talismans of the Three Heavens of the Most High” are three talismans depicted later in the scroll. This makes clear that the *Ordination Scroll* was bestowed upon Empress Zhang together with the sacred texts. The second item, “official document of contract tallies”, appears again in line 99 with a more elevated title as “Precious Tally of the Contract for the Cultivation of Perfection” (*xiuzhen hetong baoquan* 修真合同寶券). “Contract tallies” (*hetong huanjuan* 合同環券) are used to certify the ordination and hence the divine standing of the adept.³⁸ During the ordination ritual, contract tallies are split, so that one half is kept by the adept while the other half is kept by the master or more commonly burnt in ritual so that it is sent to the otherworldly bureaucracy.³⁹ They are derived from tallies used in pre-Han times to verify contracts, particularly between the king and his vassals.⁴⁰ This suggests that, in addition to the *Ordination Scroll*, there was apparently a document carrying contract tallies that was also bestowed upon the empress. One wonders if the unusual second large inscription may have originated from this document, perhaps as its frontispiece, that was later inserted into the current scroll.

³⁷ See *TAC*, 213.

³⁸ Kohn, “Medieval Daoist Ordination,” 392.

³⁹ This act is called “separating the ring and rending the tally” (*fenhuan pojuan* 分環破券). It is described in the early Tang *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi* 太上洞神三皇儀 (Liturgies of the Three Sovereigns of the Cavern of Spirit of the Most High) (DZ 803), 7a. See summary in Charles Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission: A Taoist Ordination Rite of A.D. 711* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 43. A metal ring may be used instead of a paper tally. See the 6th century compendium *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 (The Essence of the Supreme Secrets) (DZ 1138), 34.10.

⁴⁰ Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 310-3.

Empress Zhang's edict corresponds to one of the first steps in the Daoist ordination ceremony, that is the submission of a written request from the ordinand to the master seeking transmission.⁴¹ Model "ritual declarations for requesting registers" (*qinglu faci* 請籙法詞) from the Ming dynasty can be found together with their corresponding registers in the Daoist Canon.⁴² They typically begin by giving the personal details of the ordinand (birth date, native place, name, natal star), then the request to the Celestial Masters at Mount Longhu for the transmission of a particular text.⁴³ The documents would then continue to elaborate on the request and the details of the ordination ritual, ending with a statement on the powers of the transmitted text and the importance of cultivation. The first part of these documents is very similar to Empress Zhang's edict. In particular, the blank spaces in the empress' edict are comparable to the use of *mou* 某 (certain so-and-so) in the model documents that let users add their own information. Empress Zhang's edict, as transcribed by Zhang Xuanqing, can thus be understood as part of the ordination process and based upon standard ritual documents.

Section (5) notes the ritual procedure of the ordination ceremony:

Your subject respectfully accepts and with care apart from recording the empress' edict, memorialising the elevated and deep, notifying the Master's Ministry in writing, sending documents to all the perfected directors ordering them to respond accordingly, [her subject] especially presents a memorial requesting ranks of registers and titles of honour to serve as [the empress'] place of office.

⁴¹ For a summary of the ordination process in Medieval China, see Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*; Charles Benn, "Ordinations and *Zhai* Rituals," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 327-332; Kohn, "Medieval Daoist Ordination," 379-398. For description of contemporary practice in Taiwan, see Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 67-71.

⁴² Examples are found in DZ 1213, 5a-9b; DZ 1214, 3.15b-19b; DZ 1215, 17a-20b; DZ 1216, 6a-9b; DZ 1217, 4a-8a.

⁴³ The personal details of the novice are largely repeated at the start of the register proper.

臣欽承惟謹除錄懿旨，奏聞高厚，啟箋師省，遍牒真司咸令照應外，特為奏請錄階睿號為任所。

The statement refers to the transcription of the empress' edict as one of the tasks of the Celestial Master. The ritual procedure described involves notifying deities of the transmission so that they will acknowledge the celestial rank of the empress and respond accordingly. According to Kristofer Schipper, one of the main purposes of the ordination ritual is to introduce the new master to the pantheon.⁴⁴ This was an elaborate process during the Ming dynasty as deities from the highest sovereigns to the Kings of Hell may have to be informed by ritual documents.⁴⁵ Section (5) includes a prayer for Empress Zhang, wishing her health, good fortune and longevity as well as protection under the aegis of the Dao. It is notable that the prayer here is focused exclusively on the wellbeing of the empress. There is no mention of the broader benefits of ordination for the emperor and, by extension, the state.

Sections (6) to (9) together form an extensive list of items transmitted to Empress Zhang. It begins with an outline of the ritual documents accompanying each of the nine sets of scriptures and registers in section (6). Each set consists of at least three basic documents, beginning with one volume of ritual declarations for requesting the particular sacred text (*qing faci* 請法詞), followed by one set of contract tallies, and one certificate (*zhaotie* 照帖) of the particular register requested. The second scripture and register transmitted, *Shangqing sandong wulei jinglu* 上清三洞五雷經錄 (Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity), contains only these three items (lines 71-72). Other sets contain additional

⁴⁴ Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 68.

⁴⁵ Examples in *Golden Writings, Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36. See comments in Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 759-761.

documents, such as another contract tally, certificates (*wendie* 文牒), different talismans (*fu* 符) and precepts (*miaojie wendie* 妙戒文牒). This section is of interest for providing information on documents that accompany the transmission of particular scriptures and registers during the Ming dynasty. For some of the texts, it may be possible to compare the items listed by Zhang Xuanqing to records from other periods for an indication of how these corpuses developed over time.⁴⁶

Section (7) gives the nine celestial ranks to be conferred upon Empress Zhang, again for each set of scriptures and registers. Like Zhang Xuanqing's celestial title, these are very long. Gratifying descriptions aside, the titles basically address the empress as a transcendent (*xian* 仙) and "Mysterious Lady" (*xuanjun* 玄君).⁴⁷ An alternate way of writing *xuanjun* is *yuanjun* 元君, which is a common appellation for high ranked female deities and transcendents.⁴⁸ According to the titles, Empress Zhang's role in the celestial realm will be to take care of the albums and records of transcendents (*baocce* 寶冊, *yuce* 玉冊, *xianji* 仙籍). One exception, however, is the third title accompanying the text *Zhengyi mengwei xiuzhen jinglu* 正一盟威修真經籙

⁴⁶ For instance, information on the first text *Shangqing dadong jinglu* 上清大洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity) can be found in the early Tang dynasty manual *Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒 (Codes and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao). The manual mentions Purple and White Interlocking Belts (*baiwen jiaodai* 白紋交帶 and *ziwen jiaodai* 紫紋交帶), also known as "Interlocking Belt of Returning by Chariot" (*huiche jiaodai* 迴車交帶) or "Tally for Completing the Way" (*bidao quan* 畢道券), but not the other items listed in the *Ordination Scroll*. See DZ 1125, 5.2b.

⁴⁷ *Jun* 君 is actually a title of respect that has no direct translation in English. It has been translated as "princess" in reference to female deities but this would not be appropriate for an empress. *EOT*, 235, translates the title of Bixia yuanjun 碧霞元君 as Original Princess of the Jasper Mist. See also *TAC*, 278-9.

⁴⁸ Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 1438. At various times in history, the character *xuan* 玄 was avoided in writings and replaced with *yuan* 元 as it was taboo to refer to the given name of the emperor. See Luo, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 2, 207. *Xuanjun* is also an honorific title that Ming emperors routinely granted the mothers and wives of Celestial Masters. The lengthiest example was offered to Madam Gao 高, mother of the forty-sixth Celestial Master in 1464, titled *Cihe duanhui zhenshu taixuanjun* 慈和端惠貞淑太玄君 (Great Mysterious Lady Who is Faithful, Virtuous, Kind and Gentle). See *Han tianshi shijia* 漢天師世家 (Lineage of the Han Celestial Masters) (DZ 1463), 4.4a, 6a, 7a.

(Orthodox Unity Scriptures and Registers of Covenant with the Powers and the Cultivation of Perfection). This title specifies the empress' role as being:

In Charge of the Subjugation of Demons by the Jade Mansion of Divine
Empyrean at Her Discretion

掌神霄玉府伏魔便宜行事

This is the only role among all nine titles bestowed to Empress Zhang that indicates an exorcistic function, specifically of the office of the Divine Empyrean. The granting of this position to the empress may be explained by the register of deities under Empress Zhang's control. As discussed in the previous chapter, the twenty martial deities include the exorcist Zhao Gongming as well as three Celestial Stalwarts who are from the Divine Empyrean. This could theoretically enable the empress to fulfill the role of a celestial exorcist, thus bringing her closer to the identity of a ritual-performing Female Master as well as to the martial Mysterious Woman of the Nine Heavens who appears in the empress' textual register.

Section (8) provides the register of twenty deities dispatched to protect Empress Zhang, which has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. It is followed by three talismans in section (9), graphically depicted in red (fig. 155). These three talismans were mentioned together with "Tablet of Transcendence" noted earlier. Although talismans tend to be illegible to the uninitiated, here the characters are sufficiently clear so that they can be deciphered. They read:

Jade Decree of Vast Rain from the Celestial Palace of Pure Subtlety of the Most
High;

Jade Decree of Clear Rain from the Celestial Palace of the Leftover's of Yu's
Food of the Most High;
Jade Decree of Warm Rain from the Celestial Palace of the Great Red of the
Most High

太上清微天宮雨泓玉勅
太上禹餘天宮雨澄玉勅
太上大赤天宮雨溫玉勅

Qingwei 清微 (Pure Subtlety), *Yuyu* 禹餘 (Leftovers of Yu's Food) and *Dachi* 大赤 (Great Red) are the names of the Three Heavens where the supreme Three Purities resides.⁴⁹ The terms *Yuhong* 雨泓, *Yucheng* 雨澄 and *Yuwen* 雨溫, which literally means “vast rain”, “clear rain” and “warm rain”, are the taboo names of the Three Purities.⁵⁰ According to the Daoist Master Zhang Zhixiong, these taboo names are often written in talismans, usually at the top, to symbolise the authority of the Three Purities upon which all talismans are basically dependent.⁵¹ *Yuchi* 玉勅 (Jade Edict) refers to the command of the Jade Sovereign.⁵² Each talisman is completed by a triangular top made of three joined dots. This is another common feature of talismans known as the “Three Platforms” (*santai* 三台).⁵³ It represents three pairs of the brightest stars in Ursa Major. Talismans usually summon certain deities for a particular task. Yet, in the case of Empress Zhang, her talismans refer to the Three Purities and the Jade Sovereign without any further command. They seem to primarily draw upon the authority of the highest deities to enable the transmission of sacred objects and ranks to the empress. Their importance as signs of authorisation is

⁴⁹ *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Seven Lots from the Book Bag of Clouds) (DZ 1032), 3.4b-5a. For a summary of the formation of these Heavens, see Robinet, *Taoism*, 67.

⁵⁰ Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei: Bukkyō minkan shinkō* 中国人の宗教儀禮: 佛教道教民間信仰 (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1983), 216.

⁵¹ Zhang Zhixiong 張智雄, “Fushu yu lingyan: Tianshi menxia de miqi jingyan 符書與靈驗: 天師門下的密契經驗” (Talismans and Efficacy: Experience of the Secret Contracts of Celestial Masters), *Furen zongjiao yanjiu* 輔仁宗教研究 (Fu Jen Religious Studies) 16 (winter 2007), 97-8.

⁵² See example in *Daofa huiyuan* (DZ 1220), 193.4b-5a.

⁵³ Chang, “Fushu yu lingyan,” 97.

suggested by their striking appearance in red in the inscription. As discussed in the previous chapter, since the talismans communicate the decree of the Jade Sovereign, it is likely that he is the supreme deity who was once depicted in the missing opening section of the procession rather than the Three Purities.

In section (10), the writer states that he has listed all the items transmitted so that they can be wisely perused as proof (*ruilan wei zhao* 睿覽為照). The term *ruilan* 睿覽 (wise perusal) is used in reference to an imperial audience.⁵⁴ The empress is then asked to accept the items listed. She is addressed by a shortened version of her celestial title for the first text she requests, *Shangqing dadong jinglu* 上清大洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity), which, as will be explained, is the most prestigious of all the corpuses transmitted to her.

Section (11) echoes the opening section by reiterating the powers of scriptures and registers as manifestations of the Dao, which would enable Empress Zhang to receive celestial recognition. The pledge of the empress is included in section (12). It is very brief and located rather inconspicuously near the end of the inscription. There is no mention in the text of any further obligations that the empress would have to fulfill in conjunction with her ordination, although precepts are included in particular sets of scriptures and registers. On the whole, the inscription emphasises the items that Empress Zhang will receive and the benefits she will enjoy from her ordination rather than what she has to give in return. Further well-wishes are made to the empress in the section, including the “daily renewal of favour and care” (*chongjuan rixin* 寵眷日新), which alludes to favour from the emperor that is the basis of her position at court.

⁵⁴ Luo, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 7, 1237.

The inscription ends with a second date, stating that it was written on the seventh month of the sixth year of the Hongzhi reign (1493). The day has been left unfilled, which, as Stephen Little notes, is not unusual for imperial documents.⁵⁵ This second date is six months later than the date given in the empress' request for transmission. The explanation offered by Little and others that the ordination ritual lasted for six months seems unlikely given that the ritual itself, which begins with the request for transmission, normally takes place over several days, with additional time spent on purification.⁵⁶ Perhaps the scroll was produced after the ordination ceremony, even though the inscription states that it was transmitted together with the scriptures and registers. More time may have been needed to produce an enormous work like the *Ordination Scroll*, especially since it includes an image of Empress Zhang. Distance may also have been an issue. There is no record of Zhang Xuanqing's whereabouts in 1493, so it is possible that he was located at his normal residence at Mount Longhu. If we assume that the image of the empress was created in Beijing where she resided, then the production of the scroll would probably have required a process of correspondence or travel. Lastly, the auspiciousness of the date may have been another factor. As noted earlier, the empress' request is dated to the Upper Prime Festival. The final date of the seventh lunar month could coincide with the Zhongyuan 中元 (Middle Prime) Festival on the fifteenth day of that month, which is the birthday of the Official of Earth.⁵⁷ Like the Upper Prime Festival, the Middle Prime Festival is an auspicious day that would enhance the efficacy of rituals. It may have been a deliberate choice to wait until this day of blessings to complete the inscription.

⁵⁵ TAC, 224 n. 10.

⁵⁶ Little, "Daoist Art," 737. On the length of the Tang dynasty ritual see Kohn, "Medieval Daoist Ordinations," 390. It is not clear how long Ming dynasty ordinations lasted, but six months seems too long.

⁵⁷ Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 1530.

The inscription composed by Zhang Xuanqing is primarily a record of the items and ranks requested by and transmitted to Empress Zhang. Based upon the initial reading in this chapter, it is already possible to observe indications of conventional wording and formatting in the inscription, which will become more evident in the discussions to follow. It is notable that the text is addressed directly to Empress Zhang. It is concerned for her welfare and her position at court, while the Hongzhi emperor remains in the background. At the same time, the inscription, like the procession, elevates the Orthodox Unity order by presenting the empress as its follower and supporter. The Celestial Masters are shown to be indispensable not only to the personal wellbeing of the empress but also to the security and longevity of the Ming Empire.

“Ordination Certificates”

In *Taoism and the Arts of China*, Stephen Little identifies the *Ordination Scroll* as Empress Zhang’s “ordination certificate”.⁵⁸ Although he does not explain this further, there are good reasons for this identification. For instance, Zhang Xuanqing writes in the inscription that he has listed the items and ranks transmitted so that they can be “wisely perused as proof” (*ruilan wei zhao zhe* 睿覽為照者). This alludes to the purpose of the scroll as a kind of certificate in the sense of a “document formally attesting a fact”.⁵⁹ However, the issue of whether the *Ordination Scroll* can be related to “ordination certificates” is actually a complicated one because of confusion over how the category is defined. In the following, I will clarify the possible meanings of

⁵⁸ TAC, 208.

⁵⁹ J. B. Sykes, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 162.

“ordination certificates” in order to relate Zhang Xuanqing’s inscription more precisely to certain types of Daoist documents.

“Ordination certificates” is a term that has conventionally been used in scholarship to denote government sanctioned licenses known as *dudie* 度牒 that were issued to Buddhist and Daoist clerics.⁶⁰ Already in use during the Tang dynasty, the licensing system was developed as a way for the government to control the size of the clergy.⁶¹ In return, certification entitled clerics to state recognition of their residence at monasteries and exemption from taxes and corvée labour. Policies towards licensing varied until the system was abolished by the Qianlong emperor in 1774.⁶² During periods of tighter control, applicants had to pass sutra and scripture examinations in order to receive certification. Quotas and age restrictions were also set for the certificates that were periodically distributed.

Yet, the system was already flawed by the late Tang dynasty. Because of their attached privileges and the interest in monastic life, ordination certificates were in demand, which prompted the government to start selling blank certificates as a quick way to

⁶⁰ For instance, Goossaert, “Counting the Monks,” 42; *The Taoists of Peking, 1800-1949: A Social History of Urban Clerics* (Cambridge, Mass. And London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 56; Paul Katz, *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lü Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 108. This is also the meaning of the term used by Judith Berling, “Taoism in Ming Culture,” *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368 – 1644, Part II (CHC)*, eds. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 956; Pierre-Henry de Bruyn, “Daoism in the Ming,” in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 596.

⁶¹ For an introduction to ordination certificates see Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 75-80.

⁶² For a survey of the changes in policy during the Ming see Zhao Yifeng 趙軼峰, “Mingdai sengdao dudie zhidu de bianqian 明代僧道度牒制度的變遷” (Development of the Regulation of Buddhist and Daoist Certificates in the Ming dynasty), *Gudai wenming 古代文明* (The Journal of Ancient Civilizations) no. 2 (April 2008), 72-87. Yang Jian 楊健, “Qianlong chao feichu dudie de yuanyin xin lun 乾隆朝廢除度牒的原因新論” (A New Theory on the Reason for the Abolition of Monk Certification during the Qianlong Reign), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu 世界宗教研究* (Research on World Religions) no. 2 (2008), 17-28.

raise revenue.⁶³ Ordination certificates became fully commoditised during the Song dynasty when they were traded at a market rate in addition to the official price.⁶⁴ In the Yuan, the cost of certificates was officially turned into a form of taxation.⁶⁵

Although this was abolished at the beginning of the Ming, the sale of blank certificates remained a government quick fix to fiscal crises, particularly in the second half of the dynasty.⁶⁶ Apart from sale, ordination certificates were also distributed without examination through imperial favour, usually to mark special occasions.

Based upon this brief survey, it is already questionable whether it would be appropriate for Empress Zhang to be a recipient of *dudie*, which is, in short, a commoditised government license originally intended to control the clergy. The problem of relating the *Ordination Scroll* to *dudie* becomes more evident when we compare it to a rare surviving example of the latter from the Ming dynasty (fig. 156). The discovery of a Ming *dudie* was made in 1962 inside the tomb of a Daoist priest named Zhang Yongxin 張永馨 (b. 1480), located near the ruins of Renji daoyuan 仁濟道院 (Daoist Cloister of Benevolent Assistance) in Maqiao xiang 馬橋鄉, Wuhui cun 吳會村, in Shanghai.⁶⁷ Measuring 117 by 120 cm, the document was found

⁶³ Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 52-60.

⁶⁴ Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society*, 61-62.

⁶⁵ This is known as *mianding qian* 免丁錢 (fee for exemption from corvée labour). Bai Wengu 白文固 and Zhao Chun'e 趙春娥, "Song Yuan Ming shiqi sengdao miandingqian wenti tantao 宋元明時期僧道免丁錢問題探討" (Study into Exempting Buddhist Monks and Daoist Priests from Poll Taxation in the Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties), *Qinghai minzu xueyuan xuebao* 青海民族學院學報 (Journal of Qinghai Nationalities Institute) 28, no. 2 (April 2002), 61.

⁶⁶ Bai, "Song Yuan Ming shiqi sengdao miandingqian," 61; Zhao, "Mingdai sengdao dudie zhidu," 72-87. Scholars have noted the negative impact of unregulated distribution of ordination certificates on the Buddhist community. Kenneth Ch'en, "The Sale of Monk Certificates during the Sung Dynasty: A Factor in the Decline of Buddhism in China," *The Harvard Theological Review* 49 (Oct 1956), 307-327; Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 31-2. On the consequences of the sale of certificates on Buddhist practices, see William Chu, "Buddhisattva Precepts in the Ming Society: Factors behind their Success and Propagation," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 13 (2006), 1-37.

⁶⁷ Wei Deming 魏德明, "Cong Mingdai daoshi Zhang Yongxin de dudie shuoqi 從明代道士張永馨的度牒說起" (Talk on Ming Taoist Zhang Yongxin's Identity Certificate), *Shanghai wenbo* 上海文博 (Shanghai Cultural Relics and Museums) no. 12 (2005.2), 52-3.

intact on the chest of the deceased. It has a printed border decorated with vines. The first half of the document states that the certificate (referred to as “*dudie*”) was issued by the Ministry of Rites and is numbered eight hundred and forty-five.⁶⁸ Citing *Da Ming lü* 大明律 (Great Ming Statutes), it highlights the punishment for private ordinations (*sizi zan ti* 私自簪剃, literally privately receiving the hairpin and tonsure). It also gives a statement in smaller writing that the certificate was granted to twenty-seven year-old Zhang Yongxin from Songjiang fu 松江府 (present-day Shanghai), who was brought to the Renji Cloister by his elder brother in 1492.⁶⁹ He became a disciple of master Gu Jin 顧瑾 of the Orthodox Unity order.⁷⁰ The second half of the document gives the date: the seventh month of the second year of the Zhengde reign (1507) (the day is left unfilled). This is followed by a list of titles of nine officials from the Ministry of Rites and their signature marks. There are two large seals of the Ministry on the document, one of which is a *qifeng yin* 騎縫印 (seal placed on the joint), so that only half of it is visible. The other half would have been imprinted on a copy presumably kept by the Ministry.

The discovery of the *dudie* in Zhang Yongxin’s tomb and its location on the body of the deceased suggest that the document was of personal significance to the tomb occupant. The burial of certificates provides one reason for their scarcity, although it is not clear how widely this was practiced. According to information given in the

⁶⁸ The certificate was at one point in the Minxing 閔行 District Museum.

⁶⁹ Established in the Yuan dynasty, Renji daoyuan was converted into a primary school in the 1950s. See Wang Xiaojian 王孝儉, ed., *Shanghai xian zhi* 上海縣志 (Gazetteer of the Shanghai County) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), 142, 1066. It is not to be confused with Renji daoyuan in Jinshan qu 金山區, Fengjing 楓涇, which was built in 502 and destroyed in the wars of 1860. See Sun Jinfu 孫金富, ed., *Shanghai zongjiao zhi* 上海宗教志 (Chronicle of Shanghai Religions) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2001), 213.

⁷⁰ A land deed found near a second coffin in the tomb gives the name Gu Shouqing 顧守清 as head of the Daoist Cloister. It is likely that Gu Jin and Gu Shouqing are the same person, and he is buried together with his disciple Zhang Yongxin. See description of tomb contents in Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai wenwu bowuguan zhi* 上海文物博物館志 (Chronicle of Cultural Relics and Museums in Shanghai) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1997), 73-4.

certificate, it was fifteen years after Zhang Yongxin renounced family life (*chujia* 出家) that he finally received a *dudie* from the Ministry of Rites.⁷¹ On the one hand, this suggests the difficulty of acquiring licenses as a result of their irregular distribution and cost. On the other hand, it also indicates the running of monastic communities without government certification for all its members. Interestingly, Zhang Yongxin received certification as a renunciant in the Orthodox Unity order. Celibacy is normally associated with the monastic Complete Perfection tradition, while it is considered a matter of choice rather than requirement for other Daoist priests.⁷² Zhang Yongxin's certificate reflects a situation different from, for instance, the Qing dynasty census conducted in the period 1736 to 1739 when only Complete Perfection Daoists were awarded proper *dudie*.⁷³

Comparing the contents of Zhang Yongxin's *dudie* with the inscription in the *Ordination Scroll*, it is clear that they are two distinct types of documents. The latter is written by a priest in charge of the ceremony and records the details of transmission. The Ming *dudie* is distributed by the government with an emphasis on deterring private ordinations. In other words, the document was in theory meant to be distributed *prior* to ordination, giving postulants permission to undertake the ritual.⁷⁴ Ordination for Buddhists is represented by the tonsure (*ti* 剃), while the equivalent in Daoism is the granting of a ritual cap consisting of a cloth headgear (*jin* 巾) and a

⁷¹ For translation and meaning of *chujia*, see *EOT*, 102, 104.

⁷² *EOT*, 104.

⁷³ For a detailed analysis of the census, see Goossaert, "Counting the Monks," 40-85.

⁷⁴ It was possible for the government to issue *dudie* retrospectively to clerics who had been privately ordained but this happened only under special circumstances. For instance, at the start of the Ming dynasty, Taizu issued *dudie* to clerics who were ordained during the Yuan but who were not licensed. He Xiaorong 何孝榮, "Lun Mingdai de duseng 論明代的度僧" (Regarding Ordained Monks in the Ming Dynasty), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 (Studies on World Religions), no. 1 (2004), 29.

round metal crown (*guan* 冠) secured with a pin (*zan* 簪).⁷⁵ The *Ordination Scroll* is clearly not a government license for ordination. It is neither appropriate for Empress Zhang to be granted a *dudie*, nor are the contents of the two documents similar to suggest the sharing of a standard format.

Although scholarship has concentrated on the development of *dudie*, it is actually not the only certifying document historically issued by the government for religious ordinations. In more recent Buddhist studies, writers have highlighted the distinction between official certificates distributed before and after ordinations.⁷⁶ Once a Buddhist undertook the tonsure, he or she received a second certificate known as *jiedie* 戒牒 (literally, precept certificate) that was sanctioned or produced by the government and distributed at authorised temples.⁷⁷ *Jiedie* appears to have been in use as early as *dudie* in the Tang dynasty.⁷⁸ The two types of certificates for Buddhist clerics appear in surviving examples from Dunhuang dated to the tenth century.⁷⁹ Of the thirty-some paper certificates indexed in *Dunhuang yishu zongmu suoyin* 敦煌遺書總目索引 (Combined Index to the Surviving Texts from Dunhuang), two are government permissions for tonsure, both for women.⁸⁰ The remaining documents are *jiedie*, their titles stating they are certificates for a certain set of precepts. The

⁷⁵ Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 36, 102-3. See also Tang Daijian 唐代劍, “Songdai daoguan pidai zhidu 宋代道冠披戴制度” (System of Receiving the Daoist Vestments in the Song dynasty), *Zongjiao xue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 (Religious Studies) no. 3 (1998), 27-34.

⁷⁶ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes*, 75-8; Wang Shengduo 汪聖鐸, “Songdai sengren shoujie zhidu yanjiu 宋代僧人受戒制度研究” (Study into the Ordination Regulations for Buddhist Monks during the Song Dynasty), *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中國史研究 (Journal of Chinese Historical Studies) no. 3 (2007), 69-80.

⁷⁷ Yifa translates *dudie* as “tonsure certificate” and *jiedie* as “ordination certificate”. See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 78.

⁷⁸ Wang, “Songdai sengren shoujie zhidu,” 70.

⁷⁹ Wang Shuqing 王書慶, “Dunhuang wenxian zhong Wudai Songchu jiedie yanjiu 敦煌文獻中五代宋初戒牒研究” (A Study of Ordination Certificates of Monks of the Five Dynasties and the Early Song in Dunhuang), *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 (Dunhuang Studies) no. 3 (1997), 33-42.

⁸⁰ Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 敦煌研究院, ed., *Dunhuang yishu zongmu suoyin xin bian* 敦煌遺書總目索引新編 (Newly Edited Index Catalogue to Surviving Texts from Dunhuang) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), S.4291, S. 1563.

documents then give the name of the cleric, the purpose of the precepts, the date and the officiants of the ritual. These were functional documents that monks could carry with them. At various times in history, *dudie* and *jiedie* were used as a travel permit for the Buddhist clergy, a practice that was followed at least during the early Ming dynasty.⁸¹

For Buddhist institutions, *jiedie* became a part of the ordination process that was maintained after the government system of licensing ceased. An example of a later Buddhist *jiedie* is a document dated 1925 titled *hujie die* 護戒牒 (certificate for protecting the precepts) for a nun at Huijusi 慧居寺 (Temple of Wise Residence) (fig. 157).⁸² The printed document notes the authorisation that the temple received in 1660 to serve as one of the locations for distributing *jiedie* prepared by the Ministry of Rites. It also elaborates on imperial patronage of the temple, reflecting the lingering prestige of court-authorised ordinations after the fall of the Qing dynasty. The second half of the document lists the names of the officiating clerics, while information about the ordinand and the ceremony is hand-written in two lines at the centre of the document.

At present, it is unclear if government certificates verifying ordinations were also applicable to Daoism.⁸³ What is certain is that over time Daoist institutions had developed their own documents for certifying ordinations. Complete Perfection ordinands received *jiedie* from their masters in addition to a copy of the text of the

⁸¹ Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*, 78-80. For Taizu's edict in the early Ming, see Dawen 大聞, *Shijian jigu lue xu ji* 釋鑒稽古略續集 (Continuation of Survey of a Buddhist Investigation into the Past) (1638; repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), *juan* 2, p. 22.

⁸² J. Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967), 336. For other Republican period examples and translation of the text, see 326-339.

⁸³ According to Wang Shengduo, government *jiedie* was only issued to Buddhist monks and nuns during the Song dynasty. See Wang, "Songdai sengren shoujie zhidu," 76-77.

precepts in the late imperial period.⁸⁴ The Orthodox Unity institution developed certificates that were distinct from government sanctioned *dudie* and *jiedie*. In the following discussion, I will use the term “ordination certificate” to mean documents given to an ordinand by religious institutions to verify the ordination ritual and hence his or her celestial rank.

As Ding Huang points out, Orthodox Unity ritual documents and procedures for ordination grew in complication between the Song and Ming dynasties after it was officially appointed the leader of the various Daoist lineages.⁸⁵ This is observable in *Shangqing lingbao jidu dacheng jinshu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書 (Golden Writings on the Great Achievement of Deliverance by the Numinous Treasure of Highest Purity, henceforth *Golding Writings*) compiled by Zhou Side 周思德 (1359 – 1451).⁸⁶ This large ritual compendium includes sections on the documents used for the transmission of particular corpuses.⁸⁷ In true bureaucratic fashion, they involve a large amount of ritual paperwork, much of which are used for notifying the various otherworldly offices of the ritual, requesting them to acknowledge the items transmitted. Among these documents are certificates. These vary in name and content depending on the sacred texts transmitted. For instance, for the transmission of the corpus *Shangqing lingbao dafa* 上清靈寶大法 (Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure of Highest Clarity; henceforth *Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure*), the ordinand receives a “certificate for conferring ordination” (*jiaodu zhaotie* 交度照帖) that lists the sacred text, the ordinand’s celestial rank, the altar that was established for the ritual, the

⁸⁴ Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 151. Goossaert translates *jiedie* as “consecration certificate”, in reference to a consecration ritual that came after the ordination for Quanzhen clerics. See Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 102-7. Zhang Xingfa 張興發, “Quanzhen shoujie xu zhi 全真授戒須知” (Notice for Complete Perfection Ordinations), *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 (China Taoism), no. 1 (1996), 35-6.

⁸⁵ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 1, 761.

⁸⁶ *Zangwai daoshu* 16 and 17.

⁸⁷ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36 and 37.

relevant celestial offices that the ordinand can summon, ritual implements and other related documents.⁸⁸ The register of deities under the ordinand's control and precepts that he or she has to follow are given in separate documents.⁸⁹ Zhang Xuanqing's inscription has obvious similarities to this type of certificate. Apart from the detailed listing of items transmitted, the certificate likewise lists the items with headings such as *yi zoushou* 一奏授 (one, bestow by memorial), *yi chugei* 一出給 (one, give out) and so forth. In addition, the certificate's introduces the items with the statement:

Apart from notifying in writing the High Sovereigns of various heavens, submitting documents to the perfected directors of the three realms seeking their response, now extend issue of...

除已狀聞 諸天上帝，申牒三界真司咸祈照應外，今則延降...⁹⁰

This is comparable to lines 49-53 in Zhang Xuanqing's writing also leading on to the items and ranks transmitted. The connection between the inscription of the *Ordination Scroll* and the certificate is further suggested in the ending of the latter, which states:

Tablet of transcendence given to Inheritor of Rites, disciple so-and-so, as a certificate

Given in the [blank] year [blank] *sui* [blank] month [blank] day and time

Acting Master who Guarantees the Initiate, rank etc, surname, signature

Acting Master who Inspects the Ordination, rank etc, surname, signature

Acting Master of Ordination, rank etc, surname, signature

仙簡給付嗣法弟子某人執證

年 歲 月 日時給

⁸⁸ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.41b-42a. Two texts with the title *Shangqing lingbao da fa* dated to the thirteenth century are found in the Daoist Canon. One is attributed to Jin Yunzong 金允中 (fl. 1224-25) (DZ 1223), the other by Wang Qizhen (fl. c. 1250) (DZ 1221). For a discussion of these texts, see *EOT*, 870-1.

⁸⁹ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.40a-b, 36.42a-43a.

⁹⁰ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.40b.

攝保舉師具位云云姓 押
攝監度師具位云云姓 押
攝傳度師具位云云姓 押⁹¹

“Tablet of transcendence” is the title of the *Ordination Scroll* given in its opening inscription in cloud seal script. The above lines make clear that the term refers to a document that is given to the ordinand as a certificate (*zhizheng* 執證). Since it is not a separate document heading, the term should be referring to the larger certificate in which it is situated, that is the “certificate for conferring ordination”.

However, it should be noted that although “tablet of transcendence” is linked to a certificate similar to the *Ordination Scroll* in the *Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure* corpus, it is not a fixed definition of the term. The term is mentioned again elsewhere in *Golden Writings* in relation to a different document that is part of the transmission of the *Yuxiu huanglu* 預修黃籙 (Yellow Register for Preparatory Cultivation; henceforth *Yellow Register*) corpus, which will be discussed later in relation to the empress’ scriptures and registers. In this corpus, “tablet of transcendence” appears at the end of a document of precepts (*jiedie*).⁹² After listing the precepts that the ordinand should follow and their importance, the text states that:

To the right, tablet of transcendence given to Disciple of Preparatory Cultivation
so-and-so to receive and carry in veneration
Given in the [blank] year [blank] sui [blank] month [blank] day
Acting Master who Transmits the Precepts, ritual rank and name

右仙簡給付預修弟子某人收執佩奉
年 歲 月 日給

⁹¹ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.41b-42a. Writer’s emphasis.

⁹² *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.19b-20a.

攝行傳戒師具法位姓名⁹³

In other words, “tablet of transcendence” does not necessarily refer to a certificate that lists various items transmitted. There appears to be flexibility in its use and, more generally, in the wording of transmitted documents. For instance, the *Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure* corpus also includes a document of precepts like that of the *Yellow Register*. The document simply ends with:

Received official document in the [blank] year [blank] *sui* [blank] month [blank] day and time

Acting Master of Ordination, ritual rank, surname, signature

年 歲 月 日時受牒
攝傳度師具法位 姓 名押⁹⁴

Conversely, the *Yellow Register* contains a document called *gongde yang die* (*yang* copy of the certificate of merit) that lists the various items and ranks transmitted to the ordinand as well as the ritual merits that he or she accumulates. It ends with the following:

To the right, official document bestowed upon so-and-so, disciple of the Yellow Register for Preparatory Cultivation as a certificate

In [blank] year [blank] age [blank] month [blank] day some place, bestowed from Great Retreat Altar of the Yellow Register

High Priest rank Surname signature

右牒給付預修黃籙弟子某人執證
年 歲 月 日某處黃籙大齋壇出給
高功階 姓押⁹⁵

⁹³ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.20a. Writer’s emphasis.

⁹⁴ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.43a.

⁹⁵ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.18b-19a. Writer’s emphasis.

It is difficult to identify the nuances that lead to changes in wording for these documents; however, there should be little doubt that the term “tablet of transcendence” is related to the terms *zhaotie* 照帖 and *die* 牒 that are referred to as certificates (*zhizheng* 執證) in the text.

The overall format of Zhang Xuanqing’s inscription clearly resembles documents such as “certificate for conferring ordination”. Yet, there are differences that need to be addressed. Based upon the examples in *Golden Writings*, “tablet of transcendence” is identifiable by the inclusion of the date and authorised issue of the certificate from ritual officiants to the ordinand-disciple. These are absent from the *Ordination Scroll*: the scroll makes no mention of officiating priests of the ordination ritual nor are there any seals and signatures of authorisation. Because of this, it is highly doubtful that the *Ordination Scroll* could have functioned as an official certificate. The absence of authorising elements may be explained by the argument presented in Chapter One that the scroll is one version of Empress Zhang’s record of ordination, which would not have required official endorsement.

Another factor may have been the nature of Empress Zhang’s ordination. As discussed earlier, the empress received a hierarchy of scriptures and registers, which suggests that she did not undertake the necessary training to be a priest. Perhaps it was possible to omit the titles of officiating masters in certificates for the ordination of a lay person. Another instance in which this omission is observable is in a Qing dynasty corpus transmitted to Yunbi 允祕 (1716 – 1773), King Chengqin (Chengqin wang 誠親王), who was the twenty-fourth son of the Kangxi emperor, in 1754.⁹⁶ This corpus, which

⁹⁶ Discussed in Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 1, 764-7, 800-1.

partially survives in the Tenri Central Library, is particularly relevant to the *Ordination Scroll* since both were transmitted to an imperial recipient. The corpus also includes images, a point that I will return to. Yunbi received *Shangqing sandong jinglu* 上清三洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity), which is a higher level corpus. According to Ding Huang, the King was ordained as a lay person because the documents make no mention of his priestly rank nor is there any information in his biography that he received Daoist training.⁹⁷ The one document that has been reproduced from the corpus functions as a certificate that attests to the transmission of a register and celestial rank (fig.158).⁹⁸ The text is much simpler than Zhang Xuanqing's inscription, but its overall structure is comparable: it gives the details of the ordinand, his request for the transmission of the particular text from the Celestial Masters, followed by a statement on the supreme deities and the celestial rank of the ordinand. It ends with a statement that the ordinand has received the items listed, the date and a reference to the Celestial Master. Like the *Ordination Scroll*, there is no mention of the names and titles of priests who oversaw the ordination ritual, even though there are authorising seals imprinted on the document. As with the scroll, Yunbi's document does not include the transmission of any ritual implements, such as swords, seals or vestments, found in other ordination certificates. This further suggests that neither Empress Zhang nor King Chengqin were ordained as priests.

⁹⁷ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 765.

⁹⁸ Reproduced and transcribed in Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, fig. 93, 453. The document is titled *Shangqing sandong taiwei huangshu dongxuan tongling baolu* 上清三洞太微黃書洞玄通靈寶籙 (Precious Register that Connects to the Numinous of Cavern Mystery of Yellow Script of Great Tenuity of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity). Although it is titled as a register, the content is actually of a certificate. This appears to be case for at least two other documents in the surviving corpus. See Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 766.

The discussion of ordination certificates transmitted by the Orthodox Unity order shows that Zhang Xuanqing did not invent the format of the inscription in the *Ordination Scroll*. The details of the inscription were adjusted for the empress, but the Celestial Master was working within the bounds of conventions for composing transmitted ordination certificates in the Ming dynasty. This tradition has continued into the contemporary period, as the overall format for recording the details of ordinations remains recognisable in the Putian certificate (fig. 153) and other twentieth-century examples recorded by Ōfuchi Ninji (fig. 159).⁹⁹

Apart from format, ordination certificates transmitted by the Orthodox Unity order also offer a basis for considering the function and scope of the *Ordination Scroll*. Unlike government issued documents that are meant for use in the mundane world, transmitted ordination certificates are documents with ritual significance and authority that extend into the otherworldly bureaucracy.¹⁰⁰ Certificates recorded in *Golden Writings* are not only given to the ordinand to keep as a record. Furthermore, they serve to prove to the pantheon that the ordination ritual legitimately took place. In addition to the ritual documents sent to notify the celestial realm of the ritual, certificates are important for ensuring that the adept's place in the celestial realm is properly recognised, which will enable him or her to reach transcendence. The process is summarised by one of the certificates used for the transmission of *Yellow Register for Preparatory Cultivation*:

⁹⁹ Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, 54-8; Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, 437-443. The Putian certificate was issued from within the ordinand's local fraternity. Two examples recorded by Ōfuchi were issued in Taiwan from the Celestial Master Zhang Enpu 張恩溥 after he founded a Daoist organisation separate from the official body in the mainland, which gives the certificates an additional political dimension. On the biography of Zhang Enpu, see Howard L. Boorman, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 52-4.

¹⁰⁰ However, the burial of Zhang Yongxin's *dudie* suggests that perhaps government certificates could also carry otherworldly significance.

In the future when the destined years [of the ordinand] reach their limit, when [his or her] spirit passes the great *yin* (underworld), carry this certificate, call upon transcendent officers, proving these merits, immediately then [he or she] will wander freely (attain transcendence).

將來限滿天年，魂經大陰，齎此文憑，投詣仙曹，證茲功德，即遂逍遙。¹⁰¹

As recorded in *Golden Writings*, the certificates of merit in the *Yellow Register for Preparatory Cultivation* corpus carry contract tallies (fig. 160).¹⁰² One half of the tally stays on the copy given to the ordinand while the other half is added to the copy sent to otherworldly offices for filing. In the afterlife, the ordinand presents the certificates to the relevant deities who will match them with the copies in their possession, thus verifying his or her celestial status.

The practice of sending copies of ordination certificates to the celestial realm continues in contemporary times. Kenneth Dean records that a copy of the Putian ordination certificate was sent to the Ministry of Supreme Mystery Metropolis by transformation through burning.¹⁰³ The copy kept by the ordinand bears the left side of a diamond-shaped seal, while the right side was stamped on the celestial copy, like a contract tally. The necessity of sending a copy to the otherworldly bureaucracy helps to explain some of the elements in the Putian certificate as well as Zhang Xuanqing's inscription. For instance, the address to the Ministry of the Supreme Mystery Metropolis at the beginning of both documents is not only a sign of authority, but actually indicates the celestial office to which a copy of the document is sent.

¹⁰¹ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.18b.

¹⁰² *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.18b-22b.

¹⁰³ Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, 57.

As Ding Huang observes, the concept of the afterlife as a journey with checkpoints that demand official documents reflects the reality of travel in the mundane world.¹⁰⁴ In particular, the development of Daoist certificates for use in the afterlife offers an interesting parallel to government sanctioned *dudie* and *jiedie*, which clerics were required to carry with them when they travelled. Certificates verifying the details of items transmitted were only one type of document that an ordinand may receive that will enable him or her to reach transcendence unobstructed. For instance, the corpus transmitted to the Taiwanese merchant Xu Jinlin 許進林 during the mid-twentieth century is dominated by documents with titles such as *zhizhao* 執照 (license), *wenpeng* 文憑 (certificate) and *tongguan* 通關 (clearance document), which all function as identity documents and travel permits in the afterlife.¹⁰⁵ These documents add a further layer of complexity to the definition of “ordination certificates” for Orthodox Unity rituals.

Since transmitted ordination certificates are used in the afterlife, the copies held by the ordinand must ultimately be transformed after their owner’s death. Early Daoist manuals stipulate that all transmitted items should be buried with the deceased.¹⁰⁶ For instance, the compendium of instructions *Zhengyi weiyi jing* 正一威儀經 (Scriptures of Dignified Liturgies of the Orthodox Unity), probably from the late 6th century, states that:

Orthodox Unity talismans and registers, contracts and ringed swords, [should be] placed in a cloth bag and follow the body into the earth.

¹⁰⁴ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou yinglu” 3, 352-3.

¹⁰⁵ See discussion of documents to navigate the afterlife, see Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 3, 351-4. Xu Jinlin’s corpus is discussed and transcribed in Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 1 and 2.

¹⁰⁶ Noted in Zhang Zehong 張澤洪, *Daojiao shenxian xinyang yu jisi yishi* 道教神仙信仰與祭祀儀式 (Daoist Belief in Transcendents and the Ceremony of Offering Rituals) (Taipei: Wenxian chubanshe, 2003), 327.

正一符籙、券契、環劍，布囊盛之，隨身入土。¹⁰⁷

This is also made clear in the early Tang manual *Fengdao kejie* 奉道科戒 (Codes and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao):

Orthodox Unity talismans, registers and various contracts [should be] put in a casket. Following the location of the deceased master in the mountains or in a tomb, a separate hole is made in which to place them.

正一符籙及諸券契函盛，隨亡師所在山谷或墓內，別作坎安置。¹⁰⁸

Later on, it became common to cremate some of the items. This is prescribed in the liturgical manual *Tiantan yuge* 天壇玉格 (Jade Code of the Celestial Altar), which is the reference text for contemporary Orthodox Unity ordinations.¹⁰⁹ The relevant section from a late Qing copy of the text has been transcribed by Ding Huang.¹¹⁰ It describes in detail the funeral procedures for burning documents for use in the afterlife.

In practical terms, the treatment of ordination certificates adds to the likelihood that the *Ordination Scroll* was not the document that was ultimately presented to Empress Zhang. Such a document would probably have been physically destroyed upon her death. This corroborates the argument presented in Chapter One that the scroll is a

¹⁰⁷ DZ 791, 18.258. A similar prescription is given in the Tang dynasty *Fengdao kejie* (DZ 1125), 5.

¹⁰⁸ DZ 1125, 5.

¹⁰⁹ See the official memorandum “Guanyu Zhengyi pai daoshi shoulu de guiding 關於正一派道士授籙的規定” (Regarding the Requirements for the Ordination of Orthodox Unity Daoism), *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 (China Taoism) no. 5 (2005), 19. On current Orthodox Unity ordinations, see Zhang Jingtao 張金濤, ed., *Zhongguo Longhushan Tianshidao* 中國龍虎山天師道 (The Way of the Celestial Masters at Mount Longhu, China) (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2000), 172-3.

¹¹⁰ The relevant section is transcribed by Ding Huang. This copy made in 1844 is titled *Qingwei lingao shenxiao buzhi yuge daquan* 清微靈寶神霄補職玉格大全 (Great Compendium on Jade Models on Adding Assignment of the Divine Empyrean of the Numinous Treasure of Pure Tenuity). See Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 3, 354-6.

version separate from the one given to the empress. Empress Zhang's tomb, which she shares with the Hongzhi emperor, has not been excavated so one can only speculate on whether such a document was cremated or buried with her. In addition, there may have been a third copy of the scroll, at least of Zhang Xuanqing's text, that was burnt in ritual to send to the celestial realm during the ordination ceremony. If, as suggested in the inscription, there was a separate scroll bearing contract tallies, then a copy of it would also have been sent to the otherworldly bureaucracy.

The category "ordination certificate" is not a straightforward one. The variety of certificates for ordinations issued by both the imperial court and the religious institutions call for more precise translations of terms in future scholarship. Its conventional meaning as *dudie* is not applicable to the *Ordination Scroll* and indeed to contemporary ordination certificates, which are issued long after the abolition of the licensing system. However, the scroll is designed as a kind of certificate from the Orthodox Unity order to verify the items transmitted in ordination. Such certificates are not mundane objects but carry significance in the otherworldly bureaucracy. The *Ordination Scroll* provides physical evidence of the complexity of certification in Ming dynasty Orthodox Unity ordinations, which we would otherwise know only from manuals such as *Golden Writings*.

Image and Text Reconsidered

In the last section, I focused on the textual part of certificates. Yet, the *Ordination Scroll*, with its colourful procession of deities, draws attention to the fact that images also play a role in certification. The inclusion of images in documents attesting to the transmission of sacred texts and celestial rank is not unique to the *Ordination Scroll*,

although it is the most elaborate known example. In Chapter One, the similarities of its visual format to that of the *Investiture of a Local God* have been noted.

Comparison may be extended to the text, since the latter work also records a request for transmission of scriptures and registers from the Celestial Master at Mount Longhu.¹¹¹ It gives the elevated celestial position of the local deity as well as the names of the martial helpers who will assist him in his new role. As noted earlier, the canonisation of local deities by the Orthodox Unity institution involve a similar process to ordinations. It appears that documents produced to record and certify such events also overlapped.

Another example of the use of images in certificates can be found in the Qing dynasty corpus transmitted to King Chengqin. The one document reproduced by Ōfuchi Ninji includes three rather loosely drawn figures (fig. 159). These are two deities facing the left, one seated and one standing with a halo. Clouds are roughly depicted above them. After several lines of text, there is a standing male figure, dressed in a plain robe with his hair tied up in a knot common for Daoists. He faces the two deities and holds a scroll in his hands. Since no other figure is depicted or mentioned, it is likely that he represents the King and the scene is a visual representation of the transmission of the register. Images are also an integral part of the corpus issued to Xu Jinlin. According to Ding Huang, some of the documents in the corpus date from the nineteenth century, if not earlier, before they were passed on to the merchant in the mid-twentieth century.¹¹² The vast corpus includes a variety of documents, some with only text or images; others with a mixture of the two.¹¹³ Based upon Ding's description, the

¹¹¹ See entry in *TAC*, 256.

¹¹² This is because the title of the Celestial Master in some of the documents has been changed by hand from sixtieth to sixty-first or sixty-second. See Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 768-9.

¹¹³ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 767.

corpus includes a document containing an image of the ordinand together with supreme deities and successive generations of Celestial Masters.¹¹⁴ Another document is described as an image of various deities descending to protect the holder of the registers.¹¹⁵ The example that has been reproduced by Ding shows images that are crudely carved and designed, although it is unclear if this is applicable for all the documents (fig. 161).¹¹⁶ Xu Jinlin's corpus suggests that images, notably depictions of the ordinand, were not exclusive to elite recipients of Daoist ordinations. In addition, the variety of the above examples indicates that a range of images were produced for transmitted corpuses that could cater to different audiences.

The function of images in Daoist documents is a large topic that awaits further research. In the case of the *Ordination Scroll*, the images of deities in procession do not simply serve as decorative illustrations of the text; instead image and text work together to attest to the event they record. The inscription composed by Zhang Xuanqing verifies Empress Zhang's place in the celestial realm by giving an inventory of the items and ranks transmitted to her. This would normally be certified by seals and signatures of authorisation in an official certificate. The text provides the basis for the depiction of the empress as a transcendent in the *Ordination Scroll*. Conversely, the images confirm the successful outcome of the transmission. In particular, the procession depicts deities bearing witness to the empress' new position in the celestial realm, which corresponds to one of the purposes of the ordination ceremony that is to introduce the ordinand to the pantheon. If the missing opening section did in fact portray the Jade Sovereign facing the procession, then the celestial acknowledgement

¹¹⁴ Ding Huang provides descriptions of each document in Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 769-796. This document is no. 6. The text of the documents is transcribed in "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, which includes reproductions of a few images.

¹¹⁵ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 770, no. 7.

¹¹⁶ See images in Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, 233, 266.

of the empress' status would have been even more literally visualised. The register of deities depicted in the latter part of the scroll can also be interpreted as witnesses to Empress Zhang's elevated position if the procession is read as a single sequence. At the same time, the pictorial register also serves to further substantiate the empress' status in the first scene since, as will be explained below, registers signal the rank of the ordination.

In short, the image and text in the *Ordination Scroll* work together to fulfil the function of a certificate by giving form to different aspects of the ceremony. They provide a record of the transmission that reassures its viewer of the resultant bond that Empress Zhang has with the celestial realm. The version presented to the empress would also serve as evidence of her ordination that she could take with her to the afterlife to ensure her unobstructed transcendence. The scroll may also serve a didactic function since, through it, the viewer can become familiar with the names and physical attributes of the celestial beings, which is particularly relevant for visualising the register of celestial beings under the ordinand's command.

