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Leiden
The Netherlands

The heavenly court: a study on the Iconopraxis of Daoist temple painting
Gesterkamp, L.

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4 Personalisation

Personalisations pertain to the irregular elements in a Heavenly Court painting. Painters could add minor modifications to the representation of a Heavenly Court by including or excluding certain deities, changing their iconographies, or arranging deities in a slightly different order, thus bespeaking the preferences of the patrons. A comparison of these irregular elements combined with other information such as the background of the patrons, the status of the temple, the quality of the workshop etc. should reveal the motivations behind the personalisation of a particular Heavenly Court painting.

I will now discuss the irregular elements and the possible motivations of the patrons for introducing these elements for each of the four Heavenly Court paintings separately.

4.1 Yongle gong

In order to determine the personalisation of the Yongle gong murals, I will first attempt to identify the patrons of the murals, after which I will discuss some pictorial elements in the murals revealing their particular motivations for designing the Heavenly Court paintings in this specific way.

Patronage

No inscriptions are known to provide clues to the identities and social background of the patrons of the Heavenly Court painting in the Yongle gong. We can however know almost for certain that the murals were funded by the Quanzhen patriarchate directly, perhaps even with the support of the Mongol court. A first indication is found in an inscription left on the narrative murals in the Chunyang hall, listing forty-nine names who are all Quanzhen priests. with the exception of two officials and the local village elders. In addition, the donations of the non-Quanzhen figures are relatively modest.¹ This suggests that the mural decoration of

¹ One official donated five pounds of azurite blue, one official donated five *ding* 錠 worth of paper money, and the village elders (*sanlao* 三老) donated five bushels of rice. The Quanzhen priests donated ten, twenty, or fifty *ding* of paper money. Wang, “Yongle gong,” p. 73.

the Chunyang Hall of the Yongle gong, and probably of the other halls as well, was mainly a Quanzhen affair.

We have strong indications that the entire project, both building and mural decoration, of the Yongle gong was funded by the Quanzhen patriarchate. The shrine to Lü Dongbin was ‘converted’ to the Quanzhen order by Song Defang 宋德方 (Veritable Piyun 披雲真人, 1183-1247) who also made the design for the architectural layout. After patriarch Li Zhichang 李志常 (Veritable Zhenchang 真常真人, 1193-1256) visited the site in 1252 during his tour to the Sacred Peaks and Marshes on behalf of the new Mongol Khan Möngke, and found out that the building of the Yongle gong had only made slow progress because of the lack of funding, he announced that from that moment on the Quanzhen patriarchate would take responsibility for the costs of the building.²

Interestingly, the Quanzhen patriarch could be so generous because he had just been awarded five thousand taels of silver by the Treasury (*neifu* 內府) to compensate for his travel expenses.³ The Yongle gong was therefore indirectly funded by the Mongol court, which was undoubtedly aware of this ‘redirection’ of imperial funds to other projects. The Quanzhen patriarchate was also officially associated with the Mongol court, since its patriarchs were automatically members of the Academy of Assembled Worthies (*jixian yuan* 集賢院) of the imperial court. The network of monasteries that the patriarchs directed was however autonomous and independent of the imperial bureaucracy.⁴ The long delay between the completion of the three main halls in 1262 and the painting of the Three Purities Hall murals in 1325 parallels the fall from grace of the Quanzhen patriarchate at the Mongol court after 1281 and its reinstitution again in 1310 by the granting of titles to its deities and former patriarchs.⁵ Moreover, the painting of the Three Purities Hall murals in 1325 coincides

² *Chonghe zhenren Pan gong shendao zhi bei* 沖和真人潘公神道碑, by Tudan Gonglü 徒單公履, dated 1260. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 555.

³ *Xuanmen zhangjiao dazongshi Zhenchang zhenren daoxing* 玄門掌教大宗師真常真人道行碑銘, by Wang E 王鄂, dated 1261. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 579.

⁴ Goossaert, *La création*, pp. 87, 336.

⁵ The fall from grace was initiated by Buddhist-Daoist debates at the Mongol court instigated by the Buddhists and eventually decided by the destruction of the Daoist Canon that had been printed only a few decades before that by Song Defang. For the historical background of this debate, see J. Thiel, “Der Streit der Buddhisten und Taoisten zur Mongolen-zeit.” *Monumenta Serica*, 20 (1961), 1-81. In 1285, registrars of Daoist monasteries were placed under the direct supervision of the Academy of Assembled Worthies, thus bringing the temple network – and its income which was tax exempted – within the sphere of influence of the imperial bureaucracy. See Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 606. Another event may also have influenced the temporary downfall of the Quanzhen order. The Mongol prince Zhenjin 真金 had close ties with patriarch Qi Zhicheng 祁志誠 (Veritable Dongming 洞明真人, 1218-1293), the Mongol prince was however disgraced and died in 1285. This event probably also implicated (by accident or deliberately) patriarch Qi and through him the

exactly with the official granting of imperial protection by the Mongol Court to the Yongle gong, a protection that also may have been accompanied by financial support.⁶ Finally, the completion of the murals may also be linked to the appointment of a new Quanzhen patriarch in 1324, Sun Lüdao 孫履道 (fl. 1312-1327),⁷ only one year before the completion of the murals, which as we have estimated took about one year to finish. These parallels between the history of the Yongle gong on the one hand, and the support or suppression of the Quanzhen patriarchate on the other suggest that the Yongle gong was mainly built under the aegis of the Quanzhen patriarchs but only with the support of the Mongol court.

The Yongle gong was also a prestigious project that obviously warranted the involvement and direction of the Quanzhen patriarchate. It was the location of the shrine to Lü Dongbin, the spiritual patriarch of the Quanzhen order who initiated its founder, Wang Chongyang, into the Dao; it was also the location where the printing blocks of the Yuan period Daoist Canon were stored;⁸ it was furthermore the location of the shrines to Song Defang and to Pan Dechong 潘德冲 (Veritable Chonghe 冲和真人, 1190-1256), both two important Quanzhen priests, the latter even residing at Yongle gong until his death. Evidently, such prestige was mainly envisioned in the eyes of the Quanzhen patriarchate rather than among the local community worshipping Lü Dongbin at the Yongle site.

In sum, all leads point to the involvement of the Quanzhen patriarchate in the patronage of the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting. The implication of this finding is that we can infer that the patriarch of that time, Sun Lüdao, would have been in charge of the whole project and responsible for the design and personalisations of the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting.

Quanzhen order and its financial position. The Quanzhen order regained its former imperial status and support with the promotion of its deities and former patriarchs in 1310, recorded in the stele inscription *Tianzhao jiafeng zuzhen zhi bei* 天詔加封祖真之碑, by Li Bangning 李邦寧, dated 1317. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 731-733.

⁶ In 1325 the Yongle gong received imperial protection, the same year when the murals of the Three Purities Hall were finished, and in 1337 the holdings of the Yongle gong were reverted to be under the control of the patriarchate and its registrars instead of that of the Bureau of Daoist Affairs. See *Chunyang wanshou gong shengzhi bei* 春陽萬壽宮聖旨碑, no author, dated 1327. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 781-782, and *Chunyang wanshou gong zhafu bei* 春陽萬壽宮札付碑, no author, dated 1336. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 791-795. For a translation of these last two stele inscriptions, see Paul R. Katz, *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lü Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, pp. 113-115.

⁷ Goossaert, *La création*, p. 101.

⁸ *Dachao chongjian da Chunyang wanshou gong zhi bei* 大朝重建大純陽萬壽宮之碑, by Wang E 王鄂, dated 1262. Ruicheng xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 芮城縣誌編纂委員會 (ed.), *Ruicheng xianzhi* 芮城縣志. Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1994, pp. 795-796. Interestingly, the stele inscription says that "the woodblocks for the scriptures of the Daoist Canon printed by the Piyun (i.e. Song Defang), were delivered with an imperial carriage of the court and stored in this temple."

The number of central deities

The number of central deities is closely related to a specific ritual layout, and through this to ritual reforms of certain periods, regions, and lineages. The choice for a specific ritual programme thus reveals the preferences of the patrons.

It is usually stated that the Yongle gong Heavenly Court has eleven central deities: the three statues of the Three Purities in the central altar niche, the paintings of the South Pole (I) and the East Pole (II) on the side walls of the altar niche, the North Pole (III) and Heavenly Sovereign (IV) on the two north walls, the King Father of the East (V) and Queen Mother of the West (VII) on the east wall, and the Jade Emperor (VII) and Earth Goddess (VIII) on the west wall. In fact, there are thirteen central deities because the list should also include the Mulberry Emperor (160) and the Fengdu Emperor (178). The first eleven deities reign over the Realm of Heaven, and the Mulberry Emperor and Fengdu Emperor rule over the Realms of Water and Earth respectively. The last two are depicted slightly in slightly smaller size but still placed in the front row of the audience in the murals.

The Yongle gong ritual programme of the eleven or thirteen central deities is at odds with information we have from other Heavenly Court paintings in North China of the same period. In fact, all other examples have a ritual programme with nine central deities: the Three Purities and the so-called Four Emperors and Two Empresses (*sidi erhou* 四帝二后), collectively referred to as the Nine Sovereigns (*jiuyu* 九御 or *jiuhuang* 九皇). The programme of Nine Sovereigns, and not Eleven Sovereigns, was the standard number of central deities used during the Jin dynasty by Heavenly Master priests in the capital Yanjing (Beijing),⁹ as well as the standard number used in Quanzhen wall painting, as confirmed by the Toronto and Nan'an murals. It is also found in Cave 2 at Longshan near Taiyuan which was designed by Song Defang in 1234 and closely followed standard practices (Plate 14).¹⁰ A stele inscription of 1250 states that: "When palaces and monasteries are renovated, one first has to build the main hall to the Three Purities, after which it is furnished with [images of] the Four Emperors and Two Empresses; next follow all the Veritables of the Three Realms, each of them waiting

⁹ This Heavenly Master priest was Sun Mingdao 孫明道 (fl. 1183-1190) taking charge of the Tianchang guan 天長觀 (Monastery of Heaven Everlasting), which was the official Daoist temple for the Jin court and also later for the Yuan court but renamed Changchun guan 長春觀 (Monastery of Everlasting Spring) and taken over by the Quanzhen order. *Shifang da Tianchang guan putian dajiao ruiying ji* 十方大天長觀普天大醮瑞應記, by Zhu Lan 朱瀾, dated 1198. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 1042-1044; on Sun Mingdao as a Heavenly Master, see Yao Tao-chung, "Ch'üan-ch'en: A New Taoist Sect in North China during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1980, pp. 122-123. The later shrine to Qiu Chuji to this temple is the present Baiyun guan 白雲觀 (White Cloud Monastery) in Beijing.

¹⁰ Reproduced in Hu, *Daojiao shike*, Vol. 2, pp. 336-339.

in attendance according to his or her rank, and all of them attending the court audience in full numbers.¹¹ The inclusion of Eleven Sovereigns in the Yongle gong murals is an exception to standard practices of that period and area, and it should therefore be explained as a deliberate choice of its patrons.

The arrangement of Eleven or Thirteen Sovereigns is however not a Quanzhen invention but a continuation of late Northern Song ritual practice. The Chinese scholar Wang Xun 王遜 in his article of 1963 on the iconography and identities of the Yongle gong deities already pointed out a connection with the *jiao*-offering list in the *Shangqing lingbao dafa* by Jin Yinzong (fl. 1225), who claimed it should represent the official ritual programme as promulgated by Song Emperor Huizong (r. 1101-1125) in the Xuanhe reign-period (1119-1125).¹² The Nine Sovereigns were introduced somewhere in the early Northern Song, probably during the ritual reforms of Chancellor Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962-1025), and were expanded to Thirteen Sovereigns under Emperor Huizong on the instigation of the Song statesman Zhang Shangying 張商應 (1043-1121), who mentioned this number in his preface to the refurbished Golden Register Retreat.¹³ The number thirteen had its roots in the Shangqing tradition, to which Zhang Shangying was allied,¹⁴ and is also referred to chapter 50 of the *Dadong jing* where it is, as in the Shangqing tradition, connected to the thirteen gates (of the body) of death and life.¹⁵

A claim on continuing a Daoist sacred empire established by Emperor Huizong should underly the choice for following a composition of his Northern Song ritual programme. The reign of Song Emperor Huizong is characterised by his attempt to create a Daoist sacred empire, an empire in which Daoism was envisioned as the leading state cult. By reinstituting the ritual format of Huizong's reign, the Quanzhen order envisioned to recreate his Daoist empire, but of course now under the guidance of the Quanzhen order. In fact, images of Huizong are incorporated on two places in the Yongle gong murals, once as the Great

¹¹ *Tiantan shifang da Ziwei gong yizhi ji Jiwa dian ji* 天壇十方大紫微宮懿旨及結瓦殿記, by Li Zhiqian 李志全, dated 1250. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 480-482.

¹² *Shangqing lingbao dafa* DZ 1223, 40.1a. Wang, "Yongle gong," p. 22.

¹³ The number of "thirteen venerable emperors" (*zundi yishisan wei* 尊帝一十三位) appears in Zhang Shangying's preface, which has now survived as a postface to the final section on tossing the jade slips of the Golden Register Retreat, *Jinlu zhai toujian yi* 金錄齋投簡儀 DZ 498, 10a.

