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## **Reenchanting Buddhism via modernizing magic: Guru Wuguang of Taiwan's philosophy and science of 'superstition'**

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# Chapter 2

## Wuguang's Quest

*Spirit, far from being opposed to the biological (as in the Cartesian dualism of body and mind), is the potentiality of human life—through conscious positing of future foals—for purposeful creation and growth. It is the possibility of structural self-transcendence made incipiently conscious in man...Its close connection with consciousness precludes exclusive linking of spirit with the irrational. French esprit, like German Geist and analogous terms in other languages, embraces “spirit” and “mind” in a single concept; hence the spiritual quest can include both the intellectual and scientific search for truth and the religious pursuit of salvation, which are fundamentally akin...Yet the ultimate indeterminacy of scientific truth need not entail a directionless relativism. On the contrary, an indeterminate goal engendered through purposive trial and error is a prime criterion for the spiritual quest (as for its biological and psychological antecedents), which thus attains in scientific inquiry one of its fullest expressions.*

~ Robert Mitchell Torrance<sup>242</sup>

Wuguang was a complex individual who led a multi-faceted life that consisted of several somewhat self-contained phases. In each phase he attempted to master a specific thought tradition and harmonize it with those already in his eclectic repertoire. These traditions include: Daoism, Chinese folk religion, Chan, Zhenyan/Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism as well as modern philosophy and science. In this chapter I will answer four questions: how did Wuguang become so eclectic? What are the particular sources of the specific elements within his eclecticism? How did Taiwan's history and religious makeup shape his life? Why did Wuguang sophisticate 'superstition' rather than accepting—or entirely rejecting—the disenchanted hermeneutic of Buddhist modernism? To answer these four questions we will now turn our attention to Wuguang's life.

Wuguang's encounter with and incorporation of the aforementioned thought traditions occurred amidst a spiritual quest. This quest consisted of an exploration into multiple aspects of

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<sup>242</sup> Robert Mitchell Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 54-55.

religion not entirely unlike the investigations of Inoue Enryō, Marui Keijirō and even the Taiwanese monk Jinglai before him.<sup>243</sup> Permeating this investigation was a single, evolving goal.<sup>244</sup> This goal related to the acquisition and comprehension of wielding power gained through harnessing invisible forces. This sort of magical power is commonly described as ‘supernatural’ or ‘paranormal’ and is easily identified as an example of Weber’s “*geheimnisvollen unberechenbaren Mächte*.”<sup>245</sup>

The structure of this chapter mirrors the compartmentalization of Wuguang’s life. It begins with his childhood then moves onto his adulthood where we explore Wuguang’s relationship with Yanjing, conversion to Buddhism and the spiritual crisis his entering the *samgha* initiated. Then we look at his time in personal retreat in the mountains, interactions with Elder Gongga, subsequent study in Kōyasan and his founding of the MSBL. Throughout, I will draw attention to which developments I detailed in the introduction and previous chapter which coincided with the events retold here in order to analyze how they steered the trajectory of Wuguang’s spiritual quest.

The biography that I present is based upon data gleaned from multiple sources. The primary data source is Wuguang’s autohagiography entitled *A Memoir of Trials and Tribulations* 滄桑回憶錄 that he read at the opening ceremony of the head temple of the MSBL in 2000—the year of his death.<sup>246</sup> This has been enriched by data collected from Taiwanese newspapers, temple publications, the writings of Wuguang’s students, contemporaries and scholars as well as

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<sup>243</sup> See pages 20, 64 and 73.

<sup>244</sup> This fact was first revealed to me by a leading monk of the MSBL, Dec. 2014.

<sup>245</sup> See page 16.