Scriptures and Registers Requested

Lastly, I will consider the five scriptures and registers and four secret registers that Empress Zhang requested for her ordination. These are:

1. *Shangqing dadong jinglu* 上清大洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity)
2. *Shangqing sandong wulei jinglu* 上清三洞五雷經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity)

3. *Zhengyi mengwei xiuzhen jinglu* 正一盟威修真經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Cultivation of Perfection and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity)
4. *Taishang shigong dahuang jinglu* 太上十宮大黃經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Yellow of the Ten Palaces of the Most High)
5. *Taishang sanwu dugong jinglu* 太上三五都功經籙 (Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High)
6. *Taishang beidou qiyuan bilu* 太上北斗七元秘籙 (Secret Register of the Seven Primes of the Northern Dipper of the Most High)
7. *Taishang sanguan fuhua bilu* 太上三官輔化秘籙 (Secret Register of the Three Officials who Assist Transformations of the Most High)
8. *Taishang jiuzhen miaojie bilu* 太上九真妙戒秘籙 (Secret Register of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of the Most High)
9. *Taishang xuansheng xuehu baosheng bilu* 太上昇玄血湖保生秘籙 (Secret Register that Protects Life from the Lake of Blood to Ascend to the Mystery of the Most High)

Before I discuss these texts, it is useful to clarify the meaning of Daoist scriptures and registers. Registers are a list of deities, while scriptures are primarily “glimpses of the primordial revelation” rather than written teachings.¹¹⁷ In their earthly form, scriptures can include components such as talismans, incantations, symbols, charts and registers.¹¹⁸ Scriptures and registers are complementary. As cosmic creations, scriptures in their pure form exist in the highest celestial realm accessible only to supreme deities.¹¹⁹ Deities of lower ranks possess scriptures that are more remote from the original source. In other words, a certain register of deities matches the grade

¹¹⁷ EOT, 26-28, 39-42; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 327.

¹¹⁸ Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 67.

¹¹⁹ See explanation in Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 327-8.

of a certain scripture. It can certify the scripture as well as the rank of the ordinand. Registers also function to protect scriptures and their owners and can be used in ritual.¹²⁰

Some basic questions concerning the scriptures and registers requested by Empress Zhang are: Can they be identified in surviving records? Were they in circulation during the Ming dynasty? What is the significance of this particular grouping of texts? One of the difficulties of identifying the above scriptures and registers is the variation that can exist for titles of Daoist texts. The Daoist Canon index, for instance, gives expanded titles that may appear in abbreviated or slightly different form in other accounts.¹²¹ Full titles also tend to be used in Daoist manuals compiled in the Daoist Canon. As will be discussed below, titles close to those of the empress' scriptures and register can be identified in Ming sources. They tend to be much longer and more elaborate. Their differences leave a degree of uncertainty regarding whether or not they are referring to the same text. However, the overlap of key terms in the titles suggests that they are at least related or versions of the same work.

To begin with, I will focus on the first five scriptures and registers transmitted to Empress Zhang. The compendium *Jade Fascicles* (preface 1444) by Zhu Quan, referred to in the previous chapter, is an important source of information on the scriptures and registers in circulation during the Ming dynasty. It gives the names of nine scriptures under the heading "Transcendent Scriptures of Various Grades of Orthodox Unity" (*Zhengyi zhupin xianjing* 正一諸品仙經).¹²² They include:

¹²⁰ Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments," 328.

¹²¹ This difficulty is discussed in Russell Kirkland, "Resources for Textual Research on Premodern Taoism: *The Taoist Canon* and the State of the Field in the Early 21st Century," *China Review International* (Spring 2007), 41-2.

¹²² DZ 1483, 2.13b-14b.

Shangqing dadong sanshijiu zhang zhenjing 上清大洞三十九章真經 (Authentic Scripture in Thirty-Nine Stanzas of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity)

Taishang zhengyi mengwei xiuzhen yujing 太上正一盟威修真玉經 (Jade Scripture of Cultivating Perfection and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity)

Taishang sanwu dugong ersishi zhi jijiu zhenjing 太上三五都功二十四治祭酒真經 (Authentic Scripture of Libationers of the Twenty-Four Parishes of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High)

Matching registers for these scriptures are listed in another section on “Liturgical Registers of Various Grades of Orthodox Unity” (*Zhengyi zhupin falu* 正一諸品法籙).¹²³ The above titles are related to scriptures and registers (1), (3) and (5) requested by Empress Zhang. Notably, the first text is recognisable as the fundamental scripture of the Highest Clarity corpus, commonly known as *Dadong zhenjing* 大洞真經 (Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern). Several versions, datable to the Song or Yuan dynasties, have survived in the Daoist Canon.¹²⁴ Its central thirty-nine stanzas for recitation describe the wanderings of deities, their presence in the human body and their power to bring salvation.¹²⁵

Based upon its title alone, text (4) is evidently concerned with salvation in the afterlife since it refers to the “Ten Palaces” (*shigong* 十宮) that are the offices of the Ten

¹²³ DZ 1483, 2.6b-13b.

¹²⁴ For instance, *Wenchang dadong xianjing* 文昌大洞仙經 (Transcendent Scripture of the Great Cavern by Wenchang) (DZ 5), *Shangqing dadong zhenjing* 上清大洞真經 (Authentic Scripture of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity) (DZ 6) and *Dadong yujing* 大洞玉經 (Jade Scripture of the Great Cavern) (DZ 7). See discussion in Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, 201; EOT, 295-7.

¹²⁵ DZ 6 is considered the closest to the original text. See Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 1043-5.

Kings of Hell.¹²⁶ In addition, it is a “Scripture and Register of Great Yellow” (*dahuang jinglu* 大黃經籙) or, in other words, it encompasses a “Yellow Register” (*huanglu* 黃籙) that is specifically concerned with the afterlife.¹²⁷ The transmission of Yellow Registers is accompanied by a performance of a Retreat (*zhai* 齋), which is a ritual of abstinence and purification, for the salvation of the dead. *Jade Fascicles* mentions two scriptures with related titles to text (4).¹²⁸ The first title is *Taishang dongxuan lingbao jinlu duming mingfu shigong dongyue yuxiu huanglu miao jing* 太上洞玄靈寶金籙度命冥府十宮東嶽預修黃籙妙經 (Wondrous Scripture of the Yellow Register of Preparatory Cultivation of the Eastern Mountain of the Ten Palaces of the Underworld, of the Golden Register that Saves Lives of the Numinous Treasure of Cavern Mystery of the Most High). The second title is identical except the term “*yuxiu* 預修” (preparatory cultivation) has been replaced by “*ba wanghun* 拔亡魂” (raise the spirit of the dead [from hell]). This indicates that the first text serves the living in preparation for the afterlife, while the second text is used by the living to save the deceased from the torments of hell. Matching registers are also given in *Jade Fascicles*.

Earlier in the chapter, we have encountered documents used in the transmission of the *Yellow Register* corpus. A version of the actual scripture in the corpus, with a title closely resembling the one given in *Jade Fascicles*, has survived in the scriptures and

¹²⁶ Li Shuhuan 李叔環, ed., *Daojiao da cidian* 道教大辭典 (Great Dictionary of Daoism) (Taipei: Juliu tushu gongsi, 1979), 145-6. Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 544. The notion that the deceased are judged in a series of tribunals administered by ten judges was inspired by Buddhism. The Ten Kings decide if the deceased will be punished in one of twenty-four hells situated under Mount Fengdu.

¹²⁷ EOT, 510-511, 1216-1217. The Yellow Register Retreat (*huanglu zhai* 黃籙齋) is one of a number of Retreats that serve different purposes. For more on *zhai* rituals, see for instance Zhang Zehong 張澤洪, *Daojiao zhajiao keyi yanjiu* 道教齋醮科儀研究 (A Study of the Daoist Retreat and Offering Rituals) (Chengdu: Ba Shu chubanshe, 1999).

¹²⁸ DZ 1483, 2.13b-14a.

registers transmitted to Xu Jinlin during the mid-twentieth century.¹²⁹ According to Ding Huang's transcription, the text is made up of ten smaller scriptures addressed to each of the offices of the Kings of Hell. In addition, the corpus transmitted to Xu Jinlin includes a document that gives a list of further texts accompanying the scripture, such as certificates, talismans and contract tallies.¹³⁰ An identical document also survives by itself without its corpus from the Qing dynasty.¹³¹ The names of the texts listed are basically the same as those accompanying text (4) in Zhang Xuanqing's inscription. This verifies that text (4) refers to the same corpus as the *Yellow Register* recorded in *Jade Fascicles*. Furthermore, the transmission of this corpus has largely remained the same from the Ming dynasty to the twentieth century.

While the scriptures listed in *Jade Fascicles* do not include a title similar to text (2), an identical one appears in the index of *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Yongle Encyclopedia), commissioned by the Yongle emperor in 1403. This indicates that text (2) was in circulation during the Ming dynasty even though it no longer survives in the fragmentary volumes that remain of the encyclopedia.¹³² In addition, *Jade Fascicles* mentions a register with a similar though much more ornate title: *Shangqing sandong hunyi chengzhen feimo yanhua feixian shangyang wulei bilu* 上清三洞混一成真飛魔演化飛仙上陽五雷秘籙 (Secret Register of the Five Thunders of Flying Transcendents that Ascend the Yang and Flying Demons that Transform, that Mixes the One to Create Perfection of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity).¹³³ The

¹²⁹ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, no. 44-53.

¹³⁰ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, no. 43.

¹³¹ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 3, 343-347.

¹³² HaoQingbo 郝慶柏, "Yongle dadian shumu kao 永樂大典書目考" (Investigation into the list of books in the Yongle Encyclopedia), in *Yongle dadian yanjiu ziliao jikan* 永樂大典研究資料輯刊 (Compilation of Research Material on the Yongle Encyclopedia), ed. Zhang Sheng 張昇 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2005), *juan* 4, no. 19948.

¹³³ DZ 1483, 2.11a.

reference to the “Five Thunders” (*wulei* 五雷) in the title of this text makes clear that it is related to Thunder Rites.¹³⁴

The identification of similar titles in *Jade Fascicles* shows that the empress’ scriptures and registers, or at least those related to them, were in circulation during the Ming dynasty. Yet, the combined transmission of these five texts in one single ordination is unusual according to Daoist regulations. Since its codification during the Tang dynasty, Daoist ordination ceremonies have been hierarchically structured. The texts transmitted at each stage of ordination signaled the rank of an ordinand as well as the rituals that he or she is qualified to perform. *Fengdao kejie* outlines eight major ranks through which an adept can progress.¹³⁵ The foundational ranks are those of the Orthodox Unity, while the most prestigious is the rank of “Three Caverns” that is only granted to those who have attained the complete corpus of *Dadong zhenjing* (see text 1). This arrangement that places the Orthodox Unity and Highest Clarity ranks at the two ends of the ordination hierarchy has been largely maintained over time. For instance, *Golden Writings* compiled by Zhou Side specifies the following progression for ordinations:

Those who seek to advance in the Dao, first receive the [texts of] All Merit of the Three and Five and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity. Only after advancement in cultivation can the adept receive [the texts of] the Middle Covenant of Numinous Treasures, then [the texts of] the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity. Those who do not abide by this are in breach of the codes of the Most Perfected.

¹³⁴ Summoning deities of the Five Thunders is a standard part of Thunder Rites, but the specific deities differ according to each sect. See Hu, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian*, 586.

¹³⁵ DZ 1125, 5.4a-8a.

進道之士，先受三五都功正一盟威，修持有漸，方可進受靈寶中盟，轉加上清大洞。若不爾者，有違太真之格。¹³⁶

Jade Fascicles also stipulates a hierarchy of ranks that coincides with the levels of texts transmitted. It further details the guidelines for advancement based upon years of cultivation and the accumulation of merit.¹³⁷ If the requirements in *Jade Fascicles* were followed, it would supposedly take an ordinand nearly three decades to reach the top rank.

Thus, the five scriptures and registers transmitted to Empress Zhang actually encompass texts representative of different ranks. There are the foundational *Register of All Merit* and *Register of Covenant with the Powers*, as well as the most prestigious *Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity*. The transmission of a hierarchy of scriptures and registers to Empress Zhang suggests the potential discrepancy that could exist between rules stipulated in manuals like *Jade Fascicles* and actual practice. Furthermore, it shows that Empress Zhang was not ordained progressively according to protocol. In other words, she would not have had the necessary training and knowledge to perform rituals as a Daoist priestess, even though she is depicted as one in the scroll. It is important to clarify this point since previous scholarship has assumed that Empress Zhang was ordained as a priestess.¹³⁸ Instead, she should have been ordained as a lay person, a practice that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Interestingly, the list of five scriptures and registers transmitted to Empress Zhang bears resemblance to the hierarchy of texts used in contemporary Orthodox Unity ordinations. Ordination practices for the Orthodox Unity order today were

¹³⁶ *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 24.22a.

¹³⁷ DZ 1483, 2.13a-25b; also see *Daofa huiyuan* (DZ 1220), 249.10b-12a.

¹³⁸ For examples, see the literature review section in the introduction.

standardised in 1994 by the Chinese Taoist Association (*Zhongguo daojiao xiehui* 中國道教協會), the official body of Daoism in mainland China.¹³⁹ In descending order, the five scriptures and registers currently transmitted are:

Shangqing dadong jinglu 上清大洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity)

Shangqing sandong jinglu 上清三洞經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity)

Taishang sandong wulei jinglu 上清三洞五雷經籙 (Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity)

Taishang zhengyi mengwei jinglu 太上正一盟威經籙 (Scripture and Register of Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Most High)

Taishang sanwu dugong jinglu 太上三五都功經籙 (Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High)

Apart from the second text, all the titles appear in Empress Zhang's list in the same relative rank. Notably, this includes the *Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders*, which was not directly listed in *Jade Fascicles*. As noted earlier, current Orthodox Unity ordination regulations are based upon the liturgical manual *Tiantan yuge*. The earliest extant edition of this text was written by the fifty-third Celestial Master and dated to 1658 in the preface.¹⁴⁰ The overlap of texts between Empress Zhang's list and *Tiantan yuge* suggests the likelihood that the hierarchy of ordinations codified in the early Qing may have had a longer history stemming from the Ming dynasty.

¹³⁹ "Guanyu Zhengyi pai daoshi shoulu de guiding," 19.

¹⁴⁰ For editions of this text, see Goossaert, "Bureaucratic Charisma," 135-136, n. 48; Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu," 354. An incomplete manual with this title survives in the Daoist Canon compiled in *Daofa huiyuan* (DZ 1220), 249-250.

I will now turn to the four secret registers. Once again, registers with related titles can be found in Zhu Quan's *Jade Fascicles*.¹⁴¹ The writer not only lists the titles, but also gives a brief description of their origin and function.

Text (6) *Taishang beidou qiyuan bilu* appears in *Jade Fascicles* as *Taishang zhongtian beidou qiyuan bilu* 太上中天北斗七元秘籙 (Secret Register of the Seven Primes of the Northern Dipper of the Middle Heaven of the Most High).¹⁴² The description that Zhu Quan gives to this text is broad: if this register is received with utmost sincerity, it will bring the adept great happiness (*zhixin peishou, jingfu da lai* 至心佩受，景福大來).¹⁴³ Fortunately, a version of this register has survived and has been published in Xu Jinlin's corpus. It is given the even more elaborate title of *Taishang zhongtian beidou qiyuan xingjun bilu* 太上中天北斗七元星君秘籙 (Secret Register of the Star Lord of the Seven Prime of the Northern Dipper of the Middle Heaven of the Most High).¹⁴⁴ As its title suggests, the register dispatches seven astral deities of the Big Dipper for the ordinand. It has the stated benefits of bringing good health and longevity as well as:

Deliverance from misfortune and the dispelling of disasters; [the adept's] body will ascend to the purple palace, [the adept's] ancestors of seven generations will be saved, and will transcend and rise up to the auspicious hall.

度厄消災，身登紫府，七祖受度，超昇福堂。¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ DZ 1483, 2.6b-13b.

¹⁴² This title also appears in Hao, "Yongle dadian shumu kao," *juan* 4, no. 19955.

¹⁴³ DZ 1483, 2.7b

¹⁴⁴ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, 249-254, no. 145-6.

¹⁴⁵ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, 252.

The benefits of this register are indeed broad. It not only empowers the adept but the blessings are also extends to his or her ancestors, who will be delivered from suffering in hell.

An extended title of text (7) *Taishang sanguan fuhua bilu* can be found in *Jade Fascicles: Gaoshang shenxiao yuqing zhenwang chishe baozhang sanyuan sanguan fuhua bilu* 高上神霄玉清真王勅赦寶章三元三官輔化秘籙 (Secret Register of the Three Officials who Assist Transformations of the Three Primes of the Precious Petition that Order Absolution from the Perfected King of Jade Clarity of the Supreme Divine Empyrean). This longer title indicates that the register is actually derived from the Divine Empyrean sect. Zhu Quan describes its benefits as follows:

For the person who receives it, [his or her] body will be guarded by Numinous Officials and Celestial Stalwarts. For punishments deserved in life and death, absolution will arrive ordering them to be silenced. Or humbly handover [the register] by burning it for the deceased, immediately [the deceased will] transcend and rise.

佩受之人，靈官天丁護衛身形，應有陽誅陰譴，赦恩所到，悉令清淨。或為先亡參受焚繳，即遂超昇。¹⁴⁶

This register focuses on absolving the ordinand of sins that lead to punishment both in life and in death. Like text (6), its powers are extended to the ordinand's deceased ancestors who would be delivered from hell as a result of its transmission. A set of three registers with this long title also appears in Xu Jinlin's corpus.¹⁴⁷ It has been mentioned in relation to the three Celestial Stalwarts depicted at the end of the

¹⁴⁶ DZ 1483, 2.11b.

¹⁴⁷ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, no. 149-152. A shortened title, *Shenxiao sanguan milu* 神霄三官秘籙 (Secret Register of the Three Officials of the Divine Empyrean), is indexed in Hao, "Yongle dadian shumu kao," *juan* 4, no. 19953.

Ordination Scroll. The version transmitted to Xu Jinlin is divided into three registers, one addressing each of the Three Offices of Heaven, Earth and Water. The introductory text to the registers also notes that they absolve the sins of the ordinand and increases his or her merit as well as saves the spirit of the deceased.¹⁴⁸

The next text in Empress Zhang's list, *Taishang jiuzhen miaojie bilu*, is related to *Taishang dongxuan lingbao yuxiu jiuzhen miaojie bilu* 太上洞玄靈寶預修九真妙戒秘籙 (Secret Register of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of Preparatory Cultivation of the Numinous Treasure of Cavern Mystery of the Most High) in *Jade Fascicles*.¹⁴⁹ The key term in the titles, *jiuzhen miaojie* 九真妙戒 (Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections), refers to nine precepts that the living should follow in order to save themselves and the deceased from hell. According to *Taishang jiuzhen miaojie jinlu duming bazui miaojing* 太上九真妙戒金籙度命拔罪妙經 (Wondrous Scripture that Removes Sins and Saves Lives of the Golden Register of Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of the Most High), these precepts were revealed by the Celestial Worthy of Original Commencement out of compassion for sinners suffering in the hell.¹⁵⁰ The precepts include loyalty to the emperor and filial piety, as well as prohibitions on murder and theft. The title of the register transmitted to Empress Zhang refers to *yuxiu* or "preparatory cultivation", which indicates that it is specifically aimed at protecting the adept in preparation for life after death. The benefits of this register are described in *Jade Fascicles*:

Those who realise the Nine Precepts will transcend the mundane and enter the sacred; those who wear the two talismans will exit suffering and ascend the

¹⁴⁸ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 2, 259.

¹⁴⁹ DZ 1483, 2.9a-b.

¹⁵⁰ DZ 181, especially 5b-6a for the precepts. The same precepts are listed in *Daofa huiyuan* (DZ 1220), 20.13a-b. Also see Hu, ed., *Zhonghua dao jiao da cidian*, 565.

perfected. Waiting until the year when fate answers and one passes away, prove on this day that one has undergone preparatory cultivation in life, then auspicious returns will have no bounds, and the person and the Heavens will forever be dependent.

悟九戒者，超凡入聖，佩二符者，出苦登真。俟他年，運應滅度，證此日生前預修，福報無邊，人天永賴。¹⁵¹

If the Nine Precepts were followed, this register would protect Empress Zhang from punishment in hell and enable her to ascend to the celestial realm.

The final text (9) *Taishang xuansheng xuehu baosheng bilu* appears in *Jade Fascicles* as *Lingbao shengxuan jidu xuehu baosheng zhenlu* 靈寶昇玄血湖保生真籙

(Authentic Register that Protects Life from the Lake of Blood to Ascend to the Mystery of the Numinous Treasure).¹⁵² It is matched with a second register with the same title except that the term *baosheng* 保生 (protect life) is replaced with *bawang* 拔亡 (raise the dead [from hell]), which suggests that Empress Zhang's register, like text (8), is concerned with protecting her from suffering in the afterlife. More specifically, as the title indicates, the register is concerned with *xuehu* 血湖 (Lake of Blood). The Lake of Blood is the hell that punishes those who die from a bloodied death, including women who die from giving birth, and those who have committed abortions.¹⁵³ Zhu Quan explains that:

If a female disciple shows compassion early on to humbly study this treasured register, or a filial son or grandchild studies and receives it in her place, immediately [she will] receive written titles and jade registers, reducing [her]

¹⁵¹ DZ 1483: 2.9a-b.

¹⁵² DZ 1483, 2.12a-b. It appears in *Yongle dadian* as *Lingbao xuehu milu* 靈寶血湖秘籙 (Secret Register of the Blood Lake of Numinous Treasure). See Hao, "Yongle da dian shumu kao," *juan* 4, no. 19958-9.

¹⁵³ See *Yuanshi tianzun jidu xuehu zhenjing* 元始天尊濟度血湖真經 (Authentic Scripture of Salvation from the Lake of Blood by the Celestial Worthy of Original Commencement) (DZ 72), 1.3b-4b.

registered status at the shadowy palace [ie in the afterlife]. Presently living in the mortal realm, [her] good fortune and longevity will increase, and some day [her] journey in the afterlife will be unhindered. Helping the living and delivering the dead, merit is unbounded.

若有信女早發善心，躬參寶籙，或孝子順孫代為參受，即得書名玉籙，削籍幽宮，現居人世，福壽增崇，異日冥途逍遙無礙，濟生度死，功德無邊。¹⁵⁴

This register is particularly appropriate for the young Empress Zhang who was still at a fertile age. It provides insurance for the empress against the perils of future pregnancies.

The four secret registers transmitted to Empress Zhang reflect a preoccupation with salvation in death, for her personally as well as for her ancestors. Unlike the five scriptures and registers in the same list, they are less clearly representative of a particular rank of ordination. They seem to be included more for the specific protection that they could offer the empress. The preoccupation with death in these registers may embody a generalised and widely shared concern. However, these texts were selected in lieu of other possibilities, a number of which are listed in *Jade Fascicles*. For instance, there are registers that are more exorcistic in function or others that focus on longevity and good health that were not chosen for inclusion. The concern for the afterlife may be connected to the death of Empress Zhang's father, Zhang Luan 張巒, in the eighth month of 1492, not long before her request for ordination.¹⁵⁵ It is conceivable that the event prompted the empress to accept ordination from the Orthodox Unity order. However, although the requested sacred texts would benefit the spirit of her deceased father, the focus of salvation is unmistakably the empress herself. This is evident from the specific transmission of a

¹⁵⁴ DZ 1483, 2.12a-b.

¹⁵⁵ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 66.5ab.

Yellow Register corpus and the register concerned with the Lake of Blood. These texts ensure her own deliverance in the future.

It can be confirmed that the nine scriptures and registers requested by Empress Zhang or versions of them were all in circulation during the Ming dynasty. They include both texts representative of various ordination ranks as well as more personalised inclusions. This combination of both conventional and individualised elements is a feature that was also evident in the deities depicted in the procession. The inclusion of certain texts indicate that Empress Zhang undertook the most prestigious level of ordination, as befitting her position, but that she did so without going through necessary progressive advancement. This suggests that Empress Zhang was ordained as a lay person rather than as a ritual-performing priest. The nature and significance of Empress Zhang's ordination will be discussed further in relation to imperial ordinations, records on her life and official policies on ordinations in the next chapter.

In the previous chapter, it was found that Empress Zhang was not ordained as a Daoist priestess but as a lay person. Also, the content of the *Ordination Scroll* was focused upon her personal wellbeing, particularly her salvation after death. Yet, what may have been the more specific significance of a Daoist ordination for Empress Zhang? Are there any precedents for her actions? This chapter will consider these questions by locating the empress' ordination within the history of imperial ordinations as well as records of her activities. The position of the Hongzhi emperor and Zhang Xuanqing in relation to her ordination will also be examined.

Imperial Ordinations

Apart from Empress Zhang, there is no clear evidence that other empresses were ordained during the Ming dynasty. However, there are a few recorded cases of imperial consorts who devoted themselves to religious life. *Ming shi* mentions that Empress Hu 胡 (d. 1443) of the Xuande emperor became a “transcendent maiden” (*xiangu* 仙姑) after she was deposed on the grounds of her ill-health and infertility.¹ “Transcendent maiden” is a polite term for female Daoists so it is conceivable that she received some form of ordination. She was later bestowed the title of Jingci xianshi 靜慈仙師 (Quiet and Benevolent Transcendent Master). *Ming shi* also notes the fervent interest of Empress Dowager Li 李 (1546 – 1614), the Wanli emperor's mother, in Buddhism, which was manifested in major building projects.² Beyond

¹ MS 113, pp. 3513-4. On deposed Ming empresses, see Soullière, “Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty,” 240-2.

² MS 114, p. 3536. On Empress Dowager Li's patronage of temples and monasteries in Beijing, see Naquin, *Peking*, 156-161.

official biographies, Cheng Sizhang 程嗣章 in *Ming gongci* 明宮詞 (Poetry of the Ming Palace) from the early Qing records that Empress Wang 汪 (d. 1506) devoted herself to Buddhism and became a vegetarian after she was replaced by the Jingtai emperor.³ Her two daughters followed her example and, in addition, refused to marry until one of them was forced to take a husband by the Chenghua emperor.⁴

These few examples suggest that religious life was a possibility for retired or widowed consorts of the Ming, but perhaps less so for young imperial women still in their marrying years. Indeed, no princesses are recorded in *Ming shi* as having entered monastic life.⁵ This is in contrast to, for instance, the Tang dynasty when more than ten princesses became Daoist masters (*daoshi* 道士), beginning with Princess Taiping 太平 in 672.⁶ A well studied example is the ordinations undertaken by Princesses Jinxian 金仙 (Gold Transcendent) and Yuzhen 玉真 (Jade Perfected), daughters of Emperor Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684 – 690, 710 – 712) in 711 and 712.⁷ The two princesses were ordained as priests according to protocol. In particular, Jinxian would

³ Cheng Sizhang 程嗣章, *Minggong ci* 明宮詞 (Poetry of the Ming Palace), in Zhu Quan 朱權 et al, *Minggong ci* 明宮詞 (Poetry of the Ming Palace) (repr. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1987), 135. Empress Wang was deposed due to her disagreement with the emperor over succession. Her children's and her piety are not mentioned in her biography in *MS* 113, p. 3519.

⁴ Cheng, *Minggong ci*, 135. *MS* only gives a biographical entry for the daughter who was married. See *MS* 121, p. 3673.

⁵ *MS* 121.

⁶ See biographies of Tang princesses in Ou Yangxiu 歐陽修, *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New Book of Tang) (1060; repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), *juan* 83. On Tang princess-nuns, see T. H. Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion and Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: The Wellsweep Press, 1996), 35-6; Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 10-1; Edward Schafer, "The Princess Realized in Jade," *T'ang Studies* 3 (1985), 1-23; Catherine Despeux, "L'ordination des Femmes Taoïstes sous les Tang," *Études Chinoises* 5 (1986), 53-100. The Northern dynasties (386 – 581) also saw a significant number of imperial consorts become Buddhist nuns. See Xia Yihui 夏毅輝, "Beichao huanghou yu fojiao 北朝佛教與皇后" (Buddhism and Empresses in the Northern Dynasties), *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊 (Monthly Academic Journal), no. 11 (1994), 65-73.

⁷ Recorded in Zhang Wanfu 張萬福, *Chuanshou sandong jingjie falu lueshuo* 傳授三洞經戒法錄略說 (Synopsis of Transmission for Scriptures, Precepts, and Liturgical Registers of the Three Caverns) (DZ 1241), 2.18a-21a. The event has been studied in detail by Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*.

go on to perform rituals for the court.⁸ Retired consorts of the Tang dynasty were also known to have spent their remaining days in imperial convents.⁹

The reasons behind the ordination of imperial women varied and their occurrence depended upon individual circumstances. Piety was certainly a major factor, but there were also other considerations. Imperial women may have been forced into monastic life upon a change in rulership as a form of banishment or to satisfy imperial wishes.¹⁰ At the same time, monastic life could be a refuge from political intrigue and unwanted marriages as well as a place to recover from illness.¹¹ Tang princess-nuns could maintain their elite lifestyles while enjoying considerable personal freedoms such as travel.¹² These advantages were only possible with the backing of the ruler who had the political power and financial resources to support them. For instance, the ordinations of Princesses Jinxian and Yuzhen were supported by their father Ruizong who constructed lavish abbeys for them.¹³

⁸ On the later activities of Jinxian, see Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 14-16; Chen Jinhua, "A Daoist Princess and a Buddhist Temple: A New Theory on the Causes of the Canon-Delivering Mission Originally Proposed by Princess Jinxian (689 – 732) in 730," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69 (2006), 267-292.

⁹ Lin Xueling 林雪鈴, "Tangdai guanchang dao jiao wenhua ce ji – Li Shangyin huanglu zhaiwen zhuan zuo shijian yu duixiang kaoshu 唐代官場道教文化側記 – 李商隱黃籙齋文撰作時間與對象考述" (Sidelights on Daoist Culture in Tang Officialdom – An Account of the Dating and Audience of Li Shangyin's Writings for the Yellow Register Retreat), *Wenxue xinyao* 文學新鑰 (New Key to Literary Studies), no. 5 (June 2006), 11, n. 33.

¹⁰ For the reasons why empresses became nuns during the Northern dynasties, see Xia, "Beichao huanghou yu fo jiao," 69-70. An example of the last reason is when the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 had his son's consort ordained in 740 so later he could take her for himself. The consort was the famous beauty Yang Yuhuan 楊玉環. See Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 11-2.

¹¹ The Tang Princess Taiping's ordination was arranged by her mother Wu Zetian to ensure blessings for her own deceased mother as well as to reject an unwanted marriage proposal from the Tibetans. See Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 10-1. Also, one Tang Princess Huayang 華陽, daughter of Daizong, asked to become a nun because of ill health. See *Xin Tang shu* 83 p. 8663.

¹² Catherine Despeux, "Women in Daoism," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 389.

¹³ Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, 10, 13.

The rarity of Ming imperial women joining convents coincides with stricter regulations during the dynasty concerning religious life for women. Imperial decrees reveal persistent efforts to restrict women from becoming nuns and hence renounce their familial duties.¹⁴ For instance, the Xuande emperor went to extremes in 1429 by declaring that all women were prohibited from entering monastic life.¹⁵ In reality, these regulations were clearly ineffective given that nunneries remained a concern for the government throughout the dynasty. The matter would have been impossible to police given that by the fifteenth century private ordinations and the sale of blank ordination certificates were common practice.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the court's attitude towards women becoming nuns may have limited this option for imperial women during the Ming.

As suggested in the previous chapter, Empress Zhang was ordained as a lay devotee rather than as a renunciant or priest. Her circumstances are distinct from the few recorded examples of Ming imperial consorts who devoted themselves to religious pursuits since she was ordained as a young empress while her husband the Hongzhi emperor was still alive. Yet, as the *Ordination Scroll* itself attests, textual sources like *Ming shi* written by scholarly officials do not present the whole picture. It is possible that Empress Zhang's ordination is indicative of wider practices of Daoist transmissions to lay elite women that are not documented in conventional histories.

¹⁴ See table in Jian Ruiyao 簡瑞瑤, *Mingdai funü fojiao xinyang yu shehui guifan* 明代婦女佛教信仰與社會規範 (Buddhist Belief of Ming Women and Social Norms) (Taipei: Duxiang chubanshe, 2007), 22-7.

¹⁵ *Ming Xuanzong shilu*, 55.1314.

¹⁶ Yü Chun-fang, "Ming Buddhism," in *CHC*, vol. 8, 918-9.

Some possible examples of such transmissions have been cited by Ding Huang.¹⁷ *Xu zuan Yangzhou fu zhi* 續纂揚州府志 (Continued Gazetteer of the Yangzhou Prefecture) (1874) records a Yellow Register corpus consisting of one hundred and eight scroll paintings (*huanglu yibaiba zhou* 黃籙一百八軸) depicting deities once held by Tianbao guan 天寶觀 (Abbey of Celestial Treasure).¹⁸ It recounts that ten of the scrolls were inscribed with the date, sixth day of the sixth lunar month of the tenth year of the Chongzhen reign (1637), and the names of their donors Tian Hongyu 田宏遇 (d. 1644?) and his wife Madame Wu 吳. Tian was the father of the favourite consort of the Chongzhen emperor.¹⁹ He served as Right Commissioner-in-chief of the Front Chief Military Commission (*Qianjun dudufu you dudu* 前軍都督府右都督) of the first rank. Ding Huang believes that, as their title suggests, the paintings were part of an elaborate Yellow Register corpus that was transmitted to the couple and later donated to the abbey.²⁰ This example may be of particular relevance to Empress Zhang's ordination since, as noted in the previous chapter, the scriptures and registers that she requested actually include a Yellow Register for Preparatory Cultivation. The Yellow Register corpus, which Xu Jinlin also received in the mid-twentieth century without entering the priesthood, appears to be one of the corpuses that were available to lay devotees, including women, in the Ming dynasty.

Another example of Daoist transmission to a Ming elite woman is a permit for the underworld (*luyin* 路引) in the Yangzhou City Museum, dated 1554, once buried with

¹⁷ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 755-801 and 3, 342-362.

¹⁸ The record recounts that the paintings were in the hands of a Daoist in 1840 before they were destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion. Yan Duanshu 晏端書, *Xu zuan Yangzhou fu zhi* 續纂揚州府志 (Continuation of Gazetteer of the Yangzhou Prefecture) (1874; repr. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 5.21b. This set of paintings is also recorded an earlier gazetteer where it is listed as one hundred and forty-six scrolls. Yao Wentian 姚文田, *Chongxiu Yangzhou fu zhi* 重修揚州府志 (Recompiled Gazetteer of the Yangzhou Prefecture) (1810; repr. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 28.11b-12a. See Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 761-4.

¹⁹ MS, 114, p. 3545.

²⁰ Ding, "Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu" 1, 763.

its owner Peng Shujie 彭淑潔. Such permits are a form of identification document for the deceased, functioning in the same way as certificates discussed in the previous chapter.²¹ Peng Shujie was the wife of Cheng Yi 盛儀 (*jinshi* 1505) who was the Chief Minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud (*Taipusi qing* 太僕寺卿). The permit states that it was issued to Peng, a “female lay devotee” (*xinnü* 信女), following a Retreat ritual, making clear that the document was an object of lay transmission. Ding Huang further suggests that the permit may have once belonged to a larger Yellow Register corpus that Peng Shujie received, given that such a permit can also be found in Xu Jinlin’s corpus.²² Another permit for the underworld has been uncovered from the tomb of Li Yinggu 李英姑 (1538 – 1556), the first wife of Zhu Yiyin 朱翊鉞 (1537 – 1603), King Xuan of Yi 宣益王 in Jiangxi province, which happens to be the heartland of the Orthodox Unity order (fig. 162).²³ Li Yinggu’s woodblock printed permit was located in a paper envelope placed in a cloth bag that was further filled with paper money ashes. It includes details of its holder and the date of issue, certified by seals and an image of a supreme deity. The ending of the document refers to the title of the Celestial Master indicating that it was issued by an Orthodox Unity priest. It is dated to 1556 when Madame Li passed away and was perhaps bestowed upon the deceased during her funeral rituals.²⁴

The above examples suggest the possibility that lay ordinations and engagement with Daoist rituals was more common for Ming elite women than suggested by standard histories. Indeed, recent scholarship has revealed the widespread participation of

²¹ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 3, 349-350.

²² Transcribed in Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu,” 348-9; discussed in 349-351. For Xu Jinlin’s underworld permit, see Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 2, no. 208.

²³ Jiangxi sheng wenwu gongzuodui 江西省文物工作隊, “Jiangxi Nancheng Ming Yi Xuanwang Zhu Yiyin fufu hezang mu 江西南城明益宣王朱翊鉞夫婦合葬墓” (Ming Tomb of King Xuan of Yi, Zhu Yiyin, and Wives in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province), *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics), no. 8 (1982), 21.

²⁴ Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 3, 350-1.

Ming regional kings in Daoist practices, so it would not be surprising if more information surfaced in the future to show that their interests were shared by their wives.²⁵

However, although Empress Zhang's ordination may be related to wider practices of Daoist transmissions to Ming elite women, the fact that she received an ordination as an empress remains significant. It is not unique in Chinese history – there are actually three examples of ordinations of empresses from the Song dynasty that offer important precedents for her case. They are the ordinations of the Northern Song Empress Liu 劉 (969 – 1033), consort of Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997 – 1022), the Southern Song Empress Yang (1162 – 1233), consort of Ningzong (r. 1194 – 1224), and Empress Xie 謝 (1208 – 1282), consort of Lizong 理宗 (r. 1225 – 1264). These events are documented in *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (Gazetteer of Mount Mao), which is available in the Daoist Canon.²⁶ In particular, the record of Empress Liu's ordination is reproduced with few changes in a separate text also in the Daoist Canon.²⁷ She was ordained in 1024 by Zhu Ziyang 朱自英 (976 – 1029), the twenty-third patriarch of the Highest Clarity tradition, after the death of Zhenzong (fig. 163). The corpus she received is *Shangqing bifa lu* 上清畢法籙 (Registers of the Complete Methods of Highest Clarity), which constituted the most prestigious rank of transmission by the

²⁵ Wang, "Ming Princes and Daoist Ritual," 51-119. Also by the same author, Wang Gang 王崗, "Mingdai wanghou yu daojiao guanxi tanjiu: Yi Lanzhou he Kunming wei li 明代王侯與道教關係探究: 以蘭州和昆明為例" (An Investigation of the Relations of the Ming Aristocracy with Daoism: The Examples of Lanzhou and Kunming), *Daojiao yanjiu yu Zhongguo zongjiao wenhua* 道教研究與宗教文化 (Daoist Studies and Religious Culture), ed. Li Zhitian (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 152-212. I would like to thank Prof Goossaert for sending me a copy of this article. On Ming kings, see Craig Clunas, "The Other Ming Tombs: Kings and their Burials in Ming China," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 70 (2005-2006), 1-16.

²⁶ In DZ 304, Empress Liu 11.11a, 17.5ab, 25.2a-5a, 25.9a-15b; Empress Yang, 26.23a-24b and 12.6ab; Empress Xie, 12.10a.

²⁷ *Zhangxian mingsu huanghou shou shangqing bifa lu ji* 章獻明蕭皇后受上清畢法籙記 (Record of Empress Zhangxian Mingsu Receiving Highest Clarity Registers for Completing the Methods) (DZ 777). Discussed in Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 882.

Song dynasty, as noted in the previous chapter. The stele inscription provides details of the ritual procedures that are relevant for Empress Zhang's ordination. Firstly, approval was sought from the divine being Zixu yuanjun 紫虛元君 (Original Lady of the Purple Void) or Wei Huacun 魏華存 (251 – 334) who is credited with originally transmitting the Highest Clarity corpus.²⁸ Representatives from the imperial court bearing ritual texts and pledges were then dispatched to Mount Mao in Jiangsu province. There at Chongsi guan 崇禧觀 (Abbey of Venerating Auspiciousness) an imperial altar was constructed to perform rituals that lasted for seven days and nights. An offering ritual (*jiao* 醮) was performed during which the sacred texts were transmitted. There was a separate ritual for giving thanks that lasted for three days and nights, and a Great Retreat (*dazhai* 大齋) performed by male and female priests.²⁹ The process was completed by the Casting of the Dragon Tablet (*tousong jinlong yujian* 投送金龍玉簡) into a pool of water, which is a ritual to exonerate the sins of the ordinand so that she can become a transcendent.³⁰

One writer has incorrectly assumed that it was emperor Renzong (r. 1022 – 1063), successor to Zhenzong, who ordered the ordination of Empress Liu.³¹ This could not have been the case since Renzong was only thirteen years old at the time. In addition, another stele in *Maoshan zhi* recording the life of Zhu Ziying makes clear that the ceremony was requested by the empress dowager herself.³² This stele explains that the patriarch was summoned to the capital during Zhenzong's reign, but it was after

²⁸ On Wei Huacun, see *EOT*, 1031-1032; Hu, ed., *Zhonghua dao jiao da cidian*, 1490-1.

²⁹ Ursula-Angelika Cedzich translates *dazhai* in this text as “ritual banquet”. See Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon*, 882.

³⁰ On the process of Casting the Dragon Tablet, see *EOT*, 998-999; Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery*, 69-71. Both ordinations of Empress Dowager Liu and the Tang princesses involved an offering of thanksgiving and the Casting of the Dragon Tablet.

³¹ See entry on “Zhu Ziying” by Lowell Skar, in *EOT*, 1296.

³² DZ 304, 25.9a-15b.

the empress dowager was “ruling from behind a screen” (*chuilian* 垂簾) and Zhu Ziying had left the capital that she requested the transmission. It further states that:

Empress Dowager Mingsu (Liu) desired to follow the purple void, so [she] entreated the transmission of the Complete Methods. From afar [she] venerated Zhu [Ziying] and Zhang [Shaoying] as master of ordination and guarantor, granting them the titles of “Observing the Wondrous” and “Bright Perfected”, and the building of two abbeys called “Pure Yang Origin” and “Celestial Saint” as an honour to the teachers.

明肅太后欲踵紫虛，故事祈授畢法，遙尊朱張為度保師，賜號觀妙明真，建乾元天聖兩觀，以旌師資。³³

This clearly indicates that the ordination was the empress’ initiative and that it was she who granted the title of “Observing the Wondrous” as well as the building of new abbeys to Zhu Ziying.³⁴ The stele inscription is also interesting as a record of the imperial incentives that were granted to the Highest Clarity priests in return for ordination. The ordination of Empress Liu was directly emulated by Empress Yang many years later in 1210 (fig. 164). According to another stele inscription, Empress Yang requested the same corpus as her predecessor from the thirty-fourth Highest Clarity patriarch Xue Ruji 薛汝積 (d. 1214).³⁵ Notably, the inscription records that Empress Yang’s decree explicitly cited the earlier consort as precedence for transmission. Although no details of the rituals are given, the inscription does specify that the empress’s request for transmission was likewise dispatched to the Highest Clarity patriarch and that the rituals also took place at Mount Mao involving elaborate pledges. The ordination of the third Song Empress Xie, the successor handpicked by

³³ DZ 304, 25.13a.

³⁴ Separately, Empress Dowager Liu also presented Zhu Ziying with a gift. See DZ 304, 3.2ab.

³⁵ DZ 304, 26.23a-24b; titled *Jiading huanghou shoulv zhi ji* 嘉定皇后受籙之記 (Record of Empress Jiading Receiving Registers. Reproduced in Chen Yuan 陳垣, ed., *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略 (Collection of Daoist Epigraphy) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), 377-8.

Empress Yang, is mentioned briefly in relation to the thirty-ninth Highest Clarity patriarch Jing Yuanfan 景元範 (d. 1262) in *Maoshan zhi*.³⁶ It records that she followed the example of her predecessor and received the Registers of the Complete Methods of Highest Clarity around 1259.³⁷

The ordinations of the Song empresses are relevant to Empress Zhang in several ways. Firstly, by the Song dynasty, it was possible for imperial women who were sufficiently powerful to directly demand the most prestigious texts from a Daoist patriarch. It is significant that the empresses' requests for transmission were made by correspondence and that the rituals were conducted away from the capital at the headquarters of the religious institution. Notably, the rituals took place without the empresses' presence. A similar scenario seems feasible for Empress Zhang given that the mobility of imperial women during the Ming dynasty was limited. In other words, it is possible that Empress Zhang's ordination took place at Mount Longhu in Jiangxi province with her in absentia. In this scenario, the image of her as a female master in the *Ordination Scroll* is even more meaningful as it visualises her presence at the ritual and her connection to the Daoist master even if she were not physically there.

Secondly, the Song empresses, like Empress Zhang's, appear to have been ordained as lay devotees. There is some indication that they were genuinely interested in Daoist teachings: Empress Liu reportedly recited the popular scripture *Huangting jing* 黃庭經 (Scripture of the Yellow Court) prior to her ordination; Empress Yang was known to have transcribed the Daoist text *Duren jing* 度人經 in 1210, the same year that she

³⁶ On Empress Xie, see her biography in Yuan Tuotuo 元脫脫 et al, *Song shi* 宋史 (History of the Song) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 243, pp. 8658-8660; Lee, "Domain of Empress Yang," 129-132.

³⁷ DZ 304, 12.10a.

received transmission, and had the work illustrated by an academy painter.³⁸ However, they were neither ordained as priests nor did they subsequently live monastic lives. Empress Liu's ordination is perhaps more closely aligned to the custom of retired consorts becoming renunciants since her husband had passed away. Indeed, her ordination could be interpreted as an act of piety for the deceased Zhenzong. On the other hand, the ordinations of Empress Yang and Xie, like Empress Zhang's, were conducted while their husbands were still alive. Moreover, the Song empresses cannot be classified as exclusively Daoist in their beliefs. Empress Liu is actually known as a patron of Buddhist art and official records mention her installation of portraits of the late Zhenzong in Daoist and Buddhist temples.³⁹ Empress Yang made calligraphic inscriptions on paintings of Chan Buddhist subject matter.⁴⁰ This is a situation that can also be observed for Empress Zhang, as will be discussed later in the chapter. In short, Song empresses offer precedents for imperial consorts requesting lay ordinations at the most prestigious level from Daoist patriarchs.

There is a further aspect to the Song empresses' ordinations that has not been recognised in scholarship. Both Empresses Liu and Yang requested transmission at a point in their lives when they had emerged as *de facto* rulers of the empire.⁴¹ Empress Liu was already the most powerful figure at court in 1020 when Zhenzong's health declined.⁴² However, it was after the emperor's death in 1022 that she officially became regent for the newly enthroned twelve-year-old Renzong, ruling by his side

³⁸ Zhang Zhao 張照 et al, ed., *Shiqu baoji chubian* 石渠寶笈初編 (Catalogue of Painting and Calligraphy in the Imperial Collection) (1745, repr. Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1971), *juan* 16, p. 175.

³⁹ Liu, "Empress Liu's 'Icon of Maitreya,'" 129-190. On the installation of portraits see especially 137, no. 33.

⁴⁰ Lee "Domain of Empress Yang," 229-243.

⁴¹ On the institution of female regency, see Yang Lien-sheng, "Female Rulers in Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 23 (1960-1961), 47-61.

⁴² Biography in Yuan et al, *Song shi*, 242, pp. 8612-6.

behind a screen until her death in 1033.⁴³ This became the model for future Song female regents who took an active role in government decision-making.⁴⁴ It seems deliberate that Empress Liu waited until after the mourning period of Zhenzong to request ordination, which would coincide with the beginning of her regency. In the case of Empress Yang, although Ningzong was still alive when she was ordained, he was a mentally and physically fragile ruler.⁴⁵ By 1207, the empress had managed to defeat her political opponents and establish herself as the central figure at court with her adoptive son as heir to the throne.⁴⁶ As Hui-shu Lee observes, from then onwards, “it would not be an exaggeration to regard her as de facto ruler of the Southern Song empire.”⁴⁷ The ascendancy of the two women is strikingly similar.⁴⁸ Empress Yang was clearly aware of the precedent set by the earlier empress as a regent who actively ruled since she explicitly claims her as a role model in her own ordination. The political dimension of the two empresses’ ordinations is further suggested by the stele inscription that connects them to Huizong, the Song emperor who claimed that he received transmission directly from heaven.⁴⁹

The third Empress Xie’s situation was somewhat different from Empresses Liu and Yang. She did not officially become regent until 1274 when she was grand empress dowager, many years after her request for transmission.⁵⁰ However, 1259, the year she was ordained, was marked by the Mongols’ invasion of the Southern Song territory. Lizong wanted to move the capital away from Hangzhou, but it was Empress

⁴³ Yuan et al, *Song shi*, 8, pp. 171-2 and 242, p. 8613.

⁴⁴ Yang, “Female Rulers in Imperial China,” 55.

⁴⁵ Lee, “Domain of Empress Yang,” 100-1.

⁴⁶ Biography in Yuan et al, *Song shi*, 243, pp. 8656-8. On her political struggle, see Lee, “Domain of Empress Yang,” 99-122.

⁴⁷ Lee, “Domain of Empress Yang,” 112.

⁴⁸ Hui-shu Lee observes that the two women shared overlapping biographies, including anecdotes about their humble origins. See Lee, “Domain of Empress Yang,” 83-4.

⁴⁹ DZ 304, 26.24ab.

⁵⁰ Biography in Yuan et al, *Song shi*, 243, pp. 8658-60.

Xie who persuaded him against the idea.⁵¹ This was the first intervention she made in government affairs that is recorded in her biography. It is possible that her request for transmission is related to the beginning of her increasing involvement in political matters.

In utilising ordination to signal and legitimise their de facto rulership, the Song empresses drew upon a firmly established tradition that linked imperial ordinations with political legitimacy. Anna Seidel has clearly demonstrated the close ties between the investiture of rulers and the early development of Daoist ordinations.⁵² The transmission of sacred objects in Daoist ordinations are an “elaboration upon... imperial treasure objects, the presence of which guaranteed the imperial mandate.”⁵³ Since the fifth century, there have been instances when sovereigns appropriated Daoist ordination as a way to legitimise their reign. The early example of the ordination of Emperor Taiwu 太武 (r. 424 – 452) in 442 by Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365? – 448), who was from a Celestial Masters family, was part of a strategic move to establish a Daoist theocracy in the Toba Northern Wei state.⁵⁴ In addition to receiving ordination, the emperor changed his reign title to Perfected Lord of Great Peace (*Taiping zhenjun* 太平真君).⁵⁵ His successors Wencheng 文成 (r. 452 – 465) and Xianwen 獻文 (r. 466 – 470) were also ordained in 454 and 466 respectively

⁵¹ Yuan et al, *Song shi*, 243, p. 8659.

⁵² Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 292. Also see John Lagerway, “Taoist ritual Space and Dynastic Legitimacy,” *Cahiers d’Études Chinoises* 8 (1995), 87-94. Matsumoto Ikuyo 松本郁代 explores the relationship between the royal enthronement ritual and Shingon Buddhism in Japan in *Chūsei ōken to sokui kanjō* 中世王権と即位灌頂 (Royal Authority in Medieval Japan and the Enthronement Initiation Ritual) (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2005). I would like to thank Dr John Carpenter for informing me of this source.

⁵³ Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 292.

⁵⁴ Recorded in Wei Shou 魏收, *Weishu* 魏書 (Book of Wei) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 114, pp. 3049-54. Discussed in Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” 352-7; Richard Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy at the Northern Wei Court, 425-451,” in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion*, eds. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 103-122.