¹⁴ Zhang wrote a highly ideological stele inscription on the Three Purities for the main temple on Maoshan, the home of the Shangqing tradition, demonstrating his close relationship with the tradition. *Jiangning fu Maoshan Chongxi guan beiming* 江寧府茅山崇禧觀碑銘, by Zhang Shangying 張商應, dated 1096. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 300-301.

¹⁵ Du Guangting makes the connection between thirteen and the *Dadong jing*, the main scripture of the Shangqing tradition. See Wang Chunwu 王純五, *Dongtian fudi yuedu mingshan ji quanyi* 洞天福地嶽瀆名山記及全譯. Guizhou: Renmin chubanshe, 1999, pp. 1-5.

Emperor of Long Life (*changsheng dadi* 長生大帝, I) (Plate 2), of whom Huizong was said to be a reincarnation, and once in a scene of the “Assembly of the Thousand Daoists” (Fig. 50) in the Chunyang Hall murals.¹⁶ Tellingly, in this last representation, it is the immortal Lü Dongbin, and not Huizong’s favourite court Daoist priest Lin Lingsu 林靈素 (1075-1119) as history tells us, who gave a demonstration of his miraculous powers in front of Huizong and the assembly of priests, thus not only rewriting history, but also creating a direct link between the Quanzhen order – the guardians of Lü Dongbin spiritual heritage – and Emperor Huizong and his Daoist empire.¹⁷

The grand claim on continuing Huizong’s Daoist empire is also exemplified by the composition of the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting. The Yongle gong Heavenly Court are the only known murals which contain all possible cosmic arrangements (Three Realms, NW-SE axis, Eight Trigrams, Thirteen Sovereigns) and incorporates most faithfully the layout of a Daoist open-air altar (three-tiered altar mound with images of the Ten Masters and Thirty-Two Heavenly Emperors as well as the Gate of Heaven of Earth Door), and apparently its designer(s) made great effort to create the most complete and most comprehensive Heavenly Court possible. The comprehensiveness of the composition suits well the claim on the establishment of a Daoist empire by the Quanzhen order and by Emperor Huizong, and I am convinced that the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting closely follows the layout as introduced during the ritual reforms under Emperor Huizong.

The specific choice for an arrangement with Thirteen Sovereigns also reveals some interesting clues on the identity of the designer of the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting. Because the arrangement of the Thirteen Sovereigns was not common in North China prior to the completion of the Yongle gong murals, we may suspect that it was introduced from South China and that the designer was familiar with ritual traditions from this area. Probably because the Northern Song court fell in 1127 soon after the ritual reforms of Huizong, the reforms were not known in North China. However, with the fled of the Song court to Hangzhou, the ritual traditions were continued in the Southern Song, as confirmed (with some

¹⁶ The Emperor of Long Life who became assimilated with the South Pole Emperor and depicted, with his divine brother Great Emperor of Green Efflorescence (*qinghua dadi* 青華大帝, who was assimilated with the East Pole Emperor), on the side walls of the central altar-shrine (I and II). In fact, this identification with a Daoist deity meant the deification of Huizong. See Michel Strickmann, “The Longest Taoist Scripture,” *History of Religions*, 17.3-4 (1978), pp. 331-353, and Patricia Ebrey, “Taoism and Art at the Court of Song Huizong,” Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, pp. 95-109. For the mural scene of the “Assembly of a Thousand Daoist Priests,” see Jin, *Yuandai daoguan*, p. 160.

¹⁷ On the support of Quanzhen for Huizong and his rituals, see Eskildsen, *Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*, pp. 192-193. For a different interpretation of the scene of the “Assembly of a Thousand Daoist Priests” and the link between Huizong and the Quanzhen order, see Katz, *Images of the Immortal*, p. 167.

variations) in the ritual manuals of this period.¹⁸ After the unification of China in 1279 by the Mongols, the ritual traditions of Huizong were introduced gradually in the north. It was Sun Lüdao 孫履道 (fl. 1312-1327) who was acquainted with the patriarchs of the Heavenly Master order and the Mystery Learning (*xuanjiao* 玄教) of South China and, according to stele inscriptions, even performed grand rituals with them.¹⁹ Since Sun Lüdao was only appointed as patriarch of the Quanzhen order one year before the completion of the Yongle gong murals in 1325, this background would strongly suggest that he was responsible for introducing the Huizong's ritual arrangement of Thirteen Sovereigns in North China, and that he was personally involved in the design for the Yongle gong murals.

Incorporation of non-standard deities

Of course, the Quanzhen order would not simply follow Song models but adjust them and insert changes to reflect the interests of the order. This is best seen in the depiction of individual or groups of deities who deviate from the standard Heavenly Court painting as advocated by ritual manuals, that is the images are not accounted for in ritual manuals.

A first type of images that the Quanzhen patrons altered in the Song ritual programme of Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting were the portraits of Daoist priests. In Yuan murals, the images of the Daoist priests can be recognised by their typical crowns – mostly a lotus crown but other types also exist – and of course their court-like robes but which have embroideries of (Daoist) auspicious signs such as cloud-swirls (*yunqi* 雲氣), numinous mushrooms (*lingzhi* 靈芝), mountains, isles of the blessed, cranes, or the eight trigrams, as well as lack the white “square-heart necktie” (*fangxin quling* 方心曲領) which is worn by emperors and court officials (Fig. 51).²⁰ Portraits of Daoist priests were part of the Six Curtains and therefore a standard part of the ritual configuration. These are also found in the

¹⁸ Memorial lists in Southern Song ritual manuals contain the complete titles of the Sovereigns, including the Queen Mother of the West and the King Father of the East, as given by Huizong, indicating that the ritual reforms were also introduced in Southern China (the Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East were not part of the Sovereigns before Huizong) *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* DZ 508, 6.19b-20a, and *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* DZ 466, 2.3b-5a. Curiously, the Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East are not incorporated in the *jiao*-offering lists, suggesting that these were altered or modified in a later period.

¹⁹ Zhang Sicheng 張嗣誠 (d. 1344) was the 39th Heavenly Master, and Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269-1346), the patriarch of the Mystery Learning, an intellectual offshoot of the Heavenly Master order that only existed in the Yuan dynasty. The relationship between Sun, Zhang, and Wu is mentioned in two stele inscriptions, *Huanglu pudu dazhai gongde bei* 黃籙普度大齋功德碑, by Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), dated 1325. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 922; and *Hetu xiantan zhi bei* 河圖仙壇之碑, by Yu Ji 虞集 (1272-1348), dated between 1338 and 1346. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 963-966.

²⁰ *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, compiled by Wang Qi 王圻 (*jinshi* 1565). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988, p. 1520.

Yongle gong murals as discussed in chapter 2. The Yongle gong murals include however also some portraits of Daoist priest on unusual places. One of these places is the outer walls of the central altar-shrine which normally would have images of the Heavenly Worthies of the Ten Directions or, according to the *Xuantan kanwu lun*, portraits of the Veritables of the Ten Extremities, but in the Yongle gong murals these ten figures seem to have been replaced by ten patriarchs of the Quanzhen order (Plates 1 and 2). Anning Jing has for example convincingly identified Chen Tuan 陳搏 (871-989) who holds a lotus flower (19) and Liu Haichan 劉海蟾 (10th cent.) holding an elixir pill between his fingers (20).²¹ The remaining eight figures are not as easy to identify but should represent similar immortals and masters of the Quanzhen tradition.

Another curious feature on the two shrine walls is the addition of two figures, one official (6) and one Daoist priest (7) on the east side, and three officials on the west side (16-19) who are all placed in front of the central deities. This additional group of five figures to the Ten Masters is unusual, and it is my guess that they should represent donors. Donor figures are for example also depicted on the posts of the central altar niche in the sculpted Heavenly Court of the Yuhuang guan in Sichuan and probably designates a honorably place for donors in such compositions. Because one of the donor figures (7) is dressed as a Daoist priest and moreover depicted frontally, as in a portrait, I would argue that this figure should represent Sun Lüdao, the Quanzhen patriarch who I consider as the main architect of the Yongle gong murals. The four remaining figures are rendered as officials, and probably represent the other donors of the murals.

Interestingly, and already pointed out by Anning Jing, a full-length portrait of the same Daoist priest is found in mid-centre of the east wall on the front row (161, Fig. 52).²² He wears a red Daoist robe and a lotus crown capped by a black gauze hat; in his folded hands he diagonally holds a fly-whisk. Because of its resemblance to the shrine wall portrait (7), this figure should also represent Sun Lüdao, the Quanzhen patriarch.

In fact, the image is part of a group of three which are not accounted for in any ritual manual and neither have been identified by Wang Xun. Two other figures are positioned to his upper left. The first is a Daoist priest figure (162) who similarly has a black gauze hat capping his lotus crown. This time however, this gauze hat is shaped differently representing

²¹ Jing, "Yongle Palace," pp. 307-317.

²² Anning Jing identifies the two portraits (7, 161) as those of Qiu Chuji. Jing advanced this idea on a symposium on Daoist studies held in Boston, June 2003. In my discussion of the Toronto murals below I will make clear that the image of Qiu Chuji has a different iconography and that the Yongle gong Daoist priest should therefore represent somebody else, and in my opinion Sun Lüdao.

a scholar's hat, the so-called Dongpo-hat styled after the Song scholar Su Shi 蘇軾 (style: Dongpo 東坡, 1036-1101) who apparently made it famous. His identity is not known. The other figure is an old man with an extremely large forehead who can be identified as the Star of Longevity (*shouxing* 壽星, 163). The scepter with the mushroom-head – the mushroom is a sign of longevity – in his hands, and the elixir pill of longevity in the left hand of one of the deities of Four Sacred Marshes to his left (169) further corroborate this identification.

A trio of three deities including the Star of Longevity are traditionally identified as the Three Stars (*sanxing* 三星), better known under their popular names as the Gods of Happiness, Emolument, and Longevity (*fu* 福, *lu* 祿, *shou* 壽) (Fig. 53). The two Daoist priests should in this case represent the Gods of Happiness and Emolument. This is rather confusing because the standard representation of these two deities are a scholar and an official.²³ However, the Water-and-Land paintings of the Gongzhu si 公主寺 (Princess Monastery) in Fanzhi of ca. 1503 depict the two gods as Daoist priests,²⁴ and I surmise that the scholar-official type is a later development. The Yongle gong version would then represent an intermediate stage, when the iconography of the Three Stars was not yet codified, between the single image of the Star of Longevity, of whom images are already known before the Song according to the *Xuanhe huapu*,²⁵ and the more popular version of the Three Stars of Happiness, Emolument, and Longevity beginning from the Ming period.²⁶

Because the Three Stars are not standard deities in ritual manuals of the Song and Yuan period, their inclusion should be interpreted as another personalisation from the side of the designer of the Yongle gong murals. I would further argue that Sun Lüdao, as the main architect of the murals, made use of the undefined status of two of the Three Stars, and included his own image and that of a fellow priest on a prominent place in the mural.

²³ Mary Fong argues that the Gods of Happiness and Emolument are originally the attributes sent by the God of Longevity who has a much longer history, and that they were only later anthropomorphised. Mary H. Fong, "The Iconography of the Popular Gods of Happiness, Emolument, and Longevity (Fu Lu Shou)." *Artibus Asiae* 44 (1983), pp. 185-186.

²⁴ See Pin Feng 品豐 and Su Qing 蘇慶 (eds.), *Lidai siguan bihua yishu: Xinjiang Jiayi miao bihua, Fanzhi Gongzhu si bihua* 歷代寺觀壁畫藝術: 新絳稷益廟, 繁峙公主寺壁畫. Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2001, pl. 2.14.

²⁵ Emperor Huizong's collection had paintings of the Star of Longevity by Huang Quan 黃筌 (903-965). Dong Yuan 董元 (d. 962), and Sun Zhiwei 孫知微 (early 11th cent.) painted images of the "Immortal of Long Life" which I take as another name for the Star of Longevity. *Xuanhe huapu*, pp. 85, 229, 332.

²⁶ I feel strongly inclined to link the origin of the image of the Star of Longevity to the image of Laozi who is flanked by two Daoist priests (*zhenren*) in early stele sculptures. The inclusion of the images of two Daoist priests in paintings of the Star of Longevity would therefore not be too strange. However, scholars have linked the origin of the Star of Longevity not to Laozi but to Confucius, probably because of his large forehead. See Fong, "The Iconography of the Popular Gods."

Beside the Three Stars, the Heavenly Court painting includes a small number of other non-standard deities. Some of them can be identified,²⁷ such as the white robed scholar with the Dongpo-hat, Zhao Yu 趙昱 (177), and two assisting officials, who should represent Li Bing 李冰 and his son Erlang 二郎 (187, 188) (Fig. 54). All three are known as water gods and placed between the Water and Earth Departments on the east wall. Other non-standard deities include the Three Mao Brothers, Mao Ying 茅盈, Mao Gu 茅固, and Mao Zhong 茅衷 (234, 236, 237), who are placed behind the Jade Emperor (VII) on the west wall (Fig. 55). All three are dressed as Daoist priests or immortals with simple crowns and plain robes. Other figures are more difficult to identify, often depicted as individuals among groups of deities crowding the walls. One example is the young man (136) holding a wheel in his hands and the only deity (not an attendant) without a halo on the northwest wall (Fig. 56), and another example is the scholar holding a feather-fan and wearing a crown capped with a gauze (220) depicted on the west wall (Fig. 57).

