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Western Citadel: A Note on the
Transmission of the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文
(*Writ of the Three Sovereigns*)

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1. Introduction

Transmission is a crucial mechanism for the spread of Chinese religion. It ensures the survival of teachings from one generation to the next and punctuates a master's relationship with students. In many traditions, transmission also serves as the semantic pivot around which communications between the divine and human realms are established. In Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) Confucian “weft-texts” (*weishu* 緯書), the will of Heaven is often expressed by a mythical creature's bestowal of a sacred scripture, chart, talisman, or other token on a sage ruler.¹ Later on, the transmission of sacraments became the template for rituals of ordination while ensuring the continuity of spiritual lineages, twin pillars in the articulation of Daoist identity.² Daoist movements such as the Tianshi dao 天師

¹ The “weft-texts” (*weishu*; alternatively, *chenwei* or *chanwei* 讖緯), otherwise known as the “Confucian apocrypha,” belonged to a genre of portent literature typified by prognosticatory commentaries on the classics and the interpretation of omens. Their principal aim was to legitimate the political power of new rulers. For more on the apocrypha, see Chen Pan, *Gu chenwei yantao ji qi shulu jieti*; Dull, “A Historical introduction to the Apocryphal (*Ch'an-wei*) Texts of the Han Dynasty;” Kaltenmark, “Les Tch'an-wei,” 363-73; Seidel *Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha*,” 291-371; Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Isho no kisoteki kenkyū*; and by the same authors, *Isho shūsei*. For the differences and similarities between talismans (*fu* 符), charts (*tu* 圖), scriptures (*wen* 文; *shu* 書), and registers (*lu* 籙), see Despeux “Talismans and Diagrams,” 498-540; and Seidel, *ibid.*, 291-371.

² For an overview of Daoist ties to Confucian weft texts, see Seidel's seminal “Imperial

道, Shangqing 上清, and Lingbao 靈寶 elaborated on early models of transmission by emphasizing the principle of a direct and personal revelation.³ Thus, Taishang Laojun 太上老君 directly revealed materials to Zhang Daoling 張道陵, the Perfected (*zhenren* 真人) to Yang Xi 楊羲, and the Celestial Worthy of the Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊) to Ge Xuan 葛玄.

The Sanhuang 三皇 or “Three Sovereigns” is another tradition that finds its genesis in the transmission, or more accurately, the revelation of documents from divine figures to human ones.⁴ It developed around the *Sanhuang wen* 三皇文 (*Writ of the Three Sovereigns*), also known as the *Sanhuang neiwen* 三皇內文 (*Esoteric Writ of the Three Sovereigns*), a text primarily made up of talismans (*fu* 符) for summoning deities.⁵ While the original is no longer extant, significant portions are preserved in the *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* 洞神八帝妙精經 (*Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors from the Canon for Storing the Divine*) and scroll (*juan* 卷) 25 from the *Wushang biyao* 無上秘要 (*Supreme Secret Essentials*).⁶ Between the fourth- and sixth-centuries, the three-scroll *Sanhuang wen* grew into a fourteen-scroll corpus known as the

Treasures and Taoist Sacraments,” especially 325-27, where she addresses the Sanhuang tradition; see also Yasui Kōzan, “Dōkyō no seiritsu to shin’i shisō,” 45-60.

³ On transmission rites in Daoism, consult Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission: A Taoist Ordination Rite of A.D. 711*, 72-98; and Stein, “Textes taoïstes relatifs à la transmission des livres révélés,” 453-57.

⁴ Pregadio’s *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 11-20, discusses the parent notions of transmission, lineage, initiation, and ordination. Revelation is explained as the transmission of a sacred scripture from the realm of deities to that of humans; Pregadio, *ibid.*, 24-26.

⁵ For general remarks on talismans, consult Despeux “Talismans and Diagrams,” 498-540; Mollier, “Talismans,” 405-29; Robinet, *Méditation taoïste*, 29-57; Robson, “Signs of Power: Talismanic Writing in Chinese Buddhism,” 130-69; Seidel, “Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha,” 291-371; Strickmann’s “Ensigillation” chapter in his *Chinese Magical Medicine*, 123-93; and Wang Yucheng, “Zhongguo gudai daojiào qiyi fuming kaolun,” 25-50.

⁶ The *Sanhuang wen* is first attested in sources from the early fourth century, but it is believed to have circulated during the third century. The *Badi miaojing jing* is dated between

Dongshen jing 洞神經 (*Canon for Storing the Divine*), one of the Three Caverns (*sandong* 三洞) of the Daoist Canon. Despite the tradition's importance, only a handful of scholars have published studies about the Sanhuang and the transmission of its texts. In Japan, Fukui Kōjun and Ōfuchi Ninji devoted sizeable chapters of their books to the subject, but few others followed suit.⁷ Chinese scholarship is equally scarce; aside from Chen Guofu's treatment of the *Sanhuang wen* in his *Daozang yuanliu kao* 道藏源流考 (*Studies on the origins and development of the Daoist Canon*), the efforts of Liu Zhongyu and Ren Jiyu may also be mentioned.⁸ Similarly, European and American scholars have generally opted to shy from the topic of the Sanhuang, with the notable exception of Poul Andersen, and Isabelle Robinet.⁹

The present article aims to contribute to the small body of work on the *Sanhuang wen* and its tradition in the hope of stimulating further research in this often overlooked but very relevant corner of Chinese religion. More specifically, this study focuses on Lord Wang of the Western Citadel (Xicheng Wangjun 西城王君), the first link in the scripture's human chain of transmission, and a short list of his immediate spiritual descendants, from Bo He 帛和 down to Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343 CE). Due to the paucity of sources, Lord Wang is usually neglected in studies that consider the *Sanhuang wen*. However, a number of works dealing with the Shangqing movement discuss Lord Wang in his capacity as a revelatory

the fourth and sixth centuries. The *Wushang biyao* was compiled at the end of the sixth century, but it is based on earlier materials.

⁷ Fukui Kōjun, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, 170-204; and Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 219-96; Kobayashi Masayoshi, *Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 223-25, and 371-73, also touches on the *Sanhuang wen*, although in lesser detail.

⁸ Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 71-78; Liu Zhongyu, "Sanhuang wen xintan;" and Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo dao jiao shi*, 124-27.

⁹ Poul Andersen's "Talking to the Gods" is the only western language study entirely dedicated to the Sanhuang tradition; Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, 17-34, covers the *Sanhuang wen* in the context of its influence on the development of the Shangqing movement.

figure, sometimes hastily identifying him with Wang Yuan 王遠 or other immortals.¹⁰ These associations are often tenuous and warrant reconsideration. The following pages will thus attempt to untangle the many lives of Lord Wang and determine his role in the formation of the Sanhuang tradition. In so doing, a clearer picture of the incipient stage in the transmission of the *Sanhuang wen* should emerge.

2. *Bo He and the Southern Esoteric Tradition*

The earliest reliable reference to the *Sanhuang wen* is found in the fourth-century *Baopu zi neipian* 抱朴子內篇 (*Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Inner Chapters*).¹¹ While a number of passages mention the scripture, the following one describes the circumstances of its transmission in considerable detail:

I heard Zheng Yin say that among the important works on the Dao, none surpass the *Sanhuang neiwen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* 五嶽真形圖 (*True Form Charts of the Five Peaks*). The ancients, immortal bureaucrats (*xianguan* 仙官), and accomplished men (*zhiren* 至人) respect and jealously guard their methods. They only transmit them to those bearing the title of 'immortal' (*xian* 仙). The writings are handed down once every forty years, after swearing an oath of blood (*shaxue er meng* 歃血而盟) and establishing a bond through offerings.

These scriptures are found in all the famous mountains and the Five Peaks, but they are hidden inside stone chambers and inaccessible places. When one who is fit to receive the Way enters the mountain and meditates on them with pure intentions and sincerity, the mountain spirits will open the

¹⁰ See pp. 124-130 for a sample of these. We are in a terrain where biography and hagiography are inextricably enmeshed. This article aims not to establish historicity, but historical *logic* within the Sanhuang tradition as it pertains to Lord Wang of the Western citadel.

¹¹ Hereafter *Baopu zi*.

mountain and allow the adept to see the texts. Such was the case of Bo Zhongli 帛仲理, who obtained [the *Sanhuang neiwen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*] inside a mountain. He immediately set up an altar and made an offering of silk, upon which he copied down the texts before departing. The texts should be kept in a purified place, and whenever they are used, it is necessary to first announce one's intentions, as is done when submitting a proposition to one's lord or father (*ru feng junfu* 如奉君父).¹²

A few elements from this passage pertaining to transmission call for closer examination. Firstly, the textual materials are covetously protected, handed down once every forty years to the most deserving of initiates. Their bestowal from one generation to the next is sealed by a blood oath (*xuemeng* 血盟).¹³ This covenant is representative of a Southern religious culture rooted in the Confucian apocrypha (*weishu*) and *fangshi* 方士 (master of recipes) traditions of the

¹² *Baopu zi* 19.336-37; Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion*, 314. Other passages from the *Baopu zi* that deal with the *Sanhuang wen* can be found on 15.272-73; Ware 255, and 17.300; Ware 282. See p. 119, below, for a translation of the former.

¹³ This rite, according to which officiants smeared their lips with the blood of a sacrificial victim, arose in Zhou Dynasty (1045-256 BCE) and was practiced in political or religious circles until the Han; see Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 43-50. Blood oaths particularly attracted the ire of the Tianshi Dao since they exemplified the wastefulness of "profane cults" (*sushen* 俗神). A description of the tensions between Tianshi dao devotees and indigenous Southern cults is found in see Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations," 7; and "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 145, n. 69, by the same author; see also Stein, "Les religions de la Chine," especially 19.54.3-5. Despite being strongly discouraged, the practice of blood oaths managed to survive in Southern China until the sixth century, when it was gradually replaced by offerings of gold and silk, or the ingestion of (blood-colored) cinnabar; see Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 189. S.3750 and P.2559, two Dunhuang manuscripts from the Liang Dynasty (502-557 CE) edited by Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536 CE), preserve a later version of the ritual. The fragments contain transmission rites for the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu*; see Ōfuchi, *Tonkō dōkyō mokuroku hen*, 331-32.

Han Dynasty.¹⁴ The esoteric nature of the transmission is further highlighted by the fact that the *Sanhuang wen* is hidden deep inside a mountain, revealed only to the worthy. Like the blood oath, the storing of sacred scriptures in caves within peaks is a recurrent theme in Southern religious transmission narratives. The paradigmatic example of the grotto revelation is found in a contemporaneous cousin to the *Sanhuang wen* that circulated in the same Southern intelligentsia family networks; the *Lingbao wufu xu*'s 靈寶五符序 (*Prolegomenon to the Five Lingbao Talismans*) famous "Grotto Passage" reproduces many of the details from Ge's description of the initial Sanhuang transmission, including the revelation of a sacred document deep within the cavernous entrails of a mountain.¹⁵

The mention of reputed *fangshi* Bo He, cognomen Zhongli, is another thread that ties the *Sanhuang wen* to a rich heritage of second- or third-century mantic and prognosticatory currents. Elsewhere in the *Baopu zi*, the figure is portrayed as a sage who appears among the people from time to time, and then abruptly

¹⁴ Or what Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*, 64, terms the state-sanctioned fields of "natural philosophy" and "occult knowledge" on the one hand, and "shamanic customs" on the other.

