Chapter Four

Deities, Spirits, and Clergy

Mourning the War Dead

When the northern caitiffs came and pastured south of the bend of the Yellow River, the emperor ordered the Earl of Zhangwu, Yang Xin [fl. 1465], to lead the army and exterminate them. Subsequently the court transferred three thousand crack troops each from the garrisons at Datong, Xuanfu, and Ningxia to encircle them. Given such numbers, the court supplied them with winter clothes from the palace storehouse and sent officials to toast the troops.

I had the assignment at Ningxia. On the second day of the seventh month, I was promoted to be supervisor of the Number Two Palace Storehouse. I saw a eunuch holding a string of prayer beads. Their color looked like ivory, and a reddish gleam suffused them. I asked what they were for. He said, “At the Yongle emperor’s great battle at Baigou River [Hebei], the soldiers’ corpses were piled in heaps all over the countryside.” The emperor remembered them and ordered that their skeletons be gathered together. He commanded that prayer beads be made for the eunuchs. They would perform Buddhists chants in the hope of a favorable rebirth for the soldiers.” Moreover, there were large deep skulls that they filled with holy water to offer to the Buddha. They named them heavenly spirit bowls (tianlingwan). These are all teachings of foreign monks. (SZ 1.3; GD 73.1602)

Communicating with the Spirits

There was a native of Shaanxi who summoned a poet-immortal. The stylus moved, and he asked which immortal was present. The spirit wrote a single character: “ghost.” The man further asked, “Since you are a ghost, why not seek to be reborn?” Then the stylus wrote a poem:
SOOTHING SOULS

The Chinese commonly believed that those who died before their time, in violent fashion, might become unruly spirits, sometimes wreaking havoc on the living. Soldiers who perished in battle were no exception. Beginning with the Sui dynasty (581–617), which reunified the empire after nearly four hundred years of division, governments regularly sponsored large-scale Buddhist rituals and monasteries expressly aimed at relieving the afterlife suffering of the war dead. These performances, addressing allies and enemies, strove to protect the regime against malevolent forces and manifest its enormous compassion, as well as accumulating vast karmic merit that would aid its fortunes in the future.

One dream, so long, forty autumns,
no vexations and no worries.
People all urge me to return to the dusty world,
I fear only that I would not become a full person.

After the spirit stopped writing, the man requested that the spirit leave behind a name, and the spirit again wrote the character “ghost,” and then left. I say that this ghost did not rashly have the title of “divine immortal.” It could be said to be wondrous. But to know that ghosts cannot return to be humans and yet say that one does not wish to return to be human—this indeed is being deceptive. \(2\) (GD 73.1609)

OMENS AND EXAMINATIONS

At the metropolitan examinations in the kuiwei year of the Tianshun reign \([1463]\), I stayed at an inn at the capital. Once for fun I made a picture of the kui star.\(^3\) Above I wrote, “Below Heaven’s gates, the ghost kicks a ladle. For first place in kuiwei, brush and ingot will fall into his hands.”\(^4\) I put it on the wall at my spot. Soon after it disappeared.

At the time Lu Dingyi was staying at the home of my friend Wen Bingzhong. He took out the picture and played with it. I was mystified and asked where it came from. He said, “Yesterday, as I was leaning against the gate. A child had it in his hand and showed me. I traded him a piece of fruit for it.” I was silent and took it as an omen of our fates. Soon after, Dingyi placed first on the examinations, and I failed to pass. (SZ 2.12–13)
THE FOUNDER’S MUNIFICENCE

When the imperial tombs were first being constructed, officials measured and established boundaries. As they were about to build an encircling wall around the area, the authorities memorialized to the court that the commoners’ graves by its side would have to be moved. The Hongwu emperor said, “These graves are all my family’s former neighbors. You need not move them out.” The graves have remained in the precincts of the imperial tombs to the present day. At seasonal occasions in spring and autumn, they receive offerings and are swept clean. Commoners are allowed to come and go among them without restriction. When this situation was made known to Fengyang Magistrate Du Chang, he said, “Here we can see how imperial magnanimity is extraordinarily encompassing and naturally differs from the common multitude.” (SZ 3.26)

A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

There was a man who faced imminent execution and avoided death, thanks to three case reviews. Someone asked him what his thoughts and spirits were at that time. He said, “I already was muddled and not aware of anything. I remember only that I myself was sitting on top of a roof and saw below a person with his hands bound behind him. My wife, children, relatives, and friends were all at his side. After a while, the pardon arrived, and only then could I get down from the roof.” Probably the one on the roof was his soul, and the one he saw with his hands bound behind his back was his body. As I observe this account, I truly believe in the common notion of the departed soul. (SZ 3.27–28)

A GHOSTBUSTER

At a Buddha hall in a temple in Nanfeng County in Jiangxi, there were demons that came and went. People did not dare go there. A student surnamed Xu, who always was reckless, went there at night with his cohort. They also made a pact, saying, “Beforehand we will place an object in the hall. If the next day Xu would take it away as proof, then the group would bring out the wine and toast him. If he does not, then there will be punishment.”

When dusk fell, the student Xu drank until he was drunk and then went. He did not carry a weapon or knife, but only tiles and bricks to protect himself, and that was all. After about the first watch [7–9 p.m.], there were, as expected, several demons who came in through the window. They had just gone up to
the beam when the student let out a great yell and threw the tiles and bricks and struck them. The demons all left through the window. The student saw where they went, and they had all gone into the waterhole below the window. He noted this to himself and lay down to sleep.

