FROM THE CHINESE RELIGIOUS ECSTATIC TO
THE TAIWANESE THEATRE OF ECSTASY:
A STUDY OF THE WU

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto

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Ecstasy, often described as an ineffable experience, is the locus of discussion in this study of the wu that begins by examining early Chinese texts, and ends with a Taiwanese contemporary dance drama called the Nine Songs (Jiuge) (1993) by Lin Huaimin. The study of early Chinese texts and a dance drama are joined together by the role of the wu. Using Richard Schechner's theories of religious performance and transformation (1976, 1985, and 1990), I compare how the texts and a dance drama refer to the wu as a religious and theatrical performer. Continuing in the direction of Richard Schechner, this religious study of the wu examines how contemporary performance reinvents classical texts, poetry, rituals and the aesthetics of transformation.

My understanding of Lin Huaimin's dance drama has been guided by Martha Graham's "theatre of ecstasy," a technique that uses dance movement and imagery to stir the performer to exaltation and joy. Following Lin to the study of the wu in traditional texts, I introduce the definitions of religious ecstatics and the dance drama, and append to my thesis copies of the program and colour pictures. A video is also available. Then, I examine the religious roles the
Abstract

wu performs in Confucian and Moist texts, as well as in Daoist texts. After that, I discuss the *Nine Songs* and how it details the role of the religious ecstatic through imagery. Later on, I explore how the wu performed early dances and exorcisms, and how the wu’s role changed over time. I discuss how Lin Huaimin’s contemporary *Nine Songs* is a reinterpretation of the original *Nine Songs* and also of the wu’s role in Chinese antiquity, using the technique of the “theatre of ecstasy” to perform some of the roles of the wu in Chinese texts. Lin’s wu also demonstrates through movement and imagery the importance of transformation in ecstatic religious performance. In this way, Lin’s drama, which is also political allegory, is blended with popular religion to evoke the power of religious ecstasy.
Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

From the Chinese religious ecstatic to the Taiwanese theatre of ecstasy: A study of the wu

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ x

Section 1—Introduction

Part 1—Who is the wu? A question of definitions ................................................................. 1

Twentieth-Century Definitions of Chinese religious ecstatcs ................................................. 5

Part 2—Lin Huaimin’s Nine Songs ......................................................................................... 18

“Welcoming the Spirits” (Ying shen 迎神) ........................................................................ 19

“Great One—Lord of the East” (Donghuang Taiyi 東皇太一) ........................................ 20

Figure 1 .................................................................................................................................. 22

“Greater Master of Fate” and “Lesser Master of Fate” .......................................................... 23

(Da siming 大司命 and Shao siming 少司命) ................................................................. 23

“Lady of the Xiang” (Xiang Furen 湘夫人) ................................................................. 25

Figure 2 .................................................................................................................................. 27

“Lord in the Clouds” (Yun zhongjun 雲中君) .................................................................... 28

“Mountain Goddess” (Shan gui 山鬼) .................................................................................. 29

Figure 3 .................................................................................................................................. 30

“Homage to the State” (Guo shang 國殤) ........................................................................... 31

Figure 4 .................................................................................................................................. 32

“Rites for the Soul” (Li hun 禮魂) ...................................................................................... 34

Figure 5 .................................................................................................................................. 35

- v -
Table of Contents

Section 2—The wu in Chinese texts

Chapter 1—Religious ecstacies in Confucian and Moist Texts

Classic of Changes

Rites of Zhou

Analects

Mencius

Record of Rites

Mozi

Chapter 2—Religious ecstacies in the Zhuangzi

Classical Daoism and Chinese religious ecstacies

Examples of the corrupted wu

The Daoist religious ecstatic

Knowledge

Flying

Outward appearance

Metaphors of transformation

Chapter 3—Religious ecstacies in the Classic of Mountains and Waters

Exegesis on the Classic of Mountains and Waters

Outward appearance and inward transformation

Wu medical healing

Rain rituals
Table of Contents

Snake Appearance ........................................................................................................................ 103

Conclusion of Section 2 .............................................................................................................. 104

Section 3—The Nine Songs .......................................................................................................... 107

Chapter 4—Historical and Religious Background of the Nine Songs ........................................ 107

Historical Background of Chu Culture ...................................................................................... 107

Nine Songs Deities ..................................................................................................................... 112

Great One—Lord of the East (Dong Huang Taiyi 東黃太一). ..................................................... 113

The Lord in the Clouds (Yunzhong jun 雲中君) ...................................................................... 114

Xiang River Goddesses—

Princess of the Xiang (Xiang Jun 湘君) and Lady of the Xiang (Xiang Furen 湘夫人) ........ 115

River Earl (He bo 河伯) ............................................................................................................ 116

Master of Fate (Siming 司命) .................................................................................................. 118

Nine Songs ecstatic religious vocabulary .................................................................................. 120

Exegesis on the Nine Songs ..................................................................................................... 123

Chapter 5—Discussion of the Nine Songs .............................................................................. 130

“The Great One—Lord of the East” ......................................................................................... 130

Commentary .............................................................................................................................. 133

“Lord in the Clouds” ................................................................................................................. 141

Commentary .............................................................................................................................. 144

“Lady of the Xiang” ................................................................................................................ 146

Commentary .............................................................................................................................. 148

-vii-
Table of Contents

“Greater Master of Fate”........................................................................................................151
Commentary .........................................................................................................................154

“River Earl”.........................................................................................................................155
Commentary .........................................................................................................................157

“Mountain Goddess”..........................................................................................................159
Commentary .........................................................................................................................162

“Homage to the State” (Guo shang 国殇) ........................................................................163
Commentary .........................................................................................................................165

“Rites for the Soul” (Li hun 礼魂) ..................................................................................166
Commentary .........................................................................................................................167

Conclusion of Section 3 ....................................................................................................170

Section 4—Ecstatic Religion and Drama ........................................................................172

Chapter 6—Drama in China and Taiwan ........................................................................172

Wu in early religious drama .................................................................................................172

Performance by youthful ecstatics before the Han dynasty ...............................................176

Wu to tong: The popularization of the wu dramatic performance ..................................180

Ecstatic youthful performers from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty .......................182

Ecstatic performers in the Tang dynasty and Song dynasty .............................................185

Religious ecstatic performers in the Yuan, Ming and Qing ...........................................188

Daoist religious performance of youth in the “Daofa Hui Yuan 道法會元” ...................188

Restrictions on theatrical performance .............................................................................191
# Table of Contents

Political uses of theatre in China and Taiwan ...................................................... 192

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 7—Introduction to Lin Huaimin's *Nine Songs* ......................................... 199

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship on the <em>jitong</em></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese religious ecstatic performance</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female fertility rituals</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male spirit possession, self-mortification and healing</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin Huaimin and the “theatre of ecstasy”</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of the image of the female <em>wu</em></td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 8—Interpretation of Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs* ........................................ 221

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 232

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 242

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A ......................................................................................................................

Appendix B ......................................................................................................................

Appendix C ......................................................................................................................
Preface

From the Chinese religious ecstatic to the Taiwanese theatre of ecstasy: A study of the wy

Preface

Ecstasy is often described as an ineffable experience and comes from the Greek word ekstasis, meaning to stand outside oneself. Ecstasy is, to some extent, to be other than who you are in everyday life. Although that definition is itself unspecific, it can focus the discussion on what ecstasy might be. Each person may have a different experience of ecstasy that is shaded by beliefs in religion, psychology or the self. One can speculate that someone sitting quietly and someone else enthusiastically dancing experience different ecstasies. A person might sit quietly after a day at the office to soothe the mind and relax the body with no thought of religion. Yet another person might do the same thing with the desire for personal enlightenment (and of course there are many types of enlightenment), spending his or her life becoming an ecstatic. If one dances because he or she wants to unwind on a Friday night then that person seeks rest rather than religious experience. But if one person is to perform a religious dance, such as the dance of the whirling Dervishes, we would presume this to be a religiously ecstatic activity. There are many ways to experience a transformed consciousness.

The first section of the dissertation introduces the definitions and the dance drama pertinent to this study. The second section of the dissertation concentrates on textual references.

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to religious ecstasies in early Chinese texts. Many classical textual references were found using the on-line Scripta Sinica Chinese Text Retrieval System database of the Academia Sinica (http://www.sinica.edu.tw); except for the Mozi 墨子, the Zhuangzi 荀子, Classic of Mountains and Waters (Shanhaijing 山海經), the Nine Songs (Jiuge 九歌), the Chuci 楚辭, the Dao Zang 道藏, and many historical texts. Once I retrieved these textual references from the Academia Sinica on-line database, I compared most of them with textual references in the Sibu beiyao 四部備要 edition, published in 1936. In the third section of this dissertation, I examine the Nine Songs and how scholarship portrayed religious ecstasies. Both the second and third sections elucidate the role of the performer in Chinese texts, poetry and commentaries.

Section four examines the performance of dance and drama in China and Taiwan and how that performance may have inspired the Taiwanese choreographer Lin Huaimin’s (林懷民) dance interpretation of the Nine Songs. As an introduction to the fourth section, the dissertation outlines the ways in which the role of the religious ecstatic might have changed because of developments in Tang dynasty 唐代 (618–907) theatre. Although the fourth section discusses the history of ecstatic religion, this history is explored only to introduce the dance drama.

E.T. Kirby studies the shamanistic origins of popular performances (or entertainments as he refers to them) of China, among other types of performances, and explains that these entertainments share the common element of trance:

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2 Academia Sinica Computing Centre (ASCC), Scripta Sinica Database, Worldwide Web, Taipei.

— xi —
Preface

At their origin, popular entertainments are associated with trance and derived from the practices of trance . . . . They do not seek to imitate, reproduce or record the forms, of existent social reality. Rather, the performing arts that develop from shamanistic trance may be characterized as the manifestation, or conjuring, of an immediately present reality of a different order, kind or quality, from that of reality itself.3

In this dissertation I am also interested in how performance makes use of ecstasy or transformation of consciousness, which Victor Turner says is one of the six universals of performance.4

Initially, I discuss how ecstacies performed for the purpose of religious efficacy.5 They were not necessarily dramatically performing to entertain audiences, but were religiously performing rituals and ceremonies. Over time such religious performances became routinized, in which ecstacies played characters to entertain the court and later commercial audiences. Richard Schechner describes how performance, "is everywhere in life, from ordinary gestures to macrodramas. But theatricality and narrativity are more limited, if only slightly so. Differences in degree of magnitude do lead to differences in kind. Aesthetic genres—theatre, dance,


5This idea is derived from Richard Schechner’s notion of the opposition between efficacy and entertainment. See Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, eds., Ritual, Play and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theatre, 207.
music—are framed theatrically signalling the intentions of their composers to their publics. Other genres are frequently not so clearly marked . . .”6 In this dissertation, performance, religious and/or theatrical, is considered to involve ecstasy.

Richard Schechner studies contemporary Indian religious dances and how early texts and religious art are used to authenticate the performance of these dances. He notes how contemporary dance and other types of performance develop through the reinvention of traditional art forms and the intervention by someone who is an outsider to the culture that performs the dance.7 This study also looks to traditions found in classical texts, poetry and rituals to understand how contemporary performance is invented.

Schechner also writes how transformation is a significant part of performance, especially in terms of ritual performance, such as initiation rites.8 Many elements create the transformation, including the performer, who undergoes a change in identity, possibly by wearing a mask,9 the stage, which is transformed by props and music, and the audience, who watches. Every time the performance is performed, the performer, the stage, and the audience, are transformed into something extraordinary.


8Richard Schechner, Between Theater and Anthropology, 127.

9I follow Henry Pernet’s definition that “an object is a mask when it covers all or part of the face in order to disguise the wearer or dissimulate his identity.” Henry Pernet, Ritual Masks: Deceptions and Revelations, translated by Laura Grillo (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 11.
Building on the theories of performance by E. T. Kirby, Victor Turner and most importantly Richard Schechner, this dissertation examines how the religious ecstatic performs in Chinese texts, in the *Nine Songs*, (which was perhaps a ritual cycle of poetry adapted for court entertainment), and in a contemporary dance drama performed in a commercial context.

Immediately, as I describe these three different types of performance, I introduce some of the differences between them. The second section refers to ecstacies as religious performers, who were performers in the sense that they performed according to traditional religious techniques and for audiences who believed in the religious efficacy of their performance. The third section describes a text that could have been performed by religious performers and later by more theatrical performers. In the first instance, the audience may have watched the performance with a belief in religious efficacy. Yet in the second instance, the audience may have watched for entertainment and with fewer religious expectations. The fourth section of this dissertation explores a contemporary dance drama and the reinvention of past ecstatic performance, using Martha Graham’s (1894–1991) “theatre of ecstasy.” While the performers in Lin’s performance are actors and the audience has little expectation of religious efficacy, the experience of the performers and audience is somewhat religious because of the use of the “theatre of ecstasy.”

During the performance, the “theatre of ecstasy” might be communicated to the audience using music, dance, lighting, and reinvented rituals. The rhythm of the music and the collective performance of the dance helps to change the mood of the audience.10

The relationship between dance and religion is sometimes difficult to articulate. When might a religious dance adapted to be performed on a theatrical stage, such as the dance of the whirling Dervishes, be both theatrical and religious? Early Twentieth-Century dance choreographers such as Isadora Duncan (1878–1927), Ruth St. Denis (1879–1968) and Ted Shawn (1891–1972) grappled with the question of how to perform religious dances. Duncan looked to the Greek idea of spirit for inspiration. Her dances were not as overtly religious as St. Denis and Shawn (known collectively as Denishawn), who choreographed dance based on themes from Eastern religion and later Christian mysticism. For these early contemporary dance choreographers, the human body became the vehicle for the expression of the ineffable quality of religious experience.

Dance theorists such as Judith Lynn Hanna refer to the movements of dance as a language. Martha Graham, the influential American contemporary dance choreographer and student of Denishawn, described the movements of her dancers as “body phrases.” Many have noted how the theme of religion was important in Martha Graham’s dance productions and in the way her dancers moved. Martha Graham had created a “theatre of ecstasy,” as once remarked by


the American drama theorist, Eric Bentley. In the opening page to her autobiography, Graham expressed her religious view of dance:

I am a dancer. I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual from which comes the shape of achievement, a sense of one’s being, a satisfaction of the spirit. One becomes in some area an athlete of god.

In 1931 and two years later in 1933, Martha Graham choreographed and performed two dances on the theme of ecstasy called “Ecstatic Dance” and “Ekstasis.” During the period she choreographed these dances, Graham was trying to create her own dance technique that was distinct from the style of her teachers.

Martha Graham’s dance technique was physically demanding and used muscular movement to communicate the emotions of the dancer and the energy that was at the core of the emotions. She wanted to force her dancers to look into themselves and draw on this energy. Susan Leigh Foster writes: “The restrained successive movements of Graham’s contraction and release build a sinewy, tensile, dynamic body that symbolizes a self full of turbulent feelings and the struggle inherent in expressing those feelings.”

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14 Martha Graham, Blood Memory, 3.

15 Martha Graham, Blood Memory, 123.
Graham, like Denishawn, was familiar with Eastern religion and in the 1930's studied Zen Buddhism, and later in 1955 took her dance company to Asia, where she performed for thousands of people. She was also interested in North American native dance and choreographed productions based on Native American ritual ceremonies in the 1931 “Primitive Mysteries” and 1941 “Primitive Mysteries el Penitente.”

In the process of discussing how religious ecstatics performed their roles, this dissertation also traces how the idea of transformation influenced the development of ecstatic religion. Possibly, the importance of transformation in early Chinese religion was conveyed by images called taotie 髹饕, although no one is certain what these images mean. Taotie appear on Shang dynasty 商代 (1600–c. 1028 BCE), and Zhou dynasty 周代 (1027–256 BCE) bronze vessels and masks, and many taotie resemble ordinary living creatures, such as bears, tigers, oxen, boars, rhinoceros, owls, rabbits, cicadas, silkworms, turtles, and fish. A few of the creatures appear to be mythical beasts with many heads, tails, and legs, with some appearing in twos, such as the two-bodied snake and demon, dragons facing one another, or horned dragons.  

I contend that these creatures were aesthetics of transformation, referring to real or symbolic images of the religious ecstatic as he or she communicated with a spirit. These images could have been created to illustrate the appearance of a religious ecstatic as he or she was


\[17\] The Lushi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 is the first text to name taotie 髹饕 and describe their demon-like bodies. Lushi chunqiu 呂氏春秋, SBBY edition, juan 6.2b.
transformed during communication with the spirit. Elizabeth Childs-Johnson notes that masks and other ritual vessels, on which tao-tie images were inscribed, might have not only described transformation but enabled it. Wearing the masks was not essential. Simply using the object during a religious ceremony was enough to transform: "I have recently demonstrated that certain modes used to represent the animal image in Shang art were designed to symbolize magical transformation from the human to the animal realm, and that this transformation facilitated communication with ancestral spirits." Childs-Johnson goes on to suggest that the ritual performer using the images or mask would have been a religious ecstatic.

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18 The meaning of these images is still debated. Important studies on these images include: Florance Waterbury, Early Chinese Symbols and Literature: Vestiges and Speculations with particular reference to the Ritual Bronzes of the Shang Dynasty (New York: E. Weyhe, 1942); Max. Loehr, Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China (New York, 1968); David N. Keightley, Sources of Shang History: The Oracle Inscriptions of Bronze Age China (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978); Kwang-Chih Chang, Shang Civilization (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980); K. C. Chang, Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Ma Chengyuan, and Hsio-Yen Shih, Ancient Chinese bronzes (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986); Sarah Allan, The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991); and Eleanor von Erdberg, Ancient Chinese Bronzes: Terminology and Iconology (Bad Wildungen: Siedenberg-Verlag, 1993).


By aesthetics, I am referring to fragments of aesthetic religious imagery on masks and bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou dynasty. I am also referring to aesthetic images described in written texts, poetry and dance drama and the way these images convey a transformation of consciousness. It is precisely because these aesthetics of transformation (as I define them), whether in the form of masks, written descriptions of imagery, or even dance, imply movement that they are such potent symbols of religious experience. They may have been symbols of interaction between the world we perceive of as the earthly and the profane, and the world divided from it, which we refer to as the spiritual and sacred. These aesthetics of transformation contrast with the Confucian importance given to unity and stability.

Confucianism (ruxue 需學) is important to the development of ecstatic religion in China and is a broadly defined term. Originally, Confucianism referred to the ideas of the teacher Confucius 孔子 (traditional dates 551–479 BCE). The Analects (Lunyu 讀語) recorded conversations that contained advice on human virtue and the proper performances of rites (li 禱)

21Elizabeth Childs-Johnson writes with regard to masks and their ecstatic religious use: “The flat, abbreviated tiger mask and the representational, three dimensional tiger with clinging human are two variations—simple and complex, abstract and literal—of the theme of human to animal metamorphosis. The animal mask image may also be specific in representing the semi-legendary, high Shang ancestor Kui 契 as transformed shaman-priest.”


23Throughout this dissertation, I use the western term Confucianism to refer to ruxue 需學 and the Confucian tradition.
between Confucius and his disciples. Possibly, the Analects’s hallmark contributions to Chinese thought might have been the notions of humanity (ren 仁) and the noble man (junzi 君子). The noble man was modeled after the sage kings of the Xia dynasty (夏代 2100–c. 1600 BCE) and Shang dynasty, and represented the ideal virtuous human being.

Over time, the term “Confucianism” expanded to include the disciples of Confucian thought and their philosophies. Mencius 孟子 (372–289 BCE) was a later disciple of Confucian thought and the eponymous work titled Mencius was ascribed to his disciples, who recorded their conversations with Mencius, and Mencius’s conversations with heads of state and others in his circle. It also elaborated on the Analects’s notion of humanity and the importance of self-cultivation.

Eventually, Confucianism became a term used to describe a corpus of Confucian classical texts and a state doctrine. In the Han dynasty (漢代 206–220 BCE), Confucian ideology revolutionized religious practice, with a new emphasis on rationalization and textual synthesis. In the Luxuriant dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals (春秋繁露 Chunqiu fanlu), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) explained human events using the terms yin 隱 and yang 阳. In 136 BCE, Han Wudi 漢武帝 (141–87 BCE) began to educate scholar-officials at the Imperial Academy. They studied the five Confucian classics: the Classic of Changes (周易 Zhouyi), the Classic of Poetry (詩經 Shi jing), the Book of Documents (尚書 Shangshu), the Record of Rites (禮記 Liji), and the Spring and Autumn Annals (春 秋 Chunqiu). The Imperial Academy established the long-standing tradition to educate state officials in the Confucian classics. It also began the Confucian hermeneutical tradition in which scholars wrote commentaries on those
classics. In the Sui dynasty 隋代 (581–618), civil service examinations for the jinshi 進士 degree were based on the Confucian classics, and in the Tang dynasty, Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 627–650) made the civil service examinations mandatory for much of bureaucratic appointments.

Confucianism also refers to the other schools of thought that developed out of the study of classical texts, such as Neo-Confucianism (lizhixue 理學). In the Song dynasty 宋代 (960–1126), the philosophy of Neo-Confucianism was formed from the ideas of Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1107–1073), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Zhu Xi (朱熹) (1130–1200). Zhu Xi created a new canon called the Four Books (Sishu 四書): the Analects, the Great Learning (Daxue 大學), the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸) and the Mencius. According to Zhu Xi, this canon contained the spiritual essence of Confucian philosophy, combining metaphysical ideas from Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Neo-Confucian philosophy may have been borne out of, at least in part, a competitive desire to keep Confucianism as the state doctrine and to maintain its dominance in Chinese society. In the Song dynasty, the authority of the Confucian tradition was further bolstered by the creation of a new category of classics called the Thirteen Classics (Shisanjing 十三經): the Classic of Changes, the Classic of Poetry, the Book of Documents, the Rites of Zhou, the Ceremonial Rites, the Record of Rites and the Spring and Autumn Annals, the Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing 孝經), Analects, Mencius, and the Erya 禤雅.
Generally, Confucianism defines much of Chinese culture and tradition. In late imperial China and in republican China, rulers continued to rely on the wisdom of Confucian thought and considered it to be one of the main components of Chinese identity. Even in contemporary China, Jiang Zemin draws on the wisdom of the Confucian tradition when he speaks about the Chinese nation.\textsuperscript{24}

To the Chinese diaspora, Confucianism still largely defines what it means to be Chinese. In recent years, North American, European and Asian scholars have written on the subject of Asian values, human rights and ecology.\textsuperscript{25} Asian values in this context refer most often to the values of the Confucian tradition.

Confucianism also has a less positive side: the Confucianism referred to in polemical texts, such as the \textit{Mozi} and the \textit{Zhuangzi}. This kind of Confucianism also seems suggested in Lin Huaimin's dance interpretation of the \textit{Nine Songs}. In response to a question about whether his interpretation followed either Zhu Xi or Wang Yi (王逸) (d.158 CE) he replied, “my interpretation, although done in the modern period, comes before Confucian interpretations in the Han dynasty.”\textsuperscript{26} However, when he was asked whether he considered Confucianism to be a

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\textsuperscript{26}Lin Huaimin, \textit{interview by Alison Marshall} (Bali, Taiwan: October 29, 1998).
symbol of Taiwanese oppression in his interpretation of the *Nine Songs*, Lin remarked: “Taiwan in many ways is more Confucian than the mainland. We study Confucian texts in school. I do not think about Confucianism as a symbol of oppression.” 27 In an effort to clarify Lin’s view of Confucianism, I asked about the significance of the removal of the Lady of the Xiang’s mask and long white veil in the fourth song, and whether this signified the removal of Confucian restrictions. To this question Lin said, “Yes.”

When I refer to Confucianism in this dissertation, I not only refer to the Confucianism of Confucius. I am also referring, by and large, to the authority of classical texts in state governance and how the study of these texts cultivated generations of scholars and officials. Additionally, I refer to the contrast between the Confucian state as government and local identity, as well as between northern Confucian culture and other regional cultures. Although ecstatic religion has not enjoyed the same state patronage as Confucianism, ecstatic religion has also had a long tradition in China. As early as the Shang dynasty, religious ecstacies may have been important on the Chinese political and religious stages.

In order to understand the significant role of religious ecstacies in the past and present, my methodology is text-based, but the way I understand references to religious ecstacies in Chinese texts has been influenced by participant-observation fieldwork. 28 Two recent fieldwork trips to Taiwan and China undertaken in 1997 and 1998 enabled me to study the modern religious and

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28 During rituals in which the religious ecstatic entered trance, I was not able to participate.

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theatrical context of religious ecstatics in Taiwan. In Taiwan, I attended many dance and ritual performances, joined a conference on the relationship between dance and religion, and interviewed dance choreographers.

During my first fieldwork visit to Taiwan in 1997, I interviewed Lin Huaimin, Taiwan’s premier dance choreographer. The interview was conducted predominantly in English and tape-recorded at Lin Huaimin’s office in downtown Taibei, lasting for one and one-half hours. Portions of this transcribed interview are cited in the study.

One year later in 1998, I returned to Taiwan and arranged a second interview with Lin Huaimin at Lin’s studio in Bali, located to the north of Taibei. It was conducted in English and it was not recorded. In the interview, Lin discussed the Nine Songs and its relevance to contemporary Taiwanese religion. While I was at his studio, I was introduced to the dance troupe, toured the grounds, and was told about the daily regime of the dance troupe, which included, Taiqi, yoga, meditation, as well as dance practice.

I also performed participant-observation fieldwork to study the modern relationship between dance and religion. During my second trip to Taiwan and also to China, my time was spent travelling to temples and observing religious ceremonies. I sought out temples where I could converse in Modern Standard Chinese with the congregation and religious ecstatics. Often I had to revisit a temple several times before I was able to witness an ecstatic religious ritual. I video-taped over twenty case studies of ecstatic religious performance. For instance: the

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29The two separate fieldwork trips in 1997 and 1998 to Taiwan and China were funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation.
beginning of a thirty-day historic ceremony in which a new ecstatic is chosen for the community, several cases of self-mortification, fortune-telling and divination, and fertility counselling and healing.

My understanding of the religious ecstatic is based on the Chinese definition of the religious ecstatic in the Han dynasty Shuowen Jiezi, compiled around 100 CE by Xu Shen. The Shuowen writes:

The *wu* is a *zhu*. The woman by being able to serve the formless, dances down the spirits. The character/graph represents a person with two sleeves [in] dance posture . . . In ancient times, Wu Xian was the first made *wu*. . . . In the case of men, they are called *xi*, in the case of women, they are called *wu*. . . .

Primarily, the text notes how the *wu* is a *zhu* or invocator, who communicates with the spirits and is female. Additionally, the text describes her movements in dancing and describes earlier examples of *wu*, such as the famous Wu Xian. The definition is especially pertinent to this study because it refers to the *wu* as a religious ecstatic, who raises her hands in dance formation.

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31 The *Shuowen*’s definition is widely used but it may not reflect the historical evidence of religious ecstasies in Chinese texts. Although the definition refers to the *wu* as a female, there were many references in Chinese texts pre-dating the *Shuowen* that used the terms *wu* and *zhu* to describe men. Lothar von Falkenhausen and Sun Yirang say that the gender specific definition in the *Shuowen jiezi* may have been the result of ubiquitous Han dynasty *yin–yang* theorizing. Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The Wu Officials in the Zhouli,” *Early China* 20 (1995): 289; and Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義 2 volumes (reprint, Jingdu, Zhongwen, 1991).
As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, Chinese definitions of religious ecstatics vary according to the text and time period. Even though this is a study of the wu, I also examine related definitions. *Zhuangzi* describes religious ecstatics as Daoist ideal men, who are distinct from and superior to wu, taking spirit journeys and engaging in spirit possession to acquire an understanding of the Dao 道. The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* defines the religious ecstatic as both a wu and in other language. The *Nine Songs* defines religious ecstatics as ling 靈 and notes how they take spirit journeys and are possessed. In post-Han dynasty historical and literary texts, religious ecstatics increasingly are not called wu but are called by other names, such as the tongzi 童子, who performs rain dancing.

Throughout this dissertation I refer to how ecstatics act and perform in their roles during performance. The words “act,” “perform,” “roles,” and “performance” are theatrical terms that are widely used metaphorically in other contexts, including here. Sometimes these theatrical terms convey how an ecstatic performs for religious efficacy and not for entertainment. But more often the distinction between religious and theatrical acting and performance is much more blurred, especially in pre-modern Chinese history.

The exhilaration felt and expressed by many who have been ecstatic is so overwhelming that it seems to come from somewhere beyond the ordinary world in which we live. Indeed, ecstasy is often referred to as possession by a spirit or by God, in the manner of a ‘shaman.’ Yet

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an ecstatic is not always a 'shaman' and a 'shaman' is not always an ecstatic. For the purposes of this dissertation, an ecstatic is a religious person whose consciousness is transformed and who describes the experience as spirit possession and/or as a spirit journey to the spirit world. This transformation of consciousness refers to a trance in which ecstacies communicate with deities, perform healing, speak in the voices of deities, or practice self-mortification and divination. But there are other ways. An ecstatic is also one who transforms his or her consciousness through dance, which may be in some instances religious and in other instances theatrical. In both instances, the movement of dance stirs the performer to exaltation and joy, even to exhilaration that accompanies ecstasy.
Section 1—Introduction

Part 1—Who is the wu? A question of definitions

The word 'shaman' originates in Siberia and is derived from a central Siberian tribe's Tungusic word 'saman'. 'Saman' or its variant 'hamman' is both a noun and a verb. As a noun it implies an individual who is changed during a religious experience: "one who is excited, moved, raised." As a verb, it captures the process of understanding that comes about as a result of the religious experience. In Siberia, a 'shaman' enters this calling during illness, or in dreams or through inheritance.

Many scholars who define the wu as a 'shaman' have used the naming convention popularized by Mircea Eliade. Eliade also invented the word 'hierophany' to describe manifestations of the sacred: according to Eliade, modern symbols and archetypes have lost their sacred meaning and become associated with the mundane. In order to recognize that these symbols and archetypes were manifestations of the sacred, not profane, they had to be categorized as hierophanies. What is significant about Eliade’s offering to the history of ideas shaping religion is that he suggested looking to many different cultures to understand the underlying structure of religious experience. Still, Eliade’s contribution of ‘hierophanies’ to the

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field of comparative religion continued the tendency to reduce unique cultural religious phenomena by defining them in a comparative way.

The term 'shaman' is sometimes used to refer to anything remotely resembling Siberian forms of shamanism. But few scholars agree on how the wu is a 'shaman,' and often how a scholar defines the wu as a 'shaman' is related to how that scholar approaches Chinese religion. As a result, the scholarly debates on the usage of the term wu reveal the state of the field not only of ecstatic religious studies but also of Chinese religion.

A breakthrough in the way scholars thought about religion came in the work of the theologian, Rudolph Otto (1869–1937). Otto proposed the religious mental state. Instead of focussing on the foreign or primitive elements of a religion, he focussed on the personal experience of religion. Otto wrote:

The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its 'profane', non-religious mood of everyday experience.³

In effect, Otto had captured the essence of ecstatic religious experience in a Christian context. Building on Otto's definition of the feeling of ecstatic religious experience, Mircea Eliade

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(1907–1986) contributed his methodology of sacred hierophanies to the study of comparative religion.

Increasingly, scholars emphasized the need to understand the religion of others in new language. Participant-observation fieldwork became an important part of scholarship. Wilfred Cantwell Smith observed in 1959 how fieldwork instilled in the scholar a respect for the autochthonous minorities he or she studied: "... at the turn of the century a typical introductory course in this field would emphasize ‘primitive religions,’ and a typical book would address itself to ‘the nature and origin of religion’ (the phrase implicitly postulates that the reality or truth of religion is to be found most purely or most surely in its earliest and simplest forms) . . ."4 Using participant-observation fieldwork, Clifford Geertz interpreted the religious meaning of cultural interaction in Balinese, Islamic and Moroccan societies.5 Catherine Bell writes how Geertz argues that: "religion is sociologically interesting not because it describes the social order but because it shapes it."6

More recently, anthropologists have studied the dynamic aspects of ritual in a performance context. In a study of Ndembu tribal rituals, Victor Turner elaborates on Émile Durkheim’s functionalist approach to the study of religion.7 He believed his own conclusions


6Catherine Bell, Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 67.
about Ndembu tribal rituals could be universally applied. Using the terms ‘communitas’ and ‘societas’ and ‘liminal’ and ‘liminoid’, he discussed the social and ideological polarities that were manifest during ritual. Ritual performance enabled social and ideological tensions to be accommodated and resolved.

Like Turner, Richard Schechner has also studied drama and how it functions. In particular, Schechner has examined the transformation of traditional ritual into staged performance. He calls this transformation “intervention/invention” and says that it is inevitable. In modern society, ritual is increasingly being taken out of its original performance context and performed in a more secular and (often) commercial setting. Jane Marie Law in a study of Awaji puppets elaborates on how “intervention” fundamentally changes the performers, ritual space, the audience and the outcome of the performance. The study of the religious ecstatic in this dissertation continues in the direction of Richard Schechner. I also examine how contemporary performance adapts classical texts, rituals, religious ecstacies and the aesthetics of transformation. I aim to focus on the themes of performance and transformation and include textual work as well as the examination of a dance drama.

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9Richard Schechner, Between Theater and Anthropology, 77.

Twentieth-Century Definitions of Chinese religious ecstacies

The term ‘shaman’ was not always the dominant definition for the *wu* or for any other Chinese religious ecstacies. Early in the Twentieth-century, scholars recognized the differences among Chinese religious ecstacies. J.J.M. de Groot’s *The Religious System of China* (1892-1910) was the first comprehensive discussion of the *wu* in early Chinese texts (Volume 6). The section titled “The Priesthood of Animism,” categorized ecstatic religious activity using E.B. Tylor’s fashionable terminology at the time—“animism.” It also referred to ecstatic religious activity as ‘wu-ism’ in the sub-heading “Wu-ism after the Han Period.” This sub-heading included de Groot’s definition of the *wu*: “men and women possessed by spirits or gods, and consequently acting as seers and soothsayers, exorcists and physicians; invokers or conjurers bringing down gods at sacrifices, and performing other sacerdotal functions, occasionally indulging also in imprecation, and in sorcery with the help of spirits.” All other religious ecstacies, such as the *ling*, *tongzi* and *jitong*, for example, were included under the rubrics of...


13The *ling* 僧 is the religious ecstatic who performed in the original *Nine Songs*.

14In some contexts, the *tongzi* 童子 is a religious ecstatic, performing the role of a spirit medium. The *tongzi* will be discussed in more detail in the fourth section of the dissertation.

15A *jitong* 子 is defined as a divining child. In Taiwan and in China, the *jitong* is a ubiquitous popular religious ecstatic performer.
Who is the wu? A question of definitions

animism and mediumism. Henry S.J. Doré used the Chinese transliterated terms to define the wu and tongzi under the title of superstitions.\(^\text{16}\) Moreover, Henri Maspero’s *China in Antiquity* (1927) defined wu as a sorcerer or sorceress under the heading of mythology.\(^\text{17}\)

Somewhat after de Groot’s important Western contribution to the field came the seminal work by Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 in 1936. Chen Mengjia studied oracle bones and epigraphic materials and put forth the highly speculative theory that the Shang dynasty kings of China were wu.\(^\text{18}\) The theory implied that the Chinese Shang dynasty kings resembled the Western religious priest. In addition, the theory suggested that that priest was also a religious ecstatic.\(^\text{19}\)


In 1945, L.C. Hopkins, wrote an article titled “The Shaman or Chinese wu: His inspired dancing and versatile character.” His article represented a European trend to define the wu as a ‘shaman’. Edward Schafer elaborated on Chen’s work and defined the wu as ‘shaman.’ In “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China” (1951), he examined classical texts and stressed the plight of female ecstatic functionaries after the Zhou dynasty. He wrote: “After the Chou dynasty the female shaman, with a few striking exceptions, was forced into sub rosa channels for the

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practising of her magic arts, analogously to the witch of medieval Europe. Eventually, Schafer’s work would focus on related youthful religious ecstacies in Tang literature.

In 1955, Arthur Waley published a slim volume on shamanism titled The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China, which translated and commented on the Nine Songs. Waley’s pioneering work on the Nine Songs defined the ling in that text as ‘shaman.’ In 1959, inspired by Waley’s book, David Hawkes’s Ch’u Tz’u ‘The Songs of the South’: An Ancient Chinese Anthology continued to use Waley’s definition, focussing on the importance of ‘shamans’ in musical performance from a more historical perspective. Hawkes explained his reasoning for the definition of wu as ‘shaman’: “Male or female shamans—it is not always clear which—having first purified and perfumed themselves and dressed up in gorgeous costumes, sing and dance to the accompaniment of music, drawing the gods down from heaven in a sort of divine courtship . . . The relationship of the worshipped to the god reminds one of the épouses célestes of Siberian shamans.”

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Derk Bodde’s study of Chinese myths (1961) also relied on Eliade’s early definition of ‘shamanism’. Bodde examined ‘shamans’ in the Guoyu 国語, and, siding with Eliade, he emphasized the important role ‘shamans’ had in society once Heaven and Earth had separated.26 ‘Shamans’ were responsible for re-establishing the link between Heaven and Earth.

In 1964, Mircea Eliade’s extensive study on ‘shamanism’ —Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy—relied heavily on de Groot’s work. But Eliade had not done de Groot’s fieldwork, and as a result, his discussion of Chinese ‘shamanism’ was generated from his knowledge of Central and North Asian ‘shamanism’. From this comparative religious framework, his discussion of Chinese religious ecstacies was brief and defined the Chinese ‘shaman’ in a manner similar to other types of ‘shamans’ who took ecstatic journeys. He wrote: “... the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld.”27 But there were some types of religious ecstacies Eliade did not think were ‘shamans.’ Eliade’s conception of the ‘shaman’ was gender specific defining it as a medicine man.28 Moreover, Eliade did not believe that spirit mediums or exorcists constituted genuine ‘shamans.’29 Many scholars use Eliade’s definition without realizing that Eliade did not define spirit mediums as ‘shamans.’


28Mircea Eliade, “Le problème du chamanisme,” 5. This is also derived from personal correspondence with one of Eliade’s last students.

Some scholars have rejected the term ‘shaman’ and have used the term ‘spirit medium’ to define the wu and other types of religious ecstacies. I. M. Lewis’s study of ecstatic possession (1971) approaches ecstatic religion from the perspective of a British social anthropologist. According to Lewis, a religious ecstatic is a spirit medium: “Spirit possession, then, is one of the main, widely distributed mystical interpretations of trance and of other associated conditions.” Religious ecstacies are defined by their ability to enter trance states of possession in which the god or spirit descends or ascends to embody them. In addition, Lewis’s interpretation of spirit mediumism implies that it is a marginalized form of religious behaviour.

An attack on Eliade’s definition of a ‘shaman’ came in 1973 with Ake Hultekrantz’s “A definition of Shamanism.” Here, Hultekrantz voiced the concern that based on his fieldwork a ‘shaman’ was not necessarily defined by the ability to engage in ecstatic journeys. Hultekrantz defined the ‘shaman’ as: “a social functionary who, with the help of guardian spirits, attains ecstasy in order to create a rapport with the supernatural world on behalf of his group members.” He further specified in contradistinction to Eliade that shamanism was specific to only certain geographic regions where gathering, hunting, and fishing continued to be the dominant life-style. Hultekrantz’s article added to the debate on how scholars should define the wu and ecstatic religious experience.


32 Ake Hultekrantz, “A definition of Shamanism,” 34.
In 1974, 1979, and in 1982 Michael Loewe published studies on Han dynasty religion and society. He used historical texts from the Han dynasty and emphasized the political role of the wu, defining the wu as a 'shaman'. Indeed, Loewe's use of the term 'shaman' set a clear precedent in the field of Han dynasty historical and religious studies.

In 1979, Isabelle Robinet's *Taoist meditation: the Mao-shan tradition of great purity* examined the contributions of mysticism, meditation techniques and alchemy to proto-Daoist philosophy. The interpretative nature of Robinet's work forged a link between Daoist and ecstatic trance states and in doing so suggested that Daoism had emerged out of ecstatic religion.

In the same year, Rolf Stein's weighty study appeared. It also explored the relationship between Daoism and ecstatic religion, detailing Daoist religion's co-opting of ecstatic practices at the local level. In 1982, Kristofer Schipper's *The Taoist Body* analyzed Daoist literature and noted how 'shamanism' was one of the antecedents to Daoism. He wrote: "... shamanism, which we know fully only thanks to the data of contemporary ethnography, actually corresponds to an archaic level which, from an objective point of view, is to be placed among the antecedents of...

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Who is the wu? A question of definitions

Taoism. Writing from an archaeological perspective in 1983, David Keightley in an unpublished paper stipulated how the wu of the Shang dynasty were not kings but ritual bureaucrats for whom trance states of either possession or ecstasy were unnecessary.

Geoffrey R. Waters's *Three Elegies of Ch'u: An Introduction to the Traditional Interpretation of the Ch'u Tz'u* (1985) had a philological approach that situated the Elegies of Chu within a political, historical and literary framework. Waters translated three of the *Nine Songs*, couplet by couplet, with four variant translations for each character, and following the precedents set by Waley and Hawkes, he defined the *ling* as 'shaman.'

In 1985, Volume 2 "History of Scientific Thought" of Joseph Needham's multi-volume *Science and Civilisation in China* devoted several pages to the discussion of Chinese 'shamans.' Here, he explored how 'shamanism' was one of the organic parts of proto-Daoism that developed

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In 1983 and based on his interpretation of Native American ecstatic experience, John Grim wrote *The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the Ojibway Indians*. Here, he discussed examples of “shamans,” one of these being the Chinese ‘shaman’, and their special ability to invoke a “transformative power.” A Chinese ‘shaman’ could be both a priest and a spirit medium. Grim’s understanding of ecstatic experience was influenced by Rudolph Otto’s conception of the mysterium tremendum. John A. Grim, *The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the Ojibway Indians* (Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1983), 3.


38 Geoffrey R. Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch’u: An Introduction to the Traditional Interpretation of the Ch’u Tz’u* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).
Who is the wu? A question of definitions

into religious Daoism. Needham defined the wu as a Chinese 'shaman.' He noted: "The Chinese had a word of their own for shaman, however, namely, wu, and it is interesting that the idea of dancing is what binds all these words together." 39

Chinese scholars, such as Lin Fushi 林富士 (1988 and 1994) and Song Zhaolin 宋兆麟 (1989) examined examples of wu in texts that were written in the Han and later dynasties. Lin Fushi's (1988) *Handai de wuzhe* 漢代的巫者 focused on wu in the Han dynasty and reviewed historical and literary Chinese sources that implied the ecstatic religious importance of the wu from the Shang to the Han dynasty. In 1994, Lin also wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the subject in English, *Chinese Shamans and Shamanism in the Chiang-nan Area During the Six Dynasties Period (3rd–6th Centuries A.D.).* As the title implied, it was a study of Six Dynasties male and female wu defined as 'shamans' in Six Dynasties historical texts. 40 Song Zhaolin studied wu in classical texts but did so using Marxist language. He emphasized the contributions of ecstatic religion to traditional Chinese society and modern Communist China. 41

The Nineties ushered in another round of criticisms of the terms used to describe the wu and its role. In 1990, Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 criticized interpretations that the wu was a king and called for a re-examination of this notion. 42 Summarizing many of the classical textual anecdotes

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40 Lin Fushi 林富士, "Chinese Shamans and Shamanism in the Chiang-nan Area During the Six Dynasties Period (3rd–6th Century A.D.)," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1994); and *Handai de wuzhe* 漢代的巫者 (Taipei county, Banqiao: Dao Xiang, 1988).

that featured the wu, he noted how wu might have been court spirit mediums and not kings in the Shang, Zhou and Han dynasties. His root objection to the Shang shaman king theory was that there was scant definitive pre-Han dynasty evidence.

In another 1990 article, Victor Mair took a linguistic approach and offered the foreign term 'magus' — a type of Persian (now Iranian) priest — to redefine the wu and other Chinese religious ecstacies. This redefinition was disputed by the linguist and historian E.G. Pulleyblank who said that it had no correspondence in Chinese. In 1990, Pulleyblank, in his Lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation early Middle Chinese, late Middle Chinese, and early Mandarin, reiterated the definition of the wu as a 'shaman'. A year later, Livia Kohn's Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Taoist Tradition appeared, which was based on the study of classical texts. It explained how Daoism merged with 'shamanism', citing as evidence the similar ecstatic trance states of 'shamans' and Daoist immortals. Peter Nickerson in 1994 and again in 1996 discussed the complex nature of competition between spirit mediums and

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44E-mail correspondence with E.G. Pulleyblank on Monday, 26 April 1999.

45E.G. Pulleyblank, Lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation in early Middle Chinese, late Middle Chinese, and early Mandarin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), 325.