¹⁵ *Taishang lingbao wufu xu*, 1.7a-1.11a. An abridged version of this same passage survives in *Baopu zi*, 12.229; Ware 209-10; cf. *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣 (*Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor*), 2.6b. For more on grotto revelations, consult Bokenkamp's "The Peach Flower Font and the Grotto Passage;" and Kaltenmark's "*Ling-pao*: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux." The *Lingbao wufu xu*, 3.5b, also refers to sacrificial blood oaths, although this specific section of the text already displays some concessions to the Tianshi dao. The early layers of the *Lingbao wufu xu*, dated to the late third or early fourth centuries, heavily rely on the traditions of the *fangshi* and the Confucian apocrypha. On this point, see Yamada Toshiaki "Futatsu no shinpu: *Gogaku shingyōzu to Reihō gofu*," and his "*Reihō gofu* no seiritsu to sono fuzuiteki seikaku;" see also Gil Raz, "Creation of Tradition: The Five Talismans of the Numinous Treasure and the Formation of Early Daoism," 286-304. For more similarities between the traditions of the Sanhuang and the Wufu (Five Talismans), see note 44, below.

decamps. He is sighted in Luoyang 洛陽 towards the end of the third century, dispensing advice and solving riddles posed to him by advanced adepts.¹⁶ He claimed to be 8700 years old, and while no one knew his true age, people readily believed that he was over a thousand. Later, he precipitately departed for an unknown destination.¹⁷ Ge Hong also discloses that when Bo He manifested in Luoyang, his immortal status was confirmed by a witness who verified that his pupils were indeed square.¹⁸ The sixth-century *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (*Annotated Classic of Waterways*) remarks that Bo He's gravesite could be found just outside Luoyang, and that the stele was still standing two centuries after being erected in 302.¹⁹ This provides an approximate date of death that is consistent with the *Baopu zi*'s timeline. The *Shuijing zhu* gives Bo's *ming* 名 as Hu 護, and Ba-Shu 巴蜀 (in present-day Sichuan) as his provenance. Conversely, the figure's hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Biographies of Divine Immortals*) presents him as a native of the Han commandery of Liaodong 遼東

¹⁶ Bo He is also the foremost figure of the eponymous Bojia dao 帛家道 lineage. No definitive account of the Bojia dao's beliefs and practices survives, but the designation seems to have been a largely pejorative umbrella term for any cult or rite related to the autochthonous esoteric traditions of the South. It appears for the first time in Tao Hongjing's *Zhoushi mintong ji* 周氏冥通記 (*Mr. Zhou's Records of his Communication with the Invisible World*), 1.13a, where it is identified with the aforementioned "profane cults." In the *Zhengao* 真誥 (*Declarations of the Perfected*), 4.10b, Tao castigates Xu Mai 許邁 (300-348 CE) for having exploited many people while he was a follower of the Bojia dao. Given Bo's presence in both Baojia dao and Sanhuang lineages, and considering the latter's indelible ties to Southern religious identity, it is not impossible that the *Sanhuang wen* was ingredient to the Bojia dao's textual patrimony. On Ge Hong's connection to the Bojia dao, see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 277.

¹⁷ *Baopu zi*, 20.350-51; Ware 327; see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 236; and Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 137.

¹⁸ *Baopu zi*, loc. cit.; Ware 328. Petersen, "The Early Traditions Relating to the Han Dynasty Transmission of the *Taiping jing*," 194-95, discusses this passage.

¹⁹ *Shuijing zhu*, 15.206, from Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 137; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 276.

(in present-day Liaoning), and only lists his cognomen.²⁰ He later moved to the Mount Difei (Difei shan 地肺山) region (in present-day Jiangsu), the same area where Ge Hong's family hailed from, to study under Dong Feng 董奉.²¹ After imparting a number of methods, Dong dismissed his pupil and encouraged him to

²⁰ *Shenxian zhuan*, from *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (*Imperial Digest of the Taiping Xingguo Reign Period*), 663.6b. Chen Guofu, loc. cit., believes the *Shenxian zhuan* account to be inaccurate, but as Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 133, n. 1, explains, a person's "origins" often refers to where a subject's clan is officially registered, and does not always denote the place of birth. What is more, either Bo He or his master might have been of foreign extraction; Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 281, points out that before the second half of the fourth century, individuals who became Buddhist monks would change their surname to that of their master; if the latter was a foreigner, the surname would constitute an ethnicon indicative of cultural or geographic origins. Bo—a sinicized transliteration of the surname of the ruling family from Kucha—was used for Kuchean. A number of Buddhist monks from the late third, early fourth centuries had Bo as a surname. For example, Bo Yuan 帛遠 and his brother Bo Fazuo 帛法作 were renown scholars and pioneers of "gentry Buddhism." Bo Sengguan 帛僧光 and Bo Daoyou 帛道猷 were respectively an ascetic and a scholarly recluse of considerable repute in Southern China. The more famous Bo Shilimituo 帛尸梨蜜羅, alternatively Bo Śrimitra, a dhāraṇī master of the Kuchean royal house, drifted southwards with the mass emigrations, and was celebrated as a "venerable curiosity" among displaced Northern aristocrats. For more on Bo Śrimitra's presence in the South, see Zürcher, *ibid.*, 103-04. Bo He's *Shenxian zhuan* vita survives in various sources; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 133-36, and 387-88, for a list of these; also refer to Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 75-76, and 276-77; Yamada Toshiaki, "Shinsen dō" 369-71; Hu Fuchen, *Wei Jin shenxian dao jiao*, 56-57; and Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo dao jiao shi*, 1: 95-96. External textual evidence from as early as the fifth and sixth centuries ties the *Shenxian zhuan* to Ge Hong. Nonetheless, the issues of authorship and datation remain unresolved as many of the entries from the *Shenxian zhuan* appear to have been composed relatively late, in some cases well into the Song (960-1279 CE); for a complete discussion, see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 118-28.

²¹ Dong Feng has his own hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan*; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 141-46, and 390-93. He is said to have been about forty years of age during the reign of Sun Quan 孫權 (229-252 CE); this agrees with the chronology from Bo He's vita. However, Dong Feng's entry makes no mention of Bo.

seek further teachings far and wide.²²

Bo He then traveled to Xicheng Mountain (Xicheng shan 西城山), where he served Lord Wang (Wangjun 王君). Prior to taking a leave, Lord Wang instructed the *fangshi* to remain in a cave and contemplate the north wall without respite. After three years of gazing at the wall, some characters suddenly appeared to Bo:²³

Carved by someone in ancient times, [the words] were those of recipes for [making] divine elixirs from the *Taiqing zhongjing* 太清中經 (*Central Scripture of Great Clarity*), as well as those of the *Sanhuang tianwen dazi* 三皇天文大字 (*Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns in Great Characters*), and the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*.²⁴ These were all manifest on the stone wall. Bo He recited all ten thousand words, but there were places where he did not understand the meaning. Lord Wang therefore bestowed oral instructions (*koujue* 口訣) on him, whereby he became an earthbound transcendent on Linlu Mountain (Linlu shan 隆慮山).²⁵

²² *Shenxian zhuan*, from *Taiping yulan*, 663.6b; Campamy, *ibid.*, 134.

²³ *Shenxian zhuan*, from *Taiping yulan*, 187.4a; Campamy, *ibid.*, 134-35.

²⁴ The *Sanhuang tianwen dazi* is a variant title for the *Sanhuang wen*. It appears fairly early, in the *Baopu zi* for instance; see page 119, below, and page 145, n. 112. A distinction between the *Sanhuang wen* and [*Sanhuang*] *Tianwen dazi* is drawn in later materials to discriminate between the text obtained by Bo He and that issued from a second transmission line; see sections 6 and 7 of the present article for more on the topic.

²⁵ *Shenxian zhuan*, from *Taiping yulan*, 663.6b. I follow Campamy's translation of the passage from *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 135, n. 9, with some modifications. The *Xianyuan bianzhu* 仙苑編珠 (*Threaded Pearls from the Garden of Immortals*), 2.17b, and the *Leishuo* 類說 (*Classification of Sayings*), 3.9b, confirm this account. However, the *Taiping yulan*, 187.4a, and *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (*Record of Initial Learning*), 24.585, report that the words from the *Taiqing jing* 太清經 (*Scripture of Great Clarity*) alone appeared on the wall; see Campamy, *loc. cit.* In a paraphrase of the passage, the *Dongshen badi miaojing jing* 洞神八帝妙精經 (*Scripture of the Wondrous Essence of the Eight Emperors*), 15b, lists the “*Taiqing zhongjing jinye shendan zhi fa*” 太清中經金液神丹之方 (“methods of divine elixirs and golden liquor from the *Central Scripture of Great Clarity*); see page 122,

This passage narrates the same events that are recorded in the *Baopu zi*, but in more detail. The transmitter, Lord Wang, is clearly identified, and while his role with respect to the revelation is strictly an intermediary one, he does directly administer oral instructions to Bo He. Even more significant than swearing an oath or the presentation of offerings, the conferral of oral instructions to complement the revelation is the crux of the transmission ceremony. Without these instructions, revealed materials are unintelligible arcana.²⁶ In the example of Bo He's reception of the *Sanhuang wen*, the revelation and transmission occur in close succession, but it is not uncommon for adepts to acquire scriptures years before they are given oral instructions, if they obtain them at all. The importance of oral instructions is underscored in Bo's *Shenxian zhuan* vita from the *Xianyuan bianzhu* 仙苑編珠 (*Threaded Pearls from the Garden of Immortals*), where Lord Wang prefaces his indications for prolonged cave contemplation with the admonishment: "Instructions on the Great Way may not be hurriedly obtained (*Dadao de jue fei ke zu de*) 大道之訣非可卒得."²⁷

3. Lord Wang and the Essential Instructions to Bo He

Oral instructions were ideally not to be written down, but in practice, some probably were.²⁸ More than forty scrolls of the Shangqing revelations for example, are introduced as transcribed oral instructions that Yang Xi received

below. A second, considerably shorter version of Bo He's hagiography in the *Shenxian zhuan* makes no mention of the *Sanhuang wen*, *Wuyue zhenxing tu*, or *Taiqing zhongjing*; it solely links the figure to *waidan* 外丹 (external alchemy) techniques; Campany, *ibid.*, 135-36, and 387; see also Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 176.

²⁶ Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 80, elaborates on the role of oral instructions in transmission rituals.

²⁷ *Shenxian zhuan*, in *Xianyuan bianzhu*, 2.17b; Campany, *ibid.*, 388.

²⁸ Ge Hong's master, Zheng Yin 鄭隱, was adamant about not having his own teachings and sayings reproduced, although the scriptures he transmitted could be copied; *Baopuzi* 19.332; Ware 312.

from the Perfected. The *Badi miaojing jing* contains a “Xicheng yaojue sanhuang tianwen dazi” 西城要訣三皇天文內大字 (“Essential Instructions from the Western Citadel on the *Celestial Writ of the Three Sovereigns in Esoteric Great Characters*”) that is organized around ninety-two talismans for summoning various deities.²⁹ This text is presented as the *Sanhuang wen* and a transcription of the accompanying oral instructions as spoken by Lord Wang. In a discussion on the use of talismans for the purpose of prescience, Ge notes:

Some people use the *Sanhuang tianwen* to summon the Director of Destinies (Siming 司命), the Director of Dangers (Siwei 司危), the Lords of the Five Peaks (Wuyue jun 五岳之君), the Headmen of the Roads (Qianmingtingzhang 阡陌亭長), or the spirits of six *ding* (*liuding zhi ling* 六丁之靈). All make themselves visible to people, and reply to various inquiries. They make good or bad fortune as clear as if it were held in the palm of one’s hand; whether distant, near, abstruse, or profound, all can be known in advance.³⁰

Divinatory talismans for conjuring these very same deities are found in the *Badi miaojing jing*’s “Xicheng yaojue,” each one accompanied by a set of summary instructions for their application.³¹ A substantial narrative section precedes the ninety-two talismans; it consists of Bo He recounting some of the directives uttered by Lord Wang on the day the *Sanhuang wen* was revealed to him on Mount Xicheng.³² An annotation to the title introduces the section:

²⁹ *Badi miaojing jing*, 12a-29b.

³⁰ *Baopu zi*, 15.272-73; Ware 255.

³¹ The talismans for the Director of Destinies, the Director of Dangers, the Lords of the Five Peaks, the Headmen of the Roads, and the spirits of six *ding* are found in *Badi miaojing jing*, 17a, 17b, 21ab, 19a, and 18a, respectively.

