

5-1988

## Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy

Catherine M. Bell  
*Santa Clara University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/rel\\_stud](https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/rel_stud)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bell, C. M. (1988). Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy. *History of Religions*, 27(4), 366–392. <https://doi.org/10.1086/463128>

Copyright © 1984 The University of Chicago Press. Reprinted with permission.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/463128>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Arts & Sciences at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [rscroggin@scu.edu](mailto:rscroggin@scu.edu).

*Catherine Bell*

RITUALIZATION  
OF TEXTS AND  
TEXTUALIZATION  
OF RITUAL IN THE  
CODIFICATION OF  
TAOIST LITURGY

Early in the fifth century in China, the Taoist master Lu Hsiu-ching began to edit a set of scriptures that had been “revealed” some fifty years earlier. These were the Ling-pao or Spiritual Treasure scriptures, considered to be the second major scriptural corpus in the development of medieval Taoism.<sup>1</sup> In reconstructing the original corpus of Ling-pao scriptures from among a multitude of imitations and forgeries, Lu worked to present these texts as the culminating revelation of the Tao in history, thereby inhibiting further revelations and securing some closure on an early canon. At the same time, however, Lu began to codify the ritual material contained in these scriptures to fashion the liturgical directives that would be the basis for much of the subsequent Taoist tradition.

<sup>1</sup> On the historical sources and organization of the Ling-pao scriptures, see Ofuchi Ninji, “On the Ku Ling-Pao Ching,” *Acta Asiatica* 27 (1974): 34–56; Ch'en Kuo-fu, *Tao-tsang yüan-liu k'ao*, 2d ed. (Peking, 1963), pp. 62–70; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Sources of the Ling-pao Scriptures,” in *Taoist and Tantric Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickmann, *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 21 (Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1983), 2:434–86.

Intrinsic to this “codification” is a curious interplay between text and rite. On the one hand, Lu firmly lodged general access to these final and holiest of scriptures (and hence to their promises as well) within proper performance of the Ling-pao rites themselves. Thus, he effectively “ritualized” these scriptures. That is, he turned them into ritual objects the real significance of which lay in their manipulation by a liturgical master. On the other hand, Lu’s codification of these ritual directives also “textualized” an emerging ritual tradition, generating a new textual medium in Taoism, the manual of “orthodox” ritual, the transmission of which would serve to establish a formal lineage of ordained liturgical masters. The final result of this interplay of text and rite was the production of texts of ritual instructions that effectively displaced revealed scriptures as a basis for religious authority and community in early sectarian Taoism. This interplay of text and rite is linked to the emergence of a Taoist liturgical institution in Chinese religion and has remained a fundamental dynamic of Taoist liturgy and identity.<sup>2</sup>

Historians of religions have always been particularly concerned with the textual aspects of religion, and questions concerning the interpretation of texts have provided some of the major methodological issues and debates that animate the field. This concern was given a new prominence when historians of religions began to argue, not so long ago, for the importance of a “contextual” study of religious literature. That is, a text should not be approached in isolation or abstraction from the historical milieu in which it was written. This position was, of course, an attempt to shake free of what was perceived as a lingering “theological” agenda underlying the phenomenological, morphological, or perennial philosophical approaches to religious texts, and it sought to ground a comparative study of religions in specific social histories.<sup>3</sup> Since then historians of

<sup>2</sup> Kristofer Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, no. 1 (November 1985): 21–51, and “The Written Memorial in Taoist Ceremonies,” in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, ed. Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 309–24.

<sup>3</sup> The resulting indeterminacy concerning the basis for comparison has generated some interesting directions in the field, among which are greater reliance on sociological and structural theory and their bases for comparison, as well as the comparative endeavor often explicitly developed between the materials under scrutiny and the worldview invoked by the categories of analysis brought to bear on those materials. The latter direction, however, is not unique to the history of religions (for two different examples of this direction, see George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986]; and Lawrence E. Sullivan, “Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance,” *History of Religions* 26, no. 1 [August 1986]: 1–33).

religions have rarely wavered in their service to the “text-in-context” imperative.

In putting texts firmly back into their contexts, however, we have naturally come to rely upon a particular set of assumptions about the relationship of a text to its context. Most often we approach the text as a formulation, representation, or expression of its context. It may be a reliable or unreliable representation when it comes to establishing historical facts, but whether it is seen as a perspective on or expression of its milieu, the text is cast as a particular human representation of a historical situation. Does such “historical objectivity” on our part constitute a definitive stance in a social understanding of religious texts? This study would like to suggest that it does not.

Viewed simply as conceptual representations or formulations of their milieux, many aspects of texts are lost to us. For example, we can lose the whole dimension of the textual medium itself. That is, the use of a textual medium and a specific textual format to communicate are taken for granted, even though these aspects have a profound effect on the message being formulated, communicated, and understood.<sup>4</sup> We also tend to lose sight of the significance of the broad economic issues involved in the production and distribution of texts, in other words, how texts as objects of determined cultural and economic value function within social arrangements that both depend upon and promote this value. By viewing the text as an entity that merely expresses a particular perspective on its time, we may miss how the text is *an actor* in those times. The tangible presence of the text may go unnoticed when we objectively regard it as a historical document, and we may forget to ask about the subjective perceptions and situations that would produce and deploy such objects within a set of social relationships.

Problems with the contextual study of texts can become particularly interesting when addressing certain types of texts, such as written accounts of ritual. Indeed, the relationship of texts and rites evokes wonderful complexities for us. On the one hand, we read both primary and secondary texts for their adequate or inadequate depictions and explanations of ritual activity. Then we go on to generate further textual accounts of these activities. On the other hand, we frequently analyze ritual as expressing or acting out a text, either an explicit set of written ritual instructions or an implicit set of tra-

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the effect of the medium in Buddhist texts, see Judith A. Berling, “Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yü-lu* as a Buddhist Genre,” *History of Religions* 27, no. 1 (August 1987): 56–88.

ditional blueprints.<sup>5</sup> In both cases, we know we are apt to miss how fully “the medium is the message” and we are at pains to compensate.<sup>6</sup> Geertz’s “thick description,” which can come no thicker than Frits Staal’s portrayal of the Vedic Agnicayana ritual, or Victor Turner’s call for “performative anthropology” are only a few of the more self-conscious attempts to redress this situation.<sup>7</sup>

Recognition of a gap between their text and their rite, their rite and our text, or even their rite and our rite, still fails to ask a more underlying set of questions. What is the significance or functional effect of writing ritual down, both vis-à-vis ritual and as a written text? How does writing a text or depicting ritual in a text act upon the social relations involved in textual and ritual activities? Ultimately, how are the media of communication *creating* a situation rather than simply reflecting it; how are they restructuring social interactions rather than merely expressing them?

This study of Master Lu and his work will attempt to explore these issues by focusing on the more dynamic aspects of texts and rites. It will demonstrate that a whole dimension of “texts-in-contexts” remains to be explored—a dimension in which texts are seen not simply as expressions or reflections of changing social situations but as dynamic *agents of change*.

#### MASTER LU AND HIS AGE

When Master Lu (407–77) picked up his brush in the first half of the fifth century to set forth the ills of his age, he had a special sense of the task before him.<sup>8</sup> His work was to be that of “discrimination.” The constant hand of the Tao in history had given way to a time of

<sup>5</sup> An example of this latter approach is the work of Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), esp. pp. 93–94, 126–41, with regard to his discussion of “models of” and “models for” and “ethos” and “world view.” Geertz’s approach was influenced by Milton Singer’s analysis of how particular rituals enact more embracing conceptual patterns of cultural order; see Milton Singer, *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959), pp. 140–82, and “The Cultural Pattern of Indian Civilization,” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 (1955): 23–26, in particular. For an analysis of this approach to ritual, see Catherine Bell, “Discourse and Dichotomies: The Structure of Ritual Theory,” *Religion* 17, no. 2 (April 1987): 95–118.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Geertz, pp. 3–30; Frits Staal, *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> For biographical information on Lu Hsiu-ching, see Ch’ên Kuo-fu (n. 1 above), pp. 38–44 and 466–68.

crisis wherein all that had been clear was now confused. He had to discriminate the true from the false, the pure from the impure, the virtuous from the blasphemous.

