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# Ritualising Names

The Construction of Order in Daoist Religious Rituals

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# Abstract

This study addresses the paradoxical problem of the advocacy for ‘namelessness’ in Daoist philosophy and the myriad of name-empowered phenomena in Daoist religion. Its particular focus is on the functions of names in three rituals from the early Way of Celestial Masters (142–fourth century CE): the exorcism of demons, the ordination of priests, and the summoning of divinities in healing rituals.

The study takes an analytical approach upon the above cases. It has been found that the application of names in these rituals has an ordering effect upon the Daoist community in three respects: religiously, name-empowered rituals invoke effective channels of communication with the bureaucratic institutions which govern the realms of the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Netherworld; socially, they provide concrete means for Daoists to deal with real life problems that are beyond the control of common people; and politically, they contribute to the organisation of a hierarchical monastic system, which maintains the Daoist values, beliefs, traditions, morality, and taboos. The efficacy of those rituals is achieved by a trade-off between the commitment to Daoist belief and the divine powers that provide ready solutions to human sufferings, such as disease or demon possession. Thus, they serve as divine interventions in times of disrupted order.

This connotation of names provides a solution to the paradox which lies at the heart of this thesis: the philosophical state of the namelessness can be considered both the initial as well as the final stage of the religious ritual process, while the need to reconstruct cosmological order facilitates the varied rituals with the uses of names.

Keywords: Daoism, ritual, name, order

*For my parents  
with gratitude for their love and support throughout my journeys*

親愛的爸媽  
感謝多年來你們無私的奉獻與關愛

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# Abbreviations and Conventions

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

BCE	Before (the) Common Era; B.C. (Before Christ)
ca.	<i>circa</i> ; “approximately”
CE	Common Era; A.D. (Anno Domini)
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> ; “for example”
ed./eds.	editor/editors; “edited (by)”
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> ; “and other things”
fl.	<i>floruit</i> ; “he flourished”
i.e.	<i>id est</i> ; “that is”
trans.	translation; “translated (by)”
p./pp.	page/pages
URL	Uniform Resource Locator; internet hyperlink
vol.	volume

## Primary Sources

BLH	<i>Book of Later Han</i> ( <i>Houhan Shu</i> 後漢書)
CDR	<i>Corpus of Daoist Ritual</i> ( <i>Daofa Huiyuan</i> 道法會元)
DC	<i>Daoist Canon</i> ( <i>Daozang</i> 道藏)
DSN	<i>Demon Statutes of Nüqing</i> ( <i>Nüqing Guilü</i> 女青鬼律)
EC	<i>Exegeting Characters</i> ( <i>Shuowen Jiezi</i> 說文解字)
GRNTHC	<i>Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure of Highest Clarity</i> ( <i>Shangqing Lingbao Dafa</i> 上清靈寶大法)
OULPLR	<i>Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers</i> ( <i>Zhengyi Fawen Falu Buyi</i> 正一法文法籙部儀)
RCOR	<i>Ritual Code of Ordination Ranks</i> ( <i>Shoulu Cidi Faxin Yi</i> 受籙次第 法信儀法)
SLBC	<i>Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds</i> ( <i>Yunji Qiqian</i> 雲笈七 籙)
SWIV	<i>Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues</i> ( <i>Daode Jing</i> 道德經)
XCL	<i>Xiang'er Commentary to the Laozi</i> ( <i>Laozi Xiang'er Zhu</i> 老子想爾 注)



## Conventions

- Traditional Chinese characters are used throughout this thesis. Their transliterations follow the conventions of *Hanyu Pinyin* 漢語拼音 and appear italicised. In the main content, all Chinese concepts and terms will be referred to by their English translations, with the exceptions of *yin* and *yang*. The key terms which are collected in the glossary, added to this thesis as appendix A, are listed alphabetically according to the spelling of the English translations.
- The titles of primary sources are italicised when used in the text body, but appear abbreviated in citations according to the above list. Quotations from the primary sources are indented, in italics and do not feature quotation marks. They are accompanied by a footnote containing the original Chinese text. All translations are my own, except when indicated otherwise.
- The spelling of ‘*Dao*’, following the *Hanyu Pinyin* transliteration, is preferred over ‘*Tao*’, from the obsolete Wade-Giles system. However, the spelling within citations is maintained as original.
- Double quotation marks are used for citations, and single quotation marks for terms. Quotation marks used in citations are adjusted accordingly.
- Italicisation within citations is maintained as original, except when indicated otherwise.
- In this thesis I will refer to persons as ‘he’ or ‘him’. In general this might also be read as ‘she’ or ‘her’. Demons, spirits, etc. are generally referred to as ‘it’.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This study focuses its research interest on the varied phenomena concerning the use of names in religious ritual contexts, particularly those from the early stages of the Daoist school Way of Celestial Masters (*Tianshi Dao* 天師道). In examination of those rituals, which make use of the names of people, demons, or deities, I intend to uncover how people envision their world and deal with various issues by ritual means during that era.

Before formulating the research questions and methodology, I will first take a brief survey of the diversity of naming practice around the world. Then I will introduce a general contextual background of medieval Chinese culture, including some of the key concepts and terminology which form the basis of this study. The aim of it is to provide a basic cognitive framework, particularly for Western readers who may not be familiar with Chinese religion and culture.

### 1.1 What's in a Name?

A 'name' is not merely a personal, private matter for any individual; it is also a public and social one. The ways in which people give, inherit, lose, trade, steal, recover, reveal, and hide names in their daily life, and the approaches of coping with those incidents, involve comprehensive sociological, historical, cultural, and psychological factors.

Names are constructed in a social web in which meaning is designated within the network. As Clifford Geertz (1973, p. 363) argues, "naming is a crucial aspect of converting 'anybodies' into 'somebodies' ". It is through names that people are interconnected as social beings, linked to various dimensions of personhood, social identity, and one's own self-identification in a certain social network. For instance, a name shared by family members constitutes a collective identity, which is internalised to a certain degree by each of the individuals within the family. At the same time, each individual also projects his own identity to the collective one. The collective identity indicates a person's inheritance of social relations,

kinship, background, geographical origin, social status, profession, title, marriage, or religion.

Beside family names, personal names also contain specific information about a person. As most personal names are given, either by parents, family members, or authoritative figures, those names are always value-ridden to a certain extent. A new-born child might, for instance, be given a name in memory of a respected figure, like ‘Muhammad’. Palestinian children are often named after the towns and villages where their parents were born but are unable to return (Slyomovics 1998, p. 202), while Israelis are regulated to adopt names that emphasise their ‘foreign’ origin from before the establishment of the state of Israel (Bering 1988, p. 53).

In a religious community, acquiring a religious name usually assumes an important role in acknowledging commitment to a religious tradition. In Christianity, it is common practice to baptise a baby after its birth and grant it a Christian name. In Tukánoan culture, animals are given esoteric names, in addition to their common species names, that can be used in spells to prevent them from causing harm. These esoteric names represent a spiritual dimension of the animal, through which ritual power can be exerted upon it (Hugh-Jones 2006, p. 79). In religious rituals, these power relations can emerge between a person and his name as well. In Japanese culture, for instance, names are not mere markers of a person, but they are believed to bear spiritual power. They played an important part in pre-modern rituals, such as exorcisms aimed at ridding sick people of the evil demons who were believed to be the cause of illnesses (Leiter 2013, p. 305).

The role of names in the context of religious rituals is at the heart of this thesis. As names not only constitute relationships among the living, but also act as bridges between past and future generations, linking the living to the dead (Benson 2006, p. 180), it is crucial to analyse the meaning of rituals from that perspective. The reason to focus on ritual is also due to the unique point of view it presents on human behaviour and cultural traditions. As Émile Durkheim seeks a systematic correlation between religious ideas and social structure, he emphasises that “religion is an eminently social thing. [...] Rites are ways of acting that are born only in the midst of assembled groups and whose purpose is to evoke, maintain, or re-create certain mental states of those groups” (Durkheim 2002, p. 38). In his opinion, the cultural ideas underlying rituals are reflections of the world-view of the particular social group from that particular era upon their relation to the external world. They provide a perspective on human existence expressed in the form of symbolic ritual ‘language’. Extending this view further, rituals that revolve around names may therefore be seen as an important instrument of approaching and investigating religion.

## 1.2 Research Background Overview

### Chinese Cosmology

Since the prehistorical era, the Chinese have envisioned the universe as an integrated whole of three paralleled realms<sup>1</sup>: the ‘Netherworld’, the ‘Terrestrial World’, and the ‘Celestial World’. Each realm functions separately according to their own rules, yet the three of them are closely correlated with each other through dynamic interactions in the form of rituals.

Three different kinds of ‘spirits’ (*mingshen* 冥神) are generally recognised as inhabiting the Netherworld: 1) ‘ancestors’ (*zuxian* 祖先), benign dead family members who are worshipped by their living family, a nation-wide tradition shaped by the Confucian-dominated social ideology; 2) ‘ghosts’ (*gui* 鬼), mostly the angry souls of people who died untimely either in accidents or in murder, likely to seek revenge on the living; and 3) ‘demons’ (*xiongshen e’sha* 凶神惡煞), the most evil and detrimental type of spirits which require great efforts to be appeased.

Next, the Terrestrial, or ‘human’ World is populated by: 1) ordinary, or lay people (*fanren* 凡人); 2) people who are capable of divine interactions, such as ‘priests’ (*daoshi* 道士) and state emperors, who were worshipped as ‘Sons of Heaven’ (*tianzi* 天子)<sup>2</sup>; and 3) ‘ghostly souls’ (*guihun* 鬼魂), deceased persons who failed to reach the Netherworld due to obstacles they encountered on their journey, or any unfinished wishes they harboured when still alive, so that they remain in the Terrestrial World and harass the living from time to time. For Daoists, the goal in life is to transcend into immortality and achieve ‘pure *yang* pneuma’ (*chunyang* 纯阳). Since humans are believed to consist of half *yin* and half *yang*, immortality can only be obtained through the eradication of *yin* pneuma from the body.

The Celestial World comprises of an ever-increasing pantheon of divinities<sup>3</sup>: 1) ‘deities’ (*shen* 神), or ‘gods’, which are worshipped either on a national or community level and which are capable of exerting divine power through an array of functionaries; 2) ‘deified ancestors’ (*shengren* 聖人), who have been venerated for their moral merit or heroic deeds, thus alleviated from the family shrine into the divine pantheon; and 3) ‘immortals’ (*xian* 仙), ordinary humans who have transcended into immortal beings through Daoist belief and practise. According

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<sup>1</sup>This cosmological view was by and large shared among early folk religions, Confucianism, Daoism, and later Chinese Buddhism.

<sup>2</sup>During the Zhou Dynasty, ancestor worship was complemented by the Confucian idea that the emperor was directly linked to the highest deity as the ‘Son of Heaven’. Legitimated by this ‘Heavenly Mandate’, the emperor functioned as high priest and as an intermediary who communicated with the dynastic ancestors and cosmic powers, by means of rites of sacrifices to the ancestors, to the heavens, and to earth.

<sup>3</sup>Here, the term ‘divine’ or ‘divinity’ assumes no connotation of the Netherworld as it does in Western culture.

to Daoist belief, any being from the Celestial World consists of *yang* pneuma, thus representing the purest state of being.

In general, the divinities are organised in a hierarchical structure, consisting of a supreme deity that is assisted by a full range of celestial officials of different ranks. They are believed to be in charge of nature, the Terrestrial World, as well as the Netherworld. They possess divine powers, exceeding that of humans, yet their interactions with humans can be either positive or negative (Littleton 2005, p. 378). These interactions between divinities and humans can be realised by means of rewards or punishments, and they can be mediated by priests through rituals. The divinities need to be pleased by humans through acts like paying respect and doing merits. A disorderly state of the Terrestrial World is caused by moral degeneration, wrongful deeds by the emperor, or worship of false deities, etc. Diseases are believed to be retributions of spirits or gods, or curses of ghosts (Pregadio 2008, p. 459). Therefore, healing rituals may be considered a particular kind of exorcisms.

To a large extent, the three realms of Netherworld, Terrestrial and Celestial World are mediated by the criteria of morality. It is believed that a human soul descends to the Netherworld after death. In order to avoid displacement of dead souls, funeral rituals are performed to assist the deceased to embark on their journey from the Terrestrial World to the Netherworld. Moral affiliation of a family with a deceased family member makes it the living family members' responsibility to guide the dead into the Netherworld. Confucian ancestral worship, in the form of periodic sacrificial rites, is an approach to ensure the dead souls continue a rather well-off afterlife in the Netherworld, so that the merits of ancestors can be passed on to the living family members as blessings.

This idea is closely associated with the Daoist notion of 'inherited burden' (*chengfu* 承負). Inherited burden refers to the cycle in which deeds of a person will be judged by celestial officials after death, and be paid back either to the same person in his next life or passed onto his descendants. A strong ethical judgement can be found in the verdict of the burden of deeds. In accordance with this theory, misfortunes of a person are often explained as the misdeeds of his ancestors or of his previous lives, and vice versa. On the other hand, the merit of the living could also serve the dead to endure less suffering in the Netherworld. The inherited burden thus not only connects the individual's position in the cosmos to the family network, but also establishes close interactions with the supernatural bureaucrats (Pregadio 2008, p. 100).

An untimely termination of one's earthly life results in anger, revenge, and even deadly harm from the victimised ghost. In circumstances of declining morality among humans, these ghosts are released from the Netherworld by divinities as a punishment upon the living. This causes disturbances within the order of the

cosmos in the form of diseases, ghostly possessions, and natural disasters which are therefore commonly understood as signs of warning from the Celestial World.

The ‘construction of order’, as mentioned in the subtitle of this thesis, refers to the restoration of these disruptions in the Daoist cosmology. This construction of order should be distinguished from the emergence of cosmos from chaos. While the terms ‘chaos’ and ‘disorder’ are by and large synonymous in everyday language, they have very distinct meanings within the context of Daoist cosmology. Chaos refers to the primordial state of the universe before it was transformed into an ‘ordered’ state, the cosmos. Order lies in the interpretation of the Dao, the harmonious balance between bipolarity of forces in the ceaseless dynamics of the universe, known as *yin* and *yang*. Though the two forces are opposite to each other, they are homogeneous in nature, therefore they “form a *yin-yang* cycle of growth and decline” (Schipper 1993, p. 178). A harmonious, endlessly rotating process, gradually interacting, replacing each other, and transforming from primary elements into more sophisticated beings is considered an orderly universe. On the other hand, interruption, disturbance or intrusion of the functioning process results in disorder. Occurrences such as disease, epidemics, natural disasters, and misfortunes of the human beings, or in a larger sense, in the human society, are regarded as signs of the disturbance of cosmological order.

## Daoism

Daoism is an indigenous tradition of China and one of the world’s oldest mystical and liturgical cultures (Schipper 2013, p. 111). The Dao, or the Great Dao, literally means ‘road’, ‘way’, or ‘approach’ to follow. The Dao is seen as the everlasting principle permeating the cosmos.

Before discussing Daoism, it is important to distinguish the Daoist *philosophical* school of thought from the Daoist *religion* as a social, cultural organisation, though the two are innately inseparable. Daoist philosophy — founded in the sixth century BCE by Laozi 老子, the alleged author of *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues* — lays the foundation for Daoist religion, by means of developing a coherent metaphysical construct of the cosmos and the Dao. Upon this philosophy, the entire system of ritual and belief structure of the Daoist religion is subsequently built.

The first organised form of Daoism, the ‘Way of Celestial Masters’ (*Tianshi Dao* 天師道), later known as School of Orthodox-Unity (*Zhengyi Dao* 正一道), was founded in 142 CE by Zhang Daoling 張道陵. Zhang Daoling claimed that Laozi had appeared to him, commanded him to rid the world of decadence, and establish a new state consisting only of the ‘Seed People’ (*Zhongmin* 種民). Zhang became the first Celestial Master, and began to spread his religion throughout the southern province of Sichuan. The movement was initially called ‘Way of the

Five Pecks of Rice' (*Wudoumi Dao* 五斗米道), because each person wishing to join was required to donate five pecks of rice (Hendrischke 2000, p. 139).

The 'School of Highest Clarity' (*Shangqing Pai* 上清派), developed in the fourth century CE, gained official status in China during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). Some of the Tang emperors claimed that Laozi was their ancestor, since they shared the family name Li 李 with him (Robinet 1997, p. 184). Between 397 and 402 CE, Ge Chaofu 葛巢甫 compiled a series of scriptures, which later served as the foundation of the 'School of Numinous Treasures' (*Lingbao Pai* 靈寶派). This school unfolded its greatest influence during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) (Robinet 1997, p. xvi). Several Song emperors, most notably Emperor Hui (*Huizong* 徽宗), were active in promoting Daoism. During his reign, the first edition of *Daoist Canon* (*Daozang* 道藏) was compiled and published (Robinet 1997, p. 213). In the twelfth century CE, the 'School of Complete Perfection' (*Quanzhen Pai* 全真派) was established and became the largest and most important Daoist school in Northern China during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 CE).

Throughout the Imperial Period of China, Confucianism was predominantly the state religion of nearly all empires, except very short interruptions in between. According to Confucian ideology, an orderly functioning Chinese society is based on the social structure of 'kinship' (*Qinshu* 親屬). The reverence for ancestors and rituals in tribute to dead spirits and heaven form the essential elements of this ideological framework.

Buddhism has been another shaping force of religious life in China. It arrived in China during the first century CE through the 'Silk Road' and quickly found its way to integrate with the Chinese culture. It had great influence on the development of early Daoism in terms of teachings, traditions, rituals, scripture, and institutions. At the same time, Buddhism itself was also deeply renovated by the Chinese cultural and religious background. Eventually, it grew from a foreign religion into the indigenous schools and movements of Chinese Buddhism (Zürcher 2008). During the Tang and Song dynasties, the rise of Esoteric Buddhism again exerted great influence on Daoist religion.

Aspects of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism were consciously synthesised in the 'Neo-Confucian school' (*Xin Rujia* 新儒家), which eventually became Imperial orthodoxy for state bureaucratic purposes under the Ming Dynasty (1368–1643 CE) (Kohn 2000, p. xvii). The Qing Dynasty (1644–1911 CE), however, much favoured Confucian classics over Daoist works.

Today, Daoism is one of five religions<sup>4</sup> recognised by the People's Republic of China. The government regulates its activities through the 'Chinese Daoist Association' (*Zhongguo Daojiao Xiehui* 中國道教協會). Daoism is freely practised

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<sup>4</sup>Namely Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. *Confucianism* is considered a philosophical system, rather than a religion.

in the Republic of China (Taiwan), where it claims millions of adherents.

This study, however, focuses exclusively on religious Daoism in the early period of Way of Celestial Masters, which lasted from 142 until the fourth century CE. A broader context of Daoist development, its relation with the Chinese state, Confucianism, and folk religions will also be addressed when it applies. Inter-dialogue with Chinese Buddhism will not be specifically discussed, unless a strong connection can be found.

## **Names and Rituals**

The notion of ‘names’ in this study entails both the names of human beings and that of entities belonging to either the Celestial World or Netherworld, including deities, spirits, and ghosts which bear one or more names. Names that are used in Daoist rituals connect the designated entities with their surrounding world.

Daoist priests are believed to possess the power to control spirits in the body and transcend everyday existence and travel or fly to the Celestial World. They are viewed as mediators between their communities and the spiritual world. During their trances, Daoists actively seek the help of spirits and deities to cure illnesses, bring about good weather, predict the future, or communicate with deceased ancestors.

Unlike Confucian rituals, which are executed by family elders, Daoist rituals can only achieve ritual efficacy when performed by ordained Daoist priests. Any unauthorised activity involving Daoist rituals is considered a violation of the heavenly law. Liturgical rituals like ordination also require official authorisation from ‘precept masters’.

The three main groups of actors participating in name-empowered rituals include: divinities from whom ritual power is derived; Daoist priests, who have the ability to invoke, channel and realise the efficacy of that power; and those upon whom that power is exerted, in particular laypeople and spirits from the Netherworld.

Sometimes external objects are used as power-ridden agents, such as spells or charms. The desired magical effect of spoken spells or written charms could be activated with additional ritual performances by Daoist priests. J.J.M. de Groot (1901, p. 1024) believes that power attached to those spells and charms is “unlimited”, because the unlimited power encompasses eliminating evil spirits, containing demons, eradicating illness, and benefiting people in general.