³² Bo’s retelling of his exchange with Lord Wang spans from *Badi miaojing jing*, 12a to

Ritual practices (*shiyong* 施用) and established forms (*licheng* 立成; talismans) of the Immortal of the Western Citadel (Xicheng xianren 西城仙人) hidden inside the Dark Hill (Xuanqiu 玄丘). Recorded by Duke Bo (Bogong 帛公). Received on the third day of the first month on the first year of the Tianhan reign (100 BCE).³³

A few lines below, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Bo supplies a different date.³⁴

In the second year of the Taichu era of the Former Han (103 BCE), under solemn covenant, Lord Wang bestowed upon me the instructions (*jue*) for the Great Way (*Dadao*). He had me burn incense and perform purifications for three days and three nights, after which he revealed the teachings.³⁵

These are the same “instructions on the Great Way” as in Lord Wang’s warning from the *Shenxian zhuan*.³⁶ Reflecting the accounts from the *Baopu zi* and the *Shenxian zhuan*, the text then meticulously details the cavern transmission. After receiving a few alchemical recipes and a method for detaining

17a. Only a few passages are reproduced below. The rest of the section is made up of miscellaneous indications pertaining to morality, ritual protocol, the ingestion of herbal and mineral drugs, and more; the talismans that constitute the core of the “Xicheng yaojue” spread from 17a to 28b. The last folio, *Badi miaojing jing*, 29ab, elaborates on general directions for summoning, including the etiquette that is expected of the adept when interacting with deities.

³³ *Badi miaojing jing*, 12a.

³⁴ The earlier date from the prefatory note might indicate when the instructions were written down in the format found in the “Xicheng yaojue.” This would imply a lapse between the time the instructions were orally transmitted, and the time they were put into writing. However, the account from the *Baopu zi*, 19.336-37, notes that Bo copied the characters on site, shortly after the revelation.

³⁵ *Badi miaojing jing*, 12b.

³⁶ *Xianyuan bianzhu*, 2.17b.

hun 魂 souls, Bo He prostrates himself and does not rise:

The master [Lord Wang] said: ‘If the method is shallow, then it will be insufficient [for repelling] all evils.’ I then bowed down and uttered these words to the immortal before me: ‘When I was young and untalented, still bound by worldly matters, I traveled halfway around the world without returning home; far and wide, I sought the paths of life, clumsily harboring the teachings of the Dao [for the first time]. Ten years have passed since then. Later, I came to know the methods of sagely wonders and verifications of immortality. On these matters, I already have a modest amount of insight, but nothing more. Now if birds and beasts gaze upon a secluded dwelling, they will find grief, even in the broadest of confines. Yet people will find solace in this very dwelling. Deep streams and profound abysses are suitable for fish and water lizards, yet people will dread them. Each individual determines what is appropriate for him- or herself, but only the Dao is intimate to all.

Since I received the subtle essentials and the methods for governing the body, I have appropriately practiced their teachings with reverence, and kept them with me at all times.³⁷ Although my intention was to venerate [their principles] and further pierce [their secrets], my mind was not sufficiently capable.

In the past, I heard of the arts of subjugating gods and demons (*yishi guishen zhi shu* 役使鬼神之數), as well as the methods of summoning the hundred numina (*zhaoshi bailing zhi fa* 召致百靈之法). If one sits in reclusion, isolates all noxious influences, and applies these [techniques], then the thousand spirits of the earth will unite [with the adept]. The most abstruse

³⁷ If we rely on the chronology from Bo He’s *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography, these essentials and methods would correspond to those he learned from Dong Feng. The *Taiping yulan*, 663.6b, lists them as teachings for circulating pneumas (*xingqi* 行氣) and ingesting atractylis (*shu* 朮), while the *Xianyuan bianzhu*, 2.17b, adds avoiding grains; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 133-34.

of mysteries will be spontaneously and effortlessly pierced. If threats arise, they will be immediately dispelled. One who truly listens to these matters, finds no need to scrutinize texts. Naturally, Heaven and Earth have innate principles. [Similarly, the principles] of the Way and its Virtue [are innate and] cannot be taught. Still, even if Bian Que 扁鵲 were to let a patient die, surely he would not discard his needles.³⁸ Thus I implore you to grant me insight and illumination in order to release my mind.’

The master then had me sit again, and while fixing me with his gaze, he declared: ‘I still cannot teach you the Great Way. In three years’ time, I will return and consult with you.’ Thereupon, he rose from his seat and took his leave.³⁹ After three years of effort and persistence, I had yet to acquire further understanding.

The master [returned] and said: ‘You are now ripe for attainment. You may, once more undertake purification rites for three days, burn incense in offering, perform ritual ablutions, and announce your request for the Dao. You will then [receive] the *Sanhuang tianwen dazi*, and the methods of the divine elixirs and golden liquor from the *Taiqing zhongjing*. Do not divulge these to other people, regardless of whether they are dead or alive, even if they are the very spirits of your deceased father and mother.’ I then received the statutes (*xing* 刑) inside the Dark Hill.⁴⁰

³⁸ In other words, even if at first the Way is unfathomable, one should persevere in trying to understand it. The name Bian Que refers to both the mythical healer from the time of the Yellow Emperor, and the “historical” Qin Yueren 秦越人 (ca. 500 BCE), an early master physician of considerable repute that was named after his divine predecessor. Bian Que’s biography in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*), 105.2785-2794, suggests the figure emerged as the result of the early deity’s historicization. Han reliefs depict Bian Que as a human with the head of the bird; Lu and Needham, *Celestial Lancets*, xxxiii, and 79-87.

³⁹ These must be the three years during which, according to the *Shenxian zhuan*, Lord Wang was away and Bo He was staring at a cavern wall.

⁴⁰ *Badi miaojing jing*, 15ab. The alchemical recipe and method for detaining *hun* souls

Poul Andersen argues that both the *Shenxian zhuan* and *Baopu zi* served as bases for the composition of the “Xicheng yaojue,” which is necessarily a later creation.⁴¹ However, the reverse is just as likely. While the *Badi miaojing jing* is composed of multiple layers, close analysis reveals that a number of its ninety-two talismans were contained in the *Sanhuang wen*.⁴² The supporting materials, including the passage translated above, are quite possibly a version of the initial “oral instructions” that accompanied the scripture. While the cited dates, namely 103 BCE and 100 BCE, are considered spurious, some scholars believe that many, if not the majority of the texts that make up the *Badi miaojing jing* circulated as independent documents around the turn of the fourth century.⁴³ Yoshioka Yoshitoyo and Wu Chengquan for example, are confident that the “Baopu miyan” 抱朴密言 (“Secret Words of Embracing Simplicity”), the section immediately after the “Xicheng Yaojue,” was authored by its narrator, Ge Hong.⁴⁴ Finally, another clue that points to an early date of composition for the “Xicheng Yaojue” specifically, is that Lord Wang is not yet identified with the immortal Wang Yuan 王遠 (fl. 146-95). Indeed, by the fifth century both figures

that precede this passage appear in the *Baopu zi*, although there are substantial differences; compare *Badi miaojing jing*, 14b to *Baopu zi*, 4.86; Ware 95; and *Badi miaojing jing*, 14b-15a to *Baopu zi*, 5.112; Ware 102.

⁴¹ From Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 268.

⁴² See the discussion in chapter 3 of my “Situating the Sovereigns.”

⁴³ In the *Baopu zi*, 19.6b-7b; Ware 314-16, Ge Hong cites the *Sanhuang wen* (the classic itself states that...), implying that by the early fourth century, the text was no longer exclusively made up of talismans, and that instructions were already appended.

⁴⁴ Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō kyōten shiron*, 47; Wu Chengquan, *Hanmo Wei Jin Nanbei chao daojiao jielu guanfan yanjiu*, 132. The “Baopu miyan” extends over *Badi miaojing jing*, 29b-32a. Also consider the “Sanhuang sanyi jing” 三皇三一經 (“Scripture of the Three Sovereigns [on Guarding] the Three Ones”), that precedes the “Xicheng yaojue” in the *Badi miaojing jing*, 2b-4b; its style, format, and content closely parallel that of the *Lingbao wufu xu*’s “Zhenyi jing” 真一經 (“Scripture on [Guarding] the Real One”), 3.14a-23b, sometimes dated to the late third or early fourth centuries.

were definitively conflated.

4. Lord Wang and Wang Yuan

When Tao Hongjing authored his *Zhenling weiye tu* 眞靈位業圖 (*Tables of Ranks and Functions in the Pantheon*), the correspondence between Lord Wang and Wang Yuan was already well-established. Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is listed as a moniker for “Wang Yuan, cognomen Fangping 方平.”⁴⁵ Later, the thirteenth-century *Qingwei xianpu* 清微仙譜 (*Chronology of the Immortals of the Qingwei Heaven*) and the fourteenth-century *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (*Chronicle of Maoshan*) unequivocally equate Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel.⁴⁶ In contrast, earlier sources like the *Baopu zi* and *Shenxian zhuan* clearly draw a distinction between both personages.

The latter work is noteworthy for the long hagiography it devotes to Wang Yuan.⁴⁷ Despite an unremarkable career in officialdom, the Donghai 東海 (present-day Shandong) native was a consummate *fangshi*, well-versed in esoteric sciences and the weft-text (*weishu*) tradition. Eventually, he retired to the mountains, even refusing to serve Emperor Huan of the Han (Han Huandi 漢桓帝; r. 146-168 CE) when called upon. After decades of reclusive self-cultivation, he attained “release from the corpse” (*shijie* 尸解) in 185.⁴⁸ As a transcendent, he headed out for Mount Guancang (Guancang shan 括蒼山) (in present-day

⁴⁵ *Zhenling weiye tu*, 3a.

⁴⁶ From Penny, “Wang Yuan,” 1020.

⁴⁷ For the full *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography and a most pertinent commentary, see Campamy, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 259-70, and 456-63; Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 351, n*, offers a succinct list of texts that contain Wang Yuan biographies based on the *Shenxian zhuan* entry; also see Fukui Kōjun, *Shinsenden*, 126.

⁴⁸ The precise year of his *shijie* does not figure in the *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography. According to Benjamin Penny, “Wang Yuan,” 1019, “this date is ascertained by cross-checking with the details of Chen Dan [his patron and housemate]’s career as it is revealed in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 or *History of the Later Han*.”

Zhejiang). On his way, he stopped by the house of the peasant Cai Jing 蔡經 and instructed him in the essentials of the Way before promptly setting off once more. In an atypical case of *shijie*, Cai Jing also joined the ranks of immortals and subsequently departed.⁴⁹ Following a ten-year absence, the peasant reappeared to announce Lord Wang (Yuan)'s imminent return. Wang arrived with great fanfare and summoned Magu 麻姑.⁵⁰ They called for a mobile kitchen (*xingchu* 行廚) and enjoyed a lavish banquet, replete with intoxicating liquor from the celestial kitchens.⁵¹ After conferring a talisman and a text in a small box to

⁴⁹ The *Shenxian zhuan* records that “Cai Jing felt his entire body grow hot as if on fire. He craved cold water to bathe himself in; his entire family brought water and poured it over him, and it was like making steam by pouring water over hot rocks. This went on for three days. Then, once his bones had completely dissolved, he stood up, went into his room, and covered himself with a blanket. Suddenly he vanished. When his family looked inside the blanket, only his outer skin was left, intact from head to foot, like a cicada shell;” from Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 260; see 266 for an interesting discussion on this particularly rare variety of *shijie*.

⁵⁰ Schipper partially translates the segment concerning Wang Yuan's return to Cai Jing's house in *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 52-53.