⁵⁵ *Weishu*, juan 4B, p. 94.

upon their ascension, which further equates the ritual with imperial investiture.⁵⁶

Later emperors who publically received transmission include Tang Emperors

Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712 – 755) and Wuzong 武宗 (r. 840 – 846) who were ordained in the capital Chang'an 長安 in 721 and 840 respectively.⁵⁷

Imperial ordinations were not the prerogative of Daoism. Emperors in China also took lay Buddhist ordinations that similarly enhanced their mythical status.⁵⁸ Examples include Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 502 – 549) of the Liang (502 – 556) and Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 581 – 604) of the Sui dynasty (581 – 618).⁵⁹ Later examples are the Yuan dynasty Mongol emperors who took vows from Tibetan Buddhist masters before they ascended the throne.⁶⁰ In one example, the emperor ordered a young substitute (*tishen* 替身) to take the tonsure in his place.⁶¹ The Song Empresses Liu and Yang may have also been conscious of the example of Wu Zetian (625 – 705), the only female emperor in Chinese history, in their use of a religious act to legitimise their rulership. Wu Zetian took the tonsure when she was a young concubine upon the death of Taizong, as was customary for retired consorts of the period. Subsequently, when she emerged in power, she embarked on a program of propaganda that presented herself as an incarnation of Maitreya, the Future Buddha, in order to justify her usurpation of the throne.⁶²

⁵⁶ *Weishu*, *juan* 5, p. 113; *juan* 6, p. 126.

⁵⁷ Liu Xu 劉昫 et al, *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old Book of Tang) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), *juan* 18, pp. 585-6; *juan* 192, p. 5128.

⁵⁸ David M. Farquhar, "Emperor As Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978), 9-11.

⁵⁹ On Emperor Wu's ordination, see Andreas Janousch, "The Emperor as Bodhisattva: The Bodhisattva Ordination and Ritual Assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty," in *State and Court Ritual in China*, ed. Joseph P. McDermott (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 112-149. Also, Farquhar, "Emperor As Bodhisattva," 10-11.

⁶⁰ Zhao Gaiping 趙改萍, "Yuanchao dui zangchuan fojiao de guanli 元朝對藏傳佛教的管理" (Yuan Dynasty Management of Tibetan Buddhism), *Nei Menggu shehui kexue* 內蒙古社會科學 (Inner Mongolia Social Sciences) 30, no. 1 (2009), 57.

⁶¹ Zhao, "Yuanchao dui zangchuan fojiao," 59.

⁶² Liu, "Empress Liu's Icon of Maitreya," 139-143.

During the Ming dynasty, it seems that it became customary once more for emperors to request transmission from the Celestial Masters. Records of imperial ordinations are found in chronicles compiled by the Celestial Masters, namely *Huang Ming enming shi lu* 皇明恩命世錄 (Chronological Register of the Gracious Ordinances of the Illustrious Ming) (1567 – 1607) and *Han tianshi shijia* 漢天師世家 (Lineage of the Han Celestial Master) (1607).⁶³ According to these texts, six out of eleven of emperors, from the reigns of Hongwu to Jiajing, requested and received *Taishang yanxi zhujie falu* 太上延禧諸階法籙 (Liturgical Registers of Various Ranks that Extends Blessings of the Most High).⁶⁴ The title suggests that, like Empress Zhang, Ming rulers received a hierarchy of sacred texts in a single ordination, which points to the exceptional nature of imperial ordinations at the highest level. Some of the entries record that transmission of the registers involved a Retreat (*zhai* 齋) ritual, but no detailed descriptions of them are given.⁶⁵ It should be noted that, unlike previous dynasties, Ming imperial ordinations were not recorded in official histories. This raises questions concerning the reliability of available sources. Yet, as will be discussed below, Ming emperors were clearly participating in religious practices and it is plausible that they would have received some form of transmission from the Celestial Masters.

The five emperors who apparently did not request transmission from the Celestial Masters were Jianwen 建文 (r. 1399 – 1492), Hongxi 洪熙 (r. 1425), Jingtai 景泰 (r. 1450 – 1457), Chenghua 成化 (r. 1465 – 1487) and Zhengde 正德 (r. 1506 –

⁶³ DZ 1462 and DZ 1463 respectively.

⁶⁴ In DZ 1462, see Hongwu 2.4b, Yongle 3.6a, Xuande 5.1b, Zhengtong / Tianshun 5.4b and 6.6b, Hongzhi 7.4a, Jiajing 8.2b. In DZ 1463, see Hongwu 3.25a, Yongle 3.29a, Xuande 4.2a, Zhengtong / Tianshun 4.3a and 4.6a, Hongzhi 4.9b, Jiajing 4.12a.

⁶⁵ See, for instance, the entry for the Yongle emperor's transmission in *Huang Ming enming shilu* (DZ 1462), 3.6a.

1521).⁶⁶ The brevity of the Jianwen and Hongxi reigns were probably the reason why they were not ordained. The absence of transmission for the Chenghua emperor who was heavily involved in religious practices may be due to the downfall of the Celestial Master Zhang Yuanji 張元吉 (1435 – 1477) (see below), while the Zhengde emperor's keen personal preference for Tibetan Buddhism may have been a factor in his decision not to request the registers.⁶⁷ The case of the Jingtai emperor is notable since he was a temporary replacement of the Zhengtong emperor who was captured by the Mongols at Tumu Fort in 1449 during a military expedition. The fact that he did not request transmission, while the Zhengtong emperor asked for it twice, once before his capture and once after he was reinstated, suggests the continued connection of ordination to the legitimacy of rule during the Ming dynasty. This is further verified by the fact that Ming emperors either requested transmission before or within a few years of their ascension. The Hongwu emperor requested it two years before he officially established the Ming dynasty, Yongle in his sixth year, Xuande in his fourth, Zhengtong in his second and again in the third year of reinstatement, and Jiajing in his first. The Hongzhi emperor is unusual in receiving transmission after twelve years, a point that will be discussed later.

There is also some evidence that Ming emperors received Buddhist ordinations. Shen Defu 沈德符 in *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Random Gleanings from the Wanli Period) (1619) records that the Wanli emperor and his sons all had children take the tonsure for them as substitutes when they were born, in accordance with Yuan dynasty customs.⁶⁸ Moreover, Ming emperors appropriated religious guises as part of their

⁶⁶ For the exact dates of Ming reigns, see Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness*, 23.

⁶⁷ See entries on Chenghua and Zhengde in DMB, 298-304 and 307-315 respectively.

⁶⁸ Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Random Gleanings from the Wanli Period) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), *juan* 27, p. 686.

imperial image. For instance, the Zhengde emperor, who did not request the Daoist register perhaps due to his personal preference for Tibetan Buddhism, proclaimed himself *Daqing fawang* 大慶法王 (Dharma King of Great Auspiciousness) in 1510 and sometimes donned the attire of a Lama.⁶⁹

Given the precedence of Song empresses and the connection of imperial ordinations to rulership both historically and during the Ming, could Empress Zhang's ordination also have carried political significance? Could it be an indication that the empress harboured political ambitions to rule as regent? How do we reconcile the fact that Empress Zhang received an ordination six years before the Hongzhi emperor? In order to explore these questions further, we need to examine more closely historical records concerning Empress Zhang.

Empress Zhang

Empress Zhang, a native of Xingji 興濟 near Beijing, was born on the second lunar month of 1470 (fig. 165).⁷⁰ She married then heir-apparent Zhu Youtang in 1487, becoming empress later that year when he ascended the throne.⁷¹ Empress Zhang came from a respectable but politically minor family. Her father Zhang Luan 張巒 (1445 – 1492) was enrolled in the National University in Beijing.⁷² Her most

⁶⁹ MS 184, p. 4886; 331, p. 8678.

⁷⁰ Empress Zhang's biography is found in MS 114, pp. 3528-9; Zheng Rubi 鄭汝璧 (*jinshi* 1568), *Huangming dihou jilue* 皇明帝后紀略 (Brief Record of Ming Emperors and Empresses) (repr. Taipei: Mingwen chubanshe, 1991), *juan* 14, p. 29; Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623 – 1716), *Shengchao tongshi shiyi ji* 勝朝彤史拾遺記 (Record of Surviving Information on Palace Life in the Previous Dynasty) (repr. Taipei: Mingwen chubanshe, 1991), *juan* 4, pp. 161-4. MS gives the year of her death but not her birth date. The month is known by a record in the *Veritable Records* when there was controversy over the emperor cancelling her birthday celebrations. *Ming Jiajing shilu*, 36.9b. The year is recorded in Gugong bowuyuan 故宮博物院, ed., *Xingji xian zhi* 興濟縣志 (Gazetteer of Xingji County) (Haikou shi: Hainan chubanshe, 2001), 170.

⁷¹ *Ming Xianzong shilu*, 286.5a; *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 4.3a.

⁷² Biographies of her father and two brothers are in MS, 300, pp. 7676-7677. Also see DMB, 74-77.

distinguished relative was Zhang Qi 張岐, her father's cousin, who passed the highest civil service examination in 1454 and served as Assistant Censor-in-chief of the Censorate (*Duchayuan youjian du yushi* 都察院右僉都御史).⁷³ Empress Zhang's relatively mundane background conforms to the requirements established by Taizu that excluded daughters of high ranking families from being selected as consorts in order to limit any potential threats to the throne.⁷⁴ She outlived both the Hongzhi emperor (fig. 166) and their son, the Zhengde emperor (fig. 167), passing away in the eighth lunar month of 1541 at the age of 71.⁷⁵

In Ming history, Empress Zhang is known for the extraordinary favour that she and her family received from the emperor, since he never had other wives.⁷⁶ Biographers tend to emphasise her later decline as a result of the Great Rites Controversy (*Dali yi* 大禮議), the conflict over ceremonial protocol between officials and the Jiajing emperor (r. 1522 – 66) who came from a collateral branch of the imperial family (fig. 168).⁷⁷ As the Zhengde emperor passed away without an heir, Empress Zhang as empress dowager temporarily came to power. Together with the major official Yang Tinghe 楊廷和 (1459 – 1529), she was instrumental in bringing the Jiajing emperor to the throne, but the new emperor refused to accept her as his adoptive mother, eventually demoting her to “Imperial Aunt” (*huang bomu* 皇伯母).⁷⁸ Her brothers were subsequently arrested: one was executed and the other died in prison.⁷⁹

⁷³ Wan Zhenxiao 萬震霄, *Qing xian zhi* 青縣志 (Gazetteer of Qing County) (repr. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 4.26a-b.

⁷⁴ Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, *Huangming zu xun* 皇明祖訓 (Imperial Ancestral Instructions of the Ming) (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1966), 29b. See Soullière, “Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty,” 263.

⁷⁵ MS 114, p. 3528.

⁷⁶ See the Hongzhi emperor's biography in L. Carrington Goodrich, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368 – 1644* (DMB) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 375-380.

⁷⁷ On the Great Rites Controversy, see Carney Fisher, *The Chosen One: Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong* (Sydney, Wellington, London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

⁷⁸ MS 114, p. 3528; Fisher, *The Chosen One*, 50-52.

⁷⁹ MS 300, p. 7677.

Historical opinion on Empress Zhang varies. Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623 – 1716) praises her for not interfering in politics but notes that she kept a blind eye to the offences of her two brothers.⁸⁰ Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578 – 1642) is particularly critical of Empress Zhang, stating that because she forbade other consorts from gaining the attention of the emperor, the imperial household was left with only one heir, which led to later political problems.⁸¹ He also blames her and eunuchs for influencing the emperor with their religious interests.⁸² Based largely on Shen Defu's account, the contemporary scholar Frederick Mote described Empress Zhang as:

a foolish and demanding woman, capable of no more than petty faults, but those included a constant desire for expensive objects, credulity about the teaching of the most specious Buddhist and Taoist clerics, and limitless favor for her family, especially her two unrestrained venal brothers.⁸³

Carney Fisher similarly criticises Empress Zhang for permitting the excesses of her relatives, but he also considers her a force in mid-Ming court politics, stating that:

She had gained a strong and perhaps undue influence in court affairs through her husband, the former Emperor Xiaozong.⁸⁴

In the context of the Great Rites Controversy, Fisher notes the important role that Empress Zhang played in bringing the Jiajing emperor to the throne. He also points

⁸⁰ Mao, *Shengchao tong shi shiyi ji*, juan 4, p. 161.

⁸¹ Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, juan 3, pp. 86-87.

⁸² Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, juan 27, pp. 684-685. Shen records that Empress Zhang was interested in Buddhism rather than Daoism, which corresponds to her later patronage activities discussed below.

⁸³ *CHC*, vol. 7, 353.

⁸⁴ Fisher, *The Chosen One*, 48-9.

out the apprehension that officials felt in the alliance of the empress and Yang Tinghe and their possible threat to rulership.⁸⁵

However, Empress Zhang was still in her early twenties when she was ordained and the Great Rites Controversy was over two decades away. Her circumstances were different from those of the Song empresses since her ordination took place when the Hongzhi emperor was in power. Empress Zhang kept a relatively low profile in official histories during the Hongzhi and Zhengde reigns.⁸⁶ When she intervened, it was to shield her two brothers from their offences. According to *Ming shi*, she ordered a eunuch He Ding 何鼎 to be beaten to death for attacking her brothers for their lack of respect towards the throne.⁸⁷ With her protection and the emperor's favour, her relatives amassed great privileges in honors, land and commercial dealings.⁸⁸ Yet, there is no indication that Empress Zhang became directly involved in government until after the death of the Zhengde emperor.⁸⁹ As empress dowager, she seems to have taken a *laissez-faire* approach with her son, who developed a notorious reputation among scholar officials as an emperor who did not take his duties seriously.⁹⁰ Furthermore, unlike the Song dynasty, there were no formal regencies by empress dowagers during the Ming. It was implicitly prohibited by the Hongwu

⁸⁵ Fisher, *The Chosen One*, 52.

⁸⁶ There was one political incident that implicated the empress: the King of Ning 寧王, Zhu Chenhao 朱宸濠 (d. 1521), attempted a rebellion against the Zhengde emperor in 1519. He claimed that he had a secret edict from the empress authorising his plan, but could produce no proof when questioned. See *CHC*, vol. 7, 423-430.

⁸⁷ *MS* 304, p. 7783; also recorded in Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, *juan* 5, pp. 160, 163, *buyi*, *juan* 2, p. 827. Another incident is with Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (*jinshi* 1494) who also criticised the empress' brothers. In this case, it was the empress' mother Madame Jin 金 who intervened by appealing to the emperor in tears. *MS* 286, p. 7346; Mao, *Shengchao tongshi shiyi ji*, *juan* 4, 161.

⁸⁸ Satō Fumitoshi 佐藤文俊, *Mindai ōfu no kenkyū* 明代王府の研究 (Research on the Ming Imperial Household) (Tokyo: Kenkun Shuppan, 1999), 436-465.

⁸⁹ This is also the view of Soullière, "Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty," 374.

⁹⁰ This view of the Zhengde emperor has recently been overturned by David Robinson, "The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols," in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368 – 1644)*, ed. David Robinson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 365-422, esp. 401-410.

emperor in his *Ancestral Instructions*, which stipulated that imperial women should not be involved in affairs beyond the household.⁹¹ It was still possible for a senior Ming empress to exercise imperial authority, such as another, unrelated, Empress Zhang 張 (d. 1442), consort of the Hongxi emperor, who was involved in affairs of state during the Xuande and Zhengtong reigns, but the institution of regency was never formalised during the dynasty.⁹²

Based on limited information, we cannot say for certain whether Empress Zhang personally harboured any political ambitions at the time of her ordination. However, it is clear that, during the Hongzhi and Zhengde reigns, Empress Zhang cannot be connected to rulership in the same way as her Song dynasty predecessors.

Nevertheless, the issue of power may be pertinent to Empress Zhang's ordination in another way. It may be linked to her ascendancy as the dominant woman at court, and in turn the rise of her family, which is marked by the birth of her son, the future Zhengde emperor, in the ninth lunar month of 1491.⁹³ Empress Zhang's ordination can be related to the birth of the imperial heir due to the involvement of the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing in both events. In 1490, the imperial couple had remained childless after three years of marriage and the emperor was under increasing pressure from his officials to select more consorts as a solution.⁹⁴ However, the emperor refused and instead turned to religious practices for assistance. In the summer of 1490, the emperor asked Zhang Xuanqing to perform two offering rituals at the inner court, one in gratitude of auspicious signs and another to pray for a royal heir.⁹⁵ The

⁹¹ Zhu, *Huangming zuxun*, 29b.

⁹² See Soullière, "Palace Women in the Ming Dynasty," 348-371. Soullière considers the earlier Empress Zhang a de facto regent.

⁹³ There was a widespread rumour that Empress Zhang did not give birth to the Zhengde emperor but appropriated him from a palace woman. The rumour was not substantiated. See Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, juan 3, pp. 86-7; Mao, *Shengchao tongshi shiyi ji*, juan 4, pp. 164-5.

⁹⁴ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 41.7b-8a.

⁹⁵ *Huangming enming shilu* (DZ 1462), 7.3b; *Han tianshi shijia* (DZ 1463), 4.9a.

emperor had previously met the Celestial Master in 1488 when he first ascended the throne, summoning him for an audience at the capital as was customary when there was a new Celestial Master or sovereign.⁹⁶ When Empress Zhang gave birth to a son in 1491, Zhang Xuanqing received a carved jade belt, gold headdress, ceremonial robe and silver for the efficacy of his ritual. Although Empress Zhang is not directly mentioned in these records, the circumstances surrounding the birth of her son connect her to Zhang Xuanqing. The success of the Celestial Master's ritual would have earned him the confidence of the imperial couple, thus paving the way for the empress' ordination in 1493.

The significance of the *Ordination Scroll* as an object indicating the beginning of Empress Zhang's rise in stature may be more clearly understood when it is compared to another record of her activity around the same time, also situated outside of official histories. Two temple steles reveal that between the summer of 1492 and the eighth month of 1493 when the inscriptions were written, Empress Zhang contributed funds to the restoration of two Buddhist temples – Xizhusi 西竺寺 (Temple of Western Zhu or India) and Puzhaosi 普照寺 (Temple of Universal Light) on Mount Yangtai (Yangtai shan 陽台山).⁹⁷ Both temples were once located on the Western Hills (Xishan 西山), beyond the Beijing city walls; only Puzhao Temple remains (fig. 169).⁹⁸ The restoration projects were initiated by Directorate of Palace Eunuchs (*Neiguan jian* 內官監) who also made donations to the temples together with other

⁹⁶ DZ 1463, 4.9a.

⁹⁷ Beijing tushuguan jinshizu 北京圖書館金石組, ed, *Beijing tushuguan cang Zhongguo lidai shike tuoben huibian* 北京圖書館藏中國歷代石刻拓本匯編 (Collected Rubbings of Historical Stelae Housed in the Beijing Library) (*BJTB*) (Zhengzhou shi: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1990), vol. 53, pp. 20-1, 22. See also He, *Mingdai Beijing siyuan xiujian yanjiu*, 440.

⁹⁸ On the Western Hills, see Naquin, *Peking*, 11-2.

eunuchs.⁹⁹ The steles were written by the same official Li Lun 李綸, stating that the emperor, the empress and the heir provided funds to the projects.¹⁰⁰ For instance, the Puzhaosi stele records that:

[The project was] made known to the emperor who bestowed some amount of silver, while the Central Palace (Empress Zhang) and the Eastern Palace (the heir-apparent) added to the amount...

具聞于上，蒙賜白金若干，中宮、東宮賜予益厚...¹⁰¹

These are the earliest recorded acts of temple patronage jointly made by the imperial couple and their infant son who was not yet two years old at this time. Xizhusi and Puzhaosi are two relatively small temples. Why were they chosen to carry this honour?

Xizhusi and Puzhaosi are temples that served Monks of the Western Paradise (*xitian seng* 西天僧), a community founded by the monk Pandita Sahajaśrī from present-day Kashmir.¹⁰² Its Indian roots distinguish it from Tibetan monks (*fanseng* 番僧, *zangseng* 藏僧), although the two groups interacted closely.¹⁰³ Founded by Yingzong in 1435, Xizhusi was built around the now lost burial pagoda of Zhiguang 智光 (1348 – 1435), the ethnically Han monk who was pivotal in establishing imperial

⁹⁹ Apart from the two eunuchs who suggested the projects to the Hongzhi emperor, the stele from Xizhusi lists sixty-five eunuch donors, while nearly one hundred eunuchs provided funds for Puzhaosi.

¹⁰⁰ Li Lun's title is given in the inscriptions as Vice Minister of the Court of the Imperial Stud, Former Grand Master Exemplar of Wenhua Hall (*Wenhua dian qian zhongxian dafu Taipusi shaoqing* 文華殿前中憲大夫太僕寺少卿).

¹⁰¹ *BJTB* 53, p. 22.

¹⁰² On Pandita 薩哈撈釋哩, see *DMB*, 1111-3; Kuan Guang, "Sahajaśrī: A Fourteenth-Century Indian Buddhist Missionary to China," *Religions of South Asia* 1, no. 2 (2007), 203-215. See also Kuan Guang, "Wutai Shan During the Ming Dynasty," (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2010). I would like to thank Dr Guang for sharing this thesis with me.

¹⁰³ On Monks of the Western Paradise see Du Changshun 杜常順, "Mingdai 'Xitian seng' kaolue 明代 '西天僧' 考略" (Investigation into the Monks of Western Paradise of the Ming Dynasty), *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 (Studies in World Religions) no. 1 (2006), 23-33; Hoong Teik Toh, "Tibetan Buddhism in Ming China" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004).

recognition for the Monks of Western Paradise.¹⁰⁴ He was sent on diplomatic missions to Tibet and Nepal on three occasions by the imperial court between 1384 and 1403.¹⁰⁵ While Puzhaosi was not built by the imperial family, it was nevertheless established by a follower of Zhiguang.¹⁰⁶ The temple received an imperial plaque from the Chenghua emperor, giving it its present title and official status. The two temples are located in the vicinity of Dajuesi 大覺寺 (Monastery of Great Enlightenment), one of the major monasteries on the Western Hills patronised by the Ming imperial household (fig. 170).¹⁰⁷ Founded on the site of a Liao dynasty temple, Dajuesi was renovated and received its present name in 1428 by the decree of the earlier Empress Zhang, mentioned above, to serve as residence for Zhiguang and his many disciples.¹⁰⁸ Xizhusi and Puzhaosi can thus be considered adjunct temples of Dajuesi centered on the cult of Zhiguang.

The restoration of the two temples, with funds from the Hongzhi emperor, Empress Zhang and their son, continues a tradition of imperial support for the Monks of the Western Paradise that dates back in the Ming to the founder Taizu.¹⁰⁹ In addition, there may have been diplomatic considerations in the act. At the beginning of his reign, the Hongzhi emperor agreed to measures put forth by officials to curb religious personnel and activities.¹¹⁰ This included the demotion and reduction of religious

¹⁰⁴ Recorded in *BJTB* 53, pp. 20-1; Also see He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*, 188-9.

¹⁰⁵ On Zhiguang, see *MS* 299, p. 7657; Yu Mingzhong 于敏中, *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考 (Investigation of Old Accounts Heard in the Precincts of the Throne) (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1985), *juan* 96, pp. 1608-9; Lu Hailong 陸海龍, ed., *Zhongguo fojiao renming da cidian* 中國佛教人名大辭典 (Great Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Names) (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1999), 746.

¹⁰⁶ Recorded in *BJTB* 53, p. 22. The founder was Sanmandashili 三曼答室哩, a native of Annan, present-day Vietnam. See Du, "Mingdai 'Xitian seng' kaolue," 27.

¹⁰⁷ According to the Xizhusi stele, the temple was next to the grounds of Dajuesi.

¹⁰⁸ On Dajuesi, see Naquin, *Peking*, 154; He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*, 232-3; Sun Rongfen 孫榮芬 et al, *Dajue chansi* 大覺禪寺 (Chan Temple of Great Enlightenment) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2006).

¹⁰⁹ Du, "Mingdai 'Xitian seng' kaolue," 24.

¹¹⁰ Discussed in He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*, 234-240.

leaders as well as officials serving in the Buddhist and Daoist Registries (*senglusi* 僧錄司 and *daolusi* 道錄司), which were set up by the Hongwu emperor to manage religious affairs.¹¹¹ One of the figures affected was Shijiaya'erta 釋迦啞爾塔, a disciple of Zhiguang, who was demoted from *fozi* 佛子 (Son of the Buddha) to *guoshi* 國師 (National Preceptor).¹¹² He is mentioned in the Xizhusi stele as a donor involved in the temple's restoration project. Patronage of two temples of the Monks of Western Paradise by the imperial family may be interpreted as a gesture of imperial favour to ameliorate the earlier slight on religious groups that included Monks of the Western Paradise.

Above all, however, Dajuesi held special significance for the imperial family in the mid-Ming dynasty because it was a monastery associated with Empress Dowager Zhou 周 (d. 1504) (fig. 171). The empress dowager was Yingzong's concubine and the Hongzhi emperor's grandmother.¹¹³ She grew up near the monastery, in an area that to this day still bears the name of the Zhou clan.¹¹⁴ The Zhou family tombs are located at the foot of Mount Yangtai, to the northeast of the monastery (fig. 172).¹¹⁵ Remnants of the main tomb walls remain visible at the rear of a local high school (fig.

¹¹¹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 2.9b-11a, 4.1b, 5.1a. On Hongwu's religious policies, see Timothy Brook, "At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism," in *Culture and State and Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques*, eds. Theodore Huters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 161-181; Anne Gerritsen, "The Hongwu Legacy: Fifteenth-Century Views on Zhu Yuanzhang's Monastic Policies," in *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), 55-72.

¹¹² Du, "Mingdai 'Xitian seng' kaolue," 28.s In a memorial dated 1487, Shijiaya'erta is mentioned as a "Son of the Buddha," which is one of religious titles that were removed at the beginning of the Hongzhi reign. See *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 2.9b. In the Xizhusi stele, he is referred to as "National Preceptor".

¹¹³ Biography in *MS* 113, pp. 3518-9.

¹¹⁴ Near the monastery is the village Zhoujia xiang 周家巷 (Streets of the Zhou family). See Sun et al, *Dajue chansi*, 34.

¹¹⁵ The site was explored by Yue Shengyang 岳升陽, "Yangtaishan xia Zhoujia fen 陽台山下周家墳" (The Zhou Family Tombs at the Foot of Mount Yangtai), *Beijing wenbo* 北京文博 (Beijing Cultural Relics and Museums) (2006), <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2006/4-10/17759.html>.

173).¹¹⁶ In 1478, Empress Dowager Zhou funded a major renovation of Dajuesi and donated land to it.¹¹⁷ She also installed her cousin, the monk Zhou Jixiang 周吉祥, as abbot at the monastery where he would remain until his death in 1492.¹¹⁸ As one text describes, Dajuesi basically functioned as the empress dowager's family shrine (*jiamiao* 家廟).¹¹⁹

The choice of Xizhusi and Puzhaosi, two smaller temples connected to Dajuesi, for a joint act of patronage by the new imperial family shows deference towards Empress Dowager Zhou. It acknowledges her seniority in the imperial family hierarchy while affirming the orthodox imperial lineage that continues in the young heir. Empress Dowager Zhou had already risen to prominence during the Chenghua reign as mother of the emperor. Her family benefited from her position: Her brother Zhou Shou 周壽 (1442 – 1509) was made Earl (*bo* 伯) of Qingyun 慶雲 in 1467, then Marquis (*hou* 侯) in 1480, while her second brother Zhou Yu 周彧 (d. 1508) became Earl of Changning 長寧 in 1485.¹²⁰ During the Hongzhi period, she was of added importance not only because of her seniority but also because the emperor's own mother, who was a servant maid, had passed away not long after he was born.¹²¹ The empress dowager had taken the young Zhu Youtang into her care, bringing him to live

¹¹⁶ The high school is the Beijing no. 47 High School. When I visited the site in the summer of 2009, construction work was taking place in front of the tomb wall.

¹¹⁷ On Empress Dowager Zhou's patronage of Dajuesi, see *BJTB* 53, pp. 130, 150; Naquin, *Peking*, 154-5; *Rixia jiuwen kao*, 96:1608-9; Sun et al, *Dajue chansi*, 34-35.

¹¹⁸ On Zhou Jixiang, see Sun et al, *Dajue chansi*, 38-41; *MS*, 300, p. 7673. Two burial pagodas were built for him by his disciples in Beijing. See Shu Xiaofeng 舒小峰, "Beijing liangchu Mingdai Zhou Jixiang ta kaobian 北京兩處明代周吉祥塔考辨" (Investigation into two Ming Pagodas of Zhou Jixiang in Beijing). *Beijing wenbo* 北京文博 (Beijing Cultural Relics and Museums), no. 2 (2003), 59-67; Wang Jianmin 汪建民 and Hou Wei 侯偉, "Beijing guta kaolue (yi) – Zhou Yunduan dashi muta 北京古塔考略(一) – 周雲端大師墓塔" (Investigation in Old Pagodas in Beijing (1) – Tomb Pagoda of Master Zhou Yunduan), *Beijing lianhe daxue xuebao* 北京聯合大學學報 (Beijing Joint University Journal) 45 (Sept 2001), 8-13.

¹¹⁹ Sun et al, *Dajue chansi*, 39.

¹²⁰ On Empress Dowager Zhou's father and brothers, see *MS* 300, pp. 7671-3.

¹²¹ *MS* 113, pp. 3521-2.

at her quarters after he was made heir at the age of five.¹²² In addition to deference to the empress dowager, the patronage of the two temples by the new imperial family may have carried an element of gratitude as well since the empress dowager did not officially demand the emperor to take more consorts during the years when the imperial couple was childless.¹²³ If she had done so, it would have been very difficult for the emperor to refuse given the expectations of filial piety.

The record of Empress Zhang's contributions to the restoration of Xizhusi and Puzhaosi are in contrast to her circumstances in the *Ordination Scroll*. In the former, the empress supports and supplements the emperor's donation. She is presented as a part of the imperial family hierarchy, showing deference to a more senior and more powerful empress dowager. The latter is focused on Empress Zhang alone. It addresses her directly and is concerned with her personal salvation and elevation into the celestial realm. They present two perspectives on the empress' position at court in the 1490s. From this time onwards, Empress Zhang and her family would emerge as the most prosperous aristocratic clan, eventually overtaking the Zhou family, a position that they would maintain until the first decade of the Jiajing reign. The empress' father had already been made Earl of Shouning 壽寧 in 1490, then Marquis after the birth of the heir.¹²⁴ Posthumously, he was made Duke (*gong* 公) of Changguo 昌國. The position of Marquis of Shouning was inherited by the empress' elder brother Zhang Heling 張鶴齡 (d. 1537?), while her second brother Zhang Yanling 張延齡 (d. 1546) was made Earl of Jianchang 建昌 in 1495 then Marquis

¹²² MS 15, p. 183; 113, p. 3522.

¹²³ In the tenth month of 1489, when the King of Jing 荆王 asked the Hongzhi emperor to select consorts, he replied that he would only do so under the command of the Grand Empress Dowager (Zhou) and the Empress Dowager (Wang 王). *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 31.12b-13a.

¹²⁴ Biography in MS 300, p. 7676; Guoli zhongyang tushuguan 國立中央圖書館, ed., *Mingren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 明人傳記資料索引 (Index to Information on Ming Biographies) (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1965-6), 560.

in 1503.¹²⁵ Other family members also received official positions.¹²⁶ Notably, the rise of Empress Zhang and her family is reflected in a series of imperial patronage projects. In 1495, two steles commemorating Empress Zhang's ancestors were erected in Xingji, her hometown.¹²⁷ The inscriptions quote elegies composed by the empress in honour of her father's and mother's families. By 1499, under the order of the emperor, Empress Zhang would have her own lavish family temple in her home town of Xingji. In addition to a special tomb built for Empress Zhang's father at Xiangshan 香山, the Zhang family tomb complex in Xingji would also undergo large-scale renovations and walling.¹²⁸ These subsequent building projects are probably related to the birth of Empress Zhang's second son in 1495 and daughter in 1497, and their premature deaths in 1496 and the 10th month of 1498 respectively.¹²⁹ Moreover, they indicate official recognition of the elevated status of Empress Zhang and her family to a level on a par with Empress Dowager Zhou's. This led to conflicts between the two clans as they competed over land ownership and commercial privileges.¹³⁰ Matters came to a head in 1496 when the two empresses' brothers and their followers brawled on the streets of the capital. Judging from a memorial condemning the fight, officials were aware of the on-going feud between the two families over profits.¹³¹

Given the tensions between the empresses' families, Empress Zhang's participation in a Daoist ritual may be pertinent as a point of differentiation between herself and

¹²⁵ MS 300, p. 7676; *Mingren zhuanji ziliao suoyin*, 523, 560.

¹²⁶ *Xingji xian zhi*, 150.

¹²⁷ *Xingji xian zhi*, 161; *Qing xian zhi*, 14.2b-3a.

¹²⁸ The Zhang family tomb complex was where Zhang Di 張迪 (Zhang Luan's grandfather) and Zhang Qi 張歧 (Zhang Luan's cousin; 1454 *jinshi*) were buried. The project to renovate and expand the site is recorded in a stele inscription composed by the emperor commemorating Zhang Luan, transcribed in *Xingji xian zhi*, 160. On Zhang Luan's tomb construction "exceeding propriety" (*yuzhi* 踰制), see MS 183, p. 4857; *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 75.15b-16a.

¹²⁹ DMB, 379.

¹³⁰ Satō, *Mindai ōfu no kenkyū*, 436-465.

¹³¹ MS 300, pp. 7672-3. *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 117.2a-3a.

Empress Dowager Zhou. The empress dowager was known for her support of Buddhism. As noted earlier, her cousin Zhou Jixiang was a Buddhist monk. Before Dajuesi, she also funded a major renovation of the monastery Baoguoqi 報國寺 (Temple for Serving the Nation) in the capital, renaming it Dacirensi 大慈仁寺 (Temple of Great Compassion and Benevolence), and installing her cousin as abbot there as well.¹³² Due to their family connection, Zhou Jixiang was elevated to the position of Left Buddhist Patriarch (*zuoshanshi* 左善世) of the Buddhist Registry, in charge of the Buddhist clergy of the empire. Empress Dowager Zhou's role as a patron of Buddhism is further documented by a painting dated 1503 in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, depicting the Maitreya Buddha with children (fig. 174).¹³³ The painting carries the seal “*Shengci renshou zhi bao* 聖慈仁壽之寶”. *Shengci renshou* is the official title that the empress dowager received in 1487, just before the death of the Chenghua emperor.¹³⁴

This distinction between Empress Zhang and her predecessor is noticeable in the choice of family shrines. While Empress Dowager Zhou's Dajuesi is a Buddhist monastery, Empress Zhang's family shrine in Xingji venerates Zhenwu, a god in the Daoist pantheon. The temple was built between 1498 and 1499 by the order of the Hongzhi emperor with official funds (*guanbi* 官幣) and donations from the empress as well as corvée labour from the nearby area.¹³⁵ Titled Chongzhen gong 崇真宮 (Palace for Venerating the Perfected), it was located next to the former Zhang residence where the empress was born and on the site of a temple that dates at least to

¹³² Sun et al., *Dajue chansi*, 38-41. He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*, 229-230. For information about patronage by Ming empresses and other imperial family members of Buddhist sites at Wutai shan, outside of Beijing, see Guang, “Wutai Shan During the Ming,” chap 5.

¹³³ Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming*, 117-9; Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law*, 392-3.

¹³⁴ MS 113, p. 3518.

¹³⁵ *Qing xian zhi*, 4.44a-45b.

the Jin dynasty (265 – 420).¹³⁶ Although the temple was destroyed during the nineteenth century, textual descriptions provide a sense of its layout.¹³⁷ It consisted of three main halls: Sanqing 三清 (Three Purities) in the front, Lingying 靈應 (Numinous Response) in the middle and Puji 普濟 (Universal Deliverance) at the back. To the right and left are six further halls, with two additional sites used to make offerings. Further rooms housed priests who would perform rituals. The overall temple was dedicated to the Perfected Warrior Zhenwu 真武, the anthropomorphised deity of the north, while the rest of the site also venerated various deities recorded in the Daoist pantheon (*daoia suo zhai zhu shen* 道家所載諸神) hierarchically placed. The lavish construction of the Zhang family temple is recorded in the empress' biography in the *Ming shi*.¹³⁸

The dedication of the Zhang family temple to Zhenwu is a clear statement of the family's status as members of the imperial household. Imperial patronage of the deity was already strong in the Song dynasty, but it reached a peak during the Ming. The Yongle emperor, in particular, evoked the power of Zhenwu when he usurped his nephew, the Jianwen Emperor. Under his encouragement, the deity became the protector of the Ming imperial household.¹³⁹ Over a period of seven years, from 1412 to 1418, the Yongle emperor devoted great sources to the construction of a vast temple complex venerating the deity at Mount Wudang 武當山, Hubei province, which was patronised by successive Ming rulers, including the Hongzhi emperor (fig.

¹³⁶ *Qing xian zhi*, 4.44a. A large bell from the Jin dynasty was still at the temple during the Republican period.

¹³⁷ *Qing xian zhi*, 4.44b.

¹³⁸ MS 114. Subsequently, presumably after the death of Empress Zhang, the townspeople changed the temple to venerate Wenchang, god of the literary arts, before the site was destroyed during the Xianfeng reign (1851 – 1861) of the Qing dynasty. *Qing xian zhi*, 4.44a-44b.

¹³⁹ Lin Shengzhi, "Mingdai daoiaio tuxiangxue yanjiu," 137.

175).¹⁴⁰ The dedication of the Zhang family temple to Zhenwu is evidently an indication of the imperial status of the clan. Yet, at the same time, the association of the Zhang family temple to a Daoist god distinguishes it from the Zhou family's Buddhist shrine of Dajue Temple.

There is some evidence to support Empress Zhang and her family's interest in Daoism during the 1490s. Textual sources contain traces of their relationship with the eunuch Li Guang 李廣 (d. 1498) who, according to official histories, gained the Hongzhi emperor's favour with the promotion of elixirs and Daoist rituals at court. His appendages addressed him as "Master of the Teaching, Perfected Being" (*jiaozhu zhenren* 教主真人).¹⁴¹ He is recorded as a corrupt figure in history, as officials accused him of confiscating lands, claiming illegal profits from the salt trade, taking bribes as well as seeking favours from imperial relatives.¹⁴² Shen Defu in *Wanli yehuo bian* believes that Empress Zhang ordered Li Guang to arrange the death of He Ding, noted earlier.¹⁴³ Li Guang committed suicide in 1498 when the geomancy of a pavilion he had built in the imperial garden was blamed for the death of a princess and a fire at the empress dowager's quarters.¹⁴⁴ After his suicide, his supporters are said to have sought the protection of Empress Zhang's brother Zhang Heling to escape official censure.¹⁴⁵

One might speculate that the death of Li Guang and of her infant daughter affected Empress Zhang's enthusiasm for Daoism. Following the *Ordination Scroll* and the

¹⁴⁰ Wang Guangde 王光德 and Yang Lizhi 楊立志, *Wudang daojiao shilüe* 武當道教史略 (Survey History of Daoism at Mount Wudang) (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 1993).

¹⁴¹ MS 180, p. 4796.

¹⁴² One memorial dated 1497 listing Li Guang's crimes is in *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 124.5-6, pp. 2220-2221. A more sympathetic view of Li Guang and eunuchs in general is found in DMB, 377.

¹⁴³ Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, *juan* 6, p. 163; MS 304, p. 7783.

¹⁴⁴ MS 304, p. 7783.

¹⁴⁵ MS 304, p. 7783.

building projects in Xingji, there is one record of her patronage of temples at Mount Wudang made jointly with the Hongzhi emperor in 1501.¹⁴⁶ Otherwise, the few recorded examples of her later patronage are all of Buddhist temples. These were Shanguosi 善果寺 (Temple of Good Results) in 1503, to which she donated funds upon the Hongzhi emperor's request, and Yanfasi 衍法寺 (Temple of Spreading Dharma) in 1508, for which she was a donor together with other imperial consorts.¹⁴⁷ Her most significant act of patronage in her later life was of a Buddhist nunnery Baomingsi 保明寺 at Xihuang Village 西黃村 in Beijing. According to legend, the nunnery was founded by Yingzong, while subsequently it was granted tax exemptions and imperial protection under the Hongzhi emperor.¹⁴⁸ When the Jiajing emperor wanted to demolish it, Empress Zhang protested and was able to save the nunnery with the support of the emperor's biological mother.¹⁴⁹ The joint patronage of the two women is materialised in a bronze bell dated 1533 that was given to the nunnery.¹⁵⁰

Yet, it should be noted that in practice the distinctions between religions were not clear. Among the many recognisably Buddhist deities venerated at Yanfasi, to which

¹⁴⁶ Wang Zuo 王佐 et al, *Dayue Taiheshan zhi* 大岳太和山志 (Gazetteer of the Great Mountain Taihe) (preface 1556), in *Wudangshan Mingdai zhishu ji zhu* 武當山明代志書集注 (Collected Commentaries on Ming Dynasty Gazetteers on Mount Wudang), ed. Li Faping 李發平 (Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe), *juan* 4, pp. 312-3.

¹⁴⁷ On Shanguosi, see *BJTB* 53, p. 137. On Yanfasi, see *BJTB* 53, p. 174. In the latter case, she donated funds together with Wuzong, Empress Dowager Wang 王, the Chenghua emperor's first wife, and Empress Xia 夏, the Zhengde emperor's wife.

¹⁴⁸ On Baomingsi, see Li Shiyu 李世諭, "Shuntian Baomingsi kao 順天保明寺考," *Beijing shi yuan* 北京史苑 3 (1995), 33-63; Li Shiyu and Susan Naquin, "The Baoming Temple: Religion and the Throne in Ming and Qing China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48 (1988), 131-188.

¹⁴⁹ Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, *juan* 27, p. 685. The entry suggests that Baomingsi was built by the Hongzhi emperor. Empress Dowagers Zhang and Jiang's intervention is not recorded in the standard Academia Sinica edition of the *Veritable Records*, but a detailed transcription of the battle of wills between Shizong and the two women can be found in another edition known as the Baojinglou 抱經樓 edition, printed in 1940 from a manuscript copy formerly in the Jiangsu Provincial Library 江蘇國學圖書館 collection in Nanjing. The section is transcribed in Huang Zhangjian 黃彰健, *Ming Shizong jiaokan ji* 明世宗實錄校勘記 (Collated Veritable Records of Ming Shizong), vol. 2 (Nangang: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1963-7), *juan* 83, pp. 572-7.

¹⁵⁰ Li, "Shuntian Baomingsi kao," 40-41; Li and Naquin, "The Baoming Temple," 139-140.

Empress Zhang was a donor, is Zhenwu, a Daoist deity.¹⁵¹ A damaged stele dated 1532 commemorating the death of the master nun Jinxi 金西 of Baomingsi records that:

The empress dowager admired her [Jinxi] Daoist energy, and could not help thinking more [of her]. She ordered to bestow again an imperial decree to especially add the title of “Daoist cloister” [to the nunnery].

太后重其道氣，不勝延想，敕重賜以璽書，特加道院。¹⁵²

The name of the empress dowager is illegible on the stele. Susan Naquin thinks that the title refers to Empress Zhang, although it may have been Jiajing emperor’s mother who was also empress dowager at this time.¹⁵³ In any case, the amorphous nature of religious distinctions is evident in the granting of the title of “Daoist cloister” to a Buddhist nunnery. As previously observed in the activities of the two Song empresses, religious patronage in imperial China was not necessarily exclusive. This is consistent with the complex religious environment in China in which the perceived major categories of Chinese religions, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and the classification “popular religion” interacted and appropriated from each other.¹⁵⁴ Ming emperors maintained support for a variety of religious groups as part of their rulership.¹⁵⁵ It is as such not necessarily problematic that Empress Zhang who was ordained by the Orthodox Unity order would also choose to participate in the patronage of other religious communities.

¹⁵¹ *BJTB* 53, p. 174.

¹⁵² This is transcribed in Li, “Shuntian Baomingsi kao,” 43.

¹⁵³ Naquin, “The Baoming Temple,” 138-9. Jiajing’s mother, Empress Dowager Jiang 蔣, once donated incense to the Daoist White Cloud Monastery, so it is conceivable that she presented this edict to the Baoming Temple. *BJTB* 53, p. 128.

¹⁵⁴ Teiser, “Introduction,” 3-40.

¹⁵⁵ See for instance Zhao Yifeng 趙軼峰, *Mingdai guojia zongjiao guanli zhidu yu zhengce yanjiu* 明代國家宗教制度與政策研究 (Research on the National Religious System and Policy during the Ming Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2008).

In summary, the *Ordination Scroll* does not appear to be directly related to the issue of rulership. Instead, it is a continuation of ritual services provided by the Celestial Master concerned with the wellbeing of the empress. It is linked to the birth of the empress' son and the beginning of the ascendancy of Empress Zhang and her family in competition with the established clan of a senior empress dowager. Following the *Ordination Scroll*, there would be a series of projects that focused on elevating the empress, her family and their native place. Yet, where was the Hongzhi emperor in all this? He is recorded as an instigator of building projects in Xingji and a joint temple donor with the empress, but he appears only as a peripheral figure in Zhang Xuanqing's inscription in the *Ordination Scroll*. It is hard to imagine that the emperor was unaware of the empress' ordination, especially given his interactions with Zhang Xuanqing before the event. Also, why did he not request transmission sooner, like other Ming emperors, but waited until 1499, six years after Empress Zhang's ordination?

The Hongzhi Emperor

The timing of the Hongzhi emperor's request for transmission may be related to the issue of *dudie*, the government permits for ordination, and his official stance towards religious patronage. Under Taizu, the period for distributing *dudie* was set at once every three years.¹⁵⁶ Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1436 – 1449, 1457 – 1464) then adjusted it to once every five years and then ten years, although by this time the government sale of *dudie* in large numbers had become the norm.¹⁵⁷ At the beginning

¹⁵⁶ The decision was made in 1384. See *Ming Taizu shilu*, 167.4a.

¹⁵⁷ Lai, ed., *Zhongguo fojiao baikequanshu*, 139.

of 1488, the Ministry of Rites suggested to the Hongzhi emperor that the distribution of ordination certificates once every ten years should be suspended in order to reduce the size of the clergy. The Hongzhi emperor agreed and this policy was apparently enforced judging from a memorial dated 1496 regarding the reinstatement of certificate distribution.¹⁵⁸ The successful overturning of the suspension that year led to distribution of eight thousand *dudie* in Beijing and five thousand in Nanjing. The Hongzhi emperor seems to have waited until the suspension of *dudie* was overturned before requesting transmission from Zhang Xuanqing.

The Hongzhi emperor's request for transmission may have been complicated by his initial official stance on religious patronage. The suspension of *dudie* distribution was part of a series of actions that he agreed to for reducing court patronage of religious activities noted earlier. Yet, we have seen that the emperor was already seeking the assistance of Daoist rituals to pray for an heir by 1490. His response when questioned by his officials is interesting. One memorial dated the eighth month of 1490 asking him to select more consorts expresses the following concern:

Your servant is afraid that evil persons have taken this chance to mislead your highness. One hears that there are those who suggest the restoration of temples, the patronising of monks and the performance of offering rituals. It is up to your highness alone not to be beguiled.

然臣恐姦人乘此巧惑聖，聽有以修寺飯僧建醮之說進者，惟斷自聖心毋為所惑。¹⁵⁹

The emperor's reply to the memorial states that:

¹⁵⁸ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 114.3b-4a.

¹⁵⁹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 41.7b-8a.

I am evidently aware of the matter of the Retreat and Offering rituals, and certainly will not be beguiled.

齋醮之事已灼知之，決不為所惑矣。¹⁶⁰

The emperor's response comes despite the fact that he had summoned Zhang Xuanqing to perform rituals at the inner court in the summer of 1490. It suggests that the emperor was inclined to maintain an appearance of detachment to his officials on the issue of religious activities that was consistent with his initial policies. Further evidence of the early ambivalence of the Hongzhi emperor towards religious patronage is observable in the case of Peng Cheng 彭程, which played out in the months leading up to Empress Zhang's request for ordination. Peng, an Investigating Censor, was assigned to audit the accounts of the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*Guanglusi* 光祿寺) in the sixth month of 1492.¹⁶¹ On the occasion he discovered that funds had been spent on producing wares for an "imperial altar" (*huangtan* 皇壇).¹⁶² The official in charge explained that the Chenghua emperor had used the site for cultivating Retreats and ritual performances (*xiuzhai xing fa zhi suo* 修齋行法之所) and now wares were being produced in case they were needed. Peng presented a memorial questioning the emperor about this discovery and demanded that he make clear his position on Daoist rituals at court so that:

Your highness' preferences would be made clear to all under the heaven.

使陛下好尚，得以別白於天下。¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 41.7b-8a.

¹⁶¹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 64.1a-b.

¹⁶² *Huangtan* also refers to the recitation of a specific scripture, but this does not seem to be the meaning here. See Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 99 n. 51.

¹⁶³ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 64.1b.

Responding angrily, the Hongzhi emperor had Peng thrown into prison.¹⁶⁴ He condemned the official for his impropriety in bringing up the shortcomings of the late emperor. Although Peng's life was ultimately spared and he was banished to Guangdong province, the emperor displayed an unusual amount of obstinacy when officials and family members pleaded for his freedom.¹⁶⁵ As seen in earlier examples, Peng's memorial was by no means the first to question the emperor's patronage of religious rituals. The difference was that, in this case, the official had exposed evidence of the emperor's sponsorship of Daoist rituals at court in the production of ritual wares: as a result of questioning, officials of the Court of Imperial Entertainments revealed that ritual wares had recently been required urgently for a Retreat performed in the inner court.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Peng had asked the emperor to make an unequivocal statement on his stance on imperial Daoist rituals, which he was apparently not prepared to do. The emperor took issue with the use of the term "imperial altar" in the accounts of the Court of Imperial Entertainments, refusing to give official status to the rituals that he was evidently sponsoring.

However, according to *Ming shi*, matters changed from around the eighth year of his reign or 1495 onwards.¹⁶⁷ The emperor became increasingly open about his support of religious figures and practices at court, a development that has been blamed on the eunuch Li Guang. In 1495, Cui Zhiduan 崔志端 (d. 1514), originally a Daoist ritual dancer at the State Sacrificial Music Office (Shenyue guan 神樂觀) and also an associate of Li Guang, was promoted to chief minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (Taichangsi 太常寺).¹⁶⁸ Further Daoists would be promoted in the office

¹⁶⁴ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 64.1b.

¹⁶⁵ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 68.8a; MS 180, p. 4793-4.

¹⁶⁶ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 63.3b-4a.

¹⁶⁷ MS, 181, p. 4806

¹⁶⁸ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 99.7b-8a.

two years later.¹⁶⁹ By 1498, the emperor was known to be taking elixirs, as a memorial from that year attests.¹⁷⁰ This would eventually lead to his appointment of Cui Zhiduan as Minister of Rites in 1504.¹⁷¹ The choice of a Daoist to head the Ministry of Rites that is the “stronghold of Confucian correctness” drew opposition from officials, which the emperor ignored.¹⁷² Moreover, records indicate that the Hongzhi emperor did not again command Zhang Xuanqing after his ritual to pray for an heir until 1496 when he ordered the Celestial Master to perform a Great Offering ritual.¹⁷³ This was followed by further correspondence in 1498, 1499 (when he requested transmission), 1501, and particularly frequently in 1505 just before his death. The Hongzhi emperor’s request for registers from Zhang Xuanqing can be situated within his increasingly involved religious patronage from the latter part of the 1490s onwards.

Zhang Xuanqing

Finally, I will briefly consider the third figure pertinent to the *Ordination Scroll* – the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing who composed the inscription and who oversaw the empress’ ordination (fig. 176).¹⁷⁴ It has been noted previously that Zhang Xuanqing was most likely involved in the design of the scroll and in selecting the scriptures and registers transmitted to the empress, given their esoteric nature. How might the empress’ ordination be of significance to the Celestial Master? Certainly, ordaining an empress would bring prestige and imperial recognition of the Orthodox Unity order.

¹⁶⁹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 128.2a, 4ab.