The restoration of order can be achieved in Daoist religion by a series of rituals known as ‘magic’ or, literally, ‘methods and arts’ (*fashu* 法術). In magic, “supernatural power is acquired by means of physical and mental techniques, symbolic words and actions, or special implements, with the purpose of controlling natural phenomena or supernatural entities such as spirits (*gui* 鬼) and deities” (Pregadio



2008, p. 116). Magic comprises a large collection of Daoist techniques, such as divination (*zhanbu* 占卜), talismans (*fu* 符), spells (*zhou* 咒), and inner alchemy (*neidan* 内丹). Through these ritual techniques, Daoist priests are able to actively interfere with the balance of *yin* and *yang* in the Terrestrial World, access the realm of the Celestial World and petition for assistance, or exert expelling force upon demons from the Netherworld.

### 1.3 Research Problem

In Daoist philosophy, the intellectual discussion of name reference on a broad scope begins with the canonical classic *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues*. It diverts its religious interest of the origin of the cosmos onto the conceptualisation of the so-called ‘nameless’ (*wuming* 無名) and ‘named’ (*youming* 有名). Laozi was the first philosopher in Chinese literary history who raised questions on the relation between names and their referencing objects.

For Laozi, Dao is the ultimate rule for the working of the universe. He believes that everything originates from the Great Dao, and it is also the Great Dao which organises the cosmos in an orderly manner. Yet the concept of the Dao is beyond reason and logic. It is the fundamental principle that universally permeates every action and every phenomenon, as is explained in the first chapter of the *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues*:

*The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao;  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.  
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;  
The Named is the mother of myriad things.  
Thus, constantly free of desire,  
One observes its wonders;  
Constantly filled with desire,  
One observes its manifestations.  
These two emerge together but differ in name.  
The unity is said to be the mystery,  
Mystery of mysteries, the door to all wonders.*<sup>5</sup> (Trans. Lin 2006,  
p. 3)

A clear distinction has to be made between the Dao, which cannot be named with sense, and the other things which can be named with a categorising label. Laozi advocates strongly for the namelessness of the Dao and he regards names as intellectual ballast which obstructs a deeper understanding of the cosmos. Laozi

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<sup>5</sup>The original text: “道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名。無，名天地之始；有，名萬物之母。故常無，欲以觀其妙；常有，欲以觀其儻。此兩者同出而異名，同謂之玄，玄之又玄，眾妙之門” (SWIV, p. 474).

points out the limitation of spoken words and written texts: for the Great Dao, any attempt to categorise, define and analyse it through words can only give us a restricted understanding of how the Dao acts upon the world, rather than explain with explicitness. Thus, the Dao should be kept as a nameless concept, free from restricted human interpretation. To comprehend it completely, people must exercise their intuition and get in touch with the “fundamental divinity” (Neville 1982, p. 124) that connects everyone. If people could free themselves from the human desire to put everything into words, and become aware of their wordless communion with nature, they can catch glimpses of a divine wisdom. This is considered far more profound than anything that academic knowledge, science, or technology has to offer.

Despite Laozi’s advocacy for namelessness in the realm of Daoist philosophy, the Daoist religion, on the other hand, regards the act of naming as a critical part of its ritual traditions: the inscription of names in spells or talismans, which provides protection against evil spirits; the ritualisation of names, as often seen in initiation and ordination ceremonies in Daoist temples; and the utterance of names in the form of mantra, recited to summon a lost soul or a divinity from heaven. This paradoxical discrepancy between the Daoist philosophical and religious approaches towards names is the main cause for this study.

## 1.4 Scope of Research

### Research Objective

This study aims to investigate how the Daoist religion developed such a divergently different picture on the issue regarding names, when its theological ideas are firmly rooted in Daoist philosophy.

The main hypothesis I bring forth here is that Daoist philosophy presents a cognition of order of the cosmos, while Daoist religion not only constructs that order in its theology, but also provides ritual solutions on how to maintain and restore the harmonious order of the Great Dao. This is achieved by devising and performing rituals to manage that order when its balance is destabilised. Therefore, the various Daoist name-empowered rituals are closely linked to the harmonious order among the divine realm, the human society, and the Netherworld.

In the context of Way of Celestial Masters, the idea of order involves at least two dimensions: in its envision of the cosmos, order can be achieved by a balanced management of various forces in the body and in nature; in the realm of society, proper order is achieved only when a society follows the Dao.

## Overview of Prior Research

Among recent academic research, some attention has been paid to the general study of names by scholars such as Gabriele vom Bruck, Barbara Bodenhorn, and Michael Lambek. In the collection *The Anthropology of Names and Naming*, they take in-depth surveys upon names and naming practice in the context of various cultures around the world.

However, the academic attention directed in the field of sinology is extremely limited. Of special note is *The Name of the Nameless and Thunder Magic* by Florian C. Reiter (2005). The main focus of this article largely coincides with the subject matter of the third case study of this thesis, which concerns the summoning of divinities and the use of talismans, yet the scope of his research is set around the time period 960–1279 CE.

Although the above mentioned scholars do not deal with the subject matter of this study directly, their methodologies in approaching name and religion have provided great analytical insights. This includes in particular the publications *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* by Roy A. Rappaport (1999) and *What's in a Name? Name Bestowal and the Identity of Spirits in Mayotte and Northwest Madagascar* by the aforementioned Michael Lambek (2006).

## Research Questions

In order to address the ritual dimensions of names and interpret their underlying rationalities, I propose the following research question:

How do name-empowered rituals from the Way of Celestial Masters contribute to the restoration and maintenance of order within the Daoist cosmology?

This question attempts to trace the significance of names in different circumstances. In order to do so, I will investigate the functionality of names in the religious lives of the Daoist tradition, how Daoists construct their faith by the use of names, and the social significance to the religious community and to the lives of common laypeople in general. Therefore, I propose the following sub-questions to answer the main research question in a more structured approach:

1. What are the functions of names in the Daoist rituals concerning the exorcism of demons, the ordination of priests, and the summoning of divinities?

Three examples of name-empowered rituals from the Way of Celestial Masters will be considered in this study: the exorcism of demons, the ordination of priests, and the summoning of divinities. This question intends to identify the functions of names in the specific ritual contexts of these cases. How these applications of names contribute to ritual efficacy is subject to the next question:

2. What constitutes the underlying ritual efficacy of names in the ritual performances?

This sub-question intends to reveal the mechanisms of ritual power, which is invoked by the applications of names, as well as their religious effects upon the various actors that are involved. In particular, it focuses on the divine transformation at the heart of each ritual. Finally, the third sub-question focuses on the real world consequences of the performance of the rituals:

3. What are the religious, social, and political effects of the name-empowered rituals?

It thus concerns the effects of these rituals on the human participants, as well as on the broader context of the Daoist community and Chinese society at large. This includes the relation with other religions, in particular Confucianism, and the Chinese state.

## 1.5 Methodology

The descriptions and analyses of this study will be largely literature based, including primary source texts, an extended collection of secondary sources from various academic scholars, as well as a number of online sources.

The main primary sources selected for this study date back to the early Way of Celestial Masters. They include *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* (*Nüqing Guilü* 女青鬼律), *Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers* (*Zhengyi Fawen Falu Buyi* 正一法文法籙部儀), *Ritual Code of Ordination Ranks* (*Shoulu Cidi Faxin Yi* 受籙次第法信儀法), and *Corpus of Daoist Ritual* (*Daofa Huiyuan* 道法會元). These texts are taken from the Ming edition of the *Daoist Canon* (*Daozang* 道藏), compiled in ca. 1445 CE. Historical records and other material evidence are also included when applicable. They provide the base material for the three case studies that will be conducted in later chapters.

The study builds its theoretical framework primarily on the theory of performative speech acts developed by J.L. Austin and John Searle. The three types of performative speech acts — namely the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary — conceptually correspond to the three sub-questions proposed in the above section. They form an overarching theoretical framework throughout this study and will provide insights into the analysis.

### Case Studies

As stated previously, three Daoist name-empowered rituals from Way of Celestial Masters have been selected for detailed analysis in three case studies: the exorcism

of demons in chapter 3; the ordination of priests in chapter 4; and the summoning of divinities in chapter 5.

The first focuses on disempowerment of a *spirit*: the divine transformation of a demon posing a threat to the Terrestrial World into one that is returned to its proper place within the Netherworld bureaucracy. The second focuses on empowerment of a *person*: the divine transformation of a new Daoist priest from disciple into ordained priest. And the third focuses on empowerment of an *object*, as well as a person: first, the divine transformation of talismans from ‘raw materials’ into items of divine healing power; second, the transformation of a patient from sickness to health.

However, a major complicating factor in studying Chinese religion in general is that its practice, rituals, and ideas vary in different social, historical contexts, and many of them can in fact be self-conflicting. In the words of Adam Yuet Chau (2013, p. 89): “the religious culture of the vast majority of Chinese...does not present itself as a neatly organised system”.

In an attempt to clarify Chinese religious culture, Chau proposes five modalities of ‘doing religion’. It provides a simplified framework for religious practice and actions, which is also applicable in the case of Daoism. The five modalities are summarised by Chau (2013, p. 89) as follows:

- ‘Discursive/scriptural’: involving mostly the composition and use of texts;
- ‘Personal-cultivational’: involving a long-term interest in cultivating and transforming oneself;
- ‘Liturgical’: involving elaborate ritual procedures conducted by ritual specialists;
- ‘Immediate-practical’: aiming at quick results using simple ritual or magical techniques; and
- ‘Relational’: emphasising the relationship between humans and deities (or ancestors) as well as among humans in religious practice.

All of these modalities are represented within the case studies. In particular, all three describe elaborate ritual procedures conducted by ritual specialists and concern the relationship between humans and deities, and thus involve the liturgical and relational modalities. The study concerning exorcisms includes an important discursive/scriptural aspect, while all other four modalities are represented as well. It is therefore a suitable case to be considered first. In addition, the study on ordination of Daoist priest focuses in particular on the personal-cultivational aspects, whereas the study on summoning of divinities involves the immediate-practical.

The selection of these case studies as a representation of name-empowered rituals in the tradition of the Way of Celestial Masters in Imperial China is due to the fact that they cover all of the Daoist cosmology consisting of Celestial World, Terrestrial World, and Netherworld; concern divine transformations of spirits, humans, and objects; and represent all of the modalities of Chinese religions described by Chau.

## 1.6 Outline

In Chapter 2, I will introduce the theoretical framework based on speech act theory. It will be applied as an analytical and conceptual tool throughout the case studies. Chapters 3 to 5 contain the three case studies of Daoist name-empowered rituals from the early period of Way of Celestial Masters: the exorcism of demons, the ordination of priests, and the summoning of divinities. The research results will be presented in the Conclusion, which also contains suggestions for further research on this topic.

A full list of references is contained in the Bibliography. It lists the primary, secondary, and online sources separately. A glossary of key terms can be found in appendix A. It provides a quick, easy access to the essential religious terms, concepts, historical figures, and book titles mentioned in this study. All definitions of the terms are based on definitions given by leading scholars, with modifications made by the author. Finally, a general overview of Chinese dynastic history and a map of the main clusters of the Twenty-Four Dioceses from the early Way of Celestial Masters have been added as appendices B and C respectively.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical Framework

The previous chapter has sketched the research project that I intend to undertake, and now I will continue by introducing the theoretical framework which underlies the analysis of the three case studies. Since these concern the use of language in relation to the performance of ritual acts, I have selected J.L. Austin's 'speech act theory', in combination with the taxonomy of illocutionary speech acts provided by John Searle, as the main frame of reference for the analysis of the ritual phenomena.

### 2.1 Performative Speech Acts

Speech act theory was developed by Austin during the 1950s and '60s. The notion of 'performative utterance' was first introduced as an antithesis to purely descriptive use of language. Austin (1962, p. 1) points out "it was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely".

Rather, he regards language as performances of social acts, depending on the speaker's intention. Words, statements, or utterances not only express certain ideas, but they may also intend to get something done (Littlejohn 2009, p. 921). According to the definition given by Austin (1962, p. 5), an utterance is 'performative', if and only if it is issued in the course of the "doing of an action". The term 'performative' derives from the verb *perform*, which "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (Austin 1962, p. 6). Therefore, an act of speech is given out to achieve something, in the sense that it has consequences beyond the mere utterance of the words that are spoken.

## Types of Performatives

Austin distinguishes three types of speech acts: the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary.

The ‘locutionary’ act is “the act of ‘saying something’ in [the] full normal sense” comprising in turn of phonetic (the mere “uttering of certain noises”), phatic (vocabulary and grammar), and rhetic acts (using these vocables “with a certain more-or-less definite sense and reference”) (Austin 1962, pp. 94–95). The phonetic and phatic aspects will remain outside the scope of this thesis. In this study, I will consider the locutionary act as the ‘face-value’ interpretation of the primary source texts and their translation and interpretation based on commonly accepted historical contextualisations. It corresponds conceptually to the first sub-question of this thesis that intends to describe which words are spoken during the performance of the ritual, what actions are taken by the participants, and which names are applied in the process.

The ‘illocutionary’ act is the “performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something” (Austin 1962, p. 99)<sup>6</sup>. The illocutionary is the essence of speech act theory. It describes how so-called ‘illocutionary force’ is exerted upon those who are being addressed by a ‘hidden message’ behind the words that are spoken as part of the locutionary act. In this study, the main illocutionary force to be revealed is the one which powers the divine transformation at the heart of each of the case studies. It therefore provides an insight into the second sub-question how ritual efficacy is achieved.

Finally, the ‘perlocutionary’ act is “what we bring about or achieve by saying something” (Austin 1962, p. 108). The perlocutionary is the result of the speech act. This may be very different from, opposite to, or even completely unrelated to the locutionary. Equally, it may be very different from the intended result, as suggested by the illocutionary act. Of particular interest for this thesis are the consequences of the performatives beyond the confines of the ritual itself — on the Daoist community, Chinese society at large, and the relationship with the state and other religions. It therefore addresses matters concerning the third sub-question of this thesis. However, it should be noted that this interpretation of the perlocutionary act is an extension of the connotation given by Austin, which only concerns the immediate results of the speech act.

As an indication of the type of analyses conducted in this thesis following this framework, we might consider the ritual of infant baptism in western, Christian culture as an — be it extremely simplified — example. First, the locutionary act of the ritual consists of calling out the baby’s Christian name in front of the gathered church community, along with the utterances of certain biblical phrases, and the affusion or submersion of the child. Second, the illocutionary

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<sup>6</sup>Italics added.



act concerns the religious transformation at the heart of the baptism: the child is ritually ‘cleansed’ of Original Sin and subsequently reborn ‘in Christ’. This constitutes the intended purpose of the ritual. Third, the direct perlocutionary act of the ritual is the adoption of the child into the church community.

In later life, however, broader consequences of the ritual might consist of the baptised person being designated as belonging to that particular church community by society at large. For instance, a person might be signified as a Catholic, based on having multiple personal names derived from apostles, as well as from the mother of Jesus, ‘Maria’, even if the person is male. These ‘Catholic’ names could very well influence the way people relate to that person — perhaps more positively in predominantly Catholic areas, and more negatively in Protestant ones.

This example reveals in particular that the theoretical framework of speech acts serves to categorise the phenomena related to the rituals to allow for a structured and consistent analysis. In other words: the framework itself is not intended to alter, distort, or otherwise influence the perception of the rituals in any way. Moreover, by considering both the actual accounts of the rituals as derived from the primary sources, as well as the religious and real world effects as derived from the common historical contextualisation of the rituals, the framework is also intended to include all relevant phenomena related to the ritual, without omissions or marginalisations.

In the initial process of categorisation some level of interpretation cannot be avoided while determining which phenomenon belongs to which category. In most cases this presents a trivial matter though. However, a particular choice has been made to exclude the intended and, most likely, also *perceived* effects of the ritual upon supernatural entities and otherworldly realms from the perlocutionary act and consider these aspects strictly as part of the illocutionary.

## 2.2 Illocutionary Acts

### Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts

As stated in the previous section, the essence of speech act theory lies in the illocutionary acts. Several different kinds of illocutions can be distinguished. Improving on Austin’s own classifications of illocutionary acts, John Searle (1975, pp. 354–361)<sup>7</sup> proposes the following taxonomy, which I will also adopt for reasons which will be explained in the next section:

- ‘Representatives’: speech acts that “commit a *speaker*...to the truth of the expressed proposition”, which may in itself be true or false. They are associated with verbs like ‘believe’, ‘conclude’, ‘deny’, etc.;

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<sup>7</sup>Italics added.

- ‘Directives’: speech acts that attempt “to get the *hearer* to do something”. Associated verbs include: ‘order’, ‘command’, ‘ask’, etc.;
- ‘Commissives’: speech acts that “commit the *speaker*...to some future course of action”. Associated verbs include: ‘promise’, ‘pledge’, ‘vow’, etc.;
- ‘Expressives’: speech acts that “express the psychological state [of the *speaker*]...about the state of affairs specified in the propositional content”. ‘Thank’ and ‘welcome’ are among the associated verbs; and
- ‘Declarations’: speech acts that intend to “bring about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality”. These are not just associated with the verb ‘declare’, but also with ‘define’, ‘dub’, and ‘name’.

It should be understood that the above list is not an taxonomy of *verbs*, which is what Austin attempted to accomplish in his own classification. Rather, the strength of the above list of illocutionary acts by Searle is that they are classified according to their ‘direction-of-fit’. It turns out this is a far more useful taxonomy, especially in relation to the subject matter of this study.

### **Direction-of-Fit**

There are two so-called ‘directions-of-fit’ for performative speech acts: ‘world-to-word’ and ‘word-to-world’.<sup>8</sup> They describe whether the words of a speech act must match the world, or the world must be made to match the words.

Directives and commissives are world-to-words: the success of the utterance depends on what will actually occur in the real world, through the actions by, respectively, the hearer or the speaker himself. Representatives fit in the opposite direction: the utterance of the statement commits the speaker to believe his statement.

Expressives and declarations present more complicated cases. A lack of direction-of-fit constitutes an expressive: their accuracy or success is not determined by events in the world, nor do they bring about any change in that world. Declarations, on the other hand, can fit in both directions: a sentence like ‘I declare this thesis done’ is world-to-words, as the success of the declaration depends on whether the thesis is actually approved. Conversely, a sentence like ‘I christen thee *Stefania*’ is words-to-world, as the act of naming defines the yet unnamed ‘object’.

Searle (1975, p. 360) identifies yet another special case, concerning the supernatural: “When God says ‘Let there be light’, that is a declaration”. More

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<sup>8</sup>In philosophy, the more general notions of ‘mind-to-world’ and ‘world-to-mind’ are typically used.

precisely, its direction-of-fit — words-to-world — is in exact opposition of what it would be if a mere mortal would utter a similar statement<sup>9</sup>.

This once again goes to the heart of the analyses I will perform in the case studies. For instance, when vocalising a demon's name as part of an exorcist ritual, the direction-of-fit of the corresponding illocutionary act will be opposite to that suggested by the locutionary act. As the vocalisation of the demon's name is supposed to identify and expel the demon, the success of the illocutionary act of the ritual seems to depend on the question whether the demon is actually understood to having been exorcised — in other words: the direction-of-fit is world-to-words. As I shall argue in the analysis of the ritual, however, the initial function of the vocalisation of the demon's name as part of the locutionary act is to reify or objectify the demon and establish it as a 'real' entity in the world. The direction-of-fit is thus completely reversed.

The above polarity will turn out to be a recurring theme throughout the analyses of the case studies, particularly in the first one on exorcisms, which will be presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>9</sup>Moreover, it would be a directive, rather than a declaration.

# Chapter 3

## Exorcism of Demons

Calling out demons' names is one of the earliest forms of exorcist rituals in Daoist religion. It can be found in the early Daoist scripture *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* (*Nüqing Guilü* 女青鬼律). The scripture contains a long register of demons, with each of their names, titles, threats, as well as instructions on how to pacify them. This chapter will examine this exorcist ritual, its ritual efficacy, as well as its implications in the context of the Way of Celestial Masters<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.1 *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*

The scripture *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* was written roughly around the fourth century CE.<sup>11</sup> It originally consisted of eight scrolls, as indicated in the introduction of the scripture. Yet only six of them have survived the ages. The current edition of *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* is included in the *Daoist Canon*, as a 'code of law' from the early stage of Way of Celestial Masters.