⁵¹ Maspero reproduces the banquet passage from the hagiography in “Le Taoïsme dans les croyances religieuses des chinois à l'époque des Six-Dynasties,” chapter from his *Le Taoïsme et les religions chinoises*, 48-49. He sees in this passage an idealized depiction of what a communal meal in a Daoist congregation must have been like; see also Doré's rendering of Wang Yuan's vita in *Recherches sur les superstitions*, 12: 1118-20. Schipper noticed an interesting trend in the transmission legends of Shangqing scriptures: due to prohibitions on gender, sacred texts are often passed down from master to disciple by the intermediary of a female deity. What is more, the transmission often occurs on the occasion of a banquet. He cites the case of the *Han Wudi neizhuan* 漢武帝內傳 (*Esoteric Biography of Emperor Wu of the Han*), in which Small Lord Green Lad (Qingdong xiaojun 青童小君) hands down the twelve talismans to his disciple Emperor Wu of the Han (Han Wudi 漢武帝; r. 141-87 BCE) via Lady of the Highest Prime (Shangyuan furen 上元夫人). Another example from the same text is that of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwang mu 西王母), who transmits scriptures from two *male* deities, the Celestial Monarch of the Primordial Beginning (Yuanshi tianwang 元始天王) and the Lord of the Dao (Daojun 道君), to the (male) emperor. The *Shenxian zhuan* presents an analogous

one of Cai Jing's neighbors, a district-level commander named Chen 陳, Wang Yuan withdrew. Years later, he returned once more to bestow another text on Commander Chen. Its characters mostly resembled seal script (*zhuanwen* 篆文), although some were written in unintelligible Perfected Writ (*zhenshu* 真書).⁵² Aside from this last detail—the script that Bo He discovered in the grotto was also “unintelligible”—there is nothing in the *Shenxian zhuan* to connect Lord Wang with Wang Yuan.⁵³

Ge Hong's autobiography from the *Baopu zi waipian* 抱朴子外篇 (*Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity: Outer Chapters*) contains a terse

situation with Wang Yuan's transmission to Cai Jing during a banquet, and in the presence of Ma Gu. This is evocative of the same Wang Yuan's bestowal of talismans on Mao Ying 茅盈, during another banquet with the Queen Mother of the West. The scene is replicated once more with Wang Bao 王褒's initiation into transcendence by a jade maiden (*yuni* 玉女) right after a banquet, yet again; see *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 58-59. Schipper contends that this is a device to relegate to the background the much criticized sexual practices of previous Daoist currents without completely doing away with them; hierogamy is presented as an initiatory means to an end rather than the end itself; see Schipper, *ibid.*, 60, for a description Wang Bao's gender-bending feats in compliance with transmission protocol. Wang Bao is also discussed below, pp. 132-135. For more on mobile kitchens, see Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face*, 23-54.

⁵² *Shenxian zhuan*, from Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 264; Company, *ibid.*, 264, n. 478, adds that “seal script (*zhuanwen*) would have been an archaic but intelligible way of writing at this time, but the perfected script (*zhenshu*) was in a celestial writing system unintelligible to uninitiated mortals.” See Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 21, 381, and, 422, n*; and Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 112-16, for more on perfected script.

⁵³ Upon closer inspection, it appears that Wang Yuan and Ma Gu were originally local gods of the eastern coastal region; see Company's analysis in *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 268-70, and 457-62. He bases his argument on anomaly accounts from Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187-226 CE) *Lieyi zhuan* 列異傳 (*Arrayed Marvels*), but also passages from the *Yiyuan* 異苑 (*Garden of Marvels*) and the *Qi Xie ji* 齊諧記 (*Records of Qi Xie*) that betray the deities' origins in local coastal traditions. In contrast, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is typically tied to locales in Central or Western China. See pp. 130-138 below for a complete discussion.

reference to a certain “Fangping” whom he was wont to emulate.⁵⁴ The *Baopuzi* is equally fleeting in its sole mention of Wang Yuan. It occurs in the context of a discussion on apotropaic methods for use when entering the mountains: “some adepts carry Wang Fangping’s realgar pills at their waist.”⁵⁵ This brief reference may hark back to the figure’s *fangshi* roots, or hint at the looming fusion with the much more alchemically-inclined Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The latter appears in the *Baopu zi*, independently of Wang Fangping/Wang Yuan, in a section that deals with the concoction of elixirs (*dan* 丹).⁵⁶ Multiple passages from both the *Baopu zi neipian* and *waipian*, the *Shenxian zhuan*, and the *Badi miaojing jing* corroborate that Wang Yuan and Lord Wang are unequivocally

⁵⁴ *Baopu zi waipian*, 50.10b; Ware 16.

⁵⁵ *Baopu zi*, 17.305; Ware 291.

⁵⁶ *Baopu zi*, 4.82; Ware 89, reveals the method for preparing Lord Wang’s elixir (*Wangjun danfa* 王君丹法), instructing the adept to:

Place Sichuan cinnabar (*basha* 巴沙) and mercury inside some chicken eggs, and seal them with lacquer. Have a chicken incubate three such eggs, and on a king and minister day (*wangxiang ri* 王相日), ingest them. You will not grow one day older. Since it halts growth, small children should not take them. When given to chicks and puppies, they will not age. This is valid when given to any bird or beast.

This same method is referred to in *Baopu zi*, 2.16; Ware 40, where it is labelled an “age-arresting drug” (*zhunian yao* 住年藥). Several elements tie the recipe to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Firstly, the mention of Sichuan cinnabar is significant since Lord Wang, like his disciple Bo He, is associated with the Ba-Shu region; see below, pp. 130-132. Secondly, in the “Xicheng yaojue,” Lord Wang reveals a series of elixir methods to Bo He, one of which lists cinnabar and mercury as key ingredients; see *Badi miaojing jing*, 14b. Finally, the expression “king and minister” is found on two occasions in the *Badi miaojing jing* in relation to talisman-based summoning practices; *Badi miaojing jing*, 11a, has “king and minister time” (*wangxiang shi* 王相時), and “king and minister day” (*wangxiang ri*) a few lines further. The term denotes the most auspicious among the ten days or hours of the Phase (*xing* 行) corresponding to the respective season. For example, during the spring, the king and minister days are the first and the second since they correspond, like spring, to wood; cf. Sivin in Ware *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion*, 89, n. 3.

distinct figures.

Regardless of pre-existing literature, the Shangqing movement was unapologetic about confusing Wang Yuan and Lord Wang of the Western Citadel.⁵⁷ The compounded figure played an important role in the transmission of Shangqing texts and methods, most notably as Mao Ying's 茅盈 master. A number of scholars have elected to follow Shangqing exegetes in conflating the two Wangs. Robinet for one, in her masterful *La révélation du Shangqing*, equates the Donghai native with the immortal from the Xicheng mountain: "A la fin des Wei, c'est Zhi Mingqi [...] qui fut initié à la fabrication de cet elixir [the rainbow elixir; *hongdan* 虹丹] par Xicheng Wangjun, qui est Wang Yuan, le maître de Maojun, l'un des maîtres aussi de la tradition du *Taiqing* et du *Sanhuang wen*, et maître en outre de Wang Bao, dont la Dame Wei Huacun fut la disciple."⁵⁸ While Robinet accurately describes various sets of associations, between the Sanhuang tradition, alchemy, and Lord Wang, the identification with Wang Yuan is not supported by sources outside the Shangqing corpus. Company believes Robinet's conclusion to be hasty on account of there being no explicit connection between

⁵⁷ Yusa Noboru, "Seijyō ōkun," 321, writes that the merging of figures occurred sometime *after* Ge Hong's generation.

⁵⁸ Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, 1: 47; see also 2: 392. Pregadio considers the connection between Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and the Shangqing movement to be firm enough that the mention of his name in a text definitively links the scripture to the revelatory tradition. Commenting on the fact that Lord Wang of the Western Citadel appears twice in the *Taiji zhenren jiu zhuan huandan jing yao jue* 太極真人九轉還丹經要訣 (*Essential Instructions on the Scripture of the Reverted Elixir in Nine Cycles of the Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate*), on 1a, and 5a, he concludes that "an earlier text was incorporated into the Shangqing corpus with the mere addition, or alteration of two sentences containing Lord Wang of the Western Citadel's name." See Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 58, for the passage in question; along with 193, and 199, for more on the same issue. Given Lord Wang's pre-Shangqing alchemical affiliations, it is possible that his inclusion in the body of a text does not necessarily indicate a relation to the Shangqing school. In this specific case however, Shangqing editors likely retouched the original text. See p. 134, n. 77, for more on the title "*taiji zhenren*" 太極真人 (Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate).

Wang Yuan and Xicheng mountain anywhere in the *Shenxian zhuan*; moreover, the specific methods that are attributed to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel are never mentioned in relation to Wang Yuan, and nowhere in the *Zhengao* do the names Wang Yuan or Wang Fangping appear.⁵⁹ [Lord] Wang of the Western Citadel (Wang Xicheng 王西城) does surface on a few occasions, mostly in instances where Mao Ying discusses his masters and the texts they handed down.⁶⁰ Given the web of potent practices that were synonymous with Lord Wang's name, it is not difficult to fathom why the Shangqing movement was so intent on absorbing him into their pantheon. As an agent of revelation, he imbued transmission materials with an instantly recognizable aura of prestige. A corollary of this prestige and its inscription into the Shangqing system was that the identities of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and Wang Yuan became permanently intertwined.

To add another layer of complexity, Wang Yuan is probably a composite personage made up of two distinct figures. While Bokenkamp identifies Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, he is more discriminate in suggesting that Wang Yuan and Wang Fangping were originally separate entities.⁶¹ Since Wang Yuan is noted for having refused his services to Emperor

⁵⁹ Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 265, n. 480, and 270, n. 500. Wang Yuan does appear in other Shangqing materials, sometimes as Mao Ying's master. To complicate matters further, the *Shangqing housheng daojun lieji* 上清後聖道君列記 (*Annals of the Lord of the Dao, Sage of the Latter [Heavens] of Shangqing*) presents Lord Wang as Wang Yuanyou 王遠遊. See Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan*, 220-22, and Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 339-62, for translations; Bokenkamp, *ibid.*, 351, n*, notes that the final character "you" 遊 was probably mistakenly appended by copyists since "the phrase *yuanyou* [遠遊], 'distant traveling,' is so common in Daoist writings."

⁶⁰ *Zhengao*, 14.16a-17a; see Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 131, for a translation of the passage, in which he also equates Wang Yuan with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, as does Schipper, *L'Empereur Wou des Han dans la légende taoïste*, 29.

⁶¹ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 213, n.*; Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is explicitly identified with Wang Yuan on 351, n*.

Huan, it is generally agreed that he lived during the Han Dynasty, circa 150 CE. On the other hand, Wang Fangping, is remembered as a contemporary of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (ca. 160-93 BCE).⁶² A handful of Tianshi dao texts that testify to Wang Fangping's existence situate him on or around Mount Pingdu (Pingdu shan 平都山; in present-day Sichuan). These scriptures also disclose that he received a revelation from Laozi or alternatively, that he was himself a transformation of Laozi.⁶³ The latter scenario is encountered in a passage from the *Laozi bianhua jing* 老子變化經 (*Scripture on the Transformations of Laozi*), which atypically places Wang Fangping near Chengdu right before the Yangjia period (132-136 CE), a mere generation earlier than Wang Yuan's purported transcendence.⁶⁴ Such proximity in dates may have contributed to the merging of the two figures.

5. The Western Citadel and Mount Wangwu

The ambivalence surrounding Lord Wang's identity parallels uncertainty about the location of Mount Xicheng. Japanese scholars tend to situate the peak in the

⁶² See the *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經 (*Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens*), in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, 213, and 213, n*.

⁶³ Bokenkamp loc. cit., lists *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji* 洞天福地嶽瀆名山記 (*Record of Grotto Heavens, Auspicious Sites, Marchmounts, Marshes, and Famous Mountains*), 12b, and *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (*Seven Lots from the Bookcase of the Clouds*), 4.12a, and 28.8a, as passages that describe him receiving a revelation from Laozi.

⁶⁴ Penny, "Wang Yuan," 1019; see also Seidel, *La Divinisation de Laozi à l'époque des Han*, 68, where she translates the following line from the *Bianhua jing*: "à l'époque des Han, son nom [à Laozi] était Wang Fangping." The next sentence does indeed refer to Laozi's manifestation in the Yangjia period of the Han, but Seidel stipulates that the two entries are unrelated due to a lack of chronological or logical consonance. In fact, the very general "époque des Han" contrasts with the specificity of the rest of the chapter, a point that suggests the sentence was designed to fill some kind of narrative void; Seidel, *ibid.*, 68, n. 2, adds that Wang Fangping "s'agit de Wang Yuan, célèbre immortel qui aurait vécu au temps de l'empereur Houan des Han postérieurs." Her note implies that Wang Fangping subsequently reemerged in the Later Han as Wang Yuan.

kingdom of Shu 蜀, in present-day Sichuan.⁶⁵ This conviction stems from a *Xuanmen dayi* 玄門大義 (*Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries*) passage about the *Sanhuang wen*: “It was handed down to many immortals, and safely stored in various famous peaks. In the region of Shu, this text is also hidden in Mount Emei of Xicheng (Xicheng Emeishan 西城峨眉山).”⁶⁶ A *Yunji qiqian* passage paraphrasing the same text adds that while the *Sanhuang wen* was distributed among many famous peaks, not all of them contained the full version; the complete scripture obtained by Lord Wang, is only found at Mount Emei in Shu.⁶⁷ Recall that Bo He is a native of the same area, just like Wang Fangping.⁶⁸ On the other hand, a large proportion of Western-language studies concur that Mount Xicheng is located in what is now Shaanxi province.⁶⁹ This discrepancy is

⁶⁵ See, for example Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 242-43; and Yusa Noboru “Seijyō ōkun,” 321.