Later Taoists came to regard Master Lu as the seventh patriarch in a line extending from the founder of the Way of the Heavenly Master, Chang Tao-ling, who had received twenty-four registers from the Lord Lao-tzu himself on a mountain top in Szechwan in the middle of the second century.<sup>9</sup> Lu was also credited with the formation of the Taoist canon in its three major sections or “caverns,” the editing of the Ling-pao scriptures, as well as the codification of liturgies that have served as a common basis for Taoist communities to the present day.<sup>10</sup>

These were some of the perceptions and assumptions involved in Taoist sectarian developments throughout the Six Dynasties period (220–589). While research yields a more modest and nuanced list of achievements, these perceptions have a logic to them that can be taken seriously to recover something of the general milieu in which these perceptions were dynamic and effective. Master Lu’s own perceptions of his work and the strategic sense of “crisis” his work addresses are a particularly good place to start to see how his “representations” of this milieu were instrumental in reshaping it.

The roots of Master Lu’s crisis lay in a series of political and social upheavals. When the northern half of China fell to invading tribes in 311, and the Chin dynasty (266–420) fled Loyang to establish a court in exile in the southern city of Ch’ang-an, members of the Taoist sect

<sup>9</sup> On the Way of the Heavenly Master, see Anna K. Seidel, “The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung,” *History of Religions* 9, nos. 2 and 3 (November 1969/February 1970): 222–30; Rolf A. Stein, “Rémarques sur les mouvements du taoïsme politico-religieux au IIe siècle après J.-C.,” *T’oung Pao* 50 (1963): 1–78; Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 263–98, 309–430; Holmes Welch, *The Parting of the Way*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1965), pp. 113–23; Max Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 113–17; J. J. M. de Groot, “On the Origins of the Taoist Church,” *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* 1 (1928): 138–49; James R. Ware, “The *Wei-shu* and the *Sui-shu* on Taoism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 53 (1933): 215.

<sup>10</sup> Sources on the history of the Taoist Canon are discussed in Ofuchi Ninji, “The Formation of the Taoist Canon,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 253–67. For general comments on Lu’s role in the formation of Taoist liturgy, see Kristofer Schipper, *Le corps taoïste* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 279, n. 22, and “Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts,” in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger*, ed. Gert Naundorf et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1985), pp. 127–28; Bokenkamp (n. 1 above), pp. 434–35; Michel Strickmann, “Review Article: History, Anthropology and Chinese Religion,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 1 (June 1980): 212–16.

of the Way of the Heavenly Master also came south in large numbers.<sup>11</sup> The landed aristocracy of the south, descendants of earlier emigrations preserving a distinct cultural style, were suddenly displaced by the arrival of the Chin court from whose influence they had previously been fairly isolated. Conversion to the northern Taoism promoted by the Chin was seen by the court as an expression of loyalty and adaptation to the new order. With little choice, whole clans became Taoists. Strickmann notes that these conversions constituted "an act of submission on the spiritual plane, corresponding to their new, unwonted political subordination."<sup>12</sup>

Yet for many years southern China remained the theater for a continued struggle between the northern Taoism of the Heavenly Masters, on the one hand, and traditional southern mediumistic cults and traditions, on the other.<sup>13</sup> One generation after the rather pressured conversions of the southern aristocracy to this northern Taoism, a number of religiopolitical syntheses began to emerge. The best recorded movement is that of the Mao Shan revelations of 364–70.<sup>14</sup> Bestowed upon the prominent Hsü family, these revelations, known as the Shang-ch'ing or "Ultimate Purity" scriptures, gave "proof and promise of the access of higher celestial regions and to more exalted and powerful immortal intercessors" than were ever envisioned by either the Heavenly Masters or such southern scholar-mystics as Ko Hung, author of the *Pao-p'u-tsu*.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, they were millennial revelations predicting the end of the present era with the arrival of "The Latter-day Sage, Lord of the Tao" (*hou-sheng tao-chün*) in the year 392. These scriptures promised that at that time the chosen recipients of these syncretistic revelations would ascend to heaven to take up divine duties in the new dispensation.<sup>16</sup>

Following the failure of the world to end on this date, a second major set of revelations was disseminated about 397, the Ling-pao

<sup>11</sup> For a thorough discussion of the events summarized here, see Michel Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan: Chronique d'une révélation*, Mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, no. 17 (Paris: Collège de France, 1981), and "The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy," *T'oung Pao* 63, no. 1 (1977): 1–64.

<sup>12</sup> Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations," p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Isabelle Robinet, *Méditation taoïste* (Paris: Dervy, 1979), p. 11; Rolf A. Stein, "Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to the Seventh Centuries," in Welch and Seidel, eds. (n. 10 above), pp. 53–82; Hisayuki Miyakawa, "Local Cults around Mount Lu at the Time of Sun En's Rebellion," in Welch and Seidel, eds., pp. 83–102; K. M. Schipper, "Taoist Ritual and Local Cults of the T'ang Dynasty," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Sinology* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1981), pp. 101–15.

<sup>14</sup> See n. 11 above.

<sup>15</sup> Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations," p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

scriptures mentioned above. They were composed by Ko Ch'ao-fu, a member of another prominent family and a descendant of the renowned Ko Hung. Ko Ch'ao-fu may have felt bitter about the slighting references to his family contained in the earlier Mao Shan revelations and suspicious of the special luck of the Hsüs.<sup>17</sup> His Ling-pao scriptures claim to have been revealed much earlier than the Shang-ch'ing texts, transmitted in fact to Ko Ch'ao-fu's equally renowned great-uncle, Ko Hsüan, and from him to Ko Hung.<sup>18</sup> Thus, this second set of scriptures set out to predate the first and went on to claim a great deal more as well. They tell their own story of cosmological germination prior to the formation of the world and their subsequent conferral on the Immortal Duke, Ko Hsüan. The Ling-pao scriptures reset the millennium for the imminent year 400 when the five "Real Writings" (*chen-wen*), the heart of the Ling-Pao revelations, would be released to the world.<sup>19</sup>

That millennial expectations were kept quite high by both sets of revelations is evident in Strickmann's translation of the comments of T'ao Hung-ching (456–536), who a century later reassembled the original Shang-ch'ing corpus and the history of its early circumstances. T'ao described the excited transcription of scriptures, the increasing economic benefits of which led to "duplicities" on the part of trusted servants who made extra copies to sell on the sly, and the "fabrication" of whole new corpora by those after money and fame.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, "new and old were mixed indiscriminately" and the "true and false put on equal footing."<sup>21</sup> It was in this bewildering bustle that Master Lu emerged.

<sup>17</sup> Bokenkamp (n. 1 above), pp. 442–45.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 438–40.

<sup>19</sup> The five Real Writings are presented in the *Yüan-shih wu-lao ch'ih-shu yü-p'ien chen-wen t'ien-shu ching*, TT 26/HY 22 (1:7b–30b), in a "celestial" script form that is illegible to mortal eyes. Translations into standard Chinese are provided in *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao ch'ih-shu yü-chüeh miao-ching*, TT 178/HY 352, and in Lu's *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao chung-chien-wen*, TT 191/HY 410. The first two texts mentioned above are the first and second scriptures, respectively, in the catalog of Ling-pao scriptures reconstructed by Ofuchi Ninji from a T'ang copy of Lu Hsiu-ching's catalog found at Tun-huang (hereafter, Ling-pao scriptures no. 1 and 2); see Ofuchi, "On the Ku Ling-Pao Ching" (n. 1 above), pp. 33–56. In the above citations, TT refers to the fascicle number of the text in the Taoist Canon, *Tao-tsang* (Shanghai, 1925–27; reprint, Taipei, 1962); HY refers to the number of the text in the Harvard-Yenching Index to the Taoist Canon (*Tao-tsang tzu-mu yin-te*), Sinological Index Series, no. 25 (Peking, 1936; reprint, Taipei, 1966), pp. 1–37.

<sup>20</sup> Strickmann, "The Mao Shan Revelations," pp. 41–62, includes a translation of the last two books of T'ao's *Chen-kao* (Declarations of the perfected), which describe the diffusion of the Shang-ch'ing scriptures as well as the Ling-pao and others; for further information on the role of T'ao, see Michel Strickmann, "On the Alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," in Welch and Seidel, eds. (n. 10 above), pp. 123–92.