The exact meaning of the term 'nüqing'<sup>12</sup> 女青 in the title of the scripture has not been fully explained. According to Strickmann (2002, p. 80) "its literal meaning is 'woman-blue'<sup>13</sup>, but it should probably be read as standing for the closely related compound, *nü-ching* ('feminine sexual essence')", yet it is also the name for a "malodorous plant...[which] controls virulent magical infections, expelling malignancies and evil influences...killer-demons, plague, and pestilence and eliminating inauspicious beings". Moreover, it has also been interpreted as "the revealer of a book of statutes...the spirit of the Celestial Emperor...the one who has established the otherworldly offices that keep the records on good and evil behavior...[and as] the name for a hell" (Kohn 2000, p. 268). As there are

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<sup>10</sup>The founding of the Way of the Celestial Masters during the second century CE marks the formal establishment of the Daoist religion. See Pregadio (2008, pp. 981–986).

<sup>11</sup>The dating of this scripture is controversial. It was probably written between the middle of the third century at the earliest and the fifth century at the latest. For more evidence on the dating and edition issues, see Bai and Dai (2007).

<sup>12</sup>Also spelled 'nü-ch'ing'.

<sup>13</sup>Terry Kleeman (2011) translates it as 'Lady Blue'.

so many different interpretations of the word, it cannot be ascertained in which way the title of this book was interpreted by the early Daoists themselves, and it is unclear if the scripture influenced later meanings of the word, I have opted for keeping the original word instead of choosing one of the possible translations.

The reason to choose this scripture for detailed analysis is threefold. First of all, the main theme of the scripture is upon demonology spell, to be applied by Daoist priests to counter demon threats by reciting demons' names; second, the sheer volume of the text dedicated to recording demons' names offers a rich source for the study concerned; third, it has been widely recognised as one of the earliest and most influential Daoist scripture on statutes from the Way of Celestial Masters, in close relation to name-related rituals.

In terms of content, four out of the surviving six scrolls take great length at recording the names of ghosts and demons, most of whom are followed by a comprehensive list of their residential locations and their primary threat to the Terrestrial World. According to the text, these demons seem to be present in every geographical spot, in every time dimension, and in every living or inanimate object imaginable. The scripture claims to be transmitted from the Celestial World upon the Terrestrial World in order to instruct Daoist believers, more specifically priests of the Way of Celestial Masters, upon a set of ritual instructions in order to expel demons in such ways as name-calling and spell-casting (Zhu 1996, p. 34). It also contains twenty-two moral precepts for human practitioners to follow.<sup>14</sup>

### Exorcist Rituals

In order to get a better understanding of the exorcist rituals as described in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, let us first take a look at some vivid descriptions of several types of demonic threats, listed in the scripture:

*Refractory murderous demons circulate everywhere among mortals, randomly causing all manners of ailments. There are the pathogenic influences of the five types of refractory beings bringing chills and hot sensations, headache, hard spots in the stomach, retching and shortness of breath, feelings of fullness and distension of the five viscera, dazed vision, gulping and gasping, extremities palsied, so that one cannot be aware or think, and one's life hangs by a thread from morning until night.*<sup>15</sup> (Trans. Strickmann 2002, p. 82)

In addition, the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* also presents the straight forward solution to counter these threats: the vocalisation of demons' names. This approach

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<sup>14</sup>As well as an early mention of a rite of sexual initiation, called the 'Joining of Pneumas' (*Heqi* 合氣), which will remain outside the scope of this study.

<sup>15</sup>The original text: “逆煞之鬼，流布人間，誑作百病。五逆疾炁，寒熱頭痛，或腹內結堅，吐逆短炁，五內脹滿，目視顛倒，口噤手足攣縮，不自知慮，命在日夕，兇鬼來守矣” (DSN, p. 242).

is explicitly introduced at the beginning of the first chapter:

*If hereafter there are male or female Daoists who behold my secret scripture and thereby know the names of the demons, all will be well for them, the myriad demons will not dare to attack them, and the thousand spirits will all submit and comport themselves as set forth in the Statutes.*<sup>16</sup> (Trans. Strickmann 2002, p. 82)

And again in chapter two:

*Once again [The Demon Statutes] record the [demons'] real names, in order to let people know them. If one knows the demons' names, perverse [forces] dare not come forward. Calling a demon's name three times will cut off the demon's vapour.*<sup>17</sup> (Trans. Lai 2002, p. 262)

It follows from the above excerpts that calling out demons or spirits by their names was considered a highly effective method for exorcisms. This practice was by no means a unique or novel one. Rather, the recitation practice as described in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* stems from an ancient therapeutic ritual which targets illnesses caused by disease demons through accurate knowledge of their names and appearances (Bokenkamp 1997, p. 391).

The exorcist ritual is being performed according to specific procedural guidelines. The following example illustrates the ritual steps that need to be taken in order to cast out two particular demons, called Tianzai and Qixiang:

*Tianzai and Qixiang, these two figures are in-the-house spirits. During the daytime, they are divine deities bringing blessings to the family, while at night, they turn into ghosts. People who know their names should stand by the doorstep at a certain hour in the evening, call out their names, clap their hands three times, turn around and repeat the process two or three times. After doing so, those two ghosts would stop harassing or imposing threats to people.*<sup>18</sup>

This excerpt is but an example among many others, which follow a similar pattern. This case reveals the names of two domestic demons that exhibit ambiguous moral behaviour — divine during the day time, demonic at night — as well as the ritual procedure to pacify their threats to the household. It illustrates the common ritual procedure to perform the exorcism: first identify the demon, and then repeatedly speak out its name, occasionally in combination with the performance of certain ritual acts, such as the clapping of hands.

<sup>16</sup>The original text: “後有道男女生，見吾秘經，知鬼姓名皆吉，萬鬼不幹，千神賓伏” (DSN, p. 239).

<sup>17</sup>The original text: “今記其真名，使人知之。一知鬼名，邪不敢前，三呼其鬼名，鬼炁即絕” (DSN, p. 244).

<sup>18</sup>The original text: “天載，芑嚮。右二鬼是門伯戶丞，白日為神福室，暮作鬼。子知名，人定時於門戶左右呼其名，三掌手，反首持兩三過，此鬼即止，不敢作害” (DSN, pp. 246-247).

## Precepts

Besides giving instructions on the ritual itself, the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* also imposes discipline upon participants from both sides of the ritual performance. On the one hand, the scripture provides a prescriptive structure by which humans could exercise the subjugation of demons, while on the other, it enforces a set of religious precepts and taboos upon the Daoist community. The release of demons from the Netherworld to the Terrestrial World was considered a penalty for human violation of morality. The rationality behind the exorcist ritual lies in the idea that any problem, issue, or difficulty faced by humans in the Terrestrial World can be related to morality in various degrees. In other words: epidemics, natural disasters, and other misfortunes were believed to be manifestations of divine punishment upon the degeneration of morality among humans. Deities from the Celestial World would record, evaluate, and judge human moral behaviour, and then issue varied sentences or rewards accordingly. Daoists ritual specialists and believers are thus made subject to the rigorous religious and moral codes that stipulate regulations on their moral behaviour.<sup>19</sup>

In the following excerpt, we read one of the precepts presented in the scripture:

*Precept 22: do not pass this scripture to laypeople, or tell someone your parents' names. In case of revealing those secrets to the laypeople, you will be deprived of three hundred days off your life span.*<sup>20</sup>

This precept shows three elements of particular interest. First of all, it instructs its reader to keep the knowledge contained in the scripture from those who are not ordained. Second, it once again underscores the importance of knowledge of names; not just the names of the demons which are listed, yet also the names of the priests' parents. This may seem as a very odd addition. Yet before the establishment of Way of Celestial Masters, Daoist priests tended to abandon their families, study Daoism as recluses, and adopt religious names in replacement of their family names. This prohibition against mentioning parents' names therefore seems to support that practice, and perhaps more importantly, the establishment of early Daoism as a separate religion by negating the core Confucian value of familial kinship. Third, it warns a punishment for those who break commitment to this precept in the form of reduction of one's lifespan by a nearly a year.

It seems the set of precepts is held as divine statutes which are to be applied by those who wish to master the demonic expulsion rituals. As to those who

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<sup>19</sup>The scripture differentiates laypeople from those who believe in Daoism, and also Daoist believers from Daoist ritual specialists. All those who either believe, follow, or practise Daoism are seen as 'Seed People' of the Dao; those who do not are forbidden to be given access to this scripture, which is considered a divine object. Daoist ritual specialists, like any other Daoist priests, receive stricter precepts than other believers and practitioners, yet they possess higher ritual powers.

<sup>20</sup>The original text: “二十二者，不得妄以經書授與俗人，道父母名諱，洩漏真要訣語俗人，天奪算三百” (DSN, p. 245).

do not follow the precepts, the scripture indicates their demise by a massive invasion of demons. Strickmann (2002) identifies an eschatological tone in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, as the opening of the scripture presents a doomsday scenario consisting of famine, plague and massive human death due to the loss of faith in the Way of Celestial Masters. This lack of awe for divine messages, the scripture claims, is the reason why diseases can easily strike the Terrestrial World. The strong tone of moral righteousness and a pressing urgency of the belief in the Daoist religion thus establish a direct link between exorcist rituals as the instruments of salvation, and morality as the embodiment of Daoist belief.

## 3.2 Application of Names

Since the knowledge of demons' names is a critical premise for performing this exorcist ritual, we need to examine the roles of names in the ritual process. I will describe this process in terms of J.L. Austin's theory of performative speech acts along with the taxonomy of illocutionary acts by John Searle as introduced in the previous chapter.

According to the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* the application of names in the exorcist ritual consists of the utterance of demons' names, in some cases accompanied by simple non-verbal ritualistic acts, such as the clapping of hands in the example given earlier in this chapter. As the common denominator of all the exorcist rituals presented in the scripture, I consider the act of speaking out demons' names as the essential *locutionary* act of the exorcist ritual. In other words, the first step of analysis concerns only what is actually being said during the performance of the ritual, as opposed to what is being meant, intended, or accomplished by it.

Assuming the exorcist ritual is considered effective by its participants, this utterance must somehow take effect upon the alleged demons. It should therefore contain some 'hidden message' aimed at those demons, in addition to the names that are actually spoken out. As the demons are expected to disperse upon receiving the ritual message, this message can be described as a command or, in Searle's terminology, a 'directive'. It constitutes the *illocutionary* act of the exorcist ritual. Hence, it is not the utterance itself which provides sufficient condition to invoke ritual efficacy, but its implied hidden message. The means by which this ritual efficacy is realised will be explored in detail in the next section.

Finally, we may consider the results of the ritual in the real world, i.e. the consequences it has for the human participants. I define this as the *perlocutionary* act of the ritual performance. It thus explicitly excludes the intended result of the ritual — the exorcism of demons — which I consider part of the illocutionary act. However, the change in the mental state of the participants, caused by the



belief that a demon has in fact been exorcised, does constitute real world effects. These not only lead to direct behavioural changes, but also contribute to broader religious, social, and political implications. These aspects will be discussed later in this chapter.

## Naming of Demons

As discussed in the previous chapter, the exorcism of the demon is considered part of the illocutionary act, rather than the perlocutionary, due to the supernatural nature of the demon. Assuming the human actors in the ritual did in fact consider them to be real entities, we are, however, left with a problem: when the priest ‘names’ the demon, who or what is actually being named? This fundamental issue concerning the identity of supernatural entities is formulated by Michael Lambek (2006, p. 120) as: “[t]o what degree can the name of a spirit be said to refer to its object when in the absence of the name the object might have no identity?” In order to provide an insight into how demons obtain their identity within the ritual process, we turn to the theory of signs as developed by Charles Sanders Peirce.

Peirce defines three ways in which a sign, such as a name, can stand for an ‘object’: as ‘icon’, if the sign resembles the object; as ‘index’, if the sign has a factual connection to the object; or as ‘symbol’, if the sign has no resemblance or factual connection to the object, i.e. it only refers to the object based on some rule or habit.<sup>21</sup>

These interpretations of signs provide an intricate way to describe name-relations concerning supernatural entities: as normal proper names have a factual connection, but usually no resemblance to the person who is signified by them<sup>22</sup>, they are *indices* in the Peircean sense. However, a demon’s name lacks that factual connection, as there is no tangible object related to the demons which are being called. It should thus be considered a mere *symbolic* sign. Moreover, as an index of ‘name’ brings along a causal link between that name and its signified object — a person, for instance — it also establishes a link between that name and any consequences from actions taken by that person. Conversely, as the name-sign of demons is essentially symbolic, this causality needs to be established by other means in order to explain the realisation of ritual efficacy.

Other possible ways in which demons might obtain identity, other than its name, could include descriptions, depictions, or titles. However, these ‘modifiers’, as Lambek calls them, define an object in relation to other objects, thus concealing

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<sup>21</sup>See the website by Romanini (2006) for an extremely detailed overview of the Peircean extended classification of signs.

<sup>22</sup>Onomatopoeic names, such as ‘Cuckoo’, do have a certain resemblance to the object to which they refer and may thus be considered *icons*. However, it should also be noted that these names tend to differ significantly across different languages and cultures.

its own identity, rather than constituting it. The act of *naming*, on the other hand, exposes it and endows its referent a “necessary, if not sufficient condition” for identity (Lambek 2006, p. 119). Demons are thus objectified or reified, through the act of naming, rather than by the name itself, and subsequently become ‘real’ actors which can act and be acted upon in the ritual process.

In return to the case study, naming the demon therefore objectifies that demon. This transforms the actual name from a symbolic sign into an indexical sign, thus establishing a factual and causal connection between the name and the demon. It establishes the demon as a ‘real’ actor within the ritual process; an actor which can pose a ‘real’ threat to the Terrestrial World, but also one which can be subject to exorcist intervention. At the same time, the demon is also *identified* by its name, which is listed in the name catalogue recorded within the scripture. This provides the description of the ritual which is designed to expel that particular demon, once again through the act of vocalising its name.

### 3.3 Ritual Efficacy

From these three functions of naming — objectification, identification, and expulsion — the latter represents the intended purpose of the exorcist ritual. Considering the second sub-question of this thesis, we might investigate what constitutes the underlying ritual efficacy of names in the ritual performance of exorcisms. In other words: what enforces the efficacy of the vocalisation of the demon’s name upon its referential object?

As opposed to a locutionary act, which is a mere utterance of words without any truth value, an illocutionary act may either succeed or fail. In the case of exorcism, the success of its illocutionary act relies on the perception of the efficacy of the exorcism as a result of the ritual performance: is the demon understood as having been cast out, or not? Its direction-of-fit is hence world-to-words. It means that the source of the realisation of ritual efficacy must lie beyond the words of the locutionary act. Hence, from the vocalisation of demons’ names in itself, the success of the ritual efficacy cannot be derived.

Instead, I will argue that the required external source of efficacy of the hidden message derives from the historical contextualisation of the scripture, in the form of the Daoist cosmology or, specifically, the ‘Netherworld bureaucracy’. This bureaucratic system would punish humans with demonic inflictions, while, at the same time, regulate the demon population. When human morality declines, demons are released to punish humans; when people start to follow the Dao and respect its precepts, they are given ritual means to cast these demons away.

## Expulsion of Demons

Hence, the release and exorcism of demons in *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* is, to a large extent, connected to the moral behaviour of humans. In the scripture, two regulatory systems for human morality can be identified explicitly: first, degenerative moral behaviour by humans can be punished by the Celestial World *directly* according to regulations stated in the scripture, particularly by means of a reduction in lifespan by a given amount of time, depending on the severity of the infraction of morality. Second, humans can also be punished *indirectly*, through the interference of demons. Human susceptibility to demon attacks will be substantially *increased* when violating the regulations presented by the scripture and likewise substantially *decreased* when properly adhering to the precepts and taboos.

Within the bureaucratic context of Daoism, however, an additional system is added: misbehaving demons are *themselves* subject to a legislative code of law, meaning that they can be punished for their wrong-doings by celestial judicial means.

The concept of a Netherworld bureaucracy presents an apparent contradiction though: if immoral behaviour of a person is the root cause of demonic interference in the Terrestrial World, why punish the demons for their actions? Or, as Terry Kleeman (2011, p. 101) wonders: “[i]s the supernatural administration of this world indeed just?”. It turns out that, besides being released into the Terrestrial World in retaliation of human immoral behaviour, demons may apparently also escape from their bureaucratic rosters on their own accord. Moreover, if they do, they are subsequently punished for stepping out of line, rather than for causing harm to the Terrestrial World. “They are not condemned categorically as evil but rather chastised for refusing to submit and accept regulation by the heavens and their representatives, Daoist priests. They assume titles that have not been authorized by the heavens and cause death and misfortune that has not been properly adjudicated. It does not seem that the divine spell itself compels obedience, but rather invokes authority” (Kleeman 2011, p. 95). This means that when a Daoist priest performs an exorcist ritual with the intent to neutralise a demonic threat to the Terrestrial World, this should be understood as a collateral effect as far as the Netherworld bureaucracy is concerned. The main purpose of the ritual, according to the bureaucratic interpretation, is to invoke authority and punish the demon for disobedience.

The Daoist priesthood is thus established as part of that bureaucratic system — in particular the extension of that system into the Terrestrial World. This does not only grant supernatural authority to the exorcist rituals they perform, it also provides them with the instrument of illocutionary power in the act of naming the demon: the priest can call upon the full regulatory force of the Celestial

World in order to ensure the return of the demon to its proper place within the bureaucratic roster. More importantly though, it provides an understanding why demons are supposed to be vulnerable for their own name in the first place: naming a misplaced, disguised, or otherwise misbehaving demon will ‘catch it in the act’ of violating regulations, providing a target for the regulatory forces of the Netherworld bureaucracy to act upon the demon.

### **Netherworld Bureaucracy**

Although the concept of a Netherworld bureaucracy is very well established and documented in later Daoism, Chi-Tim Lai (2002) and Terry Kleeman (2007) disagree whether that concept is already present in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*.

As Lai points out, it is hard to find explicit traces of even a rudimentary version of a Daoist bureaucratic system in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*. Therefore, he considers its place in a continuous development from Han-era traditions to the bureaucracy of later Daoism doubtful: “[i]n comparison with the later texts of early Medieval Daoism, the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* has no indication of the existence of a code of laws for the Netherworld bureaucracy. There is no reference to concepts of judgement, punishment or imprisonment of demons according to demon statutes” (Lai 2002, p. 261). Based on the presence of the 22 precepts in the scripture, he concludes that the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* presents a moral code for humans, rather than for demons. Kleeman, on the other hand, argues in direct opposition to Lai that the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* “is not on codes of conduct [for humans]. On the basis of the title, this text has been characterized as a legal system for demons, and hence demonstrates the bureaucratization of the demonic realm in the Celestial Master tradition” (Kleeman 2007, p. 25).

Even though explicit references to a bureaucracy of the Netherworld may be absent in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, it seems they are necessarily *implied* within the rituals. As I have shown in the previous section, a certain form of an otherworldly regulatory system is required in order for the vocalisation of demons’ names to take effect upon the demon. Even though this may not necessarily correspond *exactly* to the concept of the Netherworld bureaucracy from later Daoism, its fundamental role and functionality has to be similar.

Moreover, “[b]ecause of China’s long tradition of political philosophy and their experience in administering complex states, it was perhaps natural that a mechanism was envisioned to assure justice that involved organs of investigation, judgement, and punishment or reward. In many aspects, these were modelled on the institutions of the Chinese state, though without the limitations of the human condition that made that state’s workings so imperfect” (Kleeman 2011, p. 101). Therefore the implied bureaucracy that may not be explicitly present in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* might not have required mentioning as the concept

was already culturally embedded and, hence, self-evident to its readers.

### 3.4 Consequences

The long-term success of the realisation of ritual efficacy may be measured by the level of, in the terminology of Roy A. Rappaport, ‘belief’ in the ritual efficacy and ‘obligation’ towards the outcome and consequences of the ritual in the real world. In this section I will distinguish several ways in which the more easily identifiable concepts of ‘acceptance’ of the ritual efficacy and the ‘compliance’ with its outcome and consequences can be traced within the Daoist community.