⁶⁶ The *Xuanmen dayi* passage is preserved in the *Daojiao yishu* 道教義樞 (*Pivot of Meaning of the Daoist Teaching*), 2.6b. For more on the *Xuanmen dayi* and its treatment of the *Sanhuang wen*, see pp. 136-137, n. 81. The term “*xicheng*” could be understood as “Western boundary,” reading *cheng* 城 as a “fortified wall” demarcating the edge of a defined space instead of a “citadel” or “city.” This would figuratively pointing to Shu’s position at the furthest orient of the Chinese cultural sphere; see pp. 134-135, n. 77, for more on this interpretation.

⁶⁷ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.11b. The subsequent lines elaborate on the “incomplete” versions: “Long ago, an immortal by the name of Zhi Qiong 智瓊 brought forth two scrolls of the *Huangwen* 皇文 (*Sovereign Writ*), but [no one] could fathom their meaning, and so he returned them to whence they came.” On the significance of Zhi Qiong’s aborted role in the transmission of the *Sanhuang wen*, see Fukui, *Dōkyō no kisoteki kenkyū*, 176; see also *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (*Record of Seeking Spirits*), 1.31: 16-17, where Zhi is referred to as “Duke Cheng” 成公; DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 16-17. This may be the same Duke Cheng (Shang Chenggong 上成公) that appears in *Houhan shu* 後漢書 (*Book of the Later Han*), 82B.2748.

⁶⁸ Refer to pages 113, and 129-130, above; the *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji*, 3b-4a, ties Wang Fangping and the Western Citadel to Shu.

⁶⁹ See Boltz, “Wuyue zhenxing tu,” and Yamada Toshiaki, “Bojia dao,” in Pregadio, *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1076, and 237, respectively; Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 134, n. 6, locates Mount Xicheng in Shaanxi as well.

likely attributable to the fact that Xu Mi's 許謐 (303-376 CE) father, Xu Fu 許副, was awarded a Western Citadel prefecture (Xicheng xian 西城縣) in present-day Shaanxi as compensation for serving Sima Rui 司馬睿 (276-322 CE) and participating in the military campaigns of the Eastern Jin (317-420 CE).⁷⁰ In light of Lord Wang's incorporation into the Shangqing pantheon, the existence of a local Xicheng administrative unit so close to the Xu family powerbase probably paved the way for the relocation of Shu's Mount Xicheng to Shaanxi; at the very least, the coincidence would have generated some confusion about where the peak was actually situated. Despite the convenient toponymic happenstance, Shangqing sources were more concerned with connecting Lord Wang of the Western Citadel to another mountain. Abandoning his former abode, the immortal relocated to a new domain, Mount Wangwu (Wangwu shan 王屋山), fifty kilometers north of Luoyang on the Henan-Shanxi border.⁷¹

With the rise of the Shangqing movement, Lord Wang was transplanted from his Western Citadel in Shu to Mount Wangwu. However, this site was already home to another presiding Wang. Previously a Han Dynasty *fangshi* of the highest distinction, Wang Bao 王褒 (fl. 73-49 BCE) was elevated to the position of ruler of the [Grotto] Heaven of the Pure Vacuity of Lesser Existence (Qingxu xiaoyou [dong]tian 清虛小有[洞]天) directly below Wangwu Mountain, thereafter adopting the title "Perfected of the Heaven of Pure Vacuity Lord Wang"

⁷⁰ Zhengao, 20.6ab; Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan*, 122.

⁷¹ Gil Raz, "Wangwu shan," in Pregadio, *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1025. A Wangwu township, roughly fifty kilometers north of Luoyang on the Henan-Shanxi border still exists today. Li Zhongfu's 李仲甫 *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography lists a Lord Wang of Hongnong 弘農 known for his practice of the *dunjia* 遁甲 (hidden stem) method, by which one may escape the space-time continuum through a "crack" in the structure of the universe. During the Han, Hongnong commandery straddled the modern Henan-Shanxi border and included Wangwu shan. This Lord Wang of Hongnong might very well be Wang Zhongdu 王仲都, a native of the same area. Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 230, n. 352, and 271, forwards the possibility that either of these two figures (potentially one and the same) could be the Lord Wang of Shangqing renown.

(Qingxu zhenren Wangjun 清虛真人王君).⁷² This Lord Wang was a teacher to Yang Xi's master Wei Huacun 魏華存, the Lady of the Southern Peak (Nanyue furen 南嶽夫人).⁷³ According to the Shangqing tradition, Wang Bao's own master was none other than the ubiquitous Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, from whom he most notably received the *Shangqing jing* 上清經 (*The Shangqing Scripture*).⁷⁴

⁷² Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan*, 83; and Chavannes, "Le jet des dragons," 133-34. The *Taiping yulan*, 669.6a, contains a Wang Bao biography that is attributed to the *Shenxian zhuan*. For more sources on the personage, see Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 550-51.

⁷³ Writing on the diffusion of Yang Xi's manuscript corpus, Tao Hongjing, *Zhengao*, 20.2b, reveals the existence of a *Wangjun zhuan* 王君傳 (*Biography of Lord Wang*). This is the *Qingxu zhenren Wangjun neizhuan* 清虛真人王君內傳 (*Esoteric Biography of Lord Wang [Bao], Perfected Immortal of Pure Vacuity*), reputed to have been authored by Wei Huacun herself. While the text is lost, a long narrative section survives in the *Yunji qiqian*, 106.1a-8a; see Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations," 59, and 59, n. 147, for a translation of the *Zhengao* passage and some bibliographic data relating to the *Wangjun zhuan*. Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 2: 369-73, doubts the authenticity of the surviving fragment.

⁷⁴ This is what Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 47, and 1: 128, contends; following the Shangqing example, she equates Lord Wang of the Western Citadel and Wang Yuan. Concerning the transmission of the *Shangqing jing*, see *Yunji qiqian*, 4.9b-10a. A passage from the *Baopu zi* translated above, p. 127, n. 56, exposes Lord Wang's Elixir Method (*Wangjun danfa*), which is also included in the pages of the *Zhengao*, 14.8b, in a section entitled "Rainbow Elixir of Lord Wang" (*Wangjun hongdan* 王君虹丹). In this instance however, the technique addresses *shijie* rather than stunting growth or slowing the aging process, and it is attributed to the Perfected of the *Xiaoyou* heaven of Pure Vacuity beneath Mount Wangwu—an unambiguous reference to Wang Bao, and not Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Nevertheless, Wang Bao could have obtained the recipe from his master, Lord Wang, and disseminated it without changing its original name; this was most certainly the case for the *hongdan* elixir. Thus, the "Wangjun" in the *Zhengao*'s "Wangjun danfa" could still designate Lord Wang of the Western Citadel; see Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," 144, for a discussion of the *Zhengao* passage in question. For more on elixirs and recipes associated with "Wangjun" (Wang Bao) in the Shangqing corpus, see Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing* 1: 45-47, 52, and 2: 371-73; see 1: 47, in particular for the transmission of the *hongdan* recipe.

In her discussion of Wang Bao's lost biography, Robinet lists his teacher as the *taiji zhenren* 太極真人 (Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate) Lord Xiliang (Xiliang jun 西梁君), implying that this figure is one and the same as Lord Wang of the Western Citadel.⁷⁵ A similar conclusion may be drawn from the eleventh-century *Dongyuan ji* 洞淵集 (*Anthology of the Abyssal Cavern*), in which Mount Xicheng is said to be inhabited by the Perfected Wang Fangping—that is Lord Wang of the Western Citadel; the passage goes on to state that “the site is one thousand *li* 里 west of Chengdu prefecture in the province Liang (Liangzhou Chengdu fu 梁州成都府). It is the entrance to the Western World (*ru xishi* 入西界).”⁷⁶ Thus, Lord Wang of the Western Citadel is Lord Xiliang, literally the Lord from Western Liang.⁷⁷

In the context of Shangqing sacred space, the master-disciple relationship encountered in certain texts might explain why the Immortal from the Western

⁷⁵ Robinet, *ibid.*, 2: 371; cf. *Zhenling weiye tu*, 10a, where Lord Xiliang appears as a separate individual from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel.

⁷⁶ *Dongyuan ji* 洞淵集 (*Anthology of the Abyssal Cavern*), 2.1a. The passage makes no mention of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel in connection with Mount Wangwu. Instead, the site is listed as Wang Bao's domain. Interestingly, he is presented as Du Zhong Wang Bao 杜沖王褒. Du Zhong is another *taiji zhenren* who has a notice in the “*Taiji zhenren zhuan*” 太極真人傳 (“Biographies of Perfected of the Supreme Ultimate”) from the *Yunji qiqian*, 104.6-8.

⁷⁷ Strangely, Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 128, rebukes this very claim (which she then supports on 2: 371), contending instead that Lord Wang and the Lord from Western Liang are two distinguishable entities. Furthermore, on 1: 52, Robinet forwards that Lord Xiliang was master to Wang Yuan (Wang Fangping), that is to say Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, and Wang Bao's “great-master.” An attempt at illustrating these ties is sketched out in a table on 1: 50, but this time the *taiji zhenren* from Western Liang is shown to be two generations removed from Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The matter is further muddled by the fact that the table also identifies Chief Perfected of the Western Ultimate (Xiji zongzhen 西極摠真) as Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. The *Zhenling weiye tu*, 3a, equates Wang Yuan and Wang Fangping with the Lord Chief Perfected of the Western Boundary from the Western Ultimate (Xiyu xiji zongzhen jun 西域西極摠真君). Note the substitution of the graph *cheng* 城 with the graph *yu* 域, hinting at the previously

Citadel and the Perfected Immortal of Pure Vacuity were placed in such proximity to each other. The master, a celestial Lord Wang, presides over Wangwu Mountain above, while his chthonian adept Wang Bao rules Wangwu's negative space, the Xiaoyou grotto below. Alchemy could offer another potential legitimation for Lord Wang's emigration to Wangwu. As seen above, both he and Wang Bao are associated with the alchemical practices. So is the *taiji zhenren* Lord Xiliang, who according to Shangqing sources, was the original purveyor of the *Jiuzhuan shendan* 九轉神丹 (*Nine Cycle Divine Elixir*).⁷⁸ Even before the revelations, Mount Wangwu was inscribed in the landscape of alchemical geography: the *Baopu zi* notes that "on ascending Mount Wangwu the Yellow Emperor was given the *Jindan jing* 金丹經 (*Cinnabar Classic*)."⁷⁹ Whatever reasoning was forwarded for his relocation, the pre-existing spiritual currency that Lord Wang enjoyed in the South made it hard for Shangqing systematizers to resist including him in their nascent pantheon and nexus of correspondences. The figure found a fitting protectorate in Mount Wangwu, bringing with him the established local clout of the Sanhuang and alchemical traditions.

The logic behind Lord Wang's defection becomes even clearer when considering the prefixes attached to the *Sanhuang wen*: one version of the scripture is known as the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* 小有三皇文 (*Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Cavern of Lesser Existence*), or *Xiaoyou jing* 小有經 (*Scripture of Lesser Existence*), while the other, historically later (but

proposed reading of "western boundary" for *xicheng*; see p. 131, n. 66, above. Finally, a passage on 1: 48, equates the Metropolitan Master of the Western Numina (?) (*Xiling zidu* 西靈子都) with Wang Yuan, and transitively, with Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. Once more, the *Zhenling weiye tu*, 10b, mentions a Great Mystery Immortal Woman Metropolitan Master of the Western Numina (?) (*Taixuan xiannü xiling zidu* 太玄仙女西靈子都), but she is distinct from Lord Wang and any of his avatars.