¹⁷⁰ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 122.2a-3a; *MS*, 181, pp. 4806-7.

¹⁷¹ *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, 207.5b; 208.3b.

¹⁷² *CHC*, vol. 7, 356.

¹⁷³ *Huangming enming shilu* (DZ 1462), 7.4a-8a; *Han tianshi shijia*, (DZ1463), 4.8a-10b.

¹⁷⁴ On the Orthodox Unity during the Ming, see Zhuang Hongyi 莊宏誼, *Mingdai daojiao Zhengyi pai* 明代道教正一派 (The Daoist Orthodox Unity School During the Ming Dynasty) (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1986).

There were probably monetary gains, since Daoist ordinations, except for those of the Complete Perfection order, are expensive and required large pledges (*faxin* 法信) from the ordinand.¹⁷⁵ Pledges are material offerings made by the ordinand to the gods to establish covenants.¹⁷⁶ Once they have served their purpose in ritual, they were distributed by the priests of the ordination.¹⁷⁷ The Tang Princesses Jinxian and Yuzhen prepared elaborate pledges including silk, cash and gold.¹⁷⁸ The ordained Song empresses also offered pledges.¹⁷⁹ In the case of Empress Dowager Liu, her ordination included granting the Daoist priests elevated titles and the building of new temples. While there is no record that additional temples were built for the Celestial Master around 1493 or that he received additional titles, it is most likely that he received material gains from arranging the empress' ordination.

It was also important for religious institutions like the Orthodox Unity order to actively foster support from the imperial family. Even though by hereditary custom the Celestial Masters were the leaders of Daoist sects and performed rituals for the imperial court as well as supplied religious officials, their position was not necessarily guaranteed. In the case of Zhang Xuanqing's predecessor, Zhang Yuanji 張元吉 (1435 – 1477), who served the Jingtai and Chenghua emperors, he was arrested in 1469 for the serious crimes of abducting children, fraud, creation of a private prison and the killing of forty-some people.¹⁸⁰ In the wake of his arrest and eventual escape from serious punishment, angry memorials were submitted calling for the emperor to strip the Celestial Masters of their privileges and destroy their temples.¹⁸¹ Some

¹⁷⁵ Goossaert, *The Taoists of Peking*, 104.

¹⁷⁶ Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery*, 32-38.

¹⁷⁷ Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery*, 37.

¹⁷⁸ DZ 1241, 2.18b-19a.

¹⁷⁹ DZ 304, 25.3a, 26.23a.

¹⁸⁰ *Ming Xianzong shilu*, 66.2a-b. Zhang Yuanji's arrest is not recorded in Celestial Master texts. The year of his death is taken from Zhang, *Mingdai daojiao zhengyi pai*, n. 17.

¹⁸¹ *Ming Xianzong shilu*, 66.2b-3a.

accused the Celestial Masters of heterodoxy (*zuodao* 左道 and *yiduan* 異端) and that it was not actually Daoism at all:

Yuanji is in fact a descendent of the bandits of the Five Pecks of Rice. [What he] venerates is not the teachings of the Dao. What service has [he] rendered to the state, what good to society?

元吉本五斗米賊之後，奉非道之教，何功於國，何益於世？¹⁸²

As a result of Zhang Yuanji's fall from grace, the position of patriarch of the Orthodox Unity order was left empty for nearly a decade before Zhang Xuanqing took over.¹⁸³

While the position and privileges of the Orthodox Unity order were ultimately safeguarded by the emperor, there was evidently animosity from members of officialdom who would be happy to see imperial patronage of the Celestial Masters terminated. In addition, the Orthodox Unity order was one among a range of religious groups that the imperial household patronised. They had to vie for limited resources, such as *dudie* quotas. There are records of Celestial Masters asking for the emperor to grant them additional *dudie*. In 1426, the Xuande emperor refused the Celestial Master Zhang Yuqing's 張宇清 (1364 – 1427) request for eighty-one certificates.¹⁸⁴ In this instance, Zhang Yuqing found it difficult to submit a memorial himself and asked assistance from an intermediary Hu Ying 胡潏 (1375 – 1463) who was then the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Rites (*Libu shilang* 禮部侍郎).¹⁸⁵ Zhang Xuanqing himself successfully requested three hundred *dudie* from the Chenghua emperor in 1486.¹⁸⁶ The Zhengde emperor granted two hundred to Zhang Xuanqing's successor

¹⁸² *Ming Xianzong shilu*, 84.1b-2a, 112.6a.

¹⁸³ *DMB*, 109.

¹⁸⁴ Zhuang, *Mingdai daojiao*, 105. For *dudie* distributions during the Ming, see Zhao, "Mingdai sengdao dudie zhidu de bianqian".

¹⁸⁵ Shen, *Wanli yehuo bian*, *juan* 13, p. 336.

¹⁸⁶ *Ming Xianzong shilu*, 285.5b.

in 1514 because of his petitioning.¹⁸⁷ Interestingly, it was possible for an empress to make a special distribution of *dudie*. In 1451, the Jingtai Empress Wang 汪, who was later deposed, ordered the supply of thirty thousand certificates.¹⁸⁸ One might speculate that, at a time when *dudie* distribution was suspended and the emperor had not yet requested registers, Zhang Xuanqing would have been eager for an opportunity to transmit sacred texts to Empress Zhang in order to engage a potentially powerful ally on the issue of ordinations.

While the precise circumstances of Empress Zhang's ordination cannot be known without further information, it is possible to reconstruct from indirect sources the ways in which the event may be of significance both to the empress and Zhang Xuanqing. Unlike for the Hongzhi emperor, it is notable that the government suspension of *dudie* distribution did not seem to have affected Empress Zhang's ordination. Although she was ordained as a lay devotee, she nonetheless received all the necessary documents for actual priesthood and was symbolically incepted into the Orthodox Unity order through her image as a Female Master. Her ordination suggests the continuation of religious practices, even within the imperial household, in spite of official attempts to control them. This may also be indicative of the greater ease with which empresses could be personally involved in religious practices compared to their husbands who were more exposed to the opinions of ministers. As Susan Naquin suggests, "being beyond direct official censure, [Ming] imperial wives and daughters had greater liberty than their husbands and sons to patronize Buddhist

¹⁸⁷ *Ming Wuzong shilu*, 10.12a.

¹⁸⁸ *Ming Yingzong shilu*, 200.11b. The entry makes clear it was an empress (*huanghou*), not an empress dowager, who made the command.

establishments.”¹⁸⁹ Her statement may be extended to Daoist institutions. The implications that this has for the agency of Ming imperial women await further study.

¹⁸⁹ Naquin, *Peking*, 154.

Chapter Five Image of the Empress

In previous chapters, the *Ordination Scroll* was explored as a Daoist ritual document and a historical record of Empress Zhang's ordination. This chapter will turn to consider the scroll as an imperial image in the sense of a court painting and an imperial portrait. Although the image of Empress Zhang in the scroll does not appear to represent a specific likeness of her, it "falls within the bounds of portraiture" because she is identifiable by the inscription and other visual elements, such as her retinue.¹ This chapter will first examine the premise for identifying the *Ordination Scroll* as a "court painting". It will then attempt to locate the image of Empress Zhang within representations of Ming imperial consorts and the discourse on Ming imperial portraiture.

The *Ordination Scroll* and Court Painting

As noted in Chapter One, the scroll would have been produced by a team of painters led by a master painter who made the sketch and wrote colour notations. The confident depiction of the iconography of different deities in the scroll suggests that these painters were most likely specialists in religious images. This would include the depiction of Empress Zhang since her portrayal is stylistically consistent with the other celestial figures in the scroll. Sung Yu and Richard Barnhart have concluded that the *Ordination Scroll* is a work by anonymous court painters. While this is not an unreasonable conclusion, what is the basis for making it? In addition, what can we

¹ Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 35.

know about these “court painters” who produced meticulously painted religious images like the *Ordination Scroll*?

During the Hongwu and Yongle reigns at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, painters were summoned to the capital, first in Nanjing then Beijing, for limited periods of time to work on specific commissions, such as portraits and temple and palace decorations.² It was from the Xuande period onwards that a structure identifiable as a “Ming painting academy” was formed.³ In this system, painters might be given a variety of official positions, such as under the Ministry of Works (*Gongbu* 工部), and nominal titles such as those in the Embroidered Uniform Guard (*Jinyiwei* 錦衣衛).⁴ Painters were usually ranked between the ninth to the fifth grades, with exceptional painters reaching the second.⁵ The two main locations where painter-officials worked were the Hall of Martial Brightness (*Wuying dian* 武英殿) and the Hall of Benevolent Wisdom (*Renzhi dian* 仁智殿) located at the outer court of the imperial palace. They were managed by eunuchs of the Directorate of Imperial Accoutrements (*Yuyongjian* 御用監).⁶ In addition to painters with official titles, the imperial court also employed a large number of artisanal painters who worked for eunuch agencies such as the Directorate of Ceremonial (*Silijian* 司禮監) and subsections of the Ministry of Works such as the Crafts Institute (*Wensiyuan* 文思院) and the Work Project Office (*Yingshansuo* 營繕所).⁷

² Sung Hou-mei, “The Formation of the Ming Painting Academy,” *Ming Studies* 29 (1990), 31, 34

³ Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming*, 59.

⁴ Nie Hui 聶卉, “Mingdai gongting huajia zhiguan zhuangkuang shulüe 明代宮廷畫家職官狀況述略” (Survey of the official positions of court painters in the Ming dynasty), *Gonggong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 2 (2007), 96-98.

⁵ Nie, “Mingdai gongting huajia zhiguan,” 98.

⁶ Nie, “Mingdai gongting huajia zhiguan,” 100-1.

⁷ Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming*, 1.

The more well-known painters with official positions include specialists in “Daoist and Buddhist” (*daoshi* 道釋) subject matter as well as figure (*renwu* 人物) painting.⁸ However, it would have been lower-ranked artisanal painters who were primarily responsible for creating carefully outlined and coloured religious images like the *Ordination Scroll*. This is suggested by the anonymity of painters of such works. Only on rare occasions have their names and titles been recorded, such as in the case of the mural paintings of Fahaisi 法海寺 (Temple of the Sea of Dharma) in the western suburbs of Beijing (fig. 38). The temple was constructed between 1439 and 1444 under the command of Li Tong 李童, a powerful eunuch in the Directorate of Imperial Accoutrements, during the mid-fifteenth century (fig. 177).⁹ The opulent wall paintings in the main hall of the temple depict the deities Brahma and Indra followed by spirit guardians of the Dharma in procession. According to an inscribed stele found near the temple, the paintings were completed by two “painter-master officials” (*huashiguan* 畫士官) named Wan Fuqing 宛福清 and Wang Shu 王恕 as well as fifteen “painter masters” (*huashi* 畫士) of whom only six names are recorded.¹⁰ Neither “painter-master official” nor “painter master” are specific official positions – “painter master” can refer to painters in general.¹¹ They are listed in the stele inscription together with a large number of artisans such as carpenters, tile makers, masons and so forth. The fifteen painter masters could likewise be artisanal

⁸ Xu Qin 徐沁, *Ming hualu* 明畫錄 (Record of Ming painting), in *Huashi congshu* 畫史叢書 (Collected Writings on Painting History), ed. Yu Anlan (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963), *juan* 1, pp. 3-15.

⁹ Marsha Weidner, “Imperial Engagements with Buddhist Art and Architecture: Ming Variations on an Old Theme,” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 124-6. See also Qi Hong 祁紅, ed., *Fahai si bihua* 法海寺壁畫 (Wall paintings of Fahai Temple) (Beijing: Zhongguo lüyou chubanshe, 1993).

¹⁰ Transcribed in Yang Boxian 楊博賢, ed., *Beijing Fahaisi* 北京法海寺 (Beijing Fahai Temple) (Beijing: Beijing huatian lüyou guoji guanggao gongsi, 1994), 52-3.

¹¹ Liu Qiqun 留啟群, “Beijing Fahaisi bihua zhi yanjiu 北京法海寺壁畫之研究” (Research on the Beijing Fahai Temple wall paintings) (MA diss., National Taiwan Normal University, 2003), 49-51.

painters, while the two painter-master officials were probably lower level painters as well since they are not referred to by more specific titles of office.

There is evidence to suggest that the Ming court had a large pool of such unknown painters at its disposal who could produce religious paintings in significant numbers. For instance, a gazetteer records that in 1501 the Hongzhi emperor ordered eunuchs to take offerings to Wudangshan, the location of the imperial temple complex venerating Zhenwu.¹² The inventory of objects sent on the occasion include paintings of the following subject matter that are not restricted to the Daoist pantheon: Zhenwu (ten scrolls), the Three Officials (ten scrolls), Amitayus Buddha (*Wuliangshou fo* 無量壽佛) (five scrolls), Mother of the Buddha who Commands Ordinations (*Chidu fomu* 敕度佛母) (eleven scrolls), the Dark Altar (*xuantan* 玄壇) (nineteen scrolls), Celestial General Wang (Wang *tianjiang* 王天將) (seven scrolls) and Numinous Officer Ma (Ma *lingguan* 馬靈官) (eight scrolls). The offering of over sixty paintings is not a large number compared to the items sent by the Chenghua emperor in 1486 to Wudangshan for the performance of a Retreat and Offering ritual. On that occasion, the gifts included two thousand five hundred and eighty scroll paintings depicting various deities.¹³ There can be no doubt that the imperial court had the resources to create a large scale, meticulously painted work such as the *Ordination Scroll*.

The *Ordination Scroll* can be compared to other examples of religious images with imperial connections. Sung Yu mentions similarities between the scroll and the Fahai Temple murals in terms of figures and ornament.¹⁴ Indeed, it is possible to see in both works, for instance, pearl-like jewels in different colours that hang distinctively at the

¹² Wang et al, *Dayue Taiheshan zhi*, juan 4, p. 313.

¹³ Wang et al, *Dayue Taiheshan zhi*, juan 4, p. 312.

¹⁴ Sung, *Selections from the Chinese Collection*, 137.

hems of garments and line the ridges of headdresses. Some common facial types can also be identified, such as the three-quarter profile of Brahma (Dafantian 大梵天) in the mural paintings (fig. 178) and the Official of Heaven (Tianguan 天官) in the *Ordination Scroll* (fig. 179). The comparisons can be extended to a set of paintings dated 1454 produced for the Water-and-Land Assembly (fig. 180).¹⁵ The group of thirty-eight extant scrolls, primarily in the collection of Musée Guimet, Paris, carries the imperial seal of “treasure of broad fortune” (*Guangyun zhi bao* 廣運之寶).¹⁶ Each painting has inscriptions in gold stating its particular subject matter and the date when it was donated (*shi* 施). The paintings also carry an inscription in ink at the bottom left explaining that they were produced under the supervision of eunuchs of the Directorate of Imperial Accoutrements (*Yuyong jian* 御用監) by imperial order. Once again, it is possible to identify similar figures in the *Ordination Scroll* and the Water-and-Land paintings. For instance, the celestial priests in the former bear resemblance to the Star Lords in one of the paintings from the Musée Guimet (fig. 181, 182). Both the *Ordination Scroll* and the Water-and-Land paintings utilise gold for inscriptions and for the depiction of decorative motifs on the robes of the figures.

There are differences among these works. The facial types are not all alike. For instance, the faces of the women in the *Ordination Scroll* have more prominent chins and pointier noses than those of the Fahai Temple murals, although their hairstyles and earrings are similar (fig. 183, 184). The portrayal of clouds is another point of

¹⁵ Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation,” 39, 63, n. 34. Thirty-five of the scrolls are in the Musée Guimet, Paris, two are in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and one in the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas.

¹⁶ On the 1454 set, see Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law*, 57, 280-287; Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming*, 105; Wai-kam Ho et al., *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art), no. 131; Caroline Gyss-Vermande, “Démon et merveilles: Vision de la nature dans une peinture liturgique du XVe siècle,” *Arts Asiatiques* (1988), 106-22; “Les Messagers divins et leur iconographie,” *Arts Asiatiques* (1991), 96-110. Also see TAC, no. 78, 79, 80, 81 and 84.

difference. The clouds in the *Ordination Scroll* are painted with fluid ink outlines, highlighted with white along the edges and lightly shaded with different colours (fig. 185). The Water-and-Land paintings have clouds that are predominantly depicted in ink washes (fig. 180). While the clouds in the Fahai Temple murals are closer in form to those in the *Ordination Scroll*, they are curlier along the edges and separated by distinct areas of colours (fig. 186). Nevertheless, on the whole, it could be said that these images are connected by some similar motifs, the use of rich pigments, confident brushwork as well as an attention to detail. Both the Fahai Temple murals and the 1454 Water-and-Land paintings are considered exemplary of the high quality of religious paintings from Ming court workshops.¹⁷ The visual similarities of the *Ordination Scroll* with these works appear to place it within the same context of production.

However, if we examine the above comparisons in more detail, the matter becomes more complicated. While the *Ordination Scroll*, the Water-and-Land paintings and the Fahai Temple murals share certain figural types, these figural types are not necessarily exclusive to them. They can be linked to an earlier religious painting tradition associated with the wall paintings of Yongle gong from the fourteenth century, which are known by inscription to have been produced by professional workshops (fig. 33).¹⁸ It is also possible to relate the facial features of the Heavenly Emperor in the Fahai Temple and the Official of Heaven in the *Ordination Scroll*, noted above, to a type found in the Yongle gong murals (fig. 187, 188). This particular manner of depicting facial features, together with individual motifs, was shared by other

¹⁷ Marsha Weidner, "Buddhist Pictorial Art in the Ming Dynasty," in *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850 – 1850*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 57.

¹⁸ See Meng Sihui, "A New Examination of the Two Yuan Temple Mural Painting workshops of Shanxi Province," *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology*, no. 2 (2007), 123-132.

Yuan-dynasty wall paintings in Shanxi province, namely Xinghuasi 興化寺 (Temple of Initiating Transformations) and murals from an unknown temple in Pingyang 平陽 County, now in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.¹⁹

The appropriation of pictorial types across time and space would have been facilitated by the use of model drawings, which were valuable assets of ateliers.²⁰ The painters of the *Ordination Scroll* may have had access to painting manuals, an example of which is an album conventionally known as *Daozi mobao* 道子墨寶 (Ink treasures of Wu Daozi) in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 189).²¹ Painted with monochrome lines, the album consists of compositions of the Daoist pantheon, scenes of hell, and exorcism in the mountains (*soushan tu* 搜山圖).²² It is actually possible to find similar motifs in the *Ordination Scroll* and in the album. For instance, Perfected Being Zhao Sheng 趙升 in the scroll closely resembles the appearance of Ziqiexing 紫炁星 in the album (fig. 190, 191). They share the same pose, facial and costume type, including the Daoist crown. The depiction of a group of celestial officials holding tablets in procession floating on top of clouds (although not in a straight line) can also

¹⁹ Meng, “A New Examination,” 126-130. On the Royal Ontario Museum murals see Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court,” 184-191, 252-7.

²⁰ Meng Sihui uses model drawings to explain the similarities in motifs among Shanxi temples. See Meng, “Xinghuasi bihua,” 291-9. Chen Junji argues that painters of the Baoning Temple water-and-land paintings had access to model drawings from Yuan dynasty murals and religious paintings produced by professional ateliers in the Ningbo region. Chen Junji 陳俊吉, “Baoningsi shuiluhua zhuangshi fengge yu fenben chuancheng yanjiu 寶寧寺水陸畫裝飾風格與粉本傳承研究” (Research on Inheritance of Painting Decoration Style and Outlines in Baoning Temple’s Shuilu Paintings), *Shiwu luntan* 史物論壇 (Forum on Historical Objects), no. 7 (Dec 2008), 127-205.

²¹ *Daozi mobao* 道子墨寶 (Ink Treasures of Wu Daozi) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963). The album is dated to the thirteenth century at the Cleveland Museum of Art. However, Caroline Gyss-Vermande has presented evidence of an early Ming dating. See Gyss-Vermande, “Les Messagers Divins et Leur Iconographie,” 101.

²² Qin Lingyun 秦嶺雲, “Guanyu *Daozi mobao* 關於‘道子墨寶’” (Regarding “Ink treasures of Wu Daozi”), *Zhongguo hua* 中國畫 (Chinese painting), no. 1 (1981), 24-7. Lennert Gesterkamp linked the Daoist pantheon composition in the album to the wall paintings of Dadao guan 大道觀 (Temple of the Great Dao) in Dingzhou 定州, Hebei, which was rebuilt in 1512. Gesterkamp, “The Heavenly Court,” 66.

be found in one of the compositions in the album.²³ Yet, it is unlikely that *Ink Treasures of Wu Daozi* and the *Ordination Scroll* are directly related or that one served as the basis for the other, since they present different groups of deities and alternative depictions of the same ones.²⁴ Instead, their similarities in isolated representations are further evidence of the existence of conventionalised figural types for religious images.

Apart from bridging temporal and spatial distances, model drawings like *Ink Treasures of Wu Daozi* could circulate among painters working in supposedly separate social spheres. Printed artists' manuals had emerged by the late Southern Song and Yuan dynasties, which extended their circulation beyond the atelier.²⁵ The same motifs could appear in both works produced by court-employed painters and professional painters. For instance, the deity identified as Brahma (fig. 192) in the wall paintings of Gongzhusi 公主寺 (Princess Temple) in Fanzhi County, Shanxi province, dated 1503, is portrayed in the same pose and with the same distinct iconographic features as the Fahai Temple version of the deity (fig. 193): His left hand is extended to touch lotus seeds in a pan carried by a female attendant, while his right hand holds a lotus flower with distinct curling leaves. The temple is so named because it was rebuilt during the Ming dynasty at the site where a princess was ordained as a nun during the Northern Wei dynasty.²⁶ The names of the painters who worked on the temple wall paintings are recorded in the rear hall, stating that they were “painter-artisans” (*huajiang* 畫匠) from Zhengdingfu 正定府 in Hebei province

²³ *Daozi mobao*, 21, 26.

²⁴ For instance, while Generals Tang, Ge and Zhou are represented as military figures with distinctive attributes in the *Ordination Scroll*, they are depicted in relaxed robes similar to other Daoist practitioners in the album.

²⁵ Fraser, *Performing the Visual*, 110.

²⁶ Chai Zejun 柴澤俊, ed., *Shanxi siguan bihua* 山西寺觀壁畫 (Shanxi Temple Wall Paintings) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997), 109.

rather than painters under the employment of the court who worked on the Fahai Temple murals. The fact that these painters were originally from a province different from the locale of the temple where they worked is in itself interesting as evidence of the mobility of painting workshops, which would have also facilitated the dissemination of models and painting practices across regions. Given the appropriation of pictorial motifs across different contexts, it may be more useful to conceive of the movement of such motifs in terms of an “iconic circuit” rather than a system of classification according to media or social group.²⁷ The notion of an iconic circuit would avoid problematic assumptions of a hierarchy of representations according to media as well as of a singular directionality of influence from one source to another.

While shared figural motifs do not necessarily suggest the same context of production, could the quality of painting be relied upon as a determining factor? As an example, the brushwork and ornamental features in the Gongzhu Temple murals produced by professional artisans, noted above, are rougher and broader than the polished images of the Fahai Temple that have a documented court connection. Based on this comparison, it could be concluded that the religious paintings produced for the imperial court exhibit a higher level of opulence and refinement. Yet, this precludes the possibility for variation. Other examples present a different view of the types of images that were produced in the courtly sphere and beyond it. For instance, a painting on silk of the Sakyamuni Buddha dated to the tenth day of the tenth month of 1643 in the Capital Museum, Beijing, has an inscription stating that it was one of seventy Water-and-Land paintings commissioned by a follower of a Guanyin Nunnery

²⁷ Carlo Ginzburg, “Titian, Ovid and Sixteenth-Century Codes for Erotic Illustration,” *Myths, Emblems, Clues*, ed. Carlo Ginzburg (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1990), 77-95. Cited and used in the Chinese context by Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41-9.

觀音庵 in Jizhou 薊州, in present-day Tianjin, close to the capital (fig. 194). The composition and style of the painting is clearly connected to the iconic images of bodhisattvas that are part of a set of Water-and-Land paintings produced for Empress Dowager Li, the Wanli emperor's mother, in 1609, in the same collection.²⁸ Each painting in this set carries the seal of the empress dowager as well as an inscription giving the date and the statement that it was commissioned by her.²⁹ The later Sakyamuni Buddha painting can be compared to an image of the Suramgama Bodhisattva (Chang jingjin pusa 常精進菩薩) in the set from the empress dowager (fig. 195). While the two paintings depict different subject matter and iconographic features, the facial characteristics of the two deities are identical and the depiction of the canopy and clouds at the top of the painting are very similar. There is also little separating the high level of detail and ornamentation in the two works, particularly in the luxurious surface patterning of the clothing. The similarity is so marked that the painters of the later work must have been aware of the empress dowager's version, perhaps through model drawings passed down in a workshop.

In fact, the overlap of court and professional painters is embedded within the painting system at the Ming court itself. As noted earlier, it is artisanal painters who would produce meticulously painted religious works such as the *Ordination Scroll*. During the Ming dynasty, artisans were a hereditary class, who were required to provide corvée labour to the imperial court.³⁰ The two main divisions of artisan labour established at the beginning of the dynasty are rotating artisans (*lunban gongjiang* 輪

²⁸ Mei and Tao, eds., *Beijing wenwu jingcui daxi: Fozaoxiang juan* 2, no. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10. Fifty-some paintings in the set produced for Cisheng survive in the Capital Museum, Beijing.

²⁹ Mei and Tao, eds., *Beijing wenwu jingcui daxi: Fozaoxiang juan* 2, 21.

³⁰ On the government organisation of artisans, see Luo Lixin 羅麗馨, "Mingdai jiangji renshu zhi kaocha 明代匠籍人數之考察" (Investigation into the Population of the Artisan Class during the Ming), *Shihuo yuekan* 食貨月刊 (Monthly Journal on Food and Money) 17 (June 1988), 2-20; Chen Shiqi 陳詩啟, *Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu* 明代官手工業的研究 (Research into the Official Craft Industry during the Ming) (Huhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1958).

班工匠) and artisans in residence (*zhuzuo gongjiang* 住坐工匠).³¹ Rotating artisans were summoned to the capital from different parts of China to fulfill their duties for durations that ranged from three months every year to every four years.³² On the other hand, artisans in residence were required to take up residency with their families in the capital or its vicinity, and to work on imperial projects ten days out of each month.³³ There were three major conscriptions before the mid-Ming dynasty. The first took place in 1380 when the Hongwu emperor conscripted 45,000 families from the Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions to fill positions in Nanjing.³⁴ When the Yongle emperor transferred the capital from Nanjing to Beijing in 1415, he ordered 27,000 artisan households to make the move as well.³⁵ In 1430, the Xuande emperor further summoned artisans from Nanjing and Zhejiang to relocate and take up residence in Daxing 大興 and Wanping 宛平 near the capital city.³⁶

According to the 1587 edition of *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 (Collected Administrative Statutes of the Great Ming), painter artisans (*huajiang* 畫匠) belonged under the category of artisans in residence.³⁷ While the Ministry of Works was responsible for the overall administering of artisanal status and their allocation, artisans in residence were under the jurisdiction of eunuchs of the inner court.³⁸ For instance, in 1531, the Directorate of Ceremonial (*Sili jian* 司禮監) employed seventy-six painters out of a total of 1,583 artisans in residence.³⁹ *Da Ming huidian* does not list the types of artisans employed by the Directorate of Imperial

³¹ Li Dongyang 李東陽 et al, *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 (Collected Administrative Statutes of the Great Ming) (DMHD) (1587; repr. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1964), 188.1a.

³² Chen, *Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu*, 71-76.

³³ Chen, *Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu*, 78; DMHD 189.1ab.

³⁴ Chen, *Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu*, 77.

³⁵ Luo, "Mingdai jiangji renshu zhi kaocha," 2.

³⁶ *Ming Xuanzong shilu*, juan 64, p. 1513.

³⁷ DMHD 189. Discussed in detail in Liu, "Beijing Fahaisi bihua."

³⁸ DMHD 188, p. 2563. Chen, *Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu*, 77-8.

³⁹ DMHD 189.12a-14a.

Accoutrements to which Li Tong, the founder of the Fahai Temple, belonged.

However, in 1567, it is recorded that the agency had a total of 40 artisan officials (*jiangguan* 匠官) and 2,750 military and civilian artisans (*junmin jiang* 軍民匠).⁴⁰ It is likely that the Directorate of Imperial Accoutrements, like other eunuch agencies, had access to their own supply of artisan painters if they needed them, such as in a project like the Fahai Temple mural paintings.

As corvée labour, artisans could not rely upon imperial projects for their livelihoods. Except for brief durations when monetary payments were made, Ming artisans in residence were only given monthly food subsidies.⁴¹ Some who were fortunate may have been recommended for an official position, but most artisans had to seek other forms of employment. As *Da Ming huidian* records, when artisans were not fulfilling official duties, they were required to “wait for orders and use the time to work on their own” (*jun tingling zixing chen zuo* 均聽令自行趁作).⁴² Some artisans had to pursue other trades, such as farming.⁴³ For painters, it would be possible to sell their skills in the market. A well known example of this is Dai Jin 戴進 (1388 – 1462) who came from an artisan background and was known to have kept a studio in the marketplace in the capital while serving a position at court, probably also at an artisanal level given that no formal title is recorded.⁴⁴ Painters and other artisans could also have

⁴⁰ DMHD 189.37a.

⁴¹ Chen, *Mingdai guanshou gongye de yanjiu*, 78-80.

⁴² DMHD 189, p. 2567.

⁴³ Chen, *Mingdai guanshou gongye de yanjiu*, 93.

⁴⁴ On Dai Jin, see for instance Chen Fangmei 陳芳妹, *Dai Jin yanjiu* 戴進研究 (Research on Dai Jin) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1981); Shan Guoqiang 單國強, “Dai Jin shengping shiji kao 戴進生平事跡考” (Investigation into the Life and Activities of Dai Jin), *Guogong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 1 (1992), 42-52; Yang Weihua 楊衛華, “Dai Jin zhongnian juming shijian xin kao 戴進中年居京時間新考” (Investigation into the Time when Dai Jin Lived in the Capital during His Middle Age), *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究 (Fine Arts Research), no. 4 (2004), 80-3; Mary Ann Rogers, “Visions of Grandeur: The Life and Art of Dai Jin,” in Richard Barnhart et al, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas: The Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), 127-194.

found work in the building and restoration of monasteries and temples in and around the capital as well as in nearby cities.⁴⁵ The mobility of painter workshops was already noted earlier in relation to the Gongzhu Temple. Further evidence can be found in Xilaisi 西來寺 (Temple of Arrival from the West) in Qinghai 青海. An inscription on the temple walls records that a benefactor travelled to Jiangzhou 絳州 in Shanxi province to hire four sculptors, while another went to Shandong 山東 to employ four painter masters (*huashi* 畫士) for the project.⁴⁶

In short, the painters who would be employed by the imperial court for the production of meticulously painted religious images were basically the same painters who worked professionally in the open market, although the individual career paths of painters varied. In the case of the *Ordination Scroll*, it has a clear imperial connection given that it carries the image and edict of Empress Zhang and functions as a document of her ordination. It is indeed likely that painters with links to the court would be employed for its production. However, the circumstances may not have been as straightforward as the empress ordering painters to create images for her ordination. The likely involvement of Zhang Xuanqing in the design of the scroll given its esoteric content is a factor for consideration. The Celestial Master may have directly engaged painters for the production of the scroll. Furthermore, traces of the painting process on the scroll surface discussed in Chapter One also points to the role of painters in shaping its final outcome. The creation of the scroll may have involved negotiations that are not reflected in a simplistic definition of “court painting”. This suggests the need in future scholarship to examine more closely the concept of “court

⁴⁵ On temples in Beijing, see Naquin, *Peking*; He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*.

⁴⁶ Bai Wanrong 白萬榮, “Qinghai Ledu Xilaisi Ming shuiluhua xi 青海樂都西來寺明水陸畫析” (Analysis of the Water-and-Land Paintings at Xilai Temple in Ledu, Qinghai Province), *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics), no. 10 (1993), 57.

painting” (*gongting huihua* 宮廷繪畫) itself, and the premise on which is based, within Chinese art historical scholarship.

I will now turn to the main feature of the images in the *Ordination Scroll* that differentiates it from the examples discussed so far, that is, the portrayal of Empress Zhang.

The *Ordination Scroll* and Imperial Portraiture

The majority of surviving imperial portraits from the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties are found in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. They are known as “Portraits of the Hall of Southern Fragrance” (*Nanxundian tuxiang* 南薰殿圖像), in reference to the site in the Forbidden City where they were stored from 1749 until the early twentieth century.⁴⁷ The collection contains only one portrait of a Ming empress in hanging scroll format, while the rest are in an album in two volumes. The hanging scroll portrays the half-length portrait of Empress Ma 馬 (d. 1382), wife of the dynastic founder (fig. 196). This work was a later addition to the imperial collection: It does not appear in an inventory from 1744 of portraits in the imperial collection but is mentioned when pictures in the Hall of Southern Fragrance were catalogued in

⁴⁷ The Qing imperial portraits were stored separately for ritual purposes in *Shouhuang dian* 壽皇殿 (Hall of Imperial Longevity) at Mount Jing (Jingshan 景山) and were not shipped to Taiwan. On the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection, see Nie Chongzheng 聶崇正, “Di hou xiaoxian hua suotan 帝后肖像畫瑣談” (Miscellaneous Talk about Portrait Paintings of Emperors and Empresses), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 1 (1980), 64-90; Li Lincan 李霖燦, “Gugong bowuyuan de tuxianghua 故宮博物院的圖像畫” (Portrait Paintings in the Palace Museum) and Jiang Fucong 蔣復璁, “Guoli gugong bowuyuan cang Qing Nanxundian tuxiang kao 國立故宮博物院藏清南薰殿圖像考” (Study into the Paintings from the Hall of Southern Fragrance in the National Palace Museum), *Gugong jikan* 故宮季刊 (National Palace Museum Quarterly), no. 1 (1970), 51-61 and no. 4 (1974), 1-16.

1815.⁴⁸ The album, on the other hand, is listed in the first inventory. It contains bust-length portraits of successive imperial couples, each measuring around 65 x 50 cm. It is arranged so that the empress' portrait is shown on the left and the emperor's portrait on the right. In the cases where an emperor was not born of his father's principal consort, then a portrait of his biological mother as empress dowager was also included.

Empress Zhang's portrait appears in the first volume of the album, coupled with an image of the Hongzhi emperor (fig. 165, 166). She is depicted frontally with a pale and delicate face that is in contrast to the colour and detail of her large bejewelled phoenix crown and richly embroidered robe. This is the only known image of Empress Zhang other than the *Ordination Scroll*. The portrait album can be interpreted as a pictorial record of the official Ming imperial line of succession. It excludes the Jianwen emperor (r. 1399 – 1402) who was usurped and the Jingtai emperor (r. 1450 – 1456) who was a temporary replacement. Its use of bust-length images can be compared to the conventional format of genealogy portraits.⁴⁹ Some variations among the portraits in the album are observable; for instance, earlier images depict the imperial couples turned slightly towards each other, while from the Zhengtong emperor onwards they are depicted frontally.⁵⁰ However, on the whole, the visual elements of the portraits are consistent in the album.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Both inventories are transcribed in Zhang Naiwei 章乃煒, *Qing gong shuwen* 清宮述聞 (Jottings on the Qing palace) (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1990), 395-400.

⁴⁹ Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2001), 52.

⁵⁰ This change in portraits of Ming emperors has been attributed to the influence of Tibetan Buddhist icons, see Wen Fong, "Imperial Portraiture in the Song, Yuan, and Ming Periods," *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995), 47- 60; Dora Ching, "Tibetan Buddhism and the Creation of the Ming Imperial Image," in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368 – 1644)*, ed. David Robinson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 321-364. Wang Cheng-hua argues that this change should be considered within the concept of rulership in the Ming. See Wang Cheng-hua, "Material Culture and Emperorhip: The Shaping of Imperial Roles at the Court of Xuanzong (r. 1426-35)" (PhD diss., Yale

Like many others in the album, Empress Zhang's portrait appears rather generalised. She looks similar to Empress Chen 陳 (d. 1528), the Jiajing emperor's wife (fig. 197), although there are sufficient physiognomic differences to distinguish her from the other consorts. The album portrait of Empress Zhang and her image in the *Ordination Scroll* could conceivably pass as a matching type, since both women are of medium built, neither plump like Empress Sun 孫 (d. 1462), second wife of the Xuande emperor (fig. 198), nor narrow in face like Empress Du 杜 (d. 1554), mother of the Longqing emperor (fig. 199). However, it would be futile to argue for any particular resemblance. There are notable differences between Empress Zhang's image in the *Ordination Scroll* and her album portrait. The latter depicts the empress in an iconic pose that appears timeless and motionless in an unspecified space. Her body seems to function as a frame for the display of imperial accoutrements. In contrast, the *Ordination Scroll* shows Empress Zhang in full-length dressed in Daoist costume, her hair partially revealed. She is presented in a setting, albeit an imagined one, with a sense of forward directionality and movement.

The *Ordination Scroll* may be more closely related to other types of imperial portraits that depict scenes of action, some examples of which can be found outside the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection. Wang Cheng-hua proposes that the figures depicted on horseback in a painting titled *Hunting* (*Lieqi tu* 獵騎圖) in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, originally attributed to an anonymous Yuan painter, are in fact the

University, 1998), 208-211. It might be interesting to consider whether gender relations were also a factor in this change.

⁵¹ The mothers of emperors who were not the principal consort have different costumes. The exception is the Jiajing emperor's mother who is dressed as an empress. This corresponds to the Jiajing emperor's agenda to make his biological parents part of the orthodox imperial lineage during the Great Rites Controversy.

Xuande emperor, Empress Sun and two female attendants (fig. 200).⁵² In the handscroll *Xianzong's Pleasures in the Lantern Festival* (*Xianzong yuanxiao xingle tu* 憲宗元宵行樂圖), in the National Museum of China, imperial women are portrayed with children enjoying various entertainments in the presence of the emperor (fig. 201). These paintings also show full-length figures in a setting with movement. Yet, the *Ordination Scroll* remains distinct from these examples since it depicts the empress in a religious guise and independently from the emperor. Wang Cheng-hua's identification of Empress Sun in *Hunting* is based upon the figure's association with the emperor and not by any individualised features of her own. The identical-looking women in *Xianzong's Pleasures* do not stand for figures with separate identities; instead they serve to highlight the ruler's virility and the wellbeing of the imperial household.

The *Ordination Scroll* is unusual among extant images of Ming consorts. Yet, as others have noted, the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection does not constitute the totality of Ming portraits once in existence.⁵³ Inventories taken in 1744 and 1815 reveal that some portraits were removed during that time, such as smaller hanging scrolls of emperors, while other items were added, such as the painting of Empress Ma. Some Ming imperial portraits never entered the Qing collections. Textual records document additional portraits of empresses in hanging scroll format. Tan Qian 談遷 (1594 – 1657) in *Zaolin zazu* 棗林雜俎 (Miscellaneous Delicacies from the Jujube Grove) mentions portraits of Empresses Ma and Xu that matched the hanging scroll portraits of their husbands the Hongwu and Yongle emperors.⁵⁴ It is also known that

⁵² Wang, "Material Culture and Emperorhip," 256-9.

⁵³ Wang, "Material Culture and Emperorhip," 149-160; Ching, "Tibetan Buddhism," 324-7.

⁵⁴ Tan Qian 談遷, *Zaolin zazu* 棗林雜俎 (Miscellaneous delicacies from the jujube grove) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 103.

the Chongzhen emperor ordered large hanging scroll portraits of his mother, Empress Dowager Liu, to be made after her death.⁵⁵ A hanging scroll portrait from the sixteenth century of an elaborately dressed court lady in the Palace Museum, Beijing, can offer some idea of the appearance of such images (fig. 202).⁵⁶ Like the material included in standard texts described in the previous chapter, imperial portraits that survive have also been filtered through the perspectives of those who established the collections. The *Ordination Scroll* suggests the possibility for alternative representations of Ming empresses that lie outside of formal imperial portraiture.

There is some evidence to suggest that other portraits depicting the imperial sitter in a religious guise were in existence during the Ming. The 1744 survey of the Qing court collection mentions two unusual portraits of the Jiajing emperor titled *Haodao tu* 好道圖 (Picture of Enjoying the Dao) in album form and a scroll called *Shenzhong zaohua shengjiang tu* 身中造化升降圖 (Picture of Ascent and Descent in Transformations within the Body).⁵⁷ Neither of these works is mentioned again in the 1815 inventory. Judging by their titles, they would have depicted the emperor as a Daoist master. More specifically, the second image would most likely have shown him as a practitioner of inner alchemy (*neidan* 內丹), which involves cultivating energies within the human body in order to become a transcendent.⁵⁸ These lost portraits indicate that Ming rulers were aware of the possibility of adopting a different

⁵⁵ MS 114, p. 3540; Fu Leshu 傅樂淑, “Xiaochun yurong kao 孝純御容考,” *Gugong jikan* 故宮季刊 (National Palace Museum Quarterly), no. 2 (winter 1976), 27-36.

⁵⁶ He Li and Michael Knight, *Power and Glory: Court Arts of China's Ming Dynasty* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2008), no. 148.

⁵⁷ Zhang, *Qing gong shuwen*, 397.

⁵⁸ A graph depicting trigrams titled *Shenjiang tu* 升降圖 (Picture of Ascent and Descent) is found in *Yiwai biezhuàn* 易外別傳 (Extraneous commentary on the Book of Changes), DZ 1009, 11-2. For more on inner alchemy, see *EOT*, 762-6.

guise through portraiture. Their subject matter can be understood in relation to the Jiajing emperor's renowned devotion to Daoism.⁵⁹

Qixiu leigao 七修類稿 (Draft of information, arranged in seven categories) by Lang Ying 郎瑛 (1487 – c. 1566) also mentions two portraits of Song empresses dressed in religious attire that were in the possession of their descendents during the Ming. One image is described as a genealogy portrait (*puxiang* 譜像) of Empress Wei 韋, the mother of Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127 – 1161), showing her:

square-faced and full-cheeked, with phoenix eyes and dragon forehead, and with the clothing and headdress of a religious figure.

方面豐頤，鳳目龍額，衣冠乃道人者也。⁶⁰

The reason Lang Ying gives for the unusual depiction of the empress was that she was so enraged by the military general Yue Fei's 岳飛 (1103 – 1142) wrongful death that she dressed in religious robes in protest. This is not recorded in official histories, although her biography in *Song shi* notes her interest in both Buddhism and Daoism in her later years.⁶¹ The second portrait is of Empress Quan 全, wife of Duzong 度宗 (r. 1265 – 1274), also depicted in religious costume (*daofu* 道服).⁶² This portrayal is explained by the claim that Empress Quan spent her remaining days as a nun at a Buddhist monastery after the fall of the Southern Song dynasty, which is noted in her official biography.⁶³

⁵⁹ See for instance Wan, "Ceramics in Context".

⁶⁰ Lang, *Qixiu leigao*, *juan* 47, p. 689.

⁶¹ Yuan, *Song shi*, *juan* 243, p. 8643.

⁶² Lang, *Qixiu leigao*, *juan* 47, p. 690.

⁶³ Yuan, *Song shi*, *juan* 243, p. 8661.

Regardless of whether these portraits actually originated from the Song, their record by a Ming writer suggests an awareness of the possibility of representing empresses in religious guises. These portrayals can be justified by the women's supposed status as religious practitioners in life. Similarly, Empress Zhang's depiction as a Daoist priestess in the *Ordination Scroll* is explained by her ordination ceremony, and the image in turn confirms the efficacy of the ritual. These examples suggest that different portrayals of empresses were possible within the realm of religious practice. Yet, while the portraits of Song empresses in religious attire were kept by their descendents, the *Ordination Scroll* connects Empress Zhang to the Orthodox Unity order, locating it beyond the inner court and the familial context. This extension of Empress Zhang's image appears potentially subversive in relation to the notion of the privacy and concealment of Ming imperial portraiture, which can be observed in two Ming dynasty records. One is found in *Qixiu leigao*:

The present statue of the God of the Earth in the West Heavenly King Hall in the Su Prefecture completely resembled our Taizu Emperor Gao. One hears that at the time also travelling there, the Buddhist Yang was surprised [by the statue] and subsequently ordered sculptors to create an image of it. Later [Yang] heard people saying that [the copied statue] looked like Taizu. [Yang] immediately covered it in a tent of yellow silk and did not let people see it; perhaps it would still be possible to change it.

今蘇郡西天王堂土地絕肖，我太祖高皇帝。聞當時亦至其地，而化主楊氏異焉，遂令塑工像之。後聞人言像太祖，即以黃絹帳之於外，不容人看，意者尚當易之可也。⁶⁴

Although Lang Ying does not explain the reasons for the need to cover a statue that resembled the Hongwu emperor, the fact that it was removed from view and was

⁶⁴ Lang Ying 郎瑛, *Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿 (Draft of information, arranged in seven categories) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), *juan* 9, p. 146.

considered necessary to change its appearance indicate a level of anxiety over the ownership and display of imperial images. In another account, the late-Ming official Zhang Xuan 張萱 (1582 *juren*) recalls his encounter with portraits of the Hongwu and Yongle emperors and those of their wives, Empresses Ma and Xu 徐:

When I was an official of the Central Secretariat, only then did I get [to see] imperial portraits of Gaozu (Hongwu) and Chengzu (Yongle) kept in the imperial storehouse. Emperor Gao was a handsome man. His beard and moustache are both like silver silk, countable but not very trimmed. There was no such thing as a dragon-shaped moustache and twelve moles. Chengzu instead has the form of a leopard's forehead and round eyes (ie ferocious appearance). If he shrugged his shoulders, the two sides of his moustache would separate horizontally and his beard would reach his navel wrapper. Both wear the *yishan* crown and dark attire. Neither are positioned frontally, quite as though [they are] face-to-face with the two empresses. Reaching [portraits of] the two empresses, [I] instead covered them with paper and did not dare to reveal them.

余直西省，始得內府所藏高成二祖御容。高皇帝乃美丈夫也，鬚髯皆如銀絲可數不甚修，無所謂龍形虬髯十二黑子也。成祖則有豹額環眼之狀，若聳其肩，兩髭橫分，鬚長褱臍。皆翼善冠衣綠，不正立，頗與二后若相對。意至二后，則以紙蒙之，不敢啟云。⁶⁵

Judging by his description, it is likely that Zhang Xuan saw imperial portraits in album form. His description of the grey-haired Hongwu emperor and the Yongle emperor with his long beard and distinctive moustache matches their portraits in the Hall of Southern Fragrance album (fig. 203, 204). It is interesting that Zhang responded differently to the portraits of the emperors and empresses. Although he indicates that access to imperial images was not customary even for officials, he was sufficiently at ease with his encounter with the portraits of the emperors to describe their appearance. He further compares the image of the Hongwu emperor to the

⁶⁵ Zhang Xuan 張萱, *Yiyao* 疑耀 (Uncertainties Illuminated) (repr. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1939), *juan* 1, pp. 3-4.

so-called “grotesque” version of the ruler’s portrait, with moles and dragon-shaped beard, which he had the opportunity to see (fig. 205).⁶⁶ Yet, when it came to images of the empresses, Zhang does not name or describe them, and refrains from viewing them at all. The difference in his response suggests a sense of propriety towards representations of imperial consorts that positioned them at a greater level of privacy than the images of Ming emperors.

Wang Cheng-hua connects the privacy and concealment of Ming imperial portraits to policies of the dynastic founder, the Hongwu emperor.⁶⁷ These included the relocation of formal imperial portraits to the newly constructed Hall of Ancestral Worship (Fengxian dian 奉先殿) that was situated within the inner rather than outer court of the imperial palace, thus re-framing these images within the familial context and in relation to ancestral worship.⁶⁸ Under his reign, representations of emperors, consorts and imperial symbols were banned from unauthorised use.⁶⁹ *The Great Ming Code* (*Da Ming lü* 大明律), established in 1397, further attempted to restrict the ownership of images of rulers from successive dynasties and to prohibit actors from performing roles of imperial figures.⁷⁰ As a result, Wang Cheng-hua observes that “imperial portraits did not constitute a public space of discourse in which Ming officials and scholars could make comments”.⁷¹ Indeed, Ming textual records on

⁶⁶ On Zhu Yuanzhang’s “grotesque” portraits, see Wang, “Material Culture and Emperorhip,” 125-9; Dora Ching, “Visual Images of Zhu Yuanzhang,” in *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society of Ming Studies, 2008), 171-209.

⁶⁷ Wang, “Material Culture and Emperorhip,” 118-147.

⁶⁸ Wang, “Material Culture and Emperorhip,” 78-117.

⁶⁹ *Ming Taizu shilu*, 55.2b, 81.3b-4a.

⁷⁰ Huang Zhangjian 黃彰健, ed., *Mingdai lüli huibian* 明代律例彙編 (Compilation of Codes and Case Law from the Ming Dynasty) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1979), 595, 956-7. For translations see Jiang Yonglin, *The Great Ming Code: Da Ming lü* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005). Also see, Tan Tian Yuan, “The Sovereign and Theater: Reconsidering the Impact of Ming Taizu’s Prohibitions,” in *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Emperor Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History*, ed. Sarah Schneewind (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), 150.

⁷¹ Wang, “Material Culture and Emperorhip,” 130.

imperial portrait are scarce compared to other dynasties, a fact noted by Hu Jing 胡敬 (1769 – 1845) when cataloguing the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection in 1815.⁷²

However, as scholars have increasingly recognised, the Hongwu emperor's policies do not define the whole of the Ming. Dora Ching observes that Ming rulers made different choices regarding whether to use portraits in particular rituals, so they may have been more visible in certain periods compared to others.⁷³ Tan Tian Yuan questions whether the censorship and destruction of plays involving the impersonation of the emperor actually took place at all during the Ming.⁷⁴ While Wang Cheng-hua's observation of the non-discursive nature of Ming imperial portraiture largely holds true, this did not prevent the emergence of imperial images outside of official control during the dynasty. For instance, woodblock printed images of the Hongwu, Yongle and Jiajing emperors can be found in the illustrated encyclopaedia *San cai tu hui* published in 1609 (fig. 206).⁷⁵ The image of Yongle with his distinctive facial hair especially resembles his portraits in the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection, which suggests that people did have the chance to see them. The so-called "grotesque" portraits of the emperor were also in circulation beyond the Ming court by the sixteenth century, as Zhang Xuan had the occasion to see. A number of these paintings were later collected by the Qing court and added to the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection.⁷⁶ It is tempting to speculate that the hanging scroll portrait of Empress Ma,

⁷² Hu Jing 胡敬, "Nanxundian tuxiang kao 南薰殿圖像考" (Study into the Portraits of the Hall of Southern Fragrance), in *Hushi shuhua kao sanzong 胡氏書畫考三種* (Three Types of Study into Calligraphy and Painting by Mr Hu) (repr. Taipei: Hanhua chuban gongsi, 1971), 281-2.

⁷³ Ching discusses the ritual of "Presenting a Posthumous Honorific Title" (*zunshiyi* 尊諡儀). See Ching, "Tibetan Buddhism," 334-5.

⁷⁴ Tian, "The Sovereign and Theater," 162.

⁷⁵ Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 3.29a-30a, p. 582.

⁷⁶ Wang, "Material Culture and Emperorhip," 125-9; Ching, "Visual Images of Zhu Yuanzhang," 183-9.

which also entered the collection later, may have been a work from outside the court as well.