Acceptance is a public affair. It is generated when a ritual community adheres to the inner logic of a ritual and the underlying cosmology. It is contrasted with belief, which is private — one cannot be forced to believe something, only to accept it. A similar contrast is found between compliance and obligation. Compliance with the rules and results of a ritual, like acceptance, can easily be enforced by external means of power. However, it would also be easily lost in absence of that force. Obligation, on the other hand, is an internal motivation and thus provides a far more effective and enduring incentive for compliance. It thus has a stabilising effect on the ritual community. As Rappaport (1999, p. 148) notes: “it is not ritual’s office to ensure compliance but to establish obligation”. Obligation constitutes a belief in the rituals and their efficacy, compliance with their consequences, and — therefore — a prolonged acceptance of the ritual practice within the community. This, in turn, maintains and reinforces the general premises of the underlying cosmology. It is thus an essential means for the maintenance of order, not just in a religious sense, but also in the broader context of society and politics.

#### Acceptance

The acceptance of the exorcist practice in general, the success of the ritual efficacy, and the compliance with the consequences of the performance of the exorcist ritual can be deduced from multiple sources, which will be addressed in this section: the historical context of the ritual, the performatives of the ritual itself, and the so-called ‘ritual agreement’ which links the ritual efficacy to the real world.

Ursula-Angelika Cedzich observes that, with regard to exorcist rituals in Daoism in general, “the depiction and naming of spirits and demons already had a long tradition before the Han” (Lai 2002, p. 261). In that view, the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* could be considered a mere continuation of older exorcist ritual practice, as, noticeably, Rolf Stein has argued. Hence, exorcist ritual practice is likely to have already been an accepted practice within the Daoist community, long before the appearance of the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, which in itself survived long

enough for the scripture to be canonised as a ‘code of law’ centuries later. This suggests a stable acceptance of both exorcist rituals in general, as well as the particular authority of the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* over a prolonged period of time.

Early Daoists believed that scriptures originated from before the beginning of the cosmos as coagulations of pneuma. They “circulate[d] among the divine powers in celestial realms, and they [were] bestowed on men or women by the grace of gods. Thus the sanctity of the scriptures derived as concrete manifestations of cosmic energy” (Benn 2000, p. 310). With this belief, Daoist scriptures, registers, and talismans were considered the materialised forms of pneuma, sent from the sacred Celestial World to the secular Terrestrial World. The *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* in fact emphasises the supernatural authority of its own text, including the exorcist rituals contained within it, in the first chapter. In particular, it establishes the role of the Way of Celestial Masters as the executive agency of the rituals.

*The Most High Great Dao could not bear to see [this devastation]. At the noon hour on the seventh day of the seven month of the second year [of the Han'an reign period], he sent down this Demon Statutes in eight scrolls, recording the surnames and names of the spirits of the realm, as well as the techniques of fortune and misfortune. He charged the Celestial Master with it, causing him to command the spirits, so that they would not be able to wantonly move to the east, west, south, or north.*<sup>23</sup> (Trans. Kleeman 2011, p. 96)

The circumstances in which the exorcist rituals described within the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* were performed, therefore seems to be one of acceptance of the exorcist practice in general, the scripture as the divine source of the methodology of expulsion in particular, and the priest as the authorised agent to perform the ritual.

The ritual itself provides additional support for this general sense of acceptance. As shown, the exorcist rituals were performed by priests who were trained and ordained ritual specialists, applying divine scriptures in special ritual circumstances. These factors enhance what Rappaport (1999, p. 115) calls the ‘formal characteristics’ of the ritual. In addition, ritual acts such as the singing of mantras, the drawing of talismans, or in this case, the clapping of hands, enhance the utterance of words which may otherwise not possess a particular performative quality.

Most relevant for this study though, is that “[p]erformatives...are self-fulfilling: they make themselves true in the sense of standing in a relationship of conformity

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<sup>23</sup>The original text: “太上大道不忍見之，二年七月七日日中時下此鬼律八卷，紀天下鬼神姓名吉兇之術，以勅天師張道陵，使勅鬼神，不得妄轉東西南北” (DSN, p. 239).

to the states of affairs with which they are concerned” (Rappaport 1999, p. 117). The three rituals analysed in this thesis all reveal a strong coherency between the ritual efficacy, the general connotation of Daoist cosmology, and the real world state of affairs. In case of exorcisms, this connection is established through what I will call the ‘ritual agreement’, linking the religious salvation derived from the ritual performance to real world implications with regard to the moral behaviour of the sufferer.

### Ritual Agreement

The necessity of abiding by the statutes and taboos is closely linked to a system of moral examination sustained by a supernatural juridical system called the ‘Law of Heaven’ (*Tianfa* 天法). It was believed that the celestial officials gave judgement on a person in the form of good fortune or misfortune based on the person’s conduct (Lai 1998, p. 15). The statute-like style of the content, and the authoritative tone it bears, adds up to the power reification of the ritual performers. A good record of moral behaviour, honouring the Celestial Masters’ statutes, and concentrating on following the Dao would be rewarded with good fortune; while transgressions on celestial taboos or committing evil would be punished, leading to untimely death. *Xiang’er Commentary to the Laozi* (*Laozi Xiang’er Zhu* 老子想爾註) explains the theological foundation behind this idea:

*Keeping the precepts of the Dao, we amass good deeds, which accrue merit and assemble our essences to form internal spirits. Once the spirits are formed, we enjoyed the longevity of Transcendence.*<sup>24</sup>  
(Trans. Bokenkamp 1997, p. 95)

In other words, the causal relationship between ethical, religious conduct and personal fortune establishes the precept as the measure of moral conduct within the celestial administration. It ensures that Daoist practitioners follow the Dao and maintain an orderly bureaucratic system on Earth through a set of ritual statutes.

This causal relationship becomes apparent in the first chapter of the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, which takes examples of those who lost their lives for disbelieving the authenticity of the scripture, and further gives warnings upon its contemporary readers not to repeat their mistakes. Next, the book addresses the true believers of its recipient through the set of precepts and regulations which are expected to be followed. For instance, “backbiting, speaking evil of others, mocking the elderly, cursing parents or spouse” (Strickmann 2002, p. 84) are forbidden. Notwithstanding, if the protocols of ritual taboos are followed properly according to the statutes, it promises the living the privilege of being among the ‘Seed People’ of the Way of Celestial Masters:

<sup>24</sup>The original text: “奉道戒，積善成功，積精成神，神成仙壽，以此為身寶矣” (XCL, p. 16).

*All those who want their names to be entered in the Registers of Life and become Seed People may follow this scripture. If one calls out their names (of the five Demons Lords of the Five Directions) in accordance with one's disease, one will be healed.*<sup>25</sup> (Trans. Lai 2002, p. 265)

Hence, although the release from demonic threat would require obligations by the sufferer in the form of abiding by statutes, precepts, and taboos, it also offers a reward when doing so, namely becoming one of the Seed People, enjoying the protection of the Celestial World against demonic threats by means of the performance of exorcist rituals. This trade-off constitutes the ritual agreement.

### **Restoring Social Order**

The ritual agreement therefore links the ritual efficacy — as the religious objective of the exorcist ritual — to real world effects upon the Daoist community, in the form of statutes, precepts, and taboos.

Identifying demons as the cause of diseases and other misfortunes is, in Victor Turner's term, a 'rite of affliction': "the rituals of affliction attempt to rectify a state of affairs that has been disturbed or disordered; they heal, exorcise, protect, and purify" (Bell 2009, p. 115). The scripture thus provides a means for society to deal with natural disasters, social issues, loss of faith, or any other forms of community dysfunction. After the rituals are performed, it is believed that the issues are reconciled, the community is purified, and social solidarity and order are restored again. This might perhaps provide the best explanation as to how the acceptance of and compliance with the several different aspects of exorcist rituals discussed in this section is transformed into belief and obligation: the incentive of maintaining social order.

The problems faced by the community would often lie beyond their understanding and power to resolve. Daoism, however, would provide both an explanation, as well as a solution to these problems. First, real world problems are defined in terms of the Daoist cosmology: the problem the sufferer faces is caused by interference from demons from the Netherworld, a place beyond the human realm, yet governed by a bureaucratic system very similar to the ones in the Terrestrial World. This interference is, in turn, triggered by 'immoral behaviour' of the sufferer, i.e. behaviour which is not compliant with the Daoist precepts and taboos. Second, Daoist religion provides a ritual solution to the problem: the performance of an exorcist ritual will expel the demon by invoking the forces of the Netherworld bureaucracy, thus ending the demonic infestation and resolving the original problem.

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<sup>25</sup>The original text: "右五方鬼主, 諸欲著名生錄為種民者, 按此文書, 隨病呼之, 知領鬼姓名, 病即差矣" (DSN, p. 250).



This social ordering principle also provides an incentive for conversion to Daoism in the first place. People outside of the Daoist community would face the same everyday issues. Conversion to Daoism would provide both an explanation for these problems in terms of the comprehensive Daoist cosmology, as well as the solution to it by ritual means. This solution comes at a price though, in the form of the ritual agreement. As these prescriptions with regard to moral behaviour could generally be considered the defining characteristics of any religion, the person is thereby effectively converted.

### 3.5 Exorcism in a Broader Context

In addition, we might consider the religious context of *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* in relation to the Chinese state. Several deities mentioned within the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* can be linked directly to official Chinese state deities since they share identical or, at the least, very similar names and titles. Two basic theories have been presented with regard to the relationship between early Daoism and the Chinese state and the state religion: coexistence versus rivalry.

According to Rolf Stein, both Daoism and the Chinese state religion, i.e. Confucianism, shared a common interest in marginalising certain ‘excessive’ cults, that “consist in making unlimited and ruinous offerings” (Stein 2009, p. 324). Therefore Daoism and the state religion are not primarily viewed as rivals, but rather as, be it uneasy, allies with a common cause. Kleeman seems to hold a similar view: although Daoism and the official Chinese state religion both had “pretensions to universal authority”, ultimately they were not fundamentally threatening to one another and “were able to co-exist for nearly two millennia” (Kleeman 2011, p. 104).

In contrast, Wang Zonyu has argued that the appearance of the names of the state deities within the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* should be considered a direct confrontation with the state-sanctioned religion, rather than with any other cult. Ursula-Angelika Cedzich (2009, p. 91) adds that “Daoist liturgy was not limited to merely opposing the sacrificial model of both state cult and popular religion, but also involved the active attempt of transforming these cults according to its own legal, bureaucratic, and ethical standards”.

Considering the era of the scripture — when the Way of Celestial Masters was still at the very early stage of development, ridden with preliminary forms of religious rituals — Maeda Shigeki interprets the content of the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* as a liturgical revolution of the Way of Celestial Masters. It is a movement against excessive ritual practice of the folk religion and ritual sacrifice, in order to “distinguish Taoism from the other kinds of worship” (Shigeki 1995, pp. 54–67). The list of demon names in the scripture is an effort to appropriate

the pre-existing ghost system from folk religion, which was already deeply rooted within Chinese society and culture, into the Daoist cosmological belief system in a more systematic manner. It differentiates the divine, the immortals, and the Celestial World Celestial Masters from the Netherworld, which consists mostly of ghosts and demons.

In a cultural sense, expulsion of demons in a vocalising approach is closely related to the need to administer that Netherworld just like the human bureaucratic institution. Paul Katz (2009, p. 40) notes, “the advent of beliefs and practices cantering on a vast underworld bureaucracy that supervised, judged, and punished the dead coincided with a change in visionary literature about journeys to and from the realm of the dead”. Such ideas of a Netherworld bureaucracy, regulated by priests, and enforced by the Celestial World, as well as the relevance of names within that process, can also be recognised in a tomb stone discovered in Gaoyou Shaojia Gou in Jiangsu province in 1960, from the late eastern Han Dynasty. It warns the deceased in the tomb in written words:

*The dead ghost in this tomb is named Celestial Light, deceased on the day of yisi (乙巳). The Celestial Master does already know your name, you better go far, far away (from the living world). If you don't head to the South Mountain, someone will be sent over to devour you.*<sup>26</sup>  
(Trans. Zhu 1960, p. 21)

In accordance with the description of the Daoist cosmology, this seems to refer to either a ‘ghostly soul’, which roams the Terrestrial World because it failed to reach the Netherworld after death, or a ‘ghost’, an angry soul from the Netherworld, belonging to a person who died untimely either in accidents or in murder, and likely to seek revenge on the living people in the Terrestrial World.

Cedzich suggests that “Daoist mortuary cult is established upon a law of otherworldly bureaucratic and legal administration accessible to functionaries of this world, which provides Daoism with the power to disperse the fear of demonic evil connected with death” (Lai 1998, p. 17). Hence, in her own words, “Daoist ritual was in its essence a bureaucratic act” (Cedzich 1993, p. 31). In this bureaucratically ordered Daoist cosmology, the realms of the Netherworld, the Celestial World, and the Terrestrial World are coordinated in a systematic structure of ‘demonic codes’ (Katz 2009, pp. 38–39), as opposed to the more chaotic worship system that was in place in China prior to the Way of Celestial Masters.

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<sup>26</sup>The original text: “乙巳日，死者鬼名為天光。天帝神師已知汝名，疾去三千裏。汝不即去南山，給令來食汝” (Zhu 1960, p. 21).

### 3.6 Concluding Remarks

I have shown that the application of names within exorcist rituals as described in the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* is the vocalisation of the demon's name in ritual performance. The functions corresponding to the application of names in exorcist rituals are threefold: first, the act of naming provides the demon with an identity through a process of objectification, which establishes it as a 'real' actor in the ritual process, which poses a 'real' threat to the human world and upon which power can be exerted; second, it identifies the demon by its listing in the scripture; and third, it actualises the final ritual effect of expelling which is realised through the invocation of the forces of the Netherworld bureaucracy. In bureaucratic terms, the demon is culpable for being out of its proper place. The vocalisation identifies the demon as such and provides a target for the Netherworld regulatory forces to punish the demon.

The immediate real world consequences of the ritual consists of a 'ritual agreement', in which the expulsion of the demon is traded for an obligation towards Daoist precepts and taboos. This in turn serves as a means of constructing social order as it provides the Daoist believers with both an explanation and a resolution of their everyday problems, which would otherwise be beyond their understanding or influence. The definition of real world problems in terms of the Daoist cosmology explains these problems as being caused by demons from the Netherworld, which are released or escaped from their rosters because of immoral behaviour of the people. They are thus transformed into *moral* issues, requiring a ritual resolution in the form of exorcisms.

In a broader sense, the ritual establishes the Netherworld and its bureaucratic system as part of the Daoist cosmology. The comprehensive vision of the Netherworld as a separate realm within the Daoist cosmology, mirrored after bureaucratic systems in the Terrestrial World, and its interactions with the human world can be seen as an extension of the Confucian view of the afterlife. As such, it contributes to the definition of early Daoism as an independent religion. At the same time, however, the ritual agreement links the exorcist practice to the Celestial World by the implementation of Daoist precepts and taboos. Thus, rather than providing a rival practice for Confucian ancestral worship, which is aimed at the realm of the Netherworld, it maintains its own focus on becoming immortal in the Celestial World.

Many of the name-functions, performative aspects, and order-constructing principles that have emerged from this chapter will resurface over the course of the next two chapters. The significance of scriptures like the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing*, and the role of the Daoist priesthood in applying their content, will be further explored in the next chapter concerning the ordination ritual of Daoist priests.

# Chapter 4

## Ordination of Priests

Ordination rituals of the Way of Celestial Masters are the “liturgical confirmation for the transmission or bestowal of a canon by preceptors to students” (Benn 2000, p. 309). The official rite of ordination (*shoulu* 授籙) plays an essential role in the religious life of Daoists as it establishes and marks their unique religious identity in relation to the Dao. The ordination ritual contains two elements which are of particular interest to this study: first, the compilation of the *name* register; and second, the bestowal of a *talisman* register to the ordinand. For both aspects, this chapter will analyse the corresponding functionality of names in relation to the realisation of the ordinand’s divine transformation from layperson to priest, as well as the real world consequences of the ritual.

### 4.1 Ordination Procedure

A detailed description of ordination ceremonies can be found in the scripture *Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers* (*Zhengyi Fawen Falu Buyi* 正一法文法籙部儀)<sup>27</sup>. The text dates roughly to the fifth and sixth century CE. It was written by an anonymous person, with revisions by later generations. It grew to over a hundred scrolls over the years, but for the most part, it was subsequently lost again. The remaining twenty-five scrolls are listed in the *Daoist Canon*.<sup>28</sup> In content, it contains four descriptions of rituals that were used in the ordination of the junior rank of Daoist priests. The four rituals differentiate on the scriptures that these priests would receive, as well as on the petitioning monologue (*zhu* 祝) they would recite at the ritual altar. They do, however, follow a similar framework in the ritual structure and procedures. In this section I will attempt to reconstruct the procedural ritual steps according to the *Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers*, along with sources found in other scriptures, such as *Ritual Code of Ordination Ranks* (*Shoulu Cidi Faxin*

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<sup>27</sup>The *Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers* is a scripture from the Daoist school of Orthodox-Unity, which is another term for Way of Celestial Masters.

<sup>28</sup>See Pregadio (2008, p. 1261) and Hu (1995, p. 280).

*Yi* 受籙次第法信儀), in order to sketch a complete picture of the entire ritual procedure of ordination.

From the four aforementioned petitioning monologues found in the primary source, I have derived the following ritual steps which are typically carried out in ordination rituals of the early Way of Celestial Masters:

1. Enter the altar and invite deities from the Celestial World onto the altar as witnesses.
2. Pledge commitment to the Dao and petition the deities for approval to be ordained.
3. Sign covenants with the Three Offices of Heaven, Earth, and Water, the precept master, and the ordinand's own master.

'Covenants' can be defined as the exchange of goods, which often involves not only consumer goods, but also 'prestige goods' or 'religious' symbolic objects. Here, higher beings are involved in the process, especially if they or elements of their representation are themselves involved in the exchange. These 'artificial relationships' with deities can be established temporarily or permanently, for purposes of arbitrated peaceful coexistence both militarily and politically (Stolz 2011).

As an example, the 'Three Covenants of Taiyi<sup>29</sup> and True Unity' (*Taiyi Zhenyi Sanmeng Qi* 太一真一三盟契) can be found in figure 4.1. It contains the Upper (*Taiyi Shangmeng Qi* 太一上盟契), Middle (*Taiyi Zhongmeng Qi* 太一中盟契), and Lower (*Taiyi Xiameng Qi* 太一下盟契) Covenants. An excerpt from the ordinand's monologue regarding such covenants:

*After establishing the covenants, may the Celestial offices transfer my registration of registers. Let the Office of Earth erase my name from the register of the dead, the Office of Heaven transcribe my name onto the register of immortal, and the Office of Water end any bad luck in my future life.*<sup>30</sup>

The 'registers' (*lu* 籙) mentioned in the monologue refer to "records that identify an individual either in this world or in the otherworld, and lists of deities and supernatural beings over which an initiate has command" (Pregadio 2008, p. 39). Daoist registers can be classified into two major categories: first, 'name registers' listing details of all ordained Daoists, including their name, religious or

<sup>29</sup>'Taiyi' refers to the star Kochab (Pregadio 2008, p. 956) (*β Ursae Minoris*), the brightest star in 'Little Dipper' (*Ursa Minor*). Due to the precession of the equinoxes, Kochab was the pole star in the northern sky around 1000 BCE. It was regarded as the most supreme celestial deity in Daoism during the Han Dynasty.

<sup>30</sup>The original text: "結盟之後，司命削某等死籍，度著生籙，使天官注仙名，地官除死籍，水官絕殃" (OULPLR, p. 201).

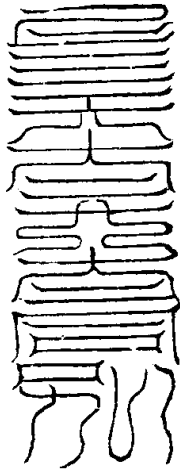


Figure 4.1.a  
Taiyi Upper Covenant



Figure 4.1.b  
Taiyi Middle Covenant

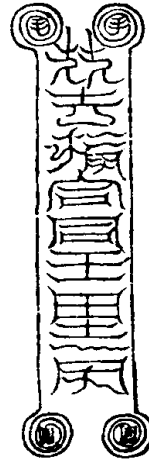


Figure 4.1.c  
Taiyi Lower Covenant

**Figure 4.1:** Three Covenants of Taiyi and True Unity (OULPLR, p. 201)

devotional name, masters they have been following, and the level of Daoist title that is given onto them. The other category concerns ‘talismanic registers’, by which Daoist deities could be summoned in ritual performances when petitioning for rain, healing, or protection, etc. Such talismans usually include the deities’ names, official titles, corresponding images, and functions that are in their charge. They are empowered with “the authority to command the gods to heal diseases and to control demons in the petitioning rituals” (Lai 1998, p. 4).