⁷⁸ See Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 50, for exact references.

⁷⁹ *Baopu zi*, 13.241; Ware 215. See *Baopu zi*, 4.74; Ware 75, for a description of the effect the divine elixir from the *Jindan jing* has on the Yellow Emperor; also see *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue*, 5.2a, and 13.3a.

mythologically earlier) version is entitled *Dayou sanhuang wen* 大有三皇文 (*Writ of the Three Sovereigns from the Cavern of Greater Existence*), or *Dayou jing* 大有經 (*Scripture of Greater Existence*).⁸⁰ The two are named after the grotto heaven in which they originally appeared. The *Yunji qiqian* discloses that the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* was created “in the Jade Commandery (Yüfu 玉府) of the Xiaoyou Heaven, and that is why it is referred to as such; it can be called *Xiaoyou jing*.”⁸¹ Betraying a thinly veiled hierarchy of heavens and revealed materials, the passage immediately specifies that “the *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen*

⁸⁰ “*Xiaoyou*” and “*dayou*” could be references to the fourteenth hexagram of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*). However, one of the earliest passages to mention both terms concurrently is found in the *Zhengao*, 13.11b, suggesting a Shangqing initiative in applying the terms to Sanhuang materials:

This man [Zhang Xuanbao 張玄寶 of the Cao Wei (220-265 CE)] was apt at discussing Emptiness and Nothingness (*kong wu* 空無). He was an expert debater. Once, he was addressing the origin of Emptiness and [its] patterns: “Nothingness is the abode of Greater Existence (*dayou*), which gives birth to Lesser Existence (*xiaoyou*). From Lesser Existence one can foster Lesser Nothingness, and see in Greater Existence the origin of Greater Nothingness. To have Existence is to not [have] Nothingness; and to not [have] Nothingness is to have Existence. Therefore my eyes do not see any object (*wu* 物), and the objects also do not perceive Nothingness. I straddle Existence and it becomes Nothingness; I straddle Nothingness and [still] obtain Nothingness.

In reference to an unrelated Daoist source, Robinet, *Histoire du taoïsme*, 191-93, argues that the terms “*you*” 有 and “*wu*” 無, translated as “existence” and “non-existence” respectively, demonstrate the influence of the Mādhyamika tetralemma on the development of Daoism.

⁸¹ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5ab. These lines are also found, with some variation, in the *Daojiao yishu*, 2.6b-7a, and the *Yunji qiqian*, 6.11ab. All three passages are based on the lost *Xuanmen dayi* (although a small portion of the text survives in the Daoist Canon under the title *Dongxuan lingbao xuanmen dayi* 洞玄靈寶玄門大義 (*Great Meaning of the School of Mysteries from the Numinous Treasure Cavern of Mystery*). While the *Yunji qiqian* preserves a selection of excerpts, a large percentage of the *Daojiao Yishu* (dated ca. 700) is

originally came from the Dayou [heaven].”⁸² From this passage alone, a Shangqing-imposed classification of Sanhuang materials is perceptible. The complement to the Xiaoyou Heaven of Mount Wangwu is located beneath Mount Weiyu (Weiyu shan 委羽山), which falls under the administrative rule of deified Han diviner Sima Jizhu 司馬季主 (d. 170 BCE). This *fangshi* is at the fore of the biographies of immortals that Xu Mi was compiling, and he figures prominently in the anecdotes that the Perfected transmitted to Yang Xi.⁸³ Mirroring the case of Lord Wang of the Western Citadel, it would appear that Sima Jizhu’s omnipresence in Shangqing materials was in some ways a function of realpolitik: in this case, the Jin (265-420 CE) rulers and more germanely Xu’s patron, Emperor Jianwen (*Jin Jianwendi* 晉簡文帝; r. 371-372 CE)—whose personal name was Sima Yu 司馬昱—were direct descendants of the Sima clan and therefore kinsmen of the illustrious Sima Jizhu himself.

If Shangqing systematizers appointed Sima Jizhu to the Dayou Heaven partly in order to gain political favour, moving Lord Wang of the Western Citadel to Mount Wangwu for the purpose of augmenting their spiritual capital would be far from outlandish. The very distinction between the *Xiaoyou* and *Dayou sanhuang wen* was an *ad hoc* contrivance designed to theologially justify the supremacy of

taken from the late sixth- or early seventh-century *Xuanmen dayi*, which was sometimes referred to as the *Daomen dalun* 道門大論 (*Great Discussion on the Gate of the Way*). The *Xuanmen dayi* itself is based on an earlier text, which partially survives in Dunhuang manuscript P.3001. On the relationship between the latter two documents, see Ōfuchi Ninji’s article “Tonko zankan sansoku.” The three aforementioned passages, two from the *Yunji qiqian* (6.5a-6b; 6.11a-12a) and one from the *Daojiao yishu* (2.6b-7a), derive from a common *Xuanmen dayi* segment that broadly deals with the Sanhuang tradition. Nonetheless, they exhibit telling discrepancies, some of which will be addressed in the following pages. The content of *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10a-11a, is significantly similar, but not close enough to be considered a product of the same root passage; cf. Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 222-57.

⁸² *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b.

⁸³ *Zhengao*, 17.16b; Strickmann, “The Alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” 131-32, n. 18, and 154, n. 94. Sima Jizhu’s biography is found in *Shiji*, 127.1-12; see Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, 2: 468-75.

the scripture's second version—the one that the Shangqing sanctioned.⁸⁴ Textual evidence indicates that in the first decade of the fourth century, there was a single version of the text in circulation. Shortly thereafter, another master tied to the Ge family, Bao Jing 鮑靚 (or 鮑靖; 230 or 260-330 CE), received a new revelation of the *Sanhuang wen*, an event that would ultimately result in the proscription of the text during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE).⁸⁵

6. Bao Jing, Alchemy, and the transmission to Ge Hong

In comparison to the shadowy Bo He and the semi-mythical Lord Wang, a fair amount is known about Bao Jing. Born in a family of Han civil servants, Bao was broadly learned in classical Confucianism and esoterica, eventually rising to the post of governor of Nanhai 南海 (present-day Guangdong).⁸⁶ Bao's master, Yin Changsheng 陰長生 taught him how to perform “*shijie* by means of a blade” (*dao shijie* 刀尸解), a method for which he later became renowned.⁸⁷ Their

⁸⁴ Since no confirmed pre-revelation source mentions the *Xiaoyou jing* or the *Dayou jing*, a reference to either should constitute a relatively reliable indicator of dating.

⁸⁵ See p. 148, below for more on this. Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 72-74, associates the *Xiaoyou jing* with the Bo He lineage while the later *Dayou jing* comprises the Bao Jing version of the *Sanhuang wen*. Curiously, Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 275-85, refuses to draw this distinction, arguing instead that the *Dayou jing* was a name (based on a Shangqing reorganization of Heavens) that the Sanhuang tradition came up with to counter the derogative *Xiaoyou jing* diminutive that was used in reference to their text. The *Xiaoyou jing* referent reflected the *Sanhuang wen*'s lowly position in the Daoist Canon, hence it is still a relatively late matter, in which the Shangqing and Lingbao schools—each jockeying for top honours in the new Three Caverns system—undoubtedly had a hand.

⁸⁶ Bao's origins vary according to the source, but many scholars agree that he was born in Langye 琅邪 in present-day Shandong; see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 76, for discordant views about his birthplace.

⁸⁷ These are the essentials of Bao Jing's entry in the *Shenxian zhuan*; see Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 295-97, and 485, for a complete list of primary materials pertaining to the figure. His biography is also preserved in the *Jinshu* 晉書 (*History of the Jin*), 95.2482; see also *Jinshu* 72.1911, and 80.2106-07. Bao also has entries

initial meeting, according to one source, took place in 318.⁸⁸ Around the turn of the fourth century, in an episode that is highly evocative of Bo He's revelation, Bao Jing discovered the *Sanhuang wen* in a cavern on Mount Song (Songshan 嵩山):

During the Jin, Bao Jing studied the Way on the peaks of Mount Song.⁸⁹ In the Yongkang year of Emperor Hui's (Jin Huidi 晉惠帝; r. 290-307 CE) reign (300), he ritually purified himself and meditated on the Way in Lord Liu's (Liujun 劉君) cavern.⁹⁰ Thereupon, the *Sanhuang wen* suddenly appeared, carved into characters.⁹¹

Bao then offered four hundred feet (*chi* 尺) of silk, swore an oath to his master Ge Xuan (164-244 CE), and received the oral instructions to the text. Later on, the passage explains, Bao transmitted the scripture to Ge Hong.⁹² A contrasting account of Bao Jing's reception exists: in marked departure from his other hagiographies, a selection from the *Yunji qiqian* affirms that the governor of Nanhai obtained the *Sanhuang wen* directly from Ge Xuan's master, Zuo Ci 左慈:

in the *Daoxue zhuan* 道學傳 (*Biographies of Students of the Dao*), which survive in the *Taiping yulan*, 663.5a, and the *Xianyuan bianzhu*, 3.20a; for these, see Bumbacher, *Fragments of the Daoxue zhuan*, 325-29; Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 76; Ōfuchi, *Shoki dōkyō*, 536-52; and Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing*, 1: 11.

⁸⁸ See *Yunji qiqian*, 85.14b-16a, for more on their encounter.

⁸⁹ The location of the reception is of significant relevance since Mount Song, in present-day Henan, was considered the Central Marchmount of the Five Peaks from the *Wuyue zhenxing tu*. As Ge Hong explained, the *Sanhuang wen* and *Wuyue zhenxing tu* were hidden in the very same Five Peaks that gave their name to the charts.

⁹⁰ According to the *Shenxian zhuan*, Liu Gen 劉根 “left the world behind and practiced the Way. He entered a cave on Mount Songgao (Songgao shan 嵩高山) that was situated directly above a sheer cliff over fifty thousand feet high.” I borrow Campany's translation of the passage from *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 240; see also 240-49, and 48-49. Liu Gen has an entry in *Hou hanshu*, 82B.2746.

⁹¹ *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a; cf. *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10b-11a; and *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b-6a, and 6.11b-12a; the *Yunji qiqian*, 4.10a, version of this passage has “the second day of the second month of the second year of Yuankang (292)” as the date of Bao Jing's reception.

⁹² *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a.

It is also said that Jing was a brilliant student of the scriptures and arts of inquiry into the apocrypha. From his master Zuo Yuanfang 左元放 [Zuo Ci], he received the Central Methods (*zhong bu fa* 中部法), but also the *Sanhuang* and *Wuyue* essentials for summoning. After practicing these, he made spirits and ghosts submit to his will, and placated the demons that roamed the mountains.⁹³

These lines invite Bao Jing into a relatively prestigious transmission lineage, linking him and the *Sanhuang wen* to the ancestry of Taiqing 太清 alchemy. In this version of events, Zuo Ci passes the *Sanhuang* text to Bao Jing, and one assumes, to his famous disciple Ge Xuan as well. From that point on, the *Sanhuang wen* would have piggybacked on the Taiqing line and come down to Ge Hong via Zheng Yin 鄭隱 (ca. 215-ca. 302 CE). Admittedly, this is a rather exotic interpretation of the *Sanhuang* chain of transmission, and its rarity is probably indicative of how little currency it had. The vast majority of accounts that tie Bao Jing to the *Sanhuan wen* rely on the spontaneous grotto revelation narrative, followed by a direct transmission to Ge Hong.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, this isolated association between Bao Jing and Zuo Ci accentuates several similarities between *Sanhuang* and Taiqing traditions. In the nineteenth chapter of the *Baopu zi*, the *Sanhuang wen* heads a list of scriptures and talismans received by Ge Hong from his master Zheng Yin, an avowed alchemist.⁹⁵ Among his more than fifty pupils, Ge was the only one to obtain the prized writ. The transmission of materials must have occurred before 302, the year that is traditionally given for Zheng Yin's "retirement from the world."⁹⁶ At that

⁹³ *Yunji qiqian*, 85.15a. Zuo Ci's biography from the *Hou Hanshu*, 82B.2747-2748, is translated in Ngo, *Divination, magic, et politique*, 138-39.