The next day, the sun was high, and the student had not yet risen. The others suspected that he had died. Only then did he come down, nonchalantly carrying the object. The others brought together the money and toasted him. On the following day, he led the youngsters in the family to dig up that place and found a pit with gold, amounting to over sixty jin. From then on, the Buddha hall had no ghosts. (SZ 3.35; GD 75.1644)

GHOSTWRITERS AND THE INEXPlicable

Zhuge Jing was a native of Jiangpu [Jiangsu]. He once took out some paper and composed poetry. He went out and did some thinking outside his studio. When he got some lines, he then went into his studio, and there already was poetry written on the paper. Jing thought this was strange and did not tell anyone about it.

On another day, he tried this several times and always had the same result. He thought it was becoming increasingly strange. Thereupon he called it the work of a great immortal and each day lit incense and treated him with ritual. Whenever he had poems or texts to write, he always requested the immortal to write for him. Once he wished to view the immortal, and the writing paper said, “I do not consent.” As his requests grew more earnest, they made an appointment to meet at dusk. Jing himself was terrified and dragged along a friend to accompany him. When night came, they heard outside the door the sound of someone snapping his fingers. They opened the door to welcome him, and it was a headless man. Jing fainted in shock. Afterward, when he wished the immortal to write for him, there was no response.

The son-in-law of Li Duan [fl. 1450s], Hangzhou prefect, at night rose to go to the toilet and did not return. His family searched for him. The doors and windows were locked as before, and no one knew where he went. Li was alarmed and thought the matter was odd. Then he went to the ancestral hall and rang the bell. He assembled the many functionaries and questioned all of them but did not find him.

At dusk the next day, the son-in-law suddenly dropped down from the roof. People asked about his coming and going, and he knew nothing. They saw that his clothes were soaked and soiled. There were yellow and green marks. It was as if he had brushed against plants and trees, but none understood it.
I learned of these matters from Censor Jiang Zongyi, who received his jinshi degree the same year that I did [1466]. Zhuge was Zongyi’s father’s friend. Li had been a judge when Jiang was his superior. So he could speak about these things in detail. (SZ 4.38–39; GD 76.1649–50)

**COFFINS AND TABOOS**

The court did not permit funeral processions in Nanjing to exit the Hongwu, Chaoyang, Tongji and Hanxi Gates. None dared to send a funeral procession through the Zhengyang Gate in Beijing, and there were no prohibitions at the other gates. In front of the Daming Gate, even if it were an empty coffin, it still was not allowed to pass in front. At each gate, empty coffins were not allowed to be carried in.

In the past there were those that did not know about this restriction. A civil official’s family lived to the west of the palace and brought a coffin east of the palace. They could not pass through with the coffin, so they went through the Beishang Gate, circled the palace wall, and then arrived at their house. There were also those who brought coffins to the capital. They knew about the restrictions and lodged them outside the gates. People thought it was funny. There indeed are reasons why the ancients asked about the restrictions when they entered a new domain.

Outside of the capital, there were no restrictions. If there were restrictions, guards used the prohibition as a technique to collect bribes. For example, for those who died in office in Liaodong [Liaoning], the returning coffin inevitably passed through the Shanhai Gate. For those who died in office in Shanxi, the returning coffin inevitably went through the Tongguan Wall. Those who died in office north of the Great Wall invariably passed through Juyong and other gates. Beyond these, there were no other roads. (SZ 4.40; GD 76.1651)

**MONKS AND DIPLOMACY**

Among foreign monks there are those with the title dharma king (fawang), which is like preceptor of the state (guoshi). The court receives them with special ritual treatment and gives them lavish provisions. Remonstrating officials always remark about them.

In general, with the customs of the western regions [Central Asia], as soon as there are rebellions or deadly feuds that cannot be suppressed from a distance, the court uses the Buddhist dharma to warn and instruct them. Then, in a ritual with sharp swords and Buddhist scriptures, they make an oath to be
trustworthy and prudent. The key to controlling foreigners probably lies in this method. So although the provisions are said to be excessively lavish, we still do not have to bother with the expenses of weapons and grain supplies. Moreover, if the state submits, and these perverse elements are made to return to their proper hidden places, then there are ample rewards. Newly appointed officials do not know about this practice, and the court does not want to speak about them openly. So these matters are never announced publicly.

In sum, these are simply the techniques of previous dynasties to control distant foreigners. It was not that they regarded Buddhism as something divine. Later ages did not realize this. Sometimes they passed down precepts and warnings, and sometimes they studied their techniques. Sometimes there were Chinese clergy who falsely took on their trappings and usurped their title. These are the ills of later eras. During the early Chenghua reign \([1465–1487]\), as one preceptor of the state was ill and about to die, he said to others, “I am going to pass away on such-and-such day at such-and-such hour.” The time came, and he was not dead. The disciples were embarrassed that the prediction did not come true and so strangled him in secret.

All dharma kings and preceptors of the state who die in China, according to established precedent, should have a tomb stupa constructed for them. When his excellency Wang of Gu’an \([1465]\) returned to be secretary in the Ministry of Works, he memorialized that the government’s gifts and provisions to these monks had grown extremely lavish. It would be appropriate that no official funds be used in the construction of their tomb stupas. People viewed this as appropriate. (SZ 4.42)

REGULATING IMAGES

In ancient times, city gods were not in the Register of Sacrifices.\(^7\) In later ages, because people used high walls and deep moats to protect against external and internal threats, they invariably had gods to rule them. Then they began to have shrines. Confused people made likenesses, dressed in official robes and caps. They added honors and titles. We have continued these practices from earlier ages, and it has gone on for a long time.