The *Ordination Scroll* seems to straddle these two sides of Ming imperial portraiture. Its fortuitous survival as one version of Empress Zhang's ordination document probably not intended for her locates it outside of the court collections, perhaps in the hands of the Celestial Masters. Its depiction of Empress Zhang connects her to a religious institution outside of the familial context. On the other hand, the scroll is a document of ordination that is meant to be kept secret between master and disciple, and ultimately physically destroyed upon the empress' death. It is conceivably due to their private nature that such religious documents could offer the empress an alternative avenue for self-representation that differed from formal portraiture while maintaining the level of decorum that was necessary for images of imperial women. The likelihood that the scroll was viewed later on, given the condition of the work, was probably never intended by Empress Zhang.

Within the context of imperial portraiture, the *Ordination Scroll* emerges as an early surviving image of an empress that exists outside of the conventions that define female portraits in the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection. Whether Empress Zhang stood alone among imperial women in the first half of the Ming dynasty in participating in alternative forms of self-representation cannot be determined given the paucity of surviving material. Yet, there is evidence to suggest that from the sixteenth century onwards, after Empress Zhang's death, the possibilities for representing the religious identity of Ming consorts expanded. Visual material and references in textual discourse on the topic begin to emerge in the late Ming and early Qing. This begins with Empress Dowager Li who, with the support of the Wanli

emperor (r. 1573 – 1620), challenged the boundaries of concealment by promoting herself as a bodhisattva at the imperial court and beyond it (fig. 207).

One account of the deified persona of Empress Dowager Li is found in *Ming shi*. It tells of an episode at the end of the Ming dynasty when the Chongzhen emperor lamented that the death of one of his young sons had been foreseen by an apparition of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva.⁷⁷ The entry explains that:

The Nine Lotus Bodhisattva is Shenzong's mother Empress Dowager Xiaoding Li. This is said because the empress dowager favoured Buddhism and an image of her in the palace was of a nine-lotus seat.

九蓮菩薩者，神宗母孝定李太后也。太后好佛，宮中像作九蓮座，故云。⁷⁸

This account records the deification of Empress Dowager Li and the continued importance of her deified self at the end of the Ming dynasty. The Nine Lotus Bodhisattva is not a canonical Buddhist deity but seems to have connections to sectarian religions.⁷⁹ Recognition of the empress dowager's identity as the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva at the Ming court is verified by an essay composed by Zhang Shifan 張士範 (1609 *jinshi*) found in Liu Ruoyu's 劉若愚 (1584 – c. 1642) *Ming gong shi* 明宮史 (History of the Ming palace).⁸⁰ It eulogises the planting of *bodhi* trees in the inner court by the empress dowager, who is referred to directly as the “Nine Lotus Bodhisattva, Compassionate and Saintly Imperial Grandmother” (*Jiulian pusa cisheng huang zumu* 九蓮菩薩慈聖皇祖母). Interestingly, in the text, Zhang Shifan equates the *bodhi* trees to the empress dowager herself. The *bodhi* tree is

⁷⁷ MS 120, 3658-9.

⁷⁸ MS 120, 3658-9.

⁷⁹ Li. “Shuntian Baomingsi kao,” 57.

⁸⁰ Liu Ruoyu 劉若愚, *Ming gong shi* 明宮史 (History of the Ming Palace) (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1980), *muji* 木集, pp. 34-5.

significant in Buddhism as it was under its shade that the Sakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment. The depiction of the empress dowager mentioned in *Ming shi* similarly represents her with an object – a lotus seat, on which Buddhist icons normally sit. The use of a proxy rather than a literal portrayal of her as a deity can be interpreted as an inventive way for self-representation that worked within the confines of decorum. Moreover, the empress dowager went further than Empress Zhang in the *Ordination Scroll* by making her religious guise visible to a much larger audience beyond the imperial court.

Empress Dowager Li and the Wanli emperor's promotion of her deified identity included the installation of representations of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva at temples in Beijing. *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略 (Survey of scenery and monuments in the imperial capital), dated 1635, gives another account of Empress Dowager Li's association with the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva.⁸¹ The text explains that the empress dowager dreamt of the goddess transmitting a sutra to her, which she managed to recall in full after she woke. She had the sutra recorded and a gilded statue of the bodhisattva made. This statue was installed at the rear hall of Cishousi 慈壽寺 (Temple of Compassion and Longevity) in Beijing, which was founded by the empress dowager between 1576 and 1578.⁸² According to the description, the statue shows the bodhisattva wearing a seven-jewel coronet and cape (*qibao guanpei* 七寶冠帔), and riding a golden phoenix with nine heads. This account was similarly told by Yang Shicong 楊士聰 (1631 *jinshi*) in *Yutang huiji* 玉堂薈記 (Collected records of the jade hall). Both texts note that monks at Cishou temple believed that the

⁸¹ Liu Tong 劉侗 and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略 (Survey of Scenery and Monuments in the Imperial Capital) (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), *juan* 5, pp. 317-320.

⁸² Naquin, *Peking*, 157.

empress dowager was a reincarnation of the bodhisattva and, according to Yang Shicong, this saying had been around from a long time (*qi lai yi jiu* 其來已久).⁸³ According to *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考 (Investigation of old accounts heard in the precincts of the throne), compiled around 1785, a statue with a nine-headed phoenix was still venerated at the temple.⁸⁴ He Xiaorong believes that the installation of this statue at Cishou Temple was ordered by the Wanli emperor after his mother's death.⁸⁵ This is because Nine Lotus Bodhisattva scriptures, mentioned in the above accounts, were commissioned by the emperor after the empress dowager passed away.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, it is clear from these records that the reputation of Empress Dowager Li as the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva had extended beyond the confines of the imperial palace during the Wanli reign. Moreover, acknowledgement of her deified identity suggests that the statue of the bodhisattva at Cishou Temple was interpreted as a representation of the empress dowager herself.

In addition to the statue, a stele related to the deified persona of Empress Dowager Li was also erected at Cishou Temple. Shen Bang 沈榜 in *Wanshu zaji* 宛署雜記 (Miscellaneous notes about my office at Wanping) (1593) records that unusually shaped lotuses blossomed at the empress dowager's residence in 1586. To commemorate the event, she ordered poems to be composed, which were then carved on to the stele installed at Cishou Temple.⁸⁷ This stele still stands at the rear of a

⁸³ Yang Shicong 楊士聰, *Yutang huiji* 玉堂薈記 (Collected Records of the Jade Hall) (repr. Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubanshe, 1977), 43.

⁸⁴ Yu et al, *Rixia jiuwen kao*, juan 97, p. 1613.

⁸⁵ He, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan*, 291-6.

⁸⁶ On these scriptures, see Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良, "Ming Wanli nianjian wei Jiulian pusa bianzao de liang bu jing 明萬曆年間為九蓮菩薩編造的兩部經" (Two Scriptures Compiled for the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva during the Ming Wanli Reign), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 (Palace Museum Journal), no. 2 (1985), 37-40; Yu Junfang 于君方, "'Weijing' yu guanyin xinyang '偽經' 與觀音信仰" ("Fake Scriptures" and the Guanyin Faith), *Zhonghua foxue xuebao* 中華佛學學報 (Chung-hwa Buddhist Journal) 8 (July 1995), 97-135.

⁸⁷ In response to the auspicious lotuses, the Wanli emperor and Empress Dowager Li also sent offerings to Mount Putuo, an island southeast of Shanghai, a sacred site connected to Guanyin.

thirteen-storey pagoda, which is the only building structure that remains at the temple site (fig. 208, 209).⁸⁸ One side of the stele is carved with an image that can be more clearly observed from rubbings (fig. 210).⁸⁹ As Marsha Weidner and Chün-fang Yü have shown, the scene depicts the white-robed Guanyin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, seated leaning on a balustrade and in front of bamboo trees.⁹⁰ Lotuses blossom below her in a pond where her child attendant Sudhana looks up at her in veneration. At the top left hand side of the composition is a square seal of Empress Dowager Li, an inscription dating the carving to 1587 and the lines:

Only our Saintly Mother, whose compassion and benevolence can move Heaven. In response to this wonderful sign, the imperial palace produces auspicious lotuses. Adding the Great Being's (ie Guanyin) image, it is carved on stone for dissemination. Prolonging the state and bringing blessings to the people, Heaven and Earth will together be fortified.

惟我聖母，慈仁格天。感斯嘉兆，闕產瑞蓮。加大士像，勒石流傳。延國福民，宵壤同堅。

The inscription refers to the empress dowager as “Saintly Mother” (*shengmu* 聖母) and the image of Guanyin (*dashi xiang* 大士像) separately. However, the assertion of

Chün-fang Yü, “P’u-to Shan: Pilgrimage and the Creation of the Chinese Potalaka,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 210-211.

⁸⁸ This stele and its relative location to the pagoda are verified by Qing surveys of the site. See Li Zongwan 勵宗萬, *Jingcheng guji kao* 京城古蹟考 (Investigation of historic sites in the capital city) (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1981), 16-7; Yu et al, *Rixia jiuwen kao*, *juan* 97, pp. 1611-13. These sources mention a second Wanli period stele to the right of the pagoda, which also survives. It depicts *Guanyin with Fishing Basket* (Yulan Guanyin 魚籃觀音) on one side, dated 1587, and the martial deity Guan Yu 關羽 on the other, dated 1607. Both steles were once located in their own pavilions. See summary in Yan, “Cisheng taihou yu Yong’an shou ta,” 7-8.

⁸⁹ The rubbings of the two Cishou Temple steles are reproduced in Beijing tushuguan shanben bu jinshi zu 北京圖書館善本部金石組, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian* 北京圖書館藏畫像拓本匯編 (Collected Rubbings of Images Housed in the Beijing Library) (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe), vol. 1, p. 112; vol. 7, pp. 21-2. Further rubbings of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele are in the Buddhist Books and Culture Relics Museum of China, Beijing (Zhongguo fojiao tushu wenwu guan 中國佛教圖書文物館) and the Beijing Art Museum of Stone Carvings (Beijing shike yishu bowuguan 北京石刻藝術博物館). See Zhou Shaoliang, “Ming Wanli nianjian wei Jiulian pusa bianzao de liang bu jing,” 40. It is not known when these rubbings were made.

⁹⁰ Weidner, “Buddhist Pictorial Art in the Ming Dynasty,” 61-2; Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 145-8.

the empress dowager's power to move Heaven with her compassion relates her to the role of a bodhisattva, particularly Guanyin. Furthermore, the precise manifestation of Guanyin is indicated by the nine large lotuses depicted in the scene. Auspicious lotuses are also the subject of the text carved on the other side of the stele, now much worn. The text includes the title “*Ruilian fu you xu* 瑞蓮賦有序” (Preface to poems on auspicious lotuses), which corresponds to Shen Bang's record.⁹¹ The combination of text and image in stele leads the viewer to associate lotuses with the goddess and the empress dowager.

In contrast to the *Ordination Scroll*, Empress Dowager Li's image from the Cishou Temple stele was circulated. A painting with identical composition can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, bearing her seal (fig. 211).⁹² Steles with similar portrayals of the bodhisattva-empress were installed elsewhere in Beijing at Sheng'ansi 聖安寺 (Temple of Saintly Peace) in 1589 (fig. 212), Mileyuan 彌勒院 (Temple of Maitreya) in 1592 (fig. 213) and Cishengsi 慈聖寺 (Temple of the Compassionate and Saintly) in 1594 (fig. 214).⁹³ The stele from 1594 also carries the seal of the empress dowager and the same inscription as the original at Cishou temple. The version at Sheng'an Temple has a different inscription stating that it was commissioned by a monk official from the Buddhist Registry, which indicates that the image of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva was perpetuated not only by the empress dowager and the Wanli emperor but also by other members of the Ming court.

Furthermore, a similar composition appears in an early Qing edition of the

⁹¹ Yan Chongnian, “Cisheng tahou yu Yong'an shou ta,” 8.

⁹² Weidner, ed., *Latter Days of the Law*, 61.

⁹³ Reproduced in Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang* vol. 7, 23, 25, 29 and 30. The entry on the Cisheng Temple stele states that the stone was located at Yingtao gou 櫻桃溝 (Cherry Tree Gully) in Beijing. The reference to Cisheng Temple, however, is carved on the top left corner of the stele on both sides. The Field Museum also has a rubbing of the Sheng'an Temple stele. See Hartmut Walravens, ed., *Catalogue of Chinese Rubbings from Field Museum* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1981), 257.

woodblock-printed *Portraits of the Fifty-three Manifestations of the Compassionate Appearance of the Great Being Guanyin* (*Guanyin dashi cirong wushisan xianxiang zan* 觀音大士慈容五十三現象贊) (fig. 215).⁹⁴ Its inclusion in this text shows that the image was subsequently absorbed into the popular iconography of Guanyin.

While Empress Dowager Li's image as the Nine-Lotus Bodhisattva was clearly widely disseminated, it remains an indirect representation of her religious guise. Just as the *Ordination Scroll* is most likely a private object, the proxy images of Empress Dowager Li may be indicative of the persistent limitations upon how an empress could be represented and viewed in the Ming. Yet, around the end of the dynasty and the early Qing period, a new view emerged that interpreted the empress dowager's bodhisattva images as actual portraits of her. As Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623 – 1716) states:

Shenzong tried to seek blessings for the empress dowager upon her birthday. He ordered the retrieval of Wu Daozi's image of [the bodhisattva] Guanyin from the imperial storeroom. It was copied and its face was changed to that of the compassionate (empress dowager). [He] made Buddhist monasteries venerate it, had it carved in stone and rubbings of a thousand pages were made from it to be distributed to all under Heaven. All Buddhist monasteries under Heaven made offerings to it.

神宗嘗於太后千秋節為太后祈福，勅取內庫所藏吳道子觀音像，臨撫之，易以慈容，使梵剎瞻仰，勒石刷千頁以布天下，天下梵剎皆供之。⁹⁵

Although Mao's account is probably exaggerated and not substantiated elsewhere, it alludes to the use of images printed from stone to propagate the identity of Empress

⁹⁴ Kevin McLoughlin, "Appropriation, Representation, and Efficacy: Three Case Studies of the Bodhisattva Guanyin in 17th and 18th Century Chinese Print Culture" (PhD diss., University of Sussex, 2005), 217-224.

⁹⁵ Mao, *Shengchao dongshi shiyi ji*, juan 5, p. 182.

Dowager Li as a bodhisattva, noted above. His description suggests that, by the early Qing, some believed that rubbings of bodhisattva images in connection to Empress Dowager Li were based upon her likeness. This belief may not be entirely without grounds since other Qing writers also claimed that there were actual portraits of empresses as bodhisattvas in existence from the end of the Ming. *Rixia jiuwen kao* gives the following account citing an unidentified text titled *Yanzhou kehua* 燕舟客話 (Sojourner's sayings from the Yan boat):

Several ten scrolls of Buddhist images are stored in a small room adjacent to the main hall at Changchun Temple. The two scrolls in the middle are mounted on yellow silk, different from the other scrolls. Opening the scrolls to view them, one depicts nine lotus flowers, bearing a sign inscribed with "seat of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva", which is Empress Dowager Li, mother of Shenzong. The other depicts a female figure, in the form of a heavenly being, wearing a *puli* crown, dressed in a red embroidered kasaya. It is inscribed with the title of a bodhisattva, below which is a note that it was painted in the *gengchen* year (1640) of the Chongzhen reign. This is Empress Dowager Xiaochun Liu, mother of Liehuang (Chongzhen). It is not known when the two images were installed at the temple. Now they are both left in the dust and dirt.

長椿寺大殿旁小室內，藏佛像數十餘軸，中二軸黃綾裝裱，與他軸異，展視之，一繪九朵蓮花，捧一牌，題曰九蓮菩薩之位，明神宗母李太后也。一繪女像，具天人姿，戴毗盧帽，衣紅錦袈裟，題菩薩號，下注崇禎庚辰年恭繪，烈皇生母孝純劉太后也。二圖不知何時安奉寺內，今乃委積塵埃中。⁹⁶

Changchunsi 長椿寺 (Temple of Long-living Tree), located in southern Beijing, was founded by Empress Dowager Li and the Wanli emperor in 1592.⁹⁷ According to the above account, the portrait of Empress Dowager Li is symbolically represented by a lotus seat, like the *Ming shi* record noted earlier. The second portrait is identified as the Chongzhen emperor's mother, Empress Dowager Liu, portrayed as a bodhisattva.

⁹⁶ Yu et al, *Rixia jiuwen kao*, juan 59, pp. 956-7.

⁹⁷ Liu and Yu, *Dijing jingwu lue*, juan 3, pp. 180-1.

The nineteenth-century Japanese text, *Tōdo meishō zue* 唐土名勝圖會 (Illustrated collection of famous sites in the land of the Tang), provides illustrations of these two paintings from Changchun Temple, but are most likely imagined since only one painting remained by the late eighteenth century, as will be shown below (fig. 216).⁹⁸ The reference in *Yanzhou kehua* to the state of the portraits left abandoned in the “dust and dirt” may be a reflection by the writer upon the demise of the Ming dynasty.

It is unclear how the Chongzhen emperor’s mother came to acquire divine status, although it was established by the early Qing. When Tan Qian visited Changchun Temple in 1655, he records in his travelogue that he saw images of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva and Above Wisdom Bodhisattva (*Zhishang pusa* 智上菩薩) flanking a bronze Buddha, which he identifies as the two Ming empress dowagers.⁹⁹ Given that they were placed next to a Buddha statue, it is likely that the images that Tan saw were actually statues rather than paintings. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the two empress dowagers by their official titles, Cisheng 慈聖 and Xiaochun 孝純, respectively, in the remainder of the discussion.

Another early Qing writer Tang Sunhua 唐孫華 (1634 – 1723) records having seen a painted portrait of Cisheng (“Ming Cisheng Li taihou *yurong* 明慈聖李太后御容”) at Changchun Temple, for which he composed a commemorative poem.¹⁰⁰ The poem eulogises the empress dowager rather than describing the image, but the reference to

⁹⁸ Okada Gyokuzan, *Tōdo meishō zue* 唐土名勝圖會 (Illustrated collection of famous sites in the land of the Tang) (repr. Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 1985), 4.16b.

⁹⁹ Tan Qian 談遷, *Beiyōu lu* 北遊錄 (Record of Travel to the North) (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), *jìyōu xià* 紀郵下, pp. 122-3.

¹⁰⁰ Tang Sunhua 唐孫華, *Dongjiang shichao* 東江詩鈔 (Selection of poems from Dongjiang) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 2.5b-6a. Also quoted in full in Dai Lu 戴路, *Tengyin za ji* 藤陰雜記 (Miscellaneous records under the shade of the vine) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), *juan* 8, p. 87-8.

yurong 御容 in the title makes clear that the image depicted her visage rather than a lotus seat as described in *Yanzhou kehua*. A bodhisattva portrait thought to be of Cisheng was still kept at Changchun Temple in the mid-eighteenth century. *Tengyin zaji* 藤陰雜記 (Miscellaneous records under the shade of the vine) by Dai Lu 戴路 (1739 – 1806) documents that in 1762, several officials visited the temple where they saw a portrait of Cisheng that was in poor condition. They decided to pay for its re-mounting and have it stored in a brocade box. Poems were then written to commemorate the event. One of the officials Jiang Shiquan 蔣士銓 describes the portrait in his poem:

With a kasaya and jeweled necklace in the costume of a heavenly being, her aura floats in space as a rain of flower descends. The gold pigments have half come off but her eyes have spirit. An old monk recognises a little of the goddess-empress' face. Once various Buddhas avoided her throne, now dust from roof beams stick to the old paper.

袈裟瓔珞天人裝，靈氣浮空花雨墜。金粉半脫目有神，老僧略識娘娘尊。當時諸佛避寶座，今日故紙黏梁塵。¹⁰¹

It is possible that this portrait is actually the same as the image of the Above Wisdom Bodhisattva described in *Yanzhou kehua*, given that both figures are described as dressed in a kasaya (a patchwork outer garment worn by a Buddhist monk) in the guise of a heavenly being (*tianren* 天人). In other words, the identity of the portrait may have changed from Xiaochun to the more famous Cisheng over time. The final line of the above account is interesting as it seems to allude to the image of the lotus seat as a portrait of Cisheng as the “Nine Lotus Bodhisattva”, described in *Ming shi*

¹⁰¹ Dai, *Tengyin za ji*, *juan* 8, p. 88.

and *Yanzhou kehua*. By the time Dai Lu wrote *Tengyin zaji*, only one scroll remained at the temple:

Now only one scroll remains: a female figure wearing a kasaya with ten thousand Buddhas, inscribed with “Above Wisdom Bodhisattva” four characters in gold. Visitors go to the temple to display and view it.

今只存一軸，女像著千佛袈裟，金書「智上菩薩」四字，遊人赴寺展觀。¹⁰²

This is echoed by the eighteenth-century writers of *Rixia jiuwen kao* who commented that:

The Changchun Temple today has only one painted hanging scroll. It is a painted female portrait, wearing a *pilu* hat and a brocaded kasaya. She sits on a lotus pedestal, and next to her are painted two female attendants. There is no writing of “Nine Lotus Bodhisattva”, nor is there a caption with the Chongzhen reign year. It has not yet been examined why this one hanging scroll is a portrait of an empress, now there is no way of verifying it.

長椿寺今止存畫像一軸，所繪乃女像，戴毗盧帽，著錦袈裟，坐蓮臺，上旁繪女侍二，並無九蓮菩薩字樣，亦無崇禎年標題，未審為何后像其一軸，今無可考矣。¹⁰³

It seems likely that the writers of *Tengyin zaji* and *Rixia jiuwen kao* were referring to the same image since they both describe a female deity dressed in kasaya. The inscription of “Above Wisdom Bodhisattva” could have been added to the painting or concealed. It is also probable that this was the same painting that Tang Yongbin 湯用彬 saw at Changchun Temple when he conducted a survey of cultural relics in Beijing in the early twentieth century. A photograph was taken of the work, which was

¹⁰² Dai, *Tengyin za ji*, juan 8, p. 87.

¹⁰³ Yu et al, *Rixia jiuwen kao*, juan 59, pp. 956-7.

reproduced in *Jiudu wenwu lüe* 舊都文物略 (Survey of cultural relics at the old capital) (1935) (fig. 217).¹⁰⁴ In the book, Tang identifies the image as a portrait of Xiaochun in the guise of the Above Wisdom Bodhisattva, citing *Yanzhou kehua* noted earlier.¹⁰⁵ The painting shows a frontal female figure seated on a lotus pedestal with her back against two large overlapping halos. Although the reproduced image is in black and white, it is possible to observe the relatively individualised facial features of the figure. She wears a Buddhist *pilu* crown and a kasaya patterned with thousand-Buddha motif, while holding a *ruyi* scepter. The hands of two flanking servants are visible on the edge of the image, one carrying a rock on a plate. Around the figure is a shower of flowers. These visual features correspond to the descriptions found in *Tengyin zaji* and *Rixia jiuwen kao*. The portrayal of the sitter as an iconic deity in painting is reminiscent of the striking Qing imperial images of the Qianlong emperor as a lama and emanation of Mañjuśrī (fig. 218) as well as of Empress Dowager Cixi who used photography and painting to promote herself as Guanyin (fig. 219).¹⁰⁶

Judging from textual sources, commentaries on painted portraits of Cisheng and Xiaochun at Changchun Temple only emerged in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the identity of the portrait had become confused over time. One possibility for this delay is that the painting is a later work that has been misidentified. Yet, a case could

¹⁰⁴ Tang Yongbin 湯用彬, *Jiudu wenwu lüe* 舊都文物略 (Survey of cultural relics at the old capital) (1935; repr. Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1972), 15-6, fig. 34.

¹⁰⁵ Tang Yongbin's entry basically quotes *Yanzhou kehua*'s account but records an expanded inscription "Hongci jisheng Zhishang pusa 宏慈極聖智上菩薩" (Vastly Compassionate, Most Saintly Above Wisdom Bodhisattva) on the painting. See Tang, *Jiudu wenwu lüe*, 16. Based on this, Fu Leshu thinks that there were two portraits of Xiaochun at the Temple: one with the expanded title and the other with the abbreviated "Zhishang pusa". See Fu, "Xiaochun yurong kao," 31.

¹⁰⁶ On Qianlong's portraits see Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 58-60. On Cixi, see Laikwan Pang, "Photography, Performance, and the Making of Female Images in Modern China," *Journal of Women's History* 17.4 (2005), 56-85.

also be made that this work does depict a Ming empress and that it had been left unknown at the Temple after the fall of the dynasty, rather like the prolonged obscurity of the *Ordination Scroll*. While the quality of the reproduction makes it difficult to determine its dating, it could be argued that the stylised lotus seat and the surface patterning on the body of the figure in the photographed image locate it closer to the Ming rather than the Qing when more naturalistic depictions became the norm in portraiture. Furthermore, if we compared the image to the retrospective portrait of Xiaochun in the Hall of Southern Fragrance album, some general similarities could be observed, such as the wide forehead and small phoenix eyes (fig. 220). If this image does depict Xiaochun from the end of the Ming, then the image offers a precedent for the portraits of deified Qing rulers. In any case, records of portraits of Cisheng and Xiaochun show the interest in images of Ming consorts in the Qing dynasty and their emergence in scholarly discourse that had previously not existed during the Ming.

While information on images of consorts from the Ming is scarce, it is possible to observe a trend in the latter part of the dynasty when alternative representations of them in religious guises emerged. Through Cisheng, it became possible for images representing the empress dowager to be visible and widely disseminated. This may have culminated in an actual portrait of a deified empress dowager, if the image reproduced by Tang Yongbin was indeed Xiaochun. Within this narrative, the *Ordination Scroll* predates the images of Cisheng and Xiaochun as the earliest surviving portrayal of a Ming empress in an alternative persona. Although the *Ordination Scroll* and the bodhisattva images of late Ming empress dowagers are different in format, function and visibility, they are related in their presentation of the religious identity of the women they portray in ways that are distinct from their formal portraits in the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection. In addition, these images extend

the presence of their sitters beyond the inner court by giving form to their transcendence as well as through their physical locations as objects. Since the *Ordination Scroll* is the earliest surviving imperial image of its kind, it is conceivable that Empress Zhang may have set an innovative precedent for Ming imperial women to participate in self-representation through the adoption of a religious guise.

Conclusion

This dissertation is, on the one hand, a close study of a particular work – the *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang* (1493). On the other hand, it also uses the scroll as a starting point to explore issues that have largely been overlooked in canonical narratives of Chinese art history and the history of the Ming dynasty.

In Chapter One, the material and visual qualities of the *Ordination Scroll* were closely examined. It was found that the work underwent conservation treatment prior to its entry in the San Diego Museum of Art during the 1960s. This included a thorough re-mounting of the work, which concealed missing sections and gave the scroll its current unusual format. There is evidence from the surface of the scroll to suggest that it was probably not the version that was ultimately given to the empress. The evidence includes a wrapper that was painted to emulate textiles, pieces of paper that were pasted on the scroll (including the image of Empress Zhang) as well as written colour notations on the figures of the composition. However, the effort that it clearly took to create the scroll indicates that it was also treated as a finished work in its own right, perhaps as a record of the empress' ordination that was kept by the Orthodox Unity order. Finally, the chapter considered the visual format of the scroll. While its depiction of a series of celestial beings can be connected to an established format of representing deities in procession, the *Ordination Scroll* differs in its monumental size and the orderliness of its compositional layout. These features may be related to imperial documentary images and visual representations of Daoist registers. In particular, the chapter suggested that the overall format of the *Ordination Scroll* bears close resemblance to that of the *Investiture of a Local God* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. These two works may be part of a wider production of

documents containing texts and images produced for Daoist rituals of transmission during the Ming dynasty.

Chapter Two was an in-depth iconographic study of the images in the *Ordination Scroll*. The identity and grouping of the deities were determined based primarily upon Ming dynasty Daoist texts and images. The celestial beings in the first procession of the scroll can be classified into those related to the transmission of scriptures and registers, deities who administer different spheres, military figures who are helpers of Marshal Zhao as well as perfected beings who are concerned with natural disasters. The second procession of the scroll is a visual representation of the list of deities under Empress Zhang's command. They are derived from three prominent Daoist registers. The celestial beings in the scroll correspond to developments in the late imperial Daoist pantheon, in which deities of relatively newer sects such as the Divine Emphyrean were appropriated by the Orthodox Unity order. There are some unusual iconographic elements in the processions, such as the martial representation of Jade Maidens that empowers their role as female protectors and addresses the empress' gender. Together with the inclusion of perfected beings connected to natural disasters, this indicates that the images of the scroll involved a degree of personalisation. Some of the deities depicted closely match with those described in specific Daoist texts, which suggests that the designer of the scroll was familiar with such writings and had a firm grasp of the iconography of Daoist deities. It is likely that the designer of the scroll was the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing who also composed the main inscription. The chapter also speculated upon the missing sections of the *Ordination Scroll*, suggesting that the opening section of the procession once depicted the Jade Sovereign with guardians and attendants.

Chapter Three analysed the inscriptions in the *Ordination Scroll*. Based upon my translation of the text, the inscription composed by Zhang Xuanqing may be summarised as a transcription of Empress Zhang's request for ordination followed by an inventory of all the items and ranks transmitted to her. The basic structure and elements of the language in the inscription correspond to standard Daoist documents used to verify transmissions of sacred texts found in the Daoist Canon and *Zangwai daoshu*, but the content has been adjusted so that it addresses Empress Zhang with reverence while also elevating the Orthodox Unity order. The inscription is thus not purely an invention by Zhang Xuanqing. The chapter then considered the claim that the *Ordination Scroll* is an "ordination certificate". It clarified that the scroll is different from the conventional understanding of the term, that is, official permits known as *dudie*. Instead, the scroll is connected to certificates verifying transmission that an ordinand receives from the Orthodox Unity institution as part of a corpus. These certificates have significance not only for the living but also function as identification documents in the afterlife. The implications of this is that transmitted documents like the *Ordination Scroll* were meant to be used after death and as such had to be buried or burnt upon the death of the ordinand. This supports the argument presented in Chapter One that the *Ordination Scroll* was not the version given to Empress Zhang, since it would have been physically destroyed upon her death.

The last part of the chapter studied the scriptures and registers requested by Empress Zhang. Like the deities depicted in the scroll, the combination of the scriptures and registers reflect both representative texts and personalised choices. The chapter found that the texts requested correspond to examples in circulation during the Ming dynasty. Moreover, they are made up of scriptures and registers of different ranks, from foundational works to the most prestigious. This indicates that, contrary to common

assumption, the empress was not ordained as a ritual performing priestess but rather as a lay devotee.

Chapter Four contextualised the ordination of Empress Zhang, which the *Ordination Scroll* records. It considered the event in relation to the history of imperial ordinations. Unlike earlier periods, monastic life was not a common option for Ming imperial women. However, there is some evidence to suggest that Empress Zhang's ordination may be situated within the wider practice of lay ordinations among elite women. Furthermore, precedence for empresses directly requesting prestigious lay ordinations from a Daoist patriarch can be found in the Song dynasty. The timing of the ordinations of three Song empresses indicates that the rituals were connected to their emergence as de facto rulers of the empire or their greater participation in the affairs of state. In this regard, the women were appropriating a well-established tradition that linked religious ordinations with political legitimacy. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Empress Zhang was involved in rulership during her early career at court. Instead, the chapter argued that the empress' ordination was connected to rituals performed for the birth of the imperial heir, which marked the ascendancy of the empress and her family. The rise of the Zhang family brought them in conflict with the more established family of Empress Dowager Zhou. The dynamics of the imperial family hierarchy in the early 1490s may be gauged by the differences between the *Ordination Scroll* that focused upon Empress Zhang and a separate act of patronage by her in the same year that showed deference towards the more senior Empress Dowager. Lastly, the chapter considered the circumstances of the Hongzhi emperor and the Celestial Master Zhang Xuanqing in relation to the empress' ordination. It suggested that their absence and involvement respectively may be related to the official policy to suspend *dudie* distribution, which meant that ordinations for the

clergy were prohibited. This seems to have delayed the emperor's own request for transmission, while it would have given the Celestial Master more reason to engage the empress as a supporter through an act of ordination.

The final chapter examined the *Ordination Scroll* as an imperial image, firstly in the sense of a court painting. It compared the scroll to religious paintings produced by court-employed painters, identifying visual similarities between the scroll and Ming examples. However, upon closer examination, it was found that some of these similarities may not be distinctive to them but may be part of conventionalised figural types in religious images that were disseminated by model drawings and travelling painters. Furthermore, meticulously produced religious images like the *Ordination Scroll* were usually produced by little known artisanal painters. An investigation into the court organisation of these painters shows that they were conscripted to take up residency around the capital to provide periodic labour under the command of eunuchs. As *corvée* labour, artisanal painters did not make a living from imperial projects and it is likely that they also worked professionally in the marketplace. The overlap of court painters and professional painters suggests that a straightforward classification of the *Ordination Scroll* as a court painting needs to be reconsidered.

The chapter then turned to study the *Ordination Scroll* as an imperial image in the sense of a portrait of Empress Zhang. This image of the empress differs from the few surviving examples of commemorative portraits of Ming imperial women in the Hall of Southern Fragrance collection. Instead, it can be related to imperial representations where the sitter adopts a religious guise. Not only did Ming emperors employ this type of portraiture, but by the late Ming dynasty it was possible for an empress dowager to portray herself as a bodhisattva. The promotion of Empress Dowager Li as

the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva is well recorded, while there is also evidence that paintings of empress-bodhisattvas were kept at a temple at the end of the Ming and early Qing. Within this discussion, Empress Zhang's image in the *Ordination Scroll* emerges as the earliest surviving painting of a Ming empress in religious guise. It suggests that, particularly from the late Ming onwards, there were greater possibilities for representing Ming imperial women than previously thought.

To reiterate, this dissertation argues that the *Ordination Scroll* is one version of Empress Zhang's ordination record. Zhang Xuanqing was most likely heavily involved in its creation, while authorisation from the empress would have been needed for the inclusion of her image and edict. The present scroll was probably kept by the Orthodox Unity order as a record of the event, while the version presented to the empress, if there was one, would have been physically destroyed upon her death. Moreover, the *Ordination Scroll* is not a singular work, but its images and texts are part of a wider production of religious documents used for verifying transmission that were distributed by the Orthodox Unity order.

Through a detailed study of the *Ordination Scroll*, this dissertation has attempted to highlight aspects of Ming history that lie beyond narratives based upon textual sources such as the *Veritable Records*. The limitation of these sources is evident in the absence of any information about Empress Zhang's ordination or the production of an object like the *Ordination Scroll*. Without the survival of the scroll, Empress Zhang's ordination by the Orthodox Unity order would not be known today. As a historical document, the scroll suggests the connections between Ming imperial women and religious institutions that could apparently exist with some degree of independence from the emperor. It also shows that involvement with religious groups was a way

through which imperial women could construct identities that were distinct from their formal image as empresses.

An area for further research would be the broader patronage activities of Ming imperial women in a range of media and geographic locations. It would be interesting to study more closely how patronage served as a way for imperial women to create social networks that extended their presence beyond the confines of the imperial court and enabled them to participate in the representation of imperial authority. Relevant to this is the extent to which gender played a role in imperial religious patronage and whether imperial women indeed had relatively greater freedom to act on their interests and piety away from official censure. The role of eunuchs and religious masters as intermediaries in the activities of imperial women in addition to their own participation as patrons is another important point for further consideration. Much villainised in history, the contributions of these social groups to the cultural production of the Ming court, touched upon in this dissertation, are only beginning to be recognised.

The re-evaluation of empresses may be further developed within the new understanding of the Ming court put forward by David Robinson. In his recent research, Robinson has revealed the significance of the Mongol legacy for the Ming imperial family.¹ One of the consequences of this has been a rethinking of Empress Zhang's son, the Zhengde emperor, who was heavily criticised by Confucian officials, but whose rulership can be better understood as an adoption of a more martial and cosmopolitan identity based upon the Mongol example. Robinson further suggests

¹ David M. Robinson, "The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols," in *Culture, Courtiers and Competition: The Ming Court (1368 – 1644)*, ed. David M. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 365-421.

that the subsequent Jiajing emperor who was raised far from the capital led to a change in the identity of the imperial family that involved a rejection of the Mongol legacy. How did the status of imperial women evolve within these tensions? In particular, what may have been the experience of the long-lived Empress Zhang who lived through this significant change in Ming court culture? There is already some indication of a different perspective on the antagonism between Empress Zhang and the Jiajing emperor given her joint patronage of Baoming Temple with the emperor's biological mother against his wishes. It is an example of the challenge, albeit limited, that Ming imperial women could pose to the authority of the ruler. The *Ordination Scroll* itself also offers a rare glimpse of an alternative self-representation by an empress in the mid-Ming dynasty. Further studies into the patronage activities and religious practices of imperial women could provide a way to consider possible negotiations of gender norms at the court.

By focusing upon the *Ordination Scroll*, this dissertation has attempted to participate in the scholarly effort that Robinson described as “repopulating of the Ming court”.² With continued research in this area, Ming empresses may finally join the broader discussion on imperial women in the early modern world and participate in potentially fruitful cross-cultural comparisons with their much better understood counterparts in European and Islamic societies.

² David M. Robinson, “The Ming Court”, in *Culture, Courtiers and Competition: The Ming Court (1368 – 1644)*, ed. David Robinson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 44.

Appendix A Titles of Celestial Beings

No.	Title	SDMA Images
1.	...siming shangqing 司命上卿 (Director of Destinies, High Official)	
2.	Sijiao Zhang zhenren 嗣教張真人 (Inheritor of the Sect, Perfected Being Zhang)	
3.	<i>Sichen bawei</i> 侍宸八位 (Eight Celestial Maids) [Image of empress without title]	
4.	<i>Dugong lu zhong guanjiang eryuan</i> 都功籙中官將二員 (Two Middle Official Generals of the All Merit Register) [Images missing]	
5.	Jiutian qingcheng Kehan zhangren 九天青城可韓丈人 (Kehan the Elder of Qingcheng of the Nine Heavens)	

6.	Jiutian caifangshi 九天採訪使 (Investigation Envoy of the Nine Heavens)	
7.	Shangyuan tianguan dadi 上元天官大帝 (Official of Heaven of Upper Prime, Great Emperor)	
8.	Zhongyuan diguan dadi 中元地官大帝 (Official of Earth of Middle Prime, Great Emperor)	
9.	Xiayuan shuiguan dadi 下元水官大帝 (Official of Water of Lower Prime, Great Emperor)	
10.	Zhu tianshi 祖天師 (Ancestral Celestial Master)	

11.	Ge xianweng 葛仙翁 (Old Transcendent Ge)	
12.	Xu zhenjun 許真君 (Perfected Lord Xu)	
13.	Fuqiu zhenjun 浮丘真君 (Perfected Lord Fuqiu)	
14.	Shanggu jingshi 上古經師 (Scripture Master of Ancient Times)	
15.	Shanggu jishi 上古籍師 (Registration Master of Ancient Times)	
16.	Shanggu dushi 上古度師 (Ordination Master of Ancient Times)	

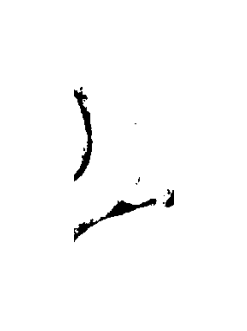
17.	Zhengyi sishi 正一嗣師 (Inheriting Master of Orthodox Unity)	
18.	Zhengyi xishi 正一系師 (Continuing Master of Orthodox Unity)	
19.	Zhengyi nüshi 正一女師 (Female Master of Orthodox Unity)	
20.	Zuoshi Wang zhenjun 左侍王真君 (Left servant, Perfected Being Wang)	
21.	Youshi Zhao zhenjun 右侍趙真君 (Right servant, Perfected Being Zhao)	
22.	Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君 (Divine Lord of Zitong)	

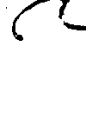
23.	Qingluo zhenren 青羅真人 (Perfected Being Qingluo)	
24.	(Yu)luo zhenren (鬱)羅真人 (Perfected Being Yuluo) [Image missing]	
25.	Dongfang lingbing Du jiangjun 東方領兵杜將軍 (General Du who Leads the Troops of the East)	
26.	Nanfang lingbing Wang jiangjun 南方領兵王將軍 (General Wang who Leads the Troops of the South)	
27.	Sifang lingbing Fu jiangjun 西方領兵傅將軍 (General Fu who Leads the Troops of the West)	

28.	Beifang lingbing Kou jiangjun 北方領兵寇將軍 (General Kou who Leads the Troops of the North)	
29.	Zhengyi nezha wang Wu jiangjun 正一哪吒王吳將軍 (General Wu, <i>Nezha</i> King of Orthodox Unity)	
30.	Manlei dawang Tang jiangjun 蠻雷大王唐將軍 (General Tang, Great King of Savage Thunder)	
31.	Chijia dawang Tan jiangjun 持枷大王譚將軍 (General Tan, Flail-holding Great King)	

32.	Xuanhe changsheng wang Wang jiangjun 烜赫長生王王將軍 (General Wang, King of Fame and Longevity)	
33.	Fangui wang He jiangjun 翻鬼王何將軍 (General He, Demon-searching King)	
34.	Xingei wang Lei jiangjun 興雷王雷將軍 (General Lei, Thunder-initiating King)	
35.	Tongtian piandi wang Gong jiangjun 通天遍地王龔將軍 (General Gong, King who Accesses Heaven and Earth)	

36.	Jianghe huaiji wang Zhang jiangjun 江河淮濟王張將軍 (General Zhang, King of Rivers)	
37.	<i>Mingwei lu zhongguan jiang si yuan</i> 明威籙中官將四員 (Four Middle Official Generals of the <i>Mingwei</i> Register) Shangyuan Tang jiangjun 上元唐將軍 (General Tang of the Upper Prime)	
38.	Zhongyuan Ge jiangjun 中元葛將軍 (General Ge of the Middle Prime)	
39.	Xiayuan Zhou jiangjun 下元周將軍 (General Zhou of the Lower Prime)	
40.	Futian guangyun Zhao tianjun 扶天廣運趙天君 (Marshal Zhao who Supports Heaven and Expands Destiny)	

41.	<i>Zhenwu lu zhong guanjiang shi'er yuan</i> 真武籙中官將十二員 (Twelve Middle Official Generals of the register of the Perfected Warrior) Dingmao Si yunü 丁卯司玉女 (Jade Maiden Si of Dingmao)	
42.	Dingchou Zhao yunü 丁丑趙玉女 (Jade Maiden Zhao of Dingchou)	
43.	Dinghai Zhang yunü 丁亥張玉女 (Jade Maiden Zhang of Dinghai)	
44.	Dingyou Shi yunü 丁酉石玉女 (Jade Maiden Shi of Dingyou)	
45.	Dingmo Zang yunü 丁未臧玉女 (Jade Maiden Zang of Dingmo)	

46.	Dingsi Cui yunü 丁巳崔玉女 (Jade Maiden Cui of Dingsi)	 
47.	Jiazi Wang jiangjun 甲子王將軍 (General Wang of Jiazi)	  
48.	Jiaxu Zhan jiangjun 甲戌展將軍 (General Zhan of Jiaxu)	 
49.	Jiashen Hu jiangjun 甲申扈將軍 (General Hu of Jiashen)	  
50.	Jiawu Wei jiangjun 甲午衛將軍 (General Wei of Jiawu)	  

51.	Jiachen Meng jiangjun 甲晨孟將軍 (General Meng of Jiachen)	
52.	Jiayin Ming jiangjun 甲寅明將軍 (General Ming of Jiayin)	
53.	<i>Sanguan lu zhongguan jiang san yuan</i> 三官籙中官將三員 (Three Middle Official Generals of the Register of the Three Officials) Dingjue zengpin Fu tianding 定爵增品傅天丁 (Celestial Stalwart Fu who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles)	
54.	Dingming zenglu Hu tianding 定命增祿胡天丁 (Celestial Stalwart Hu who Sets Destinies and Increases Emoluments)	
55.	Chufu yanqing Li tianding 儲福衍慶李天丁 (Celestial Stalwart Li who Spreads Celebrations and Stores Good Fortune)	

Appendix B Translation of the Main Inscription

(line 1)

Ministry of Supreme Mystery Metropolis

(lines 2-10)

One has heard that authentic scriptures, treasured registers, jade scrolls and caskets were once secret in Heaven and not transmitted to the earthly realm. [This was] until the initiating motion of the Saintly Master, starting with the opening charts of Draconic Magnificence, henceforth [they were] promulgated. Real Numinous Beings are relied upon for peace and stability in the nation's fortunes, for ensuring the perpetuity of Heaven, the development of culture and the obtainment of boundless blessings.

(lines 10-17)

Now this Numinous Treasure Leader of the Teaching of the Scriptures and Registers of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity, Perfected Being of the Mysterious One, Transcendent Official Who Assists Transformations of Jade Purity, Great Ritual Master of All the Heavens, Transcendent Official In Charge of Ritual Systems of the Mystery Cavern of Pure Tenuity, Who Appropriately Administers Various Offices, Inheritor of the Teaching, the Forty-seventh Celestial Master, subject Zhang Xuanqing, respectfully receives the edict of the Great Ming Empress of the Central Palace, humbly accepting it as his own great command.

(lines 17-26)

“Born in the [blank] year [blank] month [blank] day [blank] hour, the above belongs under the authority of the Lord of the Emolument-preserving Star of the Northern Dipper. My humble self respectfully bears the kindness of the Mysterious and is mother to all under Heaven. This is entirely dependent upon the care and protection of Heaven and comes from the esteem of the Saintly Lord. But now granted a path in continuous peace, [one should] all the more with sincerity undertake cultivation. Henceforth, if one wishes to bring peace to the fortunes of the imperial ancestral shrine for ten thousand years, and increase the prosperity of the great foundation of Heaven and Earth for a thousand years, one must rely upon brocaded replies from the Numinous Script of Exalted Mystery.

(lines 26-32)

Formerly on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month in the sixth year of the Hongzhi reign, the Upper Prime Festival, a time when the Official of Heaven grants blessings, at the blissful land, Dragon Tiger Mountain, Ancestral Altar of Ten Thousand Methods, follower of the Perfected Lord, the Ancestral Celestial Master, please transmit:

(lines 33-47)

Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity

Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity

Scripture and Register on the Cultivation of Perfection and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity

Scripture and Register of Great Yellow of the Ten Palaces of the Most High

Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High

Secret Register of the Seven Primes of the Northern Dipper of the Most High

Secret Register of the Three Officials Who Assist Transformations of the Most High

Secret Register of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of the Most High

Secret Register that Protects Life from the Lake of Blood to Ascend to the Mystery of the Most High

Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection, of the Jade Talismans of the Three Heavens of the Most High, contract tallies and certificates, one of each.

Receiving them in initiation for worship at the palace, borrowing the merits of these scriptures and registers to quietly assist the consolidation of the empire and aid my humble self to peacefully enjoy longevity, by the empress herself.”

(lines 47-63)

Her subject respectfully accepts with care apart from recording the empress’ edict, memorialising the elevated and deep, notifying the Master’s Ministry in writing, sending documents to all the perfected directors ordering them to respond accordingly, [her subject] especially presents a memorial requesting ranks of registers and titles of honour to serve as [the empress’] place of office. Wishing that [her] good deeds are recorded in the blue writings, [her] name marked in the purple album, happiness and longevity at [her] palace of destiny, health and serenity accordingly in [her] body, perpetual tranquility and purity during the four seasons and eight solar terms, forever extending the boundlessness of longevity, sharing in great blessings equaling Heaven, frequently shaded by the Dao and forever benefiting from its extraordinary protection.

(lines 63-99)

Now [I will] write out the requested items of the treasured registers and the memorialised ranks of registers and wise titles sought in the memorial.

[Division marker] Please transmit:

Ritual Declarations for Requesting the Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity, one volume;

Contract Tally of the Great Cavern; Certificate of the Liturgical Register; Slips of Perfected Script of the Three Caverns; Purple and White Interlocking Belt of the Great Cavern; Homage Tablet for an Audience With the Perfected of the Eighteen; Numinous Talisman of Returning by Chariot and Completing the Way;

Ritual Declarations for Requesting the Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity, one volume;

Contract Tally; Certificate of the Liturgical Register;

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Scripture and Register on the Cultivation of Perfection and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity, one volume;

Yellow and White Contract Tally; Certificate of the Liturgical Register; Assignment Tablet for the Cultivation of Perfection;

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Scripture and Register of Great Yellow of the Ten Palaces of the Most High, one volume;

Yin and Yang Contract Certificates; Certificate of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections; Talisman of the High Sovereign Who Reduces Death and Increases Life; Talisman Tablet of Long Life and Salvation of the Suffering; Contract Tally; Talisman of the Tablet-Holding Dragon-Child; All-Assembling Certificate; Certificate of the Liturgical Register

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High, one volume;

Contract Tally; Assignment Tablet for Controlling Pneuma; Certificate of the Ten Kings; Certificate of the Liturgical Register

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Secret Register of the Seven Primes of the Northern Dipper of the Most High, one volume;

Contract Tally; Certificate of the Liturgical Register; Silver Contract Ring

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Secret Register of the Three Officials Who Assist Transformations of the Most High, one volume;
Contract Tally; Certificate of the Liturgical Register; Silver Contract Ring

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Secret Register of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of the Most High, one volume;
Yellow and White Contract Tally; Certificate of the Ten Kings; Authentic Talisman of the Original Commencement Who Saves the Suffering; Numinous Talisman of the Golden Register that Extends Life; Certificate of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections; Certificate of the Liturgical Register

Ritual Declaration for Requesting the Secret Register that Protects Life from the Blood Lake to Ascend to the Mystery of the Most High, one volume;
Yellow and White Contract Tally; Talismanic Order of the Sovereign of Emptiness and the Dragon-Child; Certificate of the Twenty-four Prisons; Certificate of the Ten Palaces; Assignment Certificate of the Liturgical Register; Certificate that Accompany the Register;

Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection, of the Jade Talismans of the Three Heavens;
Precious Tally of the Contract for the Cultivation of Perfection

(lines 100-131)

[Division marker] Please transmit ranks of registers and wise titles:

Jade-assisting Highest Transcendent from the Golden Turrets of the Three Heavens of the Scripture and Register of the Great Cavern of Highest Clarity, Saintly Empress Who is Wise, Moral and Benevolent Who Expands Fortune and Venerates Heaven, Mysterious Lady Who Embodies the Dao and is Vastly Kind and Compassionate, Who is Mysteriously Transforming and Faithful to the One of the Wondrous Dao of Purple Tenuity, In Charge of the Highest Perfected Treasured Albums of Exquisite Transcendents at the Jade Turrets of Various Heavens of the Jade Clarity Palace of Great Tenuity at Her Discretion;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Scripture and Register of the Five Thunders of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity, Mysterious Lady Who is Compassionate and Responds to the Good of Jade Clarity of the Great Tenuity, In Charge of the Affairs of the Treasured Albums and Exquisite Folios of the Highest Marks that Protect the Perfected at the Jade Turrets of Middle Heaven;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Scripture and Register on the Cultivation of Perfection and Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity, Mysterious Lady Who Embodies the Dao of Serenity of the Bright Morning of Great Tenuity, Who is In Charge of the Subjugation of Demons at the Jade Mansion of Divine Empyrean at Her Discretion;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Scripture and Register of Great Yellow of Numinous Treasure of the Cavern Mystery of the Most High, Saintly Empress Who Expands the Dao and Embodies Heaven of the Golden Turrets of the Three Heavens, Mysterious Lady Who Assists Transformations and Attains the Dao of Original Virtue, who is Chaste, Quiet and Serene, Who Controls the Palace of Great Tranquility, In Charge of the Affairs of Jade Albums and Exquisite Folios;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Scripture and Register of All Merit of the Three and Five of the Most High, Mysterious Lady Who is Gentle, Who Connects Kindness and Spreads Assistance, and is In Charge of the Affairs of the Highest Perfected Exquisite Albums of the Female Transcendents at the Jade Turrets of the Northern Dipper;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Secret Register of the Seven Primes of the Northern Dipper of the Most High, Mysterious Lady Who Assists Transformations, Who Connects the Mystery of the Nine Perfections of the Purple Pole, Who is In Charge of the Affairs of the Records of Transcendents that Notes Emoluments and Natal Destinies at Such Palaces as the Mysterious Dipper;

Female Perfected Highest Transcendent of the Cavernous Numen and Clear Emptiness of Purple Tenuity, of the Secret Register of the Three Officials of the Three Primes Who Assist Transformations of the Most High, Who is In Charge of the Affairs of Records of Transcendents of Nüqing of Great Mystery at the Palatial Office of the Three Primes;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Secret Register of the Wondrous Precepts of the Nine Perfections of the Numinous Treasure of the Cavern Mystery of the Most High, Mysterious Lady of Purple Clarity Who Attains the Dao of the Ultimateless of the Cavern of Perfection, Who is In Charge of the Affairs of the Jade Albums of the Cultivation of Perfection of the Exquisite Turrets of Various Heavens;

Female Perfected Transcendent of the Scripture and Register that Protects Life from the Blood Lake and makes Exceptional Absolution to Ascend to the Mystery of the

Most High, Mysterious Lady Who is Universally Quiet of Cavernous Brightness of Highest Clarity, Who is In Charge of the Records of Transcendents and Exquisite Folios at the Inner Courtyard of the Jade Turrets of Various Heavens.