⁹⁴ The versions in the *Daojiao yishu* (2.7a) and the *Yunji qiqian* (4.10b-11a; 6.5b-6a; 6.11b-12a) are consistent on these points.

⁹⁵ *Baopu zi*, 19. 333; Ware 312.

⁹⁶ *Baopu zi*, 19.338; Ware 317

time, he was already into his late eighties or nineties, hence his date of birth would be around 210 or 215.⁹⁷ Ge received alchemical materials, namely the *Taiqing jing*, the *Jiudan jing* 九丹經 (*Scripture of the Nine Elixirs*), and the *Jinye jing* 金液經 (*Scripture of the Golden Liquor*) in 300 or 301, when he was about eighteen, roughly a year before his master's disappearance.⁹⁸ In the *Baopu zi*, he reminisces about obtaining these “scriptures of gold and cinnabar” (*jindan zhi jing* 金丹之經) and the *Sanhuang neiwen* in the same breath.⁹⁹ As previously noted, the *Badi miaojing jing* and the *Shenxian zhuan* claim the *Sanhuang wen* was transmitted together with the *Taiqing zhongjing* and its recipes.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore feasible that the *Sanhuang wen* was transmitted to Ge Hong on the same occasion that he obtained alchemical materials from Zheng Yin.¹⁰¹

While Zheng Yin's timeline overlaps with that of Bo He, and Ge lists them both as holders of the text, there is no record of them meeting, let alone any

⁹⁷ Ge Hong, who studied with Zheng between the age of fourteen and nineteen, explains that he joined his master when he was “leaving his eighties;” see *Baopu zi*, 19.331; Ware 310.

⁹⁸ See Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 5, and 256, n. 16.

⁹⁹ *Baopu zi*, 19.333. Zheng Yin did not transmit the actual *Taiqing* texts because they were already in the possession of the Ge family since the time of Ge Xuan. What Ge Hong received from Zheng Yin would have amounted to the oral instructions (*koujue*) required for understanding the scriptures and undertaking the methods contained therein; cf. Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 3-5 passim. The account from *Baopu zi*, 4.71, however, insists that Zheng Yin handed down the scriptures themselves. The same passage relates that Zuo Ci transmitted the *Taiqing jing* to Ge Xuan, who then passed it on to Zheng Yin. The *Shenxian zhuan* on the other hand, recounts that the *Taiqing jing* manifested before Bo He's eyes in a cavern on Xicheng Mountain, indicating that there were at least two transmission lineages (unless Zuo Ci carved the characters in the cave) that converged in the person of Zheng Yin. Likewise, the revelation of the *Sanhuang wen* to Bo He does not necessarily indicate that this was a unique line of transmission; see p. 131, n. 67; and p. 150, for more.

¹⁰⁰ See p. 117, n. 25, and p. 122, above.

¹⁰¹ *Baopu zi*, 4.71; Ware 69; This section addresses the transmission of *Taiqing* materials—a few lines after mentioning the *Sanhuang neiwen*; see Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 3, for translation.

indication that documents changed hands.¹⁰² Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that these personages were at the very least semi-legendary: since Bo and Zheng basked in auras of great prestige, it was not uncommon for influential Southern literati families to subsume either of them into their spiritual lineage and tie them to materials already in their possession.

Additionally, the so-called historical lineages were often shadowed by “celestial” lineages, that is to say transmission lines between deities that predate a text’s revelation to humans. The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝) is an early recipient in a few textual legacies, including that of the *Sanhuang wen*: “Of old, when the Yellow Emperor came eastward to Azure Hill (Qingqiu 青丘), he passed Mount Wind (Fengshan 風山) and met the Master of the Purple Residence 紫府先生 (Zifu xiansheng). From him, he received the *Sanhuang neiwen* which enabled him to summon the myriad spirits [...].”¹⁰³ In the *Wushang biyao*’s “Sanhuang yaoyong pin” 三皇要用品 (“Essential Functions of the Three Sovereigns”), the Yellow Emperor is listed as one of the first legatees of the *Sanhuang wen*, but he also supplies the oral instructions to the text, echoing Lord Wang of the Western Citadel’s role in the “Xicheng yaojue.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, like Lord Wang, the Yellow Emperor is

¹⁰² See the relevant passage in *Baopu zi*, 19.336-37; Ware 314-16; and Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 71.

¹⁰³ *Baopu zi*, 18.323; Ware 302. This same passage is found in *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a, and with variations in *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5a, and 6.11b; see also *Yunji qiqian*, 100.27a; and *Lingbao wufuxu*, 3.17b. The *Wushang biyao*, 22.12ab, contains an enumeration of sites where Shangqing deities reside and texts were revealed. Among them figures a “Palace of Purple Commandery (Zifu gong 紫府宮), flanked by the Azure Hill (Qingqiu) to the right, and Mount Wind to the left. It is where the Heavenly Perfected Divine Immortal Jade Maiden Youguan (Tianzhen shenxian yunü Youguan 天真神仙玉女遊觀) resides.” A Mount Wind (or “mountains of wind”) appears in relation to an Azure Hill in a description of lands south of Yishatuo 伊沙陀; *Wushang biyao*, 4.5b; see also *Shangqing waiguo fangpin Qingtong neiwen* 上清外國放品青童內文 (*Esoteric Text of the Green Lad on the Goods Deposited in Foreign Countries*), 2.32a.

¹⁰⁴ *Wushang biyao*, 25.1b. *Daojiao yishu*, 6.6b, and *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5ab, add that the *Sanhuang wen* comes from Lord Divine Treasure (Shenbao jun 神寶君), the Sovereign of

cited in relation to the early or inaugural stages of alchemical transmissions.¹⁰⁵

The Lord Wang—Bo He *Sanhuang wen* line is relatively well established in Southern religious lore. Ge himself claims to have obtained his copy of the text from that very lineage, via his master Zheng Yin. Unfortunately, there is no surviving account of how the *Sanhuang wen* made its way from Bo He to Zheng Yin. Given the coupling of Taiqing and Sanhuang materials in a number of sources, one possibility is that the *Sanhuang wen* came down through the mythical Zuo Ci and Ge Xuan.¹⁰⁶ This is what the above *Yunji qiqian* passage intimates, with the awkward insertion of Bao Jing into the equation. However, the crucial link in the chain, Ge Xuan, is not explicitly mentioned. Notwithstanding the anomalous inclusion of Bao into the line, the hypothesis that Ge Hong obtained Sanhuang materials from Lord Wang and Bo He through the intermediary of Zheng Yin is widely accepted—primarily due to the fact that it is outlined in the *Baopu zi*.¹⁰⁷

Humanity (Renhuang 人皇), who transmitted the text to Lord Wang of the Western Citadel. This marks the transition from the “celestial” to the human lineage; see also *Wushang biyao*, 6.5a, and 24.1ab; and Ōfuchi, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 281.

¹⁰⁵ Pregadio, *Great Clarity*, 41-43. Wang, *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, 247, n. 16, draws attention to the ambivalence about whether the first revelation of the *Jindan jing* was addressed to the Yellow Emperor, or whether he was merely a later link in the chain of transmission.

¹⁰⁶ Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 76, mentions the possibility without explicitly discrediting it. Ōfuchi, *Shoki dōkyō*, 545, regards any direct transmission from Zuo Ci to Bao Jing as highly improbable, but he does not reject the idea that the *Sanhuang wen* could have made its way from one figure to the next by way of intermediaries. While these lineages were often fabricated to lend legitimacy to a tradition, they were still expected to be chronologically sound and conform to internal logic.

¹⁰⁷ Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 72, summarizes:

According to the usual structure of Daoist scriptures, many texts narrate their own origins. Therefore, [the Yellow Emperor passage] that is recorded in “Earthly Truth” (“Dizhen” 地眞) [the eighteenth chapter of the *Baopu zi*] is likely to have been taken from the *Sanhuang wen* itself. The historical reliability of this account however, is untrustworthy. Furthermore, Bo He and the story of his transmission are the origins of this scripture’s appearance. The “Gazing Afar” (“Xialan” 遐覽)[nineteenth] chapter of

Another, competing scenario, unrelated to the latter, features Bao Jing as the beneficiary of the *Sanhuang wen*'s grotto revelation, Ge Xuan as the dispenser of oral instructions, and Ge Hong as the subsequent recipient.

7. *Bao Jing, and the Dayou jing*

The two Bao Jing lines examined in the preceding pages document the existence of a second *Sanhuang wen* pedigree, independent of the Lord Wang—Bo He transmission. Some scholars relegate the Western Citadel genealogy to the realm of myth—in the same category as the celestial bequeathal to the Yellow Emperor—affirming instead that Bao Jing's revelation and the conferral of materials to his son-in-law are more historically reliable alternatives.¹⁰⁸ In stark contradiction to this claim, the *Baopu zi* fails to connect Bao Jing to the *Sanhuang wen*. Even the figure's short *Shenxian zhuan* biography presents him as no more than a recipient and practitioner of *shijie*.¹⁰⁹ Ōfuchi Ninji believes the omission is attributable to Ge meeting the Nanhai governor after the completion of the *Baopu zi* (and quite possibly after that of the *Shenxian zhuan*).¹¹⁰ Although a draft was completed by 317, the final version of the *Baopu zi* was not penned until 330, the year of Bao Jing's death. However, Ge Hong became a disciple of Bao Jing shortly after meeting him in or around 312, when both withdrew to Mount Luofu (Luofu shan 羅浮山; in present-day Guangdong) to study the esoteric arts.¹¹¹ It is very likely that Ge received the *Sanhuang wen* on

the *Baopu zi* says that Ge Hong's master Lord Zheng (Zheng Yin) obtained the *Sanhuang neiwen*. [...] We can surmise that Bo He originally obtained the *Sanhuang neiwen*, followed by Zheng Yin, who then passed it on to Ge Hong. However, when Zheng Yin entrusted it to Ge Hong, it was presented as originally coming from the Yellow Emperor.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, Schipper, *L'Empereur Wou dans la légende des Han*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 295.

¹¹⁰ Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki dōkyō*, 503.

¹¹¹ Chen Feilong, *Baopu zi neipian jinzhū jinyi*, 841-43; Pregadio, *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 442.

this occasion, or at the very least, that he became aware of the Bao's revelatory episode on Mount Song.

Moreover, the second item in Ge Hong's bibliographic catalogue, immediately below the *Sanhuang neiwen: tian, di, ren* 三皇内文天地人 (*Writ of the Three Sovereigns: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity*) in three scrolls, is a *Yuanwen* 元文 (*Original Writ*), also in three scrolls. This is possibly an abbreviation for the full title of a second version, the *Sanhuang yuanwen* 三皇元文 (*Original Writ of the Three Sovereigns*).¹¹² These two works could very well be the Bao Jing and Lord Wang—Bo He versions of the *Sanhuang wen*. The *Xuanmen dayi* confirms that Ge Hong received two versions of the text, one from Bao Jing, and the other from the Lord Wang line, via Zheng Yin.¹¹³

If Ge Hong possessed both renderings of the *Sanhuang wen* before the completion of the *Baopu zi*, then his reasons for not discussing the Bao Jing version remain obscure. Had the texts been identical, there would be no need to distinguish them, yet after the advent of Bao's *Sanhuang wen*, the *Daojiao yishu* reveals "the writ that Lord Bao obtained in the cave does not agree with the version that is known in the world" (*Baojun suode shishi zhi wen yu shi bu tong* 鮑君所得石室之文與世不同).¹¹⁴ This is reflected in the *Yunji qiqian*, which

¹¹² *Baopu zi*, 19. 333; Ware 312. Campány, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 67, n. 177, endorses the possibility that the *Yuanwen* refers to a second version of the scripture. Wang Ming, *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, 339-40, n. 25, notes that the *Sanhuang neiwen tiandiren* is sometimes more accurately rendered as the *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen* 三皇内文天文; the title notably appears in *Baopu zi*, 15.272. This agrees with Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A. d. 320*, 382, whose reading of the bibliography unequivocally finds a *Sanhuang neiwen tianwen* followed by a *Sanhuang neiwen yuanwen* 三皇内文元文.