These deity figures have in common that they do not appear in any Song *jiao*-offering list or memorial list and as such were not recognised by most Daoist institutions of the Northern and Southern Song as deities pure enough to be able to enter the ranks of the Heavenly Court. Theoretically speaking, the local Earth God (*tudi* 土地, 201) occupies the lowest rank in memorial lists and *jiao*-offering lists, and deified historical figures and other deities of local cults, who rank below the Earth God, would normally fall outside the Daoist ritual pantheon.²⁸ This would strictly speaking mean that they were not incorporated in Heavenly Court painting. The inclusion of figures such as Zhao Yu and the Three Mao Brothers, despite their being venerated as Daoist priests and immortals (which I assume is exactly the way that made them immortal, because most of these figures started out as semi-historical figures worshipped in local cults), is an irregular element introduced by the Yongle gong patrons.

The specific location of these figures are revealing on their status. All these figures are individuals or form small groups tucked away between standard groups of deities, and they are placed in background positions in the upper row. In addition, they are often depicted as scholars, a class of deities which erstwhile was not represented in the Daoist ritual pantheon.

²⁷ For these identifications I refer the reader to the appendix.

²⁸ The pantheon of the Song state cult organised its deities in a similar way. If we look at the organisation of the chapters on deities in the *Song huiyao* 宋會要, all the local deities are placed after (i.e. below) the City God and Earth God, who again come after the deities of the Altar of Heaven etc. See the ordering of the deities in the *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, compiled by Xu Song 徐松 (1781-1848). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957, chapters 20-21.

They are evidently additions or “new-comers” to the traditional layout of a Heavenly Court audience and as such important examples of personalisations by the patrons of the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting. The inclusion of these local cult deities reveals a marked interest on the part of the Quanzhen order for local cults by granting their deities – even though most of them seem to be Daoist priests²⁹ or immortals and therefore already partly accepted among the ranks of the Heavenly Court – a place among the Daoist ritual pantheon and address them with memorials during Daoist *chao*-audience rituals. It is interesting to note that many Quanzhen patriarchs and members of the clergy had a scholarly background – rather than being ordained as priests in the traditional sense – suggesting that the incorporation of scholar-type deities reflected a new change in the social composition of the Daoist community.

Although the patrons of the Yongle gong murals closely followed a composition established under Huizong in the Northern Song Dynasty, they were able to modify its content, and add to the former intentions of Huizong. If the Yongle gong Heavenly Court entailed a claim on continuing Huizong’s Daoist empire, the Quanzhen patrons had now expanded this claim to include local cults as well, even though they were only marginally represented and mostly after a transformation into Daoist priests and immortals or scholars.

The Yongle gong Heavenly Court therefore reflects a social reality in the Yuan period. On the toplevel, the Quanzhen patriarchate was closely allied to the imperial court, but on the bottomlevel, the Quanzhen clergy also closely interacted with the local people, organising them in local communities and religious organisations (*hui* 會). The temples of the local gods were “converted” (*du* 度) to the Quanzhen order, which took care of their renovation but also expanded them with a hall to the Three Purities and a hall to the Seven Veritables of the Quanzhen order. It is in this sense that the Quanzhen order not only renovated former Song state temples,³⁰ thus presenting themselves as the protectors of the Song and Jin imperial heritage and the successors of the Daoist empire established in the Northern Song dynasty, but also incorporated in its network of monasteries many local cult temples, such as the shrine to Lü Dongbin in Yongle, and thus granting it existence and permanence.

²⁹ Perhaps Daoist master would be a better term, because some of these figures do not wear Daoist robes and lotus crowns, but are, like Zhao Yu, dressed as scholars or scholar-officials.

³⁰ See for example the stele inscriptions *Chongxiu Zhongnanshan Shangqing taiping gong ji* 重修中南山上清太平宮記, by Li Ding 李鼎, dated 1254. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 518-521; *Chongxiu Zhong Taiyi gong bei* 重修中太一宮碑, by Yao Sui 姚燧, dated between 1325 and 1328. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 723-724; and *Xinzhou Tianqing guan chongjian gongde ji* 忻州天慶觀重建功德記, by Yuan Haowen 元好問, dated 1250. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 1087-1088.

The personalisations of the Heavenly Court painting at the Yongle gong therefore tend to be all-inclusive and should be considered exemplary of the ambitions and aspirations of the Quanzhen patriarchate, in particular Sun Lüdào, to re-create a Daoist sacred empire built on the foundations laid by Emperor Huizong.

4.2 Toronto murals

The original location of the set of Heavenly Court paintings in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, has still to be determined but the design and contents of the murals reveal important clues on the particular personalisation of this Heavenly Court painting, and thereby on the motivations of the patrons. I will discuss two elements, one is the Daoist priest image and the other is the particular ritual configuration of deities in the Toronto murals.

Daoist priest as central deity

The most conspicuous element in the Toronto Heavenly Court is the image of the Daoist priest (B12) taking the position of a central deity (Fig. 58). This image has been identified as an image of Laozi by William White, and again by Anning Jing who simply follows White's identification. The main reason for refuting this identification, apart from the fact that both authors do not provide any evidence for their identification, is that Laozi is always portrayed with a (three-pointed) beard and a moustache, and often carries a fly-whisk or fan in his hand. These identification marks are all lacking in this figure. The fact that this figure is beardless, while all other (male) members in the Toronto murals, and in particular the central deity figures, do have beards, make this figure stand out from the rest, an aspect reinforced by his frontal depiction. His robe with embroidered mushroom-clouds and his Daoist crown would identify him as a Daoist priest rather than as an imperially dressed central deity, which is another conspicuous element uncommon to other Heavenly Court paintings. The frontal depiction could be explained as being copied from an existing portrait of a Daoist priest.

Who is this Daoist priest? Considering that the wall paintings should date to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and that they were produced in an area where the Quanzhen order had many temples, we may guess that the Daoist priest portrayed should most probably represent a famous Quanzhen patriarch. Images of Daoist priests were standard to the Daoist ritual area, but the Quanzhen order pushed the use of portraits of former masters to a new

level, well beyond the confines of the ritual area of the Heavenly Court. The first step was made by Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (Veritable Changchun 長春真人, 1148-1227) in 1188 when he ordered the making of three sculptural images of Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 (Veritable Chunyang 春陽真人), Wang Zhe 王嘉 (Veritable Chongyang 重陽真人, 1112-1170), and Ma Yu 馬鈺 (Veritable Danyang 丹陽真人, 1123-1183) for a personal retreat (*xiu an* 修庵) north of the capital Dadu 大都 (Beijing).³¹ Probably sometime after the death of Qiu Chuji, this number was then expanded to seven, the Seven Veritables, whose images were installed in a separate hall behind the central hall dedicated to the Three Purities. This became standard practice for most Quanzhen monasteries in North-China.

Because images of the Seven Veritables were widespread, perhaps our Daoist priest may be found among them. Portraits of the Seven Veritables and other Quanzhen patriarchs are preserved in a Quanzhen text, the *Jinlian zhengzong ji xianyuan xiangzhuan* 金蓮正宗記仙源像傳 accompanied by names, titles, and biographies. It was written in 1310 when the titles of the Five Ancestors (*wuzu* 五祖) and Seven Veritables were augmented by imperial decree. Among the Seven Veritables, two figures attract our immediate attention because they are beardless. One is a depiction of the only female veritable, Sun Bu'er 孫不二 (1119-1182), which therefore does not qualify, and the other is Qiu Chuji (Fig. 59).³² As the main architect of the Quanzhen order, Qiu Chuji would of course make a good chance to be depicted in a wall painting. Let us explore this possibility further.

There are two other pictorial sources that can support our findings. The first source is the *Xuanfeng qinghui tu* 玄風慶會圖, an illustrated biography of Qiu Chuji published in 1305. In the illustrations of this biography, Qiu Chuji appears also without moustache and beard (Fig. 60).³³ Another source are the Longshan cave sculptures near Taiyuan (Shanxi) of 1234. Although the statues are now almost all decapitated, photographs of the complete statues have

³¹ *Quanzhen diwudai zongshi Changchun yandao zhujiao zhenren neizhuan* 全真第五代宗師長春演道主教真人內傳, by Li Daoqian 李道謙 (1219-1296), dated 1281. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 634. Because Daoist liturgy has a ritual of worshipping the Three Masters (*li sanshi* 禮三師) since very early times and which probably originated with the Heavenly Master order, it is probable that Qiu Chuji modelled his practice on the standard ritual. Daoist oratories seem to have been equipped with images of the Three Masters but I have found no evidence dating before the Southern Song. See *Lingbao lingjiao jidu jinshu* DZ 466, 319.11a, 13a.

³² *Jinlian zhengzong ji xianyuan xiangzhuan* 金蓮正宗記仙源像傳 DZ 174, 32a, 41b.

³³ The *Xuanfeng qinghui tu* was printed in 1305 and survives in a 1925 re-edition from Shanghai, Hanfen lou, kept at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan. There is also another version in Japan which has more and older prefaces, among which one by Zhao Mengfu. See Wang Zongyu 王宗昱, "Zaoqi Quanzhen shiliao 早期全真史料." *China Taoism* 5 (2002), on www.chinataoism.org. For a study of the Taiwan version, see Paul R. Katz, "Writing History, Creating Identity: A Case Study of the *Xuanfeng qinghui tu*." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 29 (2002), pp. 161-178.

survived, made by Japanese archaeologists in the 1920's and recently re-published and studied by two Chinese scholars.³⁴ Although the caves have no inscriptions identifying the images, two of the eight caves have distinct images of a Daoist priest without moustache and beard, an image we can arguably relate to Qiu Chuji. Cave 7 has a set of seven images portraying the Seven Veritables. On the north wall (Fig. 61) are three seated statues with Wang Zhe in the centre, recognisable by his long triangular beard such as in his portrait in the *Jinlian zhengzong ji xianyuan xiangzhuan* (Fig. 59), and on his left (west side) a beardless figure who should represent Qiu Chuji. The third figure on his right should probably represent Ma Yu.³⁵

In Cave 3 of Longshan (Fig. 62), a figure without beard and moustache is portrayed reclining on his left side. A figure depicted in this position immediately reminds of the familiar scene of Shakyamuni Buddha in parinirvana, the Buddha on his deathbed. The parinirvana Buddha is almost always portrayed lying on his right side in the opposite direction, and the designer of the caves, Song Defang, apparently wanted to differentiate the Quanzhen order from its Buddhist practice, on which it was obviously inspired. The parinirvana scene also has some direct bearing on Qiu Chuji since he was Song Defang's master and had only recently passed away in 1227, a few years before the completion of the caves. The reclining image thus portrays Qiu Chuji in a Daoist version of parinirvana and is a respectful homage of Song Defang to the memory of his deceased master.

As a note of interest, Stephen Eskildsen, a scholar of Quanzhen history, also noticed the conspicuous beardless face of Qiu Chuji in the *Jinlian zhengzong ji xianyuan xiangzhuan* and suspects his beardlessness could be explained by a rather painful story that Qiu Chuji castrated himself (*jingshen* 精身, lit. "purifying one's body" but generally used to describe castrated eunuchs) in order to subdue his lustful passions, and almost died from it.³⁶

On the basis of the foregoing, we can with confidence identify the beardless Daoist priest image in the Toronto murals as a portrait of Qiu Chuji. Portraying an image of the great Quanzhen patriarch Qiu Chuji after his death on the position of the Heavenly Sovereign,

³⁴ Zhang Mingyuan 張明遠, *Taiyuan Longshan daojiao shiku yishu yanjiu* 太原龍山道教石窟藝術研究.

Taiyuan: Shanxi kexue jishu chubanshe, 2002; Hu, *Daojiao shike*. Vol. 2, pp. 321-408. The identifications of the deities given in these studies, despite their comprehensiveness, are almost all incorrect.

³⁵ The remaining four figures on the east and west wall are less easily identified. Two statues were already decapitated, one has a beard, and the last one on the south end of the west wall is a female figure, thus representing Sun Bu'er. This would mean that Sun replaced a Veritable other than Wang Zhe in this cave, thus making an alternative composition of the Seven Veritables not seen or read elsewhere.

³⁶ The only source of this information is the analects of Qiu Chuji's disciple Yin Zhiping 尹志平, collected in the *Zhenxian zhizhi yulu* 真仙直指語錄 DZ 1256, 2.4b-5a. Eskildsen, *Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters*, pp. 53, 219, n. 36. I suspect the cause for his castration is found on p. 55, translating a parallel story told by Yin Zhiping but which omits the castration.

which actually identifies Qiu Chuji with the central deity has a distinct commemorative value for the patrons of the murals, thus revealing their motivation for this extraordinary type of personalisation.

Ritual configuration

A second conspicuous element in the Toronto murals is the particular ritual configuration and choice of deities, which is at odds with other known Heavenly Court representations in either painting or text. There are four irregular elements in the Toronto murals: 1) The deities of the Nine Heavens (*jiutian* 九天, B3-11) (Fig. 86) in front of the Heavenly Sovereign on the west wall who, although accounted for in memorial and *jiao*-offering lists, are not very common in known Heavenly Court paintings or references thereof, and their inclusion is therefore peculiar. 2) The inclusion of the King Father of the East (B13) and Queen Mother of the West (B14) who act as substitutes for the Holy Ancestor (*shengzu* 聖祖) and Holy Ancestress (*shengmu* 聖母) in the original arrangement of the Nine Sovereigns in the early Northern Song dynasty. 3) The absence of any Curtains to the Daoist masters, Five Emperors and Three Officials. These are all included in the Yongle gong murals and in the Nan'an murals. 4) The inclusion of only (subordinate) deities belonging to the Realm of Heaven, and the absence of any deities from the Realms of Water and Earth of the original Three Realms (*sanjie* 三界).