4. Vow to abide by the three covenants and swear the consequence of breaking them.

This especially involves making promises not to transmit scripture to laypeople, similar to the precept from the *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* which was discussed in the previous chapter. The religious consequences of breaking these vows are severe, as is shown in the following two excerpts from the *Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers*, the first of which reads:

*If one day I, the ordinand, break my vows, I shall pay repentance to the Three Offices of Heaven, Earth, and Water, and die ten thousand times, with no room for hatred or discontentment.*<sup>31</sup>

The second states:

*On the day that I break my covenant, let my name be retrieved from the divine register, and I be dispatched to the Netherworld to be a ghost for good, with no chance of ever becoming immortal.*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup>The original text: “一旦負違今誓，甲當以身謝天地水三官，萬歿之後，不敢有怨” (OULPLR, p. 199).

<sup>32</sup>The original text: “違約之日... 長為下鬼，命為土塵，削除仙名，不得廁預仙品” (OULPLR, p. 220).

As becoming an immortal is the goal of every Daoist, this vow reflects the ultimate determination of the ordinand.

5. Express gratitude towards all the deities; prepare very expensive incense and burn it for those deities.<sup>33</sup>
6. Compile the names and titles of the precept master, register master, and the scripture master into the name register.

These three masters who are directly involved in the ordination ritual are given great importance, as the *Ritual Code of Ordination Ranks* explains:

*Without masters you cannot be ordained, without masters you cannot become immortal...first meditate the three masters and then practise the Dao.*<sup>34</sup>

7. Give tributes to the master as tokens of sincerity and gratitude.
8. The precept master bestows a new Daoist title to the ordinand according to the Daoist rank hierarchy.
9. Receiving Daoist precepts, registers, and scriptures.

These registers hold the instruments of power of the new priest: precepts, spells, and lists of names of demons and deities intended for the use in, respectively, exorcist and summoning rituals. They are a reflection of both the priest's hierarchical rank within the monastic system, as well as his level of ritual expertise. In subsequent ordinations the priest can obtain increasingly higher ranks which will also bestow him additional registers and scriptures.

In practical terms, the scriptures are appropriated through a process of copying. In order to ensure accurate duplication, two copies are produced: one by the master and one by the ordinand. These are then compared and validated by the master. If correct, one of the copies is stored for safe-keeping, and the other is bestowed on the ordinand during the ordination ritual. If rightfully acquired through revelation or transmission, a Daoist scripture has the same rank-conferring value for the adept or the priest, as the imperial regalia for an emperor. Unauthorised appropriation of scripture, on the other hand, is not only ineffective, but a guilt punishable by deities.

Due to this exclusivity of the scriptures, the Daoist priesthood maintains its own 'monopoly' on the communication with the Celestial World, the performance of rituals, and the divine powers that are believed to be possessed by the priests. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is an altogether different situation

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<sup>33</sup>The significance of burning objects as a means of establishing divine communication will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>34</sup>The original text: “非師不度，非師不仙人... 先存三師，然後行道” (RCOR, p. 220).

compared to Confucian traditions, in which rituals are performed in a familial context by laypeople.

## 4.2 Applications of Names

Among the numerous steps of the ordination ritual, the use of names emerge in two critical instances: the entering of the ordinand's name into the name register and the receiving of deities' names contained in the talismanic register. Other applications of names in the procedure, such as the use of deities' names, correspond to a large degree with the analyses performed in the previous chapter regarding the vocalisation of demons' names and are thus omitted here.

The two remaining applications, however, present a problem with regard to the theoretical framework of performative speech acts, applied throughout this thesis: the first concerns the act of *writing* a name, while the second revolves around the act of *giving* a physical list of names. Both do not directly constitute an act of 'speaking', yet they are *performative* in nature: the entering of the ordinand's name into the name register is not merely a simple act of putting ink on some scroll of paper. The act corresponds conceptually to the notion of 'speech act' in the sense that it involves the use of language, consists of a basic public act, has an intended purpose which goes unspoken — or, in this case, *unwritten* — and affects all those involved in the ritual in a certain way. They can thus be described in terms of a locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act in exactly the same manner as an act of speaking. A similar case can be made for the handing over of the talismanic register to the ordinand.<sup>35</sup>

Of the two, the interactions surrounding the name register in relation to the covenants make up the main body of the ordination rite. Not only do they connect all principle actors in the ritual — ordinand, master, precept master, and the Three Offices — they also account for the bulk of the performative acts. The importance of the covenants is reflected in their triple confirmation: they are first signed, then given vows, and finally sworn. All of these acts take the form of 'commissive' acts on behalf of the ordinand. The signing of the covenant also marks the only direct contribution by the ordinand's own master to the ritual procedure.

Backed by these covenants, the precept master subsequently enters the ordinand's name, as well as his master's, into the name register, overseen by the

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<sup>35</sup>This parallels in some sense the issue that emerged in the classification of illocutionary acts. In the original taxonomy by Austin himself, these acts are classified according to their associated verbs, i.e. they are defined within terms of *speech*. Searle (1975) has convincingly shown that this leads to contradictory results as some verbs are simply classified incorrectly, while others belong to different classes in different contexts. The improved classification considers the direction-of-fit as the defining characteristic of the acts, which proves more successful as it is an altogether more robust and coherent, yet also more abstract classification in relation to the general principles underlying speech act theory.



Three Offices. This seems to be the essential step in the ordination ritual. The elaborate net of interactions concerning the covenants and name register suggests that the ultimate source of illocutionary force that elevates the ordinand to the position of an ordained priest is the induction of the ordinand's name into the name register.

In Searle's terminology, the entering of the name of the ordinand into the name register functions effectively as a 'declaration': by writing the name, the masters declare the ordinand to be religiously transformed into a priest.

### 4.3 Ritual Efficacy

Next, I intend to deconstruct how the performative use of names contribute to the realisation of ritual efficacy, i.e. to the transformation of the ordinand from a regular human being into an ordained priest.

#### Entering the Divine

This divine transformation constitutes the intended result of the ordination ritual. It means that the ordinand obtains a certain divine element which distinguishes him from the laypeople and authorises him to perform religious rituals, as stated in *Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds* (*Yunji Qiqian* 雲笈七籤):

*After receiving the name register, the newly ordained priest candidate shall refrain from laziness, sever the evil thoughts, dedicate himself into the cause of Daoism, and enter the divine world as an ordinary human.*<sup>36</sup>

The question is how this transformation into the divine is accomplished. Ample clues can be found in the third step of ritual procedure, in which the ordinand pledges to the celestial offices to erase his name from the 'register of the dead' and transcribe his name onto 'the register of the immortal', i.e. the name register. The 'register of the dead' refers to a name catalogue kept by the Netherworld bureaucracy to keep track of the livelihood of human beings, while the 'register of the immortal' keeps record of the immortal beings and deities. Since the ultimate goal of Daoist practice is to transcend from mortality into immortality, a successful ordination would imply approval from the Three Offices to the ordinand's transcendence. Such a transcendence would release the ordinand from a mortal death or turning into a ghost after death. Instead, he will become one of the members of the Celestial World. In other words, beyond the mere act of writing an ordinand's name in the name register, it contains the unrevealed message of the ordinand being allowed to becoming part of the divine realm.

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<sup>36</sup>The original text: “策者，戒錄情性，止塞愆非，制斷惡根，發生道業。從凡入聖，自始及終，先從戒策，然後登真” (SLBC, p. 1006).

Moreover, by writing the name of the ordinand into the name register, a direct connection between the ordinand and divine is established through the lineage of those who are recorded in the name register; from the earliest, divine masters all the way down to the ordinand. The new priest is therefore literally ‘entered into the divine’ through the act or writing his name.

Another aspect of this transformation that can be derived from the ordination ritual centres on the act of the giving out divine scriptures. The scriptures that are passed on to the new ordinand include talismanic books, name registers, and statutes. Those books contain ritual guidance on how to invoke the names of the corresponding divine figures which follow the ordinand’s commands, and thus enable the ordinand to establish channels of communication with the three realms of the cosmos. The receiving of the talismanic registers, therefore, provides the ordained priest with the instruments of his divine power. This divine power not only demonstrates the newly ordained priest’s rightful status of priesthood, but also enables him to perform varied sorts of rituals to cope with disasters or petition for luck.

The discussion on talismans and their means of empowerment is omitted here, since it will be addressed in the next chapter, which is entirely dedicated to that topic. The conclusion which can be drawn at this moment is that the act of writing the ordinand’s names and giving out register books signify the intention of the Daoist authorities — both the celestial offices as well as the masters — to grant approval to the ordination and authorise the legitimacy and empowerment of the newly ordained priest.

## 4.4 Consequences

Besides the religious transformation that is brought about by the two ritual acts regarding to names, we also need to consider the ritual consequences of those acts upon the real world, particularly in regard to the construction of social and political order in relation to the monastic tradition of Way of Celestial Masters.

### Constructing Social Order

The ritual of ordination has multiple social effects: constituting a hierarchical lineage of the ordinand in the monastic system, winning respect and authority within the Daoist community, as well as causing a change in the self-identification of the ordinand.

The social position of the priest within the Daoist community is marked by the possession of registers, which accounts for a public, physical token of ordination. By bestowing the scriptures onto the ordinand, the masters publicly acknowledge the divine transformation of the ordinand. In Searle’s terminology, it commits

the masters to the truth of this transformation. The bestowal can therefore be considered a ‘representative’ illocutionary act on behalf of the masters who are involved in the ordination ritual. It may be seen as a ‘vote of confidence’ for the ordained priest, not only in the eyes of his peers, but also for the Daoist community in general.

The possession of talismanic register thus reflects the *social* status of Daoist priests within the community. It is a representation of his ritual powers which can be applied in the maintenance of social order as discussed in the previous chapter. With the advancement of the priest’s practice, a higher level of register would be inaugurated, with more powerful deities at his command. This, in turn, would elevate his rank and social status accordingly, as it would allow the priest to deal with ever more complex social problems in the eyes of the Daoist community.

In addition to the social function of securing the priest with religious authority in society, ordination also marks a *personal* transition for the ordinand, a ‘rite of passage’<sup>37</sup>. Becoming a priest involves leaving behind his original social, secular community — namely his family — and joining a new, religious one (Bell 2009, p. 95). By entering this new spiritual stage of life, the ordained priest confers a new identity reflecting his status in relation to the monastic community. The practice of compiling name registers within the community thus creates a lineage, or ‘genealogy’, based on master-disciple relations, instead of familial kinship. Therefore, it not only establishes a divine hierarchical order in relation to the Celestial World, but also an alternate social structure among the Daoist priests in the real world.

It should be noted that the nature of this Daoist system of ‘kinship’ is very different from that of Confucianism. Within the Chinese culture, which is deeply Confucian-value based, social relations are highly marked by family names. The family name determines social status, boundaries of social circles, and they are even associated with possession of material elements or officialdom. In Confucian society, a person’s identity is largely predetermined by his familial relations, while the Daoist notion of relations has no such sense of possession. Daoist ordinands, practitioners, or believers, consider themselves independent individuals, free of the bonds of wealth, family, or any predetermined identities. It construes a social order in which each individual is connected to the religious community via his own identification with the Dao. This becomes particularly apparent in the use of devotional names.

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<sup>37</sup>From French: rites de passage, introduced in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep to mark transitions between two stages of life or conditions of being (Michaels 2011).

## Devotional Names

Daoists from the Way of Celestial Masters typically take a different approach upon their religious names compared to Buddhists, whose secular names are completely replaced to sever their attachment to their previous secular life. Daoists are able to adopt one or more devotional names (*Daohao* 道號) in combination with their family name, replacing only their personal names. The coexistence of family names and devotional names results in two ways in which those Daoists can be addressed: either by their devotional name alone, or by a combination of their devotional name and their family name.

In the first case, Daoists' devotional names are used mostly among recluses, who adopt a religious name that is completely detached from familial kinship, in the aim to demonstrate their religious determination to break away from secular bondage. They do not designate any particular social relationship, but rather define the religious identity of the person signified by it. Hugh-Jones (2006, p. 74) classifies this type of name into “the domain of metaphysics [which has] an individualising function” in the sense that those names are independent from such social nominators as gender, kinship, geographical origin, ethnographic, or political boundaries, but instead are a highly spiritual reflection of the person's individuality. That was a bold endeavour in relation to Confucian values: abandoning family and moving to distant sacred places to practise the Dao was considered immoral behaviour. Due to the prevalence of Confucian values within Chinese society, this reclusive approach towards religion was thus generally disapproved.

In the second case, using a combination of family names and devotional names, on the other hand, is more common and was adopted during the development of the early Daoist monastic traditions, particularly the Way of Celestial Masters. It incorporates the predominant Confucian values and unites the social, personal, and Daoist religious dimensions of naming practice into one. It bridges the gap between the realms of the Terrestrial World which is marked by the familial legacy of the family name, and the Celestial World where legacy of lineage is created by entering ordinands' names into the name register. This development of monastic Daoism as a religious movement in Chinese society could, therefore, be seen as a factor in the creation of political order, as it provides additional explanation why Confucianism and Daoism were able to coexist in relatively peaceful terms: by incorporating this key element from Confucianism, some hard edges of traditional Daoist reclusion were smoothed out, decreasing the chances of religious conflicts.

## 4.5 Ordination in a Broader Context

Positing the liturgical ritual into its socio-political context of early Way of Celestial Masters, as represented by ordination ritual in this case study, a direct link

between the social construct of the monastic system and its cosmological ideal can be identified through the ordination ritual.

From the first founder Zhang Daoling 張道陵 to his grandson Zhang Lu 張魯, the early Way of Celestial Masters established a socio-political structure organised by ‘Twenty-Four Dioceses’ (*Ershisi Zhi* 二十四治) in Sichuan Province.<sup>38</sup> Each of the twenty-four dioceses formed a religious community, headed by a spiritual leader. At his command were 240 armies of spirits, composed of 2,400 celestial generals, 24,000 celestial officers and 240,000 celestial soldiers. These soldiers formed the forces of the Celestial World, which subsequently provide assistance to Daoist priests in the performance of the rituals.

By establishing a monastic tradition of lineage and hierarchy, an ordered organisation was constructed within Daoism as a social institution. The ordination ritual legitimated its ordinands as the bearers of the ritual power from the religious dimension, as well as of the juristic power over the society by issuing ritual sanctions in the form of precepts and taboos. Ordination, as a liturgical phenomenon, enabled the empowerment of this group of people in mediating between the Celestial World and the secular Terrestrial World.

Alongside with the juristic areas of the Twenty-Four Dioceses, “a priestly hierarchy of Twenty-Four Offices was promulgated” (Verellen 2003, p. 16). The liturgical and clerical order found in the Twenty-Four Dioceses “establishe[d] precisely the connection between the cosmological order of the dioceses, ordination ritual, and the clerical hierarchy” (Verellen 2003, p. 16).

The central role for Daoist ordinands during this period concerned the communication between the Celestial World and the twenty-four Daoist communities. The specific activity of transferring talismans established an open channel with the divinity, by the use of which “active interference of God [was] established as the only true source of consequential action” (Lindhardt 2012, p. 123). The liturgical act of receiving the talismanic registers thus reflects, what Rappaport calls in relation to religion in general, the ‘cosmological axioms’ of early religious Daoism. These cosmological axioms constitute “assumptions concerning the fundamental structure of the universe or, to refer to the paradigmatic relationships in accordance with which the cosmos is constructed” (Rappaport 1999, p. 264). As Verellen (2003, p. 15) argues, the dioceses were “conceived as projections of the stellar lodges on earth”. This projection can in fact be taken *literally*: the number of dioceses relates to the dozenal organisation of the Chinese zodiac, which is in turn likely derived from the (approximate) twelve year orbital period of the planet Jupiter. The hierarchy of clergy based on title ranks can thus be seen as both a reflection of the celestial pantheon, as well as a social structure of officialdom.

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<sup>38</sup>A map containing the main clusters of these dioceses is added in appendix C.

The officer of each of the twenty-four dioceses served as the top governor of each community. A hierarchy of offices was developed in the process of ordinating priests of different ranks. Ordination also differentiated the priesthood from the believers, the laymen, and people from other divisions of social membership. Since the transmission of knowledge and skill to the next generation was considered both *secret* and *sacred*, only a person who exhibited strong desire for the Dao and who was willing to obey the Daoist precepts was eligible as a qualified candidate; transmission of the sacred texts to someone inferior would bring down heavenly punishment (Pregadio 2008, p. 16).

A second aspect of the cosmological axiom concerns the relationship of deities from the Celestial bureaucracy. A striking feature of the Daoist pantheon is the representation of deities of different levels and ritual functions, which constructs a hierarchical cosmological structure. As Reiter (2005, p. 104) observes, “many names of deities are *functional* and *abstract* right from the beginning”<sup>39</sup>.

By ‘functional’, Reiter means that most deities from Chinese culture — whether they are Daoist, Buddhist, or from popular religion — assumed great pragmatic value in dealing with the real, tangible problems that exist in the daily life of the human society. Thus, great importance was given to rituals in addressing problems such as illness, ghostly possession, extreme weather, or natural disasters. The rituals served as a means of control with regard to worldly affairs that were considered to be beyond human capabilities. Arthur P. Wolf (2013, p. 626) concludes: “[t]he view of the gods as bureaucrats is so pervasive that evidence to the contrary is itself explained away in bureaucratic terms”. A similar effect could be identified in the previous chapter, in which errors made by the Netherworld bureaucracy, i.e. the unwarranted release of demons which subsequently haunt ‘innocent’ humans in the Terrestrial World, is corrected by the forces of the Celestial World.

By ‘abstract’, it should be understood that the deities from the Daoist pantheon were worshipped as abstract entities which were given abstract names and titles, such as the ‘Jade Emperor’ (*Yuhuang dadi* 玉皇大帝), ‘Three Purities’ (*Sanqing* 三清), or ‘Three Offices’ (*Sanguan* 三官). These names represent the religious aspiration for the concept of namelessness from Daoist philosophy, expressing the transcendental nature of these entities. While in the meantime, they also created a link “between the very top of this pantheon and the mundane world” (Reiter 2005, p. 102) due to the legendary history of those deities.

This double feature of functionality and conceptual abstraction gives birth to a celestial bureaucracy represented by well-structured, clearly designated offices of deities. This celestial bureaucratic system will also be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>39</sup>Italics added.

## 4.6 Concluding Remarks

In summary, I have identified two key applications of names in the ordination ritual: the acts of writing the ordinands' names in the celestial name register and the act of bestowing talismanic registers containing deities' names to the ordinand.

The ritual efficacy of ordination constitutes the ordinand's divine transformation from a mortal human being into a member of the celestial world. It is being realised by a 'commissive' act of signing covenants with the celestial offices. The legitimacy of this transformation is marked by the induction into the name register which establishes a direct divine lineage between the Celestial World and the ordinand. The divine empowerment of the new priest is manifested in the receiving of the talismanic registers. They embody both the divine as well as the practical tools for the performance of rituals.

The ordination ritual not only constitutes a religious transformation, it also has real world effects on the relation between the Daoist community and the ordinand, as well as the ordinand's own self-identification with his new religious status within the monastery. The latter is reflected in the adoption of devotional names in addition to the ordinand's family name. The former contributes to the maintenance of social order in a way that is similar to the one discussed in the previous chapter: the ordinand now possesses certain divine powers that enable him to perform rituals which can be applied in everyday situations, which represents his social status in the Daoist community.

In a broader sense, the monastic system establishes early Daoism as a religious, social and political organisation. The monasteries are seen as a reflection of the Celestial World, as well as an extension of the celestial bureaucratic system into the Terrestrial World. For the priests themselves, the monastic hierarchy presents an alternative social network based on seniority, replacing the secular one based on kinship. In contrast with earlier Daoist tradition, the ties with the family — in particular the family name — are not completely severed. This in turn neutralises a potential conflict with Confucian family values, thus maintaining a political order between these two systems of belief.