Daoists in early medieval Chinese texts. In his two studies, the titles suggested a definition of wu as 'shaman' but the content revealed how he defined the wu as a spirit medium.47

In 1995, Lothar von Falkenhausen's "Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The wu Officials in the Zhou Li" addressed the growing debate, initiated in part by David Keightley in 1983, about the definition of the character wu as 'shaman-king.' Von Falkenhausen combined textual and epigraphic analysis in an effort to re-examine the wu in the *Rites of Zhou.* He commented on how Keightley's repudiation of the term 'shaman' appeared in several unpublished works:

In a couple of papers, unfortunately still unpublished, David N. Keightley has taken issue with the notion that early rulers were 'shamans'—a term by now so loaded that I hesitate to use it . . . . While conceding the importance of contact with the spirits in legitimizing Shang royal authority, Keightley prefers to believe that such contact was made through the rulers' punctilious performance of rituals, with no need for trance and ecstasy.48


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Keightley examined Neolithic and Shang period work done in the field from an anthropological perspective and once more articulated his concerns about the character wu and its definition: “Future work will have to define putative shamanism of early China in more precision. Did it involve ecstatic possession, travel to other realms, speaking in tongues?”

Keightley’s concerns about the applications of the terms ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism’ to describe the Chinese wu were echoed in Donald Harper’s contribution to the section on the state of the field, “Chinese Religions in the Warring States, Qin and Han Periods.” Harper cautioned the reader to be aware of the increasingly broad speculative definition of the character wu as a ‘shaman.’ Later, in 1995, Jordan Paper added that the term ‘shaman’ was too general to describe the many functions of the wu in historical and contemporary China.

This dissertation uses the Chinese terms for religious ecstasies. Texts and the dance drama provide the contexts that define the different types of religious ecstasies. Such context-driven definitions avoid the late Twentieth-century debate about the terms ‘shaman’ and ‘shamanism.’ These context-driven definitions are also influenced by performance theory. Because the discussion is not limited to one period of history or literary genre, the context of each religious ecstatic describes him or her in a slightly different way. For instance, the roles religious

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ecstatics performed in early Chinese texts and poetry contrast with the roles they perform in theatre. While some of those differences are related to the way religious ecstacies were and are named, many of the differences are created by the aesthetics of transformation as metaphors, simile, imagery and movement, that determined how the religious ecstatic performed a role. By not restricting the religious ecstatic to one definition, this dissertation allows the texts and the dance drama to shade the performance.
Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs*

**Section 1—Introduction**

**Part 2—Lin Huaimin’s Nine Songs**

Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs* was first performed on August 10, 1993 in Taipei, Taiwan, and continues to be performed today in Taiwan and on other stages in the East and West. Consisting of eight scenes with an intermission after the third scene, the whole performance takes 110 minutes. One of the eight scenes is a popular ritual that invites the deities to attend the performance. The remaining seven scenes are interpretations of original songs in the *Nine Songs*. Each scene is performed by members of the twenty-four female and male dance troupe. The female *wu* appears in three scenes.

The music of the production is eclectic. Taiwanese Zou tribal 鄂族 music sung by male vocalists accompanies the first and last songs. In addition, the first song is accompanied by the recorded sounds of nature, such as birds and flowing water. Dancers perform to Tibetan bell music in the second song. Tibetan music, this time sung by Gyoto monks, is also featured in the third song. In the fourth song, a Balinese song is performed by a lead female vocalist and chorus to a tune played by bell and other percussion instruments. Wind, string and percussion instruments play the Japanese music in the fifth song. In the sixth song, the dancer is accompanied by Indian sitar music. Drums and the spoken names of individuals in Mandarin and the Taiwanese and mainland dialects comprise the music of the seventh song.
Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs*

At the beginning of the production, white Chinese calligraphy is projected onto an all-black background. But during most of the production, the background of the stage is plain and black. Occasionally, such as in the songs “Lady of the Xiang” and “Mountain Goddess,” the image of a full moon is projected against the black backdrop. The only stage prop that remains the same throughout the entire production is a large lotus pond filled with lotus flowers and water. Lighting is used to accentuate the starkness of the background, the flowers in the pond and the dancers.

In the production, masked deities wear colourful costumes and the female *wu* wears a red dress. Often the rest of the dancers wear ordinary clothing that accentuates the movement of their torsos. For much of the production, female dancers wear beige leotards and male dancers wear beige briefs, and sometimes they wear white robes or black pants. Reoccurring male and female characters also wear dark formal suits, long shirts and shorts.

*Welcoming the Spirits* (*Ying shen* 迎神)

“The Female *wu* rises and dances to welcome the spirits” 女巫起舞迎神.¹
“Music: Greeting the Gods, by the Tsou tribe of Ali Mountain, Taiwan
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
The Traveller: Huang Hsu-hui
The Celebrants: The Company.”²

¹The translation is my own. *Nine Songs ( Jiuge 九歌)*, choreographed and produced by Lin Huaimin 林懷民, Taipei: Joy Communications, 1994, videocassette program, 1. See Appendix A.

²Lin Huaimin 林懷民, *Nine Songs ( Jiuge 九歌)*, performed by Cloud Gate Dance Theatre troupe, 1997, performance program, 2. See Appendix B.
Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs* opens with a scene called “Welcoming the Spirits 迎神.” Zou

tribal music and natural sounds create the mood. Calligraphy is projected on the black backdrop:

> On a lucky day with an auspicious name  
> Reverently we come to delight the Lord on High.  
> We grasp the long sword’s shaft of jade,  
> And our girdle pendants clash and chime.  
> From the god’s jewelled mat with treasures laden  
> Take up the fragrant flower-offerings,  
> The meats cooked in melilotus, served on orchid mats,  
> And libations of cinnamon wine and pepper sauces!  
> Flourish the drumsticks, beat the drum!

The rites are accomplished to the beating of the drums;  
The flower-wand is passed on to succeeding dancers.  
Lovely maidens sing their song, slow and solemnly,  
Orchids in spring and chrysanthemums in autumn:  
So it shall go on until the end of time.³

When the calligraphy disappears from the screen, a man called the Traveller dressed in a three-piece dark suit and hat walks across stage with a suitcase and then stops. The music ends and in silence, twenty-two dancers dressed in white robes appear one by one on the stage.

**“Great One—Lord of the East” (Donghuang Taiyi 東皇太一)**

“A staged fertility sacrifice and afterward the spirit just suddenly disappears” 一場豐饒祭後神祗突然消失.⁴  
“Music: *Crossing the Line*, by Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings  
The Sun God: Huang Hsu-hui  
His Guards: Sung Chao-chiu, Wang Chih-hao  
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun  
The Celebrants: The Company.”⁵

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⁴The translation is my own. *Nine Songs*, videocassette program, 1.
Dancers dressed in plain white robes enter the stage and sit down in a circle and cross their legs. The one female wu enters, with very long dark and uncombed hair that is adorned with flowers. Her face is painted white. She walks over to the lotus pond. Bending down, she brings water first to her lips and next to her forehead. After this, the female wu turns around and walks back to the seated circle of dancers, and positions herself in its centre. Breaking the silence, the dancers raise their long sticks, shouting and beating them rapidly: she writhes to the rhythm of the beat in the centre of the circle, spinning faster and faster. Finally she collapses and falls to the floor of the stage.

When the female wu collapses, the Tibetan bell music begins. An illuminated rectangular window in the back of the stage opens and in it stands the sun god on the shoulders of two men. He wears only a small golden brief and a mask with golden tendrils extending out from all sides. The two men who support him wear beige briefs and hold tall wooden poles in front of them. As the men walk onto the stage, the sun god holds the upper ends of the poles and moves them up and down. Each time the poles hit the floor of the stage they make a loud sound. When the illuminated window closes, the sun god jumps down from the shoulders of the men and begins to dance, awakening the female wu, who then stands up. A formally dressed man appears (a "Traveller") and walks across the stage, carrying a briefcase. The female wu and the sun god dance aggressively. At one point, the dancers position the female wu beneath the sun god and the sun god leans over her. (See Figure 1.) The dancers bob up and down, and as they do their robes

\[\text{Lin Huaimin's Nine Songs}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 3.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 3.}\]
Lin Huimin's *Nine Songs*

Figure 1—
Photograph by Yu Hui-hung 游輝弘
fall off their shoulders and hang at their waists. After the dance, the sun god stands in front of the female wu and the dancers. He bends forward while the female wu and the dancers bend backward. He bends backward while the female wu and the dancers bend forward. When this is over, the window re-opens and the sun god ascends slowly off the stage on the shoulders of the two men.

The female wu is shaking. Once more, she walks over to the lotus pond and lowers her hands into it and then raises them to wet her forehead. Returning to the dancers, she picks up the long sticks and, looking up, points to the ceiling of the stage.

"Greater Master of Fate" and "Lesser Master of Fate"
(Dasiming 大司命 and Shao siming 少司命)

"The staged moving play of methodical control" 一場操控的遊戲. 6
"Music: Sangwa Dupa, Tibetan Buddhist Tantras of Gyuto
The Greater God of Fate: Wang Chih-hao
The Lesser God of Fate: Tsao Kuei-shing
The Greater Puppet: Sung Chao-chiun
The Lesser Puppet: Tiong Ing-siong
Human Beings: The Company." 7

The lights dim, the music of chanting Gyoto monks begins and the eighteen dancers from the last dance become the Human Beings in this dance, wearing white robes that hang below their waists. A woman, wearing a long red blouse over the top of her leotard, rides a bicycle across the stage and signals the beginning of the scene. Six pairs of men and women appear on

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6Nine Songs, videocassette program, 1.
7Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 3.
the stage. The women wear flesh coloured leotards and the men wear white robes exposing their chests. In each pair, the men forcefully move the women in front of them so that the women appear like dolls, whose arms and legs are easily moved.

Two additional men appear on stage and begin to move the men and women in each couple. These two men adjust the other men in pairs so that they embrace the women, and they also force the women to embrace the men.

Two masked deities named the Greater Master of Fate and the Lesser Master of Fate enter the stage. One deity enters on the back of another deity. The one on top has a long white beard and wears red briefs with a long red sash. The other deity has a long black beard and wears black briefs and a black sash.

Then two very tall puppets called the Greater Puppet and Lesser Puppet appear on stage. Each puppet is created out of a wooden frame that is moved around by a man underneath it. For a short time, the men move the puppets around, shaking their long arms and legs. Their appearance on the stage is followed by a formally dressed man or Traveller, who walks across the stage carrying an open black umbrella.

*Intermission*
"Lady of the Xiang" (Xiang Furen 湘夫人)

"At the river’s edge the wait of anxiety and despair” 江邊焦慮絕望的等候.

"Music: Mugamut, by the Puyuma tribe, eastern Taiwan
Gending Mandulapat-Ladrang
Agun-Agun, by Javanese Court Gamelan

The Goddess of the Xiang River: Wang Chiang-mei
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
Her Maids: Chang Yu-huan, Chiu I-wen, Chou Wei-ping, Lu Chiu-yen, Wen Ching-ching
Young Men: Liu Chih-kuo, Shu Yao-cheng, Tiong Ing-siong, Tsao Kuei-hsing,
Wu Chun-hsien.
Her Guards: Liu Chih-kua, Tiong Ing-siong."

This next song in the production is set at night to a Balinese tune sung by a lead female singer and a chorus. There is a faint outline of the full moon on the all black backdrop. A rectangular window opens at the back of the stage and five women enter. Dressed in sheer light blue dresses, their hair is neatly arranged in a bun and adorned with flowers. They walk to the front of the stage and bend down to the lotus pond, wet their faces and stand up. Then they dance with slow balletic movements.

The Lady of the Xiang is carried on to the stage on a simple wooden platform. She wears a white mask that has purple flowers on the right side. Her hair is long and unadorned by flowers. The wooden platform is carried by two men wearing beige briefs and another female attendant wearing a light blue dress. The Lady’s left hand holds a staff wrapped with vines and flowers and her head and body are covered by a white veil with a long train that trails more than ten feet behind her.

*The translation is my own. Nine Songs, videocassette program, 1.

9Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 3.
The five women go over to the Lady to help her step down from the wooden platform. Stepping down from the platform, she watches while the maidens in slow methodical movements unravel the veil that has shrouded her body as she entered the stage. The unveiling reveals how her upper torso is covered by a metal frame from which several golden ropes dangle. After the veil has been removed the attendants place it in a line extending behind the Lady.

For some time, the Lady cautiously dances around the limits of the veil—sometimes inside the perimeter of the veil and at other times along the edge of it. The Lady's dance movements are slow and stilted. At one point, the Lady ventures beyond the limits of the veil and the female attendants swiftly return to reposition her at the edge of her veil. She walks over and sits by the edge of the lotus pond and the music changes to a pulsing synthesizer. The formally dressed Traveller wanders through the scene dressed in a suit and hat and carrying a suitcase. (See Figure 2.) Then the female wu enters.

Wearing her red dress, the female wu enters the stage. The female wu carefully removes the mask of the Lady and places it on her own face. The Lady’s face beneath the mask is pale and around her eyes are deep red circles. She begins to dance more freely and wanders away from the limits of the veil, dancing more quickly and sensually. Toward the end of the dance without the mask, the Lady lifts her legs high. The female wu and the Lady dance for a time and then the female wu leaves the stage with the mask on her face. The audience's attention is re-focussed on the different movements of the Lady. Taking the veil as her partner.
Lin Huaimin's *Nine Songs*

**Figure 2**
Photograph by Liu Chen-Hsiang 劉振祥
she lifts it up and wraps it around her playfully and drops down to the stage rolling herself up in it. The Lady then shapes the veil into what appears to be a long river. Fog fills the stage. The Lady dances along the veil until the music changes again. Then the same formally dressed Traveller appears and walks across the stage with his luggage, as one of the female dancers enters, scattering flower petals along the outstretched length of veil and then leaving the stage. The Lady walks over to the veil, gathers it around her head and shoulders and watches the petals fall to the floor of the stage as she lifts it up. The attendants reappear and refit the Lady with her mask, veil and staff and help her onto the wooden platform. She is then carried away by her attendants.

"Lord in the Clouds" (Yun zhongjun 雲中君)

"Driving and riding, travelling the four seas" 駕御坐騎四海遨遊. 10

"Music: Estenraku in Hyojo, Gagaku music of the Japanese court
Lord in the Clouds: Wu I-fang
His Carriers: Sung Chao-chiun, Wang Chih-hao
The Flag Bearer: Shu Yao-cheng."11

The next scene opens to an all black and empty set. Wind, string and percussion instruments play a Japanese tune. The Lord in the Clouds enters the stage standing on the backs of two men. Like the other deities in the production, the deity wears a mask. His mask is a large white frame with thick white tendrils extending from either side. He wears white briefs and a long white sash that accentuates his sinewy physique. The men beneath him are dressed in dark blue,

10 The translation is my own. Nine Songs, videocassette program, 1.
11 Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 4.
double-breasted, brass buttoned, business suits and crawl along the stage to support the weight of the large muscular deity. While the deity parades slowly around the stage, a scantily clad man on roller skates enters. Carrying a large white banner, the man wears only bright blue satin shorts, a long flowing white scarf and a white head band. (See Figure 3.)

"Mountain Goddess" (Shan gui 山鬼)

"The expanse of the mouth of silent misery" 一張淒慘的無言的嘴. 12
"Music: Rag Ahir Bhairav, classical flute music of India
The Mountain Spirit: Chang Xiao-xiong." 13

In “Mountain Goddess” the stage setting is all black, except for the full moon in the background. The dance is choreographed to Indian sitar music and opens with a single male dancer dressed in a small green brief. The male dancer’s face and body are painted white, except for a bright green mark on his chest and on his left cheek. He dances alone on a sparsely lit stage to a sad tune, moving slowly and with emotional depth. His dance movements are awkward and sometimes he falls backward or forward. Many times during the song, the male dancer opens his mouth and utters a silent scream. At other times he appears to be looking at something and backing away from it on the stage. At the end of the song a formerly dressed Traveller in a black hat, suit and tie carries a suitcase and walks across the stage behind him. The faint outline of the moon on the backdrop fades and two men and one woman race across the stage on bicycles.

12The translation is my own. Nine Songs, videocassette program, 2.
13Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 4.
Lin Huaimin's *Nine Songs*

**Figure 3**
Photograph by Yu Hui-hung 潘鈞宏.
They wear shorts and shirts. Eighteen dancers walk on to the stage wearing white robes and white sashes tied around their heads. As they enter, the male dancer from the previous song exits the stage. (See Figure 4.)

**"Homage to the State" (Guo shang 国殇)**

"Death and new birth" 死亡與新生.

“Music: Percussion by Ju Percussion Group; Recitation of the names of heroes and victims killed in wars and massacres in Chinese history

The Swordsman: Wang Wei-min
The Young Man: Wu Chun-hsien
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
and The Company.”

The last male dancer to enter the stage also holds a wooden sword. While the rest of the dancers settle into two lines, the man with the sword walks over to the lotus pond. Putting down his sword at the side of the pond and lowering his robe to his waist, he bends down and raises water to his face. He picks up his sword, walks over and stands in front of the two lines of dancers. Bowing with his sword, the dancers bow in return and then sit down. He dances quickly with the sword, motioning in long strokes that he is fighting with someone. As he slices through the air in front of him, his feet land heavily on the stage floor. His dance is interrupted by loud bangs.

The stage fills with smoke and suddenly the dancers disrobe and now wear their beige leotards or briefs and black trousers. Nine dancers enter the stage with baskets over their heads.

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14 The translation is my own. *Nine Songs*, videocassette program, 2.

Lin Huaimin's *Nine Songs*

**Figure 4**
Photograph by Yu Hui-hung 游輝弘.
heads, walking around in a circle on the stage. The banging intensifies. Names are announced in Mandarin, Fukienese or Hokkienese, Taiwanese and aboriginal dialects and after each name a dancer falls to the stage floor.

Following this the dancers all rise, run and huddle on the right side. Names are called out again and the dancers one by one fall to the stage floor. A man wearing a white shirt rides a bicycle across the stage. The dancers run back and forth.

Finally, two enormous lights appear from the back of the stage and shine into the eyes of the audience. A male dancer raises his hand to block the blinding light, some dancers run away from the bright light and other dancers fall to the floor of the stage. But the one male dancer remains in the centre of the stage as the banging continues. Dramatically, he touches his chest and falls.

The female wu enters the stage. As she arrives, the man falls. She wanders around the stage looking at all of the fallen dancers. She walks over to the pond and dips her hands into the water bringing it to the one fallen man’s face and forehead.

The dancers rise, leave the stage and then re-enter. All of the characters in the production now wear costumes from the various scenes. The sun god wears the dress of the female dancer in “Lady of the Xiang,” and the men in black pants reappear holding the long sticks used to evoke the sun god. A man wearing a beige brief has put on the Lady of the Xiang’s mask. Women in beige leotards have put on the remaining male godly masks of the Lord in the Clouds, the
Greater Master of Fate and Lesser Master of Fate. Once more, the formally dressed Traveller enters the stage and carries his luggage across the staged imagery.

"Rites for the soul" (Li hun 禮魂)

"Music: Farewell to the God, by the Tsou tribe of Ali Mountain, Taiwan The Company."

Zou tribal music sung by a chorus begins softly and gradually becomes louder. All of the dancers in the production return and join the female wu on stage. Then one by one dancers disappear and then reappear carrying lit candles onto the stage. Eventually the stage is filled with candles. A curtain at the back of the stage is lifted, revealing even more candles. The music swells as the audience sees more candles form a river of light extending back to the depths of the stage. (See Figure 5.)

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16 Lin Huaimin, Nine Songs, performance program, 4.
Lin Huaimin's *Nine Songs*

**Figure 5**
Photograph by Yu Hui-hung.
Section 2—The wu in Chinese texts

Chapter 1—Religious ecstacies in Confucian and Moist Texts

Early Chinese texts bristle with references to wu and other religious ecstacies. As there are too many references to discuss here, I have chosen to discuss only references in key classical texts that elaborate on the themes of performance and transformation.

I choose texts where the wu is discussed, in order to get a more complete understanding of the wu. From textual sources I shall refer to two groups of texts called Confucian (and related) texts and Daoist (and related) texts. I realize that the distinctions are not always clear between the two. I begin with a discussion of the Classic of Changes. Although the text contains few references to the wu, it seems to convey the transformative quality of ecstatic religion. I also examine two ritual classics. The Rites of Zhou and the Record of Rites contain many references to the wu and their roles in ritual performance, showing how the concept of ritual propriety was increasingly important in Chinese religion. In addition, I examine the characterizations of the wu in the Analects and Mencius. Finally, I discuss references to the wu and other religious ecstacies in the Mozi. These references are useful because they demonstrate how the wu was viewed by those who were not followers of Confucian thought in the fourth century BCE.
Arguably, the *Classic of Changes* contains ancient ecstatic religious elements that are remnants of an earlier oral religious tradition of *yì* 呂 ritual divination. The *yì* was performed to establish a human connection to the spirit world and was important to matters of religion, politics and warfare.

After existing for at least a millennium as an oral ritual tradition, the *Classic of Changes* was recorded during the early Zhou dynasty. The *Classic of Changes* is traditionally attributed to sagely authorship: Fu Xi, created the eight trigrams and the sixty-four hexagrams; while the characters describing the meaning of each of the sixty-four hexagrams were composed around 900 BCE.1 King Wen 文王 (1171–1122 BCE), the founder of the Zhou dynasty, appended statements or judgments to the hexagrams. The Duke of Zhou 周公 (d. 1094 BCE) later composed the explanatory text to the individual lines of the hexagrams. Richard Lynn writes:

> It is likely that, by the time the Change was put together as a coherent text in the ninth century B.C.E., hexagram divination had already changed from a method of consulting and influencing gods, spirits and ancestors . . . . to a method of penetrating movements of the cosmic order to learn how the Way or Dao is configured . . . to determine what one’s place is.²

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The *Classic of Changes* contains the vestiges of early Chinese ecstatic religion and the beginnings of the trend to order and structure religious behaviour. In the commentary on the fifth yang of the first hexagram *Qian* 乾, the text uses aesthetics of transformation to describe human conduct. The flying image of the dragon symbolizes the importance of transformation and movement: “Fifth Yang. When a flying dragon is in the sky, it is fitting to see the great man” 九五. 飛龍在天, 利見大人.² The flying dragon in the sky is a sign that there has been a change.³ Because of this change, the text suggests that a visit should be made to the great man. The image of the dragon becomes a symbol of divine wisdom.

The *yi* was an important ancient Chinese ritual that was intended to harmonize the actions of human beings with heaven and earth. First a question was asked and then the *yi* ritual was performed. The *yi* ritual answered a question with symbolism that needed to be interpreted. By interpreting the *yi*’s extensive symbolism, the one performing the divination could achieve harmony between this world and the one beyond it. It is likely that *wu* were involved in the performance of the *yi*.⁴ Hexagrams eight and eighteen provide evidence of this. With regard to


⁴Images of flight and how they convey ecstatic religious experience will become clearer in the discussion of the *Zhuangzi*.

⁵The only direct reference to *wu* performance in the appended line commentaries of the *Classic of Changes* occurs in hexagram fifty-seven (*Sun* 烏) that reads: “Second yang. This one practices compliance as if he were beneath a bed, but if he were to use it in respect to invokers and shamans on a large scale, there should be good fortune and no blame” 九二巽在一下用史巫紛若吉無咎也. The translation is from Richard Lynn, ed. and trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*, 503. *Zhouyi zhengyi*, SBBY edition, juan 6.4b.
hexagram number eight, Zhou Cezong 周策縱 links Wu Bi 巫比 to the practice of the yi ritual, who belonged to a group of nine wu in the Rites of Zhou. Bi was also the name of the image appended to hexagram number eight. Zhou Cezong speculates as to why a wu would be named Bi: “the hexagram Bi relates to the mating and hatching of snakes or worms which might be the shaman’s work.” Wu Bi may have performed rituals to ensure that snakes and worms would hatch and the hexagram named Bi would have been named after the bi ritual he performed.

The performance of the bi ritual may have pre-dated the Classic of Changes. Serpent imagery on bronze vessels symbolize how the religious ecstatic was transformed during possession. In ritual ceremonies, wu often used snakes to prove their ecstatic religious powers. James Xu, who studies bone glyphs and bronze inscriptions, notes the incidence of wu together with snakes on early Chinese artefacts: “Decorative designs showing a shaman biting a snake or grasping snakes in his hands are often found on bronze or lacquer objects.” Ritual imagery suggests that the wu was linked to snakes and how they might have used the bi ritual and its natural process to effect change during ecstatic religious rituals.

The wu’s involvement in the Classic of Changes and its relationship to snakes are also implied by hexagram number eighteen, which is described by the character gu 蜲, or decay. The composition of the character describes its meaning: insects (蟲) and bowl (皿). Richard

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6See the full discussion below.


Wilhelm's description of hexagram number eighteen elaborates on the concept of decay, explaining the metaphor of breeding worms:

The Chinese character ku represents a bowl in whose contents worms are breeding. This means decay. It has come about because the gentle indifference of the lower trigram has come together with the rigid inertia of the upper, and the result is stagnation. Since this implies guilt, the conditions embody a demand for removal of the cause. Hence the meaning of the hexagram is not simply 'what has been spoiled' but 'work on what has been spoiled'.

Decay happens when indifference and rigid inertia coincide. In this situation movement and change seem impossible. But the divination suggests ways of understanding how the situation can be transformed from decay into something else. Emanating from the unmanifest world, the divination of this particular hexagram highlights the creative and transformative nature of decay and the possibility for change. Carmen Blacker concurs that hexagram number 18 refers to the transformative nature of gu magic: "The character ku [gu] appears on the oracle bones (1500 B.C.) and gives its name to one of the hexagrams of the I Ching [Yijing]." The Zuo commentary (Zuo zhuan 左傳) confirms that the image of breeding worms refers to gu magic.

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The *wu*'s role in *gu* magic is documented in later history. Some say *gu* magic is performed by heating insects, snakes, and venomous creatures in a pot. Others say that the process is much more complicated, with venomous snakes, scorpions, and insects being put into a pot until one animal devours all of the others. The remaining animal contains a concentrated amount of venom, which is then used as a poison.

Extant textual material is suggestive, although not conclusive, of the *wu*'s role in ecstatic religious ceremonies embedded in the *Classic of Changes*. One of these religious ceremonies appears to have involved snakes and *gu* magic. Ostensibly, the *wu*'s performance of this religious ceremony relied on its expertise to invoke the ecstatic religious power of

11 *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, SBBY edition, *juan* 41.15a–b; Zhao Gong 昭公, first year of the reign.

In the early usage, *gu* does not always refer to the malevolent practice of *Gu* magic. *Gu* defined as decay has a negative meaning as it occurs in the *Spring and Autumn annals of Mr. Yan* (Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋). Here, Duke Jing 景公 is described as an excessive drinker. Upon meeting Yanzi he says: "We are not clever and are without goodness. Those immediately around me debauch and decay me. Since it has reached such a state as this, please kill them" 墓人不敏無良, 左右淫蕩寡人, 以至于此, 請殺之. *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, SBBY edition, *juan* 7.7.1b. Leaving aside the obviously humorous nature of the comment made to Yanzi by Duke Jing, it is apparent that the term 'gu' meant corruption in early China.


13 The creature is placed with another like creature to couple. *Jing* is extracted from the mating creatures and is used as a poison to harm an intended victim. Sometimes this *jing* is translated as semen or spiritual essence. See Paul U. Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 46–9.
transformation. The *Classic of Changes* used the power of imagery to convey the importance of transformation. In this way, the *Classic of Changes* was very similar to the *taotie* and its aesthetics of transformation. It signified the importance of change in early Chinese religion and the gradual structuring of religious experience.

*Rites of Zhou*

The *Rites of Zhou* describes an idealized feudal bureaucracy that possibly existed in the early Zhou dynasty. It presents a different idea of how and why *wu* performed their roles in early Chinese history. Lothar von Falkenhausen comments that *Rites of Zhou* may have been compiled from secondary sources:

... the information presented in the text was systematically culled ... from pre-existing written sources, such as the *Shijing*, the *Shang shu* ... as well as Warring States period works of historical narrative such as the *Zuo zhuan*, the *Guoyu*, and similar works now lost. Recent epigraphic research has shown, moreover, that some of the *Zhou li* terminology is consistent with that preserved in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions.  

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14It is now believed that much of the *Rites of Zhou* was written during the Han dynasty. See Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), “Zhou Gong zhi li de chuanshuo he Zhouguan yi shu de chuxian 周公制禮的傳說和周官一書的出現,” *Wenshi* 6 (1979): 1–40.

15Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The *Wu* Officials in the *Zhou Li*”, 281. See also Lothar von Falkenhausen’s useful summary of the studies concerning the authenticity of the *Zhouli* on page 280.
Regardless of whether the text contains primary or secondary sources, it is an excellent resource for the study of the classes and functions of *wu*. The *Rites of Zhou* lists nine *wu* among its ranks who performed rituals, one of which was the *yi*:

Diviners manipulate three kinds of changes as such, we distinguish the names of nine diviners. One kind is called lianshan, the second kind is called guizang and the third kind is called zhouyi. The named nine diviners Wu Geng, Wu Xian, Wu Shi, Wu Mu, Wu Yi, Wu Bi, Wu Si, Wu Can and Wu Huai, as such, distinguish good fortune and bad fortune.

Traditional commentators claim that the character *wu* in this passage is a transcription error and should be *shi*, or diviners. This correction would change the reading of the whole anecdote. Instead of describing religious ecstasies, the passage would describe ritual diviners. If there was no textual or epigraphic corroboration that *wu* performed early divination, this amended reading would be correct. But there are many textual examples of *wu* who performed divination. Earlier, I discussed how Wu Bi performed the *bi* ritual in the *Classic of Changes*. In the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*, *wu* also performed in groups. Since there is evidence of

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18 Wu Xian 巫咸 also appears in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* where he performs a healing ritual with nine other *wu*. Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 (Taipei: Liren, 1982), 11, 301, and, 396.
performing divinations, both textual and epigraphic, and evidence that \textit{wu} performed in large groups, I submit that the reference is to nine \textit{wu} and not to nine diviners.

Returning to the discussion of \textit{wu} in the \textit{Rites of Zhou}, the text also enumerates different classes of \textit{wu}. The highest ranked \textit{wu} are the \textit{siwu} 司巫, or head \textit{wu}. The head \textit{wu} are male and oversee the activities of the \textit{wu} office (\textit{wuguan} 巫官).\footnote{There are two officials of \textit{zhongshi} ("Middle Gentlemen") rank 司巫中士二人. The translation is adapted from Lothar von Falkenhagen, "Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The \textit{wu} Officials in the \textit{Zhou Li}," 285. Sun Yirang, \textit{Zhouli zhengyi}, volume 1, \textit{juan} 32.28.} The Ministry of Spring 春官 section of the \textit{Rites of Zhou} recounts that the head \textit{wu} administers the orders given to the rest of the \textit{wu}, guides them in rain dances in times of drought, and oversees funeral ceremonies in which \textit{wu} invoke spirits.

When there was a sacrifice to be made, the head \textit{wu} prepared the offertory casket.\footnote{Édouard Biot describes how sacrificial victims were wrapped in mats and placed on shelves draped with veils and then put into the large casket. During all sacrifices, the head \textit{wu} was responsible for protecting the spot where a sacrificial victim was buried and in sacrifices to the spirit of the earth, victims were interred with jade. Édouard Biot, trans., \textit{Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou}, tome 2 (1851; reprint, Paris: L'imprimérie nationale, 1939), 102, footnote 2.} The head \textit{wu} also oversaw all funeral services to ensure the attendance of the spirits. Because they were ranked individuals, head \textit{wu} did not personally go into trance.\footnote{Édouard Biot describes how sacrificial victims were wrapped in mats and placed on shelves draped with veils and then put into the large casket. During all sacrifices, the head \textit{wu} was responsible for protecting the spot where a sacrificial victim was buried and in sacrifices to the spirit of the earth, victims were interred with jade. Édouard Biot, trans., \textit{Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou}, tome 2 (1851; reprint, Paris: L'imprimérie nationale, 1939), 102, footnote 2.}

According to Sun Yirang, the next in rank were the \textit{shiwu} 師巫, or teaching \textit{wu}.\footnote{Édouard Biot describes how sacrificial victims were wrapped in mats and placed on shelves draped with veils and then put into the large casket. During all sacrifices, the head \textit{wu} was responsible for protecting the spot where a sacrificial victim was buried and in sacrifices to the spirit of the earth, victims were interred with jade. Édouard Biot, trans., \textit{Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou}, tome 2 (1851; reprint, Paris: L'imprimérie nationale, 1939), 102, footnote 2.} He says that the teaching \textit{wu} were chosen from the throngs of unranked male \textit{wu} and they taught the other \textit{wu} how to perform.\footnote{Édouard Biot describes how sacrificial victims were wrapped in mats and placed on shelves draped with veils and then put into the large casket. During all sacrifices, the head \textit{wu} was responsible for protecting the spot where a sacrificial victim was buried and in sacrifices to the spirit of the earth, victims were interred with jade. Édouard Biot, trans., \textit{Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou}, tome 2 (1851; reprint, Paris: L'imprimérie nationale, 1939), 102, footnote 2.}
Following the head *wu* and the teaching *wu* were countless unranked male and female *wu*: “Male *wu* without fixed number and female *wu* without fixed number” 男巫無數女巫無數 . . .

As for the male *wu*, they had many roles and performed in groups: “The male spirit mediums are in charge of the *si* and the *yan* sacrifices to the deities of the mountains and rivers. They receive the honorific titles of the deities, which they proclaim in the four directions, holding reeds” 男巫掌望祀望衍授號旁招以茅. At the end of winter and at the onset of spring, male *wu* appealed to the highest ranking spirit to keep the community free from contagious disease. They were also responsible for conducting ritual exorcisms indoors. When the king paid a visit of condolence, the male *wu* would walk in front of him along with the male *zhu*, known as an invocator or blesser.

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21The *siwu* of the Spirit Mediums are in charge of the policies and orders issued to the many spirit mediums. When the country suffers a great drought, they lead the Spirit Mediums in dancing the rain-making ritual. When the country suffers a great calamity, they lead the spirit mediums in enacting the long-standing practices of spirit mediums . . . . In all funerary services, they are in charge of the rituals by which the Spirit Mediums make the spirits descend” 22Sun Yirang, *Zhouli zhengyi*, volume 2, juan 50.51–7.


24Sun Yirang, *Zhouli zhengyi*, volume 1, juan 32.28.

Female wu also had distinct roles within the state bureaucracy:

The female wu are in charge of anointing and ablutions at the exorcisms that are held at regular times throughout the year. When there is a drought or scorching heat, they dance in the rain-making ritual. When the queen offers condolence, they together with the invocators precede her. In all great calamities of the state, they pray, singing and wailing

女巫掌時祓除髪浴.旱暵則舞雩.若王后弔.則與祝前.凡邦之大變.歌哭而請.27

During droughts and heat waves, female wu performed ritual rain dancing.28 They performed ritual exorcisms within the palace, and entered trance-states in which they invoked spirits.29

Female wu also accompanied the queen on visits of condolence, walking in front of the queen.

They also communicated with the spirits.

26Ritual exorcism dances were performed by wu to ward off demons, who were believed to cause drought, or to purify an area to ensure a good harvest. Often exorcism dances involved the chanting of invocations to dispel demons and misfortune, such as disease and disaster. For a discussion of the importance of ritual exorcism dances and their medical application see Donald John Harper, Early Chinese medical literature: the Mawangdui medical manuscripts (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 161–2. One example of an exorcism dance called the jiudai 九代 is mentioned in the Classic of Mountains and Waters as being performed by King Qi. See Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 209; and K. C. Chang, “Shang Shamans,” 34.


29Édouard Biot says these ritual exorcisms resemble the modern day third moon ritual in China to keep away bad influences. Édouard Biot, trans., Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou, tome 2, 104, footnote 1.
Beneath the unranked male and female wu were horse wu (mawu 马巫), who were in charge of horse healing, horse exorcism and horse funerals. The Rites of Zhou elaborates on the wu's important role in all areas of horse care and provides a detailed accounting of those involved in the practice. There were two wu who belonged to the third class of horse doctors; four veterinarians; a shop-keeper (perhaps a horse shop or a horse medicine shop); two scribes; two horse merchants; and twenty disciples. Wu who were responsible for nurturing sick horses observed the horse in motion to determine the injured part of the horse. Sometimes, the horse wu would assist the horse doctor in curing a sick horse by invoking each of the sick horse's ancestors, revealing his expertise in horse genealogy and soul summoning. I speculate that while in trance, the ancestors would tell the wu how to treat the horse. If a horse died, the wu would arrange for the sale of the horse cadaver and remit the sum to the director of the horses. It is

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30Horses were an important part of ritual healing and other ceremonies in Chinese history. In the Han dynasty and in modern Daoist religious ceremonies, the horse represents the vehicle on which the wu travels to the spirit world. The Shuihudi 睡虎地 dated 217 BCE, one of the Mawangdui 马王堆 texts, describes a horse exorcism ritual that was used for healing. Donald Harper, “Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.,” Harvard Journal of Asian Studies 45 (1985): 459.

Some horses were deities to which offerings and sacrifices were made. Other horses were themselves sacrificed. The importance of horses in rituals and as deities stems from their importance in transportation and as tributary gifts. Special rituals existed to bless horses that would be presented as tributary gifts. See Roel Sterckx, “An Ancient Chinese Horse Ritual,” Early China 21 (1996): 47–79.

31“There are two under those ranked” 巫马下士二人. Sun Yirang, Zhouli zhengyi, volume 2, juan 54.94.

32Sun Yirang, Zhouli zhengyi, volume 2, juan 62.52; and Édouard Biot, trans., Le Tcheou li ou rites de Tcheou, tome 2, 260.
interesting to note that the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* authenticates the importance of *wu* in horse medicine, describing how the *wu* concentrated on healing horse limbs.\(^{33}\)

Often when reading the *Rites of Zhou* and the copious references to the ranked and unranked *wu* in the text, one forgets that there were many *wu* who practiced outside the state hierarchy.\(^{34}\) References to the *wu* in the *Rites of Zhou* discuss the *wu* in terms of their ranking, functions and gender. It differentiates between those ranked *wu* who do not become possessed and those unranked *wu* who do become possessed. Every ritual act performed by the *wu* appeared designed to serve a state need. This is not surprising. The *Rites of Zhou* is a tersely written record of officials and their duties in various ministries. It may not have ever been intended to be an ecstatic religious text and it is unlikely that those who wrote it were interested in describing the ecstatic religious experiences of the *wu*. But the depiction of the *wu* is nevertheless significant. It records how the *wu* was still serving different spirits such as the sick horse’s ancestors. Additionally, the tone and contextualization of the *wu* are entirely different than they were in the *Classic of Changes*.

*Analects*

Comments about the *wu* in the *Analects* could be interpreted as both positive and negative. The first reference to the *wu* in the *Analects* occurs when Confucius repeats a southern

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\(^{33}\) Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 29, 114, and 158.

\(^{34}\) Later in this chapter I discuss a reference in the *Mozi* that confirms the *wu* performed beyond the state hierarchy.
saying: "Confucius said: The southern people have a saying: 'People without constancy cannot as such make wu physicians'" 子曰: 南人有言曰: ‘人而無恆,不可以作巫醫.’ 3 The writer of this passage may want to convince the reader that Confucius is familiar with southern sayings. Confucius's familiarity with the foreign sayings gives him authority. But when Confucius utters the saying he may be criticizing the wu. He is a northerner who uses the words of a southerner to express that the wu doctor needs to be a steady person in order to engage in unsteady trance states; yet unsteadiness often characterizes a person as a religious ecstatic. When Confucius repeats the saying, he condemns the defining characteristic of a wu. However, Confucius could also be praising the wu, with the passage being written to show how the wu is an exemplary person with the ability for self-control and because of this self-control for healing.

The Analects's other reference to the wu is to an individual called Wuma Qi 巫馬期, who was a Confucian disciple with a name suggesting he was related to the horse doctors and custodians described in the Rites of Zhou:

Ch'en Ssu-pai asked whether Duke Chao was versed in the rites. Confucius said, 'Yes.' After Confucius had gone, Ch'en Ssu-pai, bowing to Wu-ma Ch'i, invited him forward and said, 'I have heard that the gentleman does not show partiality. Does he show it nevertheless? The Lord took as wife a daughter of Wu, who thus is of the same clan of himself, but he allows her to be called Wu Meng Tzu. If the Lord is versed in the rites, 35The translation is my own. Lunyu zhushu 論語注疏, SBBY edition, juan 13.5a.
Religious ecstatics in Confucian and Moet texts


In the passage, Chen Sibai asks Confucius if he thinks Duke Zhao is versed in the rites. Confucius says he is. After Confucius leaves, Chen Sibai suggests to Wuma Qi that the Duke is not versed in the rites because he allows his wife to keep her family name, and this suggestion is an implicit criticism of Confucius. Although he only appears once in the Analects, Wuma Qi demonstrates his loyalty when he then reports to Confucius what Chen Sibai said to him.

Mencius

The Mencius refers to the wu in a cryptic discussion about different professions. After mentioning those who make arrows and armour, it mentions the wu and coffin maker as examples of those who protect:

‘Is the maker of arrows really more unfeeling than the maker of armour? He is afraid lest he should fail to harm people, whereas the maker of armour is afraid lest he should fail to protect them. The case is similar with sorcerer-doctor and the coffin-maker. For this reason one cannot be too careful in the choice of one’s calling.’ 矢人豈不仁於函人哉。

矢人惟恐不傷人. 函人惟恐傷人. 巫匠亦然. 故術不可不慎也.


The anecdote suggests that the wu and coffin maker heal and protect, as opposed to the arrow maker, who profits from people hurting and killing each other. One might infer from this anecdote that Mencius approves of the wu for his or her ability to heal.

Record of Rites

Like the Rites of Zhou, the Record of Rites contains many examples of the wu and language that suggests how wu performed their roles. A section on ceremonial performance in this text develops the idea that the wu was an integral part of court and funeral ceremonies: "The son entered before him [the ruler], (and stood) at the right of the gate, outside which the exorcist [wu] stopped. The ruler having put down the vegetables (as an offering to the spirit of the gate), and the blesser preceding him, entered and went up to the hall" 主人迎先入門右，巫止于門外。君释菜，祝先入升堂。³⁸ In state rituals, the wu accompanies the ruler to a funeral of a court official as part of a funeral procession that includes the ruler’s son, the ruler, and the blesser or zhu 祝. While the others proceed into the temple, the wu remains outside the doors. The positioning of the wu outside of the funeral hall doors is significant, communicating the wu’s role as exorcist, who has the ability to keep evil spirits away from the doors of the temple. But it also describes how the wu is a secondary religious figure; excluded from other aspects of the religious ceremony.

Religious ecstasies in Confucian and Moist texts

In addition, the Record of Rites includes information about the role of the wu in rain rituals, using an anecdote from the Zuo Commentary that has been revised in meaningful ways. This anecdote describes how there had been no rain for a long time. To end the drought, a duke proposes to perform a rain ceremony to burn to death a wuwang 巫尪, interpreted sometimes as a female wu or a sick child. But the Duke is advised against it. In the Record of Rites example, the Duke of Shu solicits suggestions to end the drought:

Heaven, said he, has not sent down rain for a long time. I wish to expose a deformed person in the sun (to move its pity), what do you say to my doing so? Heaven, indeed, was the reply, does not send down rain; but would it not be an improper act of cruelty, on that account to expose the diseased son of someone in the sun? Heaven, indeed, does not send down rain; but would it not be to wide of the mark to hope for anything from (the suffering of) a foolish woman, and by means of that seek for rain? What do you say then to my moving the marketplace elsewhere?”

曰: 天久不雨，吾欲暴尪而奚若。曰: 天則不雨，而暴人之疾子。虐，毋乃不可與。然則吾欲暴巫而奚若。曰: 天則不雨，而望之愚婦人。於以求之，毋乃已疏乎。徙市則奚若。”

Katô Jôken discusses this anecdote and how the wuwang is related to the yuwang 偃尪 or hunchback. See Katô Jôken, “Fushuku kô,” 12.

The reference to the pao ceremony originates in the Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi, SBBY edition, Duke Xi, biography of the 21st year.

One suggestion is to sacrifice a sick child beneath the sun and the second suggestion is to place a female wu under the sun. Both suggestions are pao rain ceremonies and rejected. The Duke expresses how it would be inhumane to make a sick child suffer. In addition, the suffering of a female wu is not enough to attract the attention of heaven. A third suggestion is made to relocate the place of business in a plea for rain, which the Duke accepts. His decision indirectly criticizes the efficacy of wu sacrifice. It is also more humane.

This textual anecdote says many things about the use of wu in ritual rain offerings during the time the Record of Rites was written. Perhaps female wu and sick children were at one time sacrificed during rain ceremonies. But in the past wu rain ceremonial sacrifices had not been successful. Someone may have noticed how it rained when shopkeepers moved their wares from one place to another and unlike ritual sacrifices, this solution did not affect human lives. As a result, the Duke had favoured this alternative. Instead of relying on wu to mediate between the earthly and spirit worlds, society was increasingly choosing secular solutions with ritual propriety, repudiating the need for ecstatic religious possession.