I would argue that the motivation for the choices of these particular deities should be sought in the liturgical framework of the Toronto Heavenly Court, and that the murals are personalised to specifically accommodate the Rite of Deliverance (*liandu* 煉度). During the Rite of Deliverance, the soul of the deceased is transformed through several cycles of inner alchemical processes refining (*lian*) the soul's energies and transporting or crossing it over (*du*) to Daoist heaven where it is installed or reborn as an immortal. If we look for example at the contents of the memorials to the Nine Heavens and those King Father of the East and Queen Mother of the West, we find that they play essential roles in the Rites of Deliverance, which had become an integrated part of the Yellow Register Retreat.³⁷ The deities of the Curtains obviously do not play a role in the Rite of Deliverance, only in the Yellow Register Retreat at large, and the singling out of deities belonging to the Realm of Heaven could be explained by the fact that stellar deities play a more central role during the Rite of Deliverance than those of the Realms of Water and Earth.

³⁷ *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* DZ 508, 6.17b-20b.

This refinement of cosmological energies (*qi* 氣) in the Rite of Deliverance is essential to understanding the particular choice and arrangement of the deities in the Toronto murals. Images of deities are anthropomorphic representations of the cosmological energies and their order in the murals reveals a cosmological process. In chapter 2, I have demonstrated that the Daoist *chao*-audience ritual is basically a return from the differentiated to the unified state of the Dao rendered in a format of ritual actions, and that Heavenly Court paintings are a representation of this ritual praxis.

The Toronto murals display a similar regressive process of unification but geared to the Rite of Deliverance. For example, a memorial to the Nine Heavens read: “[Daoist priest X will] harmonise yin and yang, return to life the *hun* 魂- and *po* 魄-souls,³⁸ and unite the nine energies of the form (i.e. human body)” and “by means of the Rite of Deliverance (*liandu*) [the Daoist priest] will make the divine energies of the Nine Heavens descend and make the rotten bones of the Nine Earths rise in order to bind together the *hun*-souls of the deceased,”³⁹ and a memorial to the Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East reads: “by means of the Rite of Deliverance, [the Daoist priest] will make the ancestral energies of the two principles (i.e. yin and yang or the moon and sun) descend and make the rotten bones of the Nine Earths rise, especially to have them bound together during this [ritual] meeting.”⁴⁰ The memorials to the other deities similarly mention the unification of energies, except for the Four Saints (A1-2, B1-2) who have an exorcist role.⁴¹ The prominence of the Nine Heavens and the Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East in the Rite of Deliverance as well as their preference in the Toronto murals above other deities thus suggest that the patrons of the Toronto murals specifically sought to stress the relationship to the Rite of Deliverance.

Therefore, I would argue that it is possible to view the entire arrangement of deities in the Toronto murals as a regressive process, in this case a singular refinement of cosmological energies proceeding along the two walls of the (former) temple hall. As in a standard cosmological arrangement with a NW-SE axis, the process of refinement should start in the southeast corner (Earth, represented by the Earth Goddess, A13) on the east wall and end in the northwest corner (Heaven, represented by the Heavenly Sovereign, B12, in this case the portrait of Qiu Chuji) on the west wall. Following this line of development, it is possible to attribute several different stages in this inversed cosmogony (Plates 4 and 5). The end of the

³⁸ According to Chinese tradition, man has seven ethereal *hun*-souls that rise to heaven and three earthly *po*-souls that descend to earth after death.

³⁹ *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* DZ 508, 6.17b-18a.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 6.20a.

⁴¹ These are the four exorcist marshals Tianpeng, Tianyou, True Warrior, and Black Killer. Ibid. 7.13a-14a.

process in the Toronto murals are the Five Elders (A26-30), representing the energies of the five bodily organs (liver, heart, spleen, lungs, kidneys) as well as the generation of mankind. If we reverse the process, we first pass the Five Planets (A22-26), who are the astronomical equivalents of the Five Elders; then Earth Goddess (A13) and the Jade Emperor (A12) who represent the energies of earth and heaven (the Jade Emperor is also the celestial equivalent of the Chinese emperor on earth); after that come the North Pole (A11), the centre of heaven, and the seven stars of the Northern Dipper (A4-10), who form the staircase to the Gate of Heaven and Jade Capital Mountain as explained in the hymn of Pacing the Void (*buxu* 步虛).

The cosmological journey continues on the south part of the west wall, where the cosmos is further condensed and abstracted first through the Twelve Zodiacal Mansions (B22-33), then the Sun and Moon represented by King Father of the East (B13) and Queen Mother of the West (B14) to finally arrive at the Gate of Heaven, the Heavenly Sovereign or Qiu's portrait (B12). After entering the Gate of Heaven and leaving the visible cosmos behind, the energies are further refined and condensed through the nine energies of the Nine Heavens (B3-11) and ultimately the Three Purities (represented as three statues in a central altar niche against the north wall).⁴² The Four Saints (A1-2, B1-2) are left out of this scheme, mainly because, as mentioned, they have an exorcist function.⁴³

The specific location of the portrait of Qiu Chuji in this cosmological process is even more conspicuous. The entire process of refinement and the reborn of the soul of the deceased would culminate in the image of Qiu Chuji, the patriarch-father of the Quanzhen order. Moreover, this culmination is also stressed in the actual performance of the Daoist priest, because the memorials read to the audience of deities in the Heavenly Court would eventually be presented in a kneeling position in a northwestern direction, the position of the Heaven's Gate and in the Toronto murals occupied by the image of Qiu Chuji. So, each time a ritual is performed, the Daoist priest would in fact kneel in the direction of the image and pay him homage. The patrons of the Toronto murals have sublimely integrated the aspect of commemoration into the ritual performance and by doing so, they have made Qiu Chuji virtually the access to the Dao for the Quanzhen order.

⁴² The cosmological energies of the heavens also have parallels to various parts of the body, the Nine Heavens finally corresponding to the Nine Palaces located in the crown of the head of the old Shangqing tradition. Many elements of the Shangqing tradition were incorporated in the inner alchemical practices of the Song dynasty on which many of the techniques of the Rite of Deliverance but also Quanzhen meditational practices were based. Both macro- and micro cosmos represent essentially the same energies which are united during Daoist ritual.

⁴³ The particular location of the Four Saints at the north end of the murals is because they are subordinated to the North Pole Emperor ruling over the northern quadrant were all the thunder marshals and other exorcist deities are dwelling.

The identification of Qiu Chuji's portrait in the Toronto murals, its commemorative aspect, as well as the emphasis on the Rite of Deliverance in the mural composition all point to one possible candidate who commissioned the murals: Song Defang 宋德方 (1183-1247). First of all, Song Defang was Qiu Chuji's disciple and had already demonstrated his love for his master with the sculpture of the reclining image of Qiu Chuji in parinirvana at Longshan made in 1234, some ten odd years after Qiu Chuji's death in 1222.

In addition, stele inscriptions mentions that Song Defang was initiated in the so-called Thunder Rites of the Shenxiao 神霄 lineage, made famous by Lin Lingsu at the court of Emperor Huizong.⁴⁴ The Rite of Deliverance is strongly related to the Thunder Rites, in particular with regard to the inner alchemical refinement of bodily energies that are used for exorcist purposes, both originating in the exorcist cults of the ritual masters (*fashi* 法師) of the tenth century. In addition, Shenxiao is the name for the highest of the Nine Heavens depicted in the Toronto murals. Although the Toronto murals do not seem to be designed with exorcist rites specifically in mind, the familiarity with such rites and their emphasis on the refinement of energies is borne out in the Toronto murals.

It should further be mentioned that Song Defang was active in the region where the Toronto murals should originate, the Pingyang area or central Shanxi province. A biography of Song Defang records that he 'converted' (*du* 度, i.e. handed over to Song Defang and then often renovated) over forty temples from Beijing to Ruicheng (i.e. the Yongle gong), thus spanning almost all central and southern Shanxi province.⁴⁵ It is well possible that the original temple of the Toronto murals was among these forty temples. Lastly, it should not be forgotten that Song Defang was a great manager of all kinds of artistic projects. He designed the Longshan cave sculptures, he managed the printing of the the Yuan Daoist Canon in Pingyang, and he made the blueprints for the architectural layout of the Yongle gong. His affinity with art, his reverence for his master Qiu Chuji, his prowess in Thunder Rites, and his prolific temple building in the Shanxi area would make Song Defang the perfect candidate for having been the patron and designer of the Toronto murals.

As an afterthought, the identification of Song Defang as the patron of the Toronto murals gives us the opportunity to hypothesise about the date of the murals and the identity of their painters. Song Defang being active in the Shanxi area from the 1230's and having died

⁴⁴ *Chongxiu Tiantan beiming* 重修天壇碑銘, by Li Zhiqian 李志全 (1191-1261), dated 1249. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 505-507; *Gu Puji dashi Liu gong daoxing beiming* 古普濟大師劉公道行碑銘, by Wang Yun 王惲 (1227-1304), dated between 1270 and 1304. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 691-692.

⁴⁵ *Zhongnanshan zuting xianzhen neizhuan* 終南山祖庭仙真內傳 DZ 955, 3.23a.

in 1247, the murals should date to this period, and probably around 1240. It would further be possible to deduce that a painting master of Zhu Haogu (active ca. 1325) two or three generations older than him painted the Toronto murals. Zhu Haogu painted the Yongle gong Heavenly Court painting, but the Toronto murals have several pictorial and compositional aspects that would link the Toronto murals to the Yongle gong, but on the other hand also contain aspects that would disqualify them as being from the same hand.⁴⁶ A workshop where the models (*fenben* and *xiaoyang*) for the murals were transmitted from master to student could perfectly explain both the commonalities and differences between the Toronto and Yongle gong murals.

4.3 Nan'an

The Nan'an murals date probably to the late Yuan dynasty and no concrete information is known concerning their patrons, but on the basis of stele inscriptions of 1256 and 1295 we know that the Daoist priests overseeing the site belonged to the Quanzhen order because their names include the Quanzhen generation characters *de* 德, *zhi* 志 and *dao* 道.⁴⁷ The patrons emphasised two major points in the design and representation of the Nan'an Heavenly Court painting which reveal their personalised wishes. One point is the basic ritual format in the Heavenly Court composition. Another point is the de-emphasis of imperial figures in the Nan'an murals. Let me discuss these two points in more detail.

Basic ritual format

The ritual format of the Nan'an murals contains only the basic elements and seems to rely very directly on the layout of an open-air altar with hanging scroll paintings, albeit without a three-tiered mound. Not only does the mural design point into this direction (i.e. a loose

⁴⁶ Common pictorial elements are for example the deity on the southend of the west wall peering over his court tablet, the coral and flower treasures (I owe this observation to Meng Sihui), and the method of dividing the composition and groups of figures by means of horizontal lines demarcated by ribbons on *mian*-crowns and banners. Differences pertain to the shape and colour of the clouds. The Toronto clouds are coloured green, yellow, and white while those of the Yongle gong are sandbrown (it is possible however that these were specifically painted by the Ma Junxiang workshop as indicated in the inscription; I also owe this observation to Meng Sihui), the ceremonial court dress of the Yongle gong figures is more detailed, varied and correct, and the Toronto figures are overall a bit more stocky.

⁴⁷ See *Wutaishan Sun zhenren fushou lun ba* 五臺山孫真人福壽論跋, no author, dated 1256. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 1090; *Yaozhou Wutaishan Sun zhenren* 耀州五臺山孫真人 開穴居記, by Qiu Duanqing 丘端卿, dated 1295. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 1126.

design as mentioned in the previous chapter), the fact that the murals comprise the standard groups of deities normally depicted on hanging scrolls hung on screens or in tents in front of the central altar mound – the Five Sacred Peaks (and Four Sacred Marshes) on the top centre of the east wall and the Six Daoist Lineage Masters and Three Officials on the opposite wall – readily suggests that the murals were largely based on the Daoist open-air altar to which the patrons added some other groups. These other groups are in this case the Northern and Southern Dippers, the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors, the Twelve Zodiacal Mansions, the Four Spirits and others whose images are now unfortunately too damaged to be identified.

This selection of groups of deities seems very standard and do not betray any particular form of personalisation. There are however two groups that reveal a preference for a certain type or aspect of Daoist liturgy. The first is the inclusion of the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors, and the second is the Four Spirits.

The inclusion of the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors is a bit of an oddity because representations of this group of deities is neither known from any other Heavenly Court painting, nor from Water-and-Land paintings. Furthermore, they are not mentioned in any *jiao*-offering or memorial list. Regardless these omissions, their presence in this Heavenly Court painting can be directly related to ritual praxis. Jiang Shuyu's *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* depicts an open-air altar mound of which the bottom-tier has twenty-four gates representing the twenty-four energy-nodes of the tropical year (twenty-four nodes of 15 days in a year of 360 days).⁴⁸ This basic division is for example also found in the body (eight for each of the three cinnabar fields) and has strong Lingbao connotations (but probably elaborating on ancient Heavenly Master practices).