In the first year of the Hongwu reign \([1368]\), the city god of each place was enfeoffed to investigate and command the common people. Gods for superior prefectures were to be called “duke,” those of prefectures were to be called “marquis,” and those of counties were to be called “earl,” and moreover there were edicts to carry out these instructions. In general the Hongwu emperor at the time did not yet have a fixed opinion. In the third year \([1370]\), the court
then rectified the Register of Sacrifices. It was ordered that, “for all of the empire’s city gods, they shall be only called such-and-such superior prefecture’s city god, such-and-such prefecture’s city god, and such-and-such county’s city god. The previous honors and titles are all abolished.”

A while later, the court further ordered authorities to remove any of the various gods mixed inside city god temples. In cases where city god temples had earthen images in the center, the authorities were to wash them away. In cases where images were placed into the center wall, the authorities were to screen them off with paintings of clouds and mountains. For images in the side corridors, they were to cover them over with mud. As soon as this order was promulgated, a thousand years of bad practices were abolished, and all was made anew.

How pitiful! Today’s authorities mostly cannot accomplish this goal. They often make images with official robes and caps, and in extreme cases create female images to accompany them. Customs are difficult to change, and the ignorant are difficult to enlighten. Subsequently, they cause the Hongwu emperor’s bright instructions to become empty talk. This can be called a crime! (sz 5.55)

CORRUPT CLERGY

The two huge Buddhist temples in the capital, Daxinglong and Dalongfu, are cloisters that conduct services on behalf of the dynasty. Other temples with plaques bestowed by the court were all constructed by eunuchs. Temples must have a monk official managing them. When eunuchs leave the palace on official business, they always stay at temples. Cunning eunuchs all make arrangements beforehand with monk officials. The monks wait for the eunuchs’ departure and then go to meet them. In cases where eunuchs ask for favors of civil officials, it is always the monk officials who make the secret payments on their behalf.

In recent times, many high ministers associate with monk officials like this. Zhihua Temple, east of the capital’s military school, is where Grand Eunuch Xu An [date unknown] and his sort burned incense for Wang Zhen. During the Tianshun reign [1457–1464], the manager was the monk official Ransheng. He was learned and understood literary matters. At the time, Yan Yuxi [1426–1476], aide at the Directorate of Education, was in charge of military school matters. Ransheng then went to visit him. Yuxi used excuses not to meet with him. On another day, Ransheng gave him tea and cakes, and Yuxi refused him. Ransheng bestowed poetry on him, and Yuxi refused him. He never
associated with him at all. Yuxi can be called a steadfast gentleman, whose worthiness stood far apart from others. \(sz\ 5.59–60\)

SPIRIT MARRIAGES

According to the customs of Shizhou in Shanxi, anytime that a son dies before marrying, his parents wait for the death of a local girl and then invariably request that she be matched with him. They discuss ritual wedding gifts to the bride’s family, as if she were living. On the day of burial, they also give a banquet for the bride’s family. If a girl dies, the parents want to make a dead son a son-in-law who would move in with them. Their ritual resembles this one.\(^{12}\) \(sz\ 5.62\)

CONVENTS AND THEIR VICTIMS

The capital has many Buddhist convents. Yet only in the district east of Prince Ying’s residence is there a place where idle imperial consorts and concubines enter the clergy. The gate restrictions are strictly adhered to, and people do not dare to enter. None of the other places are like this. That said, some places regard it as taboo that people know about them and some places do not. In places that do not regard such knowledge as taboo, gentlemen prudently suspect them and do not enter as a matter of course. Places that do regard such knowledge as taboo have experienced strange disasters, and gentlemen certainly may not enter.

In the Tianshun reign \([1457–1464]\), a nominated scholar at the departmental examinations left the test site and went strolling. He did not return for seven days, and no one knew where he went. He had entered a convent and was detained. Each day the nun would lock the door and exit. At night she returned, secretly bringing wine and delicacies. So no one knew about it. One day the student took fright and then jumped over the wall and left. When he left, he had become an emaciated stalk.

I also heard that during the Yongle reign \([1403–1424]\), there was a mason repairing a convent. He found a hat made of horsehair in a dustpan. The hat had crystals and pearls. The worker took the pearls and sold them in the market. The boss recognized them and seized the man. They asked where he got them, and he told them the truth. Only then did they learn that a youth had secretly entered the convent and then died from lust. His corpse could not be taken out, and the nuns had dismembered and buried it under the wall. The court recommended that the arrested nuns be punished with the death
penalty, and that their temple be destroyed. The grass lot northeast of the palace today is said to be the abandoned site. (Sz 6.68)

Mountains and Their Birthdays

Popular custom has passed down that the twenty-eighth day of the third lunar month is the birthday of the Eastern Marchmount [Dongyue], but it does not appear in the records. In his excellency Xu Bin’s [fl. mid-fifteenth century] “Commemoration of the Reconstruction of Haoli Shrine,” it reads, “Every year on the twenty-eighth day of the third lunar month, we call on the thearch (di) of the Eastern Marchmount to celebrate his birthday. The people of the empire do not regard thousands and hundreds of li as a long way, and so all arrive eagerly with incense and cloth and animal sacrifices to offer.” This is seen in the text.