<sup>21</sup> Strickman, "The Mao Shan Revelations," pp. 46 and 48, quoting the *Chen-kao* (19:12ab).

Lu particularly allied himself with the Ling-pao scriptures, seeing in them the culminating manifestation of the Tao in history. He set about to reconstruct the original corpus of Ling-pao texts, which in only fifty years had become lost among the proliferation of copies and imitations. Although T'ao Hung-ching, writing only a few decades after Lu, explicitly referred to Ko Ch'ao-fu's production of the Ling-pao scriptures, Master Lu never mentioned this human authorship. He presented the Ling-pao scriptures as bona fide revelations of the highest order, even though the originals, he lamented, were nearly lost among the forgeries.

The ultimate Tao is pure and empty. Its doctrines are simple: quietude and nonaction, these are their essentials. But the things of this world are ephemeral and false, and few are able to practice these teachings. They either compete to be on top or they sink down into corruption. Their faith involves blasphemy, and they attach themselves to evil spirits falsely posing as true and orthodox. The noble and the base-hearted alike chase after them without thinking, as if in a deep sleep. So far no one has understood, and it has come to the point that they endanger the dispositions of the gods above and lead around the people below, destroying their bodies and overturning the state. And still the warning has not been heeded, and the situation has become one of immorality and chaos.<sup>22</sup>

As demonic leaders have misled the people, so scholars have been lax in their pursuit of the truth.

In the short time since these texts have been revealed, scriptures and worldly writings have become mixed up. But the false writings have appeared authentic by posing either as the titles recorded in the old catalog or as those mentioned in the scriptures themselves. Schools of scholars revered them all, seldom showing any discrimination. . . . [The followers of the unorthodox] have deceived the simpleminded and falsely belittled the Supreme Mystery. And later studies took it all on faith and did not investigate further. Now, as a consequence, the pure and the vulgar are confused, the true and the false are practiced together.<sup>23</sup>

In the midst of this chaos, Lu's role is very clear. "I was born just in this final age when the authority of the teachings and the law is collapsing. The people all turn to others, while I alone keep the law. Increasingly each day I forsake life in order to return to the "root" [of

<sup>22</sup> Lu Hsiu-ching, *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen*, TT 1004/HY 1268, 1a.6–1b.1.

<sup>23</sup> Lu Hsiu-ching, *Ling-pao ching-mu hsü*, contained in the encyclopedia collection, the *Yün-chi ch'i-ch'ien*, TT 677–702/HY 1026, 4:5a.8–10 and 5b.9–10.

the law]. I am nourished by these documents as by a mother, I am grateful for their voices of elegant purity.”<sup>24</sup>

Hence, Master Lu saw himself in possession of an orthodox law and a genuine revelatory corpus, the Ling-pao scriptures, by which he could discriminate among the many teachers and teachings holding forth in the name of the Tao and thereby alert a careless people to the corruption engulfing them. He saw it as his mission to point to the truth in their midst and to make perfectly clear how it could be discerned by all.

#### FRAMEWORKS FOR A CRISIS

To “discriminate” clearly to all, Lu appealed to a series of very traditional frameworks for defining a socioreligious crisis. In the first framework, a sweeping succession of cosmological eras was the context for interpreting recent events. In a second framework, scriptural revelations were cast as the conferral of a talismanic “mandate” of authority that established the legitimacy of a distinct line of religious leaders. And in the third, a conventional contrast between “vulgar” and “proper” forms of worship was used to define “orthodox” and “heterodox” claims to religious authority. Not only did such frameworks serve to delineate a situation in redundant and stereotypical ways, they also constructed a set of causes and solutions with de facto naturalness. The manipulation of these conventional arguments formed the context within which Lu presented his liturgical directions and within which they must be understood.

Lu’s first framework of cosmic history had two interconnected themes. In the first, current chaos and decadence were the result of a confusion of spheres, an “improper mixing” that threatened to sever relations between heaven and earth. This is, in fact, an old mythic theme frequently played out in a number of ways.<sup>25</sup> For Lu, demons had disguised themselves and taken up residence in temples, demanding offerings and confusing the people, while sages and immortals of all pretensions were calling down scriptures from heaven and ascending aloft at will. Such disorderly doings, he stated, violated proper order and had “cut off the original law.”<sup>26</sup> The solution was clear—rectification of the original law and the establishment of proper mediation between heaven and earth.

<sup>24</sup> *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen*, 1b.2–4.

<sup>25</sup> See Derk Bodde’s account of this theme in “Myths of Ancient China,” in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel N. Kramer (New York: Anchor, 1961), pp. 389–91; it is also a major theme in the fifth-century Taoist text, the *San-t’ien nei-chieh ching*, TT 878/HY 1196.

<sup>26</sup> *Ling-pao ching-mu hsü*, 4:4b.5–8; and Lu Hsiu-ching, *Lu-hsien-sheng tao-men k’o-lüeh*, TT 761/HY 1119, 1a.1–9.

Within this cosmic framework, Lu went on to present a second theme, that the Ling-pao have arrived at just the critical cosmic moment. He described a succession of five ages in the course of which the Ling-pao emerged and then spread dramatically throughout the world.

The cosmic age of "Red Brilliance" ascended and the *ling* writings flourished there in it. All the heavens revered them. . . . Then, in the first year of the cosmic age of "Lofty Majesty," the Original Primordial descended to teach the great law and transmit the great method, and they circulated widely. . . . When this cosmic revolution reached its extreme and the great method swelled in all directions, only then did the scriptures began to flourish. Their revelations are not yet completed—only ten sections have been revealed. . . . But even though its profundities have not yet been exhausted, the wheel of the law has already turned through the eight directions. If it were not the right time for their cosmic ascendancy, how could these scriptures have flourished like this?<sup>27</sup>

In a second traditional crisis framework, Lu cast the receipt of scriptural revelations as evidence for the legitimacy of a line of religious leaders, thereby evoking descriptions of the heavenly conferral of a "mandate" to rule.<sup>28</sup> The receipt of a mandate not only presented a solution to a crisis, it also served to define exactly what sort of crisis it was, namely, one of legitimate authority.

For Lu, the fundamental rectification of history lay in the founding of the northern sect of the Way of the Heavenly Master, when the Lord Lao conferred twenty-four registers (*lu*) on Chang Tao-ling.<sup>29</sup> Robinet describes such *lu* as an "inscribed certificate establishing the place that the recipient occupied in the celestial hierarchy. *Shou-lu*, to receive a *lu*, is a term used in the Confucian tradition as synonymous with 'receiving the celestial mandate.'"<sup>30</sup> In Taoist organizations, increasingly powerful *lu* were conferred at various stages of initiation and advancement in the hierarchy.<sup>31</sup> It is significant that the transmission of scriptures was accompanied by the bestowal of a *lu* giving

<sup>27</sup> *Ling-pao ching-mu hsü*, 4:4b.2–5a.8.

<sup>28</sup> The notion of a "Mandate of Heaven" was promoted in the Chou dynasty (1126?–256 B.C.E.). It held that the cosmos is ruled by a powerful but impersonal Heaven and that no one rules except by the "mandate" granted by Heaven. With this mandate, they will rule successfully for as long as they remain virtuous; see Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Lu hsien-sheng tao-men k'o-lüeh*, 1a.9–1b.1.