Priests who are ordained according to the ritual described in this chapter are able to perform rituals according to their hierarchical status. With such scriptures as *Demon Statutes of Nüqing* and talismanic books, those priests are given legitimacy to exorcise demons and summon divinities, which will be preceded in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5

## Summoning of Divinities

Talismans, also known as ‘divine talismans’ (*shenfu* 神符) or ‘heavenly talismans’ (*tianfu* 天符), are among the most important ritual tools in Daoism. They are typically collected in a talisman register which a Daoist priest would receive on his ordination, as discussed in the previous chapter. They are used for a wide range of purposes, such as exorcism, healing, protection, wind- and rain-summoning, locust-expelling, etc. (Hu 1995, p. 630). This chapter takes the talisman of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ as an example to analyse the divine power that can be invoked from deities’ names.

### 5.1 Healing Rituals

#### Talismans

The use of talismans in Daoism traces its origin to ‘tally’ (*fu* 符), which was an important token used by the state bureaucracy in issuing commands upon military troops. The scripture *Exegeting Characters* (*Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字) provides the following description of tallies:

*Tally is a form of credence. The tallies in Han Dynasty were made of bamboo, six inches long and split into two.*<sup>40</sup>

Tallies were usually carved with the name of the official who gave out the order, along with his title and function, as well as a brief description of the mission and period of validity on it. They were then delivered by post soldiers to their intended destinations. The popularisation of tally during the Han Dynasty was to counteract fake stamps and written orders. Later, in Daoist religion, the use of tally developed into a symbol for divine covenants. According to *Corpus of Daoist Ritual* (*Daofa Huiyuan* 道法會元):

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<sup>40</sup>The original text: “符，信也。漢制以竹長六寸分而相合” (EC, p. 96).



*Talismans are the substantial evidence of deities from the universe,  
the unifying, and a contract.*<sup>41</sup>

Priests from the Way of Celestial Masters thus apply talismans within their own ritual traditions. It allows the possessors to command and control ‘armies’ of deities that can be dispatched in ‘battles’ against malicious entities (Robson 2011, p. 226).

In Daoism, it is believed that sacred texts, such as talismans, are conceived as ‘cloud seals’ (*yunzhuan* 雲篆) that derive from the primordial state of chaos that existed prior to the birth of the cosmos. According to the Daoist canon *Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds*, cloud seals are the product of the original life force in the celestial clouds, and are subsequently transcribed by Daoist priests who can communicate with the Celestial World. This origin of scripture is significant “insofar as the written scriptural texts somehow ‘participate’ in the divine reality” (Taylor 2008, p. 383). Because of their heavenly origin, they are believed to possess a divine nature (Pregadio 2008, p. 24). Therefore, the transcription of talismans cannot be imitated by other humans without proper divine authorisation, but can only be transcribed when the celestial pneuma is channelled through ordained Daoist priests.

The actual transcription of talismans consists of a certain type of graphic writing on yellow papers, using lines or curved strokes in black and red ink, which represent both Chinese characters, as well as depictions (Gai 2012, p. 294). The writing on a talisman is usually difficult to read, but follows a pattern in its graphical construction which includes a deity’s name, its title, and sometimes its corresponding profile image, written in mystified linguistic shapes. Its resemblance to Chinese writing presents both legible signs and illegible graphic elements. The latter are derived from patterns found in nature, yet they are considered to reflect spiritual and divine powers from the Celestial World that can be harnessed to control or influence the deities addressed in the mystified writing. They thus form a means of “communication with...the realm of demons and deities” (Robson 2011, p. 226) and can be used to channel a deity’s divine power to the Terrestrial World (Pregadio 2008, pp. 35–38). Most talismans therefore address specific deities for specific purposes and do so in a direct manner, i.e. by means of their names.

### **Summoning Celestial Doctor**

The most common type of talisman in Daoism is the *healing* talisman, which is used for curing diseases. The general procedure of carrying out medical talismanic rituals includes fasting, purifying the body, installing an altar, burning incense, drawing talismans, reciting prayers, and giving offerings. According to *Great*

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<sup>41</sup>The original text: “天地神明之信。又合也，契也” (CDR, p. 695).



天醫使者治病功曹速降  
臣某承符奉召

**Figure 5.1:** Talisman of Celestial Doctor (CDR, p. 848)

*Rites of the Numinous Treasure of Highest Clarity (Shangqing Lingbao Dafa 上清靈寶大法)*, Celestial Doctors (*Tianyi* 天醫) are invited from the Celestial World to come down to the Terrestrial World in order to expel demons and diseases:

*After the completion of the soul, the supervision of birth, and the decomposition of the placenta, the Celestial Doctor and the divine officer should be invited to release them. When someone has died of disease and his soul is ill...the Celestial Doctor should also be invited to save this person. [...] Burn the [Talisman of Celestial Doctor], then recite the summoning incantation<sup>42, 43</sup> (Trans. Gai 2012, p. 297)*

As an example of talismanic healing rituals, I choose the sources on ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ for detailed analysis. The ritual is recorded in the *Corpus of Daoist Ritual*. Although it was confiscated during the South Song and Yuan Dynasties, its content stems from an earlier era and reveals the core of the talismanic tradition from the school of Way of Celestial Masters. Some aspects concerning the differences in the use of talismans between the two periods will be discussed in section 5.5.

The ritual procedure of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ involves six talismans that are collectively used as one complete healing ritual. The first talisman,

<sup>42</sup>‘Incantations’ consist of formulated spells, spoken in a certain rhythm. They are typically part of healing rituals and form “the rendering and explanation of the celestial text” (Gai 2012, pp. 297–298).

<sup>43</sup>The original text: “夫產魂監生解胞既畢，當請天醫細吏，救度成全。又有亡人生存受疾而殂，隨魂有病... 當請天醫拯治... 焚天醫諸符，玉訣正炁” (GRNTHC, p. 244).

‘Talisman of Celestial Doctor’ (*Zhao Tianyi Fu* 召天醫符), is shown in figure 5.1. Its accompanying spell reads:

*The envoy of Celestial Doctor and other official doctors, descend yourself upon the talisman as soon as possible. I, the humble such and such, hereby summon you all in the undertaking of this talisman.*<sup>44</sup>

The name of the priest is left out as ‘the humble such and such’ (*chen mou* 臣某), to be filled in on each ritual occasion (Kohn 2000, p. 270). Although the priest dominates the ritual process of summoning deities — whereas the deities are in a subordinate position to be called upon for service — the priest assumes a very humble attitude towards the heavenly officials and deities. It also implies compliance to subordination which was a common expression in imperial hierarchy when addressing the emperor.

The next step of the ritual procedure is the transcription of ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’ (*Zhibing Fufu* 治病服符), which consists of three talismanic remedies that need divine empowerment. Below each of the talismanic cloud seals, a short instruction is given on the respective spells that need to be recited accordingly. The three talismans include:

1. ‘Magical Alchemy’<sup>45</sup> (*Shen Dan* 神丹) in figure 5.2.a:

*Secretly enchant the Ten-Words Heavenly Scripture, and end with the respective names of the Five Emperors.*<sup>46</sup>

2. ‘Flying Thunder’ (*Fei Lei* 飛雷) in figure 5.2.b:

*Secretly enchant Little Golden-Light Mantra, and end with the respective names of Three Heavens.*<sup>47</sup>

3. ‘Tranquillising Mind’ (*An Shen* 安神) in figure 5.2.c:

*Secretly enchant that the Blue Emperor<sup>48</sup> protects the person’s living soul, no other deity can be more powerful; then enchant the Heavenly Spirit Spell, and end with the respective names of Five Emperors.*<sup>49</sup>

The procedure then continues as follows, according to the *Corpus of Daoist Ritual*:

<sup>44</sup>The original text: “天醫使者治病功曹速降。臣某承符奉召” (CDR, p. 848).

<sup>45</sup>Daoist magical alchemy was closely connected to Daoist forms of traditional Chinese medicine and mainly concerned with the formulation of the elixir of immortality.

<sup>46</sup>The original text: “密念十字天經塗，五帝諱五字蓋之” (CDR, p. 848).

<sup>47</sup>The original text: “密念小金光咒塗，以三天諱蓋” (CDR, p. 848).

<sup>48</sup>The Blue Emperor refers to Emperor Taihao of the East, one of the Five Emperors.

<sup>49</sup>The original text: “密念青帝護魂至萬神無越，又合天靈節榮咒塗，以五帝諱蓋之” (CDR, p. 848).

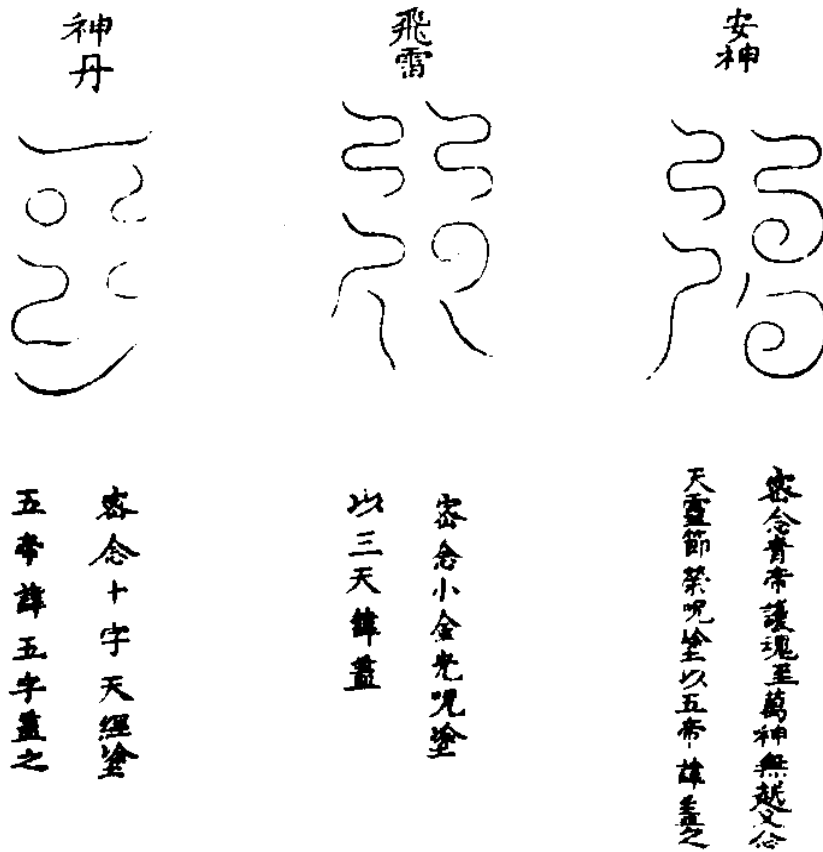


Figure 5.2.a  
Magical Alchemy

Figure 5.2.b  
Flying Thunder

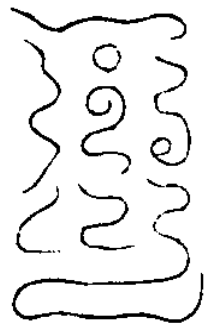
Figure 5.2.c  
Tranquillising Mind

**Figure 5.2:** Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases (CDR, p. 848)

*The above three talismans will be written upon three pieces of thin yellow paper, burned to ashes, and mixed with either a bowl of water, or a herbal medicine soup.<sup>50</sup>*

Next, the mixture of water and ashes is given to the patient to drink. The preparation of this ‘talismanic water’ (*fushui* 符水) as a cure for diseases or epidemics was an important practice of the Way of Celestial Masters. Before treating a patient, the priest will ask him to repent his moral sins first, and write down a pledge of regression to the Three Offices for forgiveness. Only then will his physical symptoms be cured. This originates from the Daoist belief that sickness is a “retribution meted out by spirits and gods for the offenses committed by the sufferers, who [have] to petition the deities to ease their symptoms by confessing their faults, drinking water containing ashes of burned talismans and making ‘handwritten documents of the Three Offices’ ” (Pregadio 2008, p. 459). The divine power that is channelled through the talismans is meant to be transferred to the patient’s body by drinking the talismanic water.

<sup>50</sup>The original text: “右三符各以薄黃紙書之... 用降香煎湯化符灰調服，或化入藥中服，亦可” (CDR, p. 848).



臣向來延降  
斗真板迎列聖仰荷  
鑒觀俯察凡懇于胃  
聖威臣下情不勝惶懼  
首謝  
臣某承符上謝

**Figure 5.3:** Talisman of Tribute  
(CDR, p. 848)



符為某人見患病苦除已具奏  
斗宮外立俟本家夢中明彰  
報應  
臣某承語奉行

**Figure 5.4:** Talisman of Nemesis  
(CDR, p. 848)

After the patient is ritually ‘healed’, a ‘Talisman of Tribute’ (*Xie'en Fu* 谢恩符) is prepared by the priest, as seen in figure 5.3. Together with the talisman, he recites a spell in which he expresses thankfulness and gratitude attributed to all the deities that were previously summoned for help. The priest also prepares a ‘Talisman of Nemesis’ (*Baoying Fu* 报应符), as seen in figure 5.4, to report the successful healing of the patient to the relevant deities. The two talismans should be drawn upon half of a yellow paper in red ink, while the written words shall be in black. They are then burned up along with paper currency (*jinqian* 金钱) and paper horse (*jiama* 甲马).<sup>51</sup> The act of burning written scripts into ashes is an essential part of Daoist efforts to solicit celestial intervention. As the burned air ascends to the sky, it carries the message written on the talisman onto its designated deities.

<sup>51</sup>Both paper currency and horse were commonly used in memorial services of the deceased. The horse acts as the envoy to send the message, and the paper currency widely circulate in the Netherworld, usually as a means of bribery.

## 5.2 Applications of Names

Names are applied in two ways in the performance of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’: firstly, the names of several deities are called out by the end of the three spells in ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’; and second, the names of the priests who perform the ritual are mentioned in the other three talismans, namely the talismans of ‘Celestial Doctor’, ‘Gratitude’, and ‘Nemesis’. In both cases, names are spoken out, but their intended religious purposes have opposite directions-of-fit:

The first is a ‘directive’ in the sense of Searle’s classification of illocutionary acts, as the names of deities are used by the priest to summon the corresponding celestial authorities. Its intended goal is to invite actions from the deities in order to empower the talismans and heal the patient. The hidden meaning of this directive speech act can be interpreted as a command to the deities to descend themselves upon the written talismans which contain their names and titles.

In the second case, the use of priests’ names can perhaps best be understood as a ‘representative’, in the sense that the priest’s name serves as a representation of his authority to issue commands to the Celestial Doctor and other deities. As a registered member of the celestial bureaucracy, the priests are given legitimacy to control deities. Referencing their own names thus publicly acknowledges their divine status.

These applications of names do imply that deities are capable of some form of interaction with the human priests; a social link which is established through talismans. The talismans of ‘Celestial Doctor’, ‘Gratitude’, and ‘Nemesis’ channel information from the Terrestrial World to the Celestial World, respectively in the form of a request for help, a message of thankfulness, and a status report. The ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’, on the other hand, works primarily in the opposite direction: divine power is obtained from the Celestial World through the media of talismans.

In short, the deities’ names used in the ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’ authorise the priest to perform the ritual healing ‘in their name’, whereas the name of the priest himself, used in the other three talismans, validates the messages they transfer to the Celestial World. In both directions, the channels of communication with the Celestial World are established by the use of names.

## 5.3 Ritual Efficacy

In the Daoist cosmology, an imbalance of *yin* and *yang* pneuma in the body due to immoral behaviour may constitute a susceptibility for interference by evil spirits, thus leading to illness. As these spirits originate from the Netherworld, they consist of pure *yin*. Illness can therefore be understood as an excess of

*yin* pneuma in the body. Consequently, the intended purpose of healing rituals is to restore the balance of *yin* and *yang* in the body of the sufferer. This is accomplished by deriving pure *yang* from deities from the Celestial World by means of talismans.

In the centre of the ‘Talisman of Celestial Doctor’ graph, a variant of the Chinese character ‘fire’ (*huo* 火) can be recognised. Fire is one of the five elements that are thought to construct the world. According to the ‘*Book of Later Han*’ (*Houhan Shu* 後漢書):

*Fire [represents] the essence of yang pneuma.*<sup>52</sup>

The element of fire also points to the south, which symbolises long life, prosperity, good fortune, as well as money and goods (Strickmann 2002, p. 8). Therefore, the inclusion of the fire element in the cloud seal talisman seems to be intended to increase *yang* pneuma, in addition to the pure *yang* pneuma of the deities summoned by it. Consequently, the burning of the talismans adds that fire element to the ashes, enhancing the *yang* pneuma already present in the talismans.

This is an altogether different purpose of burning compared to the talismans of ‘Tribute’ and ‘Nemesis’. In those cases, the burning of the talismans establishes a channel of communication from the Terrestrial World to the divine. By executing the last two ritual steps, the priest performs, respectively, an ‘expressive’ and a ‘representative’ act: he thanks the deities for their contributions to the healing ritual and reports the progress of the patient, committing to the assessment of the patient’s status, and thus to the efficacy of the ritual in general.

## Healing Empowerment

Of particular interest in achieving the healing efficacy, however, are the two different stages of empowerment: first, the summoning of the Celestial Doctor by referring to their *function titles*; and second, the summoning of other deities, which possess higher ranks in the celestial bureaucracy, by calling their *names*. The second stage serves as the actual treatment of the patient by drinking the talismanic water. The question arises why this healing occurs in two separate stages rather than one.

Neither in ‘Talisman of Celestial Doctor’, nor in ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’ are Doctors called upon directly by their *names*. On the other hand, high-ranking deities are invited in the spell as an additional ritual enforcement, urging the Doctors to attend the summoning ritual: in figure 5.2.a, all members of the Five Emperors are called upon; in figure 5.2.b, the names of Three Heavens are addressed; in figure 5.2.c, the Emperor of the colour Blue is called to safeguard the patient’s soul; and finally the Five Emperors are called upon once again.

<sup>52</sup>The original text: “火者，陽之精也” (BLH, p. 37).

Given the fact that ashes of the ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’ are used as the medicine, the ultimate empowerment of the healing ritual is apparently not established by linking it to either the function or title of the Celestial Doctor. Instead, it seems to be empowered by addressing the Five Emperors and Three Heavens, in particular by their *names*. This is rather odd, as it seems to negate the need for the Celestial Doctor. Moreover, one might ask why a doctor is summoned in the first place, since the patient’s ‘illness’ is ultimately due to moral, rather than physical causes. The ritual seems to implicitly subscribe to this notion as the ‘healing’ power is contained in the talismans which address the specific deities representing the Celestial World bureaucracy, rather than the Celestial Doctor.

Anna Seidel (1989, p. 253) reaches a similar conclusion about the use of talismans in general: “[t]hese and other uses of the fu can perhaps best be understood in the general context of the supernatural bureaucracy”. She contributes the efficacy of the healing ritual to the talisman: “[t]he function of the fu characters or diagrams are to give efficacy to rites and validate petitions addressed to the deities and orders given to the spirits” (Seidel 1989, p. 253). This interpretation corresponds with the origin of talismans as military seals of command. Yet, it does not fully explain why the ‘Talisman of Celestial Doctor’ requires additional empowerment through the use of ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’, as the Doctor is also part of that Celestial World bureaucracy. The ritual description and the above analysis, however, seems to suggest that it is the deities’ *names* which ultimately validate the petitions, rather than the talismans themselves, which function as a physical channel from the Celestial World to the patient, allowing for celestial intervention.

The example of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ considered in this study does, however, appear to be an exception to the general case in which deities are summoned by addressing directly to their names. For instance, in Thunder magic, which will be discussed later in this chapter, one will typically summon a specific deity for a specific purpose. In those cases, the deities also called by their own name, rather than their function. This emphasises the particular role of names in the ritual of ‘Talisman of Celestial Doctor’: the Celestial Doctor itself is not called by its name, but only by its function. Yet, the summoning of the Celestial Doctor doesn’t seem to suffice in generating the required ritual empowerment. According to my interpretation of the scripture, that empowerment is obtained during the second stage of the ritual — the ‘Drinking Talisman of Curing Diseases’ — from the names of the Five Emperors and Three Heavens. It appears that calling divinities by their function alone is not sufficient for the divine empowerment of healing rituals. This conclusion corresponds to the observation made in the chapter concerning exorcisms that demons’ *names*, rather than their



titles, constitute the necessary condition for identity and, consequently, for the successful expulsion of the demons.