Now heaven opened in the first stage of creation, and the earth split in the second stage. When they opened and split, the mountains and rivers of the world, regardless of size, were all formed completely at the same time. It is not as if today one mountain was born, the next day another mountain was born, and that there is a sequence of days and months that can be recorded and called “birthdays.” This absurdity does not need further discussion to be clarified. I do not understand on what basis his excellency Xu had it written on stone! Yet his collected works do not have this text. Could it be that someone else used his name? (Sz 7.82; Gd 79.1700)

Shamans and Charlatans

In the capital’s wards, most people believe in shamanesses. There was a military man, Chen Wu. He was tired of his family’s devotion to them and could not control it. One day he put a green pear inside his cheek and told his family that the boil was very painful. He did not eat but lay down the entire day. His wife was very worried and summoned a shamaness to cure him. The shamaness caused the god to descend, and it said that what ailed Wu was a god named Ding Boil. Because he had never respected this god, the god would not save him. The family members lined up and bowed, praying earnestly, and afterward the shamaness consented to help. Wu pretended to cry out with great urgency. He said to his family, “It would definitely be acceptable for you to get a divine master to come in and observe and save me.” The shamaness entered, and Wu calmly spat out the green pear and displayed it. He seized the shamaness, slapped her face, and sent her out of the house. From then on, none of his
The relationship between the state, Chinese religion, and Confucians often took complex forms, and the Eastern Marchmount offers a prime example. The Confucian canon sharply circumscribed who might worship what. The Son of Heaven might worship universal deities, such as Heaven and Earth, feudal lords could provide offerings to mountains and rivers within their realm, commoners were left to express their devotion only to their ancestors. This neat hierarchy broke down, however, early in imperial Chinese history, as some Han emperors went on lavish pilgrimages to Mount Tai, thanking its deity for blessing their reigns with peace and prosperity. Monarchs in subsequent dynasties followed suit, and as the centuries wore on, the mountain became a widespread cult, with its temples found everywhere. Apologists cited the longevity of these practices and claimed that Mount Tai’s beneficent qi extended throughout the empire. In 1291, the Mongol court formally included the Mount Tai cult within the state’s Register of Sacrifices, to be worshiped in spring and fall by prefects and magistrates, and commoners turned to the deity to relieve them of drought and plague. In addition, the god was accorded imperial status, fully outfitted with seventy-odd bureaucratic offices to aid him in his celestial and terrestrial duties. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, most scholar-officials accepted this state of affairs as a fait accompli, and some viewed this piety as an aid in governing the people.

Not so Lu Rong. In two inscriptions for public buildings in his native district, the public house (gongguan) and city-god temple, he denounced the Eastern Marchmount cult.1 These construction projects involved the destruction of the temple’s image and conversion of the temple to new uses. Many writers would have touched on the facts only briefly or not at all, but they

1 See “Taicang cheng chenghuang miao ji,” SXW, 31.6a–7b, and “Kunshan xian gongguan ji,” SXW, 31.9b–11a.

family revered them. I heard this from Zeng, from the Bureau of Honors, who talked and laughed about it. (SZ 7.87; GD 79.1705)

EXORCISMS AND MONSTERS

My colleague Liu Shiyong spoke of a girl from his county who became afflicted with an odd illness. In the middle of every night, there was something that
occupied major sections in both essays. Lu based his objections on Confucian grounds. First, the mountain was located in the north, and its cult worship then ought to stay in the north; it was illegitimate for devotion to spill south of the Huai and Yangzi Rivers. Second, the human representation of the god, attended by images of officials and bearing fulsome titles from the court, lacked any canonical basis. Third, temple images of hellish and heavenly afterlives played on the fear and greed of ignorant commoners. Although officials understood that matters were amiss, most acquiesced to accepted practices, and few had the fortitude to properly carry on in the spirit of the Hongwu emperor and curb the excesses of popular devotion. Other temples for nationwide cults, such as to five Tang dynasty generals who perished fighting against rebels, also drew Lu’s opposition. The men had shown unquestioned loyalty, but only one figure had ties with the region. Consequently, Lu rearranged the images, putting the local man alone in the front chamber and consigning the other four to a building at the rear.²

Lu took an impeccably Confucian position, which remained, however, a minority view. The Eastern Marchmount cult continued to thrive in the Ming, and renovated temples in its honor received due commemoration from Lu’s scholar-official colleagues. Sanction for this devotion indeed came from the throne itself, as Emperor Yingzong composed an inscription in 1447 for a rebuilt temple in Beijing.³ Virtually all records duly noted the presence of images and lodged no objections. Centuries later, a Kunshan local gazetteer noted that the public house celebrated by Lu Rong had become again an Eastern Marchmount temple.⁴

² “Yu Zhu Taipu shu,” SXW, 32.1a–2a.
³ For the text and a translation, see Schipper and Marsone, ”Inscription pour la reconstruction.”
⁴ Kunxin liangxian xuxiu hezhi, 3.19a.
burst forth from the water, carrying a big snakehead. The head had small horns and probably belonged to the kraken species.  

The two boys fell to the ground in a faint and revived only after a long time. That night the girl started to sleep peacefully, and her sickness did not recur. As for the Daoist, from then on, his reputation amazed the public. Later there were people who summoned him. In the end, he was ineffective. Some suspected that he had become licentious and polluted, and so ruined himself.

Krakens are evil things. Long ago Zhou Chu [236–297] and Xu Xun [trad. 239–374] decapitated krakens. I suspect that between heaven and earth there naturally are these sorts of divine techniques. If people can with the utmost sincerity move the gods, then divine beings will curse demons and defend people, and these techniques will take effect. Otherwise, krakens and dragons coil and stay at the bottom of deep pools. Even for people with upright qi and martial abilities, these places are not where one simply goes to farm. People would lose their lives if they go there, and most are destroyed by their maws and teeth. How can one hope to be able to come out holding the krakens' skeletons? (SZ 7.90)

FILIAL PIETY AND CULTS

There is a Five Sons temple in a village in Guangling [Jiangsu]. It is said that during the Five Dynasties era [907–960], many bandits made a sworn brotherhood. They roamed and looted in the Jiang-Huai area. Their clothing and food were plentiful. All regretted not nurturing their parents. Then they sought out a poor old woman to be their mother and served her with the utmost filial piety. In whatever they did, they only followed her orders. As a result, they changed and did good deeds. The local people regarded them as righteous. After she died, divine and strange events occurred. So they established a temple for her. In Wu those who worship the Wutong gods always include one they call the Great Mother. I suspect that it is precisely this demon.