The Record of Rites also describes the wu's role in ceremonies performed in the ancestral temple. A reference to one ancestral ceremony accentuates the importance of orderly ritual performance:

For the same reason, there are the officers of prayer in the ancestral temple; the three ducal ministers in the court; and the three classes of old men in the college. In front of the king were the sorcerers, and behind him the recorders; the diviners by the tortoise
shell and by the stalks, the blind musicians and their helpers were all on his left and his right. He himself was in the centre 故祭帝於郊。所以定天位也。祝社於国。所以列地利也。祖廟。所以本仁也。山川。所以偽鬼神也。五祀。所以本事也。故宗祝在廟。三公在朝。三老在學。王前巫而後史。卜筮瞽侑。皆在左右。王中。42

Number, physical position and role were important elements of ritual propriety and were also the way in which ecstatic religious behaviour was expressed. The wu has two roles in this ceremony. He or she is a sorcerer who walks in front of the king. In addition, the wu is a diviner, who flanks the king, along with a group of blind musicians and helpers. Once more, the wu appears as a minor ritual bureaucrat.

The discussion of the religious ecstatic in the Record of Rites creates the impression that the wu had become a ritual bureaucrat in service to the state. It carefully outlines the wu’s physical position in relation to others in ritual processions. Yet aside from brief descriptions of the wu’s function, there is no recognition of the wu’s role as ecstatic religious performer. Apparently, the state no longer used the wu to perform rain ceremonies. Rather, the wu, when positively portrayed, was an ancillary religious figure.

Mozi

Mo Di (fifth century BCE) founded the Moist school of thought and the Mozi is ascribed to his disciples. The Mozi is a text coming from a school that was in some ways close to the

Confucian school and in other ways critical of it, condemning the wastefulness of elaborate funerary ceremonies and criticizing Confucian notions that reinforced the need for a this-worldly hierarchy. *Mozi* was much more concerned with the otherworldly hierarchy of spirits headed by a supreme deity. Many of the references to the *wu* in the *Mozi* convey Mo Di’s contempt for how ritual performance had evolved.

The *Mozi* stressed the *wu*’s role in rituals. But the way it communicated that role was very different, alluding to how the *wu* had become a ritual bureaucrat who was more concerned with the practice of the ritual than with the spirits:

\[\text{... there was a minister named Kuan-ku the Invocator, who served in the ancestral temple of the state. Once a shaman [zhuci] appeared from the temple, bearing a club, and said, ‘Kuan-ku, what does this mean? The sacramental jades and circlets do not fulfill the proper standard, the offerings of wine and millet are impure, the sacrificial animals are not fat and flawless as they should be, and the ceremonies appropriate to the four seasons are not performed at the right times!’... Then the shaman [zhuci] raised his club and struck Kuan-ku, and he fell dead on the altar.} \]

In the passage, *Mozi* tells a story about a *zhuci* and an invocator or *gu* named Guan Gu. On the surface, the *wu* chastises Guan Gu’s ritual preparations. He notes how the offerings are

\[\text{... The interpretation is based on Sun Yirang’s commentary. See Sun Yirang, *Mozi jiangu* 墨子閒話 (Beijing: 1954, reprint, Taipei, Taiwan: Shijie shuju, 1962), juan 8.143–4.}\]
below standard, the animals killed for the sacrifice are flawed and the ritual is being performed at the wrong time of year. The implication is that the religious ecstatic knows more about proper ritual performance than Guan Gu. Guan Gu admits that he is responsible for the ritual and the religious ecstatic beats him to death with a club. The end of the long passage cautions the reader that those who perform sacrifices and rituals without heeding the rules of ritual propriety will be similarly punished.

The text *Mozi* is not praising sacrifices and elaborate rituals. It is mocking the precision with which offerings and sacrifices are prepared. *Mozi* intends the reader to understand that it is the spirit world that punishes Guan Gu, who is a symbol of authority in the state hierarchy and the way Confucians prescribed rituals to be performed. In contrast to Guan Gu, the religious ecstatic called a *zhuci* in the passage is possessed by a spirit. The *zhuci* is supposed to be inferior to Guan Gu and not responsible for ritual propriety. But *Mozi* switches the roles. While the *zhuci* is possessed, he condemns Guan Gu's ritual preparations. When the text shows how not even the invocator follows the rules, the text is doing two things. It is accentuating the division between the invocator as a humanist and the religious ecstatic. It is also undermining the authority of Confucianism.


\[4^5\] The *zhu* and the *gu* are different names for the *wu* and *zhu*. Guan Gu is both a minister of the state and an invocator.
Another passage in the *Mozi* elaborates on the *wu*’s talent as a spirit medium: “All spiritually powerful shamans from houses outside (the walls) who are known for (their abilities in performing) great sacrifices are to invoke together there and to supply the prayers and the sacrificial animals” 從外宅諸名大祠，靈巫或禨焉，給禨牲。 This time the passage specifies how the *wu* reside beyond the walls of the city, where they are responsible for performing important ceremonies and obtaining the animals to be sacrificed. Here, the *wu* represents the local religious culture.

Elsewhere, the *Mozi* discusses the range of the *wu*’s ecstatic religious expertise and the *wu*’s role in divining the changes. *Mozi* comments on the relationship between religious ecstacies and officials:

Those who are *wu*, invocators, scribes and watchers of the ethers, must tell the people when there is good news. They report what they have requested from on high to the Defender of the City, and it is the Defender of the City alone who knows what has been asked. Do not accompany the watchers of the ethers in rashly speaking ill-omened words that startle and frighten the people. [They will be] executed without pardon 巫祝史與望氣者必以善言告民，以請上報守，守獨知其請而已。無與望氣妾為不善言驚恐民，斷弗赦。

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There are restrictions on what the wu can communicate to the people. The wu may only tell the people good news but the Defender of the City is allowed to hear both good and bad news. If the wu disobeys, capital punishment ensues.

An individual with a name like Wuma Qi from the Analects appears in the Mozi. This individual, called Wumazi 巫馬子, debates with Weizi 謂子 and Mozi on subjects such as universal love and who among the ghosts, spirits and the sage has the clearest wisdom. The subtext here is that Wumazi has opinions worthy of placing alongside Mozi. Scott Lowe comments on the ubiquitousness of Wumazi in the Mozi: “For instance, the ‘Keng Chu’ chapter could perhaps better have been named after Wumazi, a man who appears in more passages than Keng Chu himself.” The many references to Wumazi in the text indicate that, at least according to Mozi, Wumazi was an important figure.

Many of the religious ecstatics, as described in Confucian and Moist texts, performed for religious efficacy, divining, praying, dancing and sacrificing themselves for rain. But some of

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48 Sun Yirang, Mozi jiangu, juan 46.


the *wu* appeared to be ranked ritual bureaucrats, such as those in the *Record of Rites* and the head *wu* in the *Rites of Zhou*, and were not described for their religious expertise. References to the *wu*’s performance in the *Analects* and in the *Mencius* contextualized the religious ecstatic in a positive way, who was sometimes a healer and protector of life and at other times may have been a loyal disciple. *Mozi* challenged the way classical texts characterized the religious ecstatic, depicting how the *wu* was controlled by the state. Yet it also expressed that the *wu* was an expert in medicine, divination, ritual and sacrifices. Even in early Chinese texts, *wu* religious performance was sometimes adapted to serve purposes other than religious. In the next chapter, the discussion will shift to the *Zhuangzi*. 
Chapter 2—Religious eclectics in the Zhuangzi

In the previous chapter, I discussed the depiction of wu in classical texts before the Han dynasty, focussing on the wu's often official role in religious performances, such as for rain, exorcism, and gu magic. In the paragraphs that follow and in the three subsequent chapters, I will focus on the changing conception of religious ecstatic performance and how it evoked the aesthetics of transformation inscribed on masks and ritual vessels, and illustrated by the Classic of Changes.

Often a distinction is made between northern Chinese texts discussed in the previous chapter with relation to the wu (with the exception of the Mencius), and southern texts. Sometimes the distinction is made between philosophical schools rather than geography. Those who wrote early texts associated with the Confucian tradition came from the north but both Laozi 老子 and Zhuang Zhou 莊周 may have come from the south. Interestingly, concepts such as yin and yang 阴阳 and taiji 太極 present in the Zhuangzi and in the Daodejing as well as in texts of southern origin are absent from texts such as the Analects. These concepts illustrate the importance of dynamism, change and transformation. While this chapter will examine ecstatic religious elements of Daoism, the following chapter will explore how the Classic of Mountains and Waters offers a different and new expression of ecstatic religion. Both this chapter and the next introduce the southern ecstatic religious context of the Nine Songs of the State of Chu.
Classical Daoism and Chinese religious ecstacies

I will first discuss the two primary texts out of which Daoism evolved.1 Classical Daoist philosophy is derived from the texts of Laozi 老子 (Master Lao) or Lao Dan 老聃 and Zhuangzi 庄子 or Zhuang Zhou 庄周 (369–286 BCE). Generally, any discussion about Daoism begins with Laozi, even though it is uncertain who he was or whether he ever existed. Accounts that Laozi lived in the sixth century BCE are now thought to be untrue, and scholars now believe that Laozi lived around the mid-third century BCE and not during the sixth century.3 Sima Qian’s biography of Laozi in the Records of the Grand Historian tells how his family name was Li 李 and how he came from the southern state of Chu.3 It also contains some dubious passages about Laozi’s activities.

Although the Daodejing is written in a terse style and contains little concrete information about folklore religion, it did have a lasting impact on popular religion. In particular, later

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1This is not meant to imply that the Zhuangzi and the Daodejing were the only texts influencing Daoism.

2The discovery of the Mawangdui 馬王堆 texts dated to 213 BCE in south-central China brought with it a new version of the Daodejing. The text in the new version also appears in a different order than in the standard version. As a result, many say that the new version is much more political in tone.

3Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 63.1a. As for the activities of Laozi, these seem to be somewhat embellished. One anecdote tells how Confucius asked Laozi for advice about rituals. Another tells how Laozi toward the end of his life left China for the West. On his way past the border, a gatekeeper named Yin Xi begged him to record his thoughts and leave the record with him. Complying with this request, Laozi is supposed to have written the eighty-one chapters and 5000 character text of the Daodejing 道德經. Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 63.1b–3b. Beyond this explanation about the reasons for the text’s terseness, some believe it was brief because it was meant to be memorized. Other legendary material relates how Laozi continued westward and eventually arrived in India where he converted the Buddha to Daoism.
Religious ecstasies in the Zhuangzi

developments in ecstatic religion were due to the early emphasis on making oneself pure and youthful like an uncarved block. The embellishments of Laozi's achievements foreshadow how he was revered and deified in later Daoism. In spite of the scholarly attention given to the issue of Laozi's historical life, the details about him are still debated.

Details about the life of Zhuang Zhou and his text are also debated. The many stories in the Zhuangzi naming people from the state of Chu or other southern states suggest that Zhuang Zhou may have also lived in southern China. The Records of the Grand Historian tells how the author of the Zhuangzi lived during the reigns of King Liang Hui and Qi Xuan, was named Zhuang Zhou and came from the state of Meng (in the modern day Hunan province).

It is now believed that only portions of the Zhuangzi text are genuine and that the rest is apocryphal. Generally, the text is divided into three parts, with the first part being the most authentic: the inner chapters (1-7) and outer chapters (8-22) and miscellaneous chapters (23-33). The extant version comprises 33 chapters and comes from Guo Xiang, who allegedly removed much of what he perceived were the licentious cult practices (yinsi) in the text. Zhuangzi previously may have contained more complete mythical accounts and

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This chapter examines the Zhuangzi with a consciously religious approach.


Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 63.3b.

References in the Zhuangzi suggest that the author was named Zhuang Zhou.
fragments of myths found in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* and the *Huainanzi*, as well as in the *Elegies of Chu*, appear in the *Zhuangzi*. Livia Kohn emphasizes the importance of understanding Guo Xiang's role in shaping the philosophical content of *Zhuangzi*:

... Kuo Hsiang not only eliminated folkloristic parts and shortened the text, but he also rearranged it and included sections that he considered explanatory in his commentary rather than in the Chuang-tzu proper. On the whole it appears that Kuo Hsiang did not hesitate to impose his personal understanding and philosophical preferences on the text.

As early as the *Zhuangzi*, Daoism defined itself in contrast to ecstatic religion and Confucianism. One of the ways the *Zhuangzi* did this was by creating its own religious ecstacies, who it characterized as superior to both *wu* and Confucians and described with the aesthetics of transformation.

8A. C. Graham notes that the apocryphal parts of the text correspond to four schools of thought (one of which was of *Zhuangzi*) that each took part in the composition. Briefly stated, he says that the Primitivists composed chapters eight to ten and a portion of chapter eleven. Yang Zhu's individualists possibly wrote chapters 28 and 29, as well as 31. Syncretists added *Yijing* philosophy when they revised chapters 12 through 15 and possibly 33. Finally, the authentic chapters written by *Zhuangzi* are the inner chapters, as well as chapters 16 through 27. See A. C. Graham, "How much of the *Chuang-Tzu* did Chuang Tzu write?" 459–501.


10See Livia Kohn, "Lost *Chuang-Tzu* Passages," 53–79.

11Livia Kohn, "Kuo Hsiang and the *Chuang Tzu*," 430. See also Isabelle Robinet "Kouo Siang ou le monde comme absolu," 73–107.
Examples of the corrupted wu

At first I would like to delve into how the Zhuangzi defines its religious ecstatic in contrast to the wu. Unlike the ambiguous references to the wu in Confucian texts, the Zhuangzi portrays the wu as someone who could learn from the Daoist religious ecstatic. As such, the Zhuangzi argues for the re-definition of the wu in Daoist language. It is important to emphasize that the Zhuangzi discusses only male religious ecstacies. Daoist ideal men—the True Man, the Holy Man, the Perfect Man, and the Nameless Man—are superior to the corrupted wu.

12The competition between ecstatic religion and later Daoist religious sects has been well documented. See Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao-tseu dans le taoisme des Han* (Paris 1969). See also Rolf A. Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries,” 53–81.

13In chapter 14, “The Turning of Heaven” (*Tian yun* 天運) there is also a reference to Wu Xian 巫咸. In the Zhuangzi, Wu Xian lectures on the necessity of orderly rule: “The shaman Hsien beckoned and said, ‘Come—I will tell you. Heaven has the six directions and the five constants. When emperors and kings go along with these, there is good order; when they move contrary to these, there is disaster. With the instructions of the Nine Lo, order can be made to reign and virtue completed. The ruler will shine mirror-like over the earth below, and the world will bear him up. He may be called an August One on high’”巫咸詠曰: ‘來! 吾語女。天有六極五常, 帝王順之則治, 逆之則凶。九洛之事, 治成德備, 照照下土, 天下戴之, 此謂上皇。’ The translation is from Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of the Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 145. Zhuangzi, SBBY edition, juan 5.19a.


15It should be noted that many other scholars have discussed the ecstatic religious qualities of Daoist ideal men. In particular, see Julia Ching, *Mysticism and kingship in China: The heart of Chinese Wisdom*; Livia Kohn, *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Taoist Tradition*; and Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist meditation: the Mao-shan tradition of great purity*.
Religious ecstasies in the Zhuangzi

In the first occurrence of the wu in the text, the Zhuangzi explains how wu are interested in procuring flawless animals and human beings to be used in jie sacrifices:

... This is the danger of being usable. In the Chieh sacrifice, oxen with white foreheads, pigs with turned-up snouts, and men with piles cannot be offered to the river. This is something all the shamans know and hence they consider them inauspicious creatures. But the Holy man for the same reason considers this highly auspicious...

Zhuangzi criticizes the wuchu for failing to understand that the uselessness of animals is what saves them from being offered in sacrificial rituals. To the Holy Man, a type of Daoist ideal man, imperfection is a blessing. The flawed pigs and men are auspicious because their imperfections will save them from being sacrificed. This statement is a denouncement of the sacrifice of living beings—both animal and human—suggesting that at the time that the Zhuangzi was written sacrifices, such as the spring jie sacrifice, were still practiced.

Zhuangzi’s negative portrayal of these sacrifices signals the changing attitude toward sacrifice and shows how ridiculous it is that an animal or human being marked for eventual death in a ritual sacrifice is somehow socially labelled as auspicious. Rather, to Zhuangzi, it is the reverse.

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17 Joseph Needham notes that by 472 CE jie sacrifices were no longer part of state sacrifices. Needham, “The Tao Chia (Taoists) and Taoism,” 137.
The auspicious one is the individual whose imperfection saves him or her from being used and murdered in a sacrificial ritual.

The Holy Man in disagreement with the wu disproves of this traditional form of sacrifice. Flawed beings are auspicious or blessed because they are spared a sacrificial death, with physical defects being signs of a special relationship with the divine. Later in this chapter, I will look at references to the crippled, ugly, and blind man and will explain how those appearances are signs of superior ecstatic religious talent.18

A further anecdote about a wu describes another of his faults.

In Cheng there was a shaman of the gods named Chi Hsien. He could tell whether men would live or die, survive or perish, be fortunate or unfortunate, live a long time or die young . . . Lieh Tzu went to see him and was completely intoxicated. Returning, he said to Hu Tzu, 'I used to think, Master, that your Way was perfect. But now I see there is something even higher 鄭有神巫曰季咸，知人之死生存亡．．．列子見之而心醉，歸，以告壺子，曰：‘始吾以夫子之道為至矣，則又有至焉者！'19

— 66 —

18 Many scholars discuss the references to men with unusual outward appearances in the Zhuangzi as early indications of the Daoist ascetic pursuit of immortality. See for instance, Stephen Eskildsen, Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 8–9. But outward appearance may not only be an indication of the belief that nourishing life or yangsheng 養生 will transform the qi and extend the life of a human being. Other scholars have noted the correlation between outward appearance and inner ecstatic talent. See footnote 15 above and footnote 38 below.

On the outside this wu seems to be able to perform ecstatic religious functions. But on closer inspection, he lacks the substance of a true Holy Man. One day Liezi goes to see the shenwu, who impresses Liezi with his ability to predict life and death. Awestruck, Liezi returns to tell his master Huzi what he saw. Later on in the passage, Huzi tells Liezi that the wu is only trying to impress people by outwardly appearing to be able to master the dao. He suggests that the wu does not have the inner substance that constitutes a true religious ecstatic and explains to Liezi that he could not have recognized a being with inner substance because Huzi had not taught him about it.

Huzi asks Liezi to arrange a visit from the wu and when the wu arrives Huzi transforms his inner self so that he appears dead. Following the visit with Huzi, the wu privately tells Liezi that his master is dying, which Liezi then recounts to Huzi. Huzi confesses that he has tricked the wu. On two more visits, Huzi changes his inner composure, eventually causing the wu to run away in fear. Zhuangzi's intended message is that the wu could present the appearance of a Daoist religious ecstatic, but he did not have the substance.

The Daoist religious ecstatic

This section of the chapter will now focus on the qualities that Zhuangzi says makes a good religious ecstatic. As I have shown above, these qualities do not include the wu's ritual

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20 This language is reminiscent of a passage in which Ziqi of the south wall is able to make his mind like dead ashes and his body like a withered tree.
knowledge or clairvoyance. Daoist religious ecstasies are defined by the Daoist knowledge of transformation.

Knowledge

Zhuangzi builds on his criticisms of wu when he discusses how knowledge is unnatural and a limitation to the understanding that the Zhuangzi intends to impart. The text is centered on discussions that dispute the benefits of human knowledge. I have already remarked on the Zhuangzi's pejorative view of the wu and below I will examine how Zhuangzi views Confucian philosophy.

In Chapter 17, “Autumn Floods,” Zhuangzi undermines Confucian philosophy and the reverence of sage kings by recounting how initially the world was permeated by a perfect unity. This unity ended when the sage kings Sui Ren, the fire controller, and Fu Xi, the reputed creator of the patterns in the Classic of Changes, first appeared. Zhuangzi views sage kings as those individuals responsible for the end to the unity in Chinese society, contrasting Confucian philosophy that correlates their arrival with the influx of wisdom, virtue and goodness. The sage king’s socially disruptive influence was furthered when Shen Nung 神農, and the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 took turns governing. All of this led to the end of harmony.\(^2\)

\(^2\)The Confucian tradition emphasizes how to make human conduct conform to the ideal behaviour and virtue of past sage king rulers.

- 68 -
Another passage in the Zhuangzi is written to convey the inanity of revering Confucian sages from the past. Zhuangzi writes: “... There is no one more highly esteemed by the world than the Yellow Emperor, and yet even the Yellow Emperor could not preserve his virtue intact. . . . Yao was a merciless father, Shun was an unfilial son, . . . .” . . . 世之所高, 莫若黃帝, 黃帝尚不能全德, 而戰涿鹿之野, 流血百里。堯不慈, 舜不孝, . . . .23 The Yellow Emperor, Yao and Shun may be synonymous with Confucian virtue, but the Zhuangzi is saying that they did not practice the philosophies they espoused. The emergence of the Confucian sage kings, according to Zhuangzi, did not bring with it virtue but rather the end to spontaneous anarchism, which is represented by many terms in Zhuangzi, most notably by the term hundun 混沌.

Needham remarks how Zhuangzi is embedded with terms suggestive of a transition from collectivism to feudalism: “I suggest, therefore, as a hypothesis for further research, that we should see behind these legendary symbols the leaders of that pre-feudal collectivist society which resisted transformation into feudal or proto-feudal class-differentiated society.”24 Needham’s comments explain how the onset of feudalism mirrors changes in the Chinese


24 Joseph Needham, “The Tao Chia (Taoists) and Taoism,” 119.
religious landscape, such as the mounting restrictions on local religious freedom. Zhuangzi’s philosophy was a reaction to ritual rules, the control and manipulation of ecstatic possession and religious performance discussed in the previous chapter, and the de-emphasis of change and transformation. Sage kings of Confucian and early Chinese history were not paragons of virtue. They were the cause of social unrest.

Zhuangzi may suggest a different type of virtue and a way to access it. Harmonizing with the dao yields de 德, which comes from the dao and not the sage kings. By not trying to cultivate these things, by not having desires, and by accepting the constancy of change, one harmonizes with the dao and gets de. Zhuangzi is asking the reader to abandon its normal, rational understanding and to embrace his way of seeing things:

. . . I’m going to try speaking some reckless words and I want you to listen to them recklessly. How will that be? The sage leans on the sun and moon, tucks the universe under his arm, merges himself with things, leaves the confusion and muddle as it is, and looks on slaves as exalted. Ordinary men strain and struggle; the sage is stupid and blockish. He takes part in ten thousand ages and achieves simplicity in oneness. For him, all the ten thousand things are what they are, and thus they enfold each other.

予嘗為女妄言之, 女以妄聽之。奚? 旁日月, 挟宇宙. 為其吻合, 置其滑嬈, 以隸相尊. 獻人役役, 聖人愚薦, 參萬歲而一成純. 萬物盡然, 而以是相貴.26

The excerpt admits its apparent absurdity and only asks that the reader suspend judgment for a moment. The reader is thinking that ordinary men cannot do these things. But Zhuangzi wants to convince the reader that it can do these things. It is only a matter of changing perception. The sage or religious ecstatic may be able to merge himself with things or to lean on the sun and the moon because he has transformed himself during an ecstatic religious experience.

The Zhuangzi is illustrating the signs of changed perception in his descriptions of religious ecstasies. Daoist religious ecstasies express the changed perception in the way they interact with familiar very large objects. Large enough to lean on the moon and to "tuck" the universe under his arm, the Daoist sage is enmeshed with the universe. This is because he perceives that the border between him and the rest of the physical reality is blurred. He does not try to make distinctions or to make logical connections between things that defy connections. Zhuangzi says all of this is wildly absurd to talk about but he does it because it is a good example of what he is trying to convey.

In contrast to the Confucian sage, the Zhuangzi's religious ecstatic is defined by his ability to harmonize with the dao, his ability to clear his mind of all knowledge and to be spontaneous. One such example of ecstatic religious experience is the story of Ziqi 子妻 of the south wall who has become lost in a trance, leaning on his armrest and staring up at the sky.26

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26Ziqi is mentioned two other times in the Zhuangzi. In addition to this account, there is Ziqi of the east wall who understands heavenly cycles. According to another account, Ziqi explains how the uselessness of a tree is useful.
Tzu-Ch'i of south wall sat leaning on his armrest staring up at the sky and breathing—vacant and far away, as though he'd lost his companion. Yen Ch'eng Tzu-yu, who was standing by his side in attendance, said, 'What is this? Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes? The man leaning on the armrest now is not the one who leaned on it before 馀子稽黙而坐, 仰天而窺, 茅焉似喪其 肢. 顔成子游立侍乎前, 曰: '何居乎? 形固可使如槁木, 而心固可使如死灰乎? 今之隱 机者, 非昔之隱机者也!'

Ziqi’s experience appears to be a trance in the way he breathes deeply with his head turned up to the sky and then becomes "vacant and far away.” His friend, Yan Cheng, remarks on his transformation and the following question serves as clarification: “Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes” 形固可使如槁木, 而心固可使如死灰乎?

Isabelle Robinet notes that the withered tree and dead ashes are traditional Daoist ways to describe a trance state.

Ziqi’s ecstatic religious experience has transformed him. He becomes vacant and far away and his body resembles a withered tree and his mind feels like dead ashes. Ziqi and nature have merged and become one entity. When the distinction between body and mind disappears the great barrier between the human being and the dao vanishes. Livia Kohn elaborates on the

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29Isabelle Robinet, Taoist meditation: the Mao-shan tradition of great purity, 43.
phenomenon of Daoist trance: “The seeker destroys all notion of physical and psychological identity and becomes fully one with the Tao.”

Continuing, Ziqi acknowledges his own transformation and alludes to an understanding that has come to him during this trance experience, and seeks to demonstrate this understanding when he asks his friend if he has heard the piping of earth or the piping of heaven. Yan Cheng is stupefied by these questions, and Ziqi expounds on the sounds of great hollows—the sounds of creaking forests, waves, and wind through leaves. Yan Cheng understands that all of these sounds are earth bound—made by earthly phenomena—but Ziqi wants him to understand the origin of these sounds. The trance state enables Ziqi to perceive and understand the process of creation.

Daoist knowledge is such a big part of Zhuangzi's message that it sometimes defines the superior religious ecstatic as the True Man. The True Man is only one of the many ways that the Zhuangzi refers to his re-defined wu. He is more than just a sage king or a Confucian scholar. The Daoist religious ecstatic acquires his knowledge through trance states such as the one had by Ziqi. Zhuangzi writes:

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31 Some say that Ziqi is Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期 in the legendary friendship with Bo Ya 伯牙. Whenever Bo Ya strums his lute Zhong Ziqi's mind is transported to the tall mountains and the rivers. When Zhong Ziqi dies, Bo Ya destroys his lute, giving as his reason that no one else could appreciate his music like Zhong Ziqi. It is interesting to note that each of these historical personalities is mentioned separately in earlier texts. See Liezi jishi 列子集釋 (Hongkong: Xianggang taiping, 1965), juan 5.111; and Lushi chunqiu, SBBY edition, juan 14.14a.
Religious ecstasies in the Zhuangzi

There must first be a True Man before there can be true knowledge. What do I mean by a True Man? The True Man of ancient times did not rebel against want, did not grow proud in plenty and did not plan his affairs. A man like this could commit an error and not regret it, could meet with success and not make a show. A man like this could climb the high places and not be frightened, could enter the water and not get wet, could enter the fire and not get burned. His knowledge was able to climb up to the Way like this.且有真人。而後有真知。何為真人？古之真人不速寡不雄成不谲士。若然者遇而弗悔當，而不自得也。若然者登高不慄入水不濡，人火不熱是知之能登假於道者也。若此。32

As this passage relates, the True Man is a religious ecstatic, who is defined by his True knowledge. In Chinese antiquity, he was an individual with modest physical needs and career ambitions and his body was not changed by the environment in the usual way. Water did not make him wet. Fire did not burn his flesh. His mind was also different. High places did not arouse fear in him. His knowledge also transcended ordinary perception. Transcendent knowledge was signified by descriptions of flight in the Zhuangzi.

Flying

Flying is another way that the Zhuangzi expresses the acquisition of Daoist knowledge. In the Introduction, I discussed how Mircea Eliade defined trance as a spirit journey. Zhuangzi

relatives to religious ecstacies who ride a flying dragon, or the clouds and mist, and wander beyond the four seas in a like manner. Livia Kohn writes about the mystical journies of Zhuangzi’s religious ecstatic: “The idea of travel, moreover, relates easily to the concept of free and easy wandering in the Zhuangzi. Mostly described as a state of ecstatic freedom, free and easy wandering is also frequently illustrated by metaphors of flight, of physical travel, of roaming beyond the Four Seas.”

The Holy Man is also an excellent example of a Daoist religious ecstatic, who takes mystical flights and whose movements in flight give him freedom in the physical realm and the potential to perform miracles: “... [he] climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his spirit, he can protect creatures from sickness and plague and make the harvest plentiful ... ”

Descriptions of the Holy Man often note his fantastic movements and how he is not limited by his human body or the borders surrounding the known world. The Holy Man’s super-human abilities represent a trance-state of mystical flight to the dao where what is communicated is Daoist knowledge. Through his concentration of spirit he is able to heal and bring good harvests. This concentration may be interpreted as a way in which the Daoist religious ecstatic demonstrates mastery of the dao. It is similar to the way

33Livia Kohn, Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in Taoist Tradition, 86.

that *wu* in the previous chapter demonstrated power over spirits in ritual possessions and ceremonies for rain.

Ecstatic flight is also a component of *Zhuangzi*'s redefinition of the *wu* called a Nameless Man, who is described as having no aspirations for public office. The religious ecstatic contrasts with elite culture and state governance. The Nameless Man berates a another man for asking him about how to rule the world:

The Nameless Man said, 'Get away from me, you peasant! What kind of a dreary question is that! I’m just about set off with the Creator. And if I get bored with that, then I’ll ride on the Light-and-Lissome Bird out beyond the six directions, wandering in the village of Not-Even-Anything and living in the Broad-and-Borderless field. What business do you have coming with this talk of governing the world and disturbing my mind 無名人曰：’去!汝鄙人也,何問之不豫也! 予方將與造物者為人, 厭。則又乘夫莽眇之鷹, 以出六極之外, 而逰何有之鄉, 以處壤壤之野。汝又何帛以治天下感予之心為?’

The Nameless Man responds dramatically to a question about how to rule the world, saying that he is not concerned with these matters. He is interested in travelling with the Creator. The Nameless Man signifies a total absence of boundaries: he has no name, he has no career and he travels wherever he pleases. Further, he takes flights on the backs of birds, like other religious

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ecstatics (who ride turtles and water dragons) I will discuss in a later chapter concerning the
Nine Songs.

At other points in the text, Zhuangzi suggests how flight is related to Daoist knowledge by comparing the differences between walking and flying. Stating the obvious, Zhuangzi writes:

... It is easy to keep from walking; the hard thing is to walk without your feet touching the ground. It is easy to cheat when you work for men, but hard to cheat when you work for Heaven. You have heard of flying with wings, but you have never heard of flying without wings. You have heard of the knowledge that knows, but you have never heard of the knowledge that does not know. Look into that closed room, the empty chamber where brightness is born... 絶跡易無行地難. 為人使, 易以僞, 為天使難以僞. 聞以有翼飛者矣, 未聞以無翼飛者也; 聞以有知者矣, 未聞以無知者也. 瞻彼闇者, 虛室生白.36

The point of this passage is to compare perspectives. Zhuangzi is playing with the reader’s understanding of what is easy and hard, and ordinary and extraordinary. Compared to walking and cheating men, flying without wings and knowledge that does not know are seemingly impossible tasks. Zhuangzi is forcing the reader to rethink cognitive boundaries and to consider that what he or she believes to be impossible is in fact possible, using the metaphor of the closed room as the locus of the unknown. Zhuangzi is challenging the reader to look into this closed room that might be any place with which the reader is unfamiliar. It could be the depths of the

self or everything beyond this known realm. When one looks into that room there is illumination. In *Zhuangzi*’s own words, the closed room that was once empty takes on a new brightness.

*Zhuangzi* further explains the metaphor of flying when it draws a connection between “flying without wings” and “knowledge that does not know.” Here, *Zhuangzi* explains that flying is figurative language and represents the ability to rise above ordinary perception and experience the higher knowledge that comes through an understanding of the *dao*. One might also infer from the text that this means a mystical flight experienced during trance.

When *Zhuangzi* refers to “knowledge that does not know” what it could be referring to is knowledge that is beyond ordinary sensory perception. *Zhuangzi* is suggesting that people should stop trying to know things based on external perception. Instead, human beings should avail themselves of inner knowledge: “... Let your ears and eyes communicate with what is inside and put mind and knowledge on the outside....” ...夫徇耳目内通而外於心知....

Indirectly, *Zhuangzi* is asking the reader to contemplate his or her inner self to discover Daoist knowledge. The inner and outer distinction is an important theme. In the untransformed ordinary man the outer world and physical form are limitations. To the transformed religious ecstatic, the outer form reflects the inner content. Once more the text is attempting to transform the reader’s perception, using metaphors and imagery.

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Religious ecstacies in the Zhuangzi

Outward appearance

In addition to many references concerning the specific qualities of the religious ecstatic’s ability to fly and its special knowledge, Zhuangzi is loaded with references to religious ecstacies who have unusual appearances that evince how they become transformed. Zhuangzi remarks how ordinary people perceive these individuals as ugly and with hunchbacks, which traits Katô Jôken says characterized many early religious ecstacies. Again, the problem is one of ordinary perception. Ai Taito 被騷 it is an ugly man to whom everyone is attracted to for his inner beauty. Zhuangzi tells how initially people were repulsed by Ai Taito’s appearance. After spending time with him they realized how he was special: “... Now Ai T’ai-t’o says nothing and is trusted, accomplishes nothing and is loved, so that people want to turn over their states to him... It must be that his powers are whole, though his virtue takes no form”...今被騷未言而信，無功而親，使人授己國...是必才全而德不形者也.” Later on in the discussion about Ai Taito there is mention of a similarly virtuous but ugly man named Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips 鴟跀支離無脈, who impressed the Duke so much that “... when he [the Duke] looked at normal men he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny”... 而視全人，其誰肩肩...40


The hunchback is a key image in the Zhuangzi. Daoist religious theory posits that there are five spirits of the five viscera — the Spirit of the Kidneys; the Spirit of the Lungs; the Spirit of the Spleen; the Spirit of the Liver; and the Spirit of the Heart. When a person’s back is hunched over the five spirits are positioned higher in the body and closer to the dao. In the Zhuangzi, Master Yu becomes ill and as a result becomes a hunchback. His illness transforms his outward appearance. Master Yu attributes the cause of his hunchback not to his illness but to the Creator:

The Creator is making me all crookedly like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation of the yin and yang ... 造物者,将以予為此拘拘也!曲僊後背,上有五管,顚隱於齊,肩高於頂,句贅指天。陰陽之氣有詁,...!42

Zhuangzi tells how Master Yu is content with his new hunched back, accepting that the Creator, however that is interpreted, has transformed his appearance. Master Yu’s transformation through illness resembles the way in which ordinary men become marked as religious ecstasies.

In another passage, Confucius while he is travelling encounters a hunchback, who is an expert cicada catcher. When questioned how he became such an expert cicada catcher, the hunchback attributes his success to his body: “I hold my body like a stiff tree trunk and use my

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41 Isabelle Robinet, Taoist meditation: the Mao-shan tradition of great purity, 69.

Religious ecstasies in the Zhuangzi

arm like an old dry limb. No matter how huge heaven and earth, or how numerous the ten thousand things, I'm aware of nothing but cicada wings." 43 Note how the cicada catcher describes how he holds his body still like a tree trunk, possibly because he wants to appear as if he is a tree to the cicada. When he becomes the tree, he is able to catch cicadas, who themselves are distinguished by bodily transformation. At first the cicada is an insect but in much the same manner as the butterfly the cicada is transformed into a winged creature. Similarly, the cicada catcher is able to transform his body in the performance of his role.

Zhuangzi mentions other Daoist religious ecstasies whose human form is distinctive in different ways. One individual is the Holy Man on Gushe Mountain, who neither needs the natural elements to survive nor is harmed by them and whose appearance reflects the environment in which he lives. He has skin like ice and snow; he is also nourished by wind and dew—not by the conventional Chinese diet of the five grains. 44

The Daoist religious ecstatic is also referred to as the Perfect Man. Like the Holy Man above, the Perfect Man’s form is invulnerable to fire, cold, lightening and wind:


44 The five grains — typically rice, millet, wheat, beans, etc. —were the staple diet of China. Rejection of these grains was a symbolic rejection of what was socially normal and common practice. Further Chinese mythology told of parasitic worms that inhabited the large intestines and fed on the decaying matter in the bowels with a view to killing their host. It was believed that one could live on saliva and air and that this diet would starve the worms out of the body.
Religious ecstacies in the Zhuangzi

The Perfect Man is godlike. Though the great swamps blaze, they cannot burn him; though the great rivers freeze, they cannot chill him; though swift lightening splits the hills and howling gales shake the sea, they cannot frighten him. A man like this rides the clouds and mist, straddles the sun and moon, and wanders beyond the four seas....

Zhuangzi begins the discussion of the Perfect Man by noting how he resembles a god or spirit and is immune to water, fire, and storms of all sorts. Additionally, he has no fear and he has the ability to fly. Such an ecstatic personality is characteristic of all of the Daoist religious ecstacies, whose physical bodies are not affected by external phenomena. Mircea Eliade describes one of these characteristics—the mastery of fire—in the following way:

Mastery over fire, insensibility to heat, and, hence, the 'mystical heat' that renders both extreme cold and the temperature of burning coals supportable, is a magico-mystical virtue that, accompanied by no less marvelous qualities (ascent, magical flight, etc.), translates into sensible terms the fact that the shaman has passed beyond the human condition and already shares in the condition of 'spirits.'

In a further passage, an individual named the Barrier Keeper Yin explains to Liezi how the Perfect Man is able to accomplish his superhuman acts:

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46Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, 335. Also see Eliade’s discussion of “Magical Heat” at page 474.
This is because he guards the pure breath—it has nothing to do with wisdom, skill, determination or courage. Sit down and I will tell you about it. All that have faces, forms, voices, colors—these are all mere things... They are forms, colors—nothing more. But things have their creation in what has no form, and their conclusion in what has no change. If a man can get hold of this and exhaust it fully, then how can things stand in his way... 是純氣之守也,非知巧果敢之列。居,予語女! 凡有貌象聲色者,皆物也,物與物何以相遠? 夫奚足以至乎先? 是色而已,則物之造乎不形而止乎無所化,夫得是而窮之者,物焉得而止焉... 47

The explanation describes how the Perfect Man is a religious ecstatic because he does not pay attention to the fixed forms of things. Further, the Perfect Man is aware that the larger entity responsible for creation similarly has no form and that that entity is constantly changing. The explanation offered by Barrier Keeper Yin suggests how this awareness enables self-transformation.

A preliminary conclusion may be drawn from the preceding discussion. In most instances, Zhuangzi is singling out the Daoist religious ecstatic because he has been divinely transformed, contrasting the wu, who performs ceremonial sacrifices and has dubious ecstatic religious talent. Divine transformation is often reflected in the strange appearance of the Daoist religious ecstatic and in the way he perceives the world around him. There are many natural metaphors and similes alluding to transformation in Zhuangzi. I have already mentioned two of them with respect to the cicada and hunchback.

Religious ecstasies in the *Zhuangzi*

**Metaphors of transformation**

*Zhuangzi* uses metaphors of transformation to show the unreality of boundaries. It is this illusion of fixed boundaries that prohibits people other than Daoist religious ecstasies from merging with the *dao*. Befitting the thematic importance of transformation, the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* begins with a description of a fish who becomes a bird.

In the Northern darkness there is a fish. His name is K’un. The K’un is so huge I don’t know how many thousand *li* he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is P’eng. The back of P’eng measures I don’t know how many thousand *li* across and, when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky. When the sea begins to move, this bird sets off for the southern darkness, which is the Lake of Heaven.

The chapter opens with a scene of transformation and movement, in which the image of a fish is transformed into the image of a bird. Both creatures create a constantly changing scene of the unreal. The unreality of the image and uncertainty of the scene are conveyed by the statement that even the author is unable to gauge how many *li* the kun and peng measure. The reader is left wondering, moreover, if every being is as transmutable as the fish, who in an instant leaves his watery abode in flight to float through the clouds.

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The transmutability of the fish implies an inner as well as an outer transformation. His inner transformation refers to the transformation of his inner body of gills to lungs, for instance. And the outer transformation refers to the change from having fins to swim to having wings to fly.

Other examples of natural transformation imply that this instant and easy transition is not restricted to animals and other beings. Human beings are also transmutable. In the often-quoted butterfly anecdote, *Zhuangzi* focusses on the uncertain knowledge of the self upon waking from a dream. *Zhuangzi* isolates this uncertainty and questions what is real, and further asks how does anybody know what is real:

Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn’t know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakeable Chuang Chou. But he didn’t know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly, there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things 昔者莊周夢為胡蝶, 楸栩栩然胡蝶也, 自喻適志與！不知周也. 俄然覺, 則蘧蘧然周也. 不知周之夢為胡蝶與,胡蝶之夢為周與? 周與胡蝶, 則必有分矣. 此之謂物化.⁴⁹

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While he was asleep, Zhuangzi enjoyed the feeling of being free and able to fly. Everything about the experience seemed to suggest he was really the butterfly. When he woke up he remembered the clear experience of being a butterfly, which was fresher than his experience of being a human being. Upon closer examination, he realized he could no longer clearly distinguish between himself and the oneiric feeling of being a butterfly. Zhuangzi calls this mutability of self-perception the transformation of things.

In a further anecdote about the mutability and the transformation of things, Zhuangzi describes how butterflies are simply one part of the life-cycle:

The seeds of things have mysterious workings... If they sprout on the slopes they become Hill Slippers. If Hill Slippers get rich soil, they turn into Crow's Feet. The roots of Crow's Feet turn into maggots and their leaves turn into butterflies. Before long the butterflies are transformed and turn into insects...種有幾,...生於陸屯則為陵鳥, 陵鳥得鬱棲則為鳥足, 鳥足之根為蜆蜋, 其葉為胡蝶. 胡蝶胥也化而為蟲,...50

Life is one cycle of transformation that begins with a seed that produces a long chain of organisms and only one part of that chain is the butterfly. All things are part of a cycle of change and at the end of the passage the Zhuangzi clarifies its meaning: “...So all creatures come out of the mysterious workings and go back into them again...”...萬物皆出於機, 皆入於機...51

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Another passage in Zhuangzi elaborates on the theme of confusion as a means of understanding. In this passage, Zhuangzi illustrates the importance of accepting change and transformation and the inappropriateness of traditional forms of death ritual. The passage describes Zhuangzi's response when his wife died. He did not perform some formal Confucian ritual to signify his respect for her after her death, as his friend and Confucian sparring partner Huizi advised; rather he sat on the floor pounding on an overturned earthenware pot and singing. Huizi is confused by Zhuangzi's actions. But Zhuang Zhou explains that the reason he is not crying is because he realizes that life and death are not two distinct things. He knows that her life with him was part of a much larger cycle of existence. When he realized this, he decided to celebrate her transformation by banging on a tub and singing. Zhuang Zhou’s realization had nothing to do with ordinary forms of knowledge or ritual propriety.52

In conclusion, I have examined how the Zhuangzi redefines what it means to be a religious ecstatic, showing how the Daoist religious ecstatic is superior to the wu found in other classical texts. Naming the Daoist religious ecstatic as a Holy Man, Perfect Man, True Man and Nameless Man, the Zhuangzi uses aesthetics of transformation to describe how they appeared and to allude to their religious ecstatic traits.

I have also discussed how instead of performing rituals or exhibiting spiritual clairvoyance like the wu, the Daoist religious ecstatic’s performance was based on an ability to merge with the dao. This is exemplified by Ziqi of the south wall, who by merging with the dao

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became marked in a significant way. *Zhuangzi* expresses these ecstatic marks as being the ability to fly, an altered appearance that was often explained by divine intervention, and the understanding and subsequent perception of the potential for transformation. In the *Zhuangzi*, one has a glimpse of how people beyond the fold of Confucian learning and the confines of elite culture were struggling to reclaim and reshape the performance of religious ecstastics.