To my knowledge, the *Scripture of Salvation* (*duren jing* 度人經) is the only Daoist ritual text which mentions the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors. It is the central text of the Lingbao tradition, the core of which dates to the fifth century and which is perhaps the most central text of Daoist liturgy, in particular for mortuary ritual, even though it can be applied to meet apotropaic and exorcistic ends as well. The mortuary ritual is basically a rite of salvation in which the soul of the deceased is transferred (*du* 度) from the northern heavens of death to the southern heavens of eternal life.⁴⁹ The prominent places of the Northern Dipper and Southern Dipper deities on the northern parts of the west and east walls would further fit this scheme presented by the *Salvation Scripture*.

⁴⁸ *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* DZ 508, 2.3a. The commentary makes no mention of the twenty-four energy-nodes. This inference is made in Schipper and Wang, "Progressive and Regressive," pp. 189-190.

⁴⁹ *Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing* DZ 1, 20.8a-22b.

The inclusion of the Four Spirits is another conspicuous element in the Nan'an murals. In the Yongle gong murals, they appear in front and at the end of the east and west audiences, acting as protective deities of the four parameters. It is also in this capacity that they are depicted in the Nan'an murals but contrary to the Yongle gong murals they are depicted in the centre and in front of the audiences. It should further be noticed that the Four Spirits lack their standard attributes of the emblematic animals (green dragon, white tiger, red bird, and turtle-snake) and are, rather, more akin in representation to the Buddhist Four Devas (*tianwang* 天王).

The prominent positioning of the Four Spirits in the Nan'an murals can also be linked to the *Scripture of Salvation*, or to be more precise with the praxis of incantating the scripture during a ritual performance. The *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* contains a chapter providing the ritual proceedings for reciting Lingbao scriptures. It states that when the precentor (*dujiang* 都講) incantates (*song* 誦) the *Scripture of Salvation*, the Daoist priest will silently sing in his heart (*chang jingnian* 唱靜念) the scripture. On this inner ritual of the priest, Jiang Shuyu comments that it should be accompanied by visualisations (*si* 思) of “a green dragon to his left, a white tiger to his right, a red bird in front, and a turtle-snake behind him amidst a *qi*-cloud in the three colours green, yellow, and white. The sun, moon, and five planets shine on the immortal-officials attending to the scripture and placed in files to the left and right of the altar.” He adds that this visualisation technique should in fact be used for reciting all types of Lingbao scriptures.⁵⁰ The animals of the four directions are represented in their human form as generals in the Nan'an murals without their attributes. The prominent placement of the Four Spirits in the Nan'an murals thus suggests that the recitation of scriptures, and in particular the *Scripture of Salvation*, was placed in high regard by the patrons of the murals.

Sometimes an omission of a deity or group of deities is as telling of the preferences of the patrons as their inclusion. For example, the Four Saints (Tianpeng etc.) are conspicuously absent in the Nan'an murals, even though these deities appear in every ritual manual from the Song onward and figure in many wall paintings, Heavenly Court paintings and Water-and-Land paintings alike. As deities specifically geared for rites of exorcism, such as the Thunder Rites and Rite of Deliverance, we may presume that these rites were not much favoured by the Nan'an Daoist priests in the Yuan dynasty. The representation of the seven deities of the Northern Dipper (top-right west wall, Plate 7) as Daoist priests dressed as local cult exorcists

⁵⁰ *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* DZ 508, 21.2b-3b.

with long dishevelled hair and holding swords demonstrates that the Nan'an priests were not ignorant of exorcist rites, as well as that the exorcist rites were performed within the confines of the traditional Lingbao liturgy without relying on the exorcist deities.

The ritual format envisioned in the Nan'an murals pertains to a basic Lingbao liturgy which is focused in particular on the *Scripture of Salvation*. The format fulfilled the needs of the patrons and their community who were more concerned with general problems of the salvation of the souls of the deceased and the eradication of demons and disaster, comfortably addressed by one scripture applicable to all needs, rather than making strong political or ideological claims such as the Yongle gong murals seem to advocate. The patrons personalised the Nan'an murals alright, but their emphasis was evidently not on demonstrating ritual prowess but on the representation of the deities themselves.

Because this traditional layout is unconcerned with any imperial or ideological motivations, as well as the inclusion of the Four Emperors and Two Empresses, which was a characteristic of Northern Song ritual formats as I argued above persisted into the thirteenth century in North China, would suggest that the painters of the Nan'an murals relied on an older model, perhaps from the early Northern Song, which they then personalised to wishes of the patrons. The more isolated location of the site, Yaowangshan, and the local origins of the painting workshop, which perhaps had kept the designs for the murals or which worked from designs kept at the temple itself, could then explain how the Northern Song model was preserved at the site. A Song stele inscription of 1081 mentions that the temple had wall paintings in 1059, which thus may have acted as a model for the Yuan paintings.⁵¹

De-emphasis of imperial figures

In the Yongle gong murals, non-standard deities were added to the Heavenly Court, but in the Nan'an murals the standard representation of deities themselves is changed. These changes pertain to the rendering of deities and the concern for detail, their positioning in the composition, and the social identity of the deities. In general, the personalisation of the deity figures suggests less emphasis on the imperial nature of the Daoist Heavenly Court in favour of a more mundane and more accessible rendering.

The de-emphasis of imperial figures is most directly witnessed in the depiction of the Four Emperors and Two Empresses. They are depicted with an almost indifferent plainness. The colours are basic without any concern for iconographical correctness, for example a dark

⁵¹ *Sun zhenren ci ji* 孫真人祠記, by Wang Huan 王璣, dated 1081. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lue*, pp. 288-291.

blue robe for the North Pole Emperor which would denote his association to the north. In addition, the emperors and empresses are depicted without any attributes, such as the usual *kun*-trigram for the Earth Goddess.

The emphasis on mundane concerns over imperial prowess is also evidenced in the particular location of the groups in the mural design and in their particular representation. The most important deities, the Four Emperors and Two Empresses, are positioned to the far northern ends of the east and west wall. The “central” deities of the Nan’an murals are dislocated from the centre (Plates 6 and 7). Although complying to rules of hierarchy and crediting them with a position near the prestigious north, the real visual centre of the Nan’an Heavenly Court is the mid-section of the east and west walls. This type of design can for example be compared to the triangular shaped Buddhist paradise scenes in the Mogao murals and in surviving Yuan and Ming temple paintings, or the Heavenly Court painting of the Toronto murals of which I argued that they adopted the same triangular format. This is the location where in the centre of the hall the Daoist priest would perform his or her ritual, and also the place where the walls are highest. In contrast to the architecture of other Daoist temple halls which have straight rectangular side walls, the hall with the Heavenly Court paintings at the Nan’an has triangular shaped side walls. It is thus at this focal centre that we find the most conspicuously personalised elements of the Heavenly Court painting.

This visual emphasis is further borne out most subtly in the display of the crowns and gowns of the deities in question. As remarked earlier, the crowns of many of the standard deities such as the Four Emperors and Two Empresses and the Southern Dipper (Plate 9) or the Five Sacred Peaks – all imperial figures by they way – although elaborated and with eye for detail are depicted in a very generic manner: each crown is almost a copy of the next one. However, when we come to the crowns and gowns of the deities of the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors and the Twelve Zodiacal Mansions, the painters put much effort in making alterations and distinctions among the figures, suggesting that they were not only visually more important but that they were also depicted with regard to the status of the patrons.

The de-emphasis of imperial figures is also seen in the depiction of the subordinate deities. Several groups, who normally have an imperial representation as officials, are now rendered with various different identities. I have already mentioned the six deities of the Northern Dipper on the top west wall who are not dressed in their standard outfits as imperial officials but rather as Daoist priests in the guise of exorcists with long, dishevelled black hair and holding swords.

Furthermore, where we would expect to find a solemn assembly of twelve imperial officials traditionally representing the Twelve Zodiacal Mansions, as in the Toronto murals (B22-33), we encounter in the Nan'an murals a motley crew of two officials, a Daoist priest, a soldier, a scholar, and a woman for the six zodiacal deities represented on the bottom centre of the west wall (the remaining six deities on the opposite wall are destroyed) (Plate 8).

A similar case can be made for the Twenty-Four Heavenly Emperors – a group reminiscent to the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions of the Yongle gong (76-89, 118-131) represented as imperial officials – who consist here primarily of Daoist priests and officials and one female figure (Plate 7). The female figure is a particular strong example of personalisation because she carries a conspicuous red sack. In this sack, the shape of a lute can be recognised, and a female deity with a lute is normally identified as Venus, one of the deities of the Five Planets. However, the other deities of the Five Planets have not been incorporated. The painters thus exchanged only one Heavenly Emperor for the image of Venus for which, I presume, they had a single painting that served as a model and not the entire group of the Five Planets. The reason for inserting the image of Venus should be sought, I would argue, in the identity of Venus as a female, because as a stellar deity it is not related to the twenty-four energy nodes as far as I have been able to determine.

Indeed, female deities play in general a more prominent role in the Nan'an murals than in other murals. Other known Heavenly Court paintings are almost all-male cosmic universes, and women only play a very marginal role in these paintings, most often as female attendants and court ladies serving the other (male) deities. The only exceptions are deities such as Venus and Mercury of the Five Planets – whose representations are imported from the western regions – and the two female central deities Queen Mother of the West and Earth Goddess. Except for the Nan'an mural, I am not aware of any Heavenly Court painting in which women are portrayed as other deities than the four just mentioned. In the Nan'an Heavenly Court, by contrast, women deities are present in a greater number and they occupy equal positions among the (male) members in deity groups. Large female figures also figure prominently, although most of them badly damaged, on the south end of the two walls near the entrance. The more prominent presence of female deities in the Nan'an murals – although still relatively modest compared to the presence of male deities – also point to a more worldly outlook of the patrons, rather than one focused on the imperial court and national politics. Because the liturgical services associated with the murals catered to a local community, we can also expect that the inclusion of more female deities reflected the interest and social composition of the local community.

Another type of figure that appears more prominently than in other Heavenly Court paintings is the Daoist priest. As has become clear from the above descriptions of groups of deities, many imperial officials have been replaced or share the stage with Daoist priests. The patrons, who we may assume were Quanzhen patrons because the site fell under Quanzhen supervision from the thirteenth century, obviously took the liberty to insert images of their own social group into the murals and in addition to the images of Daoist priests such as the six lineage masters depicted on the top west wall. We may even suspect that portraits of the patrons themselves are among the images of the Daoist priests, but this is impossible to verify.

The various personalisations of the ritual format and the deity figures in the Nan'an murals make sense if we take into account the ritual and social praxis of the site. The hall with the Heavenly Court paintings only occupies a minor role in the entire layout of the temple complex. The temple complex is located on two hilltops divided by a deep gully, and the hall with the murals is located in one of two rows of halls on the south hill, called Nan'an (Southern Hermitage). The main hall dedicated to Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581-682) and adjacent buildings lie sprawled over the northern hill, called Beidong 北洞 (Northern Cave). The location of the hall with the Heavenly Court paintings is peculiar, because they are not depicted in the central hall of the site but in a subordinate hall. In the traditional layout of a temple hall, the central hall with the Heavenly Court paintings would be located in the south with the other, smaller halls located behind it to the north. From the layout of the temple complex we can infer that the local cult of Sun Simiao at this site was more important than the rituals of the Daoist clergy.

The importance of the local cult of the site is also seen in the Nan'an murals. Although the Nan'an Heavenly Court still follows the standard layout, the personalisations of its deity figures subtly downplay the importance of the imperial model and elevate the status of various kinds of figures – Daoist priests, scholars, women, and warriors – to that of deities and on an equal footing as the celestial officials, in a same fashion as Sun Simiao – a Daoist priest, physician, and scholar – is moved centre stage in the architectural layout. The personalisation of the ritual format also makes more sense when this Daoist liturgy is seen as subordinated to the local cult. The Lingbao liturgy envisioned in the Nan'an murals is basic in nature and geared for the salvation of souls and the averting of disaster by the incantation of Lingbao scriptures, in particular the *Scripture of Salvation*, beside of course the presentation of memorials; and in this basic format it lacks the political or ideological aspirations implied for example by the Yongle gong and Toronto murals, being in accordance to its modest

position in the architectural layout of the temple complex, and rather reflects the social needs and build-up of the local community.

4.4 Beiyue miao

The personalisations of the Beiyue miao murals are closely related to the question of their date. Because the Beiyue miao have a long history and the murals were painted, re-painted, and renovated on several occasions in this history, we may expect that the personalisations to some extent reflect their development. It seems however impossible that the murals would date before 1270 when the Beiyue miao was renovated. Before that date, the temple was destroyed twice. In 946, it was burnt to the ground by the Khitan armies, a fact confirmed by the finding of a layer of charcoal at about one meter depth in the foundation of the Hall of Virtuous Tranquility (*dening zhi dian* 德寧之殿), the central hall where the murals are located, with another layer of floortiles covering the charcoal layer.⁵² In addition, the close similarity between the architecture of the Hall of Virtuous Tranquility of the Beiyue miao and the Three Purities Hall of the Yongle gong, in particular the high, elevated foundation of the hall and the large terrace in front, would suggest that the hall was also destroyed during the wars between the Jurchen and Mongol armies in the thirteenth century, and then completely rebuilt in 1270.⁵³

That the murals inside the hall should date to the Yuan period is demonstrated by Zhang Lifang. He first demonstrated that the decorative paintings on the architecture of the Hall of Virtuous Tranquility are similar to those of the Yongle gong, thus dating them to 1270 when the hall was renovated. Secondly, because the painted dragon on the ceiling of the hall is identical in form, colour, and number of claws to the dragon depicted in the mural on the east wall, he concluded that the murals should also date to 1270.⁵⁴

I would further like to add that the murals use also the same set of colour pigments as those found in the murals of the Mingying wang dian of 1324 in Hongtong County (Shanxi). Especially the use of the same brown and orange colours is striking, which are not often seen

⁵² Xue Zengfu 薛增福 and Wang Limin 王麗敏 (eds.), *Quyang Beiyue miao* 曲陽北嶽廟. Baoding: Hebei meishu chubanshe, 2000, pp. 92, 120-123. For the charcoal layer, see Nie Jinlu 聶金鹿, "Quyang Beiyue miao Dening zhi dian jiegou tedian chuyi 曲陽北嶽廟德寧之殿芻議." *Wenwu chunqiu* 文物春秋 4 (1995), p. 48.