Alas! People all excel at being bandits, but they also have filial feelings. Heavenly principle abides in the human heart. When has it ever completely disappeared? How much more so that she was not their real mother, but all followed her instructions and in the end became good people. Isn’t there a great deal to be gained here? In this world, there are cases where the parents are still alive but children do not follow their instructions. For those rich and noble sorts who do not think of their parents, if they saw the Five Sons, how could they not be ashamed? (SZ 8.94; GD 80.1716)
NAME GODS

The origins of the title celestial consort (tianfei), are very old. The ancients treated Heaven as thearch (di) and Earth as empress (hou) and regarded Water as consort (fei). That being so, celestial consort in general referred to water gods. During the Yuan, when grain transports traveled to the capital by sea, the deified daughter of the Lin family of Putian [Fujian] had divine powers over the rivers and seas, and people called her Celestial Consort. This is just like calling Zhang Daoling [fl. 142] of Qibo Celestial Master. It is a term of ultimate honor and reverence, and that is all.

Some say, "Water is of the yin category. Thus, for all water gods, people make statues of women." Moreover, they use famous people as models, such as at the Xiang River temple [Hunan] using Shun’s consort, and at the Gudui temple [Shanxi] using Yao’s empress. I daresay that the common people do not know that the gods of mountains and rivers cannot be sought with physical likenesses, and so they mistakenly create them. (SZ 8.95)

BUDDHIST MONUMENTS

Longxing Buddhist Temple in Zhending was built by the Song emperor Taizu [r. 960–975] in the fourth year of the Kaibao reign [963]. The Buddha hall is extremely imposing and majestic. One day I excused myself from work and went up to look at the view. The hall was five stories high and had nine bays. We ascended by a staircase that encircled the structure. On the wall was an engraved stone signature of Cai Guibo. The calligraphy was lovely. Inside the hall was a bronze cast image of Guanyin. Its head went to the very top.

A monk said, "The hall’s height is thirteen zhang [about 145 feet]. The bronze image is seven zhang, five chi [about 84 feet]. Forty-two arms extend from it. The whole body is adorned with gold." He did not know how much it cost. Looking at it, one could not help but be moved and sigh. The day I climbed up was the fifteenth day of the intercalary second month of the dingyou year of the Chenghua reign [March 15, 1477].

Long ago, Emperor Zhou Shizong [r. 954–959], because the common people lacked coin, ordered that all bronze Buddhist images be destroyed. The metal was to be cast into coin to relieve the common people. Earlier Confucians deeply approved this measure, but the Song founder cast the metal back into images like this. We can know from this the understandings of these two monarchs. (GD 80.1718)
The father of Zhou Hongmou [1419–1490] was an assistant instructor in Changyang [Hubei]. He wrote *Explanations about Sprites and Fiends* (Yaomei shuo). He said that one of his pupils, He Zan, and his younger brother were drinking at a commoner’s house. Zan returned home drunk and lost track of his brother. He searched for him in the mountains for several days and found him in a tree. He asked his brother how he got there. His brother said, “A man led me here. Now he saw that all of you came, and he hid away.” He probably was a mountain demon.

Moreover, a pupil’s father, Elder Zheng, went into the mountains to search for herbs. He encountered a tree with a large fungi specimen, which he took. He went on for several li, Someone chased and fought him, saying “How could you hurt my ear? You should give it back.” Elder Zheng was a shaman. He had techniques for driving away demons. The person could not hurt him and left. Yet Zheng’s spirit was shaken, and he lost his way home. Several days later, people searched for and found him. They asked Zheng to return. Zheng was stubborn and unwilling to do so. Then they seized him and brought him back. They made him drink herbal medicine, and then he revived. He told them the whole story, and it was like one long dream. In general it is said that in the deep mountains and secluded valleys, there are those who died in previous ages fleeing soldiers. So there are many hungry ghosts. Moreover, these are mixed in with tree, stone, bird, and animal goblins. People do not understand the rules and so there are cases of people travelling alone and coming to harm. I write this to show people. Anyone who goes into deep mountains should carry a sharp knife, and it is not right to go alone. (*SZ* 8.102; *GD* 80.1725–26)

**VIRTUOUS WOMEN AND DEMONS**

In Wu there are demons fond of lechery. In general, amorous girls are usually corrupted by them. Those girls who like being with them steal money, silk, and head ornaments to give to the demons.

A girl from a commoner family in Zhenyi in my Kun Prefecture [Jiangsu] was about to be corrupted. The girl said, “There’s a girl from a certain family in Jingxi who has beautiful looks. Why do you not go there but instead come here?” The demon said, “That girl’s mind is proper.” The girl said angrily, “Isn’t my mind proper?” The demon then left and did not come again. Thus we know there is something to the notion that the perverse will not violate the upright. (*SZ* 8.103)
**A Spectral Encounter**

A man in the village, Zeng Mengyuan, once was walking at night. There was a river he had to cross. He encountered an old acquaintance, who said, “I will carry you across.” Mengyuan happily followed his instructions. He got on his back and suddenly realized: “This man is already dead. How can he be here? It must be a ghost that wants to trick me.” Then he firmly clung to its back. When they reached the bank, the one carrying him said, “You can get down now.” Mengyuan clung even tighter, and suddenly it transformed into a board. He embraced it as he arrived at a commoner’s home. He knocked on the door and asked for a torch to illuminate it. It was a charred coffin board. Then he split it and burned it. He regarded the incident as profoundly inauspicious and that his own fate would certainly be death. But in the end, he was without trouble. Later he died after living past seventy years of age. (SZ 8.105)