(lines 132-144)

[Division marker] Dispatch and assign:

Mysterious Woman who Protects Correctness and Slays Evil of the Nine Heavens;

General Tang who Transforms through the Dao of Upper Prime;

General Ge who Protects Correctness of Middle Prime;

General Zhou who Sets Resolve of Lower Prime;

Marshal Zhao of the Wish-granting Wand and Golden Wheel who Expands Destiny and Supports Heaven;

Celestial Stalwart Fu of Great Brightness who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;

Celestial Stalwart Hu of High Character who Sets Destinies and Adds Emoluments of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;

Celestial Stalwart Li of Great Fairness who Spreads Celebrations and Stores Blessings of the Supreme Divine Empyrean;

Six *Ding* Spirit Maidens;

Six *Jia* Generals accompanying

the registers and the Tablet of Transcendence of the Totality of Perfection to protect and assist all bestowed from the Origin.

(lines 146-148)

Jade Talismans of the Three Heavens bestowed together:

Jade Decree of Vast Rain from the Celestial Palace of Pure Subtlety of the Most High;

Jade Decree of Clear Rain from the Celestial Palace of the Leftovers of Yu's Food of the Most High;

Jade Decree of Warm Rain from the Celestial Palace of the Great Red of the Most High;

(lines 149-153)

Certificates and covenants, scriptures and registers are respectfully as above. [Your subject] humbly hopes that [it is] wisely perused as proof.

To the right, [your subject] respectfully asks Empress of the Great Ming, Highest Transcendent Who is Jade-Assisting of the Golden Turrets of the Three Heavens, Mysterious Lady Who Embodies the Dao and is Vastly Kind and Compassionate to accept

(lines 154-165)

To the right:

Respectfully as the numinous chart reveals its secrets from the box of six dragons carrying seven treasures, and imperial edicts bestow favours in the brocade of twin phoenixes illuminating five flowers, it has always been that the Dao is manifested in text and scriptures are proclaimed through speech. Registers recover the mystery of the Three Caverns, the Dao connects the wonders of the One Vehicle: If one obeys them, then the elixir platform will records [one's] merits. If one carries them [on their body], then [one will be] promoted by the Jade Mansion.

(lines 165-174)

Now the Empress of the Central Palace was born at a time of great prosperity, receiving [the honour of] serving a Master of Saintly Enlightenment, residing peacefully at the Forbidden Palace, located happily in the golden boudoir, diligent in doing good to harbour devotion, carefully working hard on [her] duties. The above pledges to study the scriptures and registers and facilitate promulgation.

(lines 174-179)

[Her subject] hopes that the preservation of the Master's treasure will grant everlasting long life, the gathering of a thousand auspiciousness, the arrival of the five blessings, the daily renewal of favour and care, and the spread of imperial grace. Carefully written.

(line 180)

Written on the [blank] day of the seventh lunar month of the year *guichou*, the sixth year of the Hongzhi reign

Appendix C Transcription of the Main Inscription

1. 泰玄都省
2. 蓋聞
3. 真經寶籙
4. 玉軸琅函昔秘
5. 上天不傳下世逮
6. 聖師之啟運由
7. 龍漢之開圖自此宣行
8. 真靈是賴安鎮
9. 國祚保
10. 天長存際遇斯文獲福無量今該
11. 上清三洞經籙靈寶領教玄一真人玉清
12. 輔化仙卿都天大法主清微洞玄掌法
13. 仙宰知諸司院府便宜事嗣教四十七
14. 代天師臣張玄慶欽奉
15. 大明中宮皇后
16. 懿旨伏為自身
17. 景命 年 月 日 時建生
18. 上屬
19. 北斗祿存星君主照切念眇躬仰荷
20. 玄恩母儀天下皆賴
21. 上天之眷佑良由
22. 聖主之尊崇顧茲獲履承平尤謹修持
23. 向去欲安
24. 宗社萬年之寶祚益隆
25. 乾坤千歲之洪基須仗
26. 高玄靈文錦覆昨於
27. 弘治六年正月十五日
28. 上元令節
29. 天官賜福之辰于
30. 福地龍虎山
31. 萬法宗壇
32. 祖天師真君門下請授
33. 上清大洞經籙
34. 上清三洞五雷經籙
35. 正一盟威修真經籙
36. 太上十宮大黃經籙

37. 太上三五都功經籙
38. 太上北斗七元秘籙
39. 太上三官輔化秘籙
40. 太上九真妙戒秘籙
41. 太上昇玄血湖保生秘籙
42. 太上三天玉符總真仙簡合同環券文
43. 牒各一階皈身佩受崇奉
44. 殿庭假茲
45. 經籙之善功陰翊
46. 皇圖之鞏固
47. 孚佑眇躬安享遐齡欽此臣欽承
48. 惟謹除錄
49. 懿旨奏聞
50. 高厚啟箋
51. 師省遍牒
52. 真司咸令
53. 照應外特為奏請籙階
54. 睿號為任所冀
55. 青篇紀善
56. 紫冊標名
57. 增延福壽於命宮
58. 允協康寧於身位四時八節常靜常
59. 清永延
60. 萬壽之無窮同享
61. 齊天之洪福常蒙
62. 道蔭永洽
63. 殊麻今將請授
64. 寶籙品目奏請籙階
65. 睿號開具
66. 一請授
67. 上清大洞經籙請法詞一部
68. 大洞合同環券 法籙照帖
69. 三洞真文板策 大洞紫白交帶
70. 十八朝真謁簡 回車畢道靈符
71. 上清三洞五雷經籙請法詞一部
72. 合同環券 法籙照帖
73. 正一盟威經籙請法詞一部
74. 黃白合同環券 法籙照帖
75. 修真職簡

76. 太上十宮大黃經籙請法詞一部
77. 陰陽合同文牒 九真妙戒牒文
78. 上帝削死上生符 長生救苦符簡
79. 合同環券 齋簡龍童符
80. 都攢文牒 法籙照帖
81. 太上三五都功經籙請法詞一部
82. 合同環券 治炁職簡
83. 十王文牒 法籙照帖
84. 太上北斗七元秘籙法詞一部
85. 合同文券 法籙照帖
86. 白金契環
87. 太上三官輔化秘籙請法詞一部
88. 合同文券 照籙牒文
89. 白金契環
90. 太上九真妙戒秘籙請法詞一部
91. 黃白合同環券 十王文牒
92. 元始救苦真符 金籙長生靈符
93. 九真妙戒文牒 法籙照帖
94. 太上昇玄血湖保生秘籙請法詞一部
95. 黃白合同環券 虛皇龍童符命
96. 二十四獄文牒 十宮文牒
97. 法籙職帖 隨籙文牒
98. 三天玉符總真仙簡
99. 修真合同寶券
100. 一請授籙階
101. 睿號
102. 上清大洞經籙三天金闕玉輔上仙承天
103. 廣運崇仁懿德睿智聖后紫微妙道貞
104. 一玄化宏慈溥惠體道玄君掌太微玉
105. 清宮諸天玉闕瓊仙上真寶冊便宜行
106. 事
107. 上清三洞五雷經籙女真仙子太微玉清
108. 慈惠善應玄君掌中天玉闕保真上相
109. 瓊篇寶冊事
110. 正一盟威修真經籙女真仙子太微明晨
111. 沖虛體道玄君掌神霄玉府伏魔便宜
112. 行事
113. 太上洞玄靈寶大黃經籙女真仙子三天
114. 金闕體天宏道聖后沖和貞靖元德至

115. 道贊化玄君統御太寧宮掌玉冊瓊篇
116. 事
117. 太上三五都功經籙女真仙子廣翊通惠
118. 柔靖玄君掌北斗玉闕女仙上真瓊冊
119. 事
120. 太上北斗七元延生秘籙女真仙子紫極
121. 九真通玄輔化玄君掌玄斗等宮本命
122. 注祿仙籍事
123. 太上三元三官輔化秘籙紫微清虛洞靈
124. 女真上仙掌三元宮府太玄女青仙籍
125. 事
126. 太上洞玄靈寶九真妙戒秘籙女真仙子
127. 洞真無極至道紫清玄君掌諸天瓊闕
128. 修真玉冊事
129. 太上昇玄曲赦血湖保生經籙女真仙子
130. 上清洞明普靜玄君掌諸天玉闕內院
131. 瓊編仙籍事
132. 一差撥
133. 九天斬邪護正玄女
134. 上元道化唐將軍
135. 中元護正葛將軍
136. 下元定志周將軍
137. 扶天廣運金輪如意趙元帥
138. 高上神霄定爵增品大明傅天丁
139. 高上神霄增祿定命上格胡天丁
140. 高上神霄儲福衍慶大公李天丁
141. 六丁神女
142. 六甲將軍隨
143. 籙總真仙簡護持所有
144. 元降
145. 三天玉符合行頒降

146. 太上清微天宮雨泓玉敕
147. 太上禹餘天宮雨澄玉敕
148. 太上大赤天宮雨溫玉敕

149. 證盟經籙謹具如前伏希
150. 睿覽為照者
151. 右謹請

152. 大明皇后三天金闕玉輔上仙
153. 宏慈溥惠體道玄君 受
154. 右
155. 伏以
156. 靈圖啟秘六龍捧
157. 七寶之函
158. 紫誥頒恩
159. 雙鳳耀五花之錦蓋以
160. 道因文顯
161. 經假言宣籙恢
162. 三洞之玄
163. 道貫一乘之妙奉之則
164. 丹臺紀善佩之則
165. 玉府登庸今
166. 中宮皇后
167. 生逢
168. 隆盛之時獲侍
169. 聖明之主安居
170. 紫禁樂處
171. 金閨孜孜好善以存誠翼翼
172. 服勤而事
173. 上誓叅
174. 經籙宜與宣傳冀
175. 師寶之維持
176. 錫壽年之永固千祥駢集
177. 五福咸臻
178. 寵眷日新
179. 恩光春布謹簡
180. 弘治六年歲次癸丑七月 日簡

Abbreviations

- DZ *Daozang* 道藏 (Daoist Canon).
- TAC Little, ed. *Taoism and the Arts of China*.
- MS Zhang et al, *Ming shi* 明史 (History of the Ming).
- EOT Pregadio, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*.
- CHC Mote and Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty, 1368 – 1644*.
- DMB Goodrich, ed. *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368 – 1644*.

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82. Zhang Chong 張翀, *Daoist Master Zhang (Zhang tianshi 張天師)*, 1639. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, 117.3 x 58 cm. Shanghai Museum.
83. Zhang Daoling 張道陵, from *San cai tu hui 三才圖會* (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 11.3a.
84. Anonymous, *Four Celestial Masters (Si da tianshi 四大天師)*, Qing dynasty. Hanging scroll. From Zhang, ed., *Daojiao shenxian huaji*, 99.
85. Scripture Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu jingshi 上古經師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
86. Registration Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu jishi 上古籍師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
87. Ordination Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu dushi 上古度師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
88. Inheriting Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi sishi 正一嗣師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
89. Continuing Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi xishi 正一系師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
90. Female Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi nüshi 正一女師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
91. Left servant, Perfected Being Wang (Zuoshi Wang zhenjun 左侍王真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
92. Right servant, Perfected Being Zhao (Youshi Zhao zhenjun 右侍趙真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
93. Female Master of Orthodox Unity, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
94. Empress Zhang, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

95. Female Daoist, detail from a set of paintings originally kept at Baoning Temple, 15th century. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk. Shanxi Museum. From Shanxi Museum, *Baoningsi Mingdai shuilu hua*, 156.
96. Qingwei jiaozhu Wei tianjun 清微教主魏天君 (left), from *Yushu baojing* 玉樞寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot), dated 1333. Accordion-folded, woodblock-printed book illustration. 33.2 x 12.5 cm each page. British Library.
97. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
98. Qingluo zhenren 青羅真人 (Perfected Being Qingluo), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
99. Ding Yunpeng 丁雲鵬, *Wenchang and the God of Literature*, 1596. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 119.2 x 46.5 cm. British Museum.
100. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.6a.
101. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), from *Sanjiao soushen da quan* 三教搜神大全, published in 1909 from a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 37.
102. General Du who Leads the Troops of the East (Dongfang lingbing Du jiangjun 東方領兵杜將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
103. General Wang who Leads the Troops of the South (Nanfang lingbing Wang jiangjun 南方領兵王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
104. General Fu who Leads the Troops of the West (Xifang lingbing Fu jiangjun 西方領兵傅將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
105. General Kou who Leads the Troops of the North (Beifang lingbing Kou jiangjun 北方領兵寇將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
106. General Wu, *Nezha King of Orthodox Unity* (Zhengyi nezha wang Wu jiangjun 正一哪吒王吳將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
107. General Tang, Great King of Savage Thunder (Manlei dawang Tang jiangjun 蠻雷大王唐將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
108. General Tan, Flail-holding Great King (Chijia dawang Tan jiangjun 持枷大王譚將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

109. General Wang, King of Fame and Longevity (Xuanhe changsheng wang Wang jiangjun 烜赫長生王王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
110. General He, Demon-searching King (Fangui wang He jiangjun 翻鬼王何將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
111. General Lei, Thunder-initiating King (Xingei wang Lei jiangjun 興雷王雷將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
112. General Gong, Heaven and Earth-accessing King (Tongtian piandi wang Gong jiangjun 通天遍地王龔將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
113. General Zhang, King of Rivers (Jianghe huaiji wang Zhang jiangjun 江河淮濟王張將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
114. *Ordination Scroll*, section showing the register in the inscription.
115. Song Jiang at the temple of the Mysterious Woman, from *Zongyi Shuihu zhuan chatu* 忠義水滸傳插圖 (Illustrations on the Loyal and Righteous Water Margin), Wanli period. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Zheng, ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, vol. 2, p. 817.
116. General Tang of the Upper Prime (Shangyuan Tan jiangjun 上元唐將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
117. General Ge of the Middle Prime (Zhongyuan Ge jiangjun 中元葛將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
118. General Zhou of Lower Prime (Xiayuan Zhou jiangjun 下元周將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
119. Celestial Lord Zhao who Expands Destiny and Supports Heaven (Futian guangyun Zhao tianjun 扶天廣運趙天君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
120. Tang Hong 唐宏, Ge Yong 葛雍 and Zhou Wu 周武, detail of *Taishang sanwu Zhengyi mengwei lu* 太上三五正一盟威籙 (Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustrations. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 1208, 1.12b-15a.
121. Three Perfected Lords, Sojourners of the Wu Kingdom (Wuke san zhenjun 吳客三真君), detail of *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 103.
122. Marshal Zhao, from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 141.

123. Jade Maiden Si of *Dingmao* (*Dingmao Si yunü* 丁卯司玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
124. Jade Maiden Zhao of *Dingchou* (*Dingchou Zhao yunü* 丁丑趙玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
125. Jade Maiden Zhang of *Dinghai* (*Dinghai Zhang yunü* 丁亥張玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
126. Jade Maiden Shi of *Dingyou* (*Dingyou Shi yunü* 丁酉石玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
127. Jade Maiden Zang of *Dingmo* (*Dingmo Zang yunü* 丁未臧玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
128. Jade Maiden Cui of *Dingsi* (*Dingsi Cui yunü* 丁巳崔玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
129. General Wang of *Jiazi* (*Jiazi Wang jiangjun* 甲子王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
130. General Zhan of *Jiaxu* (*Jiaxu Zhan jiangjun* 甲戌展將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
131. General Hu of *Jiashen* (*Jiashen Hu jiangjun* 甲申扈將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
132. General Wei of *Jiawu* (*Jiawu Wei jiangjun* 甲午衛將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
133. General Meng of *Jiachen* (*Jiachen Meng jiangjun* 甲辰孟將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
134. General Ming of *Jiayin* (*Jiayin Ming jiangjun* 甲寅明將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
135. Two of the Six *Ding*, from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.10ab.
136. Two of the Six *Jia*, from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.11ab.
137. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the snake headdress of a Jade Maiden.

138. *Pottery Figurines of the Twelve Zodiac Animals*, Tang dynasty. Burial objects, 36.5-42.5 cm tall. Unearthed at Hansen Village, Xi'an, Shaanxi in 1955. National Museum of Chinese History.
139. One of the twenty-eight constellation deities, detail on the north wall of the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong. From Jin, ed., *Yongle gong bihua quanji*, no. 84.
140. Two of the twenty-eight constellation deities, detail on the north wall of the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong. From Jin, ed., *Yongle gong bihua quanji*, no. 59.
141. Jade Maiden, from *Shangqing qionggong lingfei liujia lu* 上清瓊宮靈飛六甲左右上符 (Left, Right and Upper Talismans of the Six Jia of Numinous Flight of the Jade Palace of Highest Clarity), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 84, 9a.
142. Jade Maidens, detail of *Shangqing dantian sanqi yuhuang liuchen feigang siming da lu* 上清丹天三氣玉皇六辰飛綱司命大籙 (Great Register of Flying Steps of the Six Stars that Govern Fate of the Jade Sovereign of the Three Pneumata of the Cinnabar Heaven of Highest Clarity), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 675, 7b.
143. *Mulan* 木蘭, from Jin Shi 金史, *Wushuang pu* 無雙譜 (Catalogue Without Compare), published between 1690 and 1699. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Zheng, ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, vol. 4, p. 427.
144. Celestial Stalwart Fu who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles (*Dingjue zengpin Fu tianding* 定爵增品傳天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
145. Celestial Stalwart Hu who Sets Destinies and Increases Emoluments (*Dingming zenglu Hu tianding* 定命增祿胡天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
146. Celestial Stalwart Li who Spreads Celebrations and Stores Blessings (*Chufu yanqing Li tianding* 儲福衍慶李天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
147. Opening section of *Investiture of a Local God* showing a supreme deity flanked by guardians, attendants and other celestial beings.
148. Zhang Daoling, from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 319.
149. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing cloud seal script.
150. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing auspicious phrase.
151. Zhang Xuanqing, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
152. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing “*Taixuan dusheng*”.

153. Ordination certificate from Putian, Fujian, dated 1981. From Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, fig. 9.
154. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing Empress Zhang's edict.
155. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing three talismans.
156. Government ordination certificate, dated 1507. Excavated from the tomb of Zhang Yongxin 張永馨 in Maqiao xiang 馬橋鄉, Wuhui cun 吳會村, Shanghai. Woodblock-printed, with writing on paper, 117 by 120 cm. Minxing District Museum.
157. Tonsure certificate from Huijusi 慧居寺 (Temple of Wise Residence), dated 1925. Woodblock-printed, with writing on paper. From Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 336.
158. *Shangqing sandong taiwei huangshu dongxuan tongling baolu* 上清三洞太微黃書洞玄通靈寶籙 (Precious Register that Connects to the Numinous of Cavern Mystery of Yellow Script of Great Tenuity of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity), transmitted to King of Chengqin (Chengqin wang 誠親王), 1754. Tenri Central Library. From Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, fig. 93.
159. Ordination certificate from Taiwan, dated 1966. From Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, fig. 92.
160. Model document with contract tallies from *Shangqing lingbao jidu dacheng jinshu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書 (Golden Writings on the Great Achievement of Deliverance by the Numinous Treasure of Highest Purity), Xuande period (1426 – 1435). From *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.22ab.
161. Talisman and images from *Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu* 正一大黃預修延壽經籙 (Scripture and Register that Prolongs Longevity for Preparatory Cultivation of Great Yellow of Orthodox Unity), transmitted to Xu Jinlin 許進林, dated 1947. From Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 2, 233.
162. Permit for the underworld (*luyin* 路印) from the tomb of Li Yinggu 李英姑, first wife of Zhu Yiyin 朱翊鉞, King Xuan of Yi 宣益王 in Jiangxi province, 1556. From Jiangxi sheng wenwu gongzuodui, “Jiangxi Nancheng Ming Yi Xuanwang Zhu Yiyin fufu hezang mu”, 21.
163. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress of Emperor Zhenzong of the Song Dynasty*, c. 1028 – 1033. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 177 x 120.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
164. Anonymous, *Empress of Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 56.2 x 45.7. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

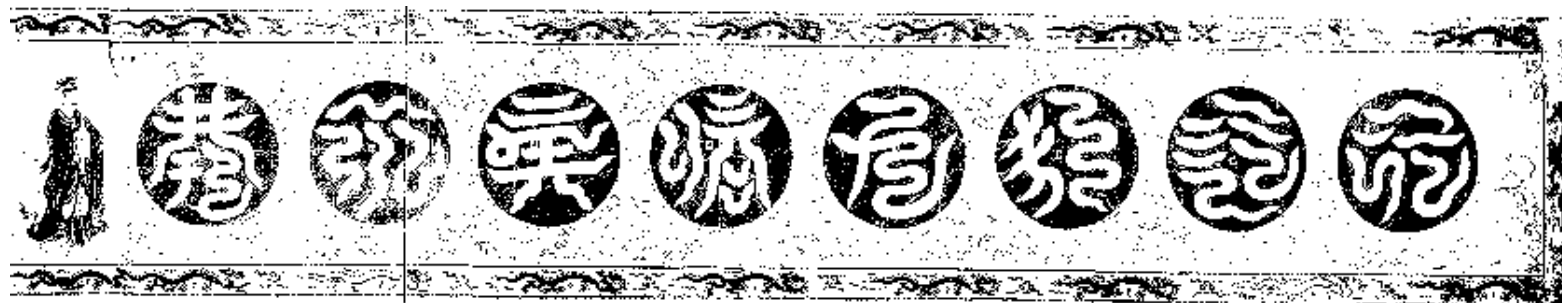
165. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Zhang (Xiaokangjing) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.2 x 52 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
166. Anonymous, *Portrait of Xiaozong (Hongzhi emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.6 x 52.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
167. Anonymous, *Portrait of Wuzong (Zhengde emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 211.3 x 149.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
168. Anonymous, *Portrait of Shizong (Jiajing emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.6 x 51.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
169. Gate of Puzhao Temple, Haidian district, Beijing. Image from Panoramio.
170. Entrance to Dajue Temple, founded in 1428. Haidian district, Beijing.
171. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Zhou (Xiaosu) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63 x 51.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
172. Map showing the location of sites related to the Zhou clan around Dajue Temple. From <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2006/4-10/17759.html>.
173. Section of the main Zhou tomb walls at the rear of Beijing no. 47 High School.
174. Anonymous, *Maitreya as Budai with Children*, 1503. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 169.8 x 97.8 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
175. Palace of Purple Empyrean (Zixiao gong 紫霄宮), Mount Wudang temple complex, Hubei province. Image from Baidu.
176. Zhang Xuanqing, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
177. Entrance to Fahai Temple, Mount Cuiwei, Beijing. Image from Fahai Temple official website: www.fahaitemple.com.
178. Head of Brahma, detail of the Fahai Temple wall paintings.
179. Head of the Official of Heaven, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
180. Anonymous, *The Star-Lords of Good Fortune, Emolument, and Longevity*, 1454. Hanging scroll, ink, colour and gold on silk, 140 x 78 cm. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet, Paris.
181. Zhang Lu, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*
182. The Star Lord of Good Fortune, detail of *The Star-Lords of Good Fortune, Emolument, and Longevity*.

183. Head of a female attendant, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
184. Head of a female attendant, detail of the Fahai Temple mural.
185. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing clouds.
186. Fahai Temple murals, detail showing clouds located behind Buddha sculptures.
187. Head of the Official of Heaven, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
188. Head of Taiyi, detail of the Yongle gong murals.
189. Anonymous, *Album of Buddhist and Daoist Themes*, originally *Daozi mobao* 道子墨寶 (Ink treasures of Wu Daozi), early Ming(?). Album leaf, ink on paper, 34.18 x 38.4 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.
190. Perfected Being Zhao Sheng 趙升, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
191. Ziqiexing 紫炁星, detail of *Album of Buddhist and Daoist Themes*.
192. Brahma, detail of Wu Zhao 武釗 et al, Gongzhu Temple wall painting, 1503. Fanzhi County, Shanxi province.
193. Brahma, detail of Fahai Temple wall painting.
194. Anonymous, *Sakyamuni Buddha*, 1643. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 189.1 x 95 cm. Capital Museum, Beijing.
195. Anonymous, *Suramgama Bodhisattva*, 1609. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 155.6 x 94.2 cm. Capital Museum, Beijing.
196. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Ma of the Ming Dynasty*. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, 106.5 x 74.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
197. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Chen (Xiaojiesu) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.9 x 51 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
198. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Sun (Xiaogongzhang) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 65.7 x 51.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
199. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Du (Xiaoke) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.8 x 51.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
200. Anonymous, originally *Hunting by a Yuan Painter (Yuanren hua lieqi tu* 元人畫獵騎圖). Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 39.4 x 60.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

201. Anonymous, sections from *Xianzong's Pleasures in the Lantern Festival* (*Xianzong yuanxiao xingle tu* 憲宗元宵行樂圖). Handscroll, ink and colours on silk, 37 x 624 cm. National Museum of China, Beijing.
202. Anonymous, *Portrait of Court Lady in a Red Phoenix Gown*, approx. 1500 – 1600. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 162 x 99.8 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.
203. Anonymous, *Portrait of Taizu (Hongwu emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.7 x 51.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
204. Anonymous, *Portrait of Chengzu (Yongle emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 65.8 x 52.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
205. Anonymous, *A "Grotesque" Portrait of Taizu*, Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 193 x 104.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
206. Portraits of Taizu, Chengzu and Shizong from *San cai tu hui*, published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustrations. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 3.29a-30a.
207. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Li (Xiaoding) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.6 x 50.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.
208. Stele depicting the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva at Cishou Temple, carved in 1587. Balizhuang, Beijing.
209. Cishou Temple Pagoda at Balizhuang, Beijing, 1576 –1578.
210. Rubbing of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Cishou Temple, carved in 1587. Ink rubbing on paper, 238 x 145 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 21.
211. Anonymous, *Guanyin by a Lotus Pond*, 1593. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 181.6 x 114.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
212. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Sheng'an Temple, carved in 1589. Ink rubbing on paper, 100 x 59 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 21.
213. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Mile Temple, carved in 1592. Ink rubbing on paper, 116 x 62 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 25.
214. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele at Cisheng Temple, carved in 1594. Ink rubbing on paper, 88 x 67 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 30.
215. Image of Guanyin, no. 44 from *Portraits of the Fifty-three Manifestations of the Compassionate Appearance of the Great Being Guanyin* (*Guanyin dashi cirong*

wushisan xianxiang zan 觀音大士慈容五十三現象贊), early Qing edition. Woodblock-printed on paper. Shanghai Library. From Ding et al, *Mingdai muke guanyin huapu*, 89.

216. Illustration of paintings of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva and Above Wisdom Bodhisattva at Changchun Temple, from *Tōdo meishō zue*, published in 1860. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Okada, *Tōdo meishō zue*, 4.16b.
217. Photograph of a portrait of a bodhisattva-empress once held at Changchun Temple, Beijing, published in 1935. From Tang, *Jiudu wenwu lüe*, fig. 34.
218. Anonymous, *Qianlong as Mañjughoṣa Emperor*. Thangka, ink and colours on silk. 113.5 x 64 cm. Freer-Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
219. The Empress Dowager Cixi as Guanyin photographed by Xun Ling, 1903. Palace Museum, Beijing. From Liu and Xu, eds., *Gugong zhencang renwu zhaopian huicui*.
220. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Liu (Xiaochun) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 71.2 x 43.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



1. Anonymous, *Ordination Scroll of Empress Zhang*, 1493. Handscroll, ink, colours and gold on paper, 54.6 x 2,743.2 cm. San Diego Museum of Art.





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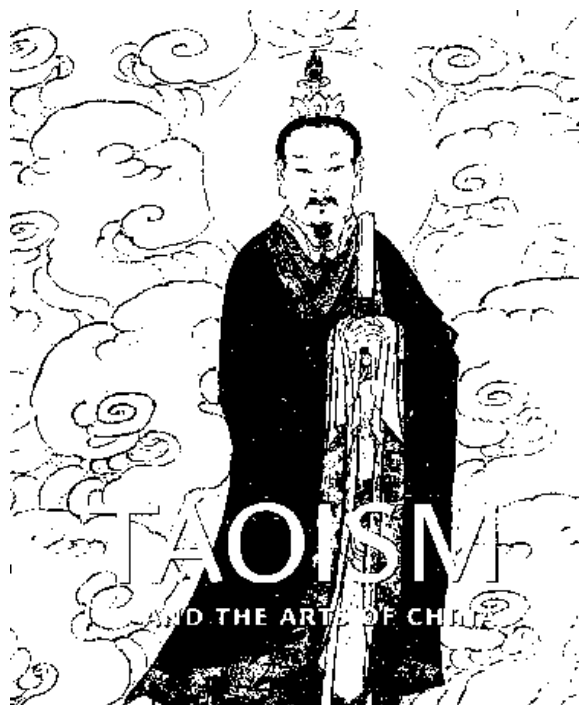
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2. Empress Zhang, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

3. Zhang Xuanqing, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



4. Front cover of the San Diego Museum of Art catalogue on its Chinese collection by Sung Yu from 1999.



5. Front cover of the exhibition catalogue *Taoism and the Arts of China* (2000) edited by Stephen Little.



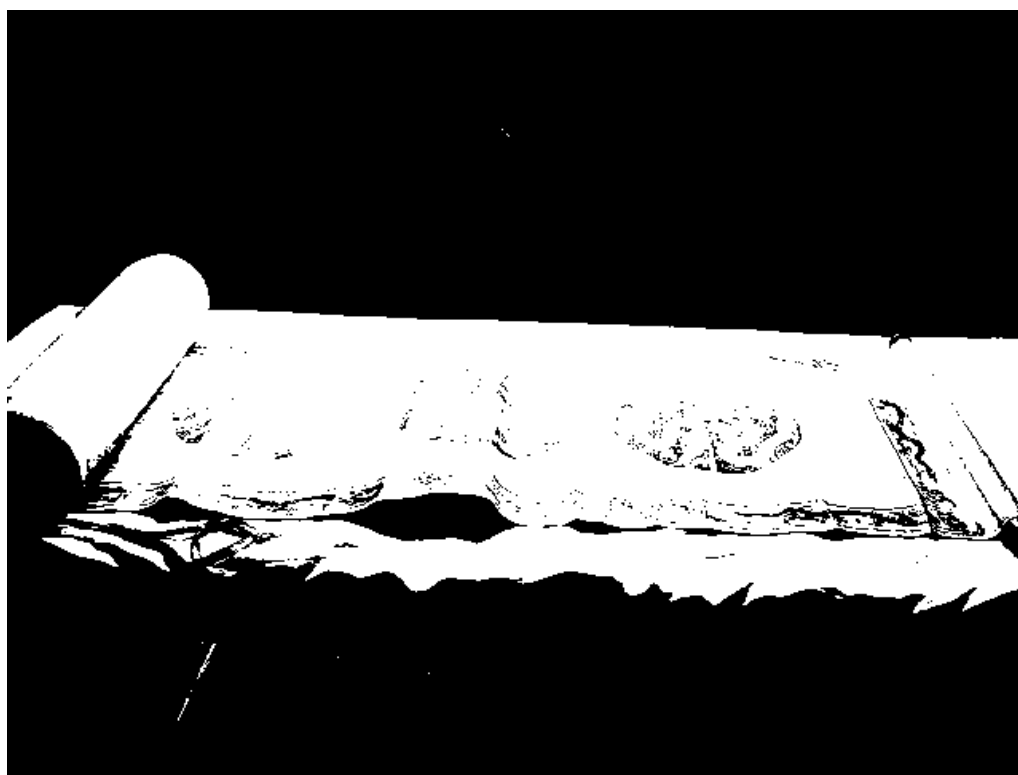
6. *Ordination Scroll*, partially rolled up.



7. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing mounting paper.



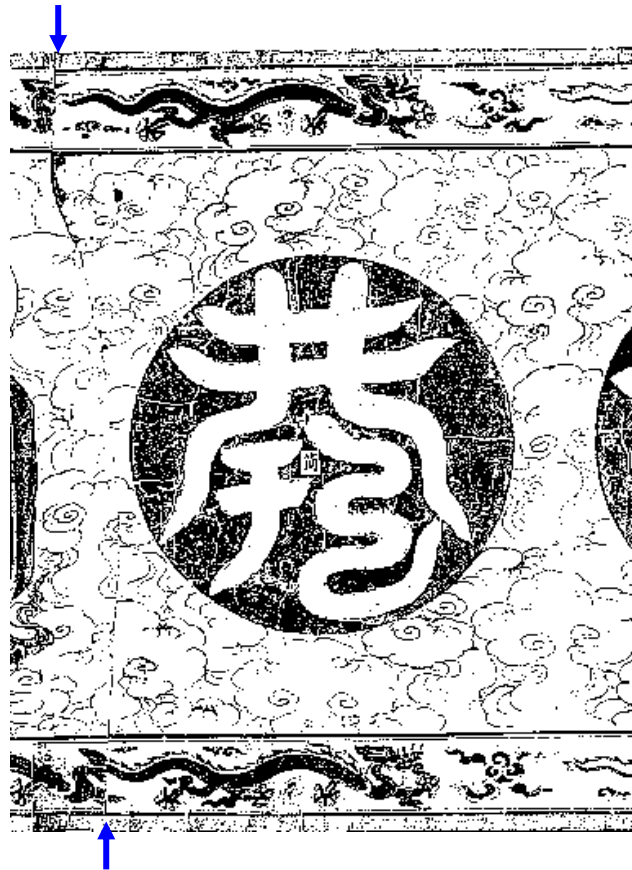
8. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing old and new *taobian*.



9. *Ordination Scroll*, showing the opening section.



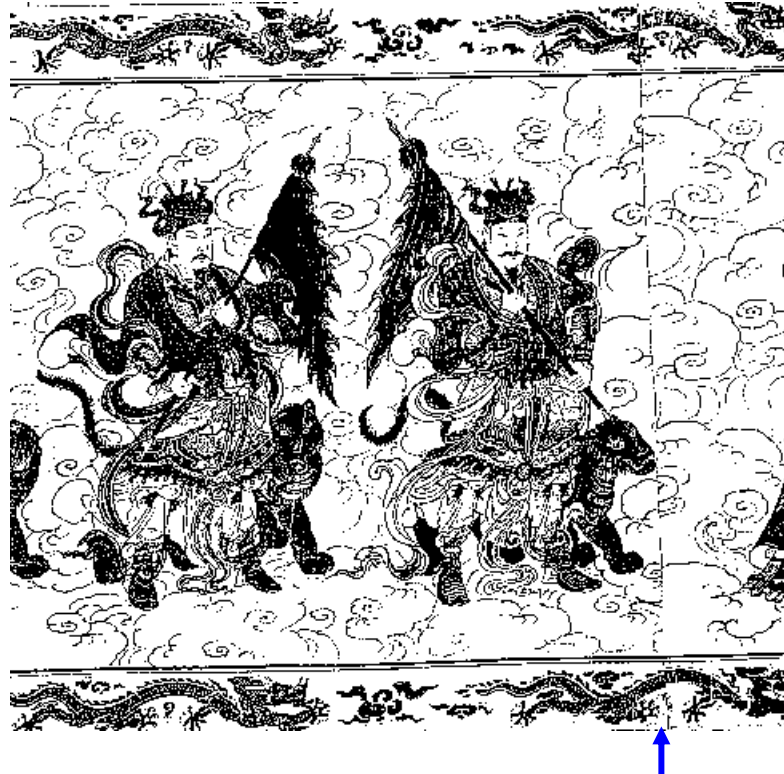
10. *Ordination Scroll*, showing the right end with roller.



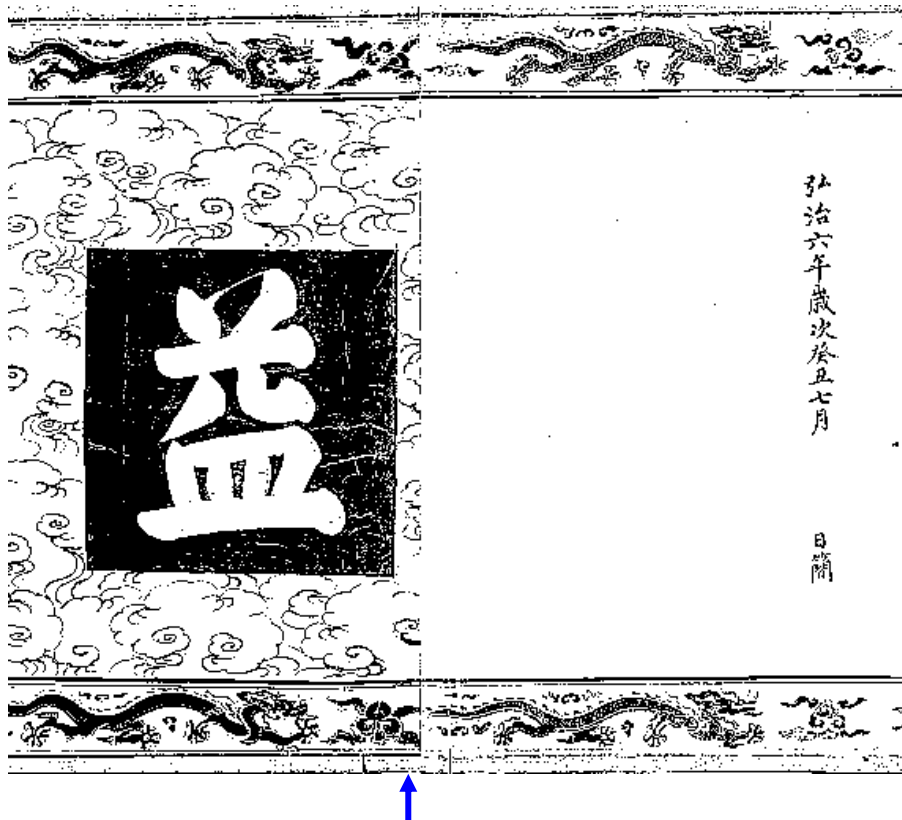
11. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the first break.



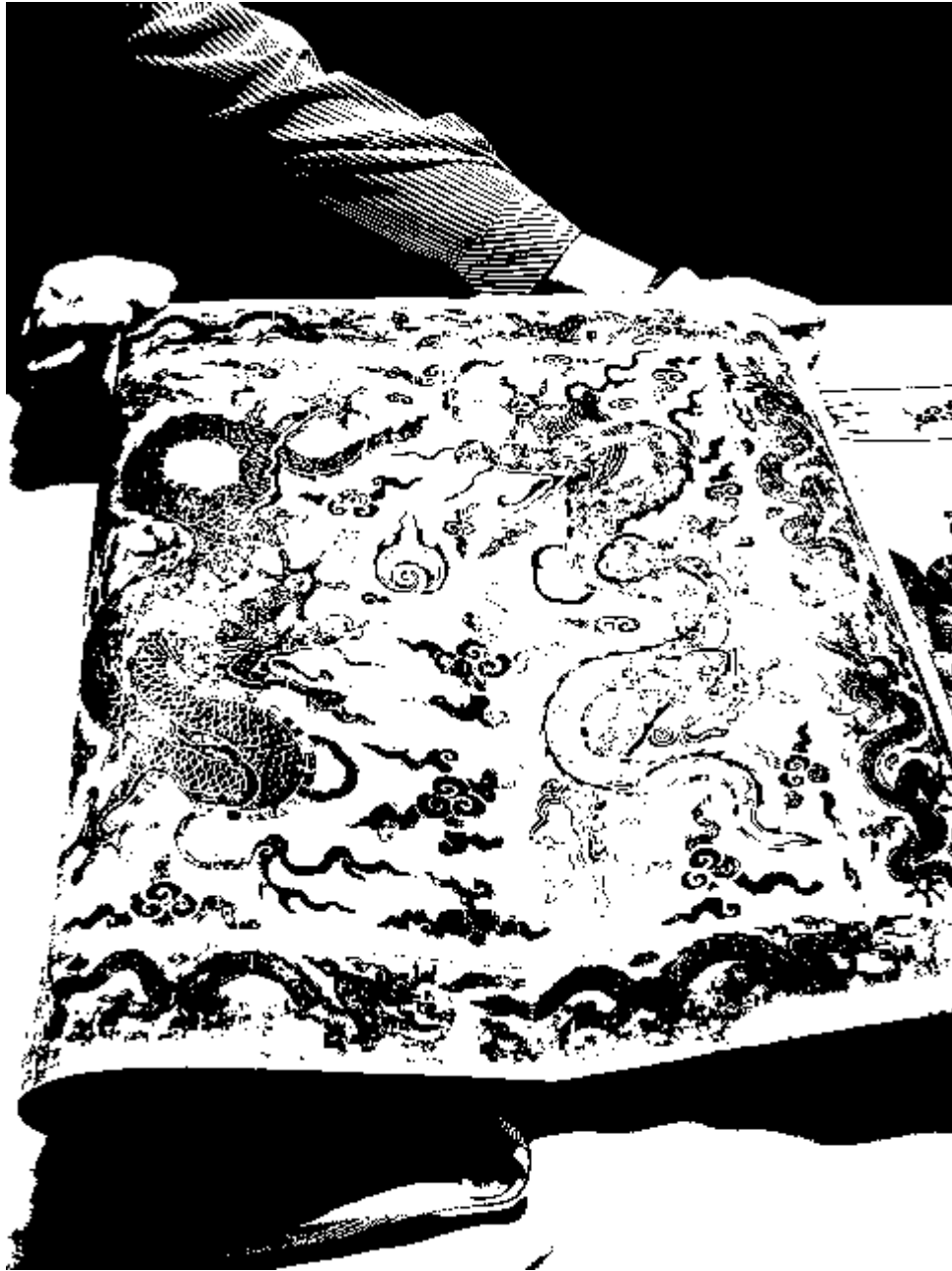
12. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the second break.



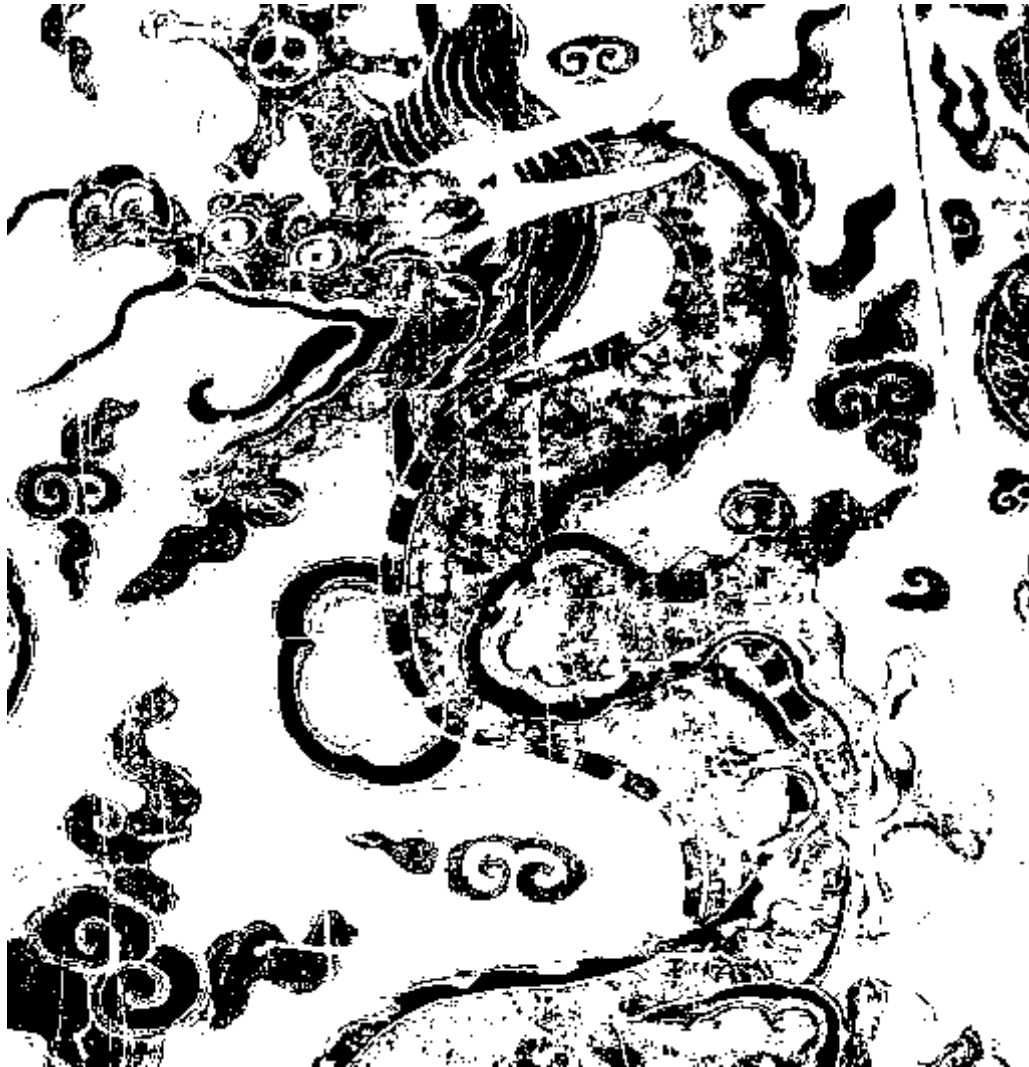
13. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the third break.



14. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the fourth break.



15. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the outer wrapper.



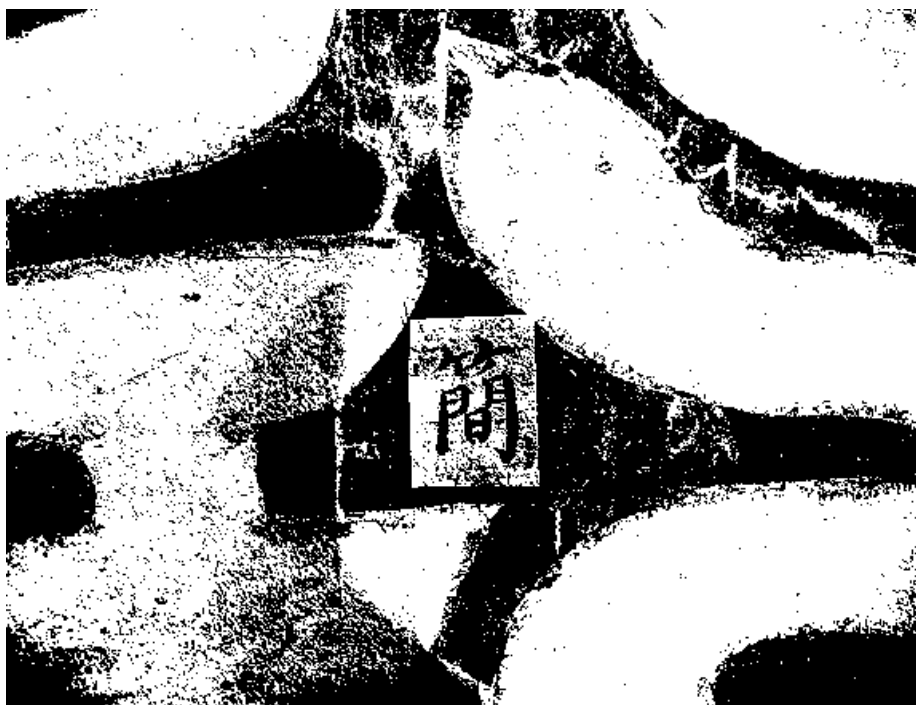
16. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing flaking on the outer wrapper.



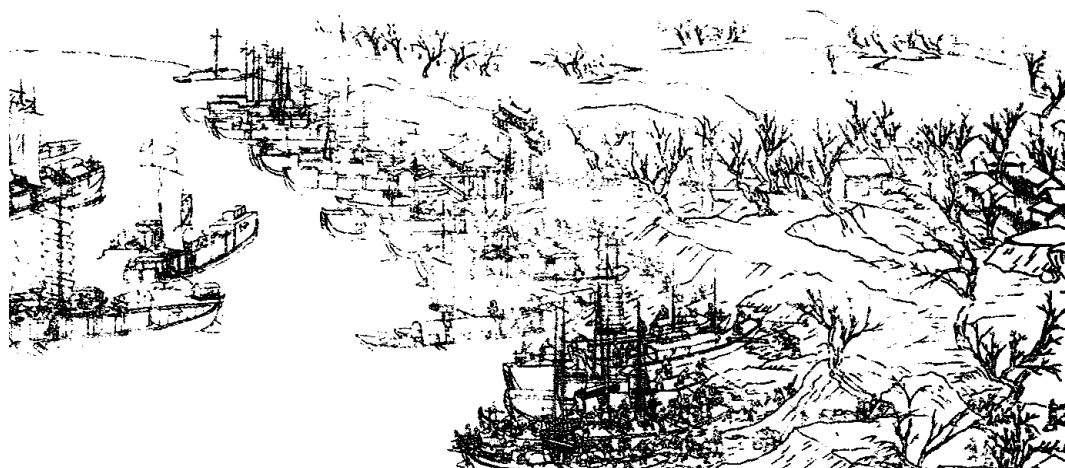
17. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the inner wrapper.



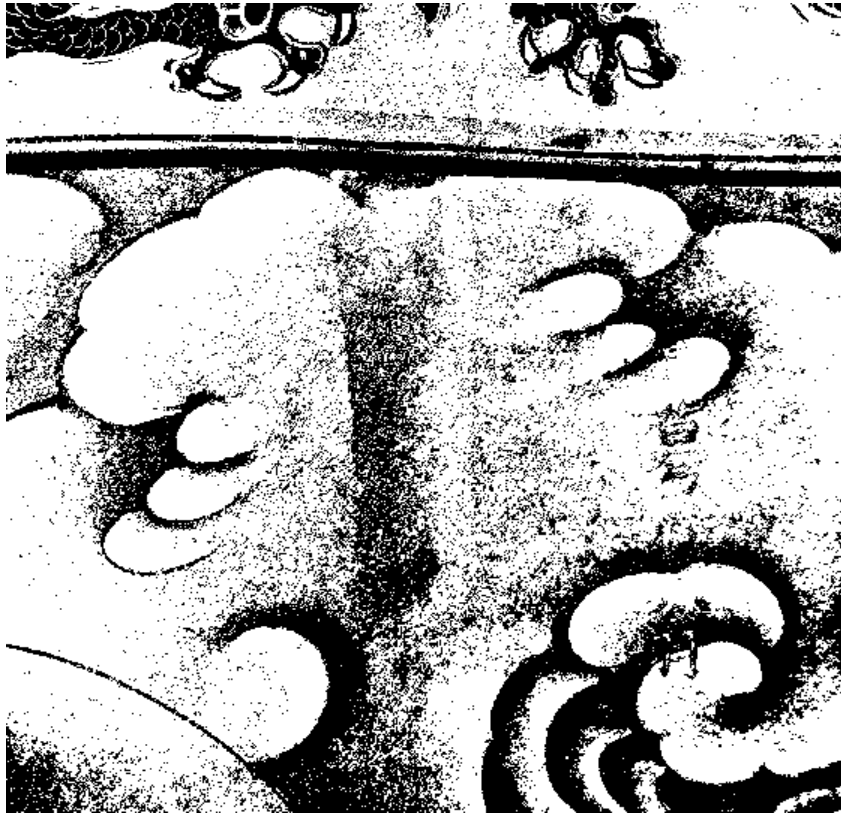
18. *Ordination Scroll, showing gejie.*



19. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing paper with regular script pasted on to the opening inscription.