In the next chapter, I will turn my attention to another textual way of describing religious ecstastics. Here, many of the textual references return to defining the ecstatic personality as the *wu*, but rely on images of transformation and geography to illustrate him or her.
Religious ecstatics in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

Chapter 3—Religious ecstatics in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* also redefined the religious ecstatic, using the aesthetics of transformation to create an image of the religious ecstatics’s appearance and the landscape where he or she resided.¹ Lu Xun remarked how the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* may have been written in the language of religious ecstatics called the *wu.*² These *wu* were possibly the same *wu* discussed in other texts, having similar names to those referred to in the *Classic of Changes, Rites of Zhou and the Records of the Grand Historian.*

Exegesis on the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

The authorship, origin and dating of the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* is unknown. Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BCE–25 CE) attributed the text to Yu, the legendary sage king, founder of the Xia dynasty, and flood controller. Exegesis on the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* focusses on the geographical content of the text as a possible reason to explain why it was written and as a way to elucidate this theme.³ Before Liu Xin’s seminal edition, the text was named the *Wuzang* 島藏.

¹In this chapter, I will rely on Yuan Ke's 注珂 annotated edition of the *Shanhaijing.* Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu.*

²Quoted in Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu,* 1. Yuan Ke also believes that the text was directly related to *wu* performance.

³The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* has only been studied seriously in the last century. For an extensive listing of sources in Chinese, Japanese, French and English predominantly written in the last century, consult Riccardo Fracasso, “*The Shanhaijing: a bibliography by subject,*” *Cina* 23 (1991): 81-104. See also Gu Jiegang, “*The Kunlun region as described in the Shan Hai Jing,*” translated by Li Zhurun and edited by W.J.F. Jenner *Social Sciences in China* no. 4 (December 1985): 95–140. Several French works deserve special mention. In particular, Rémi Mathieu’s translated edition of the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* has only been studied seriously in the last century.
Religious ecstasies in the Classic of Mountains and Waters

Shanjing 五藏山經, describing the first five chapters of the text. Some believed that the five chapters were descriptive passages written down after an imperial mapping expedition during the time of Zou Yan 随衍. These passages recorded the routes through mountain passes and along rivers, as well as the tribes, plants and animals indigenous to those areas. However, this theory only explained the first five chapters. More recently, Yuan Ke 袁珂 has argued that the first five chapters are not the oldest parts of the Classic of Mountains and Waters, but rather the two last sections are the most authentic, dating to the Warring States period.

The Classic of Mountains and Waters contains 144 hybrid creatures, with two-thirds of them occurring in the first five chapters. Among these hybrids are all sorts of strange creatures who are either chiefly animal or chiefly human. Human hybrids have too many or too few limbs, Waters contains noteworthy research on the flora and fauna in the text. Rémi Mathieu, Étude sur la mythologie et l'ethnologie de la China ancienne. See also Vera Dorofeeva Lichtmann, “Conception of terrestrial organization in the Shan Hai Jing,” Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient 82 (Paris 1995): 57–110. John Schiffer has also written extensively on the subject: John Wm Schiffer, “Chinese Folk Medicine,” Chinese Culture 20, no. 4 (December 1979), and The Legendary Creatures of the Shan Hai Jing (Taipei: Hwa Kang Press, 1978).

Wei Juxian 衛聚賢, “Shanhaijing bian wei 山海經辨偽,” in Gushi yanjiu 古史研究 2 volumes (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1934), 304.

Wei Tingsheng 衛挺生 and Xu Shengmo 徐聖謨, Shanjing dili tu kao 山經地理圖考 (Taipei: China Academy, 1974).

These two sections are the “Great Wilderness” (Da Huang 大荒), comprised of east, south, west and north chapters, and the “Inner Seas” (Hai Nei 海內) section. Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 1–2. Yuan Ke’s argument is supported by textual evidence that the Classic of Mountains and Waters contains many fragments of myths and figures who appear in earlier texts. For a good study of the correlation between character usage in the Classic of Mountains and Waters and in other texts, see also Shi Jingcheng 史景成, “Shanhaijing xinzheng 山海經新證,” in Chuan Tangren 傳鑑壬, comp., Shanhaijing yanjiu 山海經研究 volume 2 (reprint; Taiwan: Tianyi, 1982), 68–106a.
tails, eyes, horns, ears, faces, and wings. There are also hybrid animals with fish faces or human faces or a horse with goat's eyes, foxes with wings, rats turtle heads, and foxes with fins.

The strange beings who inhabited the landscape of the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* have always been associated with foreign tribes and with culture beyond the pole of Chinese civilization. Scholars appropriated the text to elaborate on the strange qualities of marginal people mentioned in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, and Guo Pu 郭璞 is known to have drawn the many pictures of hybrid creatures accompanying the text of the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*. Han and later scholars helped to entrench the idea that the text was written by foreigners. References to the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*, for instance, described the physical appearance of barbarians referred to as *Man* 蠻 or *Yi* 夷. At other times, textual references from the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* provided information about horses used by another group of foreigners called the Xiongnu 匈奴.

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9 "The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* says that the Northern Sea has beasts. They appear like horses..." 海經云北海有獸, 其狀如馬, ... *Shiji*, SBBY edition, *juan* 110:50.1a.
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

Outward appearance and inward transformation

One of the ways that the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* resembles the *Zhuangzi* is through the use of external metaphors to indicate the transformation of ordinary phenomena, consistently describing how individuals appear in mysterious places and have a human head but different bodies. While these metaphors could have been intended to be understood as exotic and otherworldly images, it is more likely that they signified some type of religious transformative experience. He Guanzhou 何觀洲 has analyzed the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* in terms of six categories of transformation and notes how the creatures described in the text are ordinary creatures that have been altered in some meaningful way.\(^\text{10}\) Difference is created by the addition or subtraction of limbs. They are also different because the location of limbs has been changed, and a few of these animals are different because they have been spiritually endowed. His analysis of the elements of transformation can be used to explain how the text uses descriptions of the body to reflect inner transformation.

\(^{10}\)The first category is called *leitu* 順推 and refers to all of the ordinary animals in the text transformed into new types of animals. The second category is called *zengshu* 增數 and describes how the text takes simple animals and adds more appendages to make a new animal. The third type is called *jianshu* 減數. This refers to the way the text subtracts limbs from ordinary animals to create new types. The fourth type refers only to animals in the *Wuzang shanjing* 萬章山經 who are a blend of the above categories. This is called *hunhe* 混合. The fifth category also concerns only the *Wuzang shanjing* animals. In particular it notes how these animals have their limbs in different places. This is called *yiwei* 易位. The final and sixth category is named *shenyi* 神異. It includes animals with spiritually imbued natures. See He Guanzhou 何觀洲, “*Shanhajing zai kexue shang zhi pipan ji zuozhe zhi shidai kao* 山海經在科學上之批判及作者之時代考,” *Yanjing xuebao* 7 (1930): 1350–3.
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

Details of the physical place and body are important interpretative devices, with geographical immediacy providing omitted details. By recounting the close distance between places, the text communicates similarities between the peoples who inhabit them. For instance, the Women’s country is located near where Wu Xian resides. Wu Xian is a religious ecstatic and the immediacy conveys how the women are also ecstasies. Snakes and other non-human hybrid creatures may also be symbolic images used to convey the religious ecstatic’s inner transformation.

*Wu medical healing*

The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* provides some evidence of ecstatic healers and their methods to extend life and prevent illness. References to the jujube tree, the peach tree, jade, gold and other common immortality elixirs appear frequently in the text. In addition, the text contains over sixty preventative remedies,\(^1\) many of which involve the ingestion of a strange bird, fish or even snake. The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* tells where these creatures live and what they prevent. A type of fish inhabits the area of a mountain named Dishan 抵山, and if the fish is eaten it will prevent cancer. In the vicinity of Dan Zhang 單張 Mountain there is a white bird that when consumed stops illness.\(^2\) One can avoid heart ache by drinking the very cold water that flows out of a sacred mountain called Gaoqian 高前.\(^3\) Even though the text

\(^1\)Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 4. For a discussion of passages in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* that concern healing see Zheng Dekun 鄭德坤, “*Shanhaijing ji qi shenhua* 山海經及其神話,” *Shixue nianbao* 史學年報 IV (1932): 127-51.

\(^2\)Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 73.
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

contains valuable healing methods, there has been much resistance in accepting its contributions to Chinese medicine.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to describing healing methods, the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* also describes the *wu* who perform the healing, with two textual anecdotes evincing the *wu*’s role.

The first example cites six *wu* who inhabit an area to the east of Kaiming:

East of Kaiming are Wu Peng, Wu Di, Wu Yang, Wu Lu, Wu Fan, and Wu Xiang.

Gripping the corpse of Ya Yu, they administer immortality drugs in order to bring him back to life. Ya Yu, with a serpent body and human head, was killed by Erfu’s minister

開明東有巫彭, 巫抵, 巫陽, 巫履,\textsuperscript{15} 巫凡, 巫相, 夾窪窪之尸, 皆操不死之藥.以距之.

窪窪者蛇身人面, 貳負臣所殺也.\textsuperscript{16}

In the above passage, a group\textsuperscript{17} of six *wu* use immortality drugs in an attempt to revive the already dead Ya Yu, who has a snake body and a human head. The description of having a

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\textsuperscript{13} Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 167.
\textsuperscript{14} John Wm. Schiffeler refers to the text as the origin of the two branches of Chinese medicine. The first branch pertains to the herbs used in early Chinese healing and the second branch pertains to the medical practitioners, who were shamans or *wu*. He writes “... The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* was never regarded as part of the Chinese medical corpus.” John Wm. Schiffeler, “Chinese Folk Medicine,” 42.
\textsuperscript{15} Yuan Ke notes how Wu Lu 巫履 is probably a transcription error of Wu Li 巫禮.
\textsuperscript{16} All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 301.
\textsuperscript{17} For a discussion of the group of *wu* in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* see Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠, *Chûgoku kodai no shûkyô to bunka* 中國古代の宗教と文化 (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1977), 322-3.
\end{flushright}
serpent body and human head is important and I will return to its significance later in this chapter.

The collective presence of the wu is also meaningful. Six wu have arrived to heal and bring Ya Yu back to life. The names of the wu here are very similar to names of famous wu, with Wu Peng and Wu Yang appearing in other texts as spiritual healers.

A detailed description of place contextualizes the performance of another group of wu: “In the midst of the Great Wilderness there is a mountain called Jade Gate of Fengju that is one of the mountains where the sun and moon set” Jade Gate of Fengju Mountain is a special place where the sun and moon disappear. The following passage refers to this mountain as ling or holy mountain. It is here that the group of wu perform their role:

There is Ling Mountain. Wu Xian, Wu Ji, Wu Fen, Wu Peng, Wu Gu, Wu Zhen, Wu Li, Wu Di, Wu Xie, and Wu Luo, these ten wu ascend and descend from here, so all the various medicinal plants are here. It is here that都 this升降百藥皆在.

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18 Guo Pu (276–324 CE) comments that all these wu were healers. Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 301.

19 Wu Peng was a famous spiritual healer mentioned in the Shiben and earlier in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu. Wu Yang was the wu asked to revive a lost soul in the Elegies of Chu’s “Summoning the Soul (Zhaohun)”. Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 301.

20 Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 396.

21 Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 396.
The character "ling" in Ling Mountain likely describes the holy quality of Jade Gate Fengju Mountain, where the wu collectively met to gather herbs with medicinal properties that may have grown especially well on the mountain summit.

The text alludes to two religious aspects of wu collective activities—the actual physical journey, and the inward transformation and healing. Conceivably, wu climbed this mountain in order to pick immortality herbs and when they came down from the mountain they possessed herbs that were able to heal and transform. The healing and transforming qualities of the herbs were related to the second aspect of the wu’s performance. When the wu administered these herbs they relied on their medical expertise and their ability to enter ecstatic trance.

The Queen Mother of the West (Xi Wang Mu 西王母) appears occasionally in the text and it is possible that the wu also performed their healing in connection with her cult. One reason to suggest this is the close proximity between Ling Mountain where the wu practice in the above quote, and where the Queen Mother of the West lives. The relationship between these two places implies a corresponding relationship between the wu and the cult of the Queen Mother of the West.

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22Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 397.

The text describes the Queen Mother of the West's attributes: "Xi Wang Mu, her appearance is like that of a human with a leopard tail, tiger teeth, and she excels at roaring, . . ." Although she has the appearance of a human being, she has other cat-like features and the ability to control pestilence and the five disasters. Ostensibly, the Queen Mother of the West is a healer similar to the wu described earlier. Gu Jiegang's commentary on this passage confirms the link between wu and the Queen Mother of the West: "Bringing good fortune and averting evil was the job of wizards (or shamans). It is evident that but for their propaganda, Queen Mother of the West would never have become so widely known."25

Wu were not only associated with the Queen Mother of the West. In addition, there is evidence that they were linked to the snake cult.26 This is suggested by a textual reference to a mountain called Snake Wu (shewu 蛇巫) Mountain.27 Again, the geographical place

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24 Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaoju, 50.
26 A snake cult may have existed in China as early as the Warring States period and as late as the Six Dynasties. Snakes were deities of cults along river banks and were especially associated with the Yellow River. The Classic of Mountains and Waters describes snake hybrids having for example the attributes of a human face with a wolf body, bird wings and the ability to slither on the ground like a snake. Terry Kleeman links this snake deity and its cult to the cult of Wenchang 文昌. See Terry F. Kleeman, "Expansion of the Wen-ch'ang Cult," in Patricia Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, eds., Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993): 48-50. See also Terry F. Kleeman, "Wenchang and the Viper" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1988); and Max Kaltenmark, "La légende de la ville immergée en Chine," Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie 1 (1985): 1-10.
27 Guo Pu points out how sometimes Snake wu Mountain (shewu shan 蛇巫山) is referred to as Snake Mountain (sheshan 蛇山). The reference to Snake Mountain indicates that it is
contextualizes the people: "On the Mountain of the Snake Wu, there are people brandishing sticks. And standing opposite to the East, one mountain is called Tortoise" 蛇巫之山，上有操杖，而東向立。一曰龜山.28 The passage suggests that Tortoise Mountain is near the Mountain of the Snake Wu. According to an earlier reference, Tortoise Mountain is also place where immortality elixirs such as gold and colourful birds may be found.29 Keeping this geographical context in mind, it seems plausible that the passage describes religious ecstacies who brandish divining rods used during immortality rituals.

Rain rituals

Religious ecstacies also performed rain rituals in the Classic of Mountains and Waters. Scholars have studied the references to the colour of snakes and the colour of robes of religious ecstacies in the Classic of Mountains and Waters, concluding that these were references to performances of rain rituals, including dances.30 within the northern sea and that snake river emerges from it. Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 461.

28Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 305. I follow Guo Pu’s interpretation that the 柄 should be read as 柄, meaning a stick or club.

29Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 175.

30The text may evidence the influences of Dong Zhongshu’s Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露 and the trend to look for this-worldly solutions to drought, such as burying clay dragons, and to express them in terms of yin-yang 陰陽 and wuxing 五行 correspondences. For a detailed discussion of the correspondence between rain rituals and Han dynasty correlative cosmology see Raymond A. Dragan, “The Dragon in Early Imperial China,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1993), 138. Dragan’s study of rain rituals in the Classic of Mountains and Waters is an expansion of Michael Loewe’s work: Michael Loewe, “The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain,” in Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader, eds., Chinese Ideas about nature
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

Religious ecstasies who perform rain rituals in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* have attributes that distinguish them from other ecstasies in the text and many of them are female: “In the Country of Women, to the north of Wu Xian, live two women” 女子國在巫咸北，兩女子居... The fact that these women live to the north of Wu Xian is significant, implying that they are religious ecstasies.

To the north of the Country of Women live snake-like creatures: “To the north of the Country of Women, [hybrids have] human faces, serpent bodies and tails encircling their heads” 在女子國北，人面蛇身尾交首. Once more, the proximity between the Country of Women and the snake-like creatures insinuates a deeper connection between the two. The text does not name the people who have human faces and snake bodies and these hybrid creatures might be more metaphorical than real, illustrating how religious ecstasies appear when they self-transform.


31 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu,* 220.
32 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu,* 221. There are other references to female ecstasies in the text who stand on mountain tops holding snakes and are described as having snakes coming out of their ears. Indigenous North American peoples such as the Hopi, Navajo and Cherokee, as well as Pentecostal Christians citing serpent references from the Bible, believe that snake handling produces rain and renders the human being divinely transformed. See Ruth Underhill, *Red Man's Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 214. See also Edward Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China,” 159.
33 Throughout this chapter have translated the colour of robes described as *qing* 蓁 to be
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

and named *Red River Woman Offering* 有鍾山者，有女子衣青衣，名曰赤水女子獻. The reference portrays an ambiguous visual impression. All the reader knows is what the woman wears. Other details such as how her body and face appear are left out. The omission of external details is relevant and tells how the text is concealing the woman’s inner transformation. Guo Pu notes that the woman is a goddess.

A further passage divulges how women perform rain rituals, with descriptions of the Xiang river goddesses, appropriating Northern Chinese mythology. The passage tells how the emperor’s two wives resided at Dong Ting lake—a reference to the sage king Shun’s legendary wives E Huang 女皇 and Nü Ying 女英, who drowned after being swept up into the river during a rain storm. It goes on to note how the two were then transformed into numinous creatures who were part human and part snake, with hands clutching snakes. The snake imagery is an aesthetic of transformation that may also allude to a snake cult.

*Wu Xian*, the name of one of the famous ten *wu* mentioned earlier, and in the *Rites of Zhou* and *Classic of Changes*, takes on even greater significance in the text when he becomes the name of a country: “Wu Xian’s country is to the north of Nuchou. In the right hand they hold a green snake, in the left hand they hold a red snake and on Dengbao Mountain is where the group of *wu* ascend and descend” 巫咸國在女丑北，右手操青蛇左手操赤蛇在登葆山群巫所从上下绿，which in this context was probably a dark colour like the colour of the night sky.

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34 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 434.

35 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 176. Guo Pu notes that the two wives are Xiang Furen and Xiang Jun of the *Nine Songs*. Another passage in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters* mentions the text of the *Nine Songs*. Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 414.
Religious ecstasies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

Akin to many other references in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*, the passage begins with an introduction to a geographic place, which is Wu Xian’s country. Elliptic in nature, the passage omits the identity of the individuals whose hands hold the green and red snakes. The reader assumes that these individuals are related to Wu Xian and might be members of the group of *wu* who ascend and descend from the mountain just discussed. The holding of snakes on mountain-tops is suggestive of rain ritual performance and the transformation that takes place during ecstatic possession.  

The physical closeness of Wu Xian and Nuchou is suggestive of other shared traits. A later passage in the text describes the Nuchou in greater detail:

In the midst of the great wilderness there is Dragon Mountain, where the sun and moon set. There are three marshes called the Three Muddies, upon which the Gunwu feeds. There are people wearing green, who conceal their faces with their sleeves, called the impersonators of Nuchou 大荒之中, 有龍山, 日月所入. 有三澤水, 名曰三淖, 昆吾之所食也. 有人衣青, 以袂蔽面, 名曰女丑之尸.  

The people of Nuchou reside in the locality of Dragon Mountain. The language used to convey the appearance of the mountain resembles the description of the earlier mountain associated with

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37 This type of snake handling is similar the modern Pentecostal Christian sect in the southern United States who demonstrate God’s power by holding snakes and not being bitten by them. Like these modern Pentecostals, Wu Xian is proving his mastery of the serpents.

38 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhajing jiaozhu*, 400.

39 Dragons have been associated with rain rituals in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*. See Michael Loewe, “The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain.”
Wu Xian and the group of ten wu. This is a special place where sun and moon set
(riyue suoru 日月所入). The people of this mountain may be the Nuchou, or the Gunwu,
variously explained as a reference to an ancient king, a mountain, an ancient feudal lord or even
a numinous substance.  

The passage elaborates on the mysterious disposition of these women in its depiction of
physical image. They wear green clothing and sleeves conceal their faces. Could it be that once
more the external appearance and omissions are suggestive of inner transformation? The final
character of the passage links the women to the shi 墓 or impersonators of the dead, possibly
referring to the appearance of such ecstatics in the performance of shi rituals.

Another example of a female connected to ecstatic rain ritual performance is the Rain
Master Concubine 雨師妾: “Rain Master Concubine resides to the north. She is a dark person,
holding a snake in each hand, and in her left ear there is a green snake and in her right ear there
is a red snake” 雨師妾在其北，其為人黒，兩手各操一蛇，左耳有青蛇，右耳有赤蛇.  
Guo Pu notes how the Rain Master Concubine, described like other religious ecstatcs in the text,
performed rituals to solicit rain. Much detail is given to create an image of the Rain Master
Concubine, who appears to be very comfortable with snakes, suggesting that she as well as other
female ecstatcs adorned with snakes may have performed religious rituals associated with the
snake cult.  

40 For the various interpretations see Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 377–8.

41 Yuan Ke, ed., Shanhaijing jiaozhu, 263.
Snake Appearance

Yuan Ke remarks how the physical description of female religious ecstatics, who have snake bodies and human faces, is significant because it implies a spiritual attitude. The outer appearance describes how an individual has the spiritual countenance of otherworldly creatures. As I mentioned, the spiritual change (resulting in an altered snake-like appearance) could have been because of snake worship and possession by a snake spirit. Indian folklore too contains many examples of ecstatic possession by a snake deity.

In a further example about an outwardly different individual, the link between inner and outer transformation becomes clearer. This time the individual is a spiritually imbued youth, living in the area of Fufu Mountain 夫夫山 a mysterious place where gold and exotic birds are found. The account reads: “The Spirit Yu Er lives there. His appearance is that of a human body, a body holding two snakes and whenever he roams in the river depths there are rays of light where he submerges and surfaces” 神于兒居之，狀人身而身操兩蛇，常遊於江澗，出入有光. The Spirit Yu Er is similar to other ecstatics associated with snakes in the text but there is one crucial difference. Yu Er is defined by his or her youth with the character 傘 兒. Instead of describing how the Spirit Yu Er’s hands grasp two snakes, the text expresses how the Spirit Yu Er’s body grasps two snakes. As if explaining why this youth’s body might be possessing two

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42 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 221.


44 Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 176.
snakes, the anecdote finishes by noting how when the spirit youth roams or takes a spirit journey, rays of light mark his or her path through the water and are possibly indications that the youth is possessed during the journey.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the appearance of Daoist ideal men in the *Zhuangzi* was symbolic. Men with hunchbacks, men with skin like ice and snow and ugly men, for instance, had unconventional attributes that were linked to their abilities to take spirit journeys. Their unconventional attributes and abilities were indications of their physical and spiritual difference from other people. They were symbols of human beings who had established a connection with the divine. Similar connections with the divine may have been implied through the many images of individuals with serpentine bodies and through descriptions of otherworldly journeys in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*. In the first example of six *wu* noted above, I stated how this hybrid image characterized Ya Yu. But Ya Yu’s killer Erfu in a subsequent passage also had a snake body and a human head.\(^4\) Likely both Erfu and Ya Yu had undergone some spiritual change.

**Conclusion of Section 2**

Some conclusions may be drawn from the discussion of the three chapters comprising the second section of this dissertation. In the Introduction, I discussed how *taotie* images may have represented ecstatic transformation and how references to the *wu* in the *Classic of Changes*

\(^4\)Yuan Ke, ed., *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 311.
elaborated on that theme. Here, I suggested how transformation of a situation was the central objective of ritual performance in early China and I noted a reference in the Rites of Zhou suggesting that wu performed the Classic of Changes ritual. These divinatory rituals were performed for religious efficacy in service to the state, the king and his consort. The tersely written Rites of Zhou elided the wu's ecstatic talent, emphasizing the wu's physical position, gender, ranking and role. Wu danced for rain but few details were given in the text about the wu's spiritual ability for ecstatic transformation.

Later references to the wu in the Analects and Mencius portrayed the wu as a distinct profession and expressed that constancy, humanity, and loyalty were important traits. With regard to the Record of Rites, textual instances of the wu pointed to the declining use of the wu in ritual rain sacrifice and the increasing reliance on this-worldly solutions to drought. In the Mozi, the roles of the wu and religious ecstacies became the vehicle used by Moists to criticize Confucian ritual propriety. At the same time, the Mozi characterized how religious ecstacies and their communications with the divine were being exploited by officials.

In my religious reading of the Zhuangzi, I discussed how Zhuangzi's depiction of the wu in third-century China was formulated to denounce what wu had become. Wu were instruments of the state with little talent or ritual expertise, perpetuating outdated sacrificial rituals, and were inferior to Daoist religious ecstacies skilled in self-transformation. Example after example was given in the Zhuangzi to correct the reader's perception of what constituted a true religious ecstatic. They were outwardly ugly and marked by hunchbacks and deformities. But they were
Religious ecstacies in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*

not just static images. They moved in fantastic ways, flying, walking without their feet touching the ground and riding on clouds. These religious ecstacies physically and symbolically transcended ordinary perception. With this Daoist perception they could conjure ecstasy within themselves and self-transform. They symbolized individual liberation and a new conception of the way religious ecstacies should perform.

The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* referred to religious ecstacies as both *wu* and with new language. On the surface, the text transmitted how religious ecstacies performed healing and rain rituals. Most passages began by describing the physical location of the individuals, which may have been a device used in the text to enrich the visual impression of the individual, who lived in that place. Like religious ecstacies in the *Zhuangzi*, religious ecstacies in this text had unusual appearances and were characterized by their strange gestures and movements. They were hybrid creatures, often resembling snakes and were marked by their abilities to ascend and descend, and take spiritually transforming journeys.

In the following section, I will discuss the *Nine Songs*. Although this text contained rich examples of ecstatic religious performance, commentaries about it conveyed the increasing tendency to manipulate religious ecstatic performance through interpretation.
Section 3—The Nine Songs

Chapter 4—Historical and Religious Background of the Nine Songs

In previous chapters, I expounded on the performance of religious ecstacies in early Chinese texts. I also discussed how texts created visual impressions of ecstatic religious experience through aesthetics of transformation. In classical texts, religious ecstacies were low ranking or unranked ritual bureaucrats who devoted themselves to state religion. In texts such as the Mozi and Zhuangzi, religious ecstacies were ritual bureaucrats but they were also critics of the ways in which ritual bureaucrats performed.

In this section of the dissertation, I discuss the poetry of the Nine Songs and commentaries about it. Initially, I will discuss the historical and religious context out of which the Nine Songs corpus developed. I will then examine the extant historical material about deities in the Nine Songs. After that, I will offer a brief analysis of the ecstatic religious language and the commentaries that subdue it, furthering the trend to appropriate ecstatic religious experience.

Historical Background of Chu Culture

Although this study mentions Chu culture and the Chu state repeatedly, the exact location of the State of Chu has yet to be archaeologically determined. Lothar von Falkenhausen discusses the region where scholars now believe the State of Chu once existed: “I take the term
‘Chu’ rather loosely to denote a vast area in southern China centered upon the middle reaches of the Yangzi river traditionally regarded to have been the Chu sphere of influence.”

The Chu silk manuscript has enabled scholars to differentiate between barbaric characterizations of the Chu state and less pejorative depictions of its culture. Noel Barnard’s seminal work on the Chu silk manuscript confirms that the Chu regional area was not as barbaric and as distinct from the rest of civilized northern China as Han historians might have wanted later readers to believe: “The culture was different, it is true, but the level in terms of manufacturing skills, artistic achievements, literary achievements, literary accomplishments, and sheer ingenuity and inventiveness was certainly no less than that of the Middle States.” Written material suggests that the State of Chu existed as early as 1100 BCE and had a clan-based lineage system of government. Following the sixth century BCE, there were increasing references to Chu culture in classical Chinese texts.

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According to classical texts, as well as oracle bones and bronze vessels, Chu culture was related to Shang and Zhou culture. An early poem in the *Classic of Poetry* called "Yinwu" recounts the military campaigns in the Shang dynasty against Jingchu, another name for the Chu State. Li Xueqin elaborates on the significance of the poem, "Yinwu," adding that oracle bones prove there were Shang military campaigns against the Jingchu. This poem and its record of the interaction between the Shang and Chu explains the similarities between bronze vessel imagery. Li Xueqin writes: "The dissemination of the hybrid Chu and Shang culture, most apparent in bronze artistry, took place as Chu increased its territorial holdings both to the southeast and northeast."

Elizabeth Childs-Johnson studies archaeological material and concurs that Chu ecstatic religious culture was related to Shang and later Chinese culture: "There is no question that with the Chu of the Eastern Zhou era there is a revival of earlier Shang-like practices that one can characterize as shamanistic." Rao Zongyi and He Bingdi, among others, agree that Chu culture was substantially influenced by the Shang dynasty. K.C. Chang explains the similarities

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5 This poem is found in the "Shang song" (Hymn to Shang) section of the *Classic of Poetry*. Maoshi zhengyi 毛詩正義, SBBY edition, Yinwu 殷武.


7 Li Xueqin, "Chu Bronzes and Chu Culture," 15.


9 See Rao Zongyi, "Some Aspects of the Calendar, Astrology, and Religious Concepts of
between cultures by saying that the Chu rulers shared a Zhou ancestry. John Major adds that as people settled in the south, they influenced and were influenced by the cultures with which they came into contact. Scholars now recognize that Chu culture was a mixture of Shang culture and culture indigenous to the area that the Chu eventually inhabited.

The appearances of Chu deities also resembled Shang dynasty and other Chinese textual images. Hayashi Minao studies the illustrations of twelve beings in the Chu Silk Manuscript, noting how these are the images of twelve gods. Like the taotie and the creatures in the *Classic of Mountains and Waters*, the twelve gods were religious images.

Chu and Shang culture may have shared ecstatic religious and other cultural traits, but texts still criticized the Chu court's employment of religious ecstasies. The *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu* explained how Chu was defeated by Qin because of the predominance of female religious ecstasies at court. This is not meant to imply that religious ecstasies did not...
exist in Qin or any other culture\footnote{See Li Xiaodong 李曉東 and Huang Xiaofen 黃曉芬, “Cong ‘rishu’ kan Qinren guishen guan ji Qin wenhua tezheng 從日書看秦人鬼神觀及秦文化特征,” Lishi yanjiu 歷史研究 4 (1987): 58–9.} but only meant to show how certain aspects of Chu culture were singled out as causing the defeat. Once Chu had been defeated, ecstatic religious attributes of Chu culture were not rejected and may have increased the popularity of religious ecstacies (as documented in Han texts), as court functionaries and important ritual performers.\footnote{See John S. Major, “Research Priorities in the Study of Ch’u Religion,” 240–1.}

Although Han texts mentioned \textit{wu} as court functionaries, some Chinese scholars and members of the new Han aristocracy may have been threatened by the power and the social position foreign religious ecstacies had once enjoyed. Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 BCE), the founder and first emperor of the Han dynasty, was partially responsible for the way in which ecstatic religion was characterized in the Han dynasty. Because he was originally a commoner from the State of Chu, one might expect that he would ensure that Chu ecstatic religion was favourably portrayed, and following the defeat of Qin he did endeavour to keep the memory of Chu alive. But as Gopal Sukhu remarks, the memory was preserved in northern Han texts and in the voice of the Han and not Chu aristocracy: “And while Liu Bang and his cohorts held to their vision of a Chu identity, the only definition of aristocracy available to them now was a northern one.”\footnote{Gopal Sukhu, “Monkeys, Shamans, Emperors, and Poets,” in Constance A. Cook and John S. Major, eds., \textit{Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China} (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 151.} Chu ecstatic religious culture was different from Han aristocratic culture and if it was going to be preserved it may have had to be done in a way that did not conflict with Han religion.
Commentaries on the *Nine Songs* reflected one of the ways Chu ecstatic religion was integrated so that it complemented Han dynasty ideas about religion. Many of the deities of the *Nine Songs*, had northern origins with which Han dynasty commentators could identify.\(^{17}\)

**Nine Songs Deities**

In 1948, He Tianxing 何天行 wrote the controversial *Chuci zuo yu Handai kao* 楚辭作於漢代考 (A study of the *Chuci* written in the Han dynasty), noting, among other things, how many of the *Nine Songs* were dedicated to deities worshipped during the Han dynasty.\(^{18}\) Although He’s theory was accepted by few, it is likely that the deities in the *Nine Songs* were imported from northern China into the south, as David Hawkes explains: “Of the gods to whom they are dedicated, only four—the Hsiang Goddess, Tung Huang, Ssu Ming and the Mountain Goddess—are actually known from external evidence to have had local cults in Hupeh, Hunan &c.”\(^{19}\) Hawkes goes on to speculate about the ways in which these cults could have infiltrated Chu culture.

\(^{17}\)This study does not examine deities beyond those mentioned in the *Nine Songs*. For a discussion of deities in the *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Classic of Mountains and Waters* see Constance A. Cook, “Three High Gods of Chu,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 22 (Fall 1994): 1–22.

\(^{18}\)He Tianxing 何天行, *Chuci zuo yu Handai kao* 楚辭作於漢代考 (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1948).

Great One—Lord of the East (Dong Huang Taiyi 東黃太一)

Many early civilizations worshipped the sun. In China, the sun god was called Taiyi 太一, and was male. Jiang Linchang 江林昌 suggests that in early China the wu was in charge of the totemic worship of the ten suns. Two songs of the Nine Songs corpus that refer to Taiyi are called “Great One—Lord of the East” (Dong Huang Taiyi 東黃太一)” and “Lord of the East” (Dongjun 東君). References in early texts suggest that proto-Daoist and Confucian texts considered Taiyi to be a powerful entity. The Zhuangzi writes: “Taiyi embodies emptiness” 太一形虛. The Hanfeizi 韓非子 reference to Taiyi lists it after mention of the five phases (wuxing 五行), among other stars. Taiyi in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu is the source of all things that become manifest through transformation. A further reference to Taiyi in the Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu elaborates on the theme of transformation and is

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24 Zhuangzi, SBBY edition, juan 10.9a.

25 Hanfeizi 韓非子, SBBY edition, juan 5.8a–8b.

26 Lushi chunqiu, SBBY edition, juan 5.3a.
preceded by anecdotes about Wu Peng and Wu Xian—the first doctor and diviner, respectively.\textsuperscript{27}

In 103 BCE, the \textit{History of the Han} recounts how Emperor Wu of the Han ordered the worship of \textit{Taiyi} for the first time.\textsuperscript{28} Michael Loewe adds that the worship of \textit{Taiyi} was associated with immortality and the cult of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝).\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{The Lord in the Clouds (Yunzhong \textit{jun} 雲中君)}

Unlike other deities in the \textit{Nine Songs}, scholars are uncertain about the identity of the Lord in the Clouds. Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155), a Song dynasty commentator, said the Lord in the Clouds was the Master of the Clouds (Feng Long 豐隆). He added that the Lord in the Clouds might have been another name for the deity called the Master of Rain (Ping Yi 屏翳),\textsuperscript{30} who was revered in thunder and rain rituals that likely took place on mountain summits.\textsuperscript{31}

The \textit{History of the Han} defines the Lord in the Clouds as a Cloud Spirit (\textit{yunshen} 雲神).\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Lushi chunqiu}, SBBY edition, \textit{juan} 17.9b.


\textsuperscript{29}Michael Loewe, \textit{Crisis and Conflict in Han China}, 169–70.

\textsuperscript{30}In Appendix C annexed to this study, there is a chart detailing religious ecstatics in the \textit{Daozang’s} large chapter titled the “\textit{Daofa huiyuan} 道法會元.” It describes many of the rain and thunder rituals, sometimes performed with the help of \textit{wu} and other religious ecstatics. The “\textit{Daofa huiyuan}” also includes a reference to the Lord in the Clouds. \textit{Daozang} 道藏, “\textit{Daofa huiyuan} 道法會元,” \textit{juan} 114.08.90a.

\textsuperscript{31}Quoted in Geoffrey Waters, \textit{Three Elegies of Ch’u: An Introduction to the Traditional Interpretation of the Ch’u \textit{Ts’u}}, 86.

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Hanshu}, SBBY edition, \textit{juan} 25a.5.a.
Additionally, the deity appears in the list of stars in the *Hanfeizi*, along with Taiyi. The *Jiu Tangshu* notes how the Cloud Spirit is red. In Daoist literature, the Lord in the Clouds becomes a powerful deity in charge of rain and thunder.

*Xiang River Goddesses—*

*Princess of the Xiang (Xiang Jun 湘君) and Lady of the Xiang (Xiang Furen 湘夫人)*

In contrast to Taiyi and the Lord in the Clouds, the Xiang River Goddesses are weak deities, who are worshipped in two songs called the “Princess of the Xiang” and the “Lady of the Xiang.” Like the other songs in the corpus, there are many theories to explain their identities in a northern mythological context that the Princess of the Xiang was the sage king Shun and the Lady of the Xiang was his consort. The feelings they expressed for each other have been interpreted as ecstatic, with both romantic and religious connotations.

In contrast, Hong Xingzu explained that the Princess of the Xiang was E Huang 娥皇 and the Lady of the Xiang River was Nü Ying 女英, and that they were the two daughters whom

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33 *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1936), *juan* 30: 10.1126.


their father King Yao allowed to marry King Shun.\textsuperscript{36} But his daughters died while they were on a mission with Shun,\textsuperscript{37} possibly by committing suicide in the Xiang river or died because they were swept into the river by a great gust of wind.\textsuperscript{38} Regardless of how they died, their death transformed the women into goddesses of a southern river.

\textit{River Earl (He bo 河伯)}

Another water deity in the \textit{Nine Songs} called the River Earl was a demonic male northern spirit of the Yellow River. Legend, extending back to the time of oracle bones in China, tells how the River Earl was so fierce that people made sacrifices and offerings to appease him.\textsuperscript{39} David Hawkes explains that the River Earl was not an indigenous god to the State of Chu, where he says the songs originated.

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\textsuperscript{38}Yuan Ke, \textit{Shanhaijing jiaozhu}, 176–7.


Oracle bones dated to the Xia dynasty document the existence of a spirit named the River Earl. In these and later Shang oracle bone accounts, his name is mentioned along with Ping Yi 靭夷, which Yuan Ke 袁珂 says is another name for the River Earl. Yuan Ke 袁珂, \textit{Zhongguo shenhua chuanshuo} 中國神話傳說 volume \textit{1} (Beijing: 1984), 299.
The Chu people may have been exposed to the story of River Earl and his need for wu sacrifice through contact with northern China.\(^{40}\)

The *Records of the Grand Historian* contains a story about the River Earl narrating the tradition of bridal sacrifice to the deity, and demonstrating how deities and state officials manipulated local religion for their own advantage.\(^{41}\) Ximen Bao 西門豹 arrived as the new official of the State of Ye 邺. Upon his arrival, he noticed how the people were poor and gathered the elders together and asked them why. They replied that it was because every year an elaborate marriage ritual had to be performed for the River Earl. In preparation for this marriage ritual, female wu went around to the houses in the village searching for beautiful women to sacrifice as brides. These women were dressed up, and sent down the river on decorated rafts. This ritual had an enormous cost for the families of those daughters, who were chosen to become the sacrificial brides. It required faith in the power of the marriage to overcome the horror people felt as they watched their young daughters disappear from the surface of the river.\(^{42}\) The villagers accepted that the performance of this ritual was not negotiable and was necessary to prevent the River Earl from flooding the region.

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\(^{40}\) David Hawkes, *Ch’u Tzu: ‘The Songs of the South’*, 35.

\(^{41}\) The reading of the material offered byWhalen Lai, and based on Yuan Ke’s Chinese mythological studies, presents a different interpretation of the *Records of the Grand Historian* account that young girls were gathered from around the village to be offered. See Yuan Ke袁珂, *Zhongguo shenhua zhuanshuo* volume 1, 300–7; and Whalen Lai, “Looking for Mr. Ho Po: Unmasking the River God of Ancient China,” *History of Religions* 29, no. 4 (May 1990): 335–51.

Ximen Bao was suspicious about the ritual and went to the place where the ritual was to be held. When he arrived, he asked the officials to show him the woman who would be offered to the River Earl. After he was shown the woman, he told the people that she was too ugly and not good enough for the sacrifice. Instead, Ximen Bao suggested that the ugly wu should be sent to tell the River Earl that a suitable bride would soon follow. The villagers followed Ximen Bao’s advice, sent the wu into the water and when she did not reappear, they sent the elders into the water to investigate. None of them returned. The onlookers became concerned that so many people were disappearing into the river, and asked Ximen Bao to stop sending more people into the water. Ximen Bao stopped and the sacrifice never took place again.

Ximen Bao had successfully ended the local people’s ritual worship of the River Earl. With so many human lives sacrificed to the deity, Ximen Bao exposed the pointlessness of the ritual, behaving like the Duke in the Record of Rites, who doubted the efficacy of wu sacrifice for rain. The story demonstrated how even the narratives about the deities of the Nine Songs contained latent criticisms of ecstatic religion.

*Master of Fate (Siming 司命)*

The Nine Songs contains one song to the Greater Master of Fate (Da Siming 大司命) and one song to the Lesser Master of Fate (Shao Siming 少司命). Bernhard Karlgren notes how these two deities refer to the Greater Master of Fate.43 Like the other deities in the Nine Songs, theories

43 Bernhard Karlgren is referring to the songs “Greater Master of Fate” and “Lesser Master of Fate.” But Karlgren has reservations as to whether the song titled after the Master of
explaining the Master of Fate focus on northern ancestry.44 Scholars, such as Ishikawa Masao 石川三佐男, concentrate on the gender of the deities, noting that the Greater Master of Fate was male and the Lesser Master of Fate was female. Ishikawa further notes how these deities were depicted on a Mawangdui scroll with human faces and bird bodies.45

Donald Harper suggests that the Master of Fate was part of an other-worldly bureaucracy and responsible for fate.46 In the “Perfect Happiness (Zhile 至樂)” chapter of the Zhuangzi, the Master of Fate determines who lives and dies.47 In the Rites of Zhou, the Master of Fate is one of several rituals and involves the offering of a pig.48 In the Record of Rites, the Master of Fate appears as one of five offerings.49 In the Records of the Grand Historian, wu from the states of Chu and Jin, performed rituals to worship the Master of Fate.50 In Buddhist texts, Robert Chard

Fate was dedicated to that god at all, arguing that the name of the god only appears once in the title affixed to the song and that that title was affixed to the song after it was written. Bernhard Karlgren, “Some Sacrifices in Chou China,” Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 40 (1968), 17–8.

44He Tianxing, Chuci zuo yu Handai kao, 85.


48Zhouli zhengyi, volume 1, juan 34.37–8.

49Liji zhengzhu, SBBY edition, juan 14.3a.

50Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 12.5b–6a and juan 28.13.b. In the second reference, wu perform rituals in their own temple, in the temple of the five gods, to Dongjun, to Siming and to the Lord in the Clouds.
notes how the god of fate was “a sort of Grim Reaper,”\textsuperscript{51} wielding the power to control birth and death and to manipulate the length of human life.

Chinese textual references to some of these deities pre-dated the \textit{Nine Songs} and showed how \textit{wu} served many of them. When the southern Chu people performed ritual offerings and sacrifices to recognize the power of the spirit world over the earthly domain they were also acknowledging the power of northern deities. But the story of the River Earl and Ximen Bao displayed how over time officials attempted to displace the \textit{wu} and to appropriate the power of local deities.

\textbf{Nine Songs ecstatic religious vocabulary}

If officials wanted to displace the \textit{wu}, they would have to learn to understand the language of religious ecstics. In the previous chapter on the \textit{Classic of Mountains and Waters}, I explained how the text was written in the language of religious ecstics. The \textit{Nine Songs} also contained the vocabulary of ecstatic religion. Here, religious ecstics are identified by the character \textit{ling} 灵.

The presence of the deity in the \textit{Nine Songs} is often foreshadowed by the use of the verb \textit{jiang} 降, which can mean “the descent [of the spirit].” It is used in this way in “The Lord in the

Clouds”: “The god had just descended in bright majesty” 嶽皇皇兮既降。⑥ Similarly, jiang can mean “the descent of the child” as it is used in “The Lady of the Xiang”: “The Child of God, descending the northern bank” 帝子降兮北渚。③ In both of these examples, the ling eventually articulates how in the past it has enticed the spirit to descend and possess him or her.

There is also language in the Nine Songs that suggests the onset of possession, such as the character jian 驖. “The Lord in the Clouds” contains the character in the following line: “He is going to rest in the House of Life” 驖將憺兮壽宮。④ In the song “The Princess of the Xiang,” the ling uses the character to communicate his foreknowledge that the deity is approaching: “Who is it taries within the islet” 驖誰留兮中洲。⑤ In both instances, the speaker announces the imminent descent of a deity with the character jian.

Female and male ling often evoke the experience of trance with specific language, such as the character dan 憧 and the expression “transfixed, forget to return” 憧兮忘歸. This phrase appears in “The Lord of the East”: “Reluctant to leave, and looking back longingly” 觀者憺兮忘歸。⑥ It also appears in “The Mountain Goddess”: “Linger ing with my lady, I forget that I must

②For the English translation see David Hawkes, Ch ’u Tz ’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 37; Chuci buchu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4b.

③David Hawkes, Ch ’u Tz ’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 38. Chuci buchu, SBBY edition, juan 2.9a.

④David Hawkes, Ch ’u Tz ’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 37; Chuci buchu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a.