⁵³ Nancy Steinhardt, "The Temple to the Northern Peak in Quyang." *Artibus Asiae* 58 (1998), pp. 69-90.

⁵⁴ Zhang Lifang, "Beiyue miao Dening zhi dian caihui fenxi 北嶽廟德寧之殿彩繪分析." *Wenwu chunqiu* 文物春秋 5 (2004), pp. 8-13.

in other murals of either the Yuan or Ming. The two temple paintings have further several pictorial elements or motifs in common, such as a dragon, the small strongmen carrying treasure-trays emitting rays of coloured light, and a Thunder Ministry. The bright red pigment used in wall painting from the Ming onward is also absent. Lastly, the proportions of the Beiyue miao figures would also correspond better to other Yuan period temple paintings when the figures were more proportionally “correct.” Song figures tend to be have slender bodies and larger heads, while Ming figures have very small shoulders and seem to stretched vertically.

The Beiyue miao murals deviate in many aspects from the standard programme of other Yuan period Heavenly Court paintings. The irregular elements in the Beiyue miao murals are very numerous, and almost all of them would suggest that the painters followed an archaic model, both in terms of ritual configuration and in style. This situation makes it difficult for us to discern whether the personalisations resulting in these irregular elements were deliberate or simply followed an older model, and which patron in which period was responsible for which element in the composition during the long history of the murals. This section will therefore first make a small inventory of the irregular elements and then attempt to explain how they relate to an archaic model in order to determine the personalisations of the former patrons and those of the 1270 patrons.

Irregular elements

The Beiyue miao murals differ from other Heavenly Court paintings from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in almost every aspect. It is helpful to make a small inventory of these irregular elements in order to discern which of these elements pertain to personalisations and which may be rather explained by older models or later repairs, or perhaps a specific ritual configuration only used for Sacred Peak temples. I will deal with the reasons for their presence in the murals in the next section.

1. *Ritual configuration.* The Beiyue miao murals contain a different set of central deities than other Heavenly Court paintings. The Beiyue miao murals are focused on the Five Sacred Peak deities in the lower register, and the Three Officials and a group of immortals in the upper register (Drawings 3A and 3B). The central niche has statues of the Northern Peak deity, the God of Hall and the Dragon King. From the Middle Phase (1000-1400) onwards, all other known Heavenly Court paintings or textual representations thereof in ritual manuals and texts on painting focus on the Nine or

Eleven (or Thirteen) Sovereigns and generally have a niche with statues of the Three Purities.

2. *Wu Daozi-style*. The Beiyue miao murals are painted in a dynamic style associated with Wu Daozi (fl. 685-758), epitomised by the dictum “Wu Daozi’s sashes billow in the wind, and Cao Zhongda’s 曹仲達 robes rise from the water.” (*Wu dai dang feng, Cao yi chu shui* 吳帶當風, 曹衣出水) in Guo Ruoxu’s *Tuhua jianwen zhi* (last half of the 11th cent.).⁵⁵ In other Heavenly Court paintings, the dynamic elements – often limited to warrior and demon figures – are combined with more static elements which are mostly used to depict the majestic images of the central deities. In the Beiyue miao murals, each and every pictorial aspect is subject to this dynamic force, the source of which seems to be the strong wind blowing through the composition from the north. In fact, Guo Ruoxu mentions that Gao Wenjin and Wu Zongyuan (d. 1050) both combined the dynamic and static styles of Wu Daozi and Cao Zhongda,⁵⁶ which also suggests that compositions designed in this manner would have begun around this time.
3. *More attending figures than deities*. The Beiyue miao murals depict all kind of attending figures with no specific identities, and who vastly outnumber the deities in the composition. In other Heavenly Court paintings, attending figures only play a marginal role and number only very few, their places being substituted by subordinate deities who gradually had filled the ranks of the Heavenly Court audience over time.
4. *No detailed decorative patterns*. The Beiyue miao murals are characterised by a simple yet very effective brushwork without much emphasis on decorative patterns. This is at odds with Yuan, and in particular Ming paintings of deities, which became increasingly detailed in their decorative patterns depicted in crowns, jewelry, borders on robes and sleeves, and armouries. The Beiyue miao murals rather put emphasis on the brushwork and the rhythm of lines they evoke in the draperies, flags, and robes and sleeves. Although the brushwork is powerful, it is never calligraphic, a form of temple painting which had become very common, probably under the influence of literati-painting and calligraphy, in Ming temple painting.
5. *No haloes*. None of the deities in the Beiyue miao murals are depicted with a halo, one of the most standard elements in other Heavenly Court paintings and in Buddhist temple paintings alike.

⁵⁵ *Tuhua jianwen zhi* p. 37.

⁵⁶ *Tuhua jianwen zhi* p. 105.

6. *Different “square-heart necktie.”* The Eastern Peak deity on the east wall does not wear the standard “square-heart neckties” (*fangxin quling* 方心曲領) in Yuan and Ming temple paintings, a decorative white ribbon with a small square pendant hanging on the deity’s chest, but a necktie in which the square pendant is replaced by a rectangular hill-shaped line (Fig. 63). This type of necktie cannot be termed a “square-heart” as it existed in the Yuan and Ming periods.
7. *No imperial mian-crowns.* The Sacred Peak deities wear ribbed *tongtian* 通天-crowns instead of the flat-top *mian*-crowns with strings of jade beads hanging from its rims, which would be the appropriate type of crown corresponding to their status of emperor since their promotion in 1011, and which also remained their standard type of crown in any other known Yuan, Ming and Qing representation.⁵⁷
8. *Dark, bearded faces showing emotional expression.* The Five Sacred Peak deities and the majority of attending figures are depicted with dark brown-red faces and large beards (Plates 10 and 11, Figs. 63, 64). In addition, the Five Sacred Peak deities have life-like faces showing various emotional expressions (compassion, fear, startlement and anger). Such characteristics are usually associated with “foreigners” or “barbarians” (from the viewpoint of the Chinese). This is at odds with the depictions of central deities in any other known temple painting who, as a principle, are the embodiment of serenity and lofty other-worldliness, and which is a feature which also correspond more closely to the rules of Chinese physiognomy. Such characteristics were also already laid down by Guo Ruoxu in his *Tuhua jianwen zhi*.⁵⁸ It should be noted however that, curiously enough, the Central Sacred Peak deity forms an exception on the abovegiven description, and only his image displays a standard depiction of a serene and emotionless Chinese deity. He neither has a long beard but only the typical long sideburns and a thin beard and moustache as in other Heavenly Court paintings.
9. *No Daoist priests.* Another strange feature of the Beiyue miao murals is the total absence of depictions of Daoist priests in their ceremonial robes, so often witnessed in Heavenly Court paintings. Paintings depicting the various patriarchs and masters of

⁵⁷ *Song shi* j. 102, pp. 2486-2487. Song Emperor Zhenzong ordered that the costumes of the Sacred Peak deities were accordingly changed. It should be noted that the Toronto murals depict a group of five deities in costumes in the five emblematic colours with *tongtian*-crowns on the south part of the east wall. I have identified these deities as the Five Elders precisely because of their lack of *mian*-crowns and the fact that the Five Elders are a more appropriate choice in a ritual configuration geared for a Rite of Deliverance or Thunder Ritual.

⁵⁸ *Tuhua jianwen zhi* pp. 20-21.

the Daoist master seem only to have been introduced in the ritual area in the Southern Song dynasty.⁵⁹ By contrast, the Beiyue miao murals include two immortals, depicted in the top-left corner on the west wall. One has a long beard and unkempt hair, and carries a large sack over his shoulder while the other is smaller in size and carries a small round flask in his left hand and a short branch in his right. They also have quite distinct faces, and one surmises that their images should represent portraits of some famous immortals but I have not been able to identify them (Figs. 65, 66).

10. *No Four Sacred Marshes deities.* In a mural with the Five Sacred Peak deities, one would also expect to find included the deities of the Four Sacred Marshes who are their traditional companions. In the Yongle gong murals and in Ming Water-and-Land paintings the Five Sacred Peak deities are accompanied by those of the Four Sacred Marshes. In the Beiyue miao murals, there is no such pair of four deities. On the east wall, two smaller-sized officials are depicted but their expected counterparts are lacking on the opposite wall. Intriguingly, in 732 Mt. Lu 廬山 and Mt. Qingcheng 青城山 were appointed auxiliary mountains to the Five Sacred Peaks, and I would therefore tentatively suggest that the two officials represent the deities of these two mountains.⁶⁰
11. *General as central deity and donor.* One of the most conspicuous irregular elements in the Beiyue miao murals is the inclusion of a military figure in the group of immortals in the top-left corner on the west wall. The general should moreover represent a donor because he is bowing with hands clasped in devotion before his chest. In addition, he takes the role as central deity of that group of figures because, like the other central deities in the upper register, he is assisted by two banner-bearers standing behind him signalling his exalted status. He should represent the patron commissioning the renovation of the hall and its murals

It is possible to relate all these irregular elements to an archaic model, meaning that they were not the invention of the painters of the 1270 renovations but of the painters of a previous set of murals copied by the painters of 1270. I will now attempt to date this archaic model and explain the personalisations of the patrons.

⁵⁹ Before the Song dynasty, there existed the visualisations of the Three Masters (*li sanshi* 禮三師), but to my knowledge no paintings included in the ritual area.

⁶⁰ *Jiutian shizhe miao bei bing xu* 九天使者廟碑並序, by Li Pin 李珣, dated 732. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lue*, pp. 114-116.

Archaic model

Even though the Beiyue miao was rebuilt in 1270, many irregular elements in its murals suggest a date in the Transitional Phase (700-1000). Their presence in the murals can be explained by postulating the use of a design or *xiaoyang* 小樣 by which means an archaic model was transferred to a later period. The *xiaoyang* was probably preserved at the site. It should be remembered that the Yongle gong had also preserved a *xiaoyang* of its murals at the temple site until the Second World War on which basis restorations to the paintings were conducted over the centuries.

If we postulate an archaic model transmitted through a *xiaoyang*, many irregular elements mentioned above can be explained. Because of their interrelationship, it will moreover be possible to find a date for this archaic model.

Let me first discuss the specific ritual configuration of the Five Sacred Peak deities. According to Jin Yunzhong (fl. 1225) in his *Shangqing lingbao dafa*, the particular Daoist liturgy performed to the Sacred Peaks or on other mountains is the Golden Register Retreat (*jinlu zhai* 金錄齋).⁶¹ Because the Golden Register Retreat is performed for the personal well-being of the emperor, often on his invitation, and for peace and harmony in the empire, it is the appropriate ritual for the Sacred Peaks which are also part of the state cult and which are believed to be able to control natural disasters in their respective dominions.⁶² From the early eleventh century onwards however, the Golden Register Retreat was expanded with a *jiao*-offering to the maximum number of 3600 deities, including an expansion to nine central deities, the Nine Sovereigns.⁶³ These were further expanded to Eleven (or Thirteen) Sovereigns at the end of the Northern Song, and the ritual pantheon of 3600 deities would remain the standard number for a Golden Register Retreat until the end of the imperial period.⁶⁴ Obviously, the grandeur of this ritual stands in stark contrast with the handful of deities and the simplicity of the Beiyue miao murals.

⁶¹ *Shangqing lingbao dafa* DZ 1223, 41.3b-4a.

⁶² The performance of Golden Register Retreats at the Sacred Peaks is confirmed by the stele inscriptions collected and annotated by Édouard Chavannes. Chavannes, “Le jet des dragons,” pp. 68-128.

⁶³ See Wang Qinruo’s *Yisheng baode zhenjun zhuan* in *Yunji qiqian* DZ 1032, chapter 103. In this text, no mention is made of a Golden Register Retreat, but a *jiao*-offering called a *putian dajiao* 普天大醮 with 3600 seats. The *Lingbao yujian* DZ 547, 1.19a-21a makes however clear that this *jiao*-offering belongs to a Golden Register Retreat. Jing Anning has demonstrated that the Nine Sovereigns were introduced under Emperor Zhenzong by Wang Qinruo. See also *Taishang chujia chuandu yi* 太上出家傳度儀 DZ 989, 1a. Jing, “The Yongle Palace,” p. 246.