20. Detail of a preliminary drawing of *The Qianlong Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour* (*Qianlong nanxun tu* 乾隆南巡圖) by Xu Yang 徐揚, 1764 – 1770. Ink on paper, 65 x 1,234 cm. Private Collection.



21. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing trace of paper slip.



22. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the damage to the top part of Empress Zhang's image.



23. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing pasted image of Empress Zhang.



24. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing sketch.



25. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing colours notations for red (工), blue (七) and green (六).



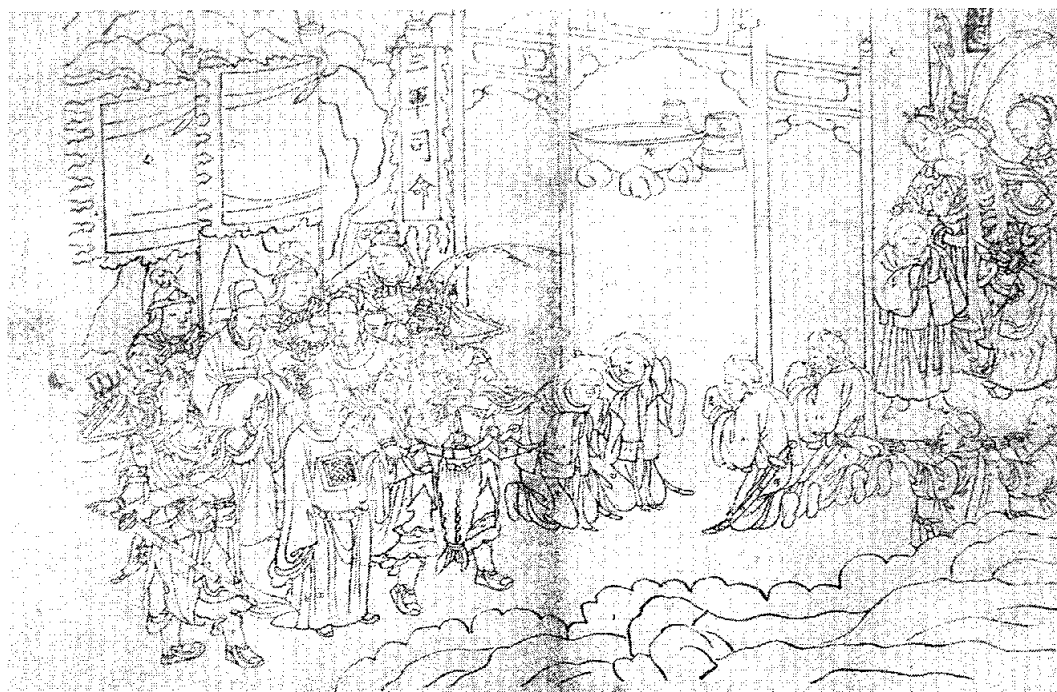
26. *Orination Scroll*, detail showing the colour notation for dark green (二六).



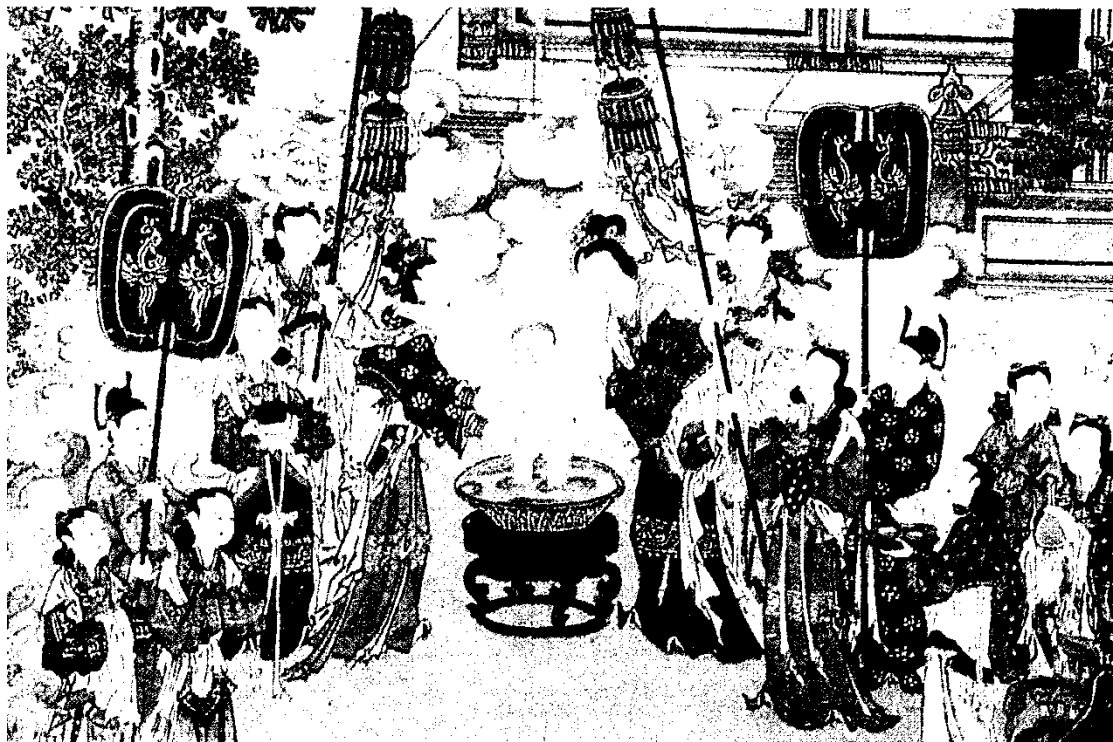
27. *Orination Scroll*, detail showing the characters *shiba* 十八 (eighteen).



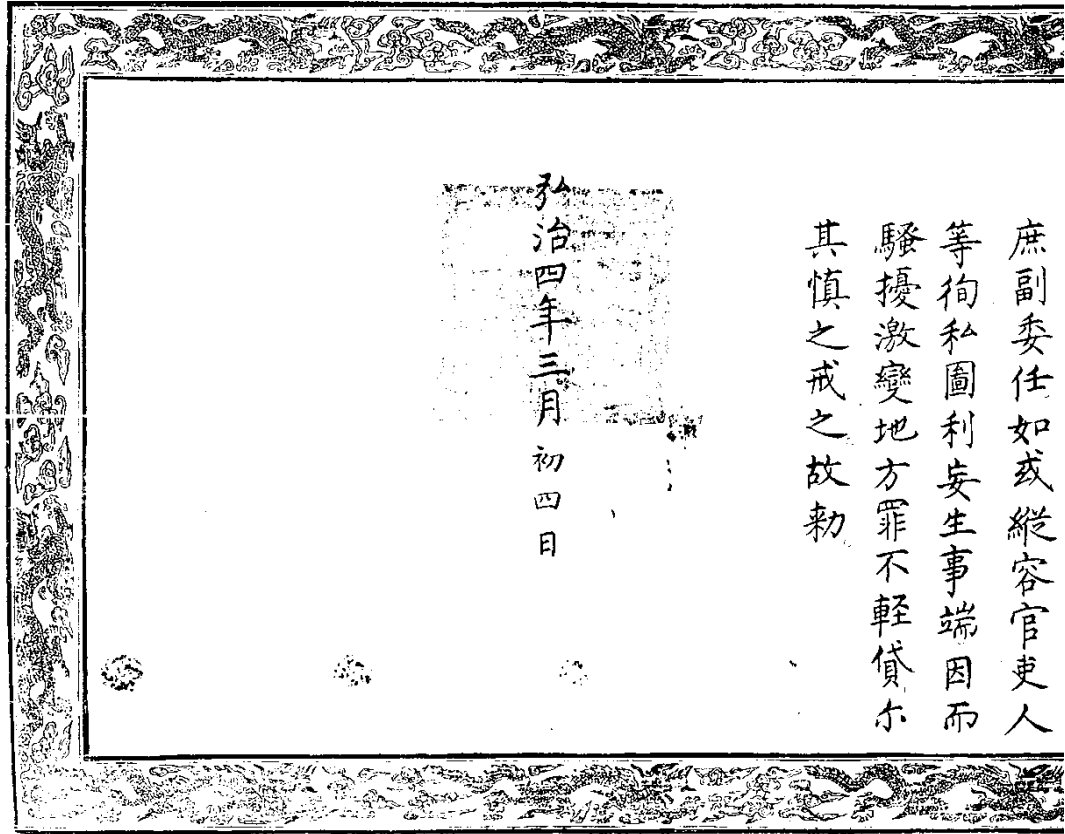
28. Section of mandalas; confessional drawings. P2012. Ink on paper, 29.4-30 cm x 513.7 cm for the entire drawing. Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France.



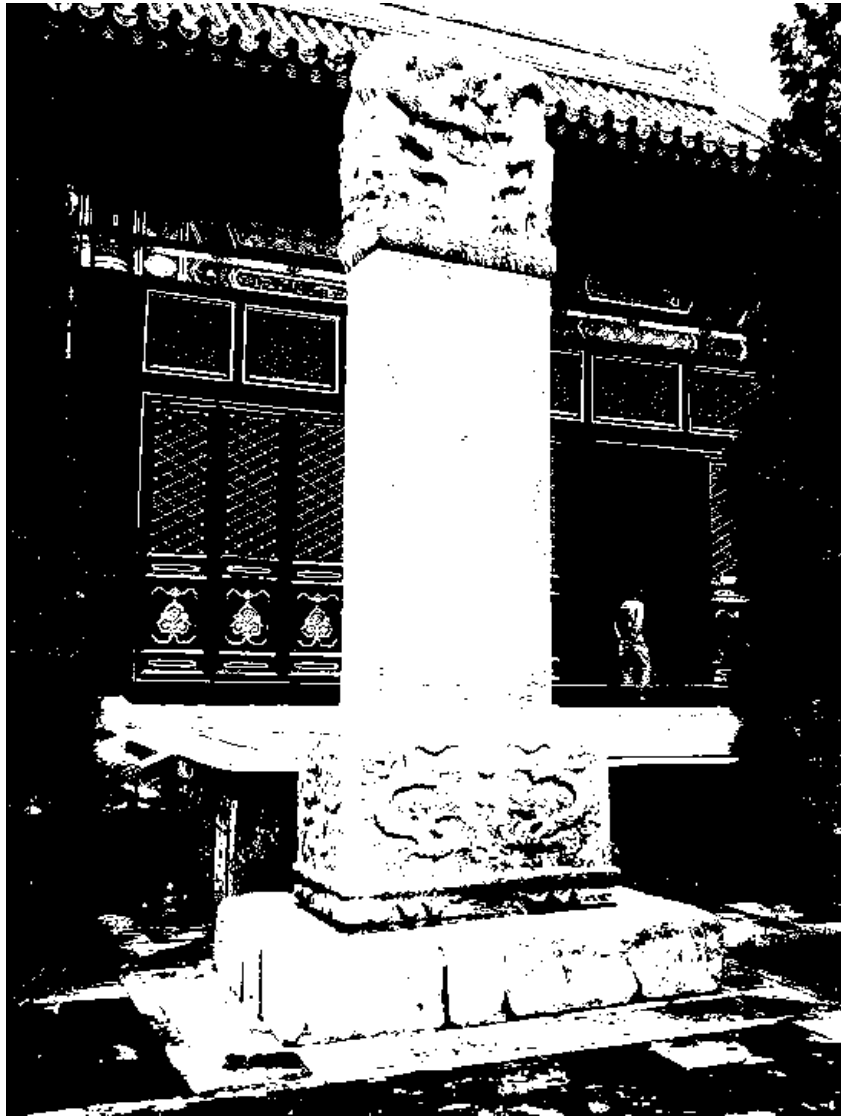
29. Anonymous, model drawing for *Blessings for the Whole Family* (*Quan jia fu* 全家福), Qing dynasty. Ink on paper. Shanxi People's Art Museum. From Bo, "Zhenxi de Shanxi minjian huagong fenben," 29.



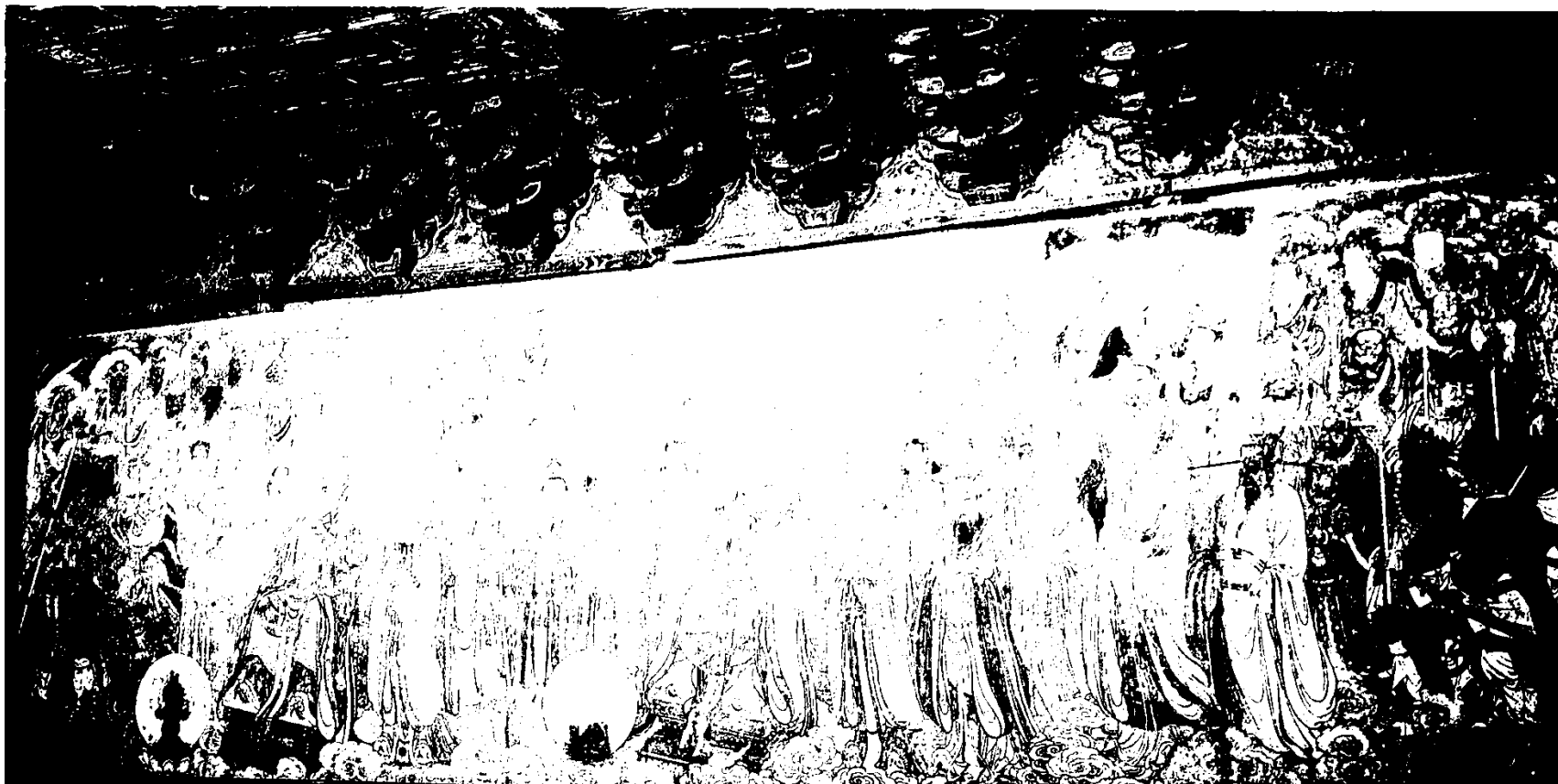
30. Detail of “First Bath of the Buddha.” Leaf 4 of the anonymous album *Shijia shizun yinghua shiji* 釋迦世尊應化示蹟圖 (Pictures of the Life of the Buddha), 1483. Ink and colours on silk, 51 x 37 cm. Shanxi Provincial Museum.



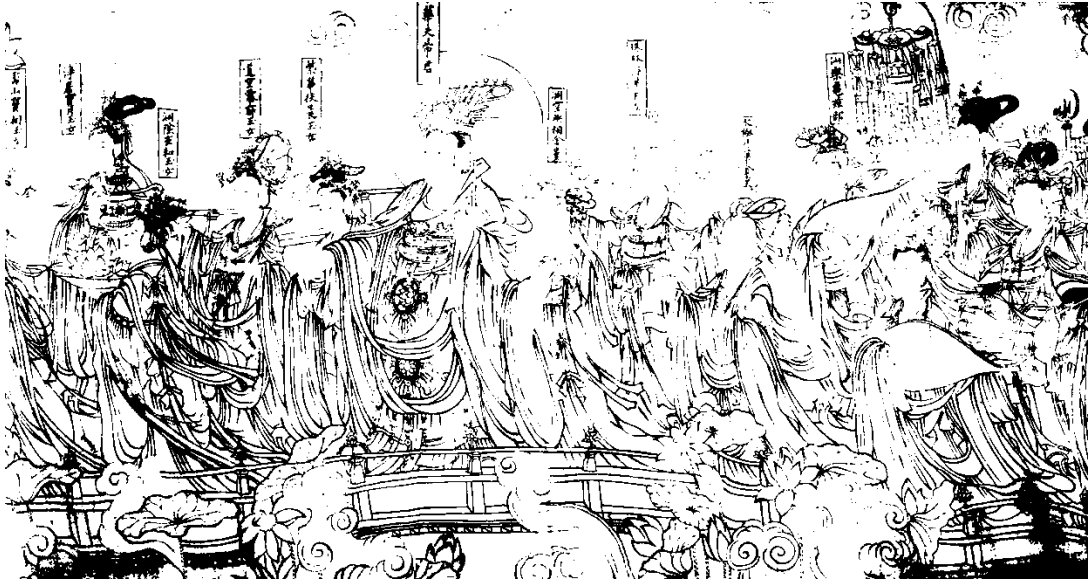
31. Section of an imperial edict by the Hongzhi emperor, dated the fourth day of the third lunar of 1491. Ink on paper with printed border, 42 x 112.5 cm. National Museum of China.



32. Ming dynasty stele at Wanshou Temple, Beijing.



33. East wall, Sanqing dian 三清殿 (Hall of Three Purities), Yongle gong 永樂宮 (Palace of Eternal Joy), c. 1325. Painted by a team of painters headed by Ma Junxiang (act. early 14th century). Wall painting. H. 400 cm. Ruicheng, Shanxi province.



34. Section of Wu Zongyuan 武宗元, *Chaoyuan xianzhang tu* 朝元仙杖圖 (Picture of Transcendents and Seniors in Audience with the Origin), early 11th century. Handscroll, ink on silk. 58 x 777.5 cm. Private collection.



35. Frontispiece of *Yushu baojing* 玉樞寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot), 1333. Accordion-folded, woodblock-printed book, 33.2 x 12.5 cm each page. British Library.



36. Frontispiece of *Taishang xuanling beidou yansheng miao jing* 太上玄靈北斗延生妙經 (Wondrous Scripture that Prolongs Life of the Northern Dipper of the Mysterious and Numinous of the Most High), 1568. Accordion-mounted album, gold on indigo paper. 25.9 x 11.9 cm each page. Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University.



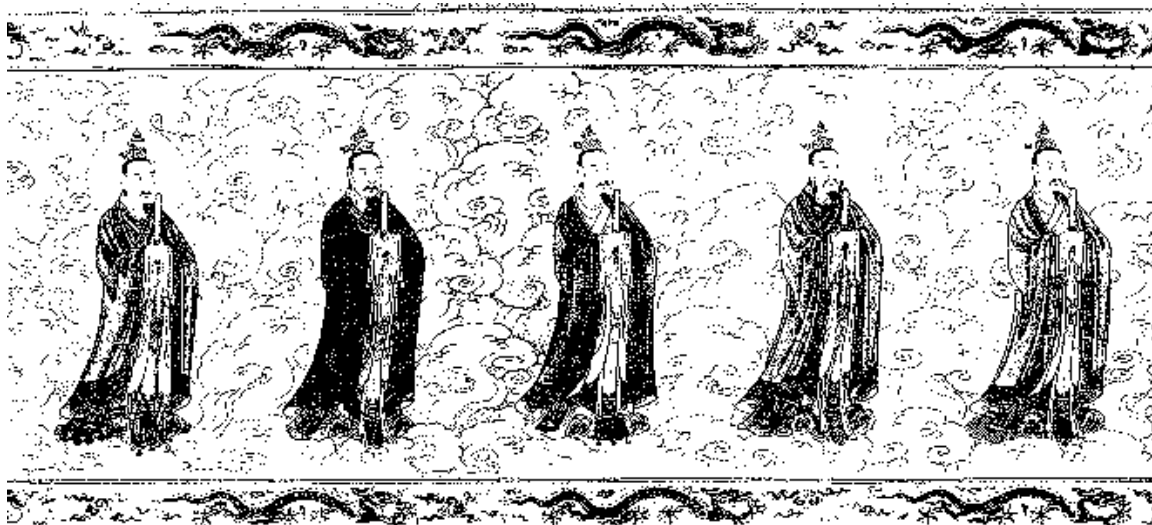
37. Anonymous, *Emperors of the Five Directions and the Opening Heaven Great Sage Emperor of Mount Changbo*, dated 1454. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 140.5 x 79 cm. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet, Paris.



38. Wan Fuqing 宛福清 and others, mural on the east wall of Fahai Temple, 1439 – 1444. Mount Cuiwei, Beijing.



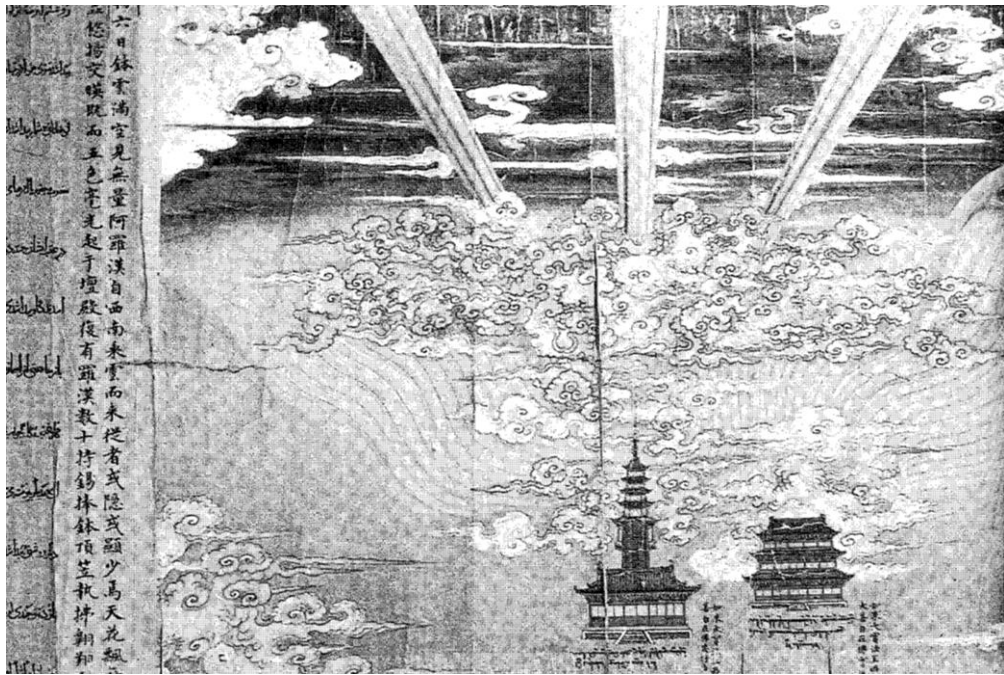
39. Shengong miaoji xu zhenjun 神功妙濟許真君 (right) and Haiqiong Bai zhenren 海瓊白真人 (left) from *Yushu baojing* 玉樞寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot), 1333. Accordion-folded, woodblock-printed book. 33.2 x 12.5 cm each page. British Library.



40. *Ordination Scroll*, section showing celestial beings dressed in ritual attire.



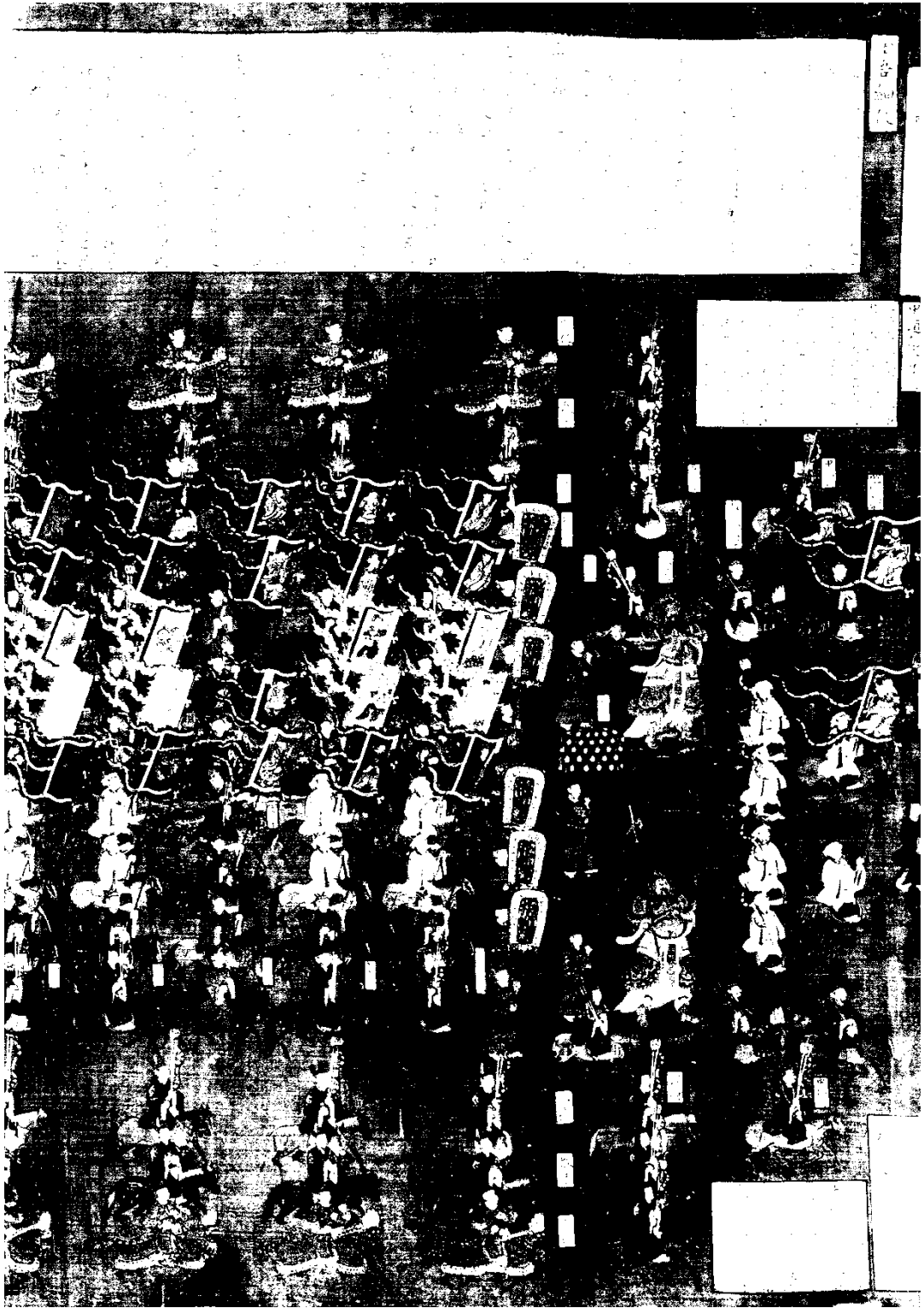
41. Female attendant, detail of the mural at the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong.



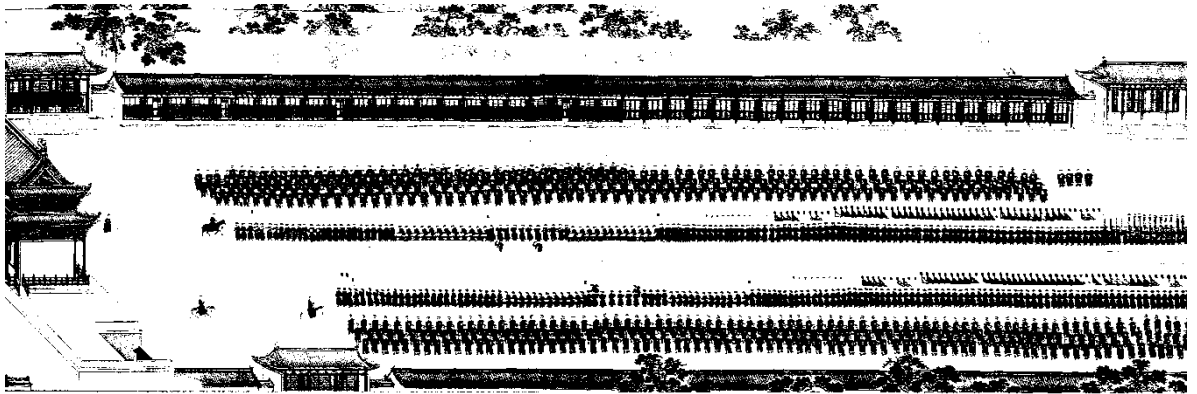
42. Anonymous, *Miracles of the Mass of Universal Salvation Conducted by the Fifth Karmapa for the Yongle Emperor*, 1407. Section; handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 4,968 x 66 cm. Norbulingkha Palace, Lhasa.



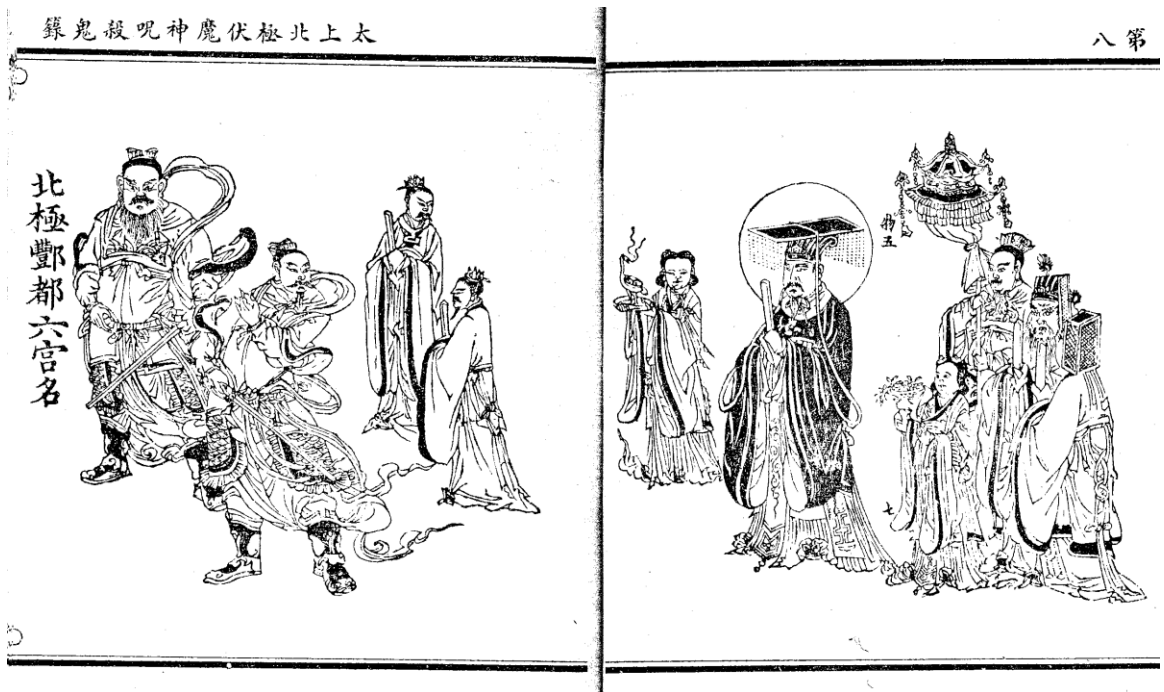
43. Anonymous, detail of *Departing from the Ming Forbidden City (Chujing tu 出警圖)*, Ming dynasty. Handscroll, ink and colours on silk, 92.1 x 2,601.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



44. Section of anonymous, *Picture of the Imperial Guard of Honour* (*Lubu tu* 鹵簿圖), Northern Song dynasty. Handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 54.1 x 1,481 cm. National Museum of China, Beijing.



45. Section of Wang Hui 王翬 and others, *The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour* (*Kangxi nanxun tu* 康熙南巡圖). Handscroll no. 12, ink and colours on silk, 67.8 x 2,612.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



46. Emperor of the Northern Dipper with entourage, section of *Taishang beiji fumo shenzhou shagui lu* 太上北極伏魔神咒殺鬼錄 (Register that Kills Ghosts of Demon-subduing Divine Spells of the Northern Dipper of the Most High), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 1215, 8a-9a.



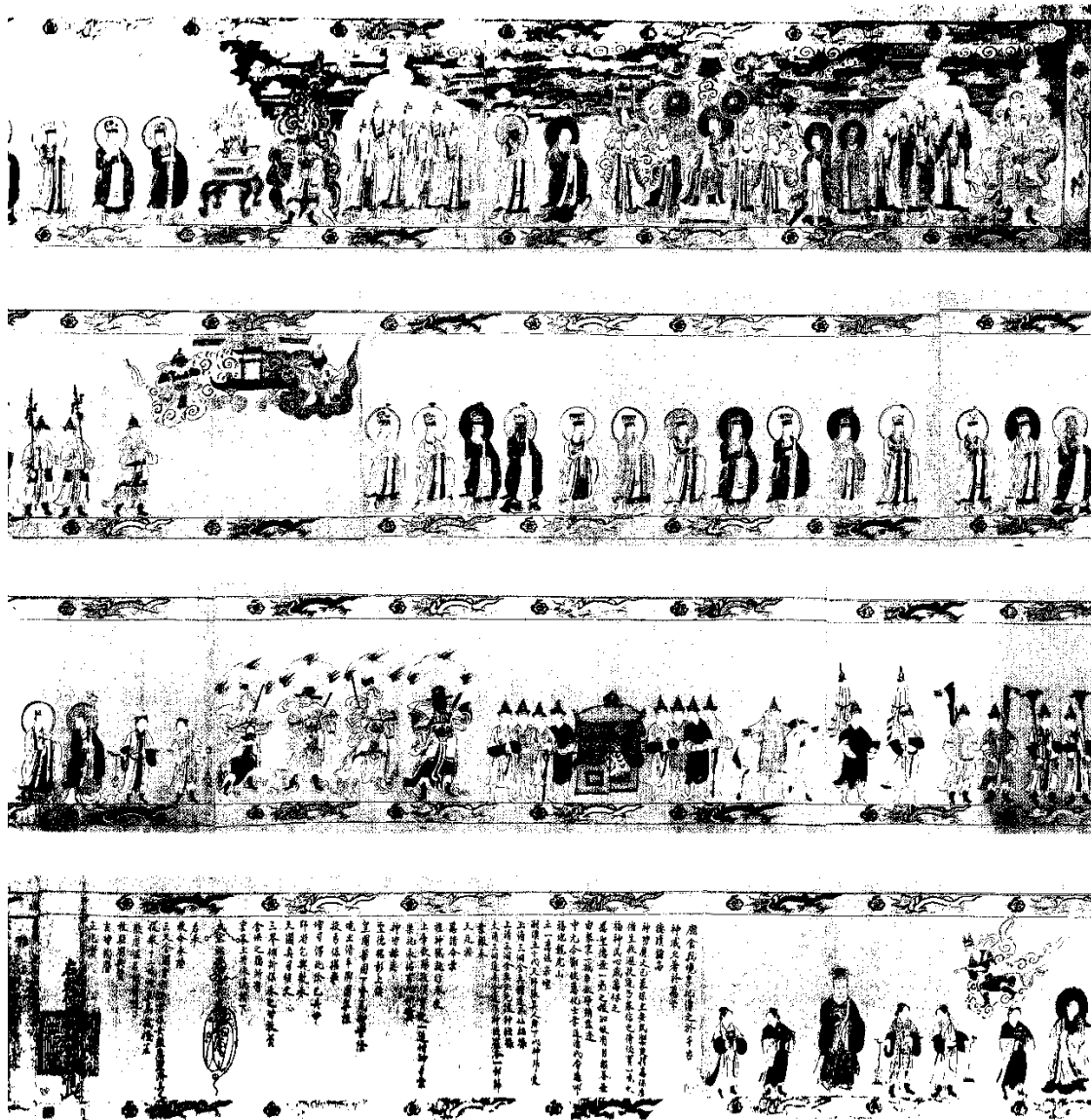
47. Tang Hong 唐宏, Ge Yong 葛雍 and Zhou Wu 周武, detail of *Taishang sanwu Zhengyi mengwei lu* 太上三五正一盟威錄 (Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustrations. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 1208, 1.12b-15a.



48. Jade maidens, section of *Shangqing dantian sanqi yuhuang liuchen feigang siming da lu* 上清丹天三氣玉皇六辰飛綱司命大錄 (Great Register of Flying Steps of the Six Stars that Govern Fate of the Jade Sovereign of the Three Pneumata of the Cinnabar Heaven of Highest Clarity), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 675, 7b-8a.



49. Two sets of talismans, (TO523-3-2/-3-3), 1942. Printed on paper, 12 x 35 cm each. From Alain Arrault and Michela Bussotti, "Statuettes Religieuses et Certificats de Consécration en Chine du Sud (XVIIe – XXe siècle)," *Arts Asiatiques* 63 (2008), fig. 18a-b.



50. Anonymous, *Investiture of a Local God*, colophon dated 1641. Handscroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 48.2 x 908 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



51. *Investiture of a Local God*, detail showing the messenger bringing the celestial mandate to the local god Li Zhong.



52. *Investiture of a Local God*, section of second inscription.



53. High official, Director of Destinies (Siming shangqing 司命上卿), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



54. Stove God, Director of Destinies (Siming Zaoshen 司命灶神), from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 from a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 158.



55. Anonymous, *Taisui, Five Dragon deities, Earth God and Goddess, Stove God and his wife*, 1609. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 157 x 92 cm. Capital Museum, Beijing.



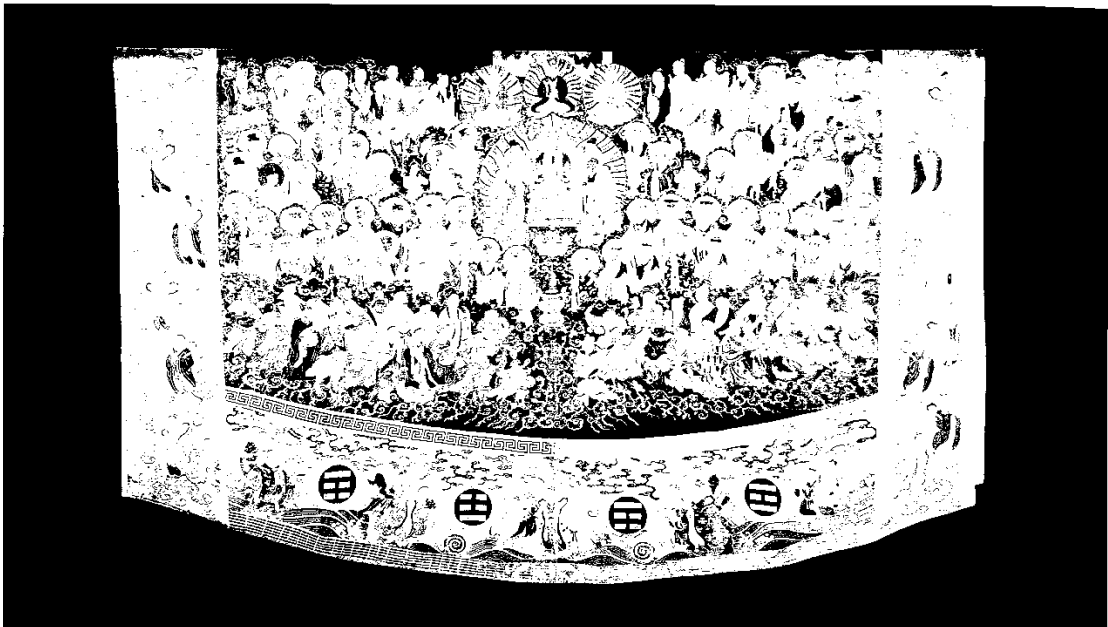
56. Anonymous, *Confucius and the Directors of Destinies* (*Zhisheng Siming xiang* 至聖司命像), Ming dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 175 x 93 cm. White Cloud Monastery, Beijing.



57. Three Perfected Lord Maos (San Mao zhenjun 三茅真君), from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 from a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 82.



58. Inheritor of the Teachings, Perfected Being Zhang (Sijiao Zhang Zhenren 嗣教張真人) (Zhang Xuanqing), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



59. *Daoist Priest's Robe*, 1650/1700. Embroidered satin, 127 x 208 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



60. Empress Zhang and eight celestial maids (*sichen bawei* 侍宸八位), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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61. Empress Zhang, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

62. Detail of Anonymous, *Saintly Mother Heavenly Immortal and the Eastern Peak*, c. 1600. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 216 x 100 cm. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet, Paris.



63. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing female attendant carrying a scroll.



64. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing female attendants with a box and an incense burner.



65. Female attendant, detail of the mural at the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong.



66. Indra with attendants, detail of the Fahai Temple mural.



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67. Kehan the Elder of Qingcheng of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian Qingcheng Kehan zhangren 九天青城可韓丈人), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

68. Investigation Envoy of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian caifangshi 九天採訪使), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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69. Thearch of the Office of Heaven of the Upper Prime (Shangyuan tianguan dadi 上元天官大帝), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

70. Thearch of the Office of Earth of the Middle Prime (Zhongyuan diguan dadi 中元地官大帝), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

71. Thearch of the Office of Water of the Lower Prime (Xiayuan shuiguan dadi 下水官大帝), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



72. Anonymous, *Daoist Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water*, first half of 12th century. Hanging scrolls, ink, colours and gold on silk, 125.5 x 55.9 cm each. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



73. Attributed to Ma Lin 馬麟, *The Excursion of the Three Officials* (*Sanguan chuxun* 三官出巡), Ming dynasty(?). Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, 174.2 x 122.9 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



74. Great Emperors of the Three Primes (Sanyuan dadi 三元大帝), from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 from a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 42.



75. Three Officials, detail of the mural on the north wall of the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong. From Jin, ed., *Yongle gong bihua quanji*, no. 72.



76. Jin Dashou, *Kings of Hell*, from a set of ten scrolls of the *Ten Kings of Hell*. Southern Song dynasty, before 1195. Hanging scrolls, ink and colours on silk, 111.8 x 47.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



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77. Ancestral Celestial Master (Zu tianshi 祖天師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

78. Old Transcendent Ge (Ge xianweng 葛仙翁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

79. Perfected Lord Xu (Xu zhenjun 許真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

80. Perfected Lord Fuqiu (Fuqiu zhenjun 浮丘真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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81. Zhang Daoling, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

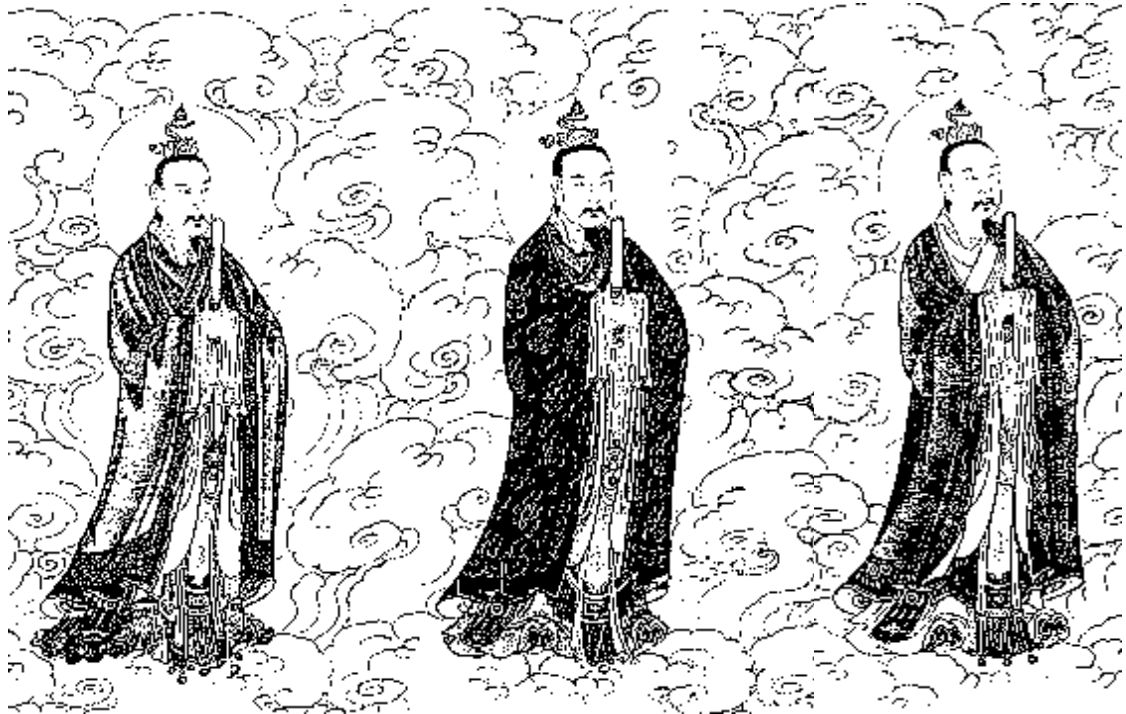
82. Zhang Chong 張翀, *Daoist Master Zhang (Zhang tianshi 張天師)*, 1639.
Hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, 117.3 x 58 cm. Shanghai Museum.



83. Zhang Daoling 張道陵, from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 11.3a.



84. Anonymous, *Four Celestial Masters* (*Si da tianshi* 四大天師), Qing dynasty. Hanging scroll. From Zhang, ed., *Daojiao shenxian huaji*, 99.



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85. Scripture Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu jingshi 上古經師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

86. Registration Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu jishi 上古籍師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

87. Ordination Master of Ancient Times (Shanggu dushi 上古度師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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- 88. Inheriting Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi sishi 正一嗣師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
- 89. Continuing Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi xishi 正一系師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
- 90. Female Master of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi nüshi 正一女師), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
- 91. Left servant, Perfected Being Wang (Zuoshi Wang zhenjun 左侍王真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
- 92. Right servant, Perfected Being Zhao (Youshi Zhao zhenjun 右侍趙真君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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93. Female Master of Orthodox Unity, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

94. Empress Zhang, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



95. Female Daoist, detail from a set of paintings originally kept at Baoning Temple, 15th century. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk. Shanxi Museum. From Shanxi Museum, *Baoningsi Mingdai shuilu hua*, 156.



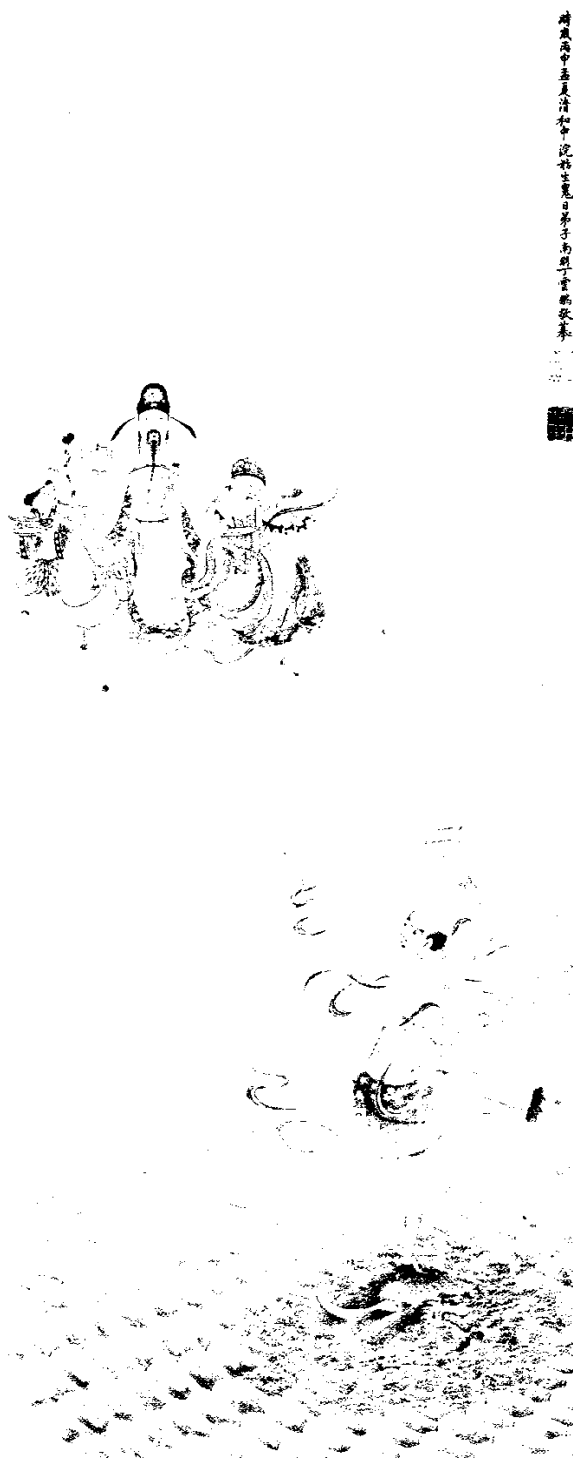
96. Qingwei jiaozhu Wei tianjun 清微教主魏天君 (left), from *Yushu baojing* 玉樞寶經 (Precious Scripture of the Jade Pivot), dated 1333. Accordion-folded, woodblock-printed book illustration. 33.2 x 12.5 cm each page. British Library.



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97. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.
 98. Qingluo zhenren 青羅真人 (Perfected Being Qingluo), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



99. Ding Yunpeng 丁雲鵬, *Wenchang and the God of Literature*, 1596. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 119.2 x 46.5 cm. British Museum.



100. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.6a.



101. Divine Lord of Zitong (Zitong dijun 梓潼帝君), from *Sanjiao soushen da quan* 三教搜神大全, published in 1909 from a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 37.