⑤David Hawkes, Ch ’u Tz ’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 37; Chuci buchu, SBBY edition, juan 2.5a.

⑥David Hawkes, Ch ’u Tz ’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 41; Chuci buchu, SBBY edition, juan 2.16b.
go” 留靈修兮憶忘歸.57 The expression communicates how the ling forgets himself or herself during possession. It is only when the trance state of possession has ended that the ling remembers that she or he has forgotten.

The Nine Songs also uses metaphors of flight to express the feeling of elation during ecstatic trance. The song “River Earl” contains the phrase: “And my heart leaps up in me, beating wildly” 心飛揚兮浩蕩.58 The heart/mind (xin 心) is the locus of ecstatic experience in this line and the place where the religious ecstatic has ordinary feelings of love for the deity, and extraordinary feelings of religious ecstasy during the experience. The line describes the ling’s inner feelings of agitation and uneasiness as she experiences ecstatic flight and transcends the boundaries of ordinary perception.

Descriptions of the ling’s movements also convey his or her emotional state of mind. The Nine Songs is full of imagery of otherworldly journeys to other realms in the water or in the sky that could be inhabited by mythical dragons. This is evidenced in another line in the “River Earl”: “I wander with you by the Nine Mouths of the river” 與女遊兮九河.59 In “Great Master of Fate” the journey is described in another way: “He drives his dragon chariot with thunder of

57David Hawkes, Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 43; Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.21a. The italics indicate where I have modified the translation.

58David Hawkes, Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 42; Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.18a.

59David Hawkes, Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South,’ 42; Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.19a.
wheels.” These journeys are flights of the spirit recorded with fantastic imagery to convey ecstasy.

Evincing the importance of music to the onset of the trance, the songs allude to the type of music necessary to trigger trance states. In “The Great One, Lord of the East (東皇太一),” the final couplet of the song indicates that when the orderly music devolves into a cacophony of five notes the god has possessed the ling: “The five sounds disorderly in a cacophony of notes; And the god is merry and takes his pleasure” 五音紛兮繁會 / 君欣欣兮樂康. In this couplet, disorderly and cacophonous music describe the experience of the religious ecstatic and the cause of the trance and god’s happiness. The constant barrage of fantastic imagery in the Nine Songs describes the ecstatic experience in the ling’s language.

**Exegesis on the Nine Songs**

Exegesis on the Nine Songs takes the ecstatic religious language of the text and imbues it with other meanings. Authorship on the Nine Songs text is uncertain and scholars disagree on

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60David Hawkes, *Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South,*’ 40; *Chuci bichu,* SBBY edition, juan 2.13b.

61The five notes in this song are traditionally interpreted as corresponding to the Confucian five notes. It is interesting to note, however, that the pentatonic scale also figures in ecstatic ritual ceremonies of Zulu African tribes, for instance, where it signifies the possession by the spirit. Consult Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (1980; translated from the French, revised by Brunhilde Biebuyck in collaboration with the author, reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 93.

62David Hawkes, *Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South,*’ 36; *Chuci bichu,* SBBY edition, juan 2.3a–3b. I have modified the translation as indicated in italics.
who wrote the text. Wang Yi in his preface to the *Nine Songs*, attributes the songs to Qu Yuan 屈原 (fourth century BCE), a poet and legendary mistreated official. Qu Yuan, while he was banished to the south of China, wrote the songs to melodies from indigenous Chu rituals.\(^6^3\)

Wang Yi's and Zhu Xi's commentaries have shaped the modern perception of the *Nine Songs*, framing religious performance in a political and classical textual context, where none probably existed. Both commentators may have interpreted the *ling* as a *wu* not only because it was the *Shuowen*’s interpretation, but also because they may have recognized that the *ling* in the *Nine Songs* were performing for northern deities.\(^6^4\) However, their efforts to allegorize religious ecstasies, either politically or philosophically, often overlooked how the *Nine Songs* expressed the distinctions between state and local culture, Chu and Han culture, and religious and theatrical performance.

Zhu Xi's preface to the songs reiterates most of Wang Yi’s comments about the nascent origins of the *Nine Songs*, such as how they were written by Qu Yuan during his banishment from court and portrayed the religious practices of the southern Chu people. He elaborates on the Qu Yuan tale and explains how the entire *Nine Songs* use spirits as metaphors for unappreciative lords, who are oblivious to their loyal underlings. Superficially, Zhu Xi appears to be re-spinning the Qu Yuan tale of an underling’s loyal service and betrayal by his king. Yet his commentary

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\(^6^3\) For the history of Qu Yuan, see Xie Wuliang 謝無量, *Chuci xinlun* 楚詞新論 (Shanghai: Shanghai yinshu guan, 1923), 12–31.

\(^6^4\) Wang Yi’s, Zhu Xi’s and other’s interpretations that the *ling* is a *wu* are consistent with the description of the character *ling* in the *Shuowen jiezi*, which notes how the Chu people define their *wu* as a *ling*. See *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, juan 1a.19.
often strays from the political metaphor, which suggests that his philosophical appreciation for the trance state of a ling has nothing to do with the relationship between an underling and king.

Among Zhu Xi's prodigious writings is an eccentric commentary on the Classic of Poetry that sheds light on Zhu Xi's attitude toward popular forms of musical composition in general. Instead of interpreting the poetry to laud and enforce Confucian ideas of principle and virtue, it highlights the often sexual implications of some of the poems. Zhu Xi notes how the original tunes of the Classic of Poetry had been lost in the Han dynasty, owing to their mixture with barbarian music.65

In his preface to the Nine Songs, Zhu Xi elaborated on his disdain for barbarian music:

"... The vulgar phrases of the barbarous people of Ching-chou were crude and in their intermediacy between yin and yang, man and ghost, they were unable to avoid the confusion of profanity and licentiousness..." 66 His commentaries on the ling in the Nine Songs may have also been indirect admonishments of foreign ecstatic religion. In a recent article, Donald Sutton writes: "Zhu Xi, besides his celebrated opposition to Buddhism as a foreign religion, often denounced spirit


mediums and popular cults as inspired by private greed, destructive of society and disruptive of good government."

Later on, Zhu Xi’s postscript to the preface of the *Nine Songs* introduced the reader to the familiar theme of the allegorical retainer and lord relationship: “This section with all of its pieces use [the theme] of serving a spirit who does not respond and the inability to forget reverence and love for it to be similes for serving a lord who is not in accord” 此卷諸篇皆以事神不答而不能忘其敬愛比事君不合 . . . 68 Zhu Xi was construing the political metaphor in the loosest sense. When he referred to the trance state of *ling*, he was really referring to *jing*, or reverence.

Elaborating upon the *ling*’s ecstatic trance state of possession in the first song “The Great One—Lord of the East,” he observed how, during the trance state, the mind was controlled by the spirit but the body was still controlled by the *ling*. *Ling* and spirits were constituted by and able to interact because of the numinous entity Zhu Xi called *qi*.

In trance states of possession, *jing* refers to the inward contemplation of *qi*. In trance states of ecstasy, *qi*, which embodies both spirits and human beings, also enables the *ling* through outward contemplation to communicate with others in the spirit realm.69 Perhaps, Zhu Xi also thought that the religious ecstatics know how to enter these trance states because they have

67Donald Sutton, “From Credulity to Contempt: Confucians confront the spirit mediums in Late Imperial China,” *Late Imperial China* (forthcoming), 16–7.

68The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., *Chuci jizhu*, juan 2.1b.

cultivated the way of sagehood through the study of classical texts. And through this classical learning they have mastered the ideal of the human to divine relationship. (But he never said so.) This twofold function of qi, allowing both inward and outward contemplation, mirrors the two characteristics of ecstatic trance states: namely, possession and spirit journeys.

Zhu Xi's commentary on the Nine Songs betrays his reluctance to embrace entirely either a Confucian classical textual reading or an ecstatic religious reading. Using repeated references to classical Confucian texts to explain the songs, he often rejects the political metaphor of a lord and a retainer as being inadequate to explain the religious experience. Consistently, Zhu Xi portrays the religious act of reverence as jing in a philosophical way, which epitomizes the religious act of inward contemplation that is necessary to the investigation of things and the outward cultivation of sagacity.

Other scholars have emphasized aspects besides the political and philosophical subtext of the Nine Songs. Arthur Waley and David Hawkes have looked to the Nine Songs for its information about the religious beliefs of the indigenous people of the Chu state in gods and goddesses. Arthur Waley notes that the songs are Chu rites: "I take them to have been a set of rites in honour of the principal deities of the land of Ch'u at a time when the territories already extended far beyond the original homeland in the basins of the Yangtze and Han rivers." They are rites dedicated to gods and goddesses and are performed by religious ecstacies of the Chu state, who are in love with the deities they serve. Waley further remarks: "In these songs

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shamanism assumes a particular form not known, I think in the classic shamanistic areas—Siberia, Manchuria, Central Asia. The shaman’s relation with the spirit is represented as a kind of love-affair."\(^1\)

David Hawkes shares Waley’s view, saying that although the songs originated as rituals of southern religious cults, they were collected and brought to court for performance: “My own view is that it was written for a court which enjoyed the performance of religious masques in much the same way as European courts once enjoyed religious music composed by talented laymen. That this would have been a Ch’u court seems for a number of reasons, beyond doubt.”\(^2\)

Hawkes’s suggestion that the songs were collected by the court for performance seems plausible since in the Zhou dynasty officials were charged with the collection of poetry today known as the *Classic of Poetry*. Moreover, Emperor Wu of the Han is said to have established the *Music Bureau* (*Yuefu 楽府*). This bureau was supposedly responsible for all aspects of ritual and musical performances at court, including the important functions of song collecting, rewriting of the songs for performance, and orchestration. The *Elegies of Chu* anthology may have been the product of a similar endeavour for the Chu state.

The poetic particle *xi* 准 appears consistently throughout the *Nine Songs* and it might have been added when the *Nine Songs* was prepared for court performance. Hawkes writes: “It follows that whoever wrote *Chiu Ko* must have collected his material from a number of different

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\(^2\)David Hawkes, *Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South’*, 36.
sources and subsequently imprinted on it the uniformity of his own style and interpretation. Chiu Ko, then, though it is based on traditional material, did not exist as a single cycle before its literary editing. Hawkes's comments are valuable and underscore how, before the songs were recorded and used for entertainment, they may have been performed for religious efficacy.

This chapter has discussed the religion of the State of Chu based on the available information about the deities who figure in the Nine Songs. While some of these deities may have been indigenous to Northern China, it is clear that many of them were revered in possibly southern rituals performed by religious ecstasies. Some attention was also given to a discussion of language in the Nine Songs that evoked the experience of the religious ecstatic. Wang Yi's commentary reduced the religious content of the Nine Songs to political allegory, Zhu Xi's comments took it a step further.

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73 David Hawkes, Ch' u Tz 'u: 'The Songs of the South', 36.
Chapter 5—Discussion of the *Nine Songs*

In the previous chapter, I explained the historical and religious background of the *Nine Songs* and further how commentaries, such as those by Wang Yi and Zhu Xi, sought to appropriate religious ecstasies in the songs to fit them into the Confucian hermeneutical tradition. This chapter will discuss the *Nine Songs* and how it contributed to the Chinese understanding of religious ecstatic performance.

There are actually eleven songs; nine of which are dedicated to deities for whom male and female *ling* profess love and sexual desire.¹ Three of these eleven songs duplicate material in other songs.² For this reason, the discussion will focus on eight of the eleven songs.

"The Great One—Lord of the East"

In the first song of the corpus, "The Great One—Lord of the East," a *ling* performs a ritual dance to *Taiyi*.³ The song begins by noting the formal aspects of the ritual: "On a lucky day with an auspicious name / Reverently I come to delight the Lord on High"

¹ Generally, the transliterated character *ling* refers to the religious ecstatic; but sometimes it also refers to the deity and to souls, and the deity and religious ecstatic together in a trance state of possession.

² These three songs occur in pairs: "The Great One—Lord of the East" and "Lord of the East"; "Lady of the Xiang" and "Princess of the Xiang"; and "Greater Master of Fate" and "Lesser Master of Fate."

³ Wen Chongyi notes that the song is an opening melody, inviting the spirits to attend the ritual performance (*yingshen qu* 迎神曲). Similarly, the final song, "Rites to Dead," is a ritual used to send off the spirits (*songshen qu* 送神曲). Wen Chongyi, "*Jinge zhong de shangdi yu ziranshen*," 49.
The ritual takes place on an auspicious day of the year when people assemble to pay homage to the deity. Next, the song introduces the appearance of the ritual actor:

"Grasping the long sword's shaft of jade / girdle pendants clash and chime" 撫長劍兮玉珥 / 瑪銅鳴兮琳琅. When the ling dances, she holds a sword. She also wears a belt of jade pendants around her waist that clash into each other as she twirls around in the dance.

Moving away from the description of the dancing ling, the text develops the appearance of the ritual stage during the dance: "Jade weights fasten the god's jewelled mat / Now take up the rich and fragrant flower-offerings" 瑤席兮玉瑱 / 盧將把兮瓊芳. Fresh flowers have been placed on a jewelled mat that becomes a sort of ritual altar where the deity will descend. The next couplet elaborates on the other fragrant offerings that are part of the ritual: "The meats cooked in melilotus, served on orchid mats / And libations of cinnamon wine and pepper sauces" 蕾肴蒸兮蘭藉 / 焼桂酒兮椒漿. The song presents the reader with elaborate descriptions of...

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4 The translation comes from David Hawkes, trans., Ch'u Tzu: 'The Songs of the South', 36. I have modified all references to the ritual actors to be singular. Chuci buzu, SBBY edition, juan 2.2a.

5 Note that although the Hawkes's translation refers to a plural number of ritual actors, I have revised the translation to refer to a singular ritual actor.


offerings laid out for the deity, such as the meats, orchid, cinnamon wine and pepper sauces, creating a pungent aroma.

Then, the song alludes to the melody of the dance: “Flourish the drumsticks and beat all the drums / The singing begins softly to a slow, solemn measure / Then, as pipes and zithers join in, the singing grows shriller” 扬袍兮拊鼓 / 疏缓节兮安歌 / 陈竽瑟兮浩倡.9 The musicians are instructed to beat the drums and the drums introduce the choir, who sings softly to the slow beat. Musicians playing wind and string instruments join the chorus, who responds by singing more loudly as the melody intensifies.

Initially, the song refers to how the melody may be slow and steady and then the notes swell in volume and variety. I speculate that as this happens the female ling performs a dance in the background to the discordant, not orderly, music. Descriptions of fragrant offerings and music build to a climax. The next line returns to describing the dancing female ling: “Now the ling dances, splendid in her gorgeous apparel” 靈優儉兮姣服.10 Descriptions of the ling’s beautiful costume and dancing suggest that she has become a ritual sacrifice. But it is how she moves to the music that may transform her into the sacrificial vessel, change the atmosphere of the hall and enable the religious ritual to be successful: “And all the hall is filled with a penetrating fragrance/ The five sounds disorderly in a cacophony of notes / And the god is merry


10 David Hawkes, trans., Ch’u Tz’u: ‘The Songs of the South’, 36. I have modified the translation as indicated in italics. Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.3a.
and takes his pleasure” 芳菲菲兮滿堂 / 五音紛兮繁會 / 君欣欣兮樂康。11 Anyone who has observed a ritual in Taiwan or China is familiar with the way this disorderly music sounds and the type of feeling it generates among the audience and performers. Like contemporary religious performances, disorderly music may be a device used to lure the deity down to possess the ling and bring peace and harmony. The ling's sacrifice completes the ritual.

Commentary

There is some evidence that Zhu Xi was personally interested in the performance of all types of ritual, having himself written a book about the proper performance of family rituals, *Rites of the Family* (*Jiaji* 家禮).12 In this book he prescribed how human beings should act like the former sage kings because sage kings knew how to perform rituals to create social harmony. In his collected works he also wrote about how the sage kings created rituals such as the *Yi*: “In former times, sages made the *Yi* [oracle] in order to mirror the changes of *yin* and *yang*” 昔者聖人作易，以擬陰陽之變。13

Zhu Xi’s commentary may not emphasize the ecstatic religious quality of the ritual but it does refer to the ling’s state of mind and how this defines her as a ritual bureaucrat. Establishing


Discussion of the Nine Songs

his belief that the ling behaves reverently towards the deity, Zhu Xi writes: "Mu is reverence. Yu is delight. Shanghuang signifies the Great One—Lord of the East." Zhu Xi defines the character mu with the character jing, or reverence that in this context does not necessarily have a political meaning.

In the fourth line in the song, Zhu Xi also establishes his interest in traditional music. To explain the specific sounds of the jangling and chiming girdle pendants, he cites chapter 47 of the Records of the Grand Historian, the "Kongzi shijia" a biographical account of Confucius’s life. Zhu Xi writes: "The ‘Kongzi Shijia’ says the jade [pendants] around the girdle sound like qiu." By mentioning this account, Zhu Xi is implying that Confucius was familiar with this type of music and that the jangling jade pendants are not outside of the Confucian tradition. However, as I will discuss later, the reference might have been anachronistic and the Chu musical system may have had little in common with the music at the time of Confucius.

When the song notes how the aromas, flowers, meats, cinnamon wine and pepper combine with the increasing tempo of the music, Zhu Xi seems more interested in similarities with classical texts than he is interested in understanding why these offerings are important to the performance of the ritual context of the song. Borrowing the comments of Hong Xingzu that the song’s cinnamon wine is one of the four beverages in the Rites of Zhou, he writes: "Cinnamon

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The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.2.

"Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 47.

The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.1b.
wine is cut cinnamon put into the wine. The beer is one of the four beverages of the Rites of Zhou. This is also with pepper soaked in it.”

In his interpretation of the music, Zhu Xi only includes Wang Yi’s and Hong Xingzu’s combined comments about how the music is orderly and loud and descriptions about the pan pipe and zither. While he is elaborating on the comments of Hong Xingzu, he offers his most original comments in the entire commentary, using the phrase jiangshen 降神 twice to isolate the different stages of the ling’s possession. In the first usage of the phrase jiangshen, he probably means something like “cause the spirit to descend.” This communicates how spirits descend when they are invoked during rituals.

In the second usage, the phrase is reversed. Shenjiang 神降, the spirit descends, might convey how the descent and possession are now taking place. Zhu Xi’s explanation of the possession of the ling as she dances includes a reference to the wu’s ancient performance: “ling signifies the spirit, who descends into the body of the wu. . . In ancient times, a wu caused the spirit so in this way to descend. The spirit descended and possessed the wu. . . the body is the wu’s but the [wu’s] mind is the spirit’s” 靈謂神降於巫之身者也. . . 古者巫以降神. 神降而託於巫 . . . 身則巫而心則神也. 18 Here, Zhu Xi might be referring to the wu ritual bureaucrats in the Rites of Zhou and Record of Rites who performed rituals, adhering to the codes of ritual

17 The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.2a.

18 The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.2b.
propriety. Zhu Xi also explains what possession means. Before the possession takes place the verb precedes the spirit and after the possession the verb follows the spirit, making the spirit the subject.

The second-to-last line of the song describes the transformation of the music from a rhythmic beating of the drum to a cacophony of notes, offering Zhu Xi another opportunity to explore how the ling’s state of possession is connected to the music. He writes: “The five notes signify gong, shang, jue, zhi and yu. Fen is abundance” 五音謂宮商角徵羽. 紛盛. Here, Zhu Xi follows the Records of the Grand Historian’s definition of the five notes, listing them as they appear in the apocryphal “Book of Music” (Yueshu 樂書). One of the central themes to the “Book of Music” is the characterization of music and ritual. The participants in a ritual are set apart from each other by the roles they play. Music, however, functions to harmonize the distinctions created by role playing. The “Book of Music” also relates how the five notes mirror the five political offices: gong is the lord, shang is the minister, jue is the people, zhi is affairs, and yu is things. It also stresses the importance of keeping the notes orderly and states the negative political consequences if they are in disarray.

With the advent of correlative thinking in the Han dynasty, the disarray of the five notes was further understood to connote the disarray of the five elements. And this disarray signified

\[\text{Translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.2b.}\]
\[\text{Shiji, SBBY edition, juan 5.a.}\]
that heaven and earth were not in harmony. Disarray could have been perceived as a threat to the political rule.\textsuperscript{21} But disorderly music may have been an aesthetic of transformation, necessary to the ling’s possession in the \textit{Nine Songs}.

To develop this key point, it is helpful to examine how Zhu Xi refers to music in a related song, “Lord of the East.” Elaborating on the Confucian and possibly normative view that music should be orderly and harmonious, he assumes that the pitch (lù 律) in “Lord of the East” refers to the twelve major pitches discussed in chapter 25 of the \textit{Records of the Grand Historian}, the “\textit{Lùshù 律書}.”\textsuperscript{22} Repeating the sequence of the \textit{Records of the Grand Historian}’s twelve lù, Zhu Xi’s commentary explains that the lù corresponds to the twelve standard pitch pipes of the traditional Chinese scale. He writes: “Lù signifies the twelve pitches: Huangzhong, Dalù, Taicu, Jiazhong, Guxian, Zhonglù, Suibin, Linzhong, Yize, Nanlu, Wuyi, and Yinzhong. The musician uses pitch to harmonize the highs and lows of the five notes” 律謂十二律黃鐘大吕太簇宮林鐘夷南呂無射應鐘也以律和五聲之高下.\textsuperscript{23} Zhu Xi also reiterates passages from the 23rd chapter of the \textit{Rites of Zhou} to clarify the sound of the music.\textsuperscript{24}

Zhu Xi recounts in detail how the correct pitch is achieved in traditional Chinese music, bringing into question the issue of the dating of classical texts, such as the \textit{Records of the Grand Historian}.


\textsuperscript{22}He may also be trying to explain Sima Qian’s correspondences between the 12 pitches and the five notes. \textit{Shiji}, SBBY edition, \textit{juan} 25.

\textsuperscript{23}Zhu Xi, com., \textit{Chuci jizhu}, \textit{juan} 2.12a.

\textsuperscript{24}Sun Yirang, \textit{Zhouli zhengyi}, volume 1, \textit{juan} 23.
Discussion of the Nine Songs

Historian, the Rites of Zhou and the dating of the Elegies of Chu. Lothar von Falkenhausen’s Suspended Time: Chime Bells in Bronze China discusses the bells of the Marquis Yi of Zeng (d. ca. 433 BCE) and how the understanding of early Chinese musical theory is enriched through the epigraphic study of these bells. Most notably, von Falkenhausen explains how the Zeng bells may belong to a Warring States and possibly Chu system of music that differs from the musical system in classical texts, such as the Records of the Grand Historian and the Rites of Zhou. According to the Zeng inscriptions, the nine pitch system corresponds to one and a half octaves and is the intermediary phase in the development of the twelve pitch system. He writes: “By the mid-third century B.C. . . two sets of six [lü] had fused into the set of Twelve Pitch Standards (Shi’er lü) that has been in use ever since.”

If the Nine Songs is the product of the state of Chu from the fourth century then it seems that it may have had more in common with the Zeng musical system. In consideration of von Falkenhausen’s remarks, Zhu Xi’s explication might not be correct in suggesting that the Nine Songs belongs to the musical systems in the Rites of Zhou and the Records of the Grand Historian.

Returning to the discussion of the first song, unlike Wang Yi, Zhu Xi neither alludes to these notes as political metaphors to build on the story of Qu Yuan’s unfair treatment, nor does

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25 Lothar von Falkenhausen, Suspended Music: Chime Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 296.

26 Lothar von Falkenhausen, Suspended Music: Chime Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China, 308
he mention the issue of disarray. Zhu Xi's commentary theorizes instead that the music these five notes generate determines the spirit's contentment. Zhu Xi's commentary avoids the discussion of disorder or disarray as it pertains to music. In the description of the five notes discussed above, he renders fen 分 as abundance, following the traditional interpretation of fen by commentators of the *Nine Songs*. The character fen is comprised of the radical *si* 素, meaning silk, and the character fen 分, meaning to divide, with the original meaning of the character fen being luan or disorder. Why then, if the original meaning is disorder, do Zhu Xi and others ascribe to fen the traditional meaning of abundance? Zhu Xi's explanation of this song and the religious experience in it consistently intimates the importance of music. And yet here he avoids explaining the music to convey ecstatic religious possession. Zhu Xi's comments or lack of comments about disarray and its relationship to the ecstatic religious experience may hint at an underlying conflict. This conflict might have been between the need for disorder to cause ecstatic trance, and the need for order to create harmony and Confucian ritual propriety.

According to Zhu Xi, orderly music might be what enables the ling to lure the deity and make him happy. In denying the meaning of fen as disorder, Zhu Xi's comments resemble previous commentaries.

Zhu Xi's commentary also links the performance of the music with the ling's trance state of possession, concluding how the deity is happy at the end of the ritual: "Jun signifies the spirit of the deity."
with its appearance of appreciation and its peaceful state. This refers to how the preparation of
music is for the delight of the spirit wishing that the spirit appreciates the music in calmness and
peace” 君謂神也，欣欣善貌康安也。此言備樂以樂神而顧神之善樂安寧也。Zhu Xi
identifies the jun here as a metaphor for the spirit.

Zhu Xi’s commentary on the first song, “The Great One—Lord of the East,”
demonstrates how he often broke out of the bounds of Confucian hermeneutics. He
acknowledges the ling’s possession and even attempts to explain that the spirit is the ling who
possesses the wu. He also seems to recognize how the music is related to religious efficacy and
needed to lure the deity down so that it may embody the ling. But Zhu Xi also seems to read the
song and the religious experience of the ling or wu as part of the classical Confucian heritage.
He includes a biographical account that implies how Confucius was aware of how the ling’s
girdle pendants sounded. He mentions the similarity of the beer to the beer in the Rites of Zhou
and identifies the five notes mentioned in the song as the five traditional Chinese notes of the
Records of the Grand Historian. Abiding by the traditional interpretations of fen, he elides the
meaning of disorder, which might contradict his intimation that ling (or wu as he defines it) are
related to Confucian sages. Zhu Xi believes the ling’s experience can be expressed by the
character jing that effectively redefines the trance experience in Zhu’s language.

29 The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.2b.
"Lord in the Clouds"

Unlike the previous song, "Lord in the Clouds" describes the fragmentary details of a ritual that appear to be out of sequence. As before, the religious ecstatic is a female ling. The song begins by noting the preparations of washing and dressing for the ritual performance: "I have bathed in orchid water and washed my hair with perfumes" 穿藤湯兮沐芳. The ritual actor initially purifies her body and perfumes her hair in a manner reminiscent of the way a person prepares for a romantic evening with a lover. Next, the song conveys the apparel of the ritual actors: "And dressed myself like flowers in embroidered clothing" 藥采衣兮若英. Then the song narrates the movements of the ling, who in this song is both the deity and the religious ecstatic: "The ling has halted, swaying above me" 熾連掙兮既留. The ling’s swaying movement is suggestive of the ecstatic frenzy that characterizes the trance state. Elaborating on the state of possession, the song expresses how the swaying transforms the ling’s appearance: "Shining with a persistent radiance / He is going to rest in the House of Life" 燦昭昭兮未央 / 燦將憶兮壽宫. The description of the ling’s appearance changes from being a description of the outer body to a description of the ling’s inner radiance that shines outward.

30David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz 'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a. I have modified this translation as indicated in italics.

31David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz 'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a. I have modified this translation as indicated in italics.

32David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz 'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a. I have modified this translation as indicated in italics.

Discussion of the Nine Songs

This changed appearance points to the onset of trance. In the second part of the couplet, the song links the ling to the “House of Life,” a temple that may have been associated with the immortality cult, and then the song adds another line to accentuate the brightness of the deity: “His brightness is like that of the sun and moon” 與日月兮齊光.34 This final line elaborates on the reason why the ling begins to radiate during the frenzied swaying. She may radiate because she is possessed by the Lord in the Clouds, resembling the Spirit Yu Er in the Classic of Mountains and Waters.

In a somewhat cryptic manner the song then switches from recounting the appearance of the ling, to describing the deity’s actions: “He yokes to his dragon car the steeds of god / Now he flies off to wander round the sky “龍駕兮帝服 / 聊翱游兮周章.”35 The deity holds the reigns of his dragon chariot, leaving the ling to return to the place from where he came. Something appears to be missing, as the text omits how the deity at one moment in the song is possessing the ling and at the next moment is driving his dragon chariot in the sky. I might speculate that this language captures the dual nature of trance. Although the ling (who represents both the deity and the religious ecstatic in trance) appears to be swaying in a frenzy-like state of trance possession, she may also be simultaneously taking a spirit journey with the Lord in the Clouds.


In a disjointed way, the next line of the song returns to reporting how the deity appears while he is possessing the ling. In this instance, the ling refers to both the deity and the possessed religious ecstatic: "The god had just descended in bright majesty" 神皇皇兮既降. Bright majesty is a phrase used to capture how the deity appears as he descends into the body of the ling and how the two are melded together in what seems to be an ecstatic trance state of possession.

As if to confuse the reader, just as the language switches to describe the deity's descent, it then notes the deity's exit from the earthly realm and his return to the land of the immortals.

"When off in a whirl he soared again, far into the clouds / He looks down on Chi-chou and the lands beyond it / There is no place in the world that he does not pass over" 猟逸舉兮雲中 / 覽冀州兮有餘 / 横四海兮焉窮. Again, the language superficially vacillates between developing the appearance of the ling while she is entranced by the bright deity, and conveying the appearance of the deity as he roams in an unseen realm.

The final two lines add a tone of sadness to the song: "I think of my lord with a heavy sigh / and sad thoughts trouble my heart very sorely" 思夫君兮太息 / 極勞心兮."  

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36David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBY edition, juan 2.4b.

37David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBY edition, juan 2.4b.

38David Hawkes, trans., Ch' u Tz'u: 'The Songs of the South', 37. Chuci buzhu, SBY edition, juan 2.5a.
After the Lord in the Clouds has left, the ling expresses her sadness. She sighs and her heart is troubled.

A few tentative conclusions may be drawn about this song, describing how a ling is lovestruck by the deity and how the ling's love for the deity is not returned. In the erratic narrative of the song, one couplet alludes to the ling and deity in ecstatic trance and another couplet portrays the deity in the sky. There is no discernible beginning and end to the description of the ritual; rather there are only jumbled fragments of a ritual. But these fragments may convey ecstatic religious ideas, such as when the ling becomes possessed by the descending spirit, she glows. Brightness or illumination is ostensibly a large part of the vocabulary of ecstatic religious experience and an important aesthetic of transformation.

Commentary

Zhu Xi infers from the song that it is about a minister who reveres his lord, de-emphasizing ecstasy in order to communicate the importance of ritual propriety.³⁹ Where the opening lines of the song detail the flowers, water purification, and the wearing of the flower coloured robe for the rite,⁴⁰ Wang Yi explains how these are preparations made by the ling (which he defines as a wu), during a sacrificial rite to the Spirit of the Clouds.⁴¹

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³⁹Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.3b.

⁴⁰Waters provides extensive notes for the political significance of the flower-coloured robe. Geoffrey R. Waters, Three Elegies of Ch'u: An Introduction to the Traditional Interpretation of the Ch' u Tz'u, 92–3.

⁴¹Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a.
Wang Yi and Zhu Xi both remark on how brightness refers to the deity, with Wang Yi explaining that the brightness indicates the high position. Wang Yi also notes how the spirit descends to partake of the offerings and then when he is full and happy he immediately ascends. In addition, he explains the abruptness of the Cloud Spirit’s movements in the song, noting that the phrase "zhouhang" is really "zhouliu" 周流, or to roam everywhere without limit, which indicates the whimsical nature of the spirit. In one instant the spirit is possessing the ling and in the next instant the spirit is wandering in the sky. Zhu Xi repeats Wang Yi’s comments that the song is related to a sacrificial rite of the House of Life cult. He also notes how these sacrificial rites originated with Emperor Wu of the Han.

Political allegory comes to the foreground in exegesis on the last few lines of the song. It begins with a comment on the Cloud spirit’s gaze to the Jizhou, a veiled reference to the sage king Yao and Qu Yuan. Wang Yi continues his political interpretation in comments on the final two couplets, writing how Qu Yuan is the man who thinks of his lord and sighs when he gazes into the sky. Zhu Xi adds that the ritual is being performed in accordance with the rules of ritual propriety outlined in the Record of Rites and in contrast to Wang Yi, notes how jun refers to the spirit, and not to the lord. Once more, Zhu Xi is reticent to embrace an entirely political reading of the song.

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42 Chu ci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.4a.
43 Zhu Xi, com., Chu ci jizhu, juan 2.3a.
44 Zhu Xi, com., Chu ci jizhu, juan 2.3b.
“Lady of the Xiang”

“Lady of the Xiang” reiterates a familiar theme in the Nine Songs, depicting a female goddess with whom the ling is in love but who fails to possess him. The song begins with the couplet: “The Child of God, descending the northern bank / Turns on me her eyes that are dark with longing” 帝子降兮北渚 / 目眇眇兮愁予. The opening couplet tells how the goddess (or Child of God) gazes lustfully at the ling from a distant shore. It then explains how her arrival has changed the natural environment: “Gently the wind of autumn whispers / On the waves of the Tung-t’ing lake the leaves are falling” 媵嫵兮秋風 / 洞庭波兮木葉下. As she descends, turbulent winds cause her to waver in flight and disturb the surface of the mythical Dong Ting Lake. The following lines suggest how the Goddess’s arrival has transmogrified the natural environment: “Over the white sedge I gaze out wildly / For a tryst is made to meet my love this evening / But why should the birds gather in the duckweed / And what are the nets doing in the tree-tops / The Yüan has its angelicas, the Li has its orchids” 白琲兮聘望 / 與佳期兮夕張 / 鳥萃兮蘋中 / 與何為兮木上 / 沅有苣兮醴有蘭. He is supposed to meet the goddess that evening and yet all he sees are birds amidst the grasses, and duckweed and fish nets suspended from trees.


The ling becomes more distraught as he waits for the goddess, seeing deer in the courtyard and water dragons on the land: “And I think of my lady, but dare not tell it / As with trembling heart I gaze on the distance / Over the swiftly moving waters / What are the deer doing in the courtyard / Or the water-dragons outside the waters” 思公子兮未敢言/ 荒忽兮遠望/ 溯流水兮潺湲/ 禽何食兮庭中/ 蛟何為兮水裔.48 While he is waiting and watching for the goddess to appear, the ling notices how birds, fish, mammals and reptiles are not in the places they should be. Like him, these creatures are out of place.

Later on, the ling recounts how he goes in search of the goddess: “In the morning I drive my steeds by the river / In the evening I cross to the western shore / I can hear my beloved calling to me / I will ride aloft and race beside her” 朝馳余馬兮江皋/ 夕濟兮西澗/ 閨佳人兮召子/ 將騰駕兮偕逝.49 Passing by the river and the shoreline where she once appeared, he imagines the goddess calling out to him.

In great detail, the ling tells about the materials he will use to create their home together in the water:

I will build her a house within the water / Roofed all over with lotus leaves / With walls of iris, of purple shells the chamber / Perfumed pepper shall make the hall / With beams of cassia, orchid rafters / Lily lintel, a bower of peonies / With woven fig-leaves for the hangings / And melilotus to make a screen / Weights of white jade to hold the mats with /


Stone-orchids strewn to make the floor sweet / A room of lotus thatched with the white flag / Shall all be bound up with stalks of asarum / A thousand sweet flowers shall fill the courtyard / And rarest perfumes shall fill the gates” 筇室兮水中／葺之兮荷蓋／築壁兮紫壇／祝芳椒兮成堂／桂棲兮蘭木寮／辛夷椒兮葦房／岡薜荔兮為帷／辨蕙幃兮張／白玉兮為鎮／疏石蘭兮為芳／芷茸兮荷屋／繚之兮杜蘅／合百草兮寶庭／建馨兮廁門。50

The ling’s frustration grows as he waits for the Goddess to approach him: “The hosts of the Chiu I come to meet her / Like clouds in number the spirits come thronging / ‘I’ll throw my thumb-ring into the river / Leave my thimble in the bay of the Li / Sweet pollia I’ve plucked in the little islet / To send to my far-away Beloved / Oh, rarely, rarely the time is given / And I wish I could sport but a little longer” 九嶷縹兮並迎／靈之來兮如雲／捐余袂兮江中／遺余襟兮醴浦／搴汀洲兮杜若／將以遺兮遠者／時不可兮驅得／聊逍遙兮容與。51 Noting how the goddess remains in the distance accompanied by other spirits, he then tells the goddess that he will cast his ring, possibly a symbol of commitment to the Goddess, into the water. In the end, he laments how he is not able to be with the goddess.

Commentary

Zhu Xi and other commentators are interested in how the song links the ling to northern Chinese mythology. Focussing on the identity of the deity, Zhu Xi significantly expands Wang


- 148 -
Yi’s comments: “Dizi signifies the goddess Xiang Furen, the second daughter of Yao. Nü Ying is Shun’s second wife. Han [Xiang]zi regarded Empress E as his legal wife . . .” Zhu Xi writes at length how the deity is associated with the ancient sage kings Yao and Shun and is related to Hanzi or Han Xiangzi, Nu Ying and Empress E. Zhu Xi’s attention to the ancestry of the deity tells of his desire to relate the religious ecstatic performers of the *Nine Songs* with Chinese sage kings.

Zhu Xi recognizes the strange description of the landscape in the song when the ling is supposed to meet the goddess, explaining how the autumn grasses and fish nets are indicative of the fleeting union between the *ling* and his lover:

These are descriptions and similes. The duckweed is an autumn grass, growing nowadays all over the lake and marsh regions of the south, resembling *suo* but it is larger and it is the wild goose’s food . . . In water filled with duckweed, the two things, grass snares and fish traps, will not work so this is used as a simile for a place that is wide open to the setting sun where a deity would not reside and so certainly would not come there.

In this passage, Zhu Xi interprets the grass snares as lures for the wild goose to descend. Presumably, the traps are also meant to catch fish. He suggests that these lures do not work because they are in the wrong places. Duckweed and the fish traps are similes for the *ling*, and like these inadequate means of ensnaring birds and fish, the *ling* does not have the means to lure...
the goddess down to possess him. As a result, when the ling gazes out to search for the deity, all
that he sees is a projection of his own inadequacy. Zhu Xi may be expressing how he
understands that ling are in love with the deities they serve.

Later on, Zhu Xi interprets what the gongzi means, expanding Wang Yi’s pithy
definitions of gongzi, as Xiang Furen to note how gongzi refers not only to the deity but also to
Emperor Qin and his children. As if the definition is still not sufficient, Zhu Xi goes on to
explain that gong signifies the disposition of ancient men.\textsuperscript{54}

Zhu Xi continues to describe in detail what si 思, or to think, means.\textsuperscript{55} Si suggests respect
for the goddess and the river she represents, with Zhu Xi’s use of the character zun, or respect,
being close to his use of reverence in “Great One—Lord of the East.” Ling and sage kings may
regard deities in the same way.

Zhu Xi renders the courtyard bursting with white grasses as the gifts to an important
political figure that have been placed in the audience chamber. He explains that the
accumulation of the sweet fragrance alludes to how the doors to the corridor have been left open:
“One gathers the blossoms of all sorts of plants in order to fill the courtyard and use these
accumulated fragrances and scents to envelope the gates” 皇百草之花以實庭中積芳馨以廸其
門也.\textsuperscript{56} These explanations are political allegory.

\textsuperscript{54}Zhu Xi, com., \textit{Chuci jizhu, juan} 2.6b.
\textsuperscript{55}Zhu Xi, com., \textit{Chuci jizhu, juan} 2.6b.
\textsuperscript{56}The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., \textit{Chuci jizhu, juan} 2.8a.
A later part of the song mentions Jiuyi Mountain and how the spirits resemble clouds. Like Wang Yi, Zhu Xi elaborates on the cloud imagery of arriving spirits, in this song defined by the character ling. He tells how this image describes how the ancient sage king Shun was able to conjure the spirits from the Jiuyi Mountain, writing: “The name of Jiuyi Mountain refers to the place where Shun is buried. This passage describes how Shun sent the spirits of Jiuyi Mountain in a dazzling array to welcome his two brides and the hosts of other spirits trailed them like clouds” 九嶷山名舜所葬也。言舜使九嶷山神纍然來迎二妃而眾神從之如雲也。\(^57\)

By highlighting Shun’s ability to control spirits, Zhu Xi indirectly suggests that the sage king Shun is like religious ecstacies.

“Greater Master of Fate”

The song “Greater Master of Fate” does not record a full ritual and contains no direct reference to the ling; although the ling’s presence in the song is implied. The underlying theme of the song appears to be the early idea of how the transformation of yin and yang is controlled by the Master of Fate. Yin and yang in this context may convey basic ideas of lightness and darkness and pre-date later Han dynasty correlative cosmology and Song dynasty yin-yang theory.

The song opens with an announcement that the spirit journey is beginning: “Open wide the door of heaven / On a black cloud I ride in splendour / Bidding the whirlwind drive before me / Causing the rainstorm to lay the dust” 廣開兮天門 / 紛吾乘兮玄雲 / 令飄風兮先驅 / 使漿

\(^57\)The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.8a.
By recounting past journeys in the spirit world, the ling establishes how she has a relationship with the deity. During her travels with the deity, she has noticed how the journey has changed the ordinary world, stirring the dust and creating rain.

The next few lines of the song develop a clearer image of the spirit journey: “In sweeping circles my lord is descending / Let me follow you over the K’ung-sang mountain’ / See the teeming peoples of the Nine Lands / ‘What is the span of man’s life to me?” 君迴翔兮下游 / 踏空桑兮從女 / 紛總總兮九州 / 何壽天兮在予。 She tells the deity how she wants to accompany him to Kongsang 空桑 mountain and imagines the people she will see as she flies through the sky. In the final line of this section, the ling muses about the span of man’s life, reminding the reader that the deity controls human fate. As she travels with the deity, she too begins to influence the fluctuations of yin and yang: “Flying aloft, he soars serenely / Riding the pure vapour, guiding yin and yang / Speedily, lord, I will go with you / Conducting High God on his way to Chiu Kang” 高飛兮安翔 / 乘清氣兮御陰陽 / 吾與君兮齊速 / 導帝之兮九坑。 During the ecstatic flight, the ling feels as if she is yoking the forces of yin and yang. Eventually the ling and the deity arrive in Jiugang—the land of the immortals.

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The song then portrays the image of the deity and the ling as they fly through the clouds:

“My cloud-coat hangs in billowing folds / My jade girdle-pendants dangle low / A yin and a yang, a yin and a yang / None of the common folk know what I am doing.”

As they fly, both the ling’s and the deity’s clothing flap in the wind and the ling remarks how she is aware that their flight is affecting yin and yang. Like the ling in the first song, the ling in this song wears a belt of jade pendants.

Suddenly, the spirit journey is over and the ling is troubled: “I have plucked the glistening flower of the Holy Hemp / To give to one who lives far away / Old age already has crept upon me / I am no longer near him, fast growing a stranger”

She gathers flowers and hemp to give to him and realizes that he lives far away.

When the journey ends, the ling remembers the dramatic way that he left: “He drives his dragon chariot with thunder of wheels / High up he rides, careening heavenwards / But I stand where I am, twisting a spray of cassia / The longing for him pains my heart”

A dragon pulls the deity’s chariot back

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up into the sky and away from the \textit{ling}. Overcome with emotion, she watches him leave and disappear into the sky.

In the final four couplets of the song, the female \textit{ling} laments the loss of the deity and her spirit journey with him: "It pains my heart, but what can I do / I only wish the present could always stay the same / But all man's life is fated / Its meetings and partings not his to arrange" The \textit{ling} accepts that she is a human being and is bound by fate but she wishes her time with the deity had been longer.

\textit{Commentary}

Wang Yi's comments are brief, describing the sound of the characters and elaborating on the general meaning of the first two couplets. They also interpret the \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} of the song in the context of Han correlative thinking. In contrast, Zhu Xi interprets the song according to later Song dynasty philosophical developments in \textit{yin-yang} theory. Noting how the Greater Master of Fate causes rain that stirs up the dust, Zhu Xi's commentary begins in the second couplet. After elaborating on the pronunciation of characters in the manner of Wang Yi, his commentary develops the latent meaning of the song. It explains that Shangdi, the most powerful deity, lives beyond the doors of heaven, which are tinged with purple and open so that the spirit can descend.\textsuperscript{64} Zhu Xi continues to explain that the spirit is associated with \textit{yang} and that the rain and dust are indications that the deity has descended.


\textsuperscript{65}Zhu Xi, com., \textit{Chuci jizhu}, \textit{juan} 2.8b.
Discussion of the Nine Songs

Where the song mentions yin and yang, Wang Yi interprets yin as representing death and yang as representing life. Zhu Xi goes further, saying that yin and yang in the song refer to yin-yang interplay and mutual transformation. Later in the same passage, Zhu Xi cites a reference in the Rites of Zhou to explain the location of Jiugeng. In the appended explanation of the song title, he mentions the Rites of Zhou a second time, for its reference to the rituals performed for the Greater Master of Fate.