⁶⁴ Only a small section of the reformed Golden Register Retreat of the end of the Northern Song is preserved, on tossing the jade slips, see *Jinlu zhai toujian yi* 金錄齋投簡儀 DZ 498, 10a. The ritual text also contains references to a *putian dajiao* with 3600 seats (7a-8b). For the ritual pantheon and central deities of a later Golden Register Retreat; see *Jinlu dazhai shejiao yi* 金錄大齋設醮儀 DZ 490, 2a, 3a. The Seven Sovereigns, a

The composition focused on five central deities, as demonstrated in previous chapters, is rather the ritual configuration corresponding more closely to Heavenly Court paintings of the Transitional Phase (700-1000), such as those painted in the Zhangren guan on Mt. Qingcheng and in the Baoli si in Chengdu, and those witnessed in the altar layouts of the *Daomen dingzhi* (depicting a Tang altar) and the *Xuantan kanwu lun*. Moreover, from the Song period onward, Sacred Peak temples are known to have been decorated with murals depicting the Sacred Peak deity on an excursion tour leaving and returning to his temple (*chuxing tu* 出行圖).⁶⁵ No references to the composition with Five Sacred Peaks are known after the tenth century. Because there are no indications that a different type of Golden Register Retreat with only five central deities was specifically performed on the Sacred Peaks,⁶⁶ we should assume that the painters of the Beiyue miao murals followed an archaic model from the Transitional Phase. The inclusion of the two auxiliary mountain deities in the composition would not be too odd when the ritual configuration had not changed much during that phase. For this period, paintings of Daoist priests were not known either, as far as can be discerned.

The abundance of attending figures is very common in Heavenly Court paintings before the Middle Phase and it is witnessed in the Wu Zongyuan scroll, in Du Fu's description of Wu Daozi's murals on Mt. Beimang, "The Five Saints line up in dragon robes, a thousand officials march in goose file" in which the "thousand officials" stand for attending figures; and even in early representations of the *chao*-audience theme such as donor-scenes depicting a royal figure assisted by a retinue of attendants. Haloes are neither found in these early depictions, and the *tongtian*-crown is a more appropriate type of crown for the title of King that the Sacred Peak deities bore since 746, corresponding to the period of the Transitional Phase.

combination seen mostly in the Ming, are the Three Purities, Jade Emperor, Heavenly Sovereign, North Pole, Earth Goddess, East Pole, and South Pole. The texts also contain a reference to the thirtieth Heavenly Master Zhang Jixian 張繼先 (1092-1127) (Veritable Xujing 虛靖真君), who was particularly popular in the Ming dynasty, and I suspect the text should date to this period. For an earlier dating, see Schipper & Verellen, *Historical Companion*, pp. 998-1000.

⁶⁵ Wu Zongyuan and Wang Jianji painted such an excursion tour in the Tianfeng guan 天封觀 (Monastery of Heavenly Enfeoffment) on the Central Sacred Peak Songshan 嵩山 (Henan). See *Songchao minghua ping*, pp. 16, 32. The Tiankuang dian 天貺殿 (Heavenly Gift Hall) on Taishan 太山 (Shandong), the Sacred Peak of the East, has similar murals of an excursion tour painted in the Ming dynasty. Zhang Mingchuan 張明川 discussed the dating of these murals in a lecture on a symposium on Daoist art held in Xi'an in May 2007. The excursion tour is also a standard theme in murals in local temples dedicated to the Five Sacred Peaks.

⁶⁶ Jin Yunzhong mentions that the rite of tossing dragons performed on the Sacred Peaks was different from the standard rite of tossing dragons in the Golden Register Retreat. *Shangqing lingbao dafa* DZ 1223, 41.3b-4a.

The Beiyue miao murals also resemble the Wu Zongyuan scroll (Plate 12) most closely in their emphasis on rhythmic brushlines of the robes rather than in intricate decorative patterns and calligraphic brushwork that came into fashion in later periods. The robes in both paintings are rather plain and have no embroidered borders. The jewelry and necklaces decorating the costumes are also rather modest and simple in design. The court ladies in the Wu Zongyuan scroll wear for example necklaces of one string with one simple medallion (Fig. 67). This type of medallion is also worn by the female attendants in the Beiyue miao murals (e.g. left of the Official of Heaven on the west wall, Fig. 68). In Yuan temple paintings, such as in the Yongle gong, or in Ming temple paintings, the necklaces of the female attendants have become opulent showcases of jewelry-ornaments shaped in intricate patterns and studded with gems (Fig. 69). Moreover, in the Wu Zongyuan scroll, simple robes are contrasted with ornate headdresses, a characteristic of Song figure paintings, and also seen in sculptures of that period.⁶⁷ The headdresses depicted in the Beiyue miao murals are a little more restrained but still demonstrate a large variation and an eye for detail not seen so much in the robes. The hats are in Five Dynasties or early Song style.⁶⁸ It should be noted that the necktie does not figure in the Wu Zongyuan scroll, but this sole painting does not mean that the necktie was invented in the late Song or Yuan.⁶⁹ Rather, it suggests that the necktie depicted in the Beiyue miao murals represents an intermediate stage in the development of the necktie. Lastly, All these aspects also suggest a date of around 1000 when the Wu Zongyuan scroll was made.

The Wu Daozi style was also very popular in this period, as confirmed by the supreme status given to Wu Daozi in Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji*, and the *Songchao minghua ping*, and the *Tuhua jianwen zhi*. The early Song painters would still have seen original murals and paintings by Wu Daozi, while in later periods his status attained more legendary or mythical proportions when his works were already lost. The only known painting of the Yuan

⁶⁷ Angela Falco Howard, *Summit of Treasures: Buddhist Cave Art of Dazu, China*. Trumbull: Weatherhill, 2001, p. 155.

⁶⁸ One curious aspect of the headdresses is the absence of the *putou* 幞頭- hat with its characteristic projecting flaps or wings, so common in Yuan and Ming temple paintings. The *putou*-hat began as a headcloth with flaps wrapped around the hairbun. From the late Tang or Five Dynasties, the cloth was stiffened with lacquer and from the Song the flaps were stiffened as well with wires which made them stand out on the sides. See Sun Ji 孫機, "Putou de chansheng he yanbian 幞頭的產生和演變," *Zhongguo lishi bowuguan guankan* 中國歷史博物館館刊 9 (1985), pp. 60-68.

⁶⁹ A painting attributed to Wu Daozi, but probably a Song copy, the "Birth of Sakyamuni" (*Shijia jiangsheng* 釋迦降生) in Tokyo, depicts a king with a necktie. In early Tang depictions, such as the emperor depicted in Mogao cave 220 or in the scroll of "Thirteen Emperors" attributed to Yan Liben in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the necktie is absent. See Whitfield, *Cave Temples of Mogao*, p. 79; Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, pp. 45-46, 127-130.

that portrays a similar overall dynamism is a handscroll, the “Nine Songs” (*jiuge* 九歌), by Zhang Wo 張渥 (fl. 1335-1365). This painting is however a copy after the same painting by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106) who, not surprisingly, is famous for painting figures in a *baimiao* 白描 style inspired on Wu Daozi’s dynamic style.⁷⁰

If we should attempt to pin down a date for this archaic model on which the 1270 murals were based, the renovations on the imperial order of Song Emperor Taizong (r. 976-997) completed in 991 would be the most plausible candidate.⁷¹ Although during the Five Dynasties and Song dynasty renovations also took place in 917, 1050, and 1106,⁷² there are two main reasons for supporting a date of 991. The first is the abovementioned archaeological research at the site that discovered a layer of charcoal and floortiles at about one meter depth in the hall’s foundation, caused by the Khitan army burning the temple down in 946. The 946 destruction would thus rule out a date of 917 for the archaic model. It can further be demonstrated that the present foundation of the hall should have been erected in 1270 because the foundation is similar to that of the Three Purities Hall of the Yongle gong completed in 1262⁷³ and because no other foundation-layers were found in between, this rules out the possibility that in 1050 or in 1106 the hall was rebuilt. Therefore, if the temple hall was built and decorated with murals in 991, the present murals are based on an archaic model dating to this period.

The other reason is a stele inscription commemorating the completion of the 991 renovation, written by the famous Song statesman Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001).⁷⁴ The stele inscription mentions the destruction of the temple by the Khitan, called Xiongnu - an old Chinese term for “barbarians” in general - in the text, and the subsequent repairs to the temple including a reference to wall painting:

⁷⁰ Reproduced and discussed in Ho, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, pp. 119-122.

⁷¹ *Chongxiu Beiyue Antian wang miao bei* 重修北嶽安天王廟碑, by Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), dated 991. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, pp. 231-233; *Beiyue miao ji* 北嶽廟集, no author. Reprint of Wanli (1573-1620) edition in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊, Vol. 118, pp. 747-830. Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1998, pp. 801-804, 8.32b-38a; *Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi* 重修曲陽縣志, Zhou Siyi 周斯億 et al. (eds.). Quyang: Xiao xuetang 小學堂, 1904, 12.1b-8b.

⁷² See the stele inscriptions, *Wang Chuzhi chongxiu Beiyue miao bei* 王處直重修北嶽廟碑, by Liu Duan 劉端, dated 917. *Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi*, 11.23a-29a; *Chongxiu Beiyue miao bei* 重修北嶽廟碑, by Han Qi 韓琦, dated 1050. *Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi*, 12.55b-67a; *Chongxiu Beiyue miao ji* 重修北嶽廟記, by Han Rong 韓容, dated 1106 (only the title is preserved). *Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi*, 12.120a-b.

⁷³ *Dachao chongjian da Chunyang wanshou gong zhi bei* 大朝重建大純陽萬壽宮之碑, by Wang E 王鄂, dated 1262. Ruicheng xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 芮城縣誌編纂委員會 (ed.), *Ruicheng xianzhi* 芮城縣志. Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1994, p. 795.

⁷⁴ See note 71.

“Before this, the Xiongnu had breached the frontiers and came to this temple to divine on their fortunes and misfortunes. When [the divinations] did not comply to their intentions to turn the Chinese empire into turmoil, they subsequently set fire [to the temple] and torched the plains. . .

[Song Emperor Taizong (r. 976-997)] immediately ordered the responsible offices to give [the temple] a new, greater appearance, and when the emperor and the officials had broke tallies on the Bird Terrace, the work force was ready; and when the nobility and commoners had selected workers at the Yellow Gate, the duties were fixed. Timber of the *pian* 楩, *nan* 楠, *qi* 杞, and *zi* 梓 trees was assembled in great masses; wires, ink, axes, and saws were collected in great numbers. With the different kinds of materials prepared in abundance and the hundred walls all constructed, they thus restored the halls and chambers applying colourful designs of majestic images; and they thus erected palisades and corridors adorning them with paintings of exemplary men. The gates and towers had wings, staircases were high and low. The bracket sets and roof beams were decorated with clouds, illuminating each other with colours of the mist and the morning sun; the jade title-board and ceiling carvings concealed for each other the rays of the sun and moon. Flags and banners, and dresses and robes were beautifully outlined; and *fu* 簠 and *gui* 簋 vessels and *dou* 豆 and *bian* 邊 beakers were neatly arranged. When all possible means were exhausted, the imperial merit was renewed.”⁷⁵

The passage unfortunately gives no precise description of the murals except for the reference that “flags and banners, and dresses and robes were beautifully outlined,” a reference which in fact could equally apply to any other wall painting. There is also no specific reference to wall paintings in the main hall; we only know that “majestic images” – “images” (*xiang* 像) in Chinese often refer to statues – were applied (lit. “installed,” *she* 設) in the halls and chambers.

Another passage in the stele inscription contains however some allusions which in my opinion are directly related to the present wall paintings:

“Modelling ourselves on Heaven and venerating the Dao, that is an emperor greatest luck: Heaven’s blessings will be abundant and the populace will cherish humaneness.

⁷⁵ *Chongxiu Beiyue Antian wang miao bei. Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi*, 12.6a-b. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lüe*, p. 232.

Yu's help is without borders, and Yao's civilisation [efforts] are beyond reckoning. [The kings of the] northern and southern states jointly enter the arrangement (or painting) of a royal assembly (*wanghui zhi tu* 王會之圖), and the *Jin* 僭, *Mai* 侏, *Dou* 兜, and *Li* 離 tribes [of the north, east, south, and western regions] tremblingly assemble according to the tunes of court music [assuming their positions according to fixed hierarchical divisions]. Literary prowess (*wen* 文) beautifies the images of the planets and stars, martial virtue (*wu* 武) displays the authority of thunder and lightning. . .”⁷⁶

What is striking about this passage is the mentioning of the “barbarian” tribes of the four directions tremblingly gathering in a royal assembly following the hierarchical positions. One peculiar element of the Beiyue miao murals are the bearded, dark faces of particularly four Sacred Peak deities, those of the east, south, west, and north, but excluding the Sacred Peak deity of the centre. These four deities also express emotions, although not all four of them are trembling with fear. Because of this correspondence, I would argue that the four Sacred Peak deities should represent the tribes of the four directions, thus explaining their irregular representation with dark faces, beards, and emotions. The Central Sacred Peak deity on the east wall, who is rendered as a more standard Chinese deity and showing no particular emotion, would of course represent China, which in traditional Chinese thought occupies the centre of the universe.

Some other elements in the last passage above show also some intriguing parallels to the Beiyue miao murals. It mentions Yao and Yu, two of the three legendary first rulers of China, as well as the planets, stars, and thunder and lightning which are conceptually divided to the left and right according to *wen* (left, east) and *wu* (right, west). Postulating Shun, the third sage ruler omitted in the text, we find Yao, Shun, and Yu depicted together with the Five Planets and the deities of the Thunder Ministry depicted in the upper register of the murals (but with *wen* and *wu* inverted).