<sup>30</sup> Robinet (n. 13 above), p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Kristofer Schipper, "The Taoist Body," *History of Religions* 17, nos. 3 and 4 (February/May 1978): 376–80, and "Taoist Ordination Ranks in the Tunhuang Manuscripts" (n. 10 above), p. 128.

the genealogy of transmission, beginning with the deities who made it available to the world.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the *lu* confirmed the recipient's possession of a scriptural "treasure" or *pao*, testified to his or her rank in the next world and enumerated the titles of the protective deities who guarded the scripture and served its owner. Indeed, Stein concludes that the scripture was relatively unimportant in comparison to the ritual role and significance of the *lu*.<sup>33</sup>

Master Lu described how Chang Tao-ling, with the authority of these *lu*, established parishes and worship halls, appointed masters, distributed petitions for supplicating the 1,200 official gods as well as talismans to exorcise demons and destroy their temples; he rescinded all previous regulations and ruled under a new, "pure" covenant.<sup>34</sup> This authority not only gave Chang the power to mediate his followers' relationships with gods and demons but also to supervise and regulate interactions with their ancestors and the gods of hearth and earth.<sup>35</sup>

Although Master Lu reasserted the legitimacy of the original mandate to Chang Tao-ling, the Ling-pao scriptures and their transmission of the five Real Writings evoked all the symbolism of a higher and more powerful revelation. Presented as the self-generated talismans by which the universe was created, the Ling-pao were ritual instruments of unsurpassed power for the rectification of the universe. Although unprecedented in scope, this claim had some history and many associations behind it. The Ling-pao scriptures composed by Ko Ch'ao-fu contained among them an old text from the library of Ko Hung entitled the *Scripture of the Five Ling-pao Talismans* (*Ling-pao wu-fu ching*). This text was probably the immediate basis and symbolic source of Ko's whole corpus. It contained "the five *ling-pao* talismans for entering the mountains of Lao-tzu," which protected the bearer when searching the mountains to secure herbs for immortality elixirs.<sup>36</sup> Ko Ch'ao-fu included this older and respected text in his new corpus as a "preface" to the final and definitive form

<sup>32</sup> Michel Strickmann, "On the Longest Taoist Scripture," *History of Religions* 17, nos. 3 and 4 (February/May 1978): 337-38.

<sup>33</sup> R. A. Stein, "Textes taoïstes relatifs à la transmission de livres révélés," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 68 (1967-68): 455; Schipper, "The Taoist Body," p. 380. See Schipper, "Taoist Ordination Ranks," pp. 128-43; and Ch'en Kuo-fu (n. 1 above), pp. 308-69, concerning the transmission of registers, precepts, and scriptures at ordination, etc.

<sup>34</sup> *Lu hsien-sheng tao-men k'o-lüeh*, 1b.1-5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1b.8-10; this theme is repeated in the *San-t'ien nei-chieh ching* (n. 25 above), pt. 1:6a.10.

<sup>36</sup> Max Kaltenmark, "Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises* 2 (1960): 563-64.

of the Ling-pao talismans now being revealed.<sup>37</sup> This older text thus linked the new corpus not only to a tangible textual history but also to a rich matrix of symbolic associations. Kaltenmark has explored the symbolism and mythology of these older five talismans, which were said to be the talismans given to the culture hero Yü so that he could order the division of land and water. They were also linked to the tradition of apocryphal talisman-texts (*ch'an-wei* and *wei-shu*) written during the later Han dynasty as "commentaries" on the Confucian classics.<sup>38</sup> Such text-talismans often involved a text (*ching*) of formulas for immortality and a talisman (*fu*) used to secure the ingredients needed.<sup>39</sup>

The terms *ling* and *pao* also evoked mediumistic notions of a heavenly presence (*ling*) descending into an earthly receptacle (*pao*), a union of heaven and earth in which the former infused the latter.<sup>40</sup> "In heaven it is *ling*, on earth it is *pao*; in the mysterious void of heaven it is *ling*, in the receptacles it is *pao*. That is why it is called *ling-pao*."<sup>41</sup> These terms were also used in Taoist internal alchemy to describe the generation of an immortal embryo within the human body.<sup>42</sup>

The Ling-pao scriptures brought many of these associations together in their opening passage:

Heaven treasures [the Real Writings] in order to float, Earth hides them in order to settle. The five emperors oversee them and are able to suppress demons. The three luminous bodies [sun, moon, and stars] carry them to heighten their brightness. Superior sages honor them in order to achieve perfection. The five peaks are patterned on them in order to acquire spiritual power. The Son of Heaven [the emperor] acquires them in order to bring good order to the state. Their blessings are enjoyed and therein the "Great

<sup>37</sup> Ch'en Kuo-fu, pp. 64–66; Max Kaltenmark, "Religions de la Chine: Conférence," *Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses* 85 (1976–77): 97–98.

<sup>38</sup> Max Kaltenmark, "Les Tch'an-wei," *Han Hiue* 2 (1947): 363–73, *passim*, and "Ling-Pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," pp. 564–65.

<sup>39</sup> Kaltenmark, "Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," p. 564.

<sup>40</sup> Kaltenmark notes that in the *Chiu-ko* (Nine songs), the shaman who is possessed by a deity is called a *ling* or *ling-pao*, *ling* indicating the deity and *pao* the body of the shaman as a receptacle of *ling*; see "Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," pp. 576–77, and "Religions de la Chine, Conférence," *Annuaire de l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses* 86 (1977–78): 93–94, and 87 (1978–79): 109–11. Also see Arthur Waley, *Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956).

<sup>41</sup> Kaltenmark, "Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux," pp. 567–68.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 580. See Henri Maspero, "Methods of 'Nourishing the Vital Principle' in the Ancient Taoist Religion," reprinted in *Taoism and Chinese Religion* (n. 9 above), pp. 443–554.

Peace” is realized. The mysterious virtue of the luminous writings [*ling-wen*] is the profound root of Heaven and Earth. Their majestic luminosity is broad and sweeping, extending limitlessly in all directions. How vast! Their great transformations formed the lineages of the gods whose number cannot be fathomed. How lofty! The “Red Writings on Jade Tablets of the Five Ancients of the Supreme Void of the Primordium” emerged into the empty cavern spontaneously. They gave birth to Heaven, established Earth, and formed the gods. Above, they are called “luminous” [*ling*] and they grant the protection of the five peaks, the peace of the country and the prolongation of life. Below, they are called “treasures” [*pao*] and all the myriad things revere the profound mysteries of these luminous treasures.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the Ling-pao scriptures that formed the basis of Master Lu’s work drew upon a long and complex history of associations that served to present them as the ultimate in talismanic treasures and as tangible evidence of the conferral of an unprecedented mandate. They presented themselves as the very unity of the truly heavenly and terrestrial and as the instruments for mediating these realms.

Using yet a third framework for defining a traditional problem, Lu invoked official or “classical” criteria for distinguishing proper practice from barbaric, licentious or subversive forms of worship. Stein argues that in their position vis-à-vis the local religious scene, particularly in regard to cults otherwise quite like themselves, early Taoists adopted the same official criteria for judging “orthodoxy” as used by government officials responsible for supervising and containing local religious life.<sup>44</sup> Lu echoed official criticisms of such cults concerning financial costs, bloody animal sacrifices, dancing and singing, use of mediums, exorcisms for healing, and uncoded gods.<sup>45</sup>

As noted earlier, Lu’s description of Chang Tao-ling’s “rule through a pure covenant” delineated a type of religious authority that was both sharply differentiated from local religious practices and in supervisory control over them.

[Chang] made the people cultivate kindness and filiality in the home and respect for others in the world. They assisted the change of seasons, aided the state, and supported destiny. Only the Son of Heaven [the emperor] sacrificed

<sup>43</sup> Ling-pao scripture no. 1 (n. 19 above), 1:2a.5–2b.3.

<sup>44</sup> Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to the Seventh Centuries” (n. 13 above), p. 61. Schipper argues (in “Taoist Ritual and Local Cults of the T’ang Dynasty” [n. 13 above], pp. 101–15, *passim*) that differentiation from local cults was an integral feature of pre-T’ang Taoism, but syntheses of local cults and Taoist Ling-pao ritual appeared in the T’ang in connection with local empowerment.

<sup>45</sup> *Lu hsien-sheng tao-men k’o-lieh* (n. 26 above), 1a.7–8; see Stein, “Religious Taoism,” p. 57, for a discussion of the characteristics of heterodox cults.

to Heaven. The three Dukes sacrificed to the five sacred mountains; the lords sacrificed to the mountains and streams. The people worshiped their ancestors on the five lucky *la* days, and sacrificed to the earth and hearth gods in the second and eighth months. Aside from this, they were not allowed to make any sacrifices. If they worshiped their ancestors on any days other than the five *la* days, or sacrificed to the hearth and earth gods at any time except the appropriate festival days, they violated the laws against licentious cults.<sup>46</sup>

This passage is very formulaic, echoing traditional definitions of proper worship laid out in the ritual classic, the *Li-chi*.<sup>47</sup> Conventionally, proper worship was regulated as to the dates, the amount of the offerings, and the spirits appropriately addressed. Frequently, such correct worship was explicitly contrasted with local cult practices involving excessive costs, sacrifices, lewd behavior, and the worship of irregular spirits. Ko Hung, for example, drew such a contrast in the third century, and Taoists in Lu's day also used it to differentiate themselves from such cults.<sup>48</sup> However, after making this contrast to establish the authority and orthodoxy of the Way of the Heavenly Master sect with regard to the local cults surrounding them, Lu went on to apply the contrast a bit differently to the Taoist practices of his day. For him, vulgar or licentious practices were also seen among backsliding, corrupt, or misinformed *Taoists* in contrast to the proper or "orthodox" Taoism he taught in the name of Chang Tao-ling. He defined "orthodoxy" by this contrast with what was local and unregulated, first differentiating Taoist practice in general, then differentiating correct and orthodox Taoism from corrupted forms.