Even though the song alludes to a spirit journey of the ling, both Wang Yi and Zhu focus on the significance of yin and yang. In this way, both commentators appear to take the song out of its ecstatic religious context. According to them, the song may be about how human beings can understand life and death in an orderly and this-worldly manner, mediated by yin and yang.

“River Earl”

Evoking a more compassionate image than the account in the Records of the Grand Historian, the song “River Earl” recounts a female ling’s spirit journey with the male river deity:

I wander with you by the Nine Mouths of the river / When the storm wind rises and lashes up the waves / I ride a water chariot with a canopy of lotus / Two dragons draw it, between two water-serpents / I climb the K’un-lun mountain and look over the four quarters / And my heart leaps up in me, beating wildly. 69

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66 Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.9a.
67 Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.9a.
68 Zhouli zhengyi, volume 1, juan 34, 37–8.
At first, the ling travels through the river in a water chariot decorated with lotus flowers and
drawn by two dragons and two water-serpents. Animal imagery in this song may be aesthetics of
transformation used to convey how the ling has been transformed during a spirit journey.
Turtles, water serpents, and dragons in the “River Earl” carry the ling in the spirit world. This
contrasts with the animal imagery in the Classic of Mountains and Waters that was blended with
human attributes to create hybrids.

The description of the journey changes to narrate how she climbs Kunlun mountain,
leaving the water to travel by herself. While she is on Kunlun mountain, she looks out in all
directions. Accentuating how the song is referring to events experienced beyond the ordinary
physical realm, and the strictures of time and space, the next portion of the song announces the
ling’s realization that her spirit journey is coming to an end:

Though the day will soon end, I forget to go in my pleasure / Longingly I look back to
that distant shore / Of fish-scales is my palace, with a dragon-scale hall / Purple cowrie
gate-towers; rooms of pearl / And what does the god do, down there in the water 日將暮
兮懷忘歸 / 惟極浦兮離懷 / 魚鱗屋兮龍堂 / 紫貝闕兮朱宮 / 靈何為兮水中。^0

Possibly, she has been in a trance and because of this she has forgotten that she has to leave. As
she regains consciousness, she looks back at the distant shore, a reference to the boundary
between this world and the world she has just left.

^9David Hawkes, trans., Ch’u Tzu: ‘The Songs of the South’, 42. Chuci buzhu, SBBY
edition, juan 2.18a–18b.

^0David Hawkes, trans., Ch’u Tzu: ‘The Songs of the South’, 42. Chuci buzhu, SBBY
edition, juan 2.18b–19a.
The last section of the song details how she left the River Earl:

Riding a white turtle, he chases spotted fishes / Let me play with you among the river’s islets / While the swollen waters come rushing on their way / Eastward you journey, with hands stately-folded / Bearing your fair bride to the southern harbour / The waves come racing up to meet me / And shoals of fishes are my bridal train

Narrating how the River Earl spends his leisure time riding turtles and playing with fishes, the ling admits she would like to remain with him. But she concedes that this is not possible and describes how he escorts her back to the shore. Then she disclose that she is the happy bride of the River Earl, returning to the shore a married woman.

Commentary

Zhu Xi’s commentary on the “River Earl” focusses on the deity’s origin in northern Chinese mythology but it does not probe the ecstatic religious relationship between the ling and the deity. Following standard commentaries of the song, he depicts the ling as the bride of the River Earl from Chinese mythology, discussing how the yellow river was related to the four rivers and the eight branches. He writes: “This river’s original way was to go out of the east and divide into eight branches” 73 These eight branches are the same


72 In the previous chapter, I discussed the custom in which wu were offered as brides to the River Earl.

73 The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.13a.
eight heavenly directions that are recounted in the *Record of Rites*; although Zhu Xi does not explicitly mention the *Record of Rites*. Once more, Zhu Xi may be attempting to find similarities between the *Nine Songs* and classical Confucian texts. The dating of both the *Elegies of Chu* and the *Record of Rites* is uncertain, however. And perhaps it is the *Elegies of Chu* that provides the material for the *Record of Rites* authorship. If this is the case, then similarities between the *Record of Rites* and the *Elegies of Chu* may have more to say about the Chu influences on the *Record of Rites* than the Confucian influences on the *Elegies of Chu*.

Zhu Xi presents an interesting reading of the second-to-last couplet of the song that reads:

“'Zi signifies He bo who holds hands. Ancient men escorted others and then held hands so to express they could not bear the thought of being parted’ 子謂河伯交手者。古人將別則相執手以見不忍相遠之意.” For Zhu Xi, these ancient sages were ideals of human perfection and virtue, and in this passage he takes the simple gesture of holding hands and makes it a metaphor for the behaviour of ancient sage kings when they escorted their lovers home.

Zhu Xi’s assessment of the “River Earl” affirms that it is about a spirit journey taken by a ling. Through an indirect comparison to the *Record of Rites*, he deduces that the ling’s travels may not be to a foreign place and might refer to the distant locations found in northern Chinese mythology: the nine rivers, Kunlun mountain; and the four seas. Alluding to the similarities between these places and the eight branches, Zhu Xi even goes so far as to connect the holding

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74The translation is my own. Zhu Xi, com., *Chuci jizhu, juan* 2.13b.
of hands with men of antiquity. I argue that all this may be done in an effort to include the *Nine Songs* within the fold of Confucian learning.

**“Mountain Goddess”**

“Mountain Goddess” expresses a male *ling*’s yearning for a female deity.\(^7\) This deity was an apotheosized female *wu*, who practiced on *wu* mountain (*wushan*);\(^7\) Some scholars have suggested that the Mountain Goddess may have been associated with fertility rituals or was a symbol of the sexual allure of divine spirits.\(^7\)

The song opens by setting the scene: “There seems to be someone in the fold of the mountain / In a coat of fig-leaves with a rabbit-floss girdle” 若有人兮山之阿 / 被薜荔兮带女萝.\(^7\) Dressed in animal skins and leaves and hidden in a mountain crevice, the *ling* waits for the

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\(^7\) Masks, in the likeness of the Mountain Goddess found in the Yuan 沅 and Xiang 湘 river regions, depict her as a beastly creature, suggesting that the goddess may have developed out of early animistic cults. See Lin He 林河, *Jiuge yu Yuan Xiang minsu* 九歌與沅湘民俗 (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian, 1990), 244–5. For other interpretations of the gender and identity of “Shan Gui” see Qian Yuzhi 錢玉趾, “*Shan Gui: Jiuge zhong de fuxin Han: Yun Zhongjun, He Bo, Shan Gui de quan xinpoujie ji fanyi* 山鬼九歌中的負心漢雲中君何伯山鬼的全般剖解及翻譯,” *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao: zhexue shehui kexue ban* 西南民族學院學報: 哲學社會科學版 20, no. 1 (January 1999), 86–8.


goddess to appear. The following lines of the song tell how he imagines what the goddess looks like:

With eyes that hold laughter and a smile of pearly brightness / ‘Lady, your allurements show that you desire me’ / Driving tawny leopards, leading the striped lynxes / A car of lily-magnolia with banner of woven cassia / Her cloak of stone-orchids, her belt of

Wearing a costume of flowers, the goddess is a happy deity who flirts with the ling. Like other deities she travels in a richly decorated carriage pulled by strange creatures.

In this song, there is the suggestion that the goddess also yearns to be with the ling: “She gathers sweet scents to give to one she loves / I am in the dense bamboo grove, which never sees the sunlight” "That I yearn to meet / A place of gloomy shadow, dark even in the daytime / Solitary she stands, upon the mountain’s summit / So steep and hard the way is, that I shall be late / The clouds’ dense masses begin below me / When the east wind blows up, the goddess sends down her showers / Dallying with the Fair One, I forget about returning / What flowers can I deck

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myself with, so late in the year 路險難兮獨後來 / 表獨立兮山之上 / 雲容容兮而在下 / 
杳冥冥兮羌晝晦 / 東風飄兮神靈雨 / 留靈脩兮殤忘歸 / 歲既晏兮孰菹子。80

The song describes how the goddess waits in the darkness for the ling to arrive. But the ling is late. The east wind blows as the goddess flies away, disturbing the clouds and causing rain to fall.81

The ling remarks how when he is with the beautiful goddess82 he forgets to return, using the language of religious ecstacies to express how she may have possessed him in the past.

Contrasting the descriptions of light in the song “Lord in the Clouds” that convey religious possession, in this song, descriptions of darkness may signify the failed possession of the ling by the deity.

The ling expresses his sadness over his failed meeting with the goddess and pines for the goddess after she has gone:

I shall pluck the ‘thrice flowering herb’ among the mountains / The arrowroot spreads creeping over the piled-up boulders / Sorrowing for my lady, I forget that I must go / My lady thinks of me, but she has no time to come / The lady of the mountains is fragrant with pollia / She drinks from the rocky spring and shelters beneath the pine trees 采三秀


81In the song “Greater Master of Fate” the ling’s travels with the deity disturbed the clouds and caused rain.

82Hawkes observes how beauty is an important attribute of the Mountain Goddess in his description of the shared characters lingxiu 靈脩, which he defines as the “fair one.” See David Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess,” Asia Major 13 (1967): 71–94.
While he searches for the goddess, he picks flowers in the hills where she once appeared to him, admonishing her for her lengthy absence. The final portion of the song conveys how the ling tries to understand why the goddess has not reappeared: “My lady thinks of me, but she holds back, uncertain / The thunder rumbles, rain darkens the sky / The monkeys chatter; apes scream in the night / The wind soughs sadly and the trees rustle / I think of my lady and stand alone in sadness.” As he lingers on top of the mountain, he hears the thunder and rain, animals and the wind in the trees. But he does not see the goddess.

Commentary

Wang Yi indirectly notes how the goddess is a metaphor for King Huai 懷王, whom Qu Yuan served. Qu Yuan is the ling who gathers flowers to honour his lord, even though he has been mistreated. Political allegory expresses the complexity of Qu Yuan’s feelings: he longs to be with, or linger with, the lord and yet at the same time he feels resentment toward him because he failed to notice his loyalty and excellent service.

In another work, Zhu Xi comments that political allegory cannot be used to explain the

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83 David Hawkes, trans., Ch'u Tz 'u: 'The Songs of the South’, 43. Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.21a-21b.


85 Chuci buzhu, SBBY edition, juan 2.20b.
song, “Mountain Goddess”: “Coming to the ‘Mountain Goddess’ section, one cannot take the
Sovereign ruler to be the Mountain Goddess, and on the contrary should say that it means the
Mountain Goddess wishes to achieve intimacy but cannot get it...” 至鬼篇, 不可以君為山鬼,
又倒說山鬼欲親人而不可得之意... 86 Zhu Xi may be reluctant to acknowledge that the
Mountain Goddess is a political trope or even a deity worthy of worship when he calls the
Goddess yin. 87 By calling the goddess yin, Zhu Xi’s commentary on the song inadvertently
marginalizes the deity, resembling pejorative comments made in the New Tang History (Xin
Tangshu 新唐書) that the worship of the goddess was a licentious local custom. 88

“Homage to the State” (Guo shang 国殤)

Most scholars agree that the song “Homage to the State” describes the events leading up
to and after a battle with another state. Some have suggested that this state may have been Qin
秦—the state that eventually overtook Chu in battle. 89 Yet there are other interpretations,

86 The translation is my own. Zhu Xi 朱熹, Zhu ci yulei 朱子語類, Li Jingde 黎靖德 (fl.
1263-1270) ed. (Yingyuan shuyuan, 1872), juan 139.1a.
87 See Zhu Xi’s comments on this song that the goddess is yin, which is a description 賦
88 The New Tang History contains an anecdote about licentious rituals to the Mountain
goddess and explains how people are tiring of them. Xin Tangshu 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua,
1975), juan 200, 5719.
89 Lin He, Jiuge yu Yuan Xiang minzu, 262–3. See also Qian Yuzhi 錢玉趾,
“Donghuang Taiyi, Dong Jun, Guo Shang, Li Hun’ de poujie yu jinyi 東皇太—東君國殤禮魂的
剖解與今譯,” Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao: zhexue shehui kexue ban 西南民族學院學報: 哲學
including one that avers the song is about an early tribal ritual to the God of War (Chiyou蚩尤).  

In this song, *ling* has the meaning of souls, and not religious ecstacies. The song begins by describing how the soldiers appeared as they left for battle and the ensuing battle in which they fought: "Grasping our great shields and wearing our hide armour / Wheel-hub to wheel-hub locked, we battle hand to hand" 操吴戈兮被犀甲 / 車錯轂兮短兵接. As the song continues, it seems that the Chu soldiers and their armour are no match for their opponents. Like clouds in the sky, the enemy seems to be everywhere: "Our banners darken the sky; the enemy teem like clouds / Through the hail of arrows the warriors press forward / They dash on our lines; they trample our ranks down / The left horse has fallen, the right one is wounded" 褪豧日兮敵若雲 / 矢交墜兮士爭先 / 凌余陣兮躐余行 / 左騕殪兮右刃傷. The song recounts the battle scene as arrows fly and horses fall wounded. The enemy is winning.   

When the warriors realize the battle is over, they beat the drum: "Bury the wheels in, tie up the horses / Seize the jade drumstick and beat the sounding drum / The time is against us: the gods are angry / Now all lie dead, left on the field of battle" 震兩輪兮繁四馬 / 援玉枹兮擊鳴

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Discussion of the Nine Songs

There is the hint that the outcome of the battle has been divinely influenced and the gods have not been on their side.

Final couplets in the song depict the warriors who travelled to another state in battle and never returned: "They went out never more to return / Far, far away they lie, on the level plain" Celebrating the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in battle and became heroes, the song tells how their bodies may have ceased to exist but their souls remain intact:

Their long swords at their belts, clasping their elmwood bows / Head from body sundered: but their hearts could not be vanquished / Both truly brave, and also truly noble / Strong to the last, they could not be dishonoured / Their bodies may have died, but their souls are living / Heroes among the shades their valiant souls will be 帶長劍兮挾秦弓 / 首身離兮心不憤 / 誠既勇兮又以武 / 終剛強兮不可凌 / 身既死兮神以靈之 / 魂魄毅兮為鬼雄."95

Commentary

Commentaries have emphasized the significance of the terms hun 魂 and po 魄 in the song.96 Wang Yi comments on the contrast between the dead soldiers and hun and po, being the two components of the human soul. Zhu Xi adds to Wang Yi’s interpretation, using a reference

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Discussion of the Nine Songs

from the Zuo commentary to note how the hun and po souls are part of yin and yang dualistic philosophy. Both of the soul components exist beyond death, with hun resembling qi 氣 and yang 陽, and po resembling jing 精 and yin 陰.97 Zhu Xi goes on to explain the common belief that the two souls are commonly thought to mix together during life and then separate at death. Hun rises and dissipates because it is associated with qi, and po falls and returns to the earth because it is associated with jing.98

"Rites for the soul" (Li Hun 禮魂)

The final song in the corpus continues the discussion of the soul and summarizes the way each of the preceding songs has been performed. Stephen Owen refers to this song as a coda on the ritual itself.99 Lin Huaimin follows the interpretation that all the songs were part of a ritual cycle of songs that was performed in honour of those who died for their country in battle, with


97Kenneth Brashier discusses the early Chinese understanding of souls, arguing that a belief in the division of the souls after death may not have existed in early China. Rather, it was a later development in Chinese thinking. K. E. Brashier, "Han Thanatology and the Division of 'Souls,'" Early China 21 (1996): 125–58. Lothar von Falkenhausen concurs, stating that the two soul theory may not have been present in the Western Zhou dynasty. Lothar von Falkenhausen, "Sources of Taoism: Reflections on Archaeological Indicators of Religious Change in Eastern Zhou Ching," Taoist Resources 5, no. 2 (1994): 4.

98Another song in the Elegies of Chu anthology, "Summoning the Soul" (Zhaojun 招魂), describes how a ling 伶 is instructed to summon a soul back from the dead. The ling presumably enters trance and attempts to lure the soul back to its homeland. Promising a lavish party when the soul returns, the ling describes the fierce creatures inhabiting the foreign territory. Zhu Xi, com., Chuci jizhu, juan 2.16b.
this song being the most important. In contrast, some suspect that when the *Nine Songs* was performed, "Rites for the Soul" was omitted.100

The song opens by stating the role drums have played in every song: "The rites are accomplished to the beating of the drums" 成禮兮會鼓.101 Flowers and dancers have also been important in these performances: "The flower-wand is passed on to succeeding dancers" 傳花兮代舞.102 Choruses of women sing the song in the rituals: "Lovely maidens sing their songs, slow and solemnly" 嬌女倡兮容與.103 Finally, the song tells how the preceding cycle of rituals has not been performed just this one time: "Orchids in spring and chrysanthemums in autumn / So it shall go on until the end of time" 春蘭兮秋菊 / 長無絕兮終古.104 The *Nine Songs* is an ongoing ceremony that re-occurs as regularly as the flowers that bloom in spring and autumn.

**Commentary**

Owing to the song's brevity, scholarly exegesis on it is scant. Wang Yi's commentary on the song tells how it recounts rituals to the nine deities mentioned in the preceding songs. He

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100Lin He, *Jiuge yu Yuan Xiang minsu*, 253.


Discussion of the *Nine Songs*

also corrects the reader’s understanding of the song, saying that the performers in the song are young boys and little girls: “The lovely appearance refers to sending young boys and pretty girls out to sing and dance first” 娉好貌謂使童稚好女先倡而舞. The revision provided by Wang Yi foreshadows the next chapter’s discussion, in which I examine the key role of boys and girls (called tongtong and tongzi) in the transition from religious to theatrical performance. Zhu Xi overlooks the revision by Wang Yi and simply explains that women, presumably wu, sing and dance.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to discern Zhu Xi’s specific ideas about religious ecstatic performance. By comparing Zhu Xi’s comments to the comments of Wang Yi and others, I have concentrated on portions of Zhu Xi’s commentary that either conformed to the standard commentary of Wang Yi or strayed from it in meaningful ways. It may be significant that these songs are supposedly remnants of the Chu religious ecstatic beliefs, and may not have emerged from the Confucian tradition. Many of the ritual practices in the *Nine Songs* might have conflicted with Confucian ideology, for example: the sexual relationship between the ling and the god or the goddess; the evocative dancing; and the frenzied music. Yet by defining the ling as a wu, Zhu Xi and Wang Yi suggested that religious ecstastics in the State of Chu were related to the wu of early Chinese texts, and possibly the Confucian tradition.

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106 Zhu Xi, *com.*, *Chuci jizhu*, *juan* 2.16b.
To strengthen his argument that religious ecstacies in the *Nine Songs* and in Chinese texts were the same types of performers, Zhu Xi noted the similar origin of the deities in Chinese mythology and how the rituals were like the ones recorded in Chinese texts. In “Great One—Lord of the East,” he noted the similarity of beer to that same beverage in the *Rites of Zhou*. He also cited the five notes from the *Records of the Grand Historian* to describe the song’s five notes and the “Kongzi Shijia” chapter from the same text to explain how the music sounded. In “Lord of the East” the lü was mentioned only once but Zhu Xi at length described it, listing the twelve pitch standards in the order they appeared in the *Records of the Grand Historian* and then borrowed lines from the *Rites of Zhou* to note how the music sounded. And in “River Earl,” Zhu Xi gave significance to the eight branches referred to in the *Record of Rites*.

Like Zhu Xi’s study of music in the *Classic of Poetry*, his study of the *Nine Songs* gives detailed explanations for musical terms. In “Great One—Lord of the East,” he implied that Confucius was familiar with the sound of dangling pendants during the religious ecstatic’s dance. What Zhu Xi does not say is also interesting. He admits the musical performance has a direct impact on the wu’s trance. Yet he refrains from interpreting the character fen as disorder.

Occasionally I have tried to show how Zhu Xi’s ecstatic religious perspective is not purely Confucian. In his postscript to his preface, and in the songs “Great One—Lord of the East” and “Lady of the Xiang,” Zhu Xi’s interpretation of the characters jing and zun is unconventional. Typically, traditional commentaries acknowledge the religious ecstatic, defining it as a wu, but the ling’s importance is often discounted. It is the tragic retainer Qu
Yuan who often receives the most attention. Zhu Xi’s commentary, however, offers only cursory words about Qu Yuan. I suggest that Zhu Xi uses the Qu Yuan metaphor of respect for his lord to indicate the philosophical reverence of a wu for northern deities. When Zhu Xi remakes the Confucian political metaphor into a philosophical metaphor, I believe he does it with the idea of jing in mind.

**Conclusion of Section 3**

For the past few chapters, I have been returning to the notion of how texts, poetry and commentaries use imagery, metaphors and even simile to convey the role of wu and related religious ecstacies. *Zhuangzi* described religious ecstacies who contrasted with the conservative performance of wu in Confucian and Moist texts, and evoked the aesthetics of transformation in the *Classic of Changes*. It created images of flamboyant ecstatic individuals, who moved beyond rational, physical and political boundaries. The way they moved made them free. *Zhuangzi* may have been consciously creating individuals who were aware of the potential for transformation of themselves and of society. The *Classic of Mountains and Waters* infused ecstatic images from classical texts with transformative qualities, adding more images to represent the hybrid appearance, movement and context of differently named religious ecstatic performers. The incoherence of the text may have been an attempt to express the ineffable nature of ecstasy, and possibly that incoherence saved the text from centuries of scholarly exegesis.

The third section of the dissertation was dedicated to a discussion of the *Nine Songs*. This section offered a chance to observe religious poetry (also called songs) that may have once
Discussion of the Nine Songs

been performed for religious efficacy and later on had been reinvented for court entertainment. Introducing the context of the songs and the commentarial literature, I discussed how the songs may have originally been ecstatic religious rituals performed in the state of Chu. While examining the songs, I referred to the images of light, animals and music that may have been aesthetics of transformation used to convey spirit possession and journeys.

Wang Yi's commentary helped to integrate Han and Chu culture through the story of Qu Yuan, who became a symbol of how elite culture appropriated and controlled local culture. Zhu Xi's commentary deconstructed the ling and its religious ecstatic performance to transform it into a classical textual wu. Instead of accentuating the movement and chaotic elements in the text he cited fragments of order and built his commentary around that element. He also de-emphasized the importance of the aesthetics of transformation as a means of describing the body of the ecstatic individual, and may have intentionally ignored the need for disorderly music in religious ecstatic performance.
Section 4—Ecstatic Religion and Drama

Chapter 6—Drama in China and Taiwan

Previous chapters explored how wu and related ecstacies religiously performed rituals, and how texts and commentaries reflected the adaptation of wu performance. In section four of this dissertation, I propose as a hypothesis that there was a transition from religious to theatrical performances of ritual in China,¹ and that a new type of religious ecstatic, who was possibly related to the Confucian tradition, developed out of that transition.

wu in early religious drama

Most scholarly work that discusses the origin of Chinese theatre begins by noting its origins in Shang and Zhou dynasty ecstatic ritual performance, such as the wu’s harvests rites, rain rituals and dancing, and exorcisms.² During ritual exorcisms, wu wore costumes and danced

¹This transition might be viewed as movement across a spectrum (and not the change from one to the other), showing the link between the religious performance of the wu to later more theatrical performances by actors.

²I note that the relationship between religious ecstacies and early Chinese theatre is assumed even though there is little textual evidence to support it. This relationship is outlined in many studies. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) was the first to link the wu with the development of theatre. See Wang Guowei 王國維, Wangguowei xiju lunwenji 王國維 戲劇論文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1957), 4–6; and Piet van der Loon’s seminal article on the subject: Piet van der Loon, “Les origines rituelles du théâtre chinois,” Journal asiatique 265, nos. 1/2 (1977): 141. See also Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜, Kanji no sekai: Chūgoku bunka no genten 漢字の世界中國文化的原點 (Tókyô: Heibon Sha, Showa, 1976), volume 1, 257–9; Zhou Yude 周育德, Zhongguo xiqu wenhua 中國戲曲文化 (Beijing: Zhongguo youyi, 1996), 12–26; W.A. Dolby, A History of Chinese Drama (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 1–13; and for a discussion of the intellectual history surrounding the relationship between drama and ritual see Chun-chiang Yen, “Problems in the Study of the Origin of Chinese Drama,” in Henry W. Wells,
like animals. In the History of the Later Han, New Year’s ritual exorcisms are performed by religious ecstacies. Piet van der Loon’s seminal discussion of the origins of theatre explains the many ways in which Chinese popular theatre developed out of these ecstatic religious rituals. He points out that contemporary Chinese theatre still incorporates ecstatic religious masked performance, exorcisms and spirit possession.

But Chinese theatre and dramatic performance also developed out of early music and dances documented in Confucian classical texts. The Classic of Poetry contains descriptions of early religious dances. One prominent dance in the Classic of Poetry is the wan dance (wanwu), appearing in the “Airs of the State” (Guofeng) section in a poem called “Easy and Different” (Jian xi 简兮):

Oh, great, great / They are just going to perform the great dance / . . . The tall man is very great / he performs the great dance in the prince’s courtyard / he has strength like a

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4Hou Hanshu, SBBY edition, juan 5.10b. Marcel Granet discusses the importance of the dance of 12 animals representing 12 deities for expelling pestilence. See Marcel Grant, Dances et légendes de la Chine ancienne, 298–337.


The poem elicits that the dance was performed in a formal setting and creates an image of the performer, who moved like a tiger, with one hand holding a flute and the other hand holding a feather. Chen Mengjia notes that the wan dance was another name for the ecstatic dance of the sage king Yu.⁸

In addition to the wan dance, there may be another dance in the Classic of Poetry poem called “Birth of the People” (Sheng min 生民), in which a woman named Jiang Yuan 姜嫄⁹ becomes pregnant when she walks in the footprint of God or di: “stepping in god’s footprint she

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⁸Chen Mengjia, “Shangdai de shenhua yu wushu,” 543.

⁹Edwin Pulleyblank notes how Jiang Yuan was part of the Jiang clan of the Zhou dynasty: “Chiang was the surname of a number of important feudal houses including Ch’i, Lu, Shen, and Xu, but more important, it was the clan from which the principal wives of the Chou kings were regularly chosen. The mother of Hou-chi, the ancestor of Chou, was Chiang Yuan 姜嫄, “Chiang Source,” and later queens seem always to have that surname.” E.G. Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and Their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times,” in David N. Keightley, ed., The Origins of Chinese Civilization (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1983), 420.

Bernhard Karlgren, in the Glosses on the Book of Odes, follows Mao Gong’s interpretation adding that Jiang Yuan was the wife of King Ku 高辛 of the royal Zhou clan Gao Xin 高辛. See Bernhard Karlgren, Glosses on the Odes (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1964), 61.
is glad 履帝武敏歎.” When she walks in the footprint of god she is performing the steps of a ritual mating dance. Wen Yiduo 閻一多 presents, and later retracts, a hypothesis that Jiang Yuan may have been an ordinary woman who participated in a sacrificial ceremony that symbolized a farmer’s tilling of the soil. After the wu and Jiang Yuan danced they had intercourse. Although Wen Yiduo abandons this hypothesis, it may be one possible explanation of the poem, given the important role of the wu in early Chinese sacrifices and ritual.

The ecstatic dance causes Jiang Yuan to become pregnant and almost effortlessly she gives birth to the child Hou Ji 后稷. After she gives birth to Hou Ji, she tries to abandon him in a variety of places. But the child is always saved. While the song praises the divine child for his contributions to agricultural life, it says nothing of the hardship his mother no doubt endured.

However the significance of the ritual acts of “Birth of the People” are explained, it seems likely that the ritual dance was intended to reinforce the importance of establishing an

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10 Maoshi zhengyi, SBBY edition, Sheng min 生民.


12 Ironically, however, in spite of the long historical importance of Jiang and her clan, she is seldom a figure whom history elaborates upon. Rather, it is her illegitimate son who receives all of the historical attention. Any historical Zhou dynasty source usually includes at least one reference to the legendary Hou Ji, referred to variously as the God of Agriculture, the Prince of Millet, or simply Hou Ji. Hou Ji enters the historical stage for the first time in the Shijing. He also reappears in later classical and Confucian texts, such as the Mengzi zhaozhu, jian 5b.2a. Lushi chunqiu, SBBY edition, jian 14.9a, and in the Chunqiu zuozhuan, Wen Gong 文公, 2nd year, Xuan Gong 宣公 3 year, Rang Gong 襄公, 7th year, and Zhao Gong 昭公 9th year.
ecstatic relationship between the deity and Jiang Yuan. The pregnancy reflected transformation on two levels. On the first level she was inwardly transformed into a mother carrying a divine child. On the second level, she represented the means through which Shangdi was able to transplant his child on earth. This child would later teach the Zhou people how to farm.

**Performance by youthful ecstasies before the Han dynasty**

There is evidence that children were revered in early Chinese religion. Hou Ji, the divinely born son of Jiang Yuan, taught the Zhou people how to farm. The *Analects* and *Mencius* referred to Confucian disciples as children and lauded the purity of a child’s mind. The *Daodejing* advised the reader to try to be like a child or uncarved block. Anne Behnke Kinney summarizes the importance of children in early Chinese ideology: “As in the early Chou, in Warring States times we see the image of the precocious child firmly entrenched within legends that celebrate the emergence of a new group of power-holders who are shown displacing (or at least winning the recognition of) an older, more established and at times less morally valid status quo.” Children may have been used in early rituals because they were naive and pure.

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14 See for example, the *Daodejing* 道徳經, SBBY edition, *juan* 28.

creatures to whom spirits were attracted. Moreover, children, unlike religious ecstasies, were possibly easier to control.

Children were sacrificed in early Chinese history in exchange for food, or the promise of a good harvest or hunt, or the end to a drought.\(^{16}\) Even though the \textit{Shuowen jiezi} noted how the \textit{wu} performed ritual rain dancing, children may have predated the \textit{wu}'s performance. Children were important in early rain sacrifices documented in the \textit{Zuo commentary} and the \textit{Record of Rites}\.\(^{17}\) Children, referred to as \textit{tongzi} 童子, also occurred in the \textit{Analects} in an arcane reference: “In late spring, after the spring clothes have been newly made, I should like, together with five or six adults and six or seven boys, to go bathing in the River Yi and enjoy the breeze on the Rain Altar, and then to go home chanting poetry”\(^{18}\) In this reference, the \textit{tongzi} are boys who have not reached maturity and have not been initiated in the capping ceremony. The juxtaposition of the boys with the rain altar may suggest how youths performed ritual rain dancing in the Zhou dynasty.

Later texts provide more evidence that youths performed ritual rain dancing. In the \textit{Discourses weighed in the balance} (\textit{Lun heng} 論衡), Wang Chong 王充 (27–c 100) revises the \textit{Analect}'s reference so that it reads: “adult men and \textit{tongzi} perform a rain dancing ritual to bring


joy to the people” 童者童子雩祭楽人也. In another chapter, Wang Chong explains the similarities between young boys and the wu, relying on yin-yang philosophy: “Boys and wu have the Yang fluid in them, therefore at the great rain sacrifice in summer boys must dance, and the wu are exposed to the sun” 童巫合陽故大雩之祭舞童暴巫. Wu are unstable throughout their lives and it is their instability that enables them to be religious ecstacies. Like wu, young boys are full of yang energy and are also characterized by instability because they are constantly growing and changing. While the tongzi dance for rain in this anecdote, the wu are merely sacrificed to the sun.

Han dynasty developments in Confucian philosophy affected the popularity of youthful performers. Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 “Seeking Rain” (Qiuyu 求雨) chapter in the Luxuriant dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals explains that drought occurred because of the imbalance of yin and yang and ended when yin and yang forces had become balanced. At length, the chapter discussed how during drought wu were burned21 and children performed ritual rain dancing.22 Following the Han dynasty, Dong Zhongshu’s Confucian philosophy continued to influence the way ritual rain dancing was performed.

19The translation is my own. Lun heng 論衡, SBBY edition, juan 15.9b.


22Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露, SBBY edition, juan 6: “Seeking rain” (Qiuyu 求雨).
*Xunzi* 荀子, reputed to be written by Xun Qing 荀卿 (c. 312–238), was most famous for the theory that human beings were by nature evil and only became good when they were controlled by the rules of ritual propriety. *Xunzi*’s new Confucian doctrines accentuated the divisions between the educated and uneducated person, between elite society and local customs and between Confucianism and ecstatic religion. He was the first Chinese scholar to propose a theory about how performance affects people. *Xunzi* also applied his theory to the performance of music and dancing. In his “Discourse on Music” (*Yuelun* 樂論), he discussed the importance of control and order in performance:

> ... How can one understand the spirit of the dance? The eyes cannot see it; the ears cannot hear it. And yet, when all the posturings and movements, all the steps and changes of pace, are ordered and none are lacking in the proper restraint, when all the power of muscle and bone are brought into play, when all is matched exactly to the rhythm of the drums and bells and there is not the slightest awkwardness or discord—there is the spirit of the dance in all its manifold fullness and intensity!... 設以知舞之意? 曰: 目不自見, 耳不自聞也, 然面治俯仰, 訕信, 進退, 遲速, 莫不廉制, 盡筋骨之力, 以要鐘鼓俯會之節, 而難有悖逆者, 畢積意... 23

*Xunzi*’s comments on the proper performance of music and dance were normative, signifying how elite culture wanted to control performance. They also effectively marginalized all

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disorderly dances and discordant music that did not abide by the rules of ritual propriety.

As time progressed, youthful religious ecstatics named tongzi 童子 or tongtong 童童 became important actors on the religious and popular stages.

Wu to tong: The popularization of the wu dramatic performance

The remainder of the chapter examines the ways that religious ecstatics played a role in the development of popular theatre. Undoubtedly, actors and actresses were not always religious ecstatics. But textual references imply that theatre did emerge out of the ecstatic religious tradition. And it seems likely that ecstatics continued to be the actors when performance made the transition from religious to popular entertainment.

Changes to ecstatic religious performance occurred in part because of pivotal events in the Han dynasty. Passages in the History of Han elaborate on how female wu were associated with black magic, which was used to put curses on, poison and murder intended victims. In 130 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han discovered that wu were engaging in black magic and issued orders for all of the wu to be rounded up and decapitated: "... In the fifth year [of the Yuan Guang (130 B.C.)] in the seventh month of autumn, arrested performers of wugu and all heads

24 The scope of the Chinese dramatic tradition and popular theatre is too large to discuss in this chapter.

25 Miao and other legends also create the impression that gu magic was the practice of female wu. One particular Miao legend tells how the gu was borne out of the female womb. According to this legend, a woman once gave birth to five daughters and five gu. These gu have continued to live on since then. Deng Qiyue, Wugu kaocha: Zhongguo wugu de wenhua xintai, 56. See also Donald John Harper, Early Chinese medical literature: the Mawangdui medical manuscripts, 158–9.
were exposed”...五年...秋七月,...捕為巫蠱者皆枭首.26 Later in 92 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han discovered that members of his imperial court had retained Xiongnu 匈奴 wu to put a curse on him by burying clay effigies. Upon discovering that his sixth chancellor and the chancellor's son, two princesses and many wu had tried to kill him using gu magic, Emperor Wu of the Han employed foreign wu to dig up the effigies. Subsequently, he issued orders for his sixth chancellor and the others to be executed.27 After this event, wu, for the most part, were ousted from court.28

There were other reasons why wu were ousted from court that had to do with the shifting belief in the religious efficacy of wu performance. Glen Dudbridge notes how female wu were pushed to the fringes of elite Chinese society: “Once they [female religious ecstasies] had played an institutional role in state religion, but now they were marginal and ambiguous in the eyes of


27Michael Loewe, “The Case of Witchcraft in 91BC,” in *Crisis and Conflict in Han China*, 37–90.

28There is evidence that wu continued to be retained throughout the Six Dynasties by emperors and members of the imperial court, but that the roles they performed were no longer as part of important state ceremonies. Imperial families of these emperors also employed wu to perform black magic to curse and murder individuals for political reasons. Lin Fu-shih, “Chinese Shamans and Shamanism in the Chiang-nan Area During the Six Dynasties Period (3rd–6th Century A.D.) (3rd–6th Century A.D.)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1994), 25–59.
As wu became less popular state ritual practitioners, Han dynasty officials may have gradually revived the custom of using children in ritual rain dancing.

**Ecstatic youthful performers from the Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty**

Wu performed ritual rain dancing and prayers after the Han dynasty. Increasingly, however, texts referred to youths who did the dancing. The *History of the Later Han* signified the influence of *yin-yang* thinking on the performance of ritual rain dancing and contained an account describing young boys and girls who performed rain dancing in two rows:

In times of drought the senior officials, drawn up in order of seniority, perform the Yu ceremony as a prayer for rain. The Yang openings are closed; the officiants don black silk and set up clay dragons. They position on the ground two rows of dancing youths (both male and female), which are changed every seven days in accordance with precedent. The translation is adapted from Michael Loewe. Loewe notes that the dancing youths are earthenware figures. Michael Loewe, “The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain,” 200. I disagree that the youths are earthenware figures and follow He Xiu’s 何休 interpretation.
Boys and girls danced to stop the accumulation of the sun’s *yang* energy, with boys symbolizing the *yang* force and girls symbolizing the *yin* force. When they danced together they harmonized the *yin* and *yang* forces. In addition, black clothing and clay effigies helped to restore the balance between *yin* and *yang*. The *History of the Jin Era* (*Jinshu* 晉書)*32* and the *History of the Song* (*Songshi* 宋史) repeated part of the anecdote about the boys and girls who danced for rain and emphasized the relationship among their dancing and *yin* and *yang*.33

The new attention to youthful performers negatively affected female *wu*, as evidenced by the *Book of Jin* that expressed how female *wu* were adjusting to the changing custom of ritual rain dancing: “... Jingning was about to perform a sacrifice to his ancestors, and invited two female shamans named Zhang Tan and Chen Zhu, both outstanding beauties. They wore splendid clothes and were skilled in singing and dancing ...” ...敬寧祠先人, 迎女巫章丹,陳珠二人,並有國色, 莊服甚麗, 善歌舞 ...34 Two extraordinarily beautiful female *wu* were talented singers and drummers and were invited entertain a group of men, who were performing an ancestral ritual. Their talents were used for secular and not religious entertainment.35 They

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*32* *Jinshu* 晉書, SBBY edition, *juan* 19.11b.

*33* *Songshi* 宋史, SBBY edition, *juan* 130.9b.


*35* The account also describes how the women performed self-mortification. I am grateful to Donald Sutton, who pointed out that this is one of the very few cases of spirit medium self-mortification so far discovered outside the Minnan region.
were exotic sing-song girls hired for the evening's entertainment. All indications suggest that these two women had crossed the boundary between ritual and popular theatre, foreshadowing a future trend for female ecstacies to play a complex social role as actress, religious functionary and even prostitute.

The Nan Qishu 南齊書 mentions groups of children, both as wutong 舞童 and as tongzi 童子, who perform ritual rain dancing, and records how female wu have been unsuccessful in ending the drought. In place of the female wu, tongzi are used to perform the rain dance. In another reference, the Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo zhi 三國志) describes the youthful ritual rain dancing with the phrase tongtong: “...gazing into the distance and seeing tongtong resembling small covered carriages”. The tongtong performs the steps of a ritual rain dance in the fusang grove where King Tang performed his rain dance to end the drought. The Records of the Three Kingdoms account evinces how ecstatic youths were being associated with the divine acts of sage kings. Historical texts reflected the changing social perception of ecstatic religion and the belief that too little or too much rain was not something that spirits caused. It was as an imbalance of yin and yang. When officials used youthful performers they were endorsing this new way of thinking and reducing the demand for wu.

36The text revises the anecdote from the Hou Hanshu, substituting the character tong 童 for the previous character tong 僕: “dancing children in eight rows of sixty-four people” 舞童八列六四人. Nanqi shu 南齋書 volume 1 of 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua: 1972), juan 9.127.

37Nan Qishu, juan 9.128.

38San guozhi 三國志, SBBY edition, juan 2.1a.
Indirectly, Confucianism was still exerting its power over the wu by forcing it to become a more secular performer.

**Ecstatic performers in the Tang dynasty and Song dynasty**

State religious performances had contained theatrical elements before the Tang dynasty, but it is generally accepted that the Tang dynasty was the period in which popular theatre was born. William Dolby notes: “During the Tang period, thriving commerce and more settled times were perhaps conducive to the growth of theater... Dance was in some cases intimately connected with Tang play-acting.”

The growth of popular forms of theatre during the Tang dynasty meant that now theatrical performances could be held on temporary stages erected in front of temples, market places and brothels. The commodification of theatre had a negative influence on the role and perception of female religious ecstacies.

The *New Tang History* contains a reference to Emperor Xuanzong’s Pear Orchard dramatic academy (*Liyuan* 梨園). Many of the pupils he selected for his academy were male youth: “Xuanzong... selected three hundred youngsters from his entertainers in close attendance and taught them in the Pear Orchard... calling them ‘the emperor’s Pear Orchard pupils” 玄宗... 選坐部伎子弟三百教於梨園... 號‘皇帝梨園弟子’.” Emperor Xuangzong’s training of his Pear Orchard pupils began a tradition in which actors were formally trained professionals.

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who began their training when they were young. Even today, people refer to actors as Pear Orchard pupils.  

As Chinese theatre evolved and was performed in the public domain it retained religious elements. In rural areas, there was never really a distinction between religious and public theatre: "Until very recent times the life of local village communities in China was centered on religious observances, and few activities were entirely divorced from these. This was particularly true of the theatre, which was, in the mind of the average villager, inseparably connected with religious festivals." Female ecstasies adapted to the popularization of theatre by becoming entertainers, prominent dancers and courtesans. They worked in the pleasure quarters and had very low social status. Colin Mackerras notes: "... everybody assumed that a good courtesan would be able to act, sing and play musical instruments."

But female ecstasies could not escape the competition of youths even on secular stages of the Tang theatre. Children were regarded as important dramatic performers and Tang theatre may have evolved out of the songs and dances performed by children. The term "children's"


play” (tongzi 童戲), eventually was modified to define the notion of modern theatre. In the Qing dynasty popular theatre was called Tongzi xi 嬰子戲. The form and name of Qing theatre gradually changed around 1930 to the present xiqu 戲曲, or Beijing traditional opera.\textsuperscript{46}

Youthful ecstacies also performed informal religious rituals, as evidenced in many Tang dynasty poems. The tongzi is found in at least one of Meng Haoran’s 孟浩然 (689–740) poems in a couplet that reads: “Coming to sneak a look at the tongzi chanting, I managed to hear a Buddhist sutra” 來窺童子偈/得聽法王經.\textsuperscript{47} Wang Jian’s 王建 (767–830) poetry contains a reference to the shentong in the name of a poem called “Sent to Sigong the spirit youth” 送司空神童, describing a ritual performed at a religious altar.\textsuperscript{48} Later poetry suggests that youthful religious ecstacies performed rain dances in the nude.\textsuperscript{49}

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\textsuperscript{46} Duan Baolin 段寶林 and Qi Lianxiu 祁連休, Minjian wenxue cidian 民間文學詞典 (Shijiazhuang, Hebei: Hebei jiaoyu: 1988), 536.

\textsuperscript{47} Quan Tangshi, juan 160.1649.

\textsuperscript{48} Quan Tangshi, juan 300.3409.

\textsuperscript{49} Sometimes youths stripped naked in ceremonial exposure signified by the character lu 露. For a discussion of nude exposure in the Record of Rites, see Edward H. Schafer, “Ritual Exposure in Ancient China,” 137–3 and 144–5.

The Song dynasty poet Lú Yu 陸游 wrote a poem titled “Describing tongtong activities” 云童童行. One of the lines in the poem reads: “Numerous tongtong exhort the rain to come” 雲童童挾雨來. A later anecdote in a Qing dynasty poem by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 is suggestive that rain dance is performed in the nude: “hipbone like fat, the buttocks of the tongtong” 髱骨如脂/尻骨童童. He Yin 何垠 comments on this line saying that the tongtong is naked 童童禿也.
Religious ecstatic performers in the Yuan, Ming and Qing

 Daoist religious performance of youth in the Daofa Hui Yuan 道法會元

In Daoist circles, tongzi and wu also competed for attention. Both were performers in Daoist religion but there might have been more tongzi than wu in ritual rain dancing. Divine tongzi were youths who were pure in body and mind and were closer in spiritual essence to divine beings. Owing to their innate purity, they were the preferred means of spiritual union. Suzanne Cahill explains how Daoist adepts attempted to cultivate an immortal embryo in sexual aspects of the practice:

The Maoshan adept went south to achieve transcendence by creating within himself an immortal embryo that would fly to heaven in broad daylight when his mortal body died. He created and nurtured this perfect embryo through various practices such as fasting, ritual, alchemy, meditation, and prayer. One especially effective path to immortality for the adept was to marry a goddess who would instruct him in the transcendent arts.50

Judith Boltz defines the tongzi in religious language as a spirit medium.51 The tongzi was not the highest ritual performer in terms of rank and followed the Daoist master in his ritual

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51Judith Boltz notes how the tongzi is a spirit medium used to treat mental disorders whose function is “to stand in for the afflicted.” See Judith M. Boltz, A survey of Daoist literature: tenth to seventeenth centuries (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1987), footnote 70. Boltz also refers the reader to her Ph.D. dissertation; however, her dissertation is not publicly available.
importance. Boltz’s definition of the tongzi emanates from the study of that term as it is used in the Dao Zang’s 大藏 large 14th century section entitled “Daofa Hui Yuan” 道法會元.