**Reincarnation**

Yu Ji [1272–1348] wrote the epitaph for Zhu Zemin’s [1294–1365] mother, the Lady of Suitability of Ji. It said:

In 1294, as the Lady of Suitability of Ji was about to give birth, her mother-in-law, Madame Shi, was very ill. She sighed, “This wife of ours behaves with the utmost filial piety. Heaven will soon bestow her with a fine son. I must survive to see him.” Later, as her illness grew grave, she put her affairs in order. The grandfather of Zhu Zemin divined a flat area at Mount Yangbao [Jiangsu] and sent people to build a pit for her burial. Madame Shi said, “How strange! I dreamed of a great man in an official robe and cap who told me, ‘Do not take away my home. I will be the madame’s grandson.’”

Later the workers dug a spot five feet deep and found a stone there. Its seal said, “Grave of the governor, His Lord Lu Ji [188–219].” In addition, there was a carved stone to the side. It said, “When this stone rots, people will come and replace it.” As it turned out, the stone had split. The grandfather ordered that the spot be immediately covered up and then divined another place. Madame Shi further dreamed that the great man in robe and cap came again and said, “I am moved by the madam’s flourishing virtue. I truly will be able to become Madame Shi’s grandson.” Derun was born, and the grandfather gave him the courtesy name of Shunsun [Obedient Grandson]. Madame Shi died. People believed Derun had been brought forth by filial feelings.

Derun was Zemin’s given name. Zemin served the Yuan dynasty. He was the eastern branch secretariat supervisor of Confucian schools and the great-
great-grandfather of today’s Censor Zhu Wentian Zhao. As the inscription shows, Zemin is a descendant of his excellency Lu Ji.

I have seen reincarnation stories of previous ages and still did not believe them. Now I see this text and understand that one cannot say that wondrous events do not happen in this world. I scribble this to provide for conversation and laughs. (SZ 9.112–13; GD 81.1738–39)

AN UNWORTHY CULT FIGURE

Xie Yingfang, courtesy name Zilan [1295–1392] of Piling [Jiangsu], proposed that the Three Eminences Shrine should not enshrine Fan Li. He said, “Zhang Han [early fourth century] and Lu Guimeng [?–881] came from Wu [Jiangsu]. The people of Wu see Fan as their eastern neighbor and that is all.”

Fan Li from beginning to end served Yue [Zhejiang]. Occasionally in his travels he stayed in Wu. His mind never for a single day forgot Yue. He presented beautiful women and offered precious things to confuse the Wu lord and ministers. Yue took advantage of its opportunity, sent forth its troops, and destroyed the state of Wu and its ancestral shrine. For the most part, it was all Fan Li’s plot. When the Yue people discussed great accomplishments, Fan Li is at the top. How could he not be a great enemy of Wu?

Yet as he finished his accomplishments and his reputation followed, he hid his tracks and left. His understanding and vision were inherently loftier than those of normal people. That being so, he floated on the seas, his cargo bound and packed, carrying pearls and jade. In Qi [Shandong], his business amassed thousands of cash. In Qi he resided in Tao [Shandong]. Father and son plowed and raised livestock, traded goods and pursued profit, and further accumulated untold amounts of wealth.

The Grand Historian did not write about these matters at all. I daresay he deeply despised Fan Li and did not regard him as a good person. If we compare him to how Zhang Liang left the Han and, untrammeled, followed Master Red-pine (Chisongzi) in his roaming, there are many differences. Du Mu [803–852] and Su Shi [1037–1101] both said that Fan Li had intimate relations with Xishi and compared those with the relations between the Lord of Shen and Consort Xia.

Looking at the matter from this perspective, I say that this person, Fan Li, acted in greedy and licentious ways but did not regard his conduct as excessive. So how is such conduct worthy of admiration? At present, we use the fragrant grain from the people of Wu to feast a greedy, immoral foe from an enemy state. What sense is there in that? The [Book of] Rites says, “The people do not sacrifice to those not of their clan.” How much more so for one’s enemies?
Wu has three eminences. People simply have not thought about them, and that is all. As for Taibo, Zhongyong, and Yanling Jizi, the whole world truly regards them as eminent. All were Wu natives. If there are no buildings, there would be no thoughts of towering virtue. It is fitting to honor sages of absolute virtue, who refused the throne three times and enshrine them in the hall. They should be accompanied by two worthies, Jiying and Luwang, who would receive supplementary sacrifices. If it were so, then it would correct the absurd perversities of earlier people and renew the eyes and ears of contemporaries. It would stimulate noble customs and cause people to revere ritual propriety and deference. How could this reform be only a small boost, to stir the miserable customs of a declining age and urge people toward moral transformation?

If one says that Fan Li had achievements and so desires to offer sacrifices to his spirit, then it is appropriate that the people of Yue offer it sacrifices. (SZ 9.113–14)

DREAMS, POEMS, AND OMENS

Before I passed the jinshi examinations, I had never written verse in the ci style. In the jimao year of the Tianshun reign [1459], when I went to the metropolitan examinations, I dreamed of arriving at a Buddhist temple. An old monk took out a book and asked for a text. I made a song lyric and gave it to him. When I awoke, I still remembered half of it. It went:

A single white cloud—no one can keep it from leaving.
A single lake and mountain—no one can move them away.
Kingfisher bamboos recite the wind.
Dark green pines gather the rain.
This is a place to delight one’s feelings.

When I returned after failing the test, I studied in Haining Temple. The monk Wengong took out The Book on the White Cloud Lair Fascicle and asked for a text. It was like the dream.