Against the historical background of the Beiyue miao evinced in Wang Yucheng's inscription, the murals obtain a political interpretation. Wang Yucheng utilises the renovation of the Beiyue miao to underscore the cultural, if not ethnic supremacy of the Chinese people over its foreign neighbours in a time when they had just defeated the Khitan and established

⁷⁶ *Chongxiu Beiyue Antian wang miao bei. Chongxiu Quyang xianzhi*, 12.4b. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lue*, p. 232. The original stele inscription is in running script and the transcriptions in both sources differ in some cases. The first source is however the more precise one.

the Song dynasty. Singling out the Sacred Peak of the North and his temple and murals for advocating this supremacy is particularly appropriate because, as the stele inscription mentions, the Khitan had also solicited the support of the Northern Peak deity through divination but who refused and choose for the Chinese instead. The Khitan occupied the steppes of northern China and obtaining the support of the Northern Peak deity would be interpreted as obtaining control over the northern dominion of the Chinese empire, i.e. control over the Khitan. The Beiyue miao thus played an important symbolic role in the battle for territorial hegemony, and investing a stele inscription, and the murals as well in my opinion, with such a political message is a celebration of Chinese supremacy in the northern dominion. This supremacy is also reflected in the composition of the murals, in which the sage rulers Yao, Shun, and Yu, as the icons of Chinese civilisation and cultural supremacy, as well as the Planets and Thunder Ministry, who control natural disasters, are depicted in the upper register above the four Sacred Peaks symbolising the foreign tribes of the four directions in the lower register.

It should be noted that such a political interpretation of supremacy is also implied by Huang Xiufu's *Yizhou minghua lu* on the Zhangren guan dedicated to the deity of Mt. Qingcheng. The text first records that the king of Shu, one of the many kingdoms that emerged after the fall of the Tang and vied with each other for hegemony, appointed the deity of Mt. Qingcheng – who was made auxiliary deity to the Five Sacred Peaks in 732 – as the supreme mountain deity ruling over the Five Sacred Peaks. When he further describes a Heavenly Court painting in which the Five Sacred Peak deities go on audience with the Mt. Qingcheng deity, the parallels to the political aspirations of the Shu King, of whom the Mt. Qingcheng deity becomes a visual metaphor, become very obvious.⁷⁷ In a ritual prayer (*ci* 詞) written for the inauguration of the murals, Du Guangting uses a similar wording as Wang Yucheng to describe the images of the Zhangren guan pointing out the supremacy of the Shu kings over the other kings, and thus implying that the Shu kings were the rightful heirs to the title of emperor after the fall of the Tang.⁷⁸

It should further be noted that a political interpretation is not in conflict with the Daoist liturgical foundation of the murals; both can exist next to each other. It seems that the painters sought for a middle-way in the depiction of the Five Sacred Peak deities between “foreign-ness” and Daoist liturgy, portraying on the one hand them with dark, bearded faces showing much emotion but on the other still depicting them as dignified Daoist mountain

⁷⁷ *Yizhou minghua lu* p. 131.

⁷⁸ *Guangcheng ji* DZ 616: 6.13a-14a; translated in Mesnil, “Zhang Suqing,” pp. 143-144.

deities. In addition, obtaining control over the five dominions is also the main goal of the liturgical practice of the Golden Register Retreat. Its essential element is the placement of the so-called Five True Writs (*wu zhenwen* 五真文) which are fixed (*zhen* 鎮) with a golden dragon on five tables placed in the five directions in the ritual area.⁷⁹ The images of the Five Sacred Peak deities are the pictorial representations of these five cosmic energies. The golden dragons are eventually sacrificed to the Three Officials of Heaven, Earth, and Water, also depicted in the murals, together with jade tablets inscribed with prayers by tossing them in a cave on a mountain (Heaven), in a river (Water), and by burying them in the ground (Earth).⁸⁰ The placement of the Five True Writs – similar to the paintings of the deities of the five organs in late Han Taiping ritual (see chapter 2.2 on ritual function) – attracts the presence of the deities of the five directions in the ritual area, by which means the original cosmic order is restored, blessings are bestowed on the emperor, and natural calamities are resolved. The Daoist ritual of the Golden Register Retreat thus achieves a similar goal of supremacy but on a cosmic level.

If we can identify the archaic model as the original murals painted in 991, we can now also identify the general-figure in the top-left corner of the west wall (Plate 11, Figs. 65, 66). This figure should represent Song Emperor Taizong (r. 976-997). He commissioned the renovation of the temples and he would be the first one to express his gratitude towards the Northern Peak deity for his help (who is represented with a statue in the central altar niche in the hall) and wish to demonstrate the Chinese supremacy over the Khitan and the remaining border tribes. His representation as a general may seem odd when compared with the better-known ancestral portraits of the Song emperors in casual scholar robes and wearing *putou* 幘頭-hats with long projecting wings, but it makes sense when seen in the light of historical situation of that period.

Song Taizong was leading military expeditions during most of the time of his reign, and depicting him in a military outfit would be a reflection of his actual situation, especially when we take into account that his worst enemies were the Khitan of the Liao dynasty, who reigned over the north and whom the Northern Peak deity should bring under control. After the establishment of the Song dynasty in 960 some regions of the former Tang empire were still in the hand of independent rulers, and when Taizong succeeded his brother Song Emperor

⁷⁹ For the central place of the True Writs in the Golden Register Retreat, see Du Guangting's (850-933) *Jinlu zhai qitan yi* 金錄齋啓壇儀 DZ 483, 4a. They are found in the fourth century *Taishang dongxuan lingbao chishu yujue miaojing* 太傷洞玄靈保赤樹玉訣妙經 DZ 352 of the original Lingbao corpus. For the True Writs and this text, see Benn, *The Cavern-Mystery Transmission*, pp. 49-55.

⁸⁰ Chavannes, "Le jet des dragons," pp. pp. 68-128, 184-189, 207 n. 78.

Taizu (r. 960-976) on the throne, he first defeated the Wu-Yue Kingdom in southeast China in 978 and one year later the Northern Han in Shanxi. Taizong then immediately continued his siege with an attack on Beijing, the Southern Capital of the Khitan who still occupied sixteen routes in northern Hebei, but his repeated attacks in the following years remained unsuccessful.⁸¹ For the remainder of his reign, and in fact of the entire Northern Song dynasty, the mountain range running from northern Hebei to northern Shanxi, Taihangshan 太行山, in which the Sacred Peak of the North Hengshan 恆山 was located, became the frontier between the Liao and Song dynasties with the Beiyue miao still located within Song territory, and a symbolic stronghold against the threat from the north.

Frederick W. Mote's description of Taizong's behaviour and personality during these military expeditions would give us even more reason to assume that the military figure in the Beiyue miao murals should represent Taizong. According to Mote, Taizong was a far less accomplished military strategist than his elder brother – the defeats suffered to the Khitan are written on his conto by Chinese historiographers – and he appeared to have been particularly keen on displaying himself as a martial leader, “a conquering hero” in the words of Mote, who “donned an armor and carried a sword when venturing to the front lines” but which left his generals clearly unimpressed.⁸² If Taizong was so focused on displaying his own martial prowess, we may not be surprised at all to find him being portrayed in the Beiyue miao murals as a devout but fierce military commander in shining armour.

The identification of Emperor Taizong as the patron of the murals opens interesting possibilities to identify the painter of the Beiyue miao murals in 991. Because the 991 murals were an imperial commission, we may assume that a famous painter of the tenth century was responsible for their production. The high quality and ingenious design of the murals would further support such an assumption. Considering that the paintings are an overt display of the Wu Daozi-style, the painter in question should have been particularly known for this style. Several painters of the tenth century would meet this requirement, such as Wang Guan 王罐, Wang Ai 王霽, or Wu Zongyuan 武宗元,⁸³ but they lived either too early or too late. The most probable painter for the 991 Beiyue miao murals would in my opinion have been Gao Wenjin, who was a personal favourite of Emperor Taizong and was involved in many wall painting projects during his reign; he was moreover versed in both Buddhist and Daoist

⁸¹ Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 84-87; Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 104-114.

⁸² Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 106.

⁸³ On these painters, see *Songchao minghua ping* pp. 6-9, 15-16.

images and also supervised the wall painters of the Yuqing zhaoying gong. The *Tuhua jianwen zhi* however mentions that he absorbed both the static and dynamic styles of Cao Zhongda and Wu Daozi – similar to Wu Zongyuan – indicating that he combined both styles,⁸⁴ and a woodblock illustration of a Buddhist assembly, which is purportedly made after a painting by Gao Wenjin, shows nothing of the dynamism witnessed in the Beiyue miao murals.⁸⁵ The attribution to Gao Wenjin remains therefore hypothetical. It seems more realistic to assume that the Beiyue miao murals were the concerted effort of a team of painters in which different painters were assigned to different tasks, elements, or sections of the wall painting, as was common with state temple painting projects, such as the Yuqing zhaoying gong, in that period. Gao Wenjin may have provided the design (*xiaoyang*), and other painters enlisted for the project were then assigned to transfer sections of it to the wall, such as the landscape, the clouds, or the faces which are particularly detailed and life-like.⁸⁶

Having discussed the irregular elements and personalisations of the archaic model, it is now possible to turn to the patrons of the renovations in 1270 and the question why they would like to adopt an archaic model.

The patron of the 1270 mural was officially Khubilai Khan who funded the restoration to the temples of the Sacred Peaks and Marshes, and probably ordered them, but the actual patron of the entire project was the Quanzhen patriarch Zhang Zhijing 張志敬 (Veritable Chengming 誠明真人, 1220-1270). A stele inscription with his biography relates how he initiated the project: “The Palace Treasury issued paper money worth a hundred thousand strings of cash to the Patriarch who consequently hired artisans to start the renovation [on the temples]. He selected among the Daoist adepts those of a fair mind and with good organisation skills to calculate the number of artisans and workers needed.”⁸⁷ He delegated the renovation to able priests with experience in temple restorations, and an inscription on the wall of the Beiyue miao discovered during the renovation of the temple in the 1980’s revealed the Daoist name of the temple’s registrar (*tidian* 提點), □*jing tongzhen dashi* □靜通真大師提點, but whom I have not been able to identify.⁸⁸ Although the Quanzhen order was deeply involved in the renovation of the Beiyue miao renovations, their involvement is not borne out

⁸⁴ *Tuhua jianwen zhi* p. 126. See also *Songchao minghua ping* pp. 34-35.

⁸⁵ See Gregory Henderson and Leon Hurvitz, “The Buddha of Seiryōji: Finds and New Theory.” *Artibus Asiae* 19 (1956), p. 5-55.

⁸⁶ The faces may for example have been done by a specialist in portraiture, such as Yuan Ai 元霽 who also worked for Emperor Taizong and painted once his portrait. See *Songchao minghua ping* pp. 43-44.

⁸⁷ *Xuanmen sifa zhangjiao zongshi Chengming zhenren daoqing beiming bing xu* 玄門嗣法掌教宗師誠明真人道行碑銘並序, by Wang Pan 王磐, dated 1273. Chen, *Daojia jinshi lie*, pp. 600-601.

⁸⁸ The characters are difficult to read. Zhang, “Beiyue miao,” p. 9.

in the murals. Rather, the 1270 patrons seem to have opted for transferring an archaic model to the renovated hall without any significant change in its subject-matter or style.

Although no stele inscription survives that could possibly motivate the particular choice for copying an archaic model, I would argue that the personalisations of the 1270 patrons pertain to the same motivations as the 991 patron, Emperor Taizong. The 1270 patrons were no doubt familiar with Wang Yucheng's stele inscription of 991 and its political message of Chinese cultural supremacy over the Khitan. The situation for the Chinese in 1270 was comparable to that of 991; this time however the Mongol forces had conquered all of northern China and the Chinese were placed in a subordinate position rather than that of victor as during the time of Emperor Taizong. By copying the archaic model, the Quanzhen clergy could express a covert wish for restoring the Chinese cultural supremacy, and eventually victory, over the invading Mongols. We have seen with the Yongle gong murals that the Quanzhen clergy expressed a similar kind of covert message by adopting a ritual configuration introduced during the reign of Song Emperor Huizong by which means the Quanzhen could claim to restore and continue Huizong's sacred Daoist empire. Restoring the glory of the Song and Chinese supremacy was apparently an important *leitmotiv* in Heavenly Court paintings in the more intellectual circles of the Quanzhen order. Contrary to the Yongle gong murals however, the Beiyue miao murals do not show any signs that the Quanzhen clergy modified the archaic model to better suit them their wishes or the situation of their time; the Song archaic model already did that quite effectively.

The personalisation of the Beiyue miao murals thus consisted, I would argue, of consciously copying an archaic model in order to express a wish for restoring Chinese cultural supremacy. The archaic model was painted in 991 on the order of Emperor Taizong and possibly designed by the Song court painter Gao Wenjin. It should have been this design (*xiaoyang*) that was preserved at the temple and on which basis the painters in 1270 re-painted the composition. The painters of the 1270 are not known, but because of the similarity in pigment use with the Mingying wang dian murals, I surmise that the painters belonged to a painting workshop hailing from central Shanxi province.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ It is possible that a certain painter Liu Borong 劉伯榮 from Puzhou 蒲州 (i.e. Pingyang in Shanxi) was a member of this workshop. See my discussion in Appendix 1.4.