### Celestial World Bureaucracy

In fact, there are many similarities between the cases on exorcism and summoning: both restore disturbances of the cosmological order caused by immoral behaviour through ritual means. It once more begs the question though: if immoral behaviour is the root cause of illnesses, why call a *doctor* in the first place? In other words: what is the difference between these two rituals?

As we have seen in the chapter concerning exorcisms of demons, immoral behaviour by humans in the Terrestrial World can lead to *direct* punishment by the forces of the Celestial World, particularly in the form of a shortened lifespan, or *indirectly* through the release of demons from the Netherworld. Since these demons originate from the Netherworld, they consist of pure *yin* pneuma. This excess of *yin* can be neutralised either by removing *yin* — as is done in exorcist rituals — or by adding *yang* — as is done in healing rituals.

A healing ritual restores order to the Terrestrial World, while an exorcist ritual restores order to both the Netherworld as well as the Terrestrial World: a misbehaving demon is subject to the regulatory forces of the Netherworld bureaucracy, consisting of even more powerful demons, which will force the demon back into its proper place within that bureaucracy. The reconstruction of order in case of exorcisms is therefore based on *authority* and *force*. The accompanying change in moral behaviour on part of the human subject, enforced by precepts and taboos, therefore appears to be somewhat of a ritual after-thought, primarily designed to prevent re-occurrence of the demonic infestation in the future.

The Celestial World bureaucracy, on the other hand, primarily keeps track of *human* behaviour, rather than that of the deities themselves. The ordering function of healing rituals therefore seems to be based on the implementation of bureaucratic mutations, rather than enforcing regulations. As shown in the first section, a patient should *first* be deemed worthy of healing by confession to his sins and asking the Three Offices for forgiveness, before invoking the forces of the Celestial World bureaucracy by drinking the talismanic water. The change in moral behaviour of the human subject, should therefore be considered a ritual requirement in this case, qualifying the patient for subsequent celestial intervention.

In sum, both rituals invoke their respective bureaucracies. In case of exorcisms, however, the demon itself is the main target of the Netherworld bureaucratic forces, rather than the sufferer of demonic infestation. On the other hand, the Celestial World bureaucracy primarily concerns the patient himself, in particular his moral behaviour.

## 5.4 Consequences

Although the involvement of the Celestial World bureaucracy explains the realisation of ritual efficacy within the religious context of the ritual, the situation with regard to the real world presents an altogether more problematic case.

### Physical Healing

If one considers illnesses to be the result of immoral behaviour, it makes sense to summon divine powers to restore order to the body and thus cure the disease. It begs another question though: how did these rituals manage to achieve that efficacy in the real world, i.e.: how did the patient actually *heal* in case of a real, physical illness? There are several ways in which this could have been achieved to some degree, yet most of these remain rather unsatisfactory as an explanation.

First, the actual curing of the disease might be obtained through *other means*, for instance via the ‘herbal medicine soup’ mentioned in the ritual. Another possible origin of actual physical healing may occur in a behavioural change due to adhering to Daoist precepts and taboos. Although factors such as these may certainly account for some of the ritual efficacy, they do not seem to provide a credible explanation of the apparent success and endurance of the talismanic healing tradition. Moreover, as Isabelle Robinet points out: “[a]s late as the fifth century [CE], Lu Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477) reports that the Celestial Master would not allow treatments with acupuncture or drugs but healed their members with talisman water, confession of sins and formal petitions to the supernatural authorities” (Kohn 2000, p. 76). Hence an active suppression of these ‘other means’ seems to have been in place, further diminishing the explanatory potential of this factor.

Second, ritual efficacy in the real world might also be a result of mere *placebo effects*. The Daoist cosmology establishes medical conditions as disturbances in the order in the body — or at least it does so in the minds of the participants of the ritual. The subsequent performance of the healing ritual may very well convince the patient *himself* of the restoration of that order. In that case, the performance of the healing ritual essentially transforms into an exorcist ritual: the same factors of establishing obligation through the objectification of divinities as a ‘real’ source of healing power, as well as the enhancement of that celestial intervention by means of the very performance of the ritual will both apply. The main difference, however, is that a *perceived* demonic threat from the Netherworld presents a fundamentally different problem than an *actual* medical condition in the real world. Whereas an exorcist ritual of a perceived demon ultimately results in a perceived riddance of that demon, a medical condition is not easily overcome by a mere change in the perception of reality.

Howard Brody (2009, p. 152) considers placebo effects a “suspect category” in the explanation of ritual efficacy of healing rituals, yet provides several ways in which they might contribute to an actual healing process. This is “most likely to occur when the meaning of the illness experience for the patient is altered in a positive direction” (Brody 2009, p. 161), for instance by providing the patient with an explanation for the illness that corresponds to his general worldview.

Following a similar rationality, the Daoist solution to illness is fashioned after the preexisting idea that the imbalance of *yin* and *yang* pneuma in the body leads to physical problems. Thus, in correspondence to that worldview, the Daoists supplement the *yang* pneuma in order to compensate the excess *yin*, which further enhances this interpretation. However, although all of these aspects are likely to contribute to the ritual efficacy of the healing ritual, they do not amount to a sufficient explanation.

Third, and most likely to explain the ritual efficacy (yet being perhaps most unsatisfactory as an explanation), is sheer *probability*: in case of most common illnesses, patients are quite likely to heal by themselves, regardless of whether any healing ritual is performed. If any ritual is indeed performed over the course of the illness, it will hence appear to have actually achieved ritual efficacy. On the other hand, if the patient dies, subsequent rituals with regard to the transition of the deceased to the Netherworld would likely divert attention away from the healing ritual. Furthermore, in cases that the patient remains chronically ill, the lack of ritual efficacy may easily be explained by moral arguments: a further punishment by the deities, not properly adhering to the precepts and taboos, etc. In any case, it seems unlikely that the ritual *itself* will be subject to re-evaluation as a consequence of a ritual ‘failure’.

Therefore, on average, *any* healing ritual can generally be expected to ‘succeed’. Although perhaps quite cynical, it seems this probabilistic interpretation provides the best explanation of the sustained popularity of the talismanic healing tradition of the Way of Celestial Masters. Moreover, as the premises of the ritual, which define any illness as a disturbance in the order of the cosmos, correspond neatly to the cosmological axioms of the Daoist community, it is understandable why these rituals managed to persist over a longer period of time. Hence, although unlikely to achieve actual healing, the ritual nevertheless succeeds in maintaining a certain level of social order by securing a ritual means of coping with diseases.

Furthermore, as ritual efficacy is easily understood in the context of Daoist cosmology — transforming medical conditions into moral issues requiring ritual interference — the healing ritual relates concrete terrestrial problems to the overall cosmology. This in itself contributes to the reinforcement of social order within the Daoist community.

## 5.5 Talismans in a Broader Context

As stated previously, talismans originated as ‘seals of command’ for the dispatching of military forces. The possession of these tallies authorised emperors or state officials to give out ‘orders’, indicating the existence of a hierarchical system based on power. Even for an emperor of Imperial China this was no exception: fake, incomplete, or loss of military tally deprived the emperor of any power to command the nation’s military forces.

When applied in Daoist rituals later on, the use of talismans passed on that principle of authorisation. It mirrors the construct of military power into the context of the Celestial World, with deities acting as generals, forming a hierarchy of celestial ranks within the divine bureaucracy. It features an extended range of functional offices that cater to the daily needs of human beings in the Terrestrial World. These include the Three Offices overseeing the registers recording the moral behaviour of humans, the Celestial Doctors which cure diseases, Thunder generals which are in charge of eradicating ghosts and demons on earth, deities which bless people’s fortune, agricultural production, longevity, and water deities which control rain, floods and draughts. Each of these offices can be invoked for favours through summoning rituals.

What concerns the most for this thesis with regard to these rituals is the use of talismans in relation to names. It can be argued that names are used in Daoist rituals to invoke the power of the hierarchical Celestial World to deal with the problems in the Terrestrial World in the aim to restore cosmological order. Henrik H. Sørensen (2011, pp. 197–205) regards the practice of spell performance in achieving supernatural powers as ‘ritual magic’ and the spell as ‘magical trigger’. He argues that the divine spells serve as an all-dominating factor for all the operating notions of supernatural magic, and it serves as the trigger to set the magical process in motion. For that reason, “knowledge of the relevant spell-literature was of paramount importance to the practitioner of magic” (Sørensen 2011, p. 205). Therefore, knowledge of the appropriate deities’ names under particular circumstances is critical; in order to achieve the desired efficacy one should trigger the supernatural power in the right way, aimed at the right deity.

In the Song Dynasty, summoning Thunder generals was common practice. In the case of summoning Zhang Yuanbo 張元伯<sup>53</sup>, a strong commanding tone was used in the following two short spells:

*The Jade Clarity orders the command of Zhang Yuanbo to transform himself into pneuma and deliver power into this talisman.*<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>A plague spirit (*wenshen* 瘟神), one of the Five Envoys of Epidemics (*Wuwen Shizhe* 五瘟使者), also known as Five Emperors (*Wudi* 五帝) or Five Blessing Deities (*Wufu Dadi* 五福大帝).

<sup>54</sup>The original text: “玉清敕召張元伯分形降氣聚入此符中” (CDR, p. 407).

And:

*The Jade Clarity has sent the Thunder deity and his five envoys in the speed of wind and lightning, let Zhang Yuanbo quickly reveal his form, abracadabra, abracadabra, in accordance with the statutes and ordinances.*<sup>55</sup>

In summoning Zhang Yuanbo, the use of expressions such as ‘order’, ‘command’, ‘quickly’, and ‘statutes and ordinances’ indicate a tougher stance of the priest in opposition to deities. This stance mirrors the way in which an army commander would address his insubordinates.

In the case of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’, on the other hand, the tone taken by the priest in reciting the spell is very humble, even to a degree of unsettling fear. The stark contrast in tone is an indication that the ritual originates from a different, i.e. earlier, era compared to the contemporary Thunder talismans from the Song Dynasty, also collected in the *Corpus of Daoist Ritual*.

This seems to suggest that the relation of the Daoist priesthood towards the Celestial World and its deities changed over time. In the earlier ritual, considered in this chapter, the priest positions himself as an insubordinate of the forces of the Celestial World, mirroring the way in which the state emperor would be addressed in the Terrestrial World. Later, the priest is essentially handing out orders to deities, thus positioning himself as an integral part of the Celestial World bureaucracy. Given the military origin of talismans, this seems like a reversed, retroactive development. It might however be interpreted as an extension or extrapolation of the Terrestrial World hierarchy onto the Celestial World, in other words: as a self-appointed ‘promotion’ of the Daoist priesthood within the Celestial World bureaucracy.

## 5.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have studied the ritual of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ as an example of Daoist healing rituals involving the use of talismans. It features two functions of names: first, the name of the priest who performs the ritual authorises the messages sent to the Celestial World and can thus be interpreted as a ‘representative’ speech act. Second, certain deities from the Celestial World are called upon by their names. They are being ‘directed’ to empower the healing efficacy of the talismans, authorising the divine intervention. In addition, the talismanic use of names also facilitates the interactions between the three worlds according to human wishes.

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<sup>55</sup>The original text: “玉清救命急召雷，右轉，左轉，神五雷使者，風至雷奔，天靈靈，地靈靈，張元伯速現形，一如律令” (CDR, p. 407).

The ritual efficacy of ‘Summoning Celestial Doctor’ is obtained by drinking ‘talismanic water’, consisting of the burned ashes of the healing talismans. This restores the balance of *yin* and *yang* pneuma in the body, ‘curing’ the patient. Although the rituals are unlikely to cause actual healing in the real world, I have argued that a combination of factors may very well explain the success and endurance of the ritual practice. These include the general likelihood of healing, independent from the performance of healing rituals, as well as the strong connection between the premises of the ritual with the general cosmological axioms of Daoism. The emphasis on the restoration of moral behaviour as a requirement for healing constitutes an even stronger ‘ritual agreement’ than in the case of exorcism, enhancing the ritual efficacy of the ritual in relation to the real world maintenance of social order.

The origin of talismans as military seals of command is reflected in their later use in rituals concerning ‘Thunder Generals’. The use of talismans during the time of the Way of Celestial Masters, however, more closely resembles the way in which emperors are addressed in the Terrestrial World.

In summary, the three Daoist rituals discussed in this thesis are intrinsically linked to the social organisation and structure within the imperial state. These rituals serve to organise society both on the level of ritual and morality, as well as keeping society from deviating from accepted social norms. Names establish and reinforce the ties between the Terrestrial World and the bureaucratic institutions of the Celestial World and the Netherworld, which, in turn, are mirrored after the bureaucratic institutions of the imperial state. They can thus be considered essential tools in the religious, social, and political processes of restoring order in the cosmos.

# Conclusion

In sum, I have argued that the name-empowered rituals in the Daoist school Way of Celestial Masters have an ordering effect upon the Daoist community in the following respects: religiously, name-empowered rituals invoke effective channels of communication with the bureaucratic institutions which govern the realms of the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Netherworld; socially, they provide concrete ritual means for Daoists to deal with real life problems that are beyond the capabilities of common people; and politically, they contribute to the organisation of a hierarchical monastic system, which maintains the Daoist values, beliefs, traditions, morality, and taboos.

In the first case ‘exorcism of demons’, calling demons by names engages the demons into an interactive social relationship with humans. It is mediated by the Netherworld bureaucracy, acknowledging the jurisdictional divide between Terrestrial human beings and the Netherworldly demons. As a result, the use of names serves to expose the identity of displaced demons and subsequently to expel them.

The second case ‘ordination of priests’ consists of two main aspects concerning names. First, the transcription of new ordinands’ names upon the celestial name register legitimately approves their membership of the celestial bureaucracy. Recording master-disciple genealogy by their names creates lines of lineage within the Daoist community; a lineage which comprises of a hierarchy based on religious status and authority, replacing Confucian principles of kinship. Second, the bestowal of talismanic register, which contains catalogues of deities’ names, is a token of consent to invoke divine powers from those deities. The register thus serves to channel divine power from the Celestial to the Terrestrial World.

In the third case of ‘summoning of divinities’, Daoist priests make use of that talismanic register to control the powers of deities by invoking their names and hence receive support in curing diseases. Talismans serve not only to establish the required lines of communication between Daoist priests and the divinities, but also as the medical cure itself in the form of talismanic water, the embodied healing power of the Celestial World.

From the analysis of the above three cases, I conclude that names assume more importance than being mere pointers. The underlying intention is closely

related to the Daoist religious cosmology and its concept of order and disorder. It has been demonstrated that the exercise of the power of naming is directly related to bureaucratic institutions in each of the three realms. It is through these bureaucracies that names are empowered with ritual efficacy. The ritual performance of naming is also invested heavily with morality, which is governed by those bureaucracies. In addition, Daoist precepts, taboos and other moral rules may be considered important instruments of incentive to restore the Daoist ideal status of religious, social, and political order. Thus, name-empowered rituals can be understood as divine intercession in times of disrupted order.

Regarding the research problem, this reordering capability of Daoist rituals may also provide a means to reconcile the paradoxical observation which gave rise to this thesis: the explicit and extended use of names in Daoist religion on one hand, and the advocacy for ‘namelessness’ in Daoist philosophy on the other. Namelessness represents a primordial status of a pure, perfect balance within the universe. In that nameless state, all beings and things exist and interact in an orderly manner. However, due to the degeneration of human morality, invasion of demons, and other disordering factors, this balance is interrupted. Therefore, names and name-empowered rituals are applied as intervening tools from the divine to restore what has been disrupted.

## Further Research

The research within this thesis has focused on three rituals from medieval Daoism. As these have proven to reveal interesting features with regard to the construction of order through name-empowerment, I would recommend developing the research further by studying *other rituals* within Daoism, particularly those from later periods. Comparative research between Daoism and other Chinese religions — in particular Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism — could also shed more light upon the broader social, philosophical and cosmological implications of name-empowered rituals in general.

Other potentially rewarding topics, that were explicitly left out of this thesis, concern the *syntactical*, *phonetic*, and *phatic* aspects of the use of names within the primary sources that were consulted for this research.

Finally, one could look into the relation with *contemporary aspects* of Daoism in China. For instance: has the efficacy of Daoist rituals changed over time, in particular in relation to the secularisation of the current Chinese state? Can Daoist rituals still contribute to the restoration and maintenance of social, political, and religious order in present-day China? And: which other mechanisms of power and order construction are in place in the current Chinese society and how do these relate to the authority exerted by the state?



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# Appendix A

## Glossary

**Ancestor (Daoism) (*Zuxian* 祖先)** Deceased, direct relatives who are revered and remembered by a family, or personalities of high status who are important to the community and whose veneration is characterised by periodically recurring rituals. An ancestors assumes protective, normative functions vis-à-vis the life journeys of individuals and communities (Guzy 2006). Ancestor worship (*zuxian chongbai* 祖先崇拜) correlates with the virtue of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), which invokes proper compliance to the needs of deceased parents. It expresses and constitutes to kinship, tending to confirm patriarchal lines of authority (Thompson 2008). 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 34

***Book of Later Han (Houhan Shu* 後漢書)** A Chinese court document covering the history of the Han Dynasty from 6–189 CE, compiled by Fan Ye 范曄 and others in the fifth century during the Period of North-South Division. vii, 54

**Bureaucracy (Daoism) (*Guanliao* 官僚)** The state bureaucracy was the basis of statehood in Imperial China. The emperor himself was the nominal representative of the entire empire, and everything (all goods, all land and all households) was subject to his authority. Concepts of supernatural powers were important, particularly the idea of a heavenly will, which influenced legitimacy of emperors and dynastic changes (Schmidt-Glintzer 2008). 12, 25–27, 31, 33, 34, 40, 45, 47, 55, 56, 59, 60

**Celestial World (*Shangtian* 上天)** One of the three realms that make up the Daoist cosmology, along with the Netherworld and Terrestrial World. A divine realm resided with various supreme beings, gods and deities, immortals and supernatural powers (Thomas 2006). 3–5, 7, 8, 13, 20, 22, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42–46, 48, 49, 53–57, 59–61

**Chaos (Daoism) (*Hundun* 混沌)** The primordial stage of the universe before it was transformed into cosmos, indicating the formless or void state



preceding the creation of the cosmos. 5, 48

**Chinese Buddhism** (*Zhongguo Fojiao* 中國佛教) Buddhism first reached China in the first century CE through the transcontinental ‘Silk Road’. It was the beginning of gradual absorption of the foreign creed from many different centres representing various types of Buddhism. As a result, this ever-growing diversity has stimulated Chinese religious leaders to ‘reconstruct’ the Buddhist message by creating their own systems of religious thought and practice in which all those diverse elements could be integrated. This process of integration eventually led to the rise of indigenous Chinese Buddhist ‘schools’ and movements. By the sixth century Buddhism had become an important force in Chinese culture (Zürcher 2008). 3, 6, 7, 45

**Confucianism** (*Rujia* 儒家) An ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius 孔子 (551–479 BCE), and later became the official state ideology of the Han Dynasty. Confucianism focuses on the practical order inscribed in a this-worldly awareness of the Heaven and a proper respect of deities, with particular emphasis on the importance of family. The requirement of piety and brotherly obedience establishes a strictly hierarchical ordering of society in Imperial China (Bumbacher 2006a). 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 22, 32, 34, 39, 42, 43, 46

**Corpus of Daoist Ritual** (*Daofa Huiyuan* 道法會元) Confiscated in the Ming Dynasty, A 268-scroll collection of ritual manuals and subsidiary writings drawn from various schools of Daoist religion that flourished throughout south China during the Song and Yuan Dynasties (Pregadio 2008, p. 316). vii, 11, 47, 49, 50, 60

**Cosmology** From Greek: κόσμος (*kosmos*) and -λογία, (*-logia*), meaning ‘study of the cosmos’; a body of beliefs based on the historical, mythological, religious, and esoteric literature and traditions of creation and eschatology. 4, 5, 8–10, 13, 25, 28–31, 33, 34, 44, 45, 48, 56–59, 61