At the metropolitan examinations in the guiwei year [1463], I dreamed that someone gave me a poem that said:

A single punting pole, and the spring waters become all muddied.
I enter and point, not seeing the marks of the waves and billows.
A thunderclap opens heaven’s gates for me.
When the time came, the examination site had a fire. In fact, the diviner’s household had the name “Lightning Fires.” Moreover, “completely muddy” and “without a mark” were like the omen.\textsuperscript{33}

In the \textit{guisi} year [1473], when I first entered office, I dreamed of visiting Grand Secretary Li. I wrote on his wall:

\begin{quote}
The sun’s reflection in the green mountain’s rain,  
Patterned heavens in the cyan sea’s rosy clouds.  
The subject speaks and the fine lord listens,  
Riding his horse, he returns home at night.
\end{quote}

In the \textit{wuxu} year [1478], when I was at the Bureau of Provisions, I dreamed I made a short \textit{ci} poem, which read:

\begin{quote}
The wind slices, the flowers and branches topple over.  
One sound of the bell cord startles the sleeping dog.  
The one I wish to see does not come.  
The bright moonlight in the half window, and the jeweled curtain is rolled up.
\end{quote}

In the \textit{yisi} year [1485], when I was in mourning for my parent, I dreamed I wrote a poem, which read:

\begin{quote}
In the sea I planted coral,  
In my lofty intentions, they were like children.  
For ten years I failed to collect them,  
on one sprig there suddenly are several.
\end{quote}

I cannot explain what any of them mean. (SZ 10.118)

\section*{Officials and Their Gods}

To represent the earth god of the Zhejiang Provincial Administration Commission, they made a black-faced demonic figure. The sign read, “Black-faced functionary, the god King Kimnara.”\textsuperscript{34} I spoke about this to the provincial administration commissioner, his excellency Xu, and wanted to get rid of it. Xu said, “There are more urgent matters than this.” Then I knew that those who get a reputation in this world for keeping things tranquil mostly do their job and do not take matters in hand and change them.
I remember the Nanjing Ministry of Personnel earth god shrine. On the days of the first and full moons of each month, ministry officials, together with agency dependents, would kneel and bow there in ritual fashion. The god’s image and that of his wife sat together, and images of his attending guards were arrayed to the left and right. When I first took office, I saw and despised it. At the time, his excellency Zhang Lun [1413–1483] of Leqing [County] was the vice-minister of the right. I spoke to his excellency about getting rid of the image and replacing it with a wooden tablet. He did not permit it. A while later, his excellency moved to serve in the Ministry of Rites, and it happened that I was provisionally put in charge of matters. Then I sunk the clay images in a well and burned all the pennants and banners. I wrote in big characters on a wooden tablet, “Earth God of the Nanjing Ministry of Personnel.” People all approved of it. (GD 82.1755)

A SCRIPTURE AND ITS STORY

My family has the volume The Book of Transformations (Hua shu). It says that it was written by Song Qiqiu [887–959]. The academician Song Lian [1310–1381] in his Discussions of the Masters (Zhuzi bian) says, “Master Qiqiu, six chapters. One name is The Book of Transformations. For generations people have said that it was written by Master Song Qiqiu, given name Song, of the pretender Tang dynasty [Later Tang, 923–937]. This is wrong. The author was the recluse Tan Qiao, courtesy name Jingsheng, of Mount Zhongnan [Shaanxi]. Qiqiu stole the authorship.”

Later I read the book. There was this passage: “Jingsheng traveled to Mount Mao [Jiangsu], and his route passed through Jinling [another name for Nanjing]. He met Song Qiqiu, took out The Book of Transformations, and gave it to him. He said, ‘The transformations in this book are endless. I hope that you can write a preface and transmit it to later generations.’ Qiqiu toasted Jingsheng with wine and got him very drunk. He put Jingsheng inside a leather sack and sewed it up. Then he threw him in a deep pool. He stole the book and took it as his own, writing a preface and transmitting it to the world.

“Later there was a recluse fishing at the pool. He got the leather sack, split it, and looked at it. There was a man sleeping and snoring inside. The fisherman yelled, and only then did Jingsheng wake up. The fisherman asked him his name, and he said, ‘I am Tan Jingsheng. Song Qiqiu stole my Book of Transformations and sunk me in the pool. Does The Book of Transformations circulate today?’ The fisherman answered, ‘The Book of Transformations has circulated for a long time.’ Jingsheng said, ‘If The Book of Transformations circulates, I will...’"
not go back into the world. I sleep in this sack and can get a lot of rest. May I trouble milord to resew the sack and throw me back into this pool? This is indeed my wish.’ The fisherman did as he said and sank him again. QiQiú later became grand councilor in the Southern Tang dynasty and met with an untimely death. How fitting!”

This record of QiQiú stealing the book is very detailed but seems to border on the ridiculous. *The Book of Transformations* is also in the Daoist canon. It says that the Perfected One Tan Jingsheng wrote it. If there truly was the affair of being sunk in the pool, Jingsheng would then be what they call a perfected one.

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**A Filial Daughter and Her Honors**

The Song court revered and believed in Daoist teachings. Most of the palaces, abbeys, temples, and cloisters of the time had plaques bestowed by the court. Most ghosts and spirits were enfeoffed with honors and titles.