<sup>246</sup> Wuguang, *Cangsang huiyilu* 滄桑回憶錄 [Memoir of Trials and Tribulations] (Handwritten manuscript, 1999). Online: [http://www.mantrabright.org/index.php?option=com\\_lyftenbloggie&view=entry&id=5&Itemid=29](http://www.mantrabright.org/index.php?option=com_lyftenbloggie&view=entry&id=5&Itemid=29) (accessed Jan. 19, 2016).

interviews I conducted between 2011-2015 with Wuguang's students, family, friends and acquaintances. Additionally, as this is the first thorough treatment of this recently departed figure, I have made use of a variety of internet resources. My reliance upon his personal retelling of his story is justified by two factors. First, a number of aspects of Wuguang's life have been confirmed by individuals I interviewed throughout the course of my fieldwork who were neither his family members, disciples nor even fans. The same is true for data I gathered from tangentially related primary and secondary sources and even correspondence with the paragon of the Buddhist mindfulness movement, Shinzen Young 真善 (Steve Young). Young is an American-born, ethnically Jewish, Japanese-ordained Shingon *ācārya* and *vipassana* teacher who collaborated with UCLA and Harvard Medical School to research the neurological effects of meditation.<sup>247</sup> Young met Wuguang in 1971 after receiving Dharma-transmission *abhiṣeka* while Wuguang was still in the training stage. After Wuguang returned to Taiwan, Young stayed with Wuguang for several months at Zhuxi Temple. The corroborations from Young and others recount the events detailed in this chapter just as, extremely close to, or—in an obviously polemically motivated fashion—differently than Wuguang did. Thus, except for a few notable exceptions, there is little room to doubt the events as Wuguang stated, or at least *his* belief that this was the case. Those elements that do immediately trigger skepticism, despite being doubttable, still offer an invaluable opportunity to see into the mind of both the tale's teller and its intended audience. I thus pay special attention to the more dubious aspects of his tale that I have neither been able to confirm nor contradict in order to understand their 'street value,' Wuguang's

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<sup>247</sup> See Shinzen Young, "Buddhist Brain: 'The Science of Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of Science,'" (public talk, Tuscon, AZ, Oct. 19, 2006). Online: <http://www.shinzen.org/The%20Buddhist%20Brain.pdf> (accessed Jan. 18, 2016). Also see Ann Gleig, "#Hashtag Meditation, Cyborg Buddhas, and Enlightenment as an Epic Win: Buddhism, Technology and the New Social Media," in *Asian Religions, Technology and Science*, ed. István Keul (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 191.

intentions for possibly engaging in tall-tale telling and the reasons behind his belief that they would in fact be believable. Thus, both the fact and possible fiction of what follows are equally invaluable resources.

The tale presented in Wuguang's autohagiography is not chronological and there are in fact numerous historical inconsistencies concerning the dates he claims events occurred. As he composed this work at the age of eighty-one—one year before he passed away—and the soul-searching such a work demands, these peculiarities are understandable. I have chosen to compose my own biographical sketch of Wuguang rather than simply presenting a translation of his depiction due to these oddities and in order to incorporate data gained from other sources. Additionally, some of the details recounted have little relevance to this dissertation.

As we are about to see, the disenchantment efforts that we have hitherto explored had little impact on the world that Wuguang grew up in. Rather than a disenchanted—or Japanified—household, Wuguang was born into an ethnically, culturally and religiously traditional Minnan-speaking Taiwanese home whose culture was rooted in the 'superstitious southern Daoists' of Fujian whom Marui had criticized. Wuguang's reenchanting Buddhist modernism was born out of this upbringing and the modernist Buddhist education he would later receive under the 'stupid sheep'-condemning monk, Yanjing.

## Section I: Childhood

*We need to recognize the importance of the “disenchantment” of certain strategic elements of society and the economy; but we must be very suspicious of, and finally reject, a priori theories that postulate the Entzauberung of the whole damn Welt.*

~Winston B. Davis<sup>248</sup>

Wuguang came into the world during the ‘Cooperation and Development’ phase of the Japanese Colonial Period, three years after the Tapani Incident.<sup>249</sup> He was born on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918 in Wushankeng 烏山坑, a rural mountain village in Kaohsiung’s Neimen District 高雄市內門區 in southern Taiwan. This was just under one month after the end of World War I. He states that his father was a bit of a vagrant whose parents had died at a very young age. This had allowed him the freedom to wander about and study Chinese martial arts. The year that his father settled down in Neimen was the year Wuguang was born.