The use of this conventional contrast became linked to another, decisive means of differentiating orthodox Taoism and local cults—the former's use of written documents. Documents were used ritually from the earliest days of the Way of the Heavenly Master sect (second century) and became an increasingly distinctive feature of Taoist ritual. Schipper, in particular, has demonstrated the significance of the written memorials used in Taoist liturgy, which culminate in a "sacrifice" of written texts instead of domestic animals, in differentiating Taoist worship from the practices of local mediums.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Lu-hsien-sheng tao-men k'o-lüeh*, 2b.5–10; similar passages from other Taoist texts are quoted by Stein, "Religious Taoism," pp. 69–70.

<sup>47</sup> See *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge (New York: University Books, 1967), 1:116; also Stein, "Religious Taoism," pp. 77–78.

<sup>48</sup> Noted by Stein, "Religious Taoism" (n. 13 above), pp. 56–57 and 63.

<sup>49</sup> Kristofer M. Schipper, "The Written Memorial in Taoist Ceremonies" (n. 2 above), pp. 309–24, *Le corps taoïste* (n. 10 above), pp. 122–25, and "Vernacular and

Thus, the use of official criteria for defining proper worship and of bureaucratic-style documentation for proper ritual mediation served to differentiate Taoist practice from the cults of its local milieu. Such practices thereby mimed official and imperial ritual functions, but did so in very different immediate and cosmic circumstances. The emperor, Son of Heaven, traditionally mediated heaven and earth in a three-tiered cosmos, presiding over the whole social order as an abstract totality. In Lu's third framework, however, although the Taoist master appears to mime such imperial mediation, he addresses very local concerns on the one hand and very different cosmic realms on the other.<sup>50</sup> Both the Shang-ch'ing and the Ling-pao revelations alluded to cosmic realms that transcended the traditional three-tiered cosmos populated by gods, people, and demons. These new realms were referred to as the three "prior" or "highest" heavens, while the traditional cosmos was referred to as the "posterior" or "later" heavens. The prior heavens were thought to be the abode of the Tao itself, the highest immortals known as "the perfected" (*chen*) and the finest life-renewing ethers (*ch'i*). These ethers were often presented as a trio of three "Heavenly Worthies" (*t'ien-tsun*), personifications of the Tao. Their descent into the world was thought to unite the realms of the prior and posterior heavens and allow the cosmic regeneration of humankind.<sup>51</sup> It was as one of these Worthies that Lao-tzu is thought to have conferred the registers on Chang Tao-ling. The realm of the Heavenly Worthies appears to have transcended the traditional three-tiered cosmos in an important way: it did not simply add new vertical levels to the traditional model but doubled the whole cosmos to create two parts, one of the purest life-giving *ch'i* that ultimately sustained the other whose *ch'i* was seen as coarse and easily exhausted. The role of the Ling-pao-empowered liturgical master was to mediate relations between these two sets of heavens, the traditional cosmos and this newly revealed dimension of the Tao. Thus, this form of mediation could distinguish itself from any accusations of *lèse majesté*. The roots of this formulation, which is nothing less than

---

Classical Ritual in Taoism" (n. 2 above), pp. 21–57, esp. p. 47 on the "holocaust of texts."

<sup>50</sup> The Taoist master addresses local concerns, but *not* local gods; see Schipper, "Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism," pp. 23–24.

<sup>51</sup> On the Heavenly Worthies, see Michael R. Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1972), pp. 51–52, 75–83; Edouard Chavannes, "Le jet des dragons," *Mémoires concernant l'Asie orientale* (Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1919), 3:201–2; Schipper, *Le corps taoïste*, pp. 86–93, 160; Bokenkamp (n. 1 above), pp. 474–75.

a differentiation of religious and political spheres, probably go back to the reformulations and compromises of the Way of the Heavenly Master that accompanied its subordination to the state in the third century.<sup>52</sup>

This third framework, therefore, used conventional formulas to describe a confusion of proper and improper worship, while setting in place equally formulaic models that defined an unprecedented form of religious authority—an authority differentiated from local religion on the one hand and from imperial religion on the other, yet using both local and imperial practices to address a cosmos, pantheon, and community located somewhere in between them.

These three traditional frameworks generated a sense of crisis and, simultaneously, defined the nature of that crisis. In Master Lu's hands, they illustrated both the need for discrimination *and* the criteria for such discrimination. All three concerned themselves with the delineation of proper religious authority: proper authority would regulate the chaotic goings and comings between Heaven and Earth; it would bear talismans that granted it a mandate of legitimate leadership from a source of power that transcends all others; and it would be a liturgically proper and official authority, addressing local concerns but with a style and discourse distinct from the form of local unregulated cults. These frameworks functioned as mere prefaces, however, to the greater bulk of Master Lu's writings, his descriptions of ritual procedures. The scope and redundancy of these frameworks set the stage for Lu's definitive answer to the crisis of his times—participation in the rites of the Ling-pao. Indeed, all that Lu had to say about the need for “discrimination” can almost obscure what he *did*, his repeated promotion of an “orthodox” Ling-pao liturgy made available by him in written form.

#### THE LING-PAO CHAI

Central to the ritual practices that Lu assembled, ordered, and edited was the *chai-chieh*, a term that refers to a “purification” or “retreat” (*chai*) and the “prohibitions” or “precepts” (*chieh*) binding on Taoist devotees. Both terms have long and complex histories in the classical literature and on the level of local religion, where antecedents of the Taoist *chai* included communal rites known as “kitchen feasts” and

<sup>52</sup> This constitutes a differentiation of religious and political claims that probably dates back to the compromise of the Way of the Heavenly Master by which its original religiopolitical claims were modified to avoid complete destruction by the state; see Anna K. Seidel's discussion of related issues in “The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism” (n. 9 above), pp. 217–22, 226–27, 234–46.

“merit meals.”<sup>53</sup> Although Lu mentioned these feasts, he was primarily concerned with the “great method of the Ling-pao ultimate *chai*” revealed in the Ling-pao scriptures.

In one work, Lu provided a catalog of *chai* that appears to be an attempt to account for and rank various forms of Taoist ritual current in his day.<sup>54</sup> Rather like some Buddhist *p'an-chiao* or “ranking of the teachings” lists, this catalog implied that different *chai* suited different levels of spiritual awareness.<sup>55</sup> The first class of *chai* derived from the Shang-ch'ing scriptures and were for adepts who wished to break all their ties with society. The third class bore the name of an old rite of the Heavenly Master Taoists, the “mud and soot *chai*,” although here it was said to be for those who wished to take a Buddhist “bodhisattva vow” to save all suffering creatures.<sup>56</sup> The second class of *chai* lay between these two extremes of total withdrawal from the world, on the one hand, and total responsibility for it, on the other. It constituted “the main body” of Lu’s catalog which was devoted to the “nine methods (*fa*) for the Ling-pao *chai*.” “Its followers are numerous; its teachings and rites flourish. There are divisions into upper and lower and there are stages for the advanced and those who follow behind. Majestic is the monthly *chai*! Its orbit is vast! The different tones of its methods are sounded farther and farther off, reaching out to transform all living things. Those in search of a lifeboat, listen! Those who come to look, watch! Its greatness and profundity are beyond words.”<sup>57</sup> The Ling-pao *chai* with its rich selection of applications was clearly cast as the major

<sup>53</sup> Stein, “Religious Taoism and Popular Religion” (n. 13 above), pp. 56–57, 70–76, “Quelques aspects des paroisses taoïstes,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 69 (1968–69): 467–68, “Les fêtes de cuisine du taoïsme religieux,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 71 (1970–71): 431–40, and “Spéculations mystiques et thèmes relatifs aux ‘cuisines’ du taoïsme,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 72 (1971–72): 489–99. Also see Maspero (n. 9 above; p. 292), who connects these feasts to contracts with the earth god to purchase tombs, as well as other local deities. Michel Soymié discusses earlier textual references to the *chai* and Buddhist influence in “Les dix jours de jeûne du Taoïsme,” in *Dōkyō kenkyū ronshū: Dōkyō no shisō to bunka* (Tokyo: Kokushokankokai, 1977), pp. 1–21.