For example, at Shangyu [Zhejiang], the authorities erected a temple for Cao E [130–143]. The declaration said, “It began in the Han era.” It was indeed enough to show people the story and urge them to be filial. In the eighth month of fourth year of the Song Daguan reign [1110], the court enfeoffed her as Madame of Numinous Filial Piety. In the eleventh month of the fifth year of the Zhenghe reign [1115], the court enfeoffed her as Madame of Numinous Filial Piety and Brilliant Docility. In the sixth month of the sixth year of the Chunyou reign [1246], the court enfeoffed her as Madame of Numinous Filial Piety, Brilliant Docility, and Pure Beauty. The court further enfeoffed E’s father as Marquis of Harmonious Response and her mother as Madame of Felicitous Goodness. Each one has an enfeoffment edict that still survives.

I have said that the Secretariat officials then spent half of their time dealing with spirits and ghosts. The ministers who wrote the edicts were especially careless. For example, the Han stele said that E’s father Xu could on seasonal occasions sing and dance for the *posuo* music god. *Posuo* means “the appearance of dancing.” The edict that enfeoffs him as Marquis of Harmonious Response says, “He welcomed the dancing spirit in this fashion until he drowned.” Isn’t it pathetic?

Upon the present dynasty’s order, the authorities at the prescribed times in spring and autumn give offerings to the spirit tablet, which says, “Spirit of the Han Filial Daughter Cao E.” They eliminated the enfeoffed honors of previous dynasties. The name is proper, and the language is appropriate. It truly can be said to be the model for all time.
Yet as for E’s filial piety, how could it rely on honors and titles to be manifested? At present the river, garrison, lodge, post station, salt yard, weir, dike, express courier station, and so forth all take Cao E for their name. One may say her name will last for a myriad of ages and never be extinguished! (SZ 11.134)

A Buddhist Landmark and Its Visitors

Mount Pudanluojia [Mount Putuo], sometimes known as Butuoluojia, lies in the sea in Dinghai County in Ningbo Superior Prefecture [Zhejiang]. It is over 200 li from the county seat. It has been passed down through ages that the Great One Guanyin lives here. Many foolish people make vows to cross the sea and worship her image. If they happen to see a bird or animal en route, they construe it as a responsive incarnation of the Great One. The Yuyao County gazetteer records that Jia Sidao [1213–1275] once went to this mountain. He met an old monk, who divined his physiognomy, said that Jia would certainly rise to a high position, and then left. Jia tried to find him again but was unable to do so. He too took the matter as verification of the Great One’s responsiveness.

I say that deceitful and perverse types since ancient times take what is not theirs and always pass it off as the assistance of ghosts and spirits, so as to confuse the eyes and ears of the people. Sidao himself knew that he rose to high position owing to chance and feared that others would criticize him. So he made up this story for the deaf and blind, the foolish and vulgar, and that is all. Otherwise, good fortune comes to the good and ill fortune comes to the evil; it is the constant way of the gods. If Guanyin did not choose right and wrong, and respond correctly as she received a request, how could she be a proper god? (SZ 12.147)

Grave Rites

The ancients said that offerings at the grave did not accord with ritual propriety. Thus the rituals did not include grave offering rites. Yet Master Zhu Xi said that they do not harm the dictates of righteousness. In general, it is because filial sons are moved at the unexpected changes in affairs over time, and their minds cannot bear the sudden death of their parents. They cannot do otherwise. This explanation is correct.

Yet there is more that can be said about this. For the written spirit tablets after burial, they say that the parent’s spiritual cloud-soul (hun) is attached to
the tablet. So all offerings are to honor and draw close to this ancestor. Yet
the wood of the tablet has nothing to do with our parent’s spiritual cloud-souls. It is only because the ritual system put it there, and people’s hearts were
attached there. The parent’s corporeal white-soul (po) is where the spiritual
cloud-soul always resided. How does one know that, after casting off the white-
soul body, the cloud-soul does not still abide there? In fact, the white-soul has
a fixed place, but the cloud-soul is everywhere. In the offerings of the ancients,
they sought it sometimes in the yang, sometimes in the yin, sometimes sought
it among the yang and yin, and did not dare to be certain.

Thus, as for those who consider gravesite offerings as ritually improper and
do not practice them, they are mired in ancient ways and forget their parents.
There is no harm in practicing them. (SZ 12.151)

A GOD’S EXTINCTION

Wang Mian was a native of Shaoxing [Zhejiang]. At the start of the dynasty,
he was a famous gentleman. His residence was very close to a god’s temple. His
hearth lacked firewood, and so he hacked up the god’s image and used the
wood to make fires. A neighboring family served the god with thoughtful
care. When they encountered Wang destroying the god’s image, they always
chopped more wood and repaired it. This happened three or four times.

Later Wang’s household for years was without trouble. In the household
that did the repairs, the wife had constant problems with her pregnancies. One
day they invited a shaman to summon the god. They questioned the god,
“Wang repeatedly destroyed the god, and the god did not punish him. I have
always rebuilt the image for you. Why does the god not protect me?” The sha-
man was distressed and had nothing to reply. Then he said angrily, “If you did
not install the image, how then could he burn it?” Subsequently, this man
did not repair the image again, and the temple was gradually abandoned.
People today still treat it as a funny story. (SZ 12.153–54)

DEFACED LANDSCAPES

In the hills near West Lake [Hangzhou], such as Feilai Peak, Shiwusi, Yanxia
Grotto and others, there are hidden cliffs and caves everywhere that one can
cherish. But at each one there are carved Buddhist images. They break the
mountain’s face and make people resentful. At Feilai Peak there are scattered
sculptures outside the cave. At Shiwusi, they are carved inside the cave.
Between the large and small ones, they amount to over five hundred. At Yanxia
Grotto, the sculptures are especially numerous. In general, all were made by people during the Wuyue [907–978] and Song [960–1279] dynasties. My “Poem at Yanxia Grotto” has the line:

Carved Buddhas abound in excess,
pure customs are destroyed.

They truly make one resentful, and that is all. (SZ 13.157)