Comprising 268 chapters, it contains Daoist rituals and various talismans, as well as treatises and codes of discipline. Piet van der Loon notes that the first 155 chapters concern Daoist Five Thunder magic. A preliminary study of the incidence of the tongzi and/or wu in the first 155 chapters, suggests how tongzi played a role in rain and thunder rituals. Possibly, the tongzi’s role in these rain and thunder rituals was related to, or developed out of, the snake cult. Chapter 42 may make reference to the snake cult when it refers to Lord Zitong of Wenchang 文昌梓潼.

The section also evinces the new attention given to youths in Daoist religion. If the tongzi is absent in a chapter some other type of youth is usually mentioned, such as small children defined as xiaoe 小兒 and haitong 孩童. Chapter 155 is devoted entirely to incantations and rituals associated with the tongzi and small children.


54 For a full preliminary listing of the incidence of the character tong and/or wu in the first 155 juan consult the Appendix C annexed to this study.

Beyond chapter 155, a couple of chapters merit individual attention. Some chapters contain no references to tongzi and instead contain several references to wu and xi, the male and female religious ecstasies discussed earlier in this study. Chapters 1, 44, 68, 80, 81, 88, 133, 134, 135, and 145 are instances in which the wu appears but the tongzi does not. Possibly, the wu in these chapters perform the role of tongzi in other chapters. Chapter 138 is also notable for its detailed account of tongzi rituals, in which a fifteen year-old (boy) washes and purifies himself before performing the ritual.

The idea that children displaced the wu in religious elite performance is also supported by the Daoist text, Huangting neijing 黄庭内經, where the tongzi occurs at least seven times in passages about the benefits of behaving like a child. Beyond this text, there are numerous examples of religious ecstatic youths in the Yijian zhi 夷堅志, among other texts.

In addition to Daoist textual references to tongzi in rain and thunder rites, there are also many references to youthful deities. These include: golden lads (jintong 金童); jade lads (yutong 玉童); cinnabar lads (chitong 赤童); azure lads (qingtong 青童); immortal lads (xiantong 仙童).

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57 Hong Mai’s 洪邇 (1123–1202) Yijian zhi 夷堅志 is a collection of more than 200 stories written by Hong with supernatural and other themes.

Drama in China and Taiwan

童); heavenly lads (tiantong 天童); and yellow lads (huangtong 黃童); among others. Schafer describes how the jade lad was a symbol of youthful vigour and fertility. 59 The association of the tongzi with these deities insinuates that youthful religious ecstacies performed only certain rites and were only possessed by these deities. Daoist literature signified that youthful religious ecstacies were in great demand on and off the stage.

Restrictions on theatrical performance

In the Yuan dynasty, tongzi continued to flourish on the religious stage when adolescent actors were needed to play the roles of women. They were also sought after prostitutes. 60 Female religious ecstacies played the same roles: “... in the Yuan society the roles that a shamaness and actor played were closely related and sometimes identical.” 61 In 1370, a law was passed restricting the dress and activities of actors and actresses. Each performer had to register with the government and live in a government-run compound. Greater restrictions were also imposed on when and where women could perform. 62 Actresses in the Imperial Music Academy were


required to wear special costumes to publicly display their low social status. In 1772 Emperor Qianlong passed an edict prohibiting women from performing on the stage. The constant process of state co-opting of popular rituals eventually led to the secularization of ritual and the creation of theatre. The absorption and subsequent abolition of the religious and ritual content of ecstatic performance enabled the ruling elite to control impure and un-Confucian behaviour of religious ecstastics. Rituals and later popular theatre eventually came to be forums in which performance was determined and controlled by the paying audience and the politicians, with less expectation of religious efficacy.

Political uses of theatre in China and Taiwan

China

Theatre has played an important role in political movements and has been appropriated for state and non-state usages. The May Fourth Movement began on May 4, 1919, with mass demonstrations at the local level using theatrical elements to convey their political messages. The dramatic appeal of theatre was manipulated to transform the way people thought about the

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theatrical representation of gender. Previously, Yuan and Ming laws prohibited women from performing on the stage. During the May Fourth Movement however, women returned to the stage to play themselves:

To the May Fourth radicals, casting women in women’s roles signaled a new gender ideology. First of all liberated women—especially well-educated women—from the confinement of domesticity, inviting them to consider stage performance as a professional career, to accept a public role, and to work side by side with men.68

Theatre played a large role in influencing popular opinion about the appropriateness of women on the stage. More importantly, it conveyed the popular feeling that women were equally important members in male dominated society. But the use of theatre during the May Fourth Movement was only one of several non-state uses.

Chairman Mao was also notorious for his use of theatre as a medium to influence popular opinion. Mao and his second wife presented plays that popularized Communist slogans. Dramatic elements, such as costumes, slogans, and props, became key elements in Mao’s political theatre. His campaigns were so powerful that they inspired theatrical popular responses in the form of mass demonstrations:

The result was the ‘campaign style’ of Maoist politics—a style that prevailed until the late 1970s. In the ritualized demonstrations that accompanied every major campaign and marked key dates on the revolutionary calendar, people would march forth behind their

unit's or mass organization's banners, with lots of red flags, drums and cymbals, and head for the central square.\(^69\)

Mao understood the power of dramatic performance and exploited it to control the masses.

One of the reasons for the success of Mao's campaign style political theatrics was because it was founded on traditional principles of Chinese ritual theatre. Ritual theatre was an important part of rural village religious life, as noted by Ken Dean who describes the long-standing tradition of the god of theater in southern Chinese liturgical performance:

The god of theater, or a version of him . . . has been worshipped in Fujian since at least the Song dynasty. Troupes of Fujianese marionettists numbering over three hundred performed in the Southern Song capital at Hangzhou. Outside the north gate of Putian in Fujian, a stele from the Ming erected inside a temple to the god lists the names of over twenty-five theatrical troupe leaders . . . the cult of the god has spread throughout Fujian.\(^70\)

Local religious performance serves several functions. As with many types of ritual theatre, it is performed to entertain the deities. Equally important is the way this type of ritual unifies local identity by expressing values specific to that local religious culture. In addition, it appropriates state rituals and adapts them for local use. Dean explains the impact of performing liturgical


texts: "Texts take shape not so much as efforts to impose a hegemonic homology of elite values upon the unsuspecting, illiterate, and powerless masses, but instead as the manifestation of the power of local culture, defining itself, exulting in itself, playing itself out."71

Political uses of religious theatre occurred at the local and state levels and symbolized further appropriations of local and religious culture. Elite culture no longer needed to control religious ecstasies. Instead, elite culture in Communist China put on the mask of the local identity and re-named itself as the Communist party and under the guise of Communism and the masses, it continued to manipulate the ecstatic quality of theatre. During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guard was innovative and brutal in its co-opting of ritual stages:

Temple and shrines are turned into schools, or community centers; images of gods and spirits are burned; and ritual practitioners abandon their vocations to become publicists exposing the fraudulent claims of their former practice. The rituals of the state-Party, therefore, re-inscribe the local landscape within its own totalizing order.72

Mao’s Red Guards eradicated the religious elements in ritual theatre, transforming religious stages into political ones on which propaganda performances, designed to popularize the Communist message, appeared.

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Taiwan

In the case of Taiwan, theatre has also been employed for political and ritual purposes. In the Twentieth-century, the Japanese colonizers of Taiwan accepted and at times encouraged Taiwanese theatrical performances. Taiwanese theatre, or Gezaixi 歌仔戲, was itself a tool that was used to influence popular opinion of what constituted Taiwanese identity. Yet Gezaixi reflected only the culture and history of one sector of Taiwanese society, who migrated to Taiwan in the late Ming and Qing. It did not reflect the customs and history of the post-1949 mainlanders and aboriginal Taiwanese people.  

When Japanese and Chinese relations worsened in the 1930s, the Japanese put restrictions on theatre, religion and all expressions of local identity. The purpose of these restrictions was to promote Japanese customs and to censor Taiwanese customs. In particular, efforts focussed on controlling theatrical expression: “During this period, Taiwanese theatre was viewed as an agency that linked people together and disseminated political dissidence. As a result, dramatic texts were censored, and police were frequently present in the theatres.” Like Mao’s early use of theatre to control public opinion, the Japanese infused Taiwanese theatre with Japanese customs. Actors were required to perform in Japanese kimonos and to sing Japanese songs.

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75 Huei-Yuan Belinda Chang, “A Theatre of Taiwaneseness: Politics, Ideologies, and
After the Japanese lost control of the island in 1945, Gezaixi continued to be a coveted political tool. This time it was used by the Guomindang when they took over rule of Taiwan. The Guomindang encouraged dance troupes to incorporate aspects of Beijing opera into their performance. Moreover, theatrical troupes could only perform what the government approved for performance. As a result, Taiwanese theatre increasingly became a vehicle for the promotion of Chinese values.

In the post-World War II period, Taiwanese ritual theatre was also politicized. Many scholars have studied the political subtext of the southern Taiwanese Mazu cult. Legend tells how Mazu assisted Zheng Chenggong (also called Koxinga) in defeating the Dutch. When it came time for Zheng Chenggong to land his boat on Taiwan, the water was too shallow to enter the harbour. Zheng Chenggong and his crew prayed to Mazu and set incense in a shrine at the bow of the boat. Mazu helped them reach the harbour by creating three-foot tides so that Zheng Chenggong could overthrow the Dutch and save the Taiwanese people. Following the defeat of the Dutch, Zheng Chenggong built a shrine to pay homage to Mazu, who enabled his forces to land.

Political sentiments about Taiwanese identity are expressed among the members of the Mazu cult, many of whom support Taiwanese independence and dislike the mainlanders or those

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who came to island after 1949. Members of the Mazu cult tell stories of how they watched their friends and colleagues disappear during the February 28, 1947 incident. During the February 28, 1947 incident (2/28 incident) thousands of indigenous Taiwanese were murdered. Yearly pilgrimages to Meizhou by Mazu's followers feature ritual performances. But these yearly pilgrimages to Meizhou, which is in Fujian, China, also suggest the complexity of political sentiments among members of the Mazu cult. Although these ritual performances have been characterized as unifying the political independence movement, they are still ambiguous expressions of Taiwanese identity.

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78This is from personal communications with members of the Mazu cult. The temple committee members I met spoke candidly about their dislike of the Guomindang 国民黨 and desire for Taiwanese independence. One of the temple committee members I spoke with told me how he and his family had to endure Japanese acculturation. I asked him about the 2-28 incident. He was 22 then. During the incident, many people he knew who did not agree with the Guomindang were taken away in cars and never seen again. Others were thrown into the ocean and still others were shot to death. He explained how this was a widespread practice against professors, students and all kinds of Taiwanese people in an effort to make them comply with the new Guomindang regulations. He told me that over 10,000 Taiwanese people were killed.


Religious ecstatic performance has also been specifically referred to as political. The idea is that entranced religious ecstacies are representatives of marginalized individuals. In the process of possession, these individuals are empowered and given higher social status. In Korea, student demonstrations use ecstatic possession, ritual props and costumes to adapt the power of religious transformation to convey political messages. See Kwang-Ok Kim, "Rituals of Resistance: The Manipulation of Shamanism in Contemporary Korea," in Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall and Helen Hardacre, ed., Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern State of Southeast Asia (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 195–219.
Chapter 7—Introduction to Lin Hualimin’s Nine Songs

Ecstatic religion is thriving in contemporary Taiwan. There are many types of religious ecstacies but the more ubiquitous religious ecstatic in southern China and Taiwan is called the jitong 夷童, or the divining child.¹ Scholars often describe how the Taiwanese jitong is related to the Chinese ecstatic religious tradition that can be traced to Xiamen 厦门, Minnan 閩南 and possibly the hinterland; but there may be no locus classicus defining the transmission from southern China to Taiwan.²

If the phrase jitong originated in China, one would expect it to be included in the major dictionaries. The phrase, however, is conspicuously absent from early and contemporary Chinese dictionaries. It is included in Taiwanese dictionaries under the heading of ki-tàng 乩童.³ Possibly, the phrase is Taiwanese or a relatively late addition to the written Chinese language. I contend that the tongzi in Chinese ritual rain dancing and later theatrical performance may have evolved into the jitong.⁴ Much of the Chinese written material regarding

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¹ Also called tâng-ki 童乩 in the local dialect (Fukien). J.J.M. de Groot notes how the tongzi is another name for the jiotng. See J. J. M. de Groot, The religious system of China, its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions connected, volume 6, 1269.

² See J. J. M. de Groot, The religious system of China, its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions connected, volume 6, 1243.

³ Chen Xiu 陳修, Taiwan hua da cidian 台灣話大詞典 (Taipei: Yuanliu, 1991), 852.

⁴ For a detailed chart of the relationship between Taiwanese theatre and Chinese forms of theatre, including tongzi performance, see Zeng Yongyi, Taiwan Gezaixi Di Fazhan yu Bianqian, 17–8.
the *jitong* links the term to the traditional healing and possession rituals of *wushi* 巫師, dating back to early Chinese history.⁵

**Scholarship on the *jitong***

Some review of the scholarship on the term *jitong* is useful to understand how the *jitong* might be perceived by modern Taiwanese people. Research on *jitong* has shown that there are many theories about the way in which the *jitong* tradition came to Taiwan.⁶ Dong Fangyuan 董芳苑 and Huang Wenbo 黃文博 have written extensively on the subject of the *jitong* in the context of Taiwanese and Chinese folkloric superstitious customs. Yet their writings may not give the complete history of the *jitong* and how it came to exist in China, and may not explain why Taiwanese ecstatic religion retains remnants from the Chinese ecstatic religious tradition.⁷

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⁵While I was conducting research in Taiwan, the Tainan City government presented me with several books in an attempt to show how they supported *jitong* and *wu* activities. The more recent gazetteer published in 1996 briefly discusses the *wu* practice (with no mention of *jitong* practice) in the introduction: *Tainan City Government, Tainan shi zhi: juan er renmin zhi zongjiao pian* 台南市志卷二人民志宗教篇 (Tainan: Tainan city government, 1996), 2. The earlier gazetteer on religion published in 1979 by the Tainan city government dedicates two pages to the discussion of *wu* practice as it relates to *jitong* in the context of popular beliefs. See *Tainan shi zhi: juan er renmin zhi zongjiao lisu pian* 台南市志卷二人民志宗教禮俗篇 (Tainan: Tainan city government, 1979), 128–9. See also Lin Guoping 林國平, “On the Evolution of the Folk Belief in Fujian and Taiwan 閩台民間信仰的興衰嬗變,” *[Chinese] Studies in World’s Religions* 世界宗教研究 71, no. 1 (1998): 68–77.

According to Dong Fangyuan, the jitong performs the same functions as the ancient wu. Dong remarks that the youthful aspect (indicated by the character tong) of the character jitong originates in the Song dynasty and is related to the phrase “invoking the child” (jiangtong 降童).8

Many scholars aver that the roots of jitong practice on Taiwan are difficult to trace because any documentation about the origin of the tradition that might have once existed disappeared during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan.9 Sources on the subject available today simply reiterate what the Japanese wrote about jitong customs during their occupation of Taiwan.

Another commonly offered interpretation is that the jitong came to Taiwan with Daoism. According to these scholars, the jitong was associated with one of the five Daoist sects in southern China that entered Taiwan with the Quanzhou 泉州 migration of Fujian 福建 people in the early Qing.10 The presumption seems to be that jitong came into Taiwan accompanying the

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8Huang Wenbo 黃文博, Taiwan minjian xinyang yu yishi 台灣民間信仰與儀式 (Taipei: Formosa Folkways, 1997), 93–4.
9Dong Fangyuan 董芳苑, Taiwan minjian zongjiao xinyang 台灣民間宗教信仰 (Taipei: Changqing: 1975), 151.
11Huang Wenbo 黃文博, “Wangle wo shi shei 忘了我是誰,” Taiwan Xinyang Chuanqi 台灣信仰傳奇 (Taiyuan: 1989), 14–6; and Huang Wenbo, Taiwan minjian xinyang yu yishi 台灣民間信仰與儀式 (Taipei: Formosan Folkways, 1997), 93–4. See also “Taiwan tongji de wupin yu wushu 台灣童乩的巫器與巫術,” in Dong Fangyuan 董芳苑, Taiwan fengtu zhi: Tantao Taiwan minjian xinyang 台灣風土誌: 探討台灣民間信仰 (Taipei: Formosa Folkways, 1996), 93–4.
temples. Yet there are also those who disagree with claims that jitong practice is associated with Daoism.

Some claim that the ji 占, or divining part of the character jitong, may be important, referring to part of the term fuji 扶乩, or wielding the planchette. The difficulty of linking jitong to fuji is that fuji refers to a spirit writing cult associated with the late Six Dynasties or early Tang Dynasty Wenchang 文昌 or God of Literature cult. Temples dedicated to the worship of the God of Literature are common in China and on Taiwan, and fuji is often associated with these temples. But unlike public ritual possessions performed by the jitong, fuji performances are often private and the teachings are esoteric. Jitong, rather, are first and foremost spirit mediums, thought to dance, sing, perform prayers and exorcisms and ritual possessions, as well as heal. Jordan and Overmyer note how the jitong are disrespected by those who practice fuji.

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12For five different explanations of the origin of the jitong as a superstitious practice, see Yan Piangang 巫片岡, Taiwan fengsu zhi 台灣風俗誌 (Taipei: Zongwen, 1987), 527-8.


15See Zhang Xun, Jibing yu wenhua, 73–82.

Racial reasons for the origin of the term jìtong are also often given. On occasion, the tongzi 童子 people indigenous to Fujian province are cited as having spirit mediums, who communicate with spirits and ghosts. Another notion pervading the literature on the subject is that jìtong are foreign practitioners associated with Tibetan and Manchurian religious ecstasies.

Others say that the jìtong is an aboriginal practice of Taiwanese origin, specifically the Pingpu on Taiwan—the many tribal people who at one time inhabited the Taiwanese plains. The massive migration from China to Taiwan, during the Qing and eventually in the twentieth century, destroyed the Pingpu people and most of their culture. What little culture that survived included some of practices of the female religious ecstasies known as both wushi and āng-ī 娘姨. Popular media, such as non-academic books, weekly television programs and newspaper articles, associates the jìtong with tribal religion and describes them as wushi.

17 Zhonghua fengsu zhi 中华风俗志 (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi, 1988), 69.

18 Wu Kang 吴康, Zhonghua shenmi wenhua cidian 中华神秘文化辞典 (Haikou: Hainan publishing, 1993), 575. Tibetan and Manchurian religious ecstasies may be called tiaoshen 跳神 and may sometimes also be referred to as tiaotong 跳童. Scholarly discussion on the phrases as they relate to jìtong notes how they are the subtypes of the wu who perform fortune-telling, summoning of the soul and healing, among other things. Hanyu da Cidian 汉语大辞典, volume 10 (China: Hebei, 1987), 466. A variation of the tiaoshen is the datong 扯童. Wu Kang, Zhonghua shenmi wenhua cidian, 580.

19 According to Liu Huanyue, wushi customs on Taiwan originate in Pingpu tribal culture and are predominantly female. Wushi are important members of society who perform dances, are in charge of rituals and exorcisms of evil, as well as curing illness and preventing natural disasters. He continues to explain how every Xila 西拉 tribe used to have female wushi but that after the end of Japanese occupation, the traditions were more difficult to pass from one generation to the next and gradually tribes started to have male religious ecstasies, where originally they had none. Liu Huanyue 劉運月, "Jiao shi 郊事," in Taiwan minjian xinyang xiao baike 台灣民間信仰小百科 44 (Taiwan: Taiyuan, 1994): 103–4.
Uncorroborated Dutch records from the seventeenth century may also tell how female
ecstatics called *inibs* were living on Taiwan when the Dutch arrived.\(^{20}\) Reverend Wm. Campbell
(1841–1921) uses Dutch records to describe the female priestesses or *inibs* who inhabited
Taiwan during the Dutch occupation: “The public service these *Inibs* perform in a religious
capacity is twofold: calling upon their gods and bringing sacrifices to them . . .”\(^{21}\) The account
continues to describe how after sacrifices had been made, two *inibs* would enter trance and then
shake and appear as if possessed by the gods. When the ceremony was over, the *inibs* stripped
off their clothes, flagellated themselves in a barbaric manner and then bathed. The Reverend
continues to note how the *inibs* also told fortunes and exorcised evil demons, among other
things.\(^{22}\) Later, the account summarizes how the Dutch Governor of Formosa would like to
banish the *inibs*, whom he fears are defiling the newly baptized. Although these accounts may
have only been legends, they nevertheless suggest that female religious ecstacies existed on
Taiwan as early as the seventeenth century.

It is possible that all of these explanations about the origin of *jitong* customs are in part
ture and mirror society’s post-Tang dynasty perception of religious ecstacies. Like their northern

\(^{20}\) It is uncertain whether these ecstacies were Taiwanese aboriginals or southern Chinese
migrants.

\(^{21}\) Reverend Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch: Described from Contemporary
Records with Explanatory Notes and a Biography of the Island* (New York: Paragon Book

\(^{22}\) Reverend Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch: Described from Contemporary
neighbours, southern Chinese society regarded ecstatic religious practices as originating from the
wu referred to in Chinese texts, Daoism, and foreign customs.

Taiwanese religious ecstatic performance

Jitong remain popular in Taiwan and often perform their roles in rituals in which they
have distinct positions. In many ways their movements in dance, spirit possession,
Initially, I will discuss some characteristics of contemporary female religious ecstatic
performance.

Female fertility rituals

Sometimes but not always, female jitong perform in groups. When they enter trance,
many explain that they do not do this alone but with the assistance of the fashi, or fazi. Some
sources refer to the female jitong as the âng-î or hongyi—the red yi. The colour red describes
the clothing worn by a female jitong, such as a red belt or red pants. Many Daoist temples rank
these female ecstatics below male ecstatics, defined as jitong or wu.

23 This is not to say that modern Taiwanese performance is not religious. For a discussion
of how and why Taiwanese ritual performers dislike the term “performer” see Donald Sutton,
Chinese Folk Religion in Motion: The Infernal Generals in 20th Century Taiwan (Cambridge,

24 In this section of the study, all references to the jitong are derived from participant–
observation fieldwork in a southern Taiwanese context. Sometimes I refer to sources to
substantiate my claims.
Occasionally they perform self-mortification in groups with male ecstacies.\textsuperscript{27} They also conduct seances in which they become possessed by dead spirits. In addition, they may perform fertility rituals for couples who are having trouble conceiving a child, or would like a male child. Although fertility rituals vary, the ones that I have witnessed feature dancing and singing before the altar of a fertility deity whom the ecstatic serves. Religious ecstacies describe how the dancing and singing transports them into the flower garden of Hades (\textit{yinjian} 隱間), where they are able to alter the gender of the fetus or enable a woman to become pregnant. Further, female ecstacies perform ritual exorcisms that also may involve dramatic gestures and chanting, as the female ecstatic waves paper figures and burns incense sticks over the patient's body.

\textit{Male spirit possession, self-mortification and healing}

Male \textit{jitong} are often associated with temples. In Daoist temples they may practice in tandem with the \textit{daoshi} 道士, \textit{fashi} 法師 and the \textit{tongzi} 通仔.\textsuperscript{28} The phrase “emergence of the child” (\textit{qitong} 起童) describes how it is the youthful spirit of the \textit{jitong} that rises during trance and is transformed into the spirit medium.\textsuperscript{29} Usually this is done in the presence of \textit{fashi}.\textsuperscript{30}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{25}The character \textit{wang} 娃 in the name \textit{âng-i} 娃姨 is the character the \textit{Record of Rites} used to refer to a sick or youthful religious ecstatic, who may have been sacrificed during a rain ritual. Kåto Jôken discusses how the character \textit{wang} indicates the hunched back appearance of religious ecstacies in Chinese antiquity, as I mentioned in the first chapter. See Kåto Jôken, “\textit{Fushuku kô},” 12. J.J.M. de Groot also notes how many \textit{âng-i} are blind. J. J. M. de Groot, \textit{The religious system of China, its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions connected}, volume 6, 1333.

\textsuperscript{26}Fan Shengxiong 范勝雄, \textit{Fucheng de simiao xinyang} 府城的寺廟信仰 (Tainan: Tainan City Government, 1995), 215. Ruan Changrui, \textit{Zhuangyan de shijie}, 42.

\textsuperscript{27}I will discuss the dramatic elements in self-mortification in greater detail below.
During rituals in which the jitong invokes the spirit, the jitong and sometimes the fashi, stand before the spirit altar where the spirit icon is located and present offerings of incense to the god. The jitong then closes his eyes and the fashi beside him chants an incantation for approximately twenty minutes and eventually the spirit descends to possess the jitong.

The more common method is when the jitong calls the spirit by himself. As before, the jitong offers incense to the god, burns spirit money before the entrance to the temple and waves incense. Traditionally, the jitong following the purification of the temple entrance and altar, sits down on a wooden stool in front, or off to the side, of the spirit joss (after placing the stool there). As he enters trance, one or two assistants hold down the stool. The time announced for

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28 I do not intend to imply that jitong are only associated with Daoist temples. See Dong Fangyuan, “Taiwan tongji de wupin yu wushu,” 93. For a discussion of the jitong or tongji’s specific practices with the fashi see Dong Fangyuan 董方苑, “Taiwan minjian de shenwu—tongji yu fashi 台灣民間的神巫童乩與法師,” in Dong Fangyuan, Taiwan minjian zongjiao xinyang, 247–66.

29 See Dong Fangyuan, “Taiwan tongji de wupin yu wushu,” 93.

30 The fashi, sometimes referred to as the fazi 法仔 or red hat (hongtou 紅頭), is distinguished by a red scarf worn around the head and an apron and red shoes, with the chief duties of exorcism and changing fate. During exorcisms, fashi may ask the heavenly soldiers and generals to expel evil spirits and get rid of disease. Some say that the fashi or fazi is associated with three Daoist sects. Fan Shengxiong, Fucheng de simiao xinyang, 214.

Michael Saso adds that the fashi or red hat also works in concert with the black hat or sigong 司公, who performs many of the liturgical rituals of purification and birthday celebrations. The red hat and black hat are common in both China and Taiwan but Saso expresses how they were probably not originally from Daoism; but came from the ecstatic religious tradition. Michael Saso, The Golden Pavilion: Taoist Ways to Peace, Healing and Long Life (Vermont: Charles Tuttle, 1996), 9–12.

31 The following discussion is based on fieldwork undertaken in Modern Standard Chinese with Modern Standard Chinese speaking jitong.

— 207 —
the onset of the ritual is seldom correct and the congregation may wait a long time until the deity decides to descend into the jitong.

A changed external appearance (not unlike the aesthetics of transformation that characterized religious ecstasies in the Zhuangzi and the Classic of Mountains and Waters) indicates that the spirit has descended. The change might manifest itself in new facial expressions or in a new posture and gait. Once possessed, the jitong stands up, sometimes with his body and arms stiff. Again, as an indication of the jitong's new state of possession, he speaks in a different voice, which many say is the voice of the possessing spirit. Then he walks over to the altar, before which a stool is placed for him to sit.

There are a few styles that the jitong uses to communicate his answers to questions. It may be rare for a jitong to answer in his natural voice or write his answers. Often the jitong answers in gibberish, which is a mix of Taiwanese, Mandarin, spirit language, and occasionally poetry. The fashi, who has worked closely with the jitong for many years, translates. On occasion, more than one individual interprets.

32 I have observed jitong in southern Taiwan who scream when the spirit possesses their body. This appears to be an idiosyncratic trait.
34 Ping Jigang 馮際罡, Lingmei: Gui shi shencha de ren 靈媒鬼使神差的人 (1985; third printing, Taipei: Wuling, 1995), 86. This is also derived from my own observation of jitong rituals in Taiwan and discussions with Modern Standard Chinese speaking jitong and fashi.
To understand the content of what the jitong utters, the congregation relies on the expertise of the interpreter. An additional temple elder may arrive to ask questions or clarify answers given to questions posed by the interpreter. Once the spirit has answered the congregation's questions, the spirit might then answer questions about family matters from the congregation.

In trance, possessed jitong are also known to practice self-mortification. Although self-mortifying jitong are for the most part male, there are self-mortifying female jitong performing every Sunday in southern Taiwan and elsewhere.

Self-mortification requires the use of the five treasures (wubao 五寶) and is possibly the most visually dramatic of all jitong performance. These five treasures include the prick ball, axe, barbed stick, dagger and double-bladed barbed stick and are used by the jitong to display the power of the possessing deity. While the jitong is possessed, he strikes his arms, back, face and chest with each of the five treasures. As the sharp instruments strike his skin, he bleeds. Some suggest that the piercing of the skin induces a state of trance. A few believe that the blood that flows down the back of the jitong during secular self-mortification rituals may not be real. Rather, it could be paint or chicken blood that has been applied to charm paper. During the performance, the jitong sweats and a nearby assistant uses the charm paper to "wipe" the sweat.

35See Dong Fangyuan, “Taiwan tongji de wupin yu wushu,” 96–102.
36Consult Liu Chiwan 劉枝萬, “Taiwan yanjiu yantaohui di qi zu jihui jilu Taiwan de lingmei tongji 台灣研究研討會第七組集會記錄台灣的靈媒: 童乩 (Minutes of the Seventh Session of the Symposium on Taiwan Research: Taiwan spirit mediums: tāng-ki),” Taiwan Folkways 31, no. 1: 104–15.
After the back is wiped, the assistant then sprays water or beer onto the back of the jitong to “cool him off.” This spraying causes red liquid to stream down the back. It has been remarked that the instruments are dull and simply re-open old wounds.37

Contemporary jitong are also known as healers. During trance they determine the cause of an illness, how to cure it, administer medical advice, and give patients herbal remedies.38 As well, their consultations are often interpreted to be psychological counselling.39 Jitong healing relies on the premise that yin and yang imbalances, as well as curses by demons and ghosts, may cause illness. Patient believe that it is the spirit possessing the jitong who does the healing. Healing sessions resemble modern medical check-ups, as jitong also check for fevers, check the pulse and heart, and check for congestion. More elaborate healing sessions might use the prick ball, which is placed under the foot of the patient, simulating acupuncture. Near the prick ball, the assistant burns spirit money. Sometimes the possessed jitong will write out prescriptions and give out bags of herbs.40

Possessed jitong may go into the prefecture of hell and find the treatment for a sick person. He is known to exorcise evil demons, and enter a figurative flower garden (huayuan 花园)...

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38See Zhang Xun, Jibing yu wenhua, 73–82.

located in Hades. The jitong may also renew the life force of someone who is dying or abort a pregnancy in the event the child is not developing properly in the womb. Additionally, the jitong is described as being able to make a barren woman fertile, calm vengeful spirits, and marry wandering ghosts to each other. Aside from performing as spirit mediums and healers, jitong are also referred to as exorcists, soul summoners, and those who sacrifice and chant prayers to dispel disasters and keep peace, like the wu in the Rites of Zhou. Much of the jitong’s spiritual healing is dependent on faith. If you do not believe in the religious efficacy of ecstatic healing, it might not work.

People may become jitong and âng-i for a variety of reasons. Usually, people discover their calling to become a jitong when they are young. A few individuals I interviewed expressed how they learned of their calling through dreams. Others expressed how they chose to become a jitong instead of going to university. Some local spirits choose new jitong from among the eligible young men of the temple congregation, during a special ceremony that takes place over a period of several weeks. At any time during the ceremony, the spirit may possess and choose

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41Fan Shengxiong, Fucheng de simiao xinyang, 215.

42See Guo Fenzhi 國分值, "Jitong yanjiu 乩童研究," Minsu Taiwan (Duben 譯本) 1: 90–102.

the new jitong. An additional way in which an individual becomes a jitong might be through illness. Once the individual becomes a jitong, he usually looks for a teacher to train him.45

In 1996, 65% of Taiwanese listed themselves as believers in folk religion. Religious fervor in folk religion, as well as in other religions, might be related to a desire for economic prosperity, as well as social and political anxieties about the future of relations between China and Taiwan.46 When questioned, some Taiwanese say that the jitong is the only medical attention they will ever receive. But many sources say that this is changing.47 In recent years, there has been a decline in the amount of people who visit jitong and other ecstatic religious specialists.48

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44While I was in southern Taiwan, I witnessed the first week of a forty-day ritual, during which time a new jitong would be chosen and initiated. I was told that it was the first time the ritual had been performed in twenty-five years.


47More recently people have been seeking the advice of religious healers in concert with the advice from medical practitioners. Consult David K. Jordan “Changes in Postwar Taiwan and Their Impact on the Popular Practice of Religion,” in Stevan Harrell and Huang Chūn-chieh ed., Cultural Changes in Postwar Taiwan (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1994), 148.
Jitong appear to still be part of the contemporary religious hierarchy and may still be regarded as religious performers of healing and spirit possession. But there are important differences that distinguish contemporary religious ecstasies from historical Chinese ones. The influx of Western forms of medicine has displaced ecstatic religious healing. As well, the rapid urbanization of Taiwanese culture and deracination of local village life has diluted many of the previously sacred rituals. Lin Huaimin comments that as people have moved to the city to work in factories and other businesses, they have become disconnected from village traditions:

If you go to the south—go out of Taipei—you see trancers all over. . . It is in almost every place. But then in the middle class I think there they pretend it is not there. They pretend of course they know it but they never learned anything about it. And so the middle class intellectuals are not even fully aware of trancers—It is like an image in a book. 49

Another important difference between past Chinese religious ecstasies and contemporary Taiwanese ones might be how in today’s society, culture tolerates and supports Taiwanese religious ecstasies. They are recognized as part of Taiwanese heritage. When I was in Taiwan conducting fieldwork on religious ecstasies, I was invited to join a government-organized and sponsored weekend tour of religious temples and culture. After the tour was over, I was given a

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48See Qu Haiyuan 魯海源, Taiwan zongjiao bianqian de shehui zhengzhifenxi 台灣宗教變遷的社會政治分析 (Taipei: Guiguan, 1992), 95–137. See page 104 for statistics depicting the decrease of those who have gone to jitong for healing between 1985 and 1990. Ping Jigang, Lingmei: Gui Shi shencha de ren, 76–86.

box of books on Taiwanese ecstatic religion, including the dates and locations of religious rituals throughout the year. Lin Huaimin's production of the *Nine Songs* is similarly a government-sponsored production about Taiwanese heritage and ecstatic religion.

**Lin Huaimin and the "theatre of ecstasy"**

Lin Huaimin was born in Taiwan on February 19, 1947 and was raised in Jiayi county by an affluent seventh generation Taiwanese family: his grandfather was a doctor and his father was a scholar familiar with Eastern as well as European culture. As a child, Lin read Japanese and Chinese classics, at the age of fourteen he began writing short stories, and by twenty-two he published his first novel *Cicada*, which has since been published in many languages.

In 1969 he travelled to the United States and after obtaining a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Iowa in 1970 he decided to become a dance choreographer and went to New York to study. In New York, he studied with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. Lin's use of ecstatic ritual in dance, especially in the *Nine Songs*, builds on Martha's Graham's dance philosophy and the "theatre of ecstasy." According to Graham, dance was a medium to express the inner emotional and ecstatic experience. Graham believed that dance and life were inseparable.

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It was when Lin was studying dance choreography in New York with Martha Graham and homesick for Taiwan that he came up with the idea for “Legacy” (薪傳). “Legacy,” which would later be performed in 1978 after his return to Taiwan, depicted the treacherous journey of Fujian migrants across the Taiwan strait.

After studying with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, he returned to Taiwan and opened his new dance company, called Cloud Gate Dance Theatre Company (Yunmen wuji 雲門舞集). By naming his company as Cloud Gate Dance Theatre Company, Lin was conforming to the trend to frame Taiwanese productions in the context of Chinese classical texts.

“Cloud Gate” (Yunmen 雲門) was the name of a piece of music and dance mentioned in the Rites of Zhou. Lin explains how he came to name his company:

I think I was interested in the Nine Songs for years because I am interested in ritual. You see the name for the company—Cloud Gate—that is a ritual name. Cloud Gate is a legendary dance. Cloud Gate is supposed to be the oldest Chinese Dance that you can find in the documents. As legend goes it existed five thousand years ago in the period of Huang Di. It is a ritual dance. It is supposed to be a grand ritual dance.

Lin’s choice to give his company a name dating back to Chinese antiquity signaled his desire to produce dance from a Chinese perspective. It also suggested that he subscribed to the

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52 Sun Yirang, Zhouli zhengyi, volume 1, juan 42.10.
idea that Chinese history began with the actions of noble sage kings. Patricia Ebrey explains how Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 CE) was of the opinion that the determinant of Chinese identity was a real or feigned lineage to the sage kings, one of which is Huang Di: “This theory is that the Chinese are descended from Shen Nong (also called Yan Di) or from his successor, Huang Di, who conferred twelve surnames on fourteen of his twenty-five songs.”

In 1990, when Lin’s dance production company had financing problems, he returned to the United States on a Fulbright scholarship to study at the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of Arts, New York University. In addition to studying in the United States, Lin had studied Chinese opera and travelled throughout Southeast Asia in search of inspiration for his productions. In 1993, Lin Huaimin brought his Nine Songs to the Taiwanese stage, combining his Western training with Martha Graham, and his Eastern heritage.

Lin Huaimin’s dance choreography has also been influenced by Taiwanese dance trends. Modernization of Taiwanese dance began in the 1950’s with Dr. Liu Fengxue’s 劉鳳學 “Neo-Classic Dance Company” (Xingudian wutuan 新古典舞團). The founding of her dance company was inspired by a trip to Orchid Island, off the coast of Taiwan. Taiwanese aboriginal ritual customs thrived on Orchid Island, unlike those on Taiwan that had been eradicated during the many years of Japanese rule. Inspired by what she had seen while visiting Orchid Island,

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55 Wuyan: Taiwan wutajishi 舞宴: 台灣舞蹈紀實 (A Dancing Feast: A Documentary on Taiwan Choreography) (Taipei: Kwang Hwa, 1997), video recording.
Dr. Liu based her productions on aboriginal ritual customs and not on Chinese Beijing opera and other traditional Chinese forms of dance performance.  

Lin's *Nine Songs* fuses Taiwanese rituals and music with Chinese rituals and other types of music. This has an unintended effect. In the process of combining Chu ecstatic rituals from the *Nine Songs* with Taiwanese dances, such as the one in the second song, he consciously suggests a similarity between the performance of southern Chu ecstatic ritual possessions and Taiwanese ritual possessions.

Lin's *Nine Songs* is dance theatre that takes popular ritual elements and produces them in a commercial setting. His productions are so successful because they engage the audience in a way similar to actual rituals and evoke the power of religious ecstasies, both past and present, whose performance is purely religious. The audience is an important part of the ritual. When the female *wu*, who is the heroine of the production, sacrifices herself she does this for all the people watching. When Lin re-enacts how Chinese people are killed by the troops during the Tiananmen massacre of 1989, or how Taiwanese people are killed by mainlander Chinese during the February 28, 1947 incident in "Homage to the State" the people do not idly watch. The lights shine into their eyes and for a moment they experience the terror of those murdered.

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56 During Japanese rule and later, many aborigine practices (such Atayal exorcistic dance) were forbidden and eventually died out. Today I am told that some aborigine religious practices have been incorporated into Presbyterian church services.

57 Dance companies continue to reinvent traditional forms of dance, using Beijing opera techniques to maintain a cultural link to China through dance. Some examples include, the “Taipei Folk Dance Group,” “Lan Yang Dancers,” and the “Tainan Folk Dance Company,” among others.
students. The ritual unites the audience through the common experience. Here, Lin demonstrates how he has mastered the “theatre of ecstasy” in the tradition of Martha Graham. He is able to use ecstatic dance and exotic music to stir the audience.

Lin Huaimin’s use of the female wu as his heroine of the *Nine Songs* stresses the important role of dancing in ritual since Chinese antiquity. Although female wu were prominent in rituals as late as the third century CE, they might not have been the powerful ritual performers. Lin inverts the role of women in Chinese ecstatic religion following this period, making his female wu in the *Nine Songs* the dominant ritual and dance performer. The dance rendition draws on past and contemporary traditions to incorporate popular ritual ecstatic practices into the performance. He invokes the images of ecstatic transformation from Chinese antiquity and from modern Taiwan.

*Nine Songs* is first and foremost a ritual adapted to the stage. The theatrical adaptation of the ritual does not detract from the power of the ritual. Although Lin’s productions are entertainment they are also intended to fill a spiritual void and render a political and social message. Lin’s conscious definition of the female ecstatic of the *Nine Songs* as wu is related to the political and social subtext of the production.

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59Many Taiwanese people believe that during the February 28, 1947 incident (2/28 incident) and for many months following this incident, thousands of indigenous Taiwanese (and likely many others) were murdered by the new Nationalist Chinese mainlander government.
Construction of the image of the female wu

The female wu is the chief intermediary between this world and the spirit world. She also might be the same noteworthy figure whose rain dancing and prayers became the definitive attributes of the wu in the Shuowen jiezi. Interestingly, Lin's usage of the wu is similar to other Taiwanese dance choreographers, such as Wang Lizhuan 王麗娟, in southern Taiwan. I arranged an interview with Ms. Wang to discuss how she choreographed images of religious ecstasies.

Before interviewing Ms. Wang, I had assumed that her southern Taiwanese dance company's folk content was derived from southern Taiwanese culture, perhaps even tribal culture. In fact, one of her productions included a Taiwanese tribal ritual enactment. But when pressed to describe the ritual actor in that production, she explained that the ritual dancer was a wu. I asked her why her production, based on contemporary folklore traditions, incorporated a wu and not an âng-i or jitong?

Ms. Wang responded that jitong, âng-i, and wu are not the same. She told me that the female Taiwanese ecstasies were wu and were related to the nine tribes, especially the Pingdong area tribes. Repeating the Shuowen jiezi's definition, she told me that the role of the female wu had historically been to dance and to pray for rain, using the phrase qiyu 祈雨 (pray for rain). She said the female âng-i was from a different religious tradition but she would not elaborate on the âng-i, except to say that she did not think that they were authentic. In contrast to the âng-i,
she noted how the wu had a much higher social position. I assumed this meant that the wu's higher position was derived from his or her Chinese historical connection.

Sensing that Ms. Wang was creating her company in the image of China, I asked her if she considered China to be an important part of the dance company's native component. She expressed that she simply looked at customs to understand Taiwan. All indications suggested that Ms. Wang also considered the wu to be predecessor of the Taiwanese jitong.

Lin Huaimin views the difference between female wu and âng-î in a similar way. Although he does not go so far as to say that wu represent tribal customs, Lin says that the reason he uses a wu as opposed to an âng-î is because there may be many imposters in the âng-î profession. Further, he says that jitong and âng-î work in concert with minor gods and never with major deities. He is quick to point out that Li Fengmao 李豐模, someone with whom he maintains regular correspondence, also supports this position.

Lin Huaimin’s English definition of the female wu as a ‘shaman’ is borne out of nostalgia for the Chinese classics as well as Western definitions of the wu. Lin’s wu may represent what is Chinese and Confucian about Taiwanese society: the classics, the myths and the rituals. She is a tool used to remind Taiwanese people of their shared Han Chinese ancestry and to evoke a memory of religious ecstacies in Chinese classical texts and poetry and their performance. At the same time, however, Lin stresses how she opposes and is oppressed by the government, which might also suggest Confucian ideology. Lin’s definition of the wu might be summarized as a female shaman who represents the oppressed people.
Chapter 8—Interpretation of Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs*

Lin Huaimin continues the tradition of appropriating the images of religious ecstasies and the aesthetics of transformation from Chinese classical texts and the *Nine Songs* in his new interpretation. During an interview in November, 1997, Lin said he had wanted to produce the *Nine Songs* for years but had not known how until after the Tiananmen massacre of 1989. At this point, Lin understood how the *Nine Songs* was political. According to Lin, the song “Homage to the State” was the political and social key to the production, describing a battle and how it was lost. Lin aptly suggested that the theme of battle and the theme of rituals, expressed in other songs, were inextricably connected. Instead of looking to a battle for modern inspiration, Lin looked to the modern political injustices of China and Taiwan—the Tiananmen massacre of 1989 and the February 28, 1947 incident (2/28 incident). He believed that these were archetypes of how politicians had always treated their followers. “Homage to the State” was similar to the Tiananmen massacre of 1989 and the 2/28 incident because it also discussed how people had given their lives to protest unfair oppression. It was from this political perspective that Lin shaped his rendition of the *Nine Songs* ritual cycle in the form of a dance production for a modern Taiwanese audience.