<sup>54</sup> *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen* (n. 22 above), 4b.6–7b.4.

<sup>55</sup> The deliberate syncretism of Ko Ch'ao-fu's Ling-pao scriptures (discussed and analyzed by Bokenkamp [n. 1 above], esp. p. 435) was compounded in Lu's liturgical writings, which sought to synthesize Shang-ch'ing practices with the established ritual practices of the Heavenly Master sect. All of these currents are represented in this list of *chai*.

<sup>56</sup> Maspero provides a good description of the “mud and soot *chai*” (n. 9 above), pp. 381–86; also see Wu Pei-yi, “Self-Examination and Confession of Sins in Traditional China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39 (1979): 5–38.

<sup>57</sup> *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen*, 5b.2–4.

focus of worship, addressing all the homely needs traditionally brought to the merit meal and kitchen feast, yet commanding a universal scope and efficacy.<sup>58</sup>

The nine methods described in this catalog were all Lu's adaptations of the *chai* contained in a text in the Ling-pao corpus entitled *Instructions from the Scriptures concerning the Ling-pao chai-chieh Revealed by the Most High Perfected*.<sup>59</sup> This text is heavily dependent upon the older *Scripture of the Ling-pao Five Talismans*, mentioned above, that Ko Ch'ao-fu included in his corpus under the title *Preface to the Ling-pao Five Talismans*.<sup>60</sup> Central to the older *Scripture of the Ling-pao Five Talismans* were the talismans themselves, directionally oriented charms evoking the symbolic system of the five cosmic elements. This older, southern text linked the talismans to five meditations by which one visualized the five deities residing in the body as each deity exchanged its ethereal substance (*ch'i*) with the corresponding deity residing in the prior heavens. This rite was called "ingesting the *ch'i* of the heavens" and led to immortality, an achievement, it is explained, that depended upon recognizing the body as a microcosm of the universe.<sup>61</sup> This older text and its notions of the human microcosm, internalized deities and the ingesting of life-renewing *ch'i* ethers from the prior heavens appears to have been the basis for the *chai* ritual described in the Ling-pao scriptures of Ko Ch'ao-fu that Master Lu edited.

This Ling-pao *chai* opened with a dramatic claim on the part of the Most High: "Now, sages, perfected, and immortals who ascend to heaven in broad daylight all regard the *chai-chieh* as the fundamental principle for establishing virtue. The Ling-pao scriptures contain the great method."<sup>62</sup>

The structure of the rite can be described briefly.

In the opening sequence, the officiant announced that the rite was about to begin: "The Most High Ling-pao Lord Lao must summon all his officials and assistants to announce that I, so-and-so, disciple

<sup>58</sup> Stein ("Les fêtes de cuisine du taoïsme religieux," p. 432) notes that by the T'ang dynasty there was no longer any mention of the kitchen feast, having been totally subsumed by Taoist ritual.

<sup>59</sup> *T'ai-shang chen-jen fu ling-pao chai-chieh wei-i chu-ching yao-chüeh*, TT 295/HY 532 (hereafter, Ling-pao scripture no. 24).

<sup>60</sup> *T'ai-shang ling-pao wu-fu hsü*, TT 183/HY 388 (hereafter, Ling-pao scripture no. 20).

<sup>61</sup> "Introduction to the Five Charms of the Most High Divine Treasure (Early Fourth Century)," unpublished draft of a translation-summary of Ling-pao scripture no. 20, by N. Sivan (TT 183/HY 388), April 14, 1976, pp. 2, 7-8, 19-20.

<sup>62</sup> Ling-pao scripture no. 24, la.2-3.

of the Great Tao of the Heavens, the Mysterium, and the Primordium, will properly enter the worship hall, burn incense and hold audience with the perfected so that the orthodox *ch'i* of the Most High Ten Directions will enter my body.”<sup>63</sup> With the help of Lord Lao invoked above, a host of spirit-officials were called forth from the body of the officiant. Their projection or externalization was accompanied by descriptions of their characteristic garb and entourage. Their mission was to announce to all corners of the universe that a *chai* was being held, at the conclusion of which they would return to the officiant’s body.<sup>64</sup> Next, three petitions were read and then burned in the incense burner. They sought the deliverance of one’s ancestors, the well-being of the state, and immortality for oneself and well-being for all living things.<sup>65</sup> The officiant then made a series of ten directional supplications—east, south, west, north, northeast, southeast, southwest, northwest, above, and below. He asked the deity residing in each of these directions to “restore the destiny” (*kuei-ming*) originally bestowed by that deity. He made another circuit—west, north, east, south—and then, facing the scriptures (*ching*) placed on a central table, recited a special prayer in each direction: “I, so and so, now unite [*ho*] all those who beseech the restoration of the destiny bestowed by the Sages, the various ranks of the Perfected and all the Lords and Great Men who have already attained the Tao.”<sup>66</sup> This last sequence was the climax, marking the descent of the *ch'i* of the prior heavens and their “union” (*ho*) with that of the assembled community.

This “great method of the Ling-pao *chai*” was a clear development of the earlier meditations on the Ling-pao talismans to ingest immortal *ch'i*. It echoes both southern mediumistic rites and Shang-ch’ing ritual meditations in which immortal ethers descended as personified deities into the body of the adept.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, the inner/outer practices of externalizing the spirit-officials and internalizing the life-renewing *ch'i*, as well as the emphasis on directional orientation, suggest the traditional ritual postures invoked in southern practices. However, the reading and burning of petitions (three of them in particular) evoke a bureaucratic form of authority that is certainly rooted in the northern rites of the Heavenly Masters.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1b.3–6.

<sup>64</sup> For a T’ang account of the projection of these spirit-officials and their subsequent return, see Chavannes, “Le jet des dragons” (n. 51 above), p. 197, nn. 8 and 9; for present practice in Taiwan, see Schipper, “The Taoist Body” (n. 31 above), pp. 380–81.

<sup>65</sup> Ling-pao scripture no. 24, 4b.5–5b.6.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 6a.8–9.

<sup>67</sup> Bokenkamp (n. 1 above), pp. 447–48.

Yet the use of scriptures nuanced this Ling-pao ritual in distinctive ways. Placed in the center of the altar, they functioned as the final focus for the union of cosmic levels that offered communal restoration.<sup>68</sup> The scriptures and the mediation of the officiant were both necessary in this Ling-pao ritual of renewal, in contrast to the older southern and northern ritual traditions, where the former assumed an individual adept alone in meditation and the latter a community with purely contractual relations with heaven, appropriate only for the immediate concerns of forgiving sins and healing illness. Ling-pao liturgical mediation combined the posture of the medium and the bureaucrat but subordinated both to a focus on the ritual importance of the scriptures as the mechanism of the rite. The Ling-pao ritual not only ordered relations between the traditional cosmos and the realm of the three prior heavens, orienting them in all directions and then effecting their union; it also submitted official petitions and thereby assumed an intercessionary role in supplicating this new transcendent source of power for the well-being of the dead, the state, and all sentient beings.

A *chai* attributed to Lu himself is preserved in a Sung liturgical collection.<sup>69</sup> It is more elaborate than the foregoing rite, but with only one major alteration of the basic elements—the central role of the scriptures is explicitly played by the five Real Writings themselves. These, as we noted earlier, constituted the key revelation of the Ling-pao corpus and the final form of the five ancient *ling-pao* talismans. In this version of the *chai*, the arrangement of the five Real Writings was the means by which the realms of the universe were united and the life-renewing *ch'i* of the prior heavens descended.