¹¹³ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.12a; and *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a. Since Ge obtained the Lord Wang—Bo He *Sanhuang wen* from Zheng Yin before 302, he should have already had it in his possession by the time he met Bao Jing.

¹¹⁴ *Daojiao yishu*, 2.7a. The "shì" 世 here indicates the epoch corresponding to the compilation of the *Xuanmen dayi*, namely the late seventh century, or earlier, since the text was based on antecedent materials; see also *Yunji qiqian*, 12a.

differentiates between Bao's cave revelation, and its predecessor, a text "acquired in a mountain" and "known in the world;" reinforcing the distinction, the passage concludes that the *Sanhuang wen* "obtained in the stone chamber (*shishi* 石室), is different from the 'Xiao' [version] of the *Sanhuang wen* that is known today."¹¹⁵ In other words, the Lord Wang—Bo He *Xiaoyou sanhuang wen* predates, and is different from Bao Jing's *Dayou sanhuang wen*.

Since knowledge of the disagreement between texts gradually spread as Bao Jing's version gained exposure, the two scriptures were probably not initially referred to as *Xiaoyou jing* and *Dayou jing*. This particular taxonomical distinction is attributable to the Shangqing propensity for incorporating and then categorizing influential Southern traditions. Before Yangxi's revelations, both interpretations of the *Sanhuang wen* were known under different names. The earlier Lord Wang—Bo He text was simply known as the *Sanhuang (nei)wen* or the *Sanhuang tianwen dazi*. As for Bao's variatum, an annotation in the *Badi miaojing jing* might provide a glimpse of the titles it once bore: the text identifies the *Baogong neijing* 鮑公內經 (*Inner Scripture of Duke Bao*), or alternatively rendered *Bao xiansheng jijie* 鮑先生節解 (*Master Bao's Explanations in Verse*), as a similar, yet competing version of the material it introduces.¹¹⁶ Irrespective of their original appellations, retroactively associating the *Sanhuang* scriptures with the Xiaoyou and Dayou grotto heavens provided the *Sanhuang* tradition with extended life, albeit at the cost of a lower standing in the Shangqing

¹¹⁵ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b-6a. See Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 244, for a discussion of the "mountain" and "cave" transmissions; he concludes that they were not that dissimilar, and that the nomenclature simply reflected different classifications of the scripture in Shangqing and Dongshen 洞神 (*Sanhuang*) hierarchies; also see Ōfuchi Ninji, *ibid.*, 275-85 *passim*, especially 284-85.

¹¹⁶ *Badi miaojing jing*, 29a, and 32a, respectively. The reference is found in the "Xicheng yaojue," which presents itself as the Bo He version of the *Sanhuang wen*, cum oral instructions. This demonstrates that the *Badi miaojing jing* was compiled at a time when both versions of the *Sanhuang wen* were in circulation. In actuality, the "Xicheng yaojue" is a pastiche of *Dayou jing* and *Xiaoyou jing* materials.

system. It is worth noting that Bao Jing was also incorporated into the Shangqing pantheon as Xu Mai's teacher. However, his role seems to have merely consisted of supplying the movement with a hagiographical link to Yin Changsheng and his methods, some of which were deemed interesting to Shangqing exegetes.¹¹⁷ Otherwise, Bao Jing's modest rank in the spiritual hierarchy was emphasized in order to showcase new improvements on the obsolete cultivation techniques with which he was associated, without altogether alienating the broad base of adepts that had previously practiced those same techniques.¹¹⁸

8. Conclusion

In early medieval China, Southern religious movements heavily relied on initiatory transmission as a tool of perpetuation and preservation. While scriptures were procurable without too much effort, the secret of their contents could only be pierced with the proper accompaniment of instructions. These were dispensed orally, uttered by masters to only the most gifted of pupils. The central tenets of numerous traditions were not recorded, but made incarnate in successive generations of adepts. Traditions like the Sanhuang attributed a disproportionate amount of importance to such lineages because they almost singlehandedly guaranteed their survival and the integrity of their teachings.

¹¹⁷ For more on Yin Changsheng and his association with *shijie* and alchemy, see his *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography in Campany, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 274-76. Bao Jing had Yin as a teacher, while Yin himself had previously been a disciple of Master Horseneigh (Ma Mingsheng 馬鳴生). From him, he notably received the *Taiqing shendan jing* 太清神丹經 (*Scripture on the Divine Elixir of Grand Purity*). Master Horseneigh is sometimes confused with another alchemical figure, Bo He. The *Taiping yulan*, 661.7a, gives his surname as Bo 帛, while the "Ma Mingsheng zhenren zhuan" 馬鳴生真人傳 ("Biography of Master Horseneigh the Perfected") from the *Yunji qiqian*, 106.15b-21a, lists it as He 和. For more on the conflation, see Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 77-78.

¹¹⁸ The *Zhengao*, 12.3a, for instance, recounts that "Bao Jing did not achieve much, for he was stubborn and of unexceptional capacities."

Sooner or later, many oral instructions were committed to bamboo strips or silken cloth. The “Xicheng yaojue” from the *Badi miaojing jing* is likely among these, as are a number of texts from the Taiqing, Shangqing, and Lingbao corpora. Yet, transmission lineages and rituals remained paramount for the concerned traditions. A full three scrolls out of the mature fourteen-scroll Sanhuang Dongshen canon of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589 CE) are exclusively devoted to transmission rites.¹¹⁹ Later, during the Tang, the bestowal of Dongshen texts marked the first level of ordination for all Daoist clergy.¹²⁰

This development noticeably increased the propagation of Sanhuang materials, but it also attracted the scrutiny of the imperial government. Before long, the *Sanhuang wen* was judged seditious; it was summarily proscribed and burned in 648 on the basis that the version in circulation, Bao Jing’s *Dayou jing*, was a forgery.¹²¹ If doubt surrounded the authenticity of Bao Jing’s discovery on Mount Song, then it would certainly explain why Ge Hong failed to mention it in the *Baopu zi*. Instead of jeopardizing his family’s credibility or embarrassing his father-in-law, Ge chose to tactfully avoid the question altogether.

The Sanhuang pedigree is rife with embellishments and prestige-inducing confabulations. Mythological characters mingle with historical figures in an imaginative, sometimes fantastical, thread of transmissions; but this made them no

¹¹⁹ Namely, the *Sanhuang zhaiyi* 三皇齋儀 (*Three Sovereigns Purification Ritual*), *Sanhuang chaoyi* 三皇朝儀 (*Audience Rite of the Three Sovereigns*), and *Sanhuang chuanshou yi* 三皇傳授儀 (*Three Sovereigns Rites for Reception and Transmission*); cf. *Taishang dongshen sanhuang yi* 太上洞神三皇儀 (*Ritual of the Three Sovereigns*), 5ab; chapter 2 from my “Situating the Sovereigns” provides an overview of the first three works and their surviving fragments in the Daoist Canon.

¹²⁰ See Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, 24-25, for a qualification of this observation. The Sanhuang’s Dongshen corpus was housed in the lowest of the Daoist canon’s Three Caverns.

¹²¹ See Chen Guofu, *Daozang yuanliu kao*, 77, for a passage from the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*Forest of Pearls in the Garden of the Law*) that describes the events leading up to the ban. A paraphrase can also be found in Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, 23-25.

less real for generation upon generation of adepts. Hopefully, the present study succeeds in shedding some light on the more conspicuous fabrications surrounding the textual lineage of the *Sanhuang wen*, especially those coming from outside the Sanhuang tradition. Lord Wang of the Western Citadel should be disambiguated from Wang Yuan, Wang Fangping, Lord Xiliang, Wang Bao, and other alleged doppelgangers. A reconstituted human lineage of the *Sanhuang wen* ostensibly free from *ex post facto* machinations begins with Lord Wang, and continues with Bo He, Zheng Yin, and Ge Hong. The link between Bo and Zheng is not fully understood, so the existence of intermediaries, such as Ge Xuan perhaps, should not be dismissed. This constitutes the orthodox Sanhuang transmission lineage, producing what was later known as the *Xiaoyou jing*. Early in the fourth century, a second version of the *Sanhuang wen* appeared, the *Dayou jing*, complete with an independent genealogy. One account describes Zuo Ci handing the scripture over to Bao Jing, but most sources recount that the governor of Nanhai discovered the sacred writing inside Mount Song. Bao then offered a pledge to Ge Xuan, and later bestowed the text on Ge Hong. Both variations on this second *Sanhuang wen* lineage include figures from the Taiqing alchemical transmission, lending some credence to speculations about Ge Xuan's involvement in the Lord Wang—Bo He line. Shangqing systematizers officially championed the second Bao Jing scenario since it was less synonymous with competing traditions. At the same time, it could still be tied to Ge Hong and other proponents of the *Xiaoyou jing* to a degree that didn't completely alienate the religious base of the South.

Fortunately, the tradition armed itself with an internal safety mechanism that ensured conflicting transmission accounts or chronological discrepancies could be explained away conveniently. The *Yunji qiqian* observes that “[the *Sanhuang wen*] was also handed down to many immortals, and safely stored in various famous peaks.”¹²² Likewise, the *Baopu zi* remarks “these scriptures are found in

¹²² *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5a, and 6.11a; cf. *Daojiao yishu*, 2.6b.

all the famous mountains and the Five Peaks.”¹²³ Different versions of the scripture were revealed at different times in multiple locations. Formerly, the immortal Zhi Qiong 智瓊 held two scrolls of *Sanhuang wen*, but no one could understand their meaning, so he returned them where they were found.¹²⁴ Other notable recipients include Sire Gourd (Hu Gong 壺公), who “transmitted the scripture to Fei Zhangfang 費長房 along with the script of the Spirit Cavern (*Dongshen zhi wen* 洞神之文).”¹²⁵ The enigmatic Master of the Yellow Hut (Huanglu zi 黃廬子), Ge Yue 葛越, otherwise known as the Duke of the Western Marchmount (Xiyue gong 西嶽公), is also tied to a transmission of the sacred writ.¹²⁶

Preserving the integrity of scriptural lineage and identity in early medieval China was a painstaking pursuit fraught with innumerable hurdles. Despite the

¹²³ *Baopu zi*, 19.336; Ware 314.

¹²⁴ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.11b; see p. 131, n. 67, above.

¹²⁵ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b. For Sire Gourd and Fei Zhangfang, see *Hou hanshu*, 82B.2743-2744; see also Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience*, 119-24; Ngo, *Divination, magie, et politique*, 128-34; and DeWoskin and Crump, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 77-81.

¹²⁶ *Yunji qiqian*, 6.5b. The *Zhenling weiyue tu*, 18b, gives “Duke of the Western Marchmount” as Ge Yue alternate title. His vita from the *Shenxian zhuan* specifies that he transmitted the arts of neutralizing pneumas (*jin[qi zhi shu]* 禁[氣之術]) to Duke White Goat (*Baiyang gong* 白羊公); see Company, *To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth*, 303, for Ge Yue’s entry, and 492-93, for the sources in which it survives. Duke White Goat appears in the *Zhengao*, 13.13b, as the master of Jie Yan 介琰, who lived during the reign of Sun Quan. This is almost certainly Jie Xiang 介象, who was reputed for neutralizing pneumas and known to have been active during the same period. Jie Xiang is also associated with the *Sanhuang wen* transmission line in the aforementioned *Yunji qiqian* passage. When examined together, the passages from the *Shenxian zhuan*, *Zhengao*, and *Yunji qiqian* suggest that the Master of the Yellow Hut bequeathed the *Sanhuang wen* to Duke White Goat, who then handed it down to Jie Xiang. For Jie Xiang’s *Shenxian zhuan* hagiography, see Company, *ibid.*, 189-94, and 423-26. For a discussion of neutralizing pneumas or “vapor charms,” as the term is sometimes translated, see Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts*, 173-83; Ngo, *Divination, magie, et politique*, 200-01; and Ōfuchi Ninji, *Dōkyō to sono kyōten*, 245-46.

threats of assimilation, appropriation, and proscription, the emphasis on esoteric transmission prevented texts like the *Sanhuang wen* from being completely engulfed in the tides of time, ensuring for posterity a glimpse, at the very least, of their rich legacy.

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