**Interpretation**

Lin begins with a ritual to invite the spirit world to attend his staged performance. This is followed by the dance between the female wu and the sun god, reaching a climax in the sexual
union between the two. Joyce Liu notes how the dance in the second song of the production is an indigenous Taiwanese fertility dance: "The dance of the priestess [female wu] is a typical indigenous Taiwan ritual dance of fertility. The life force and the sexual connotation of her gestures come from her belly, and from the earth."¹ Lin interprets the sexual union of the female wu and the sun god as a necessary but implicitly degrading fertility dance, explaining that the sun god is a symbol of many things. He is a male chauvinist pig, a metaphor for how deities treat people and how politicians treat their followers:

Dongjun came and had sex with her. Of course she is beautiful. But . . . he is a chauvinist pig. And the most important thing is that after the rite of mating he deserted her. So actually there are two things here. A rite of personalization and all its gender things. And also it is the human being and the god. That is how a god treats human beings. How a man treats a woman.²

The Classic of Poetry’s “Birth of the People” is also important in Lin’s rendition of the Nine Songs. Lin remarks on his choice:

The thought behind the ritual is not from Nine Songs. It is from Shijing. Actually it is from ‘Sheng min’ in which his mother [Jiang Yuan] steps in the footprint of the God . . . . The mythological footprint is a metaphor for a dance step—Jiang Yuan follows the


²Lin Huaimin, interview, tape recording, 1997.
footstep of the God—ludi wuming . . . The dance step of a god in a ritual in which the noble young prince of the Zhou family, perhaps with a mask, performs as the god. And Jiang Yuan as the leader of the females dances with him and gets pregnant . . .

Emphasizing the female wu’s lineage to Jiang Yuan and what Lin calls the “Earth Mother” tradition, Lin’s female wu wears a low cut red dress draped over one shoulder. Lin Huaimin’s modern interpretation of the *Nine Songs* follows Wen Yiduo’s interpretation that Jiang Yuan danced with a wu, suggesting that she may have been one herself.

Lin views the ritual and the person who has a unique and exclusive relationship with Heaven as the female wu. She acts in the tradition of Jiang Yuan, who gets pregnant during a fertility dance. Jiang Yuan’s self-sacrifice to the deity and of her virginity restores harmony to the community and establishes her as what Lin calls the “first Earth Mother of China.” Interestingly, many of Martha Graham’s productions also focussed on the power of women and goddess imagery.

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4Similar to the Empress of Heaven and the popular maritime goddess who is known for her acts of compassion in Taiwan today, Mazu 媼祖, Lin’s female wu wears a red dress. Unlike the goddess Mazu, this is not because she has committed suicide: it is a symbol of the female wu as Earth Mother.

5Chen Mengjia has suggested that Nu Wa, another important woman in Chinese mythology, was a female wu who became a goddess through a process of reverse euhemerization. Chen Mengjia, “Shangdai de shenhua yu wushu,” 536.

6For a discussion of Jiang Yuan’s key role as a mother, see Chow Tse-tsung, “The childbirth myth and ancient Chinese medicine: A study of aspects of the wu tradition.”
The female wu in the first song has a sexually violating experience similar to Jiang Yuan, which is what ultimately empowers her. Although she is a ritual victim, she is not without her own power. She represents the distinction between oppressive state rulers and the local peoples they oppress. In the production, the female wu’s acceptance of oppression, enables her to revive her people in the final act.

After the possession has taken place, she appears confused and even upset and struggles to bring herself out of the trance. What I believe Lin is trying to express is that the sexual union, although superficially consensual, requires the final submission of the female wu. Self-sacrifice enables her to enter into a sexual union with the god, which re-establishes harmony between the community and the god. In essence, Lin views the ritual through the lens of the female wu: her self-sacrifice for the people represents a locally based superior and purer form of political intervention by the people and for the people. It also invests her with spiritual and political power needed to transform and liberate in the “Lady of the Xiang River” and in the “Homage to the State.”

Lin’s third song is a combination of the original songs “Greater Master of Fate” and “Lesser Master of Fate.” Here, he re-enacts on stage how all beings, human and otherwise, do not act freely but are constantly moved or suppressed by some other power. Lin comments:

Greater Master of Fate and Lesser Master of Fate and of course the whole section is talking about how people are manipulated by each other and how human beings are manipulated by the God of fate and how Greater Master of Fate is manipulated by Lesser
Master of Fate. In the end, the Greater Master of Fate and Lesser Master of Fate are manipulated by two puppets who are manipulated by two dancers. In this section manipulation is a word for the whole sequence.\(^7\)

The third song demonstrates how control is administered by all powerful and intangible forces. At first these forces are human, later they are divine and at the end of the scene, the controlling forces are puppets. Lin focuses on the abusive relationship between human beings and deities, paralleling the relationship between the retainer and the ruler in Chinese history. He represents several tiers of power relationships between men and women, \(yang\) and \(yin\), deities and men, deities and human beings, and deities and deities.

Lin develops his critique of oppression and oppressors in the song "Lady of the Xiang." He remarks:

Xiang furen is just being pretty and sad after being deserted by a date that never shows up. Now at a certain point, the shamaness comes in to take off ... the mask from Xiang furen. And here is a duet between the two women—one in white and one in red. One is all hips and the other one is affected with all kinds of court restrictions ... And in a way the female \(wu\) leads the dance, she has a certain kind of relationship with the people while Xiang furen doesn't have any relationship with them.\(^8\)

In Lin’s version of “Lady of the Xiang,” the goddess is alone in what appears to be wedding attire. The wedding theme suggests that the song is about the practice in which young

\(^7\)Lin Huaimin, interview, tape recording, 1997.

\(^8\)Lin Huaimin, interview, tape recording, 1997.
brides and later female wu were sacrificed to the River Earl. The wedding veil and carriage become accessories that represent how religious ecstacies have been repressed by the spirits, by elite culture and by Confucian ideology. But Lin’s production is ambiguous and does not elaborate on the significance of the wu’s marriage to the River Earl. Lin agrees that both the wedding veil and mask could be interpreted as symbols of Confucian restrictions placed upon the goddess’s behaviour.9 In contrast to the male gods, her behaviour is weakened and compromised by Confucian ideology.

The mask, which is an aesthetic of transformation, labels the otherworldly figure and emphasizes the importance of religious transformation in the production. Lin reverses who wears the mask in his dance production. Although early Chinese texts contained references to wu who wore masks in ritual exorcisms, all the deities, and not the wu, wear masks. When the female wu removes the mask from the face of the goddess, the appearance as well as the roles change. The role reversal implies liberation. By lifting the mask from the face of the goddess, the female wu releases her from the bonds of her role and makes her appear as if she is an ordinary woman. In contrast, the mask has little power over the female wu, who continues to dance freely and sexually while she wears it.

Lin’s comments that the Nine Songs express the oppressed to oppressor relationship between human beings and gods and rulers are perhaps most aptly articulated in “Lord in the Clouds.”10 The modern portrayal of “Lord in the Clouds” is unlike the original and features

neither the female wu nor the love affair between her and the deity. Instead, the Lord in the Clouds is another deity who is a villainous oppressor. Well-dressed men bend and lunge to accommodate the Lord in the Clouds's great demands and the purpose of the deity's descent seems to be purely about his ability to dominate and terrorize the people.

The "Mountain Goddess" scene follows "Lord in the Clouds" to show how oppression has affected the people. Lin's "Mountain Goddess" is male and not female. Because he does not wear a mask, he is also not a god. Lin says that the male dancer who plays the part is the "shattered and broken human soul," dancing on the stage to express his grief.

"Homage to the State" begins where "Mountain Goddess" left off. Here, Lin re-enacts the mass execution of political dissidents during the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, with dancers who wear baskets over their heads and then are shot to death. Next, names are called out in the many languages of the people of Taiwan and dancers fall to the floor of the stage, re-enacting the 2/28 incident in which thousands of people were murdered by the mainlander government. Then, one dancer evokes the well-known image of the youth and the tank during the Tiananmen incident. When the female wu arrives on stage she draws attention to these murders, and uses her relationship with the spirit world to perform a traditional soul summoning ritual to revive them. Lin says that it is in this song where the oppression of men and women by deities reaches its climax. As before, the female wu in this song is a trope for the key role of the religious ecstatic in Chinese antiquity and contemporary Taiwan. But unlike previous songs, Lin

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does not use a metaphor to portray the oppressors. His staged images and voices identify the oppressors as Japanese colonizers in one case, as the Nationalist Chinese and mainlander government in the 2/28 incident, and as the Chinese Communist government in the Tiananmen massacre. Lin conveys the female wu’s central role as a ritual expert, keeping the past customs alive and through the performance of ritual heals those who have been killed through social injustice. At the end of the scene all the dead are then further transformed into deities, as Lin conflates all of his theatrical imagery. In “Homage to the State” Lin completes his religious and political critique, illustrating how the female wu is powerful.

Lin fuses the historical rendering of the Nine Songs with various classical and modern themes, both religious and political, through the use of a re-appearing character called the “Traveller.” The “Traveller” is sometimes a modern figure who appears in a suit, tie and hat, and at other times may be a female or male dressed in a casual outfit.

The “Traveller” who appears in the song “Lord in the Clouds” exemplifies how the character functions. This “Traveller” is defined by the way he moves. In this song he moves around the stage on roller skates that enable him to move quickly around the deity who lumbers across the stage supported on the back of two formally dressed men. The speed and ease with which the “Traveller” moves contrasts with the heavy and slow movements of the stern deity.

In other songs, the “Traveller” similarly glides through the images presented on stage. He or she rides on a bicycle and a tricycle. As a comic device, the “Traveller” resembles the clown or jester in Western theatre, offering respite to the intense drama and allowing the
audience to laugh and to view the performance from another perspective. André Lepecki adds that the "Traveller" forces the audience "to experience a critical estrangement."\(^{13}\)

Zhang Zhaotang 张照堂, a critic of the *Nine Songs*, mistakes the "Traveller" as an image of Lin Huaimin, saying that the "Traveller" is Lin Huaimin in male or female disguise. Lin refutes this interpretation and argues how he does not need the "Traveller" to be omnipresent in the production. Besides, all the characters are essentially extensions of his own persona. He says that the "Traveller" is simply a performance tool employed to indicate that this is a production, spanning a long historical period of time and geographical distance.\(^{14}\)

**Conclusion**

Lin’s dance version of the *Nine Songs* criticizes the oppression by the governments, by Confucian ideology and by China. The governments are Japanese, Chinese and mainlander. He depicts the Japanese colonizers, who murdered Taiwanese dissidents and intellectuals. He depicts the mainlander Chinese (as he interprets it), who killed thousands of protestors during the 2/28 incident. He also depicts the modern Chinese governing officials during the Tiananmen massacre. Lin refers to these as universal acts of government oppression.

In addition to highlighting government oppression, Lin’s dance interpretation targets elite culture, and in some respects Confucianism. He does this with a contradictory mix of nostalgia

\(^{13}\)André Lepecki, "Postcolonialism, Interculturalism: Taiwanese choreographer Lin Huaimin has found a new voice for dance: André Lepecki interprets his *Nine Songs*," *Ballett International* 1 (1996): 4.


- 229 -
and desire to revise Confucian texts and commentaries. Lin’s production blends Chinese and Western traditions: he begins from early Chinese texts, linking his female wu to Jiang Yuan, the mother of the Zhou people and defining his wu as a female ritual performer based on the *Shuowen jiezi*’s definition. She dances with the other dancers of his dance company named after Huang Di’s sacred Cloud Gate Dance. But he choreographs the dance using Western dramatic elements such as Martha Graham’s “theatre of ecstasy,” and the theatrical character called the “Traveller,” who dresses like a Westerner.

Lin’s emphasis on Jiang Yuan and not on Houji may also allude to his view of men and of the ancestral deities (in whose image the deities of the *Nine Songs* might be loosely created) to whom Jiang Yuan was sacrificed. Lin calls his wu the oppressed and the deities in the production the oppressors, saying that his interpretation of the second song is intended to show how the female wu’s experience with the god is the same as Jiang Yuan’s. Both females acknowledge that the god is in a higher position and because of that position pay homage to the god. The respect shown is both religious and sexual. But Lin suggests that the god abuses his position and takes advantage of the smitten woman, noting that the way the god treats the female wu is symbolic of how he treats all people who are in positions inferior to him.

Nevertheless, Lin’s female wu is not a victim. She realizes that her self-sacrifice is necessary to appease the gods, as she does in the second song to the great spring god. The female wu sacrifices herself for the people and her self-sacrifice represents a superior form of political intervention.
Lin develops the idea that the production might be a critique of Confucian ideology in the song "Lady of the Xiang." Here, the female wu appears for the second time. The removal of the mask is a symbolic gesture that signals the emancipation of the goddess. In the final song, "Homage to the State" Lin completes his critique when he shows how the female wu is powerful because she is supported by the people. The people support her because she has the ability to heal and she demonstrates this ability when she performs a traditional ritual in which she brings the dead back to life. Her staged and dramatic performance draws on the belief that wu and jitong in Chinese antiquity, and in contemporary Taiwan still summon the soul and engage in spirit possession.
Conclusion

This dissertation has presented a discussion of religious ecstacies in early Chinese texts, the *Nine Songs* and in a dance drama. The textual parts of this dissertation and the contemporary dance drama are joined by the role of the *wu* and the experience of ecstasy as performance and transformation. In an effort to understand the *wu*, I have selected Confucian and Moist texts, as well as Daoist texts, and compared the role described in these texts with the role of the religious ecstatic described in the *Nine Songs*, and in Lin Huaimin’s *Nine Songs*. I selected these texts because Lin expressed to me that he had based his interpretation on the *wu* in Chinese history. But this dissertation is more about Chinese religion and less about history.

The discussion has therefore focussed on the relationship between ecstatic religion and Martha Graham’s “theatre of ecstasy.” Throughout the dissertation, ecstasy has been the locus of discussion and has enabled me to explore how texts referred to the performance of the *wu* (as a religious ecstatic and as an actor) and how the specific objectives of the performance differed every time. Early Chinese texts referred to some of the traditional ways *wu* performed in a state hierarchy, and later historical texts described religious ecstatic performances in both state and local contexts. Lin’s construction of the contemporary role of the *wu* in the *Nine Songs* may have been informed by his knowledge of classical texts and traditional religious performance, as well as his familiarity with contemporary Taiwanese religious ecstacies. Lin’s *wu* demonstrated how ecstasy was still important even though the *wu*’s religious performance had been reinvented for a theatrical performance on the stage.
In examining this transition from religious performance to theatrical performance, I have kept in mind Richard Schechner's concept of theatrical "intervention/invention." Implicit in religious and theatrical performance is the idea that performance depends on transformation. Each time during the performance, props and music transform the stage and the mood. The way the performer moves and behaves makes him or her the character. Further, an audience comes to a performance to experience the figurative journey that takes place on the stage, to be swept away from routine living, and to be moved.

In addition to transformation in a performance context, the aesthetics of transformation have also enabled me to bridge the gap between the seemingly disparate genres of classical texts, poetry, commentaries and dance. In the preface, I discussed how taotie images on masks and bronze vessels could have both described and enabled transformation, and possibly ecstasy, in early Chinese religion. Looking for similar images of transformation in texts and the way decorative language was employed to develop them, I tried to find a motif of movement. This movement, which implied dynamism and religious transformation, might have been the language that scholars and religious ecstacies themselves used to describe performance. Dance movement was the way the Shuowen jiezi described early Chinese wu and it was also the way that Lin Huaimin's wu expressed her own ecstasy in the contemporary dance drama. Lin Huaimin also used masks and their implicit power of transformation to cover the faces of the deities in his production.
The popularity of Lin Huaimin's contemporary interpretation of the *Nine Songs* (and other productions of his that involve religious ecstasies) is in part due to the popularity of religious ecstasies on Taiwan. Lin's production suggests that there is a relationship between today's *jitong* and the *wu* of Chinese antiquity. Like the *jitong*, Lin's female *wu* also performs fertility dances and soul summoning, and enters trance. Lin says: "We are cut off from our culture: . . . Everybody knows that the *Nine Songs* is a group of beautiful verses but if you ask them what it is all about they don't know . . ."¹ Lin is in effect trying to revive the religious past through using the classics and by reviving the *wu* as the central figure in the ritual process. The importance of the *wu* and the link between their roles as secular and sacred figures is evidenced in Lin Huaimin's production of the *Nine Songs*.

But the popularity of Lin's production may also be because it interprets a Chinese text from a modern political perspective. Many of Lin's patrons share his Chinese ancestry and his feelings about his ancestral nation's unjust actions during the Tiananmen massacre. Some of these people may also remember the 2/28 incident that eclipsed in importance the departure of the Japanese from the island of Taiwan, and the end of a long era of colonization.² Lin's *Nine Songs* can be seen as a discourse on Taiwanese identity and an attempt, whether conscious or unconscious, to reconnect Taiwanese people with their political, social and religious heritage.


²Here, I am relying on recent scholarship that examines how historical memory is created. In particular, Lin uses the female *wu* to recreate an understanding of Taiwan's collective past. See for instance, Billie Melman, "Gender, History and Memory: The Invention of Women's Past in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *History and Memory* 5, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1993): 6–39.
using the wu. Lin makes a step toward influencing the perception of Taiwanese identity in this production, combining Chinese and Confucian classical images and ideas with popular religious acts. In addition, Lin's interpretation highlights the hybrid nature of Chinese and Taiwanese identity, incorporating music and dance from other communities with Chinese heritage such as Bali, the Miao people, and Tibetans. The result is that the production begins from a Confucian perspective but gradually moves away from it, incorporating other aspects of culture to establish a more inclusive definition of what represents Taiwanese identity. But like his own identity, Taiwanese identity is ambiguous.

In his production, the female wu performs the role of a leader, which is a role women are generally lacking in male dominated modern Taiwanese politics.³ As a leader in the performance, the female wu, symbolizing women with less power in real life, also highlights the dilemma of Taiwan as a marginal world identity excluded from the United Nations, but still very powerful economically. Possibly, Lin uses the female wu not only because of her Chinese ancestry but also because she evokes recent women's movements in Taiwan.

Lin's female wu is the medium for the religious, political and social leimotifs of the production, allowing the audience to remember and re-identify with their shared Taiwanese history and to re-define ideas of what it means to be Taiwanese. By viewing the Nine Songs as a religious and social commentary of the oppressed to oppressor relationship, Lin shows how the

³See Free China Review 49, no. 5 (May 1999); and Bih-Er Chou, Women in Taiwan politics: overcoming barriers to women's participation in a modernizing society (Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner, 1990).
female wu, as the oppressed Taiwan, endures the violent actions against her and even is able to resist. This oppression has been by the Dutch, by the Japanese, and after the Nationalist forces fled China, by the mainland Chinese after 1948. The female wu like Jiang Yuan before her presents herself as the sacrifice to a powerful deity. She survives a near rape experience with the sun god and after the ritual she unites and harmonizes the people. This song proves her ritual expertise.

Many studies have recently emerged dealing with the difficulty of defining Taiwanese identity and in particular the difficulty in finding an identity that moves away from the traditional Confucian perspective. The mainlander Taiwanese group might assert that Taiwanese identity is chiefly Chinese and Confucian. Under Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945, Taiwanese and Chinese identities had been subsumed under the category Han Chinese when the colonizers had instituted Assimilation Regulations 同化政策. The intention had been to eradicate Taiwanese cultural traditions including what the Japanese colonizers perceived as “Licentious Temples and Perverse Religious Sects” (yinci xiejiao 淫祠邪教). There had also been bans on speaking Chinese and teaching Taiwanese history in schools.

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4 After the Japanese won the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, under the Treaty of Shimoneski they took Taiwan and the Penghu islands from China and ruled there between 1895 and 1945. The Japanese left Taiwan in 1945 after defeat by the Allied Forces. This was not the first instance of colonizing in Taiwan. The Dutch had briefly ruled Taiwan between 1622 and 1661.

Conclusion

Lin Huaimin consciously begins from his own Chinese heritage naming his company after the Yellow Emperor’s dance. Patricia Ebrey discusses how people have historically identified themselves as Chinese because they perceive themselves to be related to these ancient sage kings. When asked whether he considers himself to be approaching the production from a Chinese or Taiwanese perspective, Lin notes how difficult it is to distinguish between what is Chinese and what is Taiwanese: “I don’t know what is Chinese. Is Jiang Zemin more Chinese than I am? No. But I would rather say that he is more rigid than I am. But don’t ask me if I am a Chinese or Taiwanese. Especially when I am choreographing I never really go into this.”

Hai Ren’s “Taiwan and the Impossibility of the Chinese” highlights the difficulties modern Taiwanese face in negotiating a unified Taiwanese identity. Hai discusses how younger Taiwanese generations are not as nationalistic as the older generations and are increasingly looking beyond their geographical and Confucian ties to China for identity. This new search has been in part motivated by the lifting of martial law in 1987 and the removal of the taboo of discussing the events of the 2/28 incident. New discussion has triggered the desire on the part of performing artists, among others, to grapple with how to unify Taiwanese identity. Hai Ren


8Many Taiwanese works on the 2/28 incident have emerged in recent years. Zhang Liangze 張良澤 notes how the 2/28 incident was the precursor to the Taiwanese independence movement. Yang Yizhou 楊逸舟 and Zhang Liangze 張良澤, Er erba minbian: Taiwan yu Jiang Jieshi 二二八民變: 台灣與蔣介石 (Taipei: Qianwei, 1991), 13.

- 237 -
Conclusion

writes: "Taiwanese culture here emerges as one national culture, based on re-framing different groups in Taiwan—social, political, ethnic, and economic—into a unified national group." Lin’s female wu is a brilliant trope for all these marginalized identities and as an agent of collective memory she helps to create a more inclusive understanding of the Taiwanese and Chinese past for Taiwan’s younger generations. As in Lin’s production, this new identity incorporates Confucian ancestry but is not limited to it.

In many ways Lin Huaimin’s interpretation, although ambiguous, was written in response to Zhu Xi’s commentary. Lin politicizes the religious ecstatic, the rituals, and the deities, who become transformed into universal symbols of oppression. Like Zhu Xi and his philosophical interpretation, Lin combines elements from popular religion such as the fertility dance, Buddhist imagery such as the lotus pond, and vague Confucian characterizations such as the image of the Lady of the Xiang River to create his religious interpretation of the Nine Songs.

Although Lin never mentioned the Zhuangzi in his discussions with me about the Nine Songs, his use of ecstatic religious experience as a tool to criticize the state resembled the Zhuangzi. He was redefining the wu based on his understanding of performance in early Chinese texts, using aesthetic imagery and the religious ecstatic as a vehicle to express his views. Like

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Zhuangzi he also elaborated on the importance of transformation in religious ecstatic performance, but unlike the Zhuangzi he expressed transformation through the "theatre of ecstasy."

In addition, Lin's production might not have considered the influences of textual references to religious ecstacies covered in this study, such as in the Classic of Changes, Rites of Zhou, Analects, Mencius, Mozi, Zhuangzi and Classic of Mountains and Waters. He did, however, mention that his production was influenced by his understanding of Chinese classical texts and Jiang Yuan from the Classic of Poetry, and that he was attempting to create a line of powerful female wu originating in the self-sacrience of Jiang Yuan.

Similar to Wang Yi and Zhu Xi, Lin uses the Nine Songs to make a political statement. Yet Lin says that his interpretation comes before Confucianism. Philosophically, Lin's production (similar to all of his productions), is created within the Chinese and Confucian dance tradition originating in the Cloud Gate Dance of the Yellow Emperor. In addition to the wu being a symbol of oppression, in some respects, she herself is a symbol of enduring Chinese imperialism. An oppressed and marginalized female wu is still the leader of the Taiwanese.

The way Lin has rendered the modern Nine Songs says something about the ambiguity of his identity. Although he is Taiwanese, he has Chinese ancestry and an appreciation for the traditions of that ancestry. As a choreographer he has been trained in the West in the technique of Martha Graham's "theatre of ecstasy," as well as other techniques. For these reasons, Lin's

11In conversation, Lin did mention how he was familiar with Chinese classical texts and kept a set of them at his office. Lin Huaimin, interview, tape recording, 1997.
production can be viewed as a critique of, and nostalgic discourse on, many of the cultures that define him.

Martha Graham’s “theatre of ecstasy” has enabled Lin to produce such a complex production. Graham’s dance philosophy evolved out of her own interests in Zen Buddhism and meditation and the desire to discover an interior reality. Eventually, her dance philosophy became a recognized technique in which dancers used muscular movement to stir themselves. Lin in the Nine Songs and in many other productions focussed on ecstatic performers in his Chinese heritage, who through transformation of consciousness were empowered.

Lin’s use of dance ritual and political theatre to shape public perception is not new. His dance interpretation of the Nine Songs builds on previous state critiques of local religious practice and at the same time restores the songs to what might have been their original performance context, using real life political events that changed the perception of rulership in China and Taiwan.

Martha Graham’s modern-day “theatre of ecstasy” also helps us to understand how Chinese religious ecstacies performed in religious and theatrical contexts. Religious ecstacies were and are today defined by the way they move their bodies and how their bodies appear. Imagery and movement are also things that the “theatre of ecstasy” uses to convey a dancer’s transformation of consciousness. Lin’s production is not mere entertainment but in many ways is

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- 240 -
Conclusion

a performance with religious, historical and political relevance. The wu with its many images and roles continues to speak to us.
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Lushi chunqiu 呂氏春秋. SBBY edition.

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Nine Songs

Choreography: Lin Hwa-min
Music: Indigenous music of Taiwan, traditional music of Asia, and percussion score by the Ju Percussion Group

Set Design: Ming Cho Lee
Lighting Design: Lin Keh-hua
Costume Design: Lin Hwa-min, Li Ruey-chih
Mask Design: Lin Shu-feng, Wang Yao-chun
Slide Design: Chang Hwei-wen
Calligraphy: Tong Yang-tzu
Technical Design: Richard Loula

First performed on August 10, 1993, at the National Theatre, National Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Center, Taipei, Taiwan.

The Chinese calligraphy which is projected at the beginning and at the end of Nine Songs may be translated as:

On a lucky day with an auspicious name
Reverently we come to delight the Lord on High.
We grasp the long sword's shaft of jade,
And our girdle pendants clash and chime.
From the god's jewelled mat with treasures laden
Take up the fragrant flower-offerings,
The meats cooked in melilotus, served on orchid mats,
And libations of cinnamon wine and pepper sauce!
Flourish the drumsticks, beat the drum!

-excerpt from The Great Unity: God of the Eastern Sky, the first poem of Nine Songs

The rite is accomplished to the beating of the drums;
The flower-wand is passed on to succeeding dancers.
Lovely maidens sing their song, slow and solemnly:
Orchids in spring and chrysanthemums in autumn.
So it shall go on until the end of time.

- Honoring the Dead, the last poem of Nine Songs

CAST

And yet the gods have never come...

GREETING THE GODS
Music: Greeting the Gods, by the Tsou tribe of Ali Mountain, Taiwan

The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
The Traveller: Huang Hsu-hui
The Celebrants: The Company

HOMAGE TO THE SUN GOD
Music: Crossing the Line, by Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings

The Sun God: Huang Hsu-hui
His Guards: Sung Chao-chiu, Wang Chih-hao
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
The Celebrants: The Company

HOMAGE TO THE GODS OF FATE
Music: Sangwa Dupa, Tibetan Buddhist Tantras of Gyuto

The Greater God of Fate: Wang Chih-hao
The Lesser God of Fate: Tsao Kuei-shing
The Greater Puppet: Sung Chao-chiu
The Lesser Puppet: Tang Ing-shiong
Human Beings: The Company

Intermission

HOMAGE TO THE GODDESS OF THE XIANG RIVER
Music: Maganati, by the Puyuma tribe, eastern Taiwan.
Geuding Mandulapiti-Laduang
Aguna-igno, by Japanese Court Gamelan

The Goddess of the Xiang River: Wang Chiang-ru
The Shaman: Lee Ching-chun
Her Maids: Chang Yu-luhan, Chu-l-wen
Chou Wei-piun, Lu chih-yen, Wen Ching-ching
Young Men: Liu Chih-kuan, Shen Yung-cheng
Tang Ing-shiong, Tsao Kun-hsing, Wu Chuen-hsiang
Her Guard: Liu Chih-kuan, Tang Ing-shiong
And yet the gods have never come...

Music for Homage to the Sun God used with permission from the copyright owner:
Crossing The Line,
composed by Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings, performed by Henry Wolff,
from the CD TIBETAN BELLS III/ THE EMPTY MIRROR
(Celestial Harmonies 13027-2) 1988 by Celestial Harmonies.

Nine Songs, or Jiù Ge, were written more than 2,400 years ago by Qu Yuan, one of the greatest Chinese poets. They have since come to represent the epitome of classical Chinese literature. The songs, actually poems, were adapted from a series of ritual verses. There are actually eleven “songs” in Qu’s cycle of poems (in Chinese, the word “nine” often simply means many). Nine of the songs address various gods and goddesses. A tenth honors the spirit of...
warriors killed in battle, and the last is a short hymn or recessional. The verses speak of life, of nature, of love unfulfilled, of the dark hours of loneliness, and of an honorable death. Throughout the cycle, the poet laments the fact that the gods fail to appear, or that they appear and quickly vanish.

In ancient rituals in which these songs were originally sung, shamans would assume the role of the gods and goddesses, as well as the celebrants. Unfortunately, the music, costumes, and dance steps used in these rituals have long been lost.

In Lin Hwa-min’s full-length production, the choreographer uses Qu Yuang’s Nine Songs as a springboard for creating a contemporary dance drama. He draws on the images of particular gods and goddesses that appear in the poems, but he reinterprets these images, giving them a new dimension that reflects his own concerns about Chinese history and about modern life. The result is a rich interplay of contrast between classical and contemporary images.

Much as the narrator in Qu Yuang’s original poems becomes frustrated by the gods, the dance itself deals with the frustration of human existence. This frustration builds up to a violent climax, then abruptly moves toward a meditative ending of spiritual calmness.

Like the poems, the dance also reflects the cycles of nature. The first half moves from day to night, from the bright and powerful Sun God to the dark and demoralizing Gods of Fate, who bring manipulation and abuse to the human world. The second half of the dance follows the seasons: Spring arrives with the Goddess of the Xiang River, who gradually becomes a symbol of wasted youth. Summer is represented by the God of the Clouds, whose powerful authority bears down on the two mortals who carry him throughout this section of the dance. In autumn is the lonely dance of the Mountain Spirit, who seems to foresee the pain ahead. Finally, the winter brings death and destruction, and the time to pay homage to those who have suffered and died.

Some of the images in the last two sections, “Homage to the Fallen,” and “Honoring the Dead,” are inspired by recent Chinese history. They draw, for example, on the Japanese occupation of Taiwan (when those to be executed were led to their deaths with baskets over their heads); on what is known as the “2-28 Incident” (an uprising that began on February 28, 1947, in which thousands of Taiwanese people were executed by the new Chinese government); and China at the end of the 20th Century. During this section, the names of people who were executed or otherwise sacrificed their lives are recited, using Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, the Hakka dialect, and the language of the Atayal, an indigenous tribe of Taiwan. The recitation spans the history of China and includes names of ancient heroes as well as those who died in the “2-28 Incident.”

The set for Nine Songs also reflects nature’s cycle. Set designer Ming Cho Lee has used the lotus as his main motif — the flower and its huge, full leaves appear in an actual lotus pond at the front of the stage, and the set itself is an enlarged detail of a lotus painting by Taiwanese artist Lin Yu-san. The lotus is a classical Chinese symbol for the cycle of death and rebirth. The flower buds in spring, blossoms in the summer, withers in autumn, and rots in winter — to return again in the spring. The final image of the dance reflects this hope of rebirth.

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT NINE SONGS...

“...The dancing of 24 members of the group is fascinating and virtuous. The audience did not experience an exotic evening with colorful folklore, but a breathtaking art of movements.”

— Elfriede Schmidt
Darmstader Echo, Germany
May 26, 1995

“To appreciate Lin’s achievement, imagine taking biblical texts and being able to express through movement their wisdom and stories, all the while relating them to events that spanned centuries”

— Ruediger Engert
Salzburger Nachrichten, Austria
March 8, 1994

“It seamlessly adapted a variety of Asian aesthetics...Every dapple of light and curve of muscle is an event”

— Pamela Squires
The Washington Post, U.S.A
October 17, 1995

“One of the most important dance works of our time...the audience celebrates the ensemble with overwhelming ovations.”

— Jochen Schmidt
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany
May 20, 1995

“...The technical perfection of the dancers is breathtaking.”

— Ruediger Engert
Salzburger Nachrichten, Austria
March 8, 1994

“You gave in to the magic. You lost all feeling for time. The audience was thrilled.”

— Von H.G. Prihil
Wiener Zeitung, Vienna, Austria
March 8, 1994
A work of epic resonance and contemporary relevance.

"Lin Hwai-min has choreographed a striking pictorial spectacle. The effect is that of a huge Chinese scroll in which movement fills in the unfurling landscape with a series of economical brush strokes."

"The two hour piece is both poetic in its meditative beauty and occasionally exasperating in its very richness.

"An eye-filling and thought-provoking spectacle."

— Anna Kisselgoff
The New York Times, U.S.A
October 20, 1995

"Lin, a student of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, presents tradition in elicate, poetic images in which the dance is as expressive and electrifying as in the aesthetics of his teachers."

— Gerald Siegmund
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany
May 26, 1995

"An exciting mixture of rites and modern dance. The audience experiences a play full of shamanistic power, a conjuration of transcendental unity between heaven and earth in an everlasting rhythm."

— Roland Langer
Frankfurter Rundschau, Germany
May 26, 1995

"This brilliant new full-length work will take the modern dance world by storm. It will also elevate Lin Hwai-min, unchallenged giant in Asia, to the ultimate level occupied by only a tiny handful including his early mentors, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham: one of the greats of the 20th century.

"He seduces the senses with his intoxicating fusion of East and West, past and present...the primitive and the cerebral...For two unforgettable hours the audience was transported — ultimately to heaven.

"Jelmer a work was fashioned for the Asian body and soul, it is this one. The movements, flowing and fusing like mercury to encompass age-old traditions from Bali to Tibet, demand awesome control, suppleness, speed and strength — all possessed by Cloud Gate’s phenomenal dancers."

— Zelda Cawthorne
South China Morning Post, Hong Kong
August 30, 1993

"The biggest surprise to us is, however, how successful Lin Hwai-min and his ensemble have harmoniously blended Oriental and Occidental forms of artistic expression. Nine Songs is a perfect example which shows that without losing one’s ethnic roots Orient and Occident can be combined — almost like an Utopian prediction of East and West finally binding together."

— Horst Koegler
Stuttgart Zeitung, Germany
June 17, 1995

"The audience is immediately fascinated by this metaphorical expression of Far Eastern mystic. It is a spectacle which combines, in a similar fashion as original shaman dances, life, death and reincarnation — heaven and earth — gods and human beings, and unite these opposites on a transcendental level where everything vibrates in a harmonic rhythm."

— Roland Langer
Wiesbadener Kurier, Germany
May 25, 1995

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT
CLOUD GATE DANCE THEATRE...

"International dance festival saved by Formosa"
— Le Figaro
Paris, France

"Fascinating, combining modern dance techniques with traditional Peking opera movement igniting a unique new culture."
— Time Magazine
U.S.A.

"Lin Hwai-min has succeeded brilliantly in fusing dance techniques and theatrical concepts from the East and the West."
— New York Times
U.S.A.

"The audience was moved to tears and celebrated the company with rousing ovations"
— Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
Germany

"Lin Hwai-min, unchallenged giant of Asia one of the greats of the twentieth century"
— South China Morning Post
Hong Kong

"His company is not only on a par with the best modern dance companies of the Old World and the New, but perhaps even beyond"
— Ballet International
Berlin, Germany

"The best dance group of this years Spoleto Festival, or of any other year was the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre."
— Sun Herald
Melbourne, Australin

"Lin Hwai-min blends the East and the West into a third world of his own"
— Der Tagesspiegel
Berlin, Germany

"Lin Hwai-min is the most important choreographer in Asia"
— Berliner Morgenpost
Berlin, Germany

"Wholly irresistible"
— Dance News
New York, U.S.A.
According to legend, Cloud Gate is the name of the oldest known dance in China, a ritual dance that was performed 5,000 years ago. In 1973, choreographer Lin Hwai-min adopted this classical name as the name for the first modern dance company ever organized by Chinese dancers: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre.

Cloud Gate's rich repertoire includes Portrait of the Families, a 110-minute examination of the last 100 tumultuous years of Taiwanese history from the point of view of the family, incorporating abstract dance, modern slide projection, and the recorded voices of Taiwanese telling their life stories in a variety of regional dialects; Songs of the Wanderers, a ninety minute production inspired by the wealth of religious practices found in Asia and loosely based on Herman Hesse's account of Siddhartha's quest for spiritual enlightenment, which brings both performers and audience through a cycle of searching, cleansing and renewal; Nine Songs, a two-hour production featuring an actual lotus pond built into the orchestra pit, a magnificent set by Ming Cho Lee, and a dance that reinterprets a cycle of ancient ritual songs as modern theatre, rich with arresting images of the past and the present: The Tale of the White Serpent, an exquisite dance drama based on a Chinese folk tale; Legacy, a 90-minute work depicting the epic voyage of Chinese pioneers who braved the stormy ocean to settle in Taiwan more than 300 years ago; Nirvana, a sensual illustration of the Buddhist theme; Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1954, which transforms Stravinsky's Russian pagan rite into a modern drama set in the streets of Taipei: Dreamscape, an evening-length production which uses slide projection and explores the identity crisis of modern Chinese caught between the conflicting cultures of East and West: The Dream of the Red Chamber, a full-length work based on the famous classical Chinese novel of the same title, with a spectacular set designed by Ming Cho Lee; My Nostalgia, My Songs, depicting the lives and dreams of young people from a rural background inspired by pilgrims of India, in which the dancers enact a timeless journey of the spirit on a stage covered with golden rice grains.

The company is comprised of 24 dancers, whose training includes Tai Chi, meditation, Chinese opera movement, modern dance and ballet. Cloud Gate performs extensively in Taiwan in venues ranging from the lavish National Theatre and Cultural Centers to high school auditoriums in far-away villages. Cloud Gate's annual outdoor performance on the plaza of the National Theatre and in Kaohsiung and Taichung have drawn audiences numbering 60,000 people every performance for the past few years. In addition, the company has made 28 overseas tours throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and the U.S.A., including performances at the Next Wave Festival, New York, and the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. in 1993, receiving both critical and public acclaim for its astonishing fusion of concepts from both sides of the globe.

LIN HWAI-MIN
Founder and Artistic Director
Founder and Artistic Director of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Mr. Lin Hwai-min studied Chinese opera movement in his native Taiwan, modern dance in New York, and classical court dance in Japan and Korea. He founded the company in 1973.

One of the most renowned choreographers in Asia, Mr. Lin often draws his inspiration from Asian myths, legends and folklore, and blends traditional theatre elements with Western dance techniques in his choreography, creating a unique dance style that is both distinctive and exciting.

He has been the recipient of the most prestigious arts awards in Taiwan. In 1983, Joyce has International named Lin Hwai-min one of the ten outstanding young persons in the world for his artistic achievement. In 1996, Mr. Lin received an Award of Lifetime Achievement from the Department of Culture of New York City and Chinese-American Council. On July 13, 1997 he received an Honorary Award of Fellowship by the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts.

An acclaimed writer, his novel Cicada is an all-time best seller in Taiwan and several of his works have been translated into English and published in the United States. He holds an MFA from the Writers Workshop, University of Iowa.

Mr. Lin founded the department of dance at Taiwans National Institute of the Arts in 1983 and served as its chairman for five years. In 1993 and 1994 he was the founding dean of the institutes graduate dance program. He has also been a guest artist in the Dance Department at UCLA and has taught and performed at the American Dance Festival. In 1990 he was a Fulbright scholar at the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of Arts, New York University.

Lin Hwai-min made his debut as an opera director when Rashomon received its world premiere in 1996, to raving acclaim at the Graz Opera, Austria.

Rashomon is scheduled to be revived for the spring season of 1998.

MING CHO LEE
Set Design
Ming Cho Lee is one of the foremost set designers in America today. His extensive credits include work in dance, opera and theatre. Born in Shanghai, Mr. Lee attended Occidental College and UCLA. He has worked with several leading dance companies, including Martha Graham Dance Company, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, Eliot Feld Ballet, Jose Limon and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

From 1962 through 1973, he was the principle set designer for Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival.

He has designed sets for several opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera and has also designed for theatre groups including Arena Stage in Washington D.C., Mark Taper Forum, Guthrie Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and the Manhattan Theatre Club. internationally, Mr. Lee has designed productions for Covent Garden in London, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, The Royal Danish Ballet, and the production of Les Contes d'Hoffmann, directed by Lo King-man for the Hong Kong Cultural Center in 1981. Mr. Lee recently designed the set for Lin Hwai-min's opera directing debut Rashomon, which premiered in 1996 at Graz opera, Austria.

His numerous awards and distinctions include...
include a Tony Award, a New York Drama Desk Award, and New York and Los Angeles Outer Circle Critics Awards. In 1996, Mr. Lee received a Bessie Award for his design for Nine Songs. In the Spring of 1995, his stage design works were exhibited at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts for the second time. As an architectural theater consultant, Mr. Lee designed for Joseph Papp's Public Theater and the State University of New York at Purchase. Currently, Mr. Lee is a professor and the Chairman of Design Department at Yale University School of Drama.

LIN KEH-HUA
Lighting Design
Technical Supervisor of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre. Mr. Lin is one of the most celebrated lighting designers in the Chinese speaking world. He has been the principal designer for Cloud Gate since 1981. Mr. Lin's designs employ western aesthetics and technology as well as oriental philosophy and mentality. This style has received increasing recognition among the world leading choreographers and other performing artists, including Lin Hwai-min, Helen Lai, Lo King Man, Mei Chu Yin, and Tong Kai Fan. Mr. Lin was the guest production consultant for the opera Rashomon's world premier in September 1996, produced by Graz Opera, Austria, directed by Lin Hwai-min, set design by Ming Cho Lee.

Mr. Lin's Cloud Gate credits encompass much of the company's major repertoire, including the internationally acclaimed Legacy, Dreamscape, The Dream of The Red Chamber, and the epic piece Nine Songs. Mr. Lin's lighting design for Nine Songs was referred to by renowned lighting designer Jennifer Tipton as a masterwork. His other recent credits include opera, The Tales of Hoffmann produced by The Hong Kong Cultural Center in 1991; Nine Songs choreography by Helen Lai, which premiered in Hong Kong in 1990, and The Kingdom of Desire, a Chinese Opera adaptation of Macbeth which has toured to London, Japan and Hong Kong.

Mr. Lin is an instructor of lighting design at the National Institute of the Arts in Taipei and is the foremost theatre consultant in Taiwan.
### Appendix C

**Incidence of tong 童 and/or wu 武 in the first 155 juan of the “Daofa huiyuan”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Juàn Page Book</th>
<th>Text (repetition) (r)</th>
<th>Juàn Page Book</th>
<th>Text (repetition) (r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.02b.884</td>
<td>wumiao 巫妙</td>
<td>22.05b.888</td>
<td>jintong yunu 金童玉女(r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.03a.884</td>
<td>tiantong 天童</td>
<td>22.09b.888</td>
<td>jintong yunu 金童玉女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.03a.884</td>
<td>gongtong 宫童(r)</td>
<td>23.16a.888</td>
<td>jintong 金童</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>qingtong 青童</td>
<td>23.17b.888</td>
<td>jiuguang tongzi 九光童子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>gongtong 宫童</td>
<td>23.18b.888</td>
<td>jintong 金童</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23.29a.888</td>
<td>tongzi 童子</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10a.884</td>
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<td>27.14b.889</td>
<td>shiwu 師巫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>27.15a.889</td>
<td>tongzi yunu 童子玉女</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.01b.885</td>
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<td>tongzi 童子</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.07b.885</td>
<td>tongshen 童神</td>
<td>27.15b.889</td>
<td>xiewu 邪巫</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>jintong yunu 金童玉女</td>
</tr>
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<td>30.18a.890</td>
<td>guantong 官童</td>
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<tr>
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<td>39.05b.891</td>
<td>qingtong 青童</td>
</tr>
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<td>zitong 梓潼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>wenchang zitong 文昌梓潼</td>
</tr>
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<td>haitong 孩童</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.17b.887</td>
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<td>44.30a.392</td>
<td>shiwu 師巫</td>
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Appendix C—1
### Appendix C

**Incidence of tong 童 and/or wu 王 in the the first 155 juan of the "Daofa huixuan"**

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Appendix C—2
### Incidence of tong 童 and/or wu 巫 in the first 155 juan of the "Daode huixuan"

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Appendix C—3