In a modification of the directional supplications described above, the officiant took up each of the five Real Writings in its appropriate direction.<sup>70</sup> Inscribed on a bamboo tally, the text was held over an incense burner placed in each direction. The officiant recited the appropriate prayer for that direction (a hymn in sixteen four-character lines), then “planted” the text on a table guarded by “golden dragons.” A clockwise pattern was followed starting in the

<sup>68</sup> See Schipper on this role of the scriptures in the modern *chai-chiao*, “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism” (n. 2 above), p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> *Wu-shang huang-lu ta-chai li-ch'eng i*, TT 278-90/HY 508, chap. 16, *K'o-i men i*.

<sup>70</sup> *Wu-shang huang-lu ta-chai li-ch'eng i*, 16:12a.6.; in this rite, the texts of the Real Writings are said to come from *Tai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao mieh-tu wu-lien sheng-shih miao-ching*, TT 181/HY 369, or Ling-pao scripture no. 17, where they can be found in their celestial version. They are hymns known as the “five refinements” (*wu-lien*), particular permutations of the Real Writings for use in this type of rite, a “yellow register *chai*” offered for the dead.

east and returning to the center, and then the cycle was repeated. The whole sequence, known as the “nocturnal announcements,” terminated the *chai* proper, which was then followed by other rites.<sup>71</sup> In Lu’s version of the *chai* and in current practice in Taiwan, this sequence constitutes “the key ritual of all Taoist liturgy,”<sup>72</sup> the crescendo of the whole ceremony, because the officiant’s disposition of the five Real Writings is thought to complete the creation and orientation of a sacred space that can summon the life-giving ethers of the prior heavens, personified in the descent of the three Heavenly Worthies, into his body and the community—*pao* infused with *ling*.

After the disposition of the five Real Writings, the officiant read a memorial stating the purpose for which the Writings were being invoked. In this particular *chai*, the purpose was the transfer of merit to the dead. Copies of the memorial were then attached to five Writings and burned, thereby bureaucratically “sealing the vows among the heavens” announced at the beginning of the ceremony. The synchronized orientation and union of the levels of the cosmos was completed.

#### RITUALIZATION AND TEXTUALIZATION

The arrangement of the five Real Writings was the core of Taoist liturgy, constituting a ritual posture that was integral to this tradition’s identity. Initially formulated in full by Master Lu, the role of the Real Writings was maintained in the T’ang liturgies of Tu Kuang-t’ing and in the comprehensive manuals written in the Sung to challenge and renew the classical rites of the Ling-pao.<sup>73</sup> Their role, moreover, remains central to modern Taoist rites in Taiwan. What was the significance of the Real Writings placed at the heart of Lu’s *chai*? The answer is suggested in a line from the Ling-pao scriptures themselves. “In this generation,” it states, “devotees are both numerous and widespread. They cannot all be given scriptures, therefore they offer the method of the *chai*.”<sup>74</sup>

In the wake of the Ling-pao revelations, access to scriptures was to be had only through the *chai*, where they functioned as the officiant’s means of mediating the realms of the Tao and the world. In Lu’s reworking of this Ling-pao ritual, even the scriptures yielded to the

<sup>71</sup> Kristofer Schipper, “Religions de la Chine: Conférence,” *Annuaire de l’Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses* 82 (1973–74): 63; and Chen Yung-sheng, “Religions de la Chine: Conférence,” *Annuaire* 85 (1976–77): 105.

<sup>72</sup> Schipper, “Religions de la Chine, Conférence,” p. 63.

<sup>73</sup> See Strickmann, “Longest Taoist Scripture” (n. 32 above), pp. 335–54.

<sup>74</sup> Ling-pao scripture no. 24, 7a.6–7.

explicit talismanic presence of the Real Writings as the means of mediation deployed by the officiant. Yet the embedding of scriptural revelation into the heart of a liturgical sequence, where all—or no one—had mediated access to it was only half the story. Lu did not simply choreograph such liturgies, he wrote them out as texts in their own right. And these textual formulations of an “orthodox” liturgy developed a new textual basis for Taoist practice.

In his textual formulations of orthodox Taoist ritual, Lu was crystallizing a shift in the Taoist practices of his day, transforming the power of the text—that is, the receipt or transmission of scriptures such as the Shang-ch'ing revelations—into the power of the rite by making participation in the *chai* the very basis of Taoist affiliation. By taking the central revelations of the Ling-pao scriptures out of a scriptural context and lodging access to them in the practice of the *chai*, the efficacy that had accompanied possession of scriptures was now available to all. Everything was subordinated to the *chai*, especially study of the scriptures: “Now in studying the Tao, nothing comes before the *chai*. Externally, you will be disinfected of all pollution; internally, the five viscera will be purified. The descending Perfected will cause your spirits to be united with the Tao. Those who cultivate the strict *chai* will be united with the Perfected of the Tao and never transgress the regulations and precepts. Therefore, the Heavenly Master handed down the instructions. To study without cultivating the *chai* is like traveling blindly at night without a burning lamp. The formal *chai* should be the first step in studying the Tao.”<sup>75</sup>

This shift in the basis of Taoist practice from transmission of revealed texts to ritually constituted mediation skills was particularly decisive in defining Taoist religious authority. Through the rituals of ordination also codified by Lu, a “priesthood” was formally established, composed of liturgical experts publicly invested by a lineage of masters with a power and skill residing irreversibly within them, their expertise at the service of all.<sup>76</sup> This was, of course, no longer an ethos in which the millennium was imminent, but one in which a more durable liturgical institution was emerging.

To foster the emergence of this institution, it was not sufficient that Lu merely describe sequences in which access to the power of the scriptures was realized in the performance of the *chai*. He had to do two things simultaneously. First, he had to define a liturgically based form of authority clearly superior to other forms. He did this through

<sup>75</sup> *San-t'ien nei-chieh ching* (n. 25 above), p. 2:2b.1–5.

<sup>76</sup> See Lu's instructions for ordination procedures in *T'ai-shang tung-hsüan ling-pao shou-tu i-piao*, TT 294/HY 528

the contrasts invoked by the three frameworks described above and through the definitions of that authority that emerge in the *Ling-pao chai*. The first framework of successive cosmic eras made clear that an era of unregulated, unmediated comings and goings between heaven and earth was responsible for the current situation of chaos and must inevitably yield to the emergence of properly appointed mediation. The second framework suggested that the type of “mandate” constituted by the bestowal of talismans such as the five Real Writings conferred an authority to mediate relations *not* between heaven and earth, the ritual realm of the emperor, but between this whole traditional cosmos and the transcendent heavens of the Tao. Such authority essentially mimed that of the emperor without challenging its jurisdiction. The third framework of dignified, bloodless ritual versus sacrificial and mediumistic cults generated a set of schemes that defined Taoist liturgical authority as “official” and textual, while still addressing immediate community needs. As noted earlier, Schipper and Stein have both explored how the Taoist master simultaneously differentiated himself from the medium and subsumed major features of their cults.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, it is clearly by virtue of mediumistic schemes focused on the body that the Taoist master transcended the sphere of traditional imperial ritual on the one hand, while it is by virtue of official bureaucratic and textual schemes that he transcended the sphere of the traditional medium on the other.

The second task implicitly facing Master Lu was to define this superior liturgical authority in a form that actually implemented it and did not just describe it. This he did by the production of liturgical codes that functioned to undermine and replace prolific scriptural transmission as the basis of religious authority.<sup>78</sup> In his production of these texts of orthodox practice, there was even a type of “emptying” of the context of the religious text. That is, his works, entitled “codes of ceremonies,” “outlines,” “gates,” “instructions,” “collected notes,” and so forth testify to a lessening reliance on any scriptural or textual revelation at all and a greater reliance on the oral teachings and explanations of the master. In so far as these types of texts came to be the objects of transmission, scriptures per se were further retired. His own writings, noted Lu, merely “precede the *chai* like a sign pointing to a doorway.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Lu’s work appears to help usher in a stage in Taoism in which the more institutionally stable activities of codifying, compiling, and composing commentaries began to replace,

<sup>77</sup> See nn. 2 and 13 above.

<sup>78</sup> This was probably perceived as a conservative return to Heavenly Master ritual, even though it constituted, in fact, a fairly radical liturgical and social revolution.

<sup>79</sup> *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen* (n. 22 above), 1b.10–2a.1.

for a few centuries at least, the production of scriptures and their unregulated transmission.