**Dao** 道 Literally ‘way’, ‘track’, or ‘principle’; also known as ‘Great Dao’. Dao is seen as the everlasting principle at the origin of the universe; it permeates and transcends all beings; it structures the cycle of cosmic time. All beings, all phenomena we perceive were created by the Dao and naturally are part of it (Schipper 2008). 5, 8, 9, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42, 43, 45

**(Philosophical) Daoism** (*Daojia* 道家) A philosophical school represented by Laozi 老子 (ca. six century BCE) and Zhuangzi 莊子 (369–286 BCE), advocating for a quietist approach towards nature and worldly affairs. 5, 8, 9, 45

**(Religious) Daoism (*Daojiao* 道教)** Based its theological ideas upon the religious interpretations of *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues* by Heshang Gong 河上公 (second century BCE) and the *Xiang'er Commentary to the Laozi* (ca. 190–220 CE) by Zhang Lu 張魯. The surviving two main schools are Way of Celestial Masters (*tianshi dao* 天師道) and School of Complete Perfection (*quanzhen dao* 全真道). Daoism is a ‘way’ to individual salvation, as well as an institution that seeks to assist persons in the defeat of crises and diseases, offers them rites of passage; and provides society in general with universally directed rites of renewal (Bumbacher 2006b). 1, 3–13, 19–22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35–38, 40, 42–48, 50–53, 57–61

***Daoist Canon* (*Daozang* 道藏)** A comprehensive collection of Daoist scriptures, rituals, and precepts, compiled in ca. 1445 CE, which consists of approximately 4500 scrolls. The version used in this thesis has been published in *Daoist Canon* (*Daozang* 道藏) (1988). vii, 6, 11, 19, 35

**Deities (*Shen* 神)** Divinities from the Celestial World; in contrast to demons, ghosts, and humans from the other two realms. 3, 4, 7, 12, 21, 22, 32, 36–38, 42, 45, 48, 50–56, 58–60

**Demon (*Xiongshen e'sha* 凶神惡煞)** From Greek: δαίμων (*daímon*), an evil spiritual entity, or a spirit of unknown type which may cause demonic possession, calling for an exorcism. Demons are more malevolent than ghosts in Chinese context, but they may be conjured and controlled through rituals (Ahn 2006). 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 18, 20–22, 24–28, 31, 33, 37, 38, 45, 46, 48, 49, 56, 59

***Demon Statutes of Nüqing* (*Nüqing Guilü* 女青鬼律)** An eschatological scripture of the Way of Celestial Masters that lists demons’ names as well as precepts. It probably dates to the fourth century CE (Pregadio 2008, p. 780). vii, 11, 19–23, 26–30, 32, 34, 37, 46

**Devotional name (*Daohao* 道號)** A devotional name can be used by Daoists either in addition to their family name, or in replacement of it. It can be bestowed by a Daoist’s master, or adopted by the Daoist himself. 37, 42, 43, 46

**Disorder (Daoism) (*Wuxu* 無序)** A disturbance or disruption of the principle Dao. Conceptually different from ‘chaos’. 4, 5, 31

***Exegeting Characters* (*Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字)** The first Chinese dictionary explaining the origins of the characters, compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–ca. 147 CE), containing over 9000 character entries under 540 radicals (*Xu Shen* 2014). vii, 47

**Exorcism** From Greek: ἐξορκίζειν (*exorkizein*), meaning ‘adjure to go out’; Exorcism is ritual expulsion of spirits from persons or (other) animate or inanimate objects, always practised by specialists (shamans, priests, etc.) and according to prescribed rules (Schmidt 2006). 2, 4, 10–13, 18–22, 26, 28, 29, 31, 47, 56, 57, 61

**Five Emperors (*Wudi* 五帝)** Five mythological rulers from prehistorical China, who are associated with the Five Elements (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth) in Daoism (Pregadio 2008, pp. 1068–1070). Each emperor corresponds to one cardinal direction, planet, heavenly creature, colour, season and climate. The Five Emperors are Taihao 太昊 of the East and blue, Yan Emperor 炎帝 of the South and red, Shaohao 少昊 of the West and white, Zhuanxu 顓頊 of the North and black, and the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 of the Centre and yellow. 50, 54, 55

**Ghost (Daoism) (*Gui* 鬼)** The spiritual soul of a deceased human being, believed to descend and dwell in the Netherworld after mortal death. It can be either benign ancestral spirits or the evil spirits. 3, 4, 7, 20, 21, 33, 37, 45, 59

***Great Rites of the Numinous Treasure of Highest Clarity (Shangqing Lingbao Dafa* 上清靈寶大法)** A canon from the School of Numinous Treasure (*Lingbao pai* 靈寶派) containing liturgical and scriptural texts dating back to the fifth century CE. Probably compiled by Jin Yunzhong 金允中 (fl. 1224–1225 CE) during the Song Dynasty (Pregadio 2008, p. 870). vii, 48

**Hierarchy** (From Greek: ἱερεὺς (*iereus*) and ἀρχή (*arche*), meaning ‘rule of a high priest’; hierarchy is a fixed system of subordination and ‘superordination’, a pyramidal order of rank, a ‘stepladder’ of authority or command. However, it need not always be a matter of hierarchies of power” (Alexandrow 2006). 38, 44–46, 50, 59, 60

**Immortal (*Xian* 仙)** An eternal duration of life, an existence without end or death. Principally, it counts as a characteristic of the gods, and constitutes one of the most important differences between their existence and that of human beings, who are therefore called ‘mortals’ (Trembl 2006). A person who has attained immortality may possess supernormal powers. It also denotes the idea of ‘transfer’ or ‘relocation’, specifically ascending to Heaven (Pregadio 2008, p. 1092). 3, 33, 34, 36–38, 40, 50

**Kinship (*Qinshu* 親屬)** Relationship established and maintained by blood or marriage (Asad 2014). 2, 6, 43

**Laozi** 老子 A philosopher probably from the sixth century BCE, best known as the reputed author of *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues* and the founder of philosophical Daoism. He is later worshipped as a deity in religious Daoism under the name ‘Supreme Old Lord’ (*Taishang laojun* 太上老君) and as one of the ‘Three Purities’ (*Sanqing* 三清). 5, 8, 9

**Lineage** Bounds of affinity created by biological link, tribe, friendship, or religious belief (Asad 2014). 41–44, 46

**Magic** (*Fashu* 法術) In magic, supernormal power is acquired by means of physical and mental techniques, symbolic words and actions, or special implements, with the purpose of controlling natural phenomena or supernatural entities such as spirits and deities, one’s own existence or vital force. Some forms of magic in Daoism include: talismans (*fu* 符), spells (*zhoufa* 咒法), ‘practices in the hand’ (*shoujue* 手訣), ‘walking along the guideline’ (*bugang* 步罡), and Thunder rites (*leifa* 雷法) (Pregadio 2008, pp. 116–117). 7, 8, 12, 19, 50, 55, 59

**Master (Daoism)** (*Daozhang* 道長) “A person who (a) has mastered specific efficacious knowledge connected to the Dao, and the ritual skills whereby such knowledge can be put into effect in the world; and (b) who has therefore been authorised to employ such knowledge and skills for the benefit of the community”; and (c) who is a senior Daoist priest, taking director functions in a temple, and also acting as religious teachers for junior priests (Pregadio 2008, p. 326). 36–39, 41

**Moral behaviour (Daoism)** Based on the teachings of Confucius (551–479 BCE), classical Confucianism developed as a system of social and political ethics in the conviction that there ought to be moral solutions to all problems concerning the human existence (Roetz 2008). 21, 22, 26, 30–32, 34, 43, 53, 56, 57, 59, 61

**Netherworld** (*Diyu* 地獄) A subterranean realm where all the dead souls, ghosts and demons continue their existence. One of the three realms that make up the Daoist cosmology, along with the Celestial World and the Terrestrial World (Herzog 2006). 3, 4, 7–9, 13, 22, 26, 27, 31, 33, 34, 45, 52, 53, 56–58, 61

**Order** (*Zhixu* 秩序) From Latin: *ordo*, meaning ‘arrangement’; an arrangement of elements that stand in a particular relationship to one other and form the structure of a larger whole. The concept of order is particularly fundamental to cosmology through the transition from an undifferentiated primal state

to a whole structured by various elements and living beings (Kather 2011).  
5–9, 28, 30, 31, 44, 46, 56–59, 61

**Ordination (Daoism) (*Shoulu* 受籙)** Involves the reception religious names, formal titles, scriptures and precepts relevant to their new ranks, talismans and registers, ordinances to grant free passage on earth and in heaven, and various ritual techniques (spells, incantations, sacred gestures, etc.). A Daoist ordination is essentially a rite of cosmic empowerment and change in social status (Pregadio 2008, pp. 17–20). 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 35, 36, 38, 40, 43, 44, 47

***Orthodox-Unity Liturgy for Protocol and Liturgical Registers***

(*Zhengyi Fawen Falu Buyi* 正一法文法籙部儀) An incomplete scroll from the early Way of Celestial Masters, written roughly in between of 420–589 CE, describing four ordination rituals. vii, 11, 35, 37

**Pneuma (*Qi* 氣)** An active principle forming part of any living thing, the concrete aspect of the Dao, the material energy of the universe (Kohn 2007, p. 105). 3, 4, 20, 29, 48, 53, 54, 56, 58, 61

**Popular religion (*Minjian zongjiao* 民間宗教)** The ‘popular’ aspect of the traditional observances of the common people, of ‘non-official’ nature; in contrast to the officially recognised religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, as well as the more recently recognised Islam and Christianity (Schipper 2008). 32, 45

**Power** Within this thesis ‘power’ is defined as the *religious* force exerted on humans, spirits, or deities by means of implementing divine authority. 2–4, 7, 12, 30, 33, 44, 46, 48, 51, 57, 59

**Precept (*Jie* 戒)** Rules for the regulation of Daoists’ behaviour, usually to prevent wrong-doing. Transgression of precepts was believed to lead directly to the shortening of life and prevent from reaching immortality (Pregadio 2008, p. 546). 20, 22, 26, 27, 30, 31, 34, 38, 44, 45, 56–58

**Precept master (Daoism) (*Chuanjie lüshi* 傳戒律師)** A Daoist religious specialist who takes charge in initiation and ordination rituals and maintaining monastic rules within a Daoist organisation. 7, 36, 38, 39

**Priest (Daoism) (*Daoshi* 道士)** Either a recluse who practises alchemy and austerity in mountains with the aim of achieving immortality, or an ordained Daoist who belongs to a Daoist temple with a clear lineage of generational hierarchy within a certain Daoist school, studying Daoist scriptures, rituals,

and precepts with a master. 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13, 20, 22, 26, 33, 34, 38, 46–48, 50–52, 60

**Register (Daoism) (*Lu* 錄)** Records that identify an individual either in this world or in the Netherworld, or lists of deities and supernatural beings over which an initiate has command (Pregadio 2008, p. 39). 19, 29, 35–40, 42, 44, 46, 47, 59

***Ritual Code of Ordination Ranks (Shoulu Cidi Faxin Yi* 受錄次第法信儀)** A text from Tang Dynasty compiled in ca. 552 CE by Zhang Bian 張辯, containing the ‘Parish Codes of the Celestial Master’ (*Tianshi Zhi Yi* 天師治儀) (Raz 2009, p. 1428). vii, 11, 35, 38

**Scripture (*Jing* 經)** A corpus of texts that transmit religious messages, regarded as charged with magical power which can be applied for certain magical purposes. The authorship of those scriptures is referred to the divine, or to the religious founder, which establishes their absolute authority (Kubota 2006). 6, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 32, 35, 37, 38, 55

***Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues (Daode Jing* 道德經)** A quietist philosophical text propounding detachment, simplicity and removal from worldly affairs, which laid the foundation for Daoist philosophy; its authorship was accredited to Laozi, the sixth-century BCE philosopher (Fava 2008, p. 515). vii, 5, 8

**Seed People (*Zhongmin* 種民)** Virtuous people who are promised salvation or immortality; more specifically, the chosen people who will survive the cataclysms at the end of the world (Pregadio 2008, p. 1286). 5, 30, 31

***Seven Lots from the Bookbag of the Clouds (Yunji Qiqian* 雲笈七籤)** An anthology of Daoist texts and scriptures which became the first Daoist Canon, including many lost texts since the eleventh century CE; compiled by Zhang Junfang 張君房 (ca. 961–1042 CE) (Pregadio 2008, p. 1203). vii, 40, 48

**Spell (*Zhoufa* 咒法)** Broad term for names, words and sounds used in ancient incantation practices of ritual magic and popular medicine (Gordon 2006). 2, 7–9, 20, 26, 49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 60

**Spirit (Daoism) (*Guihun* 鬼魂)** Supernatural beings of neither unambiguously human nor divine origin, including a broad spectrum of beings, such as ghosts, demons, and dead souls, most of whom reside in the Netherworld (Prohl 2006). 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 21, 28–30, 44, 53

- Taboo** (*Jinji* 禁忌) A vehement prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behaviour is either too sacred or too accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake; transgression brings threat of supernatural punishment. A taboo can pertain to gods, human beings, bodily parts, objects, types of relationship, words, areas or regions (Jödicke 2006). 22, 26, 30, 31, 34, 44, 56–58
- Talisman** (*Fu* 符) Diagrams, conceived as a form of celestial writing, from which power can be derived to the matching celestial deities who bestowed them (Pregadio 2008, p. 35). 8–10, 12, 29, 37, 44, 46–52, 54–60
- Terrestrial World** The human world, i.e. earth. One of the three realms that make up the Daoist cosmology, along with the Celestial World and the Netherworld. 3, 4, 8, 12, 13, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 43–46, 48, 49, 53, 54, 56, 59–61
- Three Heavens** (*Santian* 三天) The benevolent and pure Three Heavens as opposed to the demonic and evil Six Heavens; they designate the original realms of the Dao generated from the Three Pneumas (*Sanqi* 三氣): Mysterious (*Xuan* 玄), Original (*Yuan* 元), and Inaugural (*Shi* 始) (Pregadio 2008, pp. 851–852). 55
- Three Offices** (*Sanguan* 三官) Offices of Heaven, Earth, and Water, whose primary duties are the maintenance of registers recording both good and evil acts of people, as well as the correlation of those records with the fates of both the living and the dead (Pregadio 2008, pp. 833–834). 36, 37, 39, 40, 45, 51, 56, 59
- Three Purities** (*Sanqing* 三清) The three supreme deities in the pantheon of Way of Celestial Masters, who are regarded as pure manifestation of the Dao and the origin of all beings. 45
- Thunder magic** (*Leifa* 雷法) An exorcist category of rituals popular during the Song Dynasty, designed to appropriate the powers of thunder for vitalising the body and punishing enemies using judicial, bureaucratic and meditative methods (Fava 2008, p. 518). 50, 51, 55, 59, 60
- Way of Celestial Masters** (*Tianshi Dao* 天師道) One of the earliest organised Daoist school founded by Zhang Daoling 張道陵 in 142 CE, which marked the formal establishment of the Daoist religion. It deifies Laozi as one of the Three Purities and venerates Zhang Daoling and his descendants as the Celestial Master. Priority was given to the healing of illness and plagues, which were considered to be demonic punishment for sins. During

the Yuan Dynasty, Orthodoxy-Unity pledged lineage to the Celestial Masters (Reiter 2011). 1, 5, 7, 9–11, 13, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 41, 43, 44, 48, 49, 51, 58, 61

***Xiang'er Commentary to the Laozi (Laozi Xiang'er Zhu 老子想爾注)***

A commentary to the *Scripture of the Way and Its Virtues*, one of the earliest surviving texts from the Way of Celestial Masters which laid the foundation for its theological framework. Probably written between 190–220 CE by Zhang Lu 張魯 (*Xiang'er* 2014). vii, 30

**Yang 陽** Originally used to indicate the sunny side of a hill. Its meaning extended with associations with ‘brightness’, ‘strong’, ‘heaven’, ‘above’, ‘male’, ‘active’, ‘birth’, ‘impulse’, ‘move’, ‘change’, ‘expand’, etc. (Kohn 2007, pp. 106–107). viii, 3–5, 8, 53, 54, 56, 58, 61

**Yin 陰** Originally used to indicate the shady side of a hill. Its meaning extended with associations with ‘darkness’, ‘weak’, ‘earth’, ‘below’, ‘female’, ‘non-active’, ‘completion’, ‘response’, ‘rest’, ‘nurture’, ‘contract’, etc. (Kohn 2007, pp. 106–107). viii, 3, 5, 8, 53, 54, 56, 58, 61

**Zhang Daoling 張道陵** Founder of the Daoist school of Way of Celestial Masters in 142 CE, revered as the first Celestial Master. 5, 44



# Appendix B

## Chinese Dynastic History

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<b>Mythic and Prehistorical Period</b>	
Xia	ca. 2200–ca. 1600 BCE
Shang	ca. 1600–ca. 1100 BCE

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<b>Classical Period</b>	
Zhou	ca. 1100–249 BCE
Western Zhou	1046–771 BCE
Eastern Zhou	771–249 BCE
Spring and Autumn period	771–476 BCE
Warring States period	475–249 BCE

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<b>Imperial Period</b>	
Qin	221–207 BCE
Han	206 BCE–220 CE
Six Dynasties	220–589
Three Kingdoms	220–280
Jin	265–420
Period of North-South Division	420–589
Sui	581–618
Tang	618–907
Song	960–1279
Yuan	1271–1368
Ming	1368–1643
Qing	1644–1911

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<b>Modern Period</b>	
Republic of China	1911–
Republic of China (Taiwan)	1949–
People’s Republic of China	1949–

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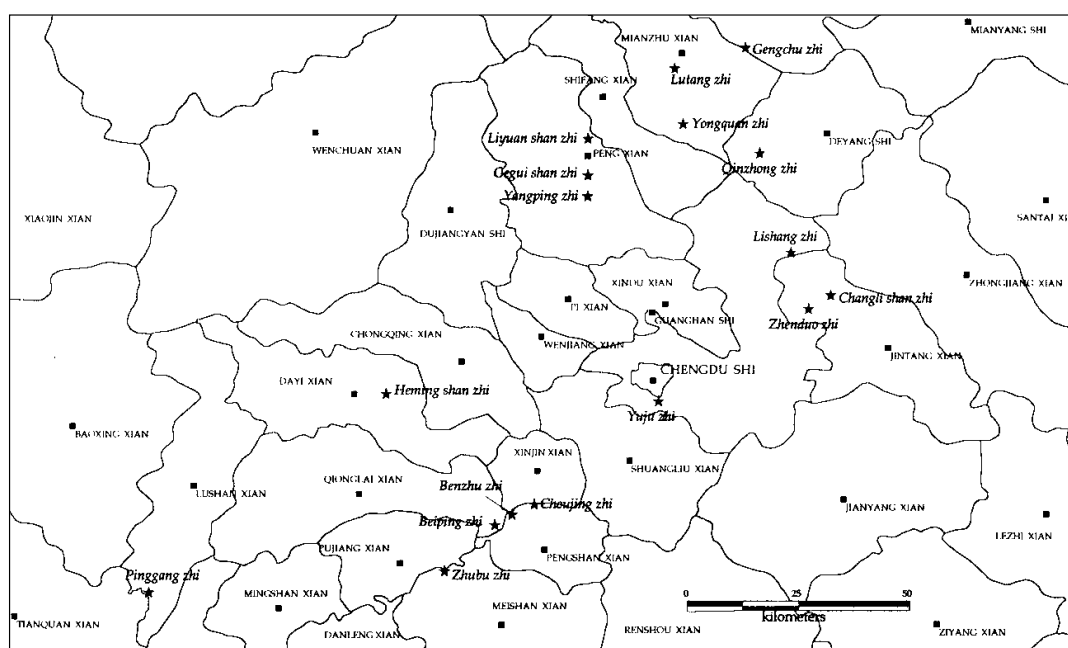
Chinese Dynastic History (Nadeau 2012, p. 1)<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>With minor alterations and additions.

# Appendix C

## Twenty-Four Dioceses



Localisation of the main cluster of the Twenty-Four Dioceses<sup>57</sup> in the Chengdu plain, Sichuan Province (Verellen 2003, p. 21)

<sup>57</sup>An additional diocese might have been located in the Xinjin area; a further six (or seven) mostly lesser dioceses were located in the wider area of Sichuan Province (Verellen 2003, p. 49).