Wuguang’s autohagiography states that he was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck and that this was seen as a bad omen that foretold of a young, tragically accidental—or suicidal—death. This prompted his parents consulted a local fortune teller 算命 who predicted that Wuguang would die by the age of thirty. This greatly troubled his parents, who sought a second and then third opinion. However, his fortune remained the same and their concern for him was deepened by Wuguang’s frequent bouts of childhood illness.

Wuguang’s childhood home was an extremely religious one. He states that the house he grew up in housed a shrine that was utilized by the local community for the three deities enshrined therein: Mazu 媽祖 (a.k.a. ‘Empress of Heaven’ 天后), the ‘Lord of Laws,’ Fazhu

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<sup>248</sup> W. Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society*, 151.

<sup>249</sup> See pages 63-64.

Gong 法主公 (a.k.a. Zhang Gong Shengjun 張公聖君) and Shennong 神農, the ‘Divine Husbandman.’ Mazu is a sea goddess who originated in Fujian. She is the most popular deity in both Taiwan and the coastal provinces of China.<sup>250</sup> The second god, the Lord of Laws, is a popular folk and Daoist deity who—according to Wuguang’s family—is associated with Daoist techniques aimed at controlling and harnessing the power of the weather referred to as ‘Thunder Magic’ 五雷.<sup>251</sup> They also told him that this second icon was brought over from China by Wuguang’s first ancestor to immigrate to the island and that this ancestor was an accomplished Daoist priest 道士頭. The third deity, the Divine Husbandman 神農, is the deified form of a mythical Chinese sage-emperor. He is believed to have lived circa 2700 BCE and traditionally attributed with authoring the classical medical text, the *Canonical Pharmacopoeia of the Divine Husbandman* 神農本草經.<sup>252</sup>

Of these three gods, Wuguang tells us that only the Divine Husbandman was perceived to display what is referred to as ‘miraculous response’ 靈感 (or 靈應). Also translated as ‘efficient response,’ this is the perception that a particular deity housed within an icon responds to requests for divine intervention. This belief is absolutely central to Chinese folk religion, Daoism and even Chinese Buddhism. As Adam Yuet puts it, “At the core of Chinese popular religion is the concept of magical efficacy (*ling*) which is conceived as a particular deity’s miraculous response (*lingying*) to the worshiper’s request for divine assistance (granting a son, granting magical

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<sup>250</sup> Randall L. Nadeau, “Divinity,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, ed. Randall L. Nadeau (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 374.

<sup>251</sup> See Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 24-30; Florian C. Reiter, “The Management of Nature: Convictions and Means in Daoist Thunder Magic (Daojiao leifa),” in *Purposes, Means and Convictions in Daoism: A Berlin Symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 183-200.

<sup>252</sup> Elisabeth Hsu, “*Zhubing yuanhou lun*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Daoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008).



medicine, bringing rain, resolving a dilemma through divination, granting prosperity, etc.).”<sup>253</sup> It should be understood that when Wuguang states that Mazu and the Fazhu Gong lacked a miraculous response he is not making a theological claim, as he is not referring to the actual deities represented by these icons but to the physical icons themselves. Thus, although the Mazu and the Lord of Laws statues did not exhibit a miraculous response, this does not mean that petitioners believed the gods themselves to be lacking. Rather, it means that people—based on experience—believed that praying to the Divine Husbandman statue in this particular shrine produced practical results, which was not the case for the statues of the other two deities.

As is typical of local shrines, townsfolk would come to Wuguang’s house and offer incense, spirit-cash and pray to the statues.<sup>254</sup> Wuguang relates that sometimes slips from the burning paper would be blown onto the beard of the Divine Husband statue. Wuguang felt that it was unseemly to the eye, and once when his parents were not home he tried to clean it. Evidently, the paper had singed the hair and it could not be removed with a wet cloth, so Wuguang grabbed one of his mother’s combs. When he began to comb the statue’s beard he was suddenly stricken with an unbearable pain in his stomach and doubled over on the floor. When his parents returned, they found him in this state and called the doctor who was unable to do anything. They then brought a ritual master 法官 and several neighbors to come and ‘ask the god’ 問神 what to do. This term, ‘asking the god,’ refers to rituals where a deity is asked specific questions. The answers are given through the aid of a medium who functions as the god’s

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<sup>253</sup> Adam Y. Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 2.

<sup>254</sup> For information on these practices see Chapter 4, Section III, “Spirit Communication.”

mouthpiece. After receiving divinely bestowed instructions, a miracle cure was created that immediately ended Wuguang's suffering.

Despite his overall poor childhood health, Wuguang entered the Japanese run public school system at nine years old and claims to have been an exceptionally gifted student. He states that from an early age he was fascinated with the wonders of modern technology and predicted the invention of the portable transistor radio<sup>255</sup> and the proliferation of television.<sup>256</sup> Due to Japanese education policy at that time, students were not allowed to speak Taiwanese and they were not instructed in Chinese orthography. In their efforts to modernize/Japanify Taiwan, the Japanese had instituted a Taiwan-wide elementary educational system that ran from grades 1-6 in which instruction was conducted in Japanese.<sup>257</sup> This meant that acquisition of Chinese literacy required the financial means to pay for tuition at privately owned traditional Chinese-styled schools 書房 or hire private tutors.<sup>258</sup> Wuguang's parents, who made a meager living making and selling bamboo furniture, had to find other means. At first they sought elementary Chinese books at local Daoist and Zhaijiao temples, but there were none there. One of Wuguang's uncles, however, had learned to read and write in order to defend himself in court. After Wuguang graduated from the Japanese school system, his uncle took on the task of

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<sup>255</sup> The first successfully produced transistor radio was the Regency TR-1 first made in 1954 by the Regency Division of Industrial Development Engineering Associates based in Indianapolis, Indiana. See John W. Klooster, *Icons of Invention: The Makers of the Modern World from Gutenberg to Gates* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2009), 520.

<sup>256</sup> The black and white television did not become widely available until the 1950s. See *ibid*, 434.

<sup>257</sup> Wei-Bin Zhang, *Taiwan's Modernization: Americanization and Modernizing Confucian Manifestations* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2003), 86.

<sup>258</sup> See Jenine Heaton, "Early Japanese Education in Taiwan: The Impact of Isawa Shūji's American Experience," *Sino-Japanese Studies* 21 (2014): 42-79. Online: <http://chinajapan.org/articles/index.php/sjs/article/viewFile/39/43> (accessed Nov. 15, 2015).

teaching him how to read Chinese through the Confucian Four Books and Daoist stories about immortals 仙.<sup>259</sup>

## Analysis

This short section concerning Wuguang's childhood reveals a number of important elements regarding his family, context and person. His family was very religious and saw themselves as descendants of a Chinese Daoist priest. As this time lies between the Tapani incident and the Kōminka movement, in this opening section offers multiple examples of what forms of Taiwanese religion the Japanese authorities were attempting to stamp out. While the Taiwanese *saṃgha* whom Wuguang would eventually join was engaged in a Japanese initiated, mainland Chinese influenced modernization effort, Wuguang was living in a house with deities who were frequented by lay patrons who believed in the miraculous response of the Divine Husbandman icon as well as mediums who drew upon that miraculous response to call upon the gods. This upbringing undoubtedly played a major role in forming Wuguang's reenchanting Buddhist modernism.

Whether or not Wuguang's predictions concerning the proliferation of audio-visual technology are true, total fabrications or even false memories, his belief in them demonstrates that he had a very positive attitude towards scientific advancement. If true, this was a sentiment he held all his life. If fabricated, it was an aspect of his outlook that he wanted others to believe in order for them to see him as a progressivist.

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<sup>259</sup> Such stories have been collected and translated into English in Eva Wong, *Tales of the Taoist Immortals* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001). It must be noted that some scholars, such as Robert Campany, assert that the term 'immortal' is an inappropriate rendering of the Chinese term *xian* 仙. For a discussion and survey of this issue see Thomas Michael, *In the Shadows of the Dao: Laozi, the Sage, and the Daodejing* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015), 119-124.

Although Wuguang's upbringing equipped him with the *lingua franca* of East Asian modernization at that time, Japanese, it did not render him proficient in Mandarin—a proficiency he lacked till the day of his death. He was only comfortable speaking Japanese and Taiwanese. This limited his interactions with—and influence by—mainland Chinese Buddhists during the later republican period. Thus, Wuguang's upbringing shielded him from not only Japanese, but even later Chinese, influence, a fact that demonstrates the relative irrelevance of Humanistic Buddhism—despite its cultural capital—to this study on a Taiwanese Buddhist figure.

## Section II: Early Adulthood

Wuguang states that, due to the horrid state of the Taiwanese economy brought about by the Shōwa Financial Crisis 昭和金融恐慌 of 1927 and the Great Depression (1929-1939), he became an economic refugee and moved to Japan in 1935 when he was seventeen years old.<sup>260</sup> At first he lived with one of his primary school teachers who had expatriated and took on odd jobs. This allowed him to meet a scholar who helped him apply to Waseda University 早稲田大學 where he earned a degree in a form of Japanese stenography called *sokki* 速記. *Sokki* was invented during the Meiji period and quickly became very popular, birthing a new genre of literature referred to as *sokkibon* 速記本.<sup>261</sup> According to J. Scott Miller, *sokki* played a large role in the modernization of Japan as it “ushered in a new age of literacy and textual immediacy.”<sup>262</sup> However, Wuguang states that the conclusion of his studies coincided with the proliferation of recording technology that essentially rendered this skill obsolete. With a largely

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<sup>260</sup> Norio Tamaki states that the Taiwanese banking system was “at the core” of the Shōwa Financial Crisis, Norio Tamaki, *Japanese Banking: A History, 1859-1959* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152-153. This crisis was a complete loss of trust in the Japanese banking system that saw the closure of multiple banks.

<sup>261</sup> J. Scott Miller, “Take as Text: *Sokkibon* in the Diet Library Collection,” in *New Directions in the Study of Meiji Japan*, eds. Helen Hardacre et al. (Leiden, New York and Cologne: Brill, 1997), 582.

<sup>262</sup> J. Scott Miller, “Japanese Shorthand and *Sokkibon*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 49, no. 4 (1994): 487.

useless degree and no chance of finding employment, Wuguang returned to Taiwan and worked in agriculture.

Wuguang tells us that his mother suddenly fell ill and passed away at the age of forty-two, shortly before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. As he had six siblings—the youngest who was six years old—and a father whose grief prevented him from properly functioning, he became the default family breadwinner. This forced him to return to Japan. He studied at a mercantile marine school in Ōsaka and later landed a job as a merchant sailor with Ōsaka Shōsen Kaisha (OSK; Ōsaka Mercantile Steamship Co.) 大阪商船株式會社.<sup>263</sup> In addition to providing for his family, Wuguang states that there was another reason for his choosing this specific job. As he would be able to travel to Thailand, Japan, China and other East Asian and even South East Asian destinations, he would have the opportunity to pursue religious specialists in a variety of places and from them learn what he referred to as ‘miraculous Daoist immortality alchemical practices’ 仙家妙訣.<sup>264</sup> Wuguang’s studies of religious practices, which he said he continued during his time at sea, were not limited to Daoist or even Chinese religious technology. This can be seen by his recounting in great detail his experiences with Samoan religious practices in a speech he gave during the founding of the MSBL’s Hong Kong branch

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<sup>263</sup> The OSK was a Japanese shipping company founded in 1884. It was merged with the Mitsui Lines in 1964 to form the Mitsui OSK Lines. It had trade routes throughout Asia as well as the United States of America. For more information see Masato Shinohara, “Maritime Cluster of Japan: Implications for the Cluster Formation Policies,” *Maritime Policy & Management: The Flagship Journal of International Shipping and Port Research* 37, no. 4 (2010): 377-399.

<sup>264</sup> For this term see Leslie de Vries, “The Gate of Life: Before Heaven and Curative Medicine in Zhao Xianke’s *Yiguan*” (PhD diss, Ghent University, 2012), 3. The exact kinds of practices which Wuguang practiced are detailed below.

temple in 1995.<sup>265</sup> It must have been during these naval excursions that he was exposed to Samoan religion.

After the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Wuguang's maritime profession became even more dangerous and he decided that it was time for him to return to Taiwan. Once in Taiwan, he began working at a branch of the Taiwanese Bureau of Transportation 台灣交通局 in Wuqi 梧棲. Wuqi is a coastal suburban district of Taichung 台中, Taiwan's third most populous city which lies in the central region of the island. He writes that he resigned his post after working there for eight months in order to fully dedicate himself to the pursuit of his spiritual goals. To do so, he began living at Quanhua Temple 勸化堂 on Lion Head Mountain 獅頭山 in Miaoli County in central Taiwan. Lion Head Mountain is one of the most important religious locations in Taiwan and a popular tourist attraction.<sup>266</sup> Quanhua Temple is one of twelve temples dotting Lion Head Mountain. It was built by the Japanese in 1940 to commemorate the 2,600th anniversary of the royal court and currently serves as a guesthouse.<sup>267</sup> During his stay there, Wuguang states that he immersed himself in Chan/Zen meditation and started fasting as a form of religious austerity. He also states that devotees who came to worship at the temple would always offer him food, which he politely refused, and this constant refusal made him feel uncomfortable and desire to find somewhere else to stay. One day the temple was visited by an eminent monk named Miaoguang 妙廣 (style Tengkong 騰空, secular name Luo

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<sup>265</sup> Wuguang, *Wuguang shangshi 1995 nian yu xianggang daochang de kaishi* 悟光上師 1995 年於香港道場的開示 [Guru Wuguang 1995 [Speech] at the Opening of the Hong Kong Sanctuary]. This text, which is hosted online in the archive of Northwestern University's Department of Buddhist Studies 西北大學佛教研究所, is a partial transcript made from a recording of this speech. Online: <http://www.china2551.org/Article/tmwh/tmzl/201002/10658.html> (accessed Sept. 15, 2015).

<sup>266</sup> Yves Raguin, "Lion Head Mountain and Buddhism in Taiwan," tr. J. Maynard Murphy, *Journal of the China Society* 8 (1971): 21-30.

<sup>267</sup> Robert Kelly and Joshua Samuel Brown, *Lonely Planet: Taiwan* (Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 176.

Shuilin 羅水鄰, 1902-1988).<sup>268</sup> Wuguang tells us that Miaoguang heard of his fasting as well as the awkwardness it was causing at the temple. To alleviate the situation, he sought Wuguang out and invited him to stay at one of Taiwan's Five Ancestral Sanctuaries,<sup>269</sup> Fayun Temple which had been founded by Miaoguang's teacher, Jueli 覺力 (1881-1933), and his close friend Miaoguo 妙果 (1884-1964).<sup>270</sup> Wuguang was well accepted there and he befriended a young man named Lee Shi-chieh 李世傑 (1917-unknown) who later became an extremely influential Buddhist scholar who wrote on esoteric Buddhism, Indian philosophy and translated scholarly works on Buddhism from Japanese to Chinese.<sup>271</sup> When their paths crossed, Wuguang relates that Lee was living in a small house next to the monastery.

One night Wuguang accompanied Lee and a number of Lee's friends to a restaurant. Despite the social