In an account of the events that led him to record a set of “five texts for meditating on gratefulness,” Master Lu left a good illustration of the shifts described above:

In the winter of 453, I assembled some followers to perform the mud and soot *chai* of the Three Primordials. Thereafter, we repeatedly gathered for ten-day periods in each succeeding month. Persevering through the frost and snow, my feet were icy and my head was clogged; in the spring, my clothes got soaked. Strong winds shook and oppressed us, the severe cold lacerated our flesh. But we still endured like that to follow the law. We dared not fail or discontinue, even though everyone was usually emaciated and frozen.

Anxious that there might be negligence, I thereupon expounded these “Five Meditations on Gratefulness” in order that we might encourage and console each other. Arranged together, they precede the various *chai* like a sign pointing to a doorway. In the same mud, these five texts make different tracks, to put it roughly. Can it be called boasting to say that some thirty-odd comrades and other disciples of faith and goodness all took pleasure in reflecting on them?

Those who perform the mud and soot *chai*<sup>80</sup> without these Five Meditations in their hearts will not have the encouragement I intended. First of all, they will waste incense and labor in vain. Second, it will result in falseness and lies. Third, they will be disrespectful to the law and prohibitions. Fourth, they will disgrace the teachings of the Masters. Fifth, they will even call down retribution from Heaven.<sup>81</sup>

This fascinating account demonstrates a shift from the study of the scriptures to the practice of the *chai* and from the oral encouragement of the leader to the authoritative instructions of the ritual master. In it, the disasters that traditionally attended disrespect for revealed scriptures descended upon the head of whoever ignored the master’s instructions. These instructions, sources of such efficacy or disaster, were all “drawn from the great scriptures of the three caverns.”<sup>82</sup> Hence, it was now only through the mediation of the ritual expert and his teachings that the lowly follower had any relation to the scriptures or any hope of practicing the rites correctly. Surely we witness here something of the institutional emergence of Ling-pao liturgy in all its dignity and authority. For some wide-eyed dreamers of immortals and scriptures of esoteric wisdom, things would probably never be the same.

<sup>80</sup> See n. 56 above.

<sup>81</sup> *Tung-hsüan ling-pao wu-kan-wen*, 1b.6–2a.5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1a.3–4.

## CONCLUSION

This article began by suggesting that texts and rites are more than passive representations or formulations of their milieu, they are also the strategic means by which persons or groups act upon their environment. Master Lu's codification of "orthodox" liturgies involved processes of "ritualization" and "textualization" that altered rather than merely reflected his milieu. "Ritualization" refers here to the orchestration of ritual activities to serve as the medium of interaction for a particular set of social relations. In other words, certain types of social relations can occur through ritual that would otherwise not take place. Similarly, "textualization" refers to the generation of textual objects that structure social interactions around their use and transmission. There are significant differences between social relations that are structured primarily by ritual and those structured primarily by the use of texts, and the ritualization of social relations doubtless serves ends other than those served by the textualization of social relations.

Lu's codification of Ling-pao ritual was, first of all, an elaborate ritualization of access to the Ling-pao scriptures. This ritualization had the result that the revelations and boons of scriptural transmission that had previously been available to only a select few were now accessible to many more people by participation in the Ling-pao rituals presided over by the Taoist liturgical master. That is, the restricted but direct access to the realms of the Tao afforded by the possession of revealed scriptures came to be redefined as the unrestricted but more indirect or mediated access to the Tao available through participation in the performance of Taoist liturgy. At the same time, however, that Master Lu crystallized this ritualization of access to the ultimate scriptural revelations of the Ling-pao, he also textualized the liturgical material in those revelations by producing manuals of "orthodox" ritual. The result of this textualization was the institutional definition of a new form of authority, the Ling-pao liturgical master. The transmission of these ritual manuals (in necessary conjunction with the oral explanations of the master) dominated the transmission of scriptures and formally conferred this liturgical form of authority. The manuals Lu produced were, therefore, the very means by which Taoists were given the formal power to preside over the ritual through which the wider, local community had access to the power of the Tao. In addition, the transmission of these ritual manuals not only defined the liturgical master, they also fostered the standardization of ritual, the formal investiture of authority through ordination and the formation of a lineage of Taoist liturgical masters. Thus, these manuals were the basis for an institutionalization of Taoist ritual practices. Institutionalization means that set procedures

for the investiture and deployment of religious authority replaced the unstable and intrinsically arbitrary processes based on divine revelation or financial resources. Such institutional “rationalization” of status and power, to borrow Weber’s terminology, meant that access to the sacred was now more accessible to anyone, but again, less directly—through apprenticeship to a master and the formal conferral of the appropriate texts or through participation in the ritual.<sup>83</sup>

One of the possible results of “ritualization” is the creation of a local community often under the leadership of an acknowledged expert of sorts who mediates the relationship between the community and their gods. For example, when Lu ritualized the Ling-pao scriptures by lodging access to them in the performance of the Ling-pao *chai*, the power of the scriptures was made collectively available to more people than could have possessed the scriptures themselves. On the one hand, their access was indirect, mediated by the Ling-pao liturgical master and subordinated to the proper performance of the *chai*. Yet, on the other hand, their participation in the Ling-pao rituals defined a distinct community with a *communal* means of access to the Tao. Thus, ritualization may well promote a complementary identification of community *and* hierarchy or stratification. Ritualization also acts to localize or specify concerns in terms of the immediate here and now. The mutual dependency of the community on the ritual expert and the expert on the community suggests that communal needs will dominate the purposes of the ritual. Taoist masters performing the Ling-pao *chai* differentiated their rites from those of local cults in a variety of ways, but as liturgical experts in the service of a community, they also continued to address many of the same concerns as the local cults.<sup>84</sup>

The results of textualization appear to go in a different direction. The textualization of social relations may promote more individuated or even democratic forms of empowerment and authority, constituting the basis for institutionalizing (i.e., “rationalizing”) bureaucratic rather than traditional or charismatic procedures for attaining and exercising authority, to borrow Weber’s terms again.<sup>85</sup> Lu’s textualization of orthodox Taoist ritual defined a distinct ritual institution differentiated from both local cults and corrupt Taoist practices

<sup>83</sup> Max Weber, *The Puritan Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin, 1930), pp. 102–17.

<sup>84</sup> This is particularly evident in Lu’s *Lu hsien-sheng tao-men k’o-lüeh*. Schipper discusses the role of classical Ling-pao liturgy in promoting local “emancipation” and empowerment; see “Taoist Ritual and Local Cults of the T’ang Dynasty” (n. 13 above), pp. 101–15, and “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism” (n. 2 above), p. 47.

<sup>85</sup> See the discussion of types of authority in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. and trans., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1946; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 294–301.

by regularized means of access both to the highest of spiritual goals and to its more humble standardized offices. This is the opposite of ritualized forms of authority which tend to remain highly discretionary, self-legitimizing, and selective. Thus, the formation of institutional structures encouraged by textualization is a social process distinct from the formation of community encouraged by ritualization.

The work of Master Lu makes it clear, however, that ritualization and textualization do not function as isolated or “pure” forms. Indeed, the dynamics of rites and texts appear here to have played off each other in quite subtle and culturally specific ways. For example, the use and sacrifice of texts differentiated Taoist ritual from local cults, while, conversely, ritual redefined the significance of texts when the Ling-pao revelations were embedded in the *chai*. In the case of Master Lu’s work, both the ritual medium and the textual medium strategically moderated each other, each reorchestrating the social ramifications of the other. Their particular orchestration remains an enduring and definitive feature of modern Taoism.

This “dynamic” analysis of texts and rites has attempted to illuminate how textualization and ritualization can define and dominate particular sets of social relations. On a basic level, this perspective assumes that the study of religion can go beyond deciphering texts and rites as cultural artifacts and begin to analyze them as strategic dynamics in the very production of culture. Master Lu’s written polemics concerning the need to discriminate the true from the false and the orthodox from the improper do not simply reflect his times, nor do they simply express a particular perspective on those times. In a fuller analysis, these polemics were part of an active process of culture formation. Master Lu ritualized scriptures and textualized ritual to produce texts of orthodox rites in which both the medium and the message inseparably functioned to produce a new form of authority. The practice of this authority in the role of the Taoist liturgical master both animated and resolved such polemics, while generating an institution that continues to mediate the social forces behind those polemics.

*Santa Clara University*