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102. General Du who Leads the Troops of the East (Dongfang lingbing Du jiangjun 東方領兵杜將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

103. General Wang who Leads the Troops of the South (Nanfang lingbing Wang jiangjun 南方領兵王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

104. General Fu who Leads the Troops of the West (Xifang lingbing Fu jiangjun 西方領兵傅將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

105. General Kou who Leads the Troops of the North (Beifang lingbing Kou jiangjun 北方領兵寇將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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106. General Wu, *Nezha* King of Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi nezha wang Wu jiangjun 正一哪吒王吳將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

107. General Tang, Great King of Savage Thunder (Manlei dawang Tang jiangjun 蠻雷大王唐將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

108. General Tan, Flail-holding Great King (Chijia dawang Tan jiangjun 持枷大王譚將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

109. General Wang, King of Fame and Longevity (Xuanhe changsheng wang Wang jiangjun 烜赫長生王王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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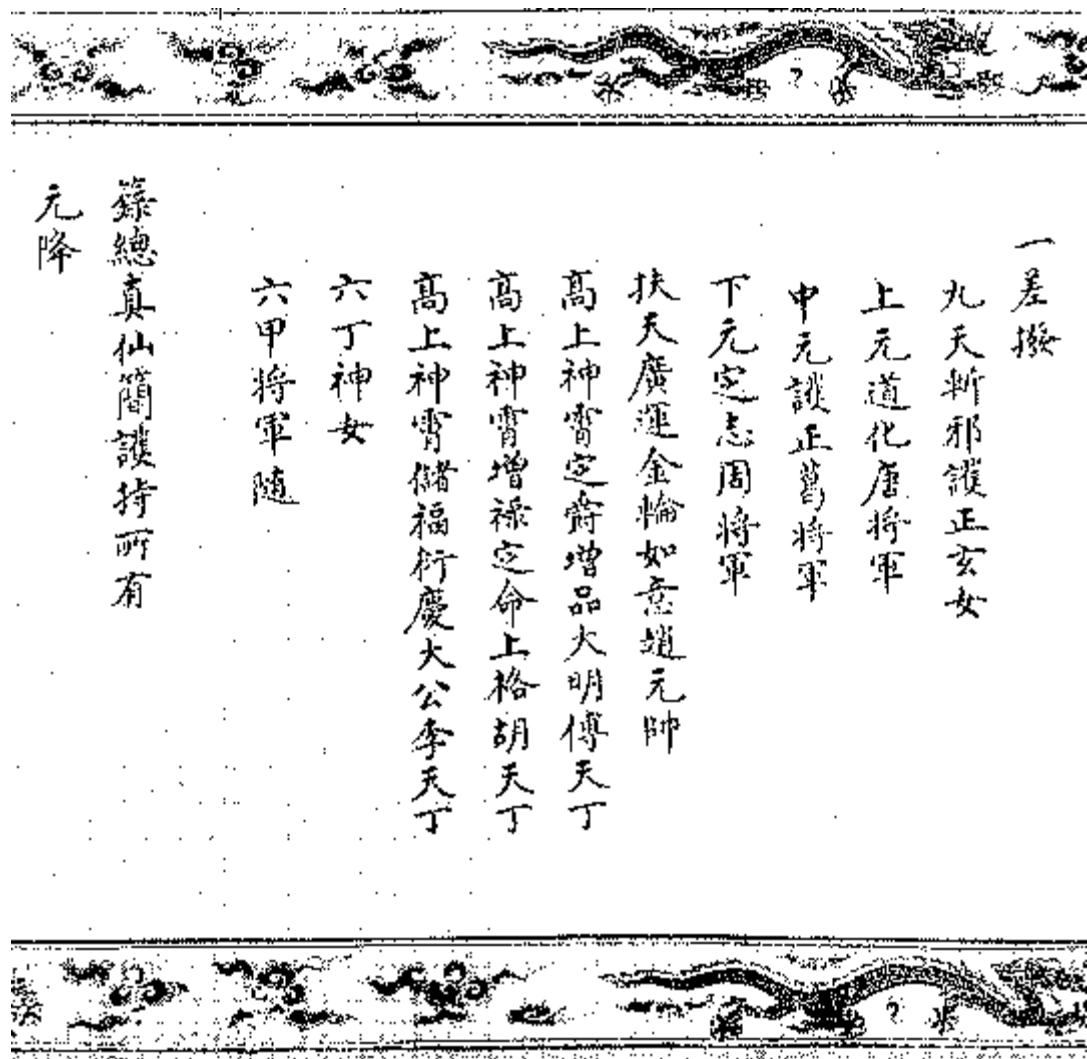
110

110. General He, Demon-searching King (Fangui wang He jiangjun 翻鬼王何將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

111. General Lei, Thunder-initiating King (Xingei wang Lei jiangjun 興雷王雷將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

112. General Gong, Heaven and Earth-accessing King (Tongtian piandi wang Gong jiangjun 通天遍地王龔將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

113. General Zhang, King of Rivers (Jianghe huaiji wang Zhang jiangjun 江河淮濟王張將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



114. Ordination Scroll, section showing the register in the inscription.



115. Song Jiang at the temple of the Mysterious Woman, from *Zongyi Shuihu zhuan chatu* 忠義水滸傳插圖 (Illustrations on the Loyal and Righteous Water Margin), Wanli period. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Zheng, ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, vol. 2, p. 817.



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116. General Tang of the Upper Prime (Shangyuan Tan jiangjun 上元唐將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

117. General Ge of the Middle Prime (Zhongyuan Ge jiangjun 中元葛將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

118. General Zhou of Lower Prime (Xiayuan Zhou jiangjun 下元周將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

119. Celestial Lord Zhao who Expands Destiny and Supports Heaven (Futian guangyun Zhao tianjun 扶天廣運趙天君), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



120. Tang Hong 唐宏, Ge Yong 葛雍 and Zhou Wu 周武, detail of *Taishang sanwu Zhengyi mengwei lu* 太上三五正一盟威錄 (Registers of the Covenant with the Powers of Orthodox Unity of the Three and Five of the Most High), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustrations. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 1208, 1.12b-15a.



121. Three Perfected Lords, Sojourners of the Wu Kingdom (Wuke san zhenjun 吳客三真君), from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 103.



122. Marshal Zhao, from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 141.



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123. Jade Maiden Si of *Dingmao* (*Dingmao Si yunü* 丁卯司玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

124. Jade Maiden Zhao of *Dingchou* (*Dingchou Zhao yunü* 丁丑趙玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

125. Jade Maiden Zhang of *Dinghai* (*Dinghai Zhang yunü* 丁亥張玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

126. Jade Maiden Shi of *Dingyou* (*Dingyou Shi yunü* 丁酉石玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

127. Jade Maiden Zang of *Dingmo* (*Dingmo Zang yunü* 丁未臧玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

128. Jade Maiden Cui of *Dingsi* (*Dingsi Cui yunü* 丁巳崔玉女), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



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129. General Wang of *Jiazi* (*Jiazi Wang jiangjun* 甲子王將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

130. General Zhan of *Jiaxu* (*Jiaxu Zhan jiangjun* 甲戌展將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

131. General Hu of *Jiashen* (*Jiashen Hu jiangjun* 甲申扈將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

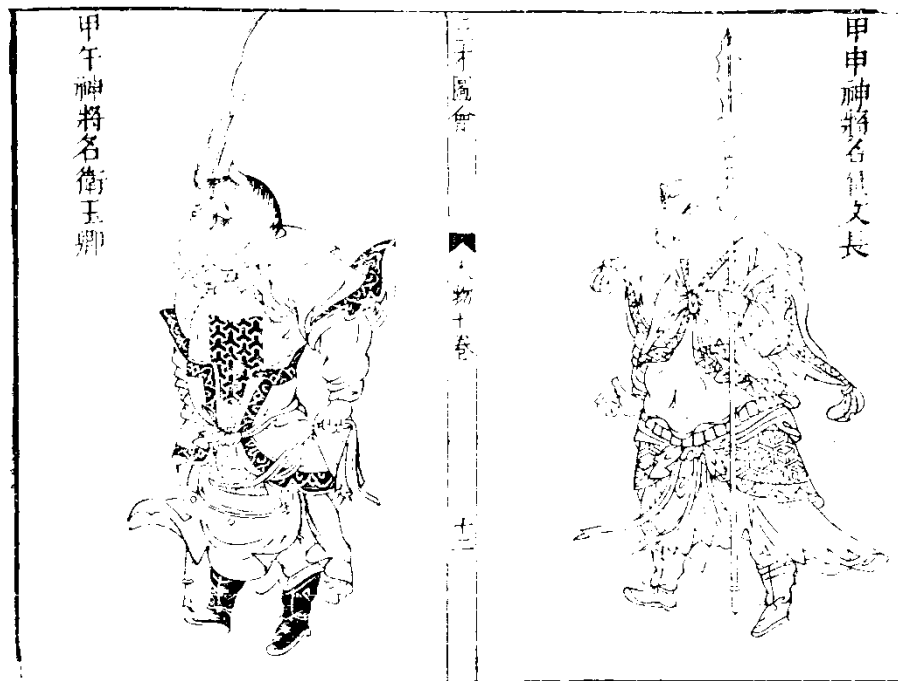
132. General Wei of *Jiawu* (*Jiawu Wei jiangjun* 甲午衛將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

133. General Meng of *Jiachen* (*Jiachen Meng jiangjun* 甲辰孟將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

134. General Ming of *Jiayin* (*Jiayin Ming jiangjun* 甲寅明將軍), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



135. Two of the Six Ding, from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.10ab.



136. Two of the Six Jia, from *San cai tu hui* 三才圖會 (A Pictorial Compendium of the Three Powers), published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 10.11ab.



137. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing the snake headdress of a Jade Maiden.



138. *Pottery Figurines of the Twelve Zodiac Animals*, Tang dynasty. Burial objects, 36.5-42.5 cm tall. Unearthed at Hansen Village, Xi'an, Shaanxi in 1955. National Museum of Chinese History.



139. One of the twenty-eight constellation deities, detail on the north wall of the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong. From Jin, ed., *Yongle gong bihua quanji*, no. 84.



140. Two of the twenty-eight constellation deities, detail on the north wall of the Hall of Three Purities, Yongle gong. From Jin, ed., *Yongle gong bihua quanji*, no. 59.



141. Jade Maiden, from *Shangqing qionggong lingfei liujia lu* 上清瓊宮靈飛六甲左右上符 (Left, Right and Upper Talismans of the Six Jia of Numinous Flight of the Jade Palace of Highest Clarity), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 84, 9a.



142. Jade Maidens, detail of *Shangqing dantian sanqi yuhuang liuchen feigang siming da lu* 上清丹天三氣玉皇六辰飛綱司命大籙 (Great Register of Flying Steps of the Six Stars that Govern Fate of the Jade Sovereign of the Three Pneumata of the Cinnabar Heaven of Highest Clarity), printed in 1445. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From the Daoist Canon, DZ 675, 7b.



143. *Mulan* 木蘭, from *Jin Shi* 金史, *Wushuang pu* 無雙譜 (Catalogue Without Compare), published between 1690 and 1699. Woodblock-printed book illustration. From Zheng, ed., *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, vol. 4, p. 427.



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144. Celestial Stalwart Fu who Adds Ranks and Sets Noble Titles (*Dingjue zengpin Fu tianding* 定爵增品傳天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

145. Celestial Stalwart Hu who Sets Destinies and Increases Emoluments (*Dingming zenglu Hu tianding* 定命增祿胡天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

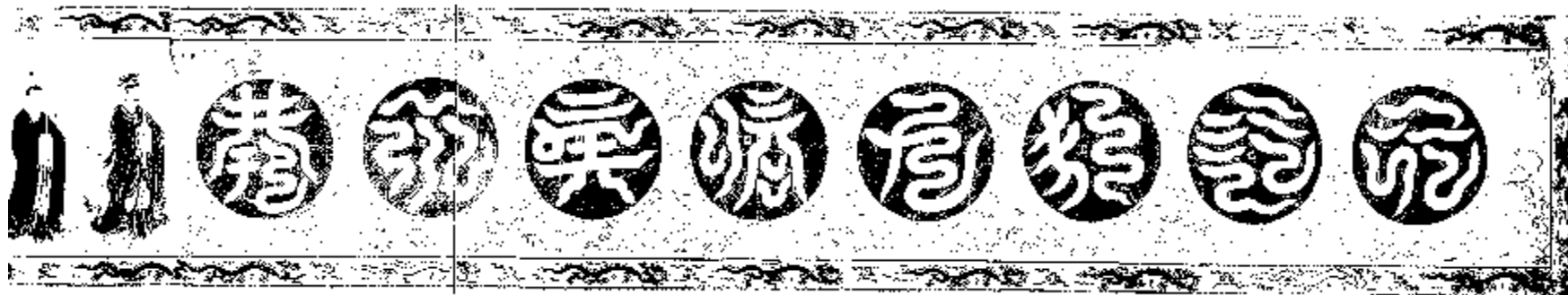
146. Celestial Stalwart Li who Spreads Celebrations and Stores Blessings (*Chufu yanqing Li tianding* 儲福衍慶李天丁), detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



147. Opening section of *Investiture of a Local God* showing a supreme deity flanked by guardians, attendants and other celestial beings.



148. Zhang Daoling, from *Sanjiao soushen daquan* 三教搜神大全 (Compendia of the Search for the Supernatural of the Three Religions), published in 1909 based on a Ming edition. Woodblock-printed book. From *Huitu sanjiao yuanliu*, 319.



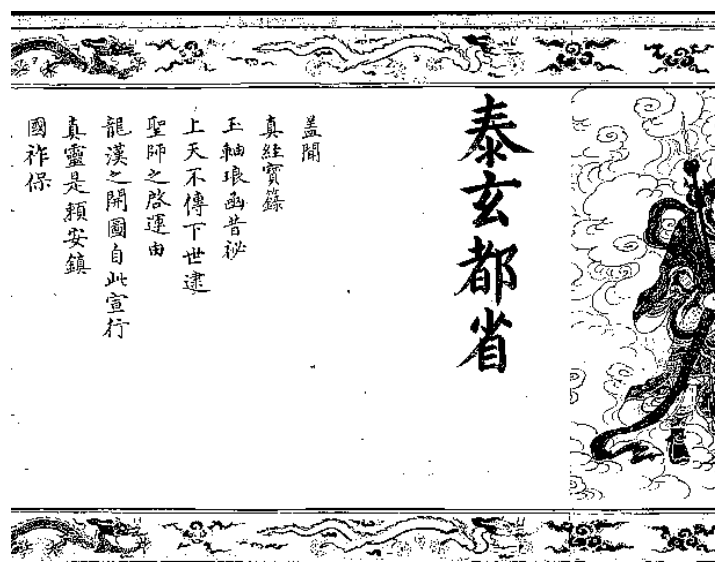
149. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing cloud seal script.



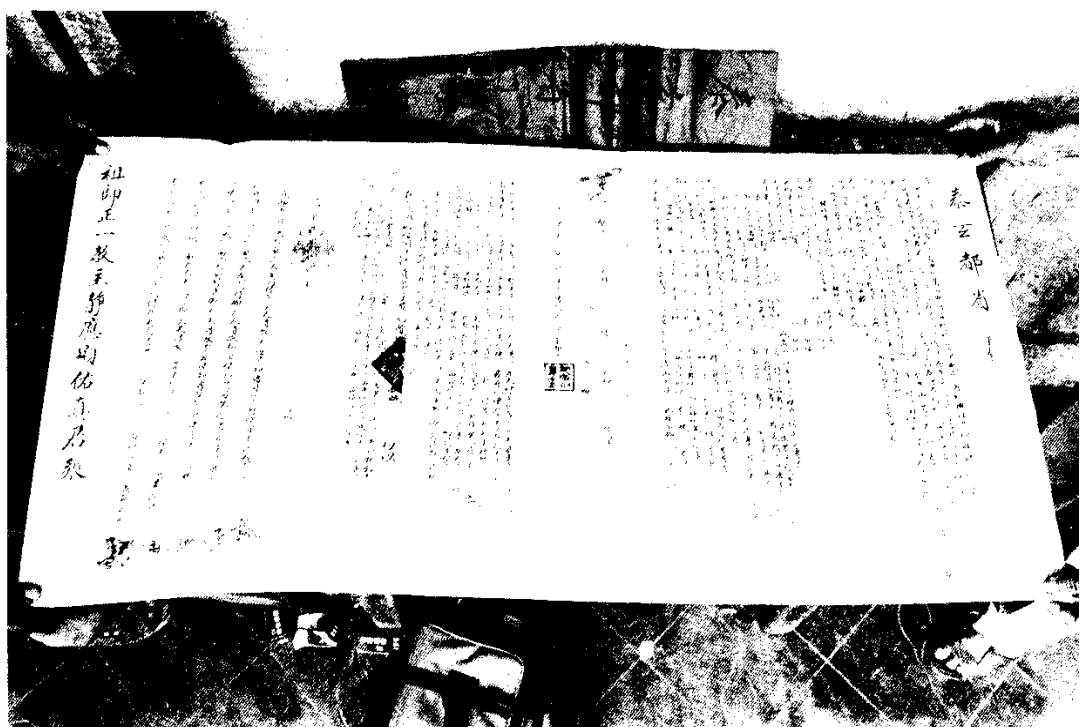
150. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing auspicious phrase.



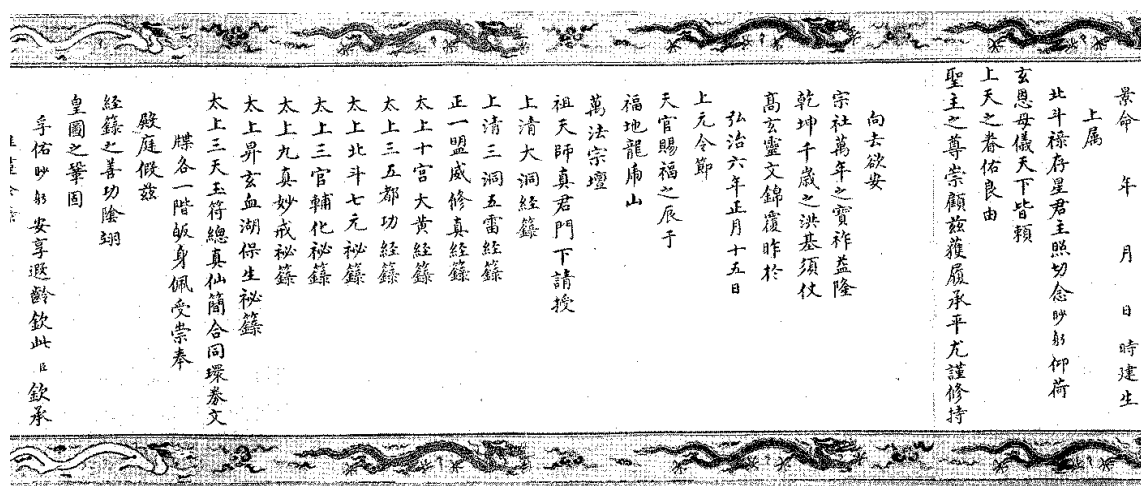
151. Zhang Xuanqing, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



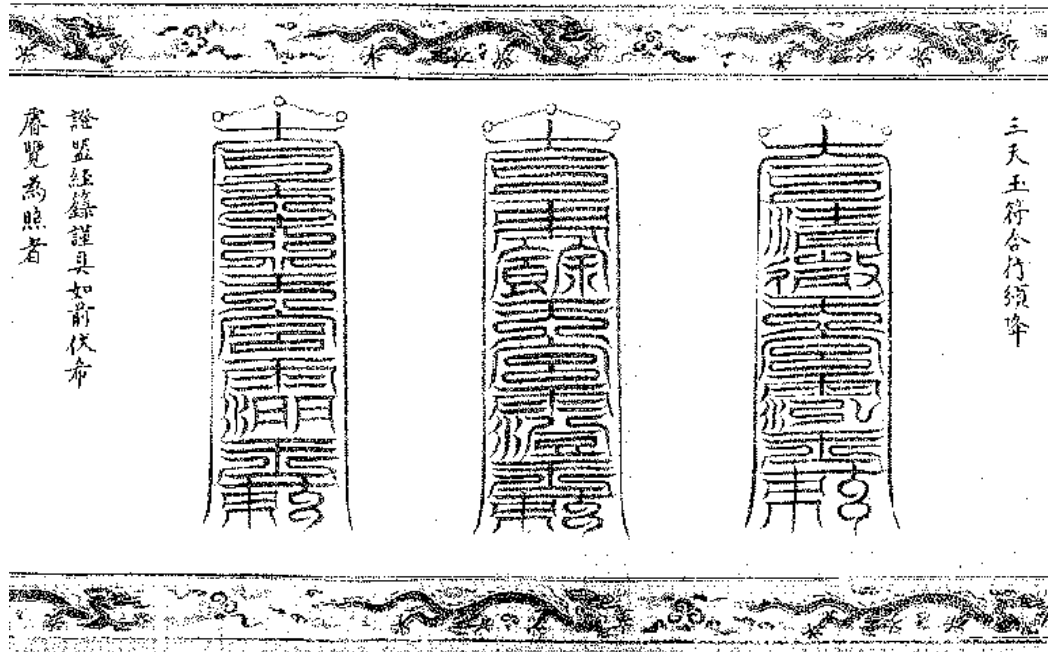
152. *Ordination Scroll*, section of inscription showing “Taixuan dusheng”.



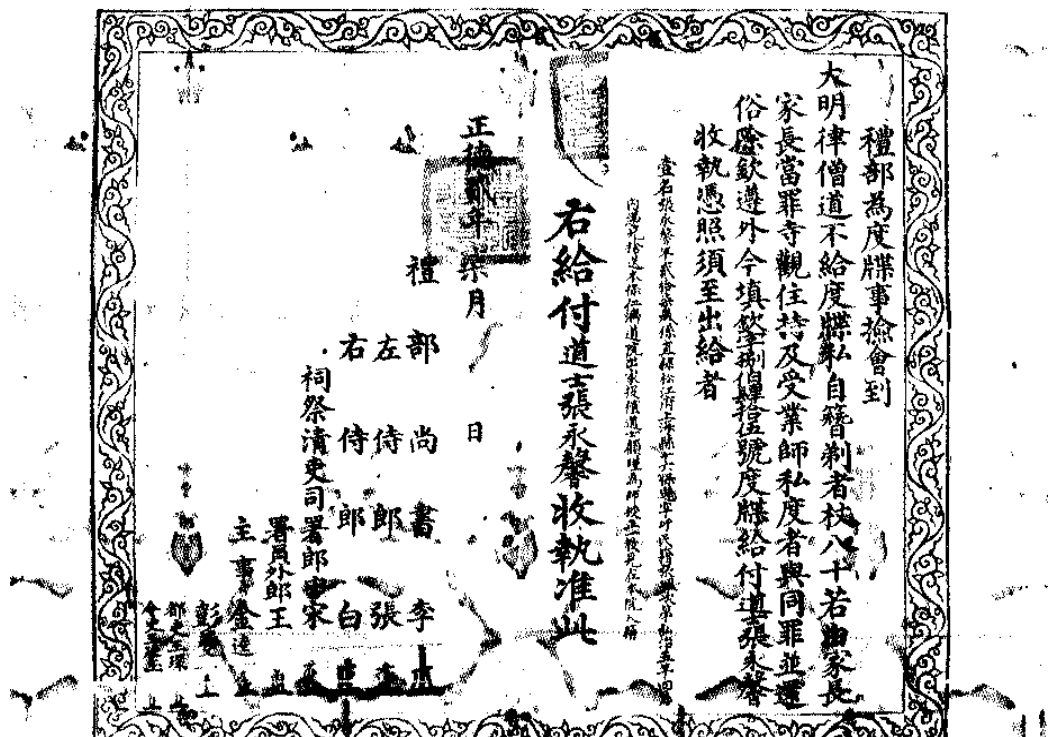
153. Ordination certificate from Putian, Fujian, dated 1981. From Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, fig. 9.



154. Ordination Scroll, section of inscription showing Empress Zhang's edict.



155. Ordination Scroll, section of inscription showing three talismans.



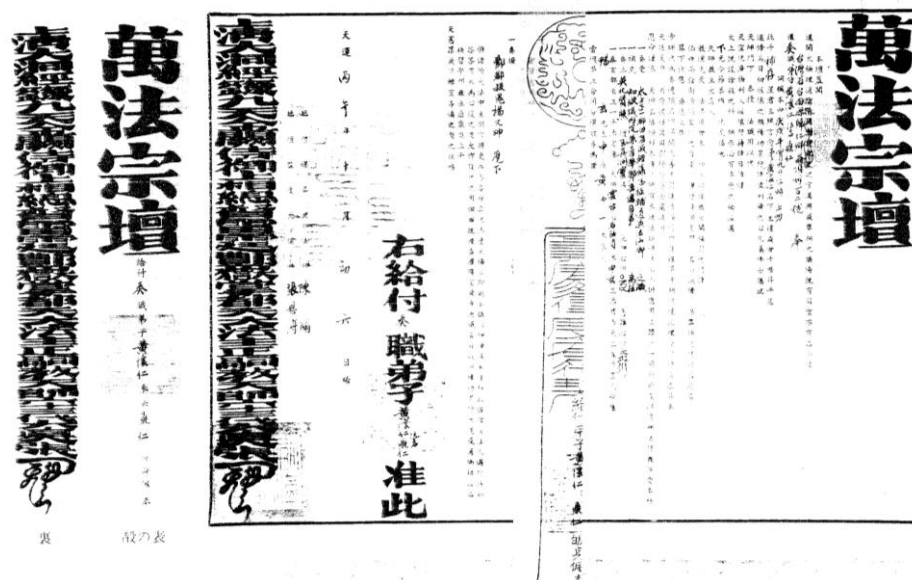
156. Government ordination certificate, dated 1507. Excavated from the tomb of Zhang Yongxin 張永馨 in Maqiao xiang 馬橋鄉, Wuhui cun 吳會村, Shanghai. Woodblock-printed, with writing on paper, 117 by 120 cm. Minxing District Museum.



157. Tonsure certificate from Huijusi 慧居寺 (Temple of Wise Residence), dated 1925. Woodblock-printed, with writing on paper. From Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 336.



158. *Shangqing sandong taiwei huangshu dongxuan tongling baolu* 上清三洞太微黃書洞玄通靈寶籙 (Precious Register that Connects to the Numinous of Cavern Mystery of Yellow Script of Great Tenuity of the Three Caverns of Highest Clarity), transmitted to King of Chengqin (Chengqin wang 誠親王), 1754. Tenri Central Library. From Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, fig. 93.



159. Ordination certificate from Taiwan, dated 1966. From Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, fig. 92.



160. Model document with contract tallies from *Shangqing lingbao jidu dacheng jinshu* 上清靈寶濟度大成金書 (Golden Writings on the Great Achievement of Deliverance by the Numinous Treasure of Highest Purity), Xuande period (1426 – 1435). From *Zangwai daoshu* 17, 36.22ab.



161. Talisman and images from *Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu* 正一大黃預修延壽經錄 (Scripture and Register that Prolongs Longevity for Preparatory Cultivation of Great Yellow of Orthodox Unity), transmitted to Xu Jinlin 許進林, dated 1947. From Ding, “Zhengyi dahuang yuxiu yanshou jinglu” 2, 233.



162. Permit for the underworld (*luyin* 路印) from the tomb of Li Yinggu 李英姑, first wife of Zhu Yiyin 朱翊鉞, King Xuan of Yi 宣益王 in Jiangxi province, 1556. From Jiangxi sheng wenwu gongzuodui, “Jiangxi Nancheng Ming Yi Xuanwang Zhu Yiyin fufu hezang mu”, 21.



163. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress of Emperor Zhenzong of the Song Dynasty*, c. 1028 – 1033. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 177 x 120.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



164. Anonymous, *Empress of Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 56.2 x 45.7. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



165. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Zhang (Xiaokangjing) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.2 x 52 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



166. Anonymous, *Portrait of Xiaozong (Hongzhi emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*.
Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.6 x 52.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



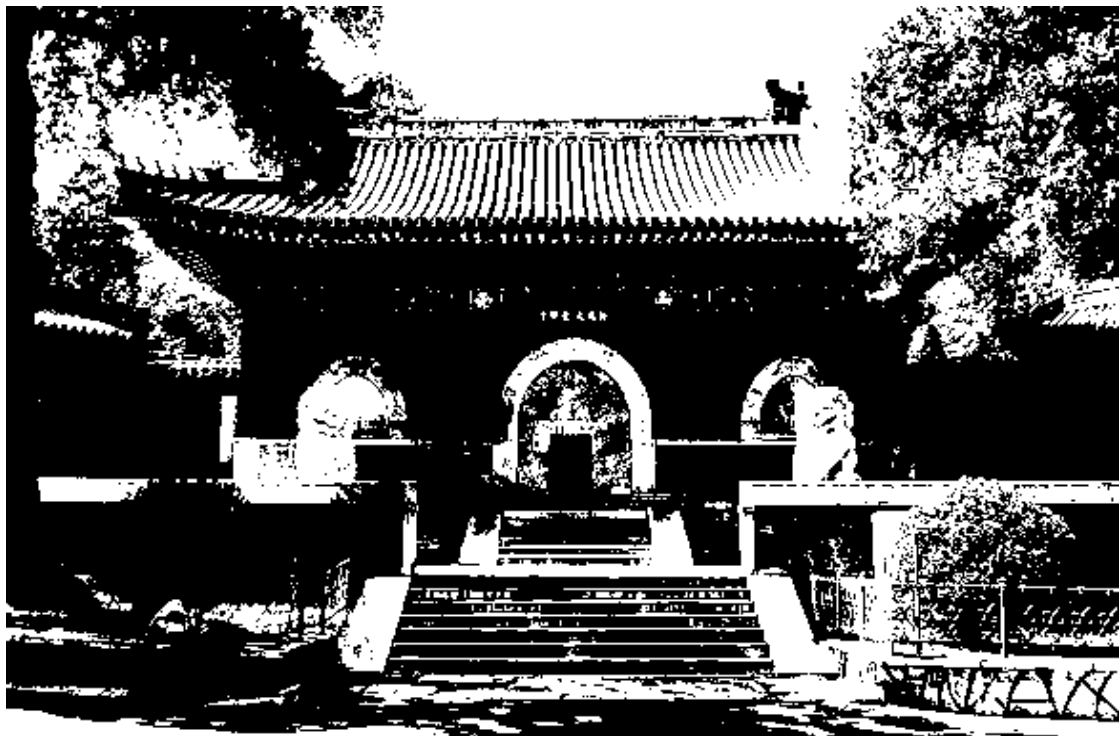
167. Anonymous, *Portrait of Wuzong (Zhengde emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.6 x 52.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



168. Anonymous, *Portrait of Shizong (Jiajing emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.6 x 51.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



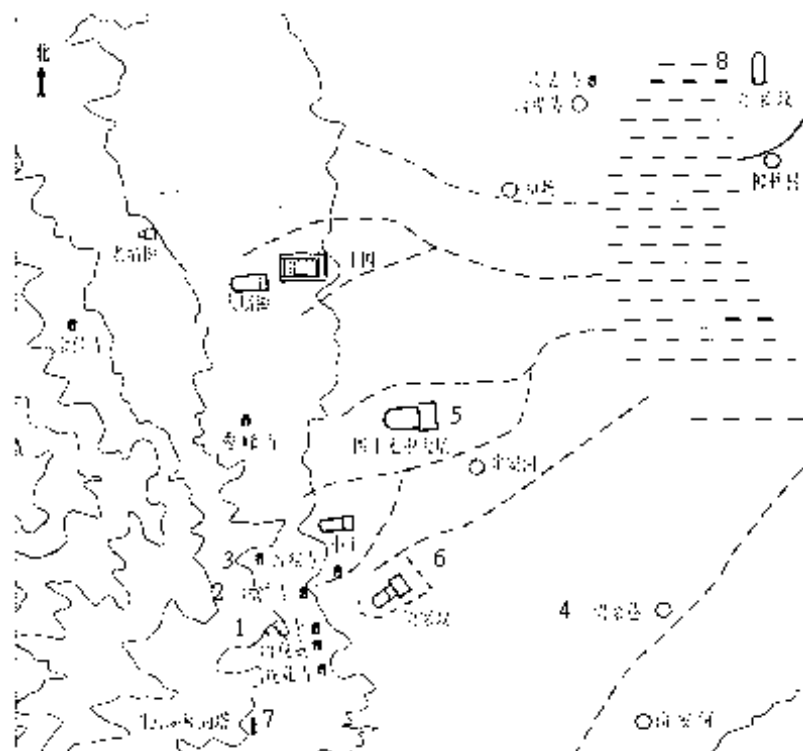
169. Gate of Puzhao Temple, Haidian district, Beijing. Image from Panoramio.



170. Entrance to Dajue Temple, Haidian district, Beijing.



171. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Zhou (Xiaosu) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63 x 51.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



172. Map showing the location of sites related to the Zhou clan around Dajue Temple.
From <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2006/4-10/17759.html>.

1. Dajue Temple
2. Xizhu Temple
3. Puzhao Temple
4. Zhou Family Lane
5. Zhou family tomb walls at Beijing no. 47 High School
6. Zhou family tomb
7. Pagoda built for Zhou Yunduan by his disciples
8. Zhou family tomb



173. Section of the main Zhou tomb walls at the rear of Beijing no. 47 High School.



174. Anonymous, *Maitreya as Budai with Children*, 1503. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 169.8 x 97.8 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



175. Palace of Purple Empyrean (Zixiao gong 紫霄宮), Mount Wudang temple complex, Hubei province. Image from Baidu.



176. Zhang Xuanqing, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



177. Entrance to Fahai Temple, Mount Cuiwei, Beijing. Image from Fahai Temple official website: www.fahaitemple.com.



178. Head of Brahma, detail of the Fahai Temple wall paintings.



179. Head of the Official of Heaven, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



180. Anonymous, *The Star-Lords of Good Fortune, Emolument, and Longevity*, 1454. Hanging scroll, ink, colour and gold on silk, 140 x 78 cm. Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet, Paris.



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181. Zhang Lu, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*



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182. The Star Lord of Good Fortune, detail of *The Star-Lords of Good Fortune, Emolument, and Longevity*.



183. Head of a female attendant, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



184. Head of a female attendant, detail of the Fahai Temple mural.



185. *Ordination Scroll*, detail showing clouds.



186. Fahai Temple murals, detail showing clouds located behind Buddha sculptures.



187. Head of the Official of Heaven, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.



188. Head of Taiyi, detail of the Yongle gong murals.



189. Anonymous, *Album of Buddhist and Daoist Themes*, originally *Daozi mobao* 道子墨寶 (Ink treasures of Wu Daozi), early Ming(?). Album leaf, ink on paper, 34.18 x 38.4 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.



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Perfected Being Zhao Sheng 趙升, detail of the *Ordination Scroll*.

Ziqiexing 紫炁星, detail of *Album of Buddhist and Daoist Themes*.



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192. Brahma, detail of Wu Zhao 武釗 et al, Gongzhu Temple wall painting, 1503. Fanzhi County, Shanxi province.

193. Brahma, detail of Fahai Temple wall painting.



194. Anonymous, *Sakyamuni Buddha*, 1643. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 189.1 x 95 cm. Capital Museum, Beijing.



195. Anonymous, *Suramgama Bodhisattva*, 1609. Hanging scroll, ink, colours and gold on silk, 155.6 x 94.2 cm. Capital Museum, Beijing.



196. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Ma of the Ming Dynasty*. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, 106.5 x 74.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



197. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Chen (Xiaojiesu) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.9 x 51 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



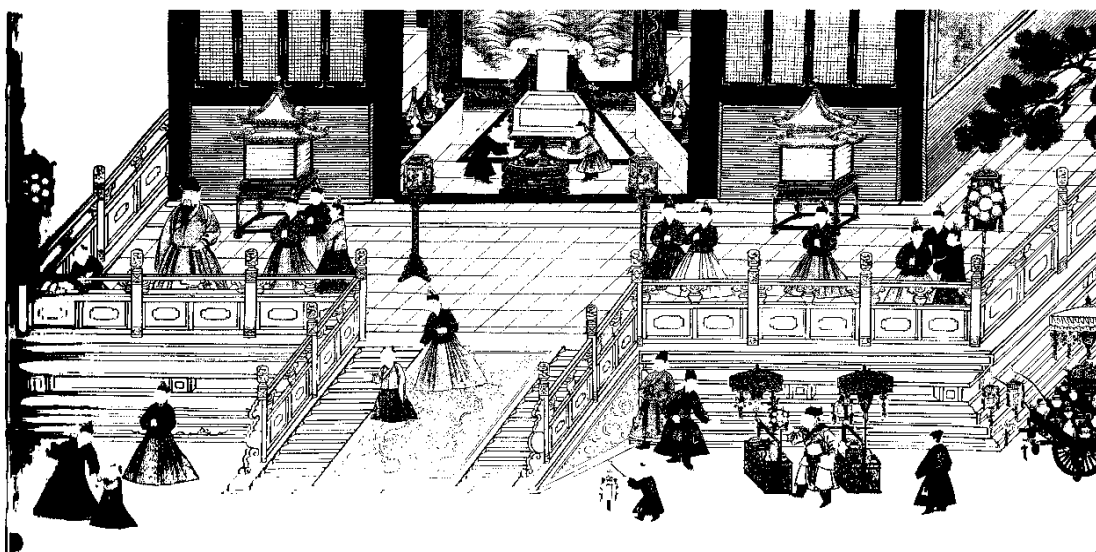
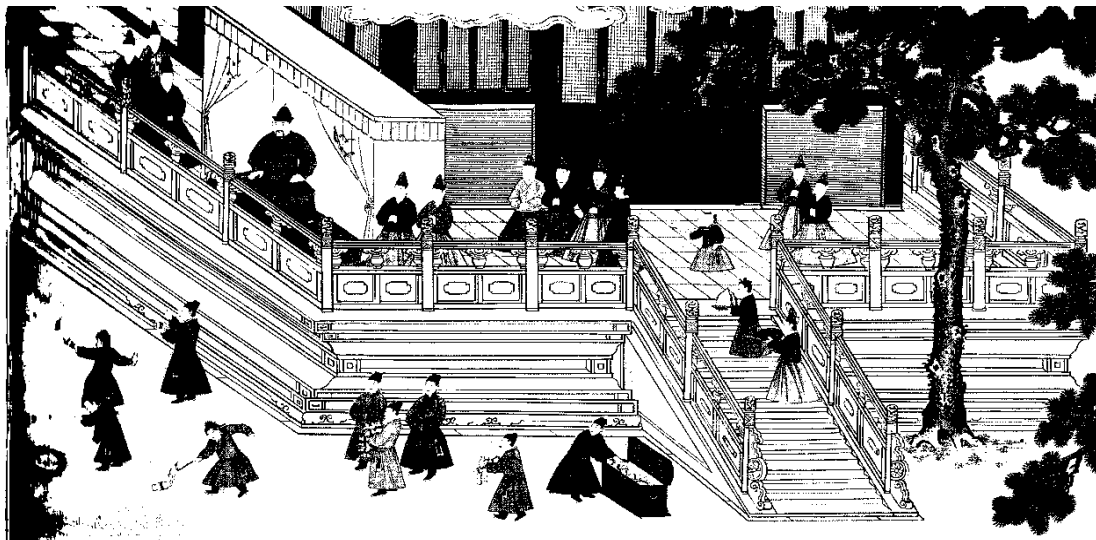
198. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Sun (Xiaogongzhang) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 65.7 x 51.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



199. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Du (Xiaoke) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.8 x 51.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



200. Anonymous, originally *Hunting by a Yuan Painter* (*Yuanren hua lieqi tu* 元人畫獵騎圖). Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 39.4 x 60.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



201. Anonymous, sections from *Xianzong's Pleasures in the Lantern Festival* (*Xianzong yuanxiao xingle tu* 憲宗元宵行樂圖). Handscroll, ink and colours on silk, 37 x 624 cm. National Museum of China, Beijing.



202. Anonymous, *Portrait of Court Lady in a Red Phoenix Gown*, approx. 1500 – 1600. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 162 x 99.8 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.



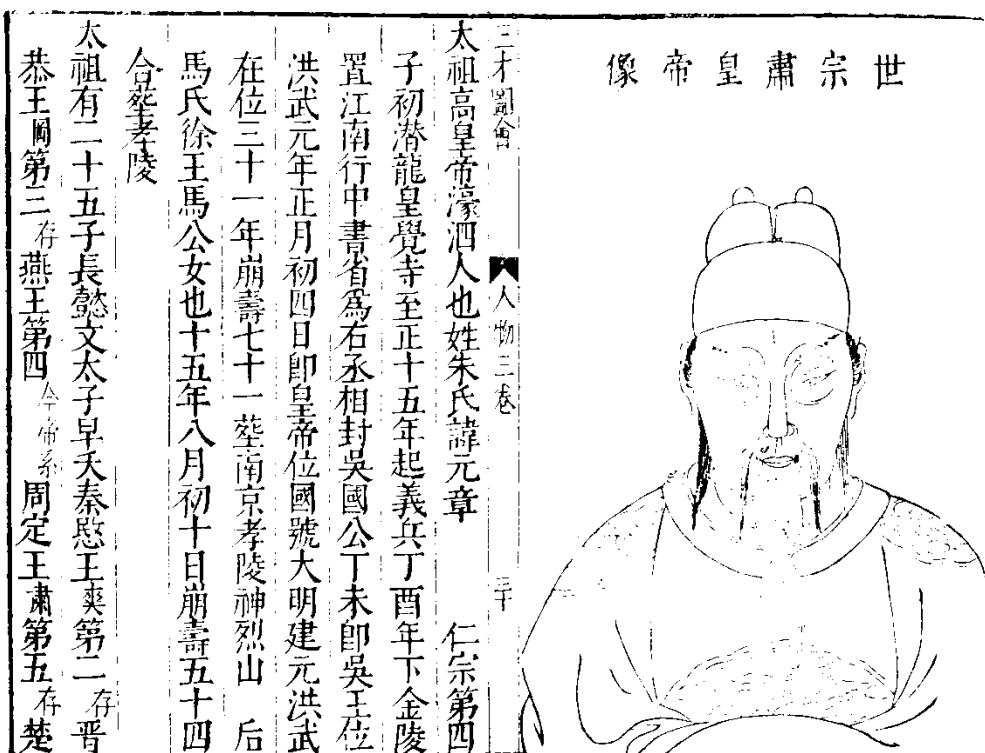
203. Anonymous, *Portrait of Taizu (Hongwu emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 63.7 x 51.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



204. Anonymous, *Portrait of Chengzu (Yongle emperor) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 65.8 x 52.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



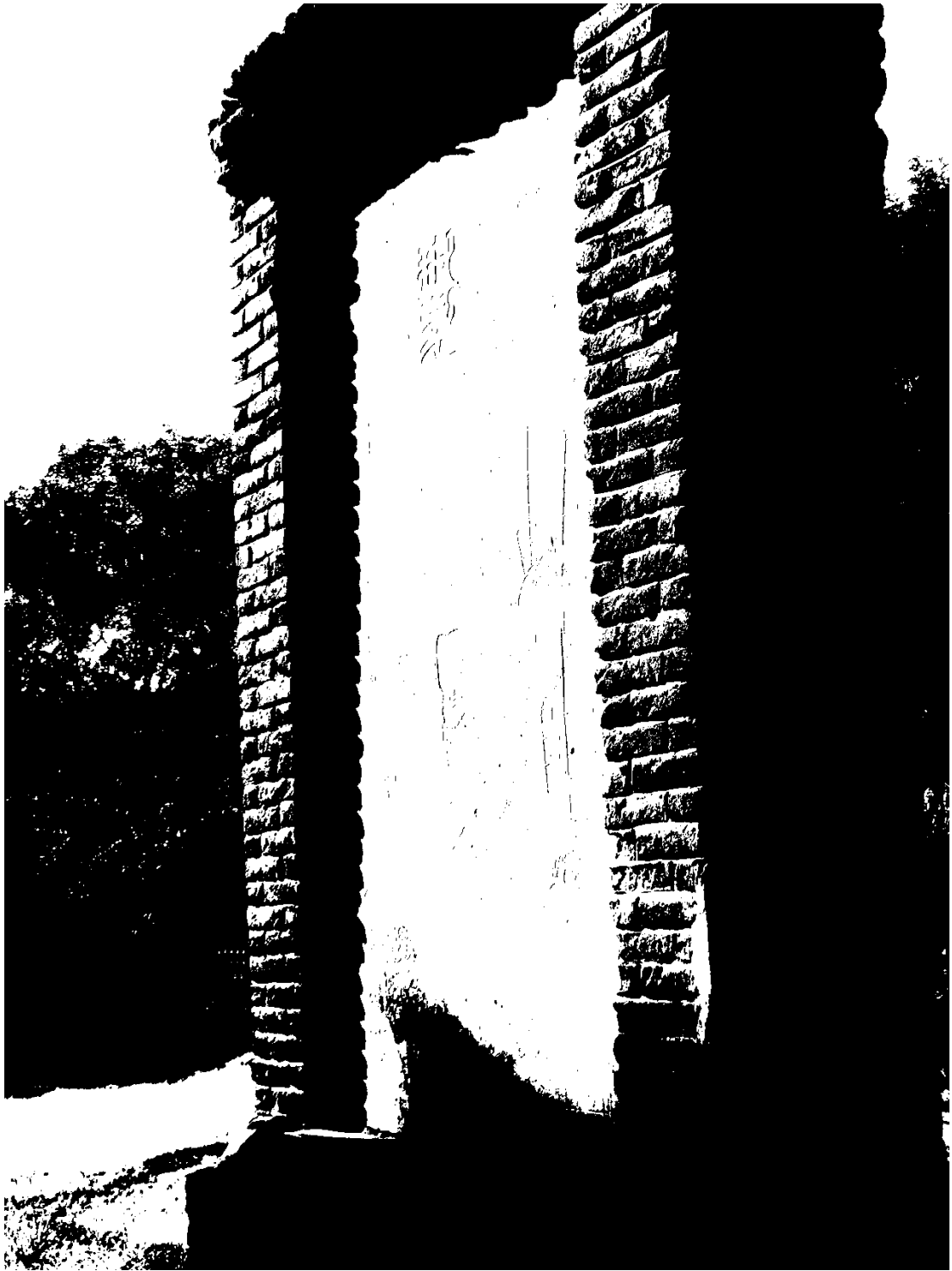
205. Anonymous, *A “Grotesque” Portrait of Taizu*, Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 193 x 104.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



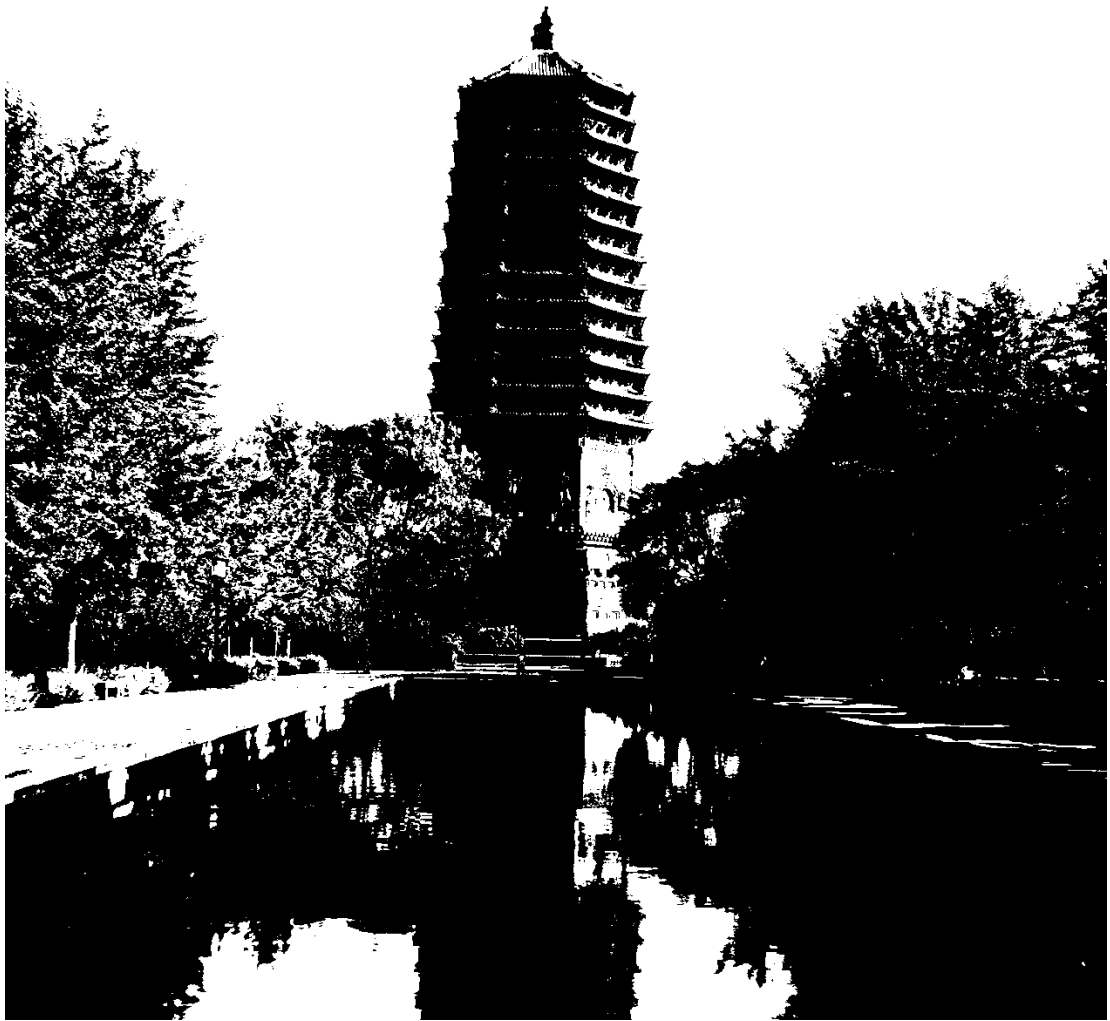
206. Portraits of Taizu, Chengzu and Shizong from *San cai tu hui*, published in 1609. Woodblock-printed book illustrations. From Wang and Wang, *San cai tu hui, renwu*, 3.29a-30a.



207. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Li (Xiaoding) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 64.6 x 50.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.



208. Stele depicting the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva at Cishou Temple, carved in 1587. Balizhuang, Beijing.



209. Cishou Temple Pagoda at Balizhuang, Beijing, 1576 –1578.



210. Rubbing of the Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Cishou Temple, carved in 1587. Ink rubbing on paper, 238 x 145 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 21.



211. Anonymous, *Guanyin by a Lotus Pond*, 1593. Hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 181.6 x 114.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



212. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Sheng'an Temple, carved in 1589. Ink rubbing on paper, 100 x 59 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 21.



213. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele from Mile Temple, carved in 1592. Ink rubbing on paper, 116 x 62 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 25.



214. Rubbing of a Nine Lotus Bodhisattva stele at Cisheng Temple, carved in 1594. Ink rubbing on paper, 88 x 67 cm. From Beijing tushuguan, ed., *Beijing tushuguan cang huaxiang tuoben huibian*, vol. 7, p. 30.



215. Image of Guanyin, no. 44 from *Portraits of the Fifty-three Manifestations of the Compassionate Appearance of the Great Being Guanyin* (*Guanyin dashi cirong wushisan xianxiang zan* 觀音大士慈容五十三現象贊), early Qing edition. Woodblock-printed on paper. Shanghai Library. From Ding et al, *Mingdai muke guanyin huapu*, 89.



217. Photograph of a portrait of a bodhisattva-empress once held at Changchun Temple, Beijing, published in 1935. From Tang, *Jiudu wenwu lüe*, fig. 34.



218. Anonymous, *Qianlong as Mañjughoṣa Emperor*. Thangka, ink and colours on silk, 113.5 x 64 cm. Freer-Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



219. The Empress Dowager Cixi as Guanyin photographed by Xun Ling, 1903. Palace Museum, Beijing. From Liu and Xu, eds., *Gugong zhencang renwu zhaopian huicui*.



220. Anonymous, *Portrait of Empress Liu (Xiaochun) of the Ming Dynasty*. Album leaf, ink and colours on silk, 71.2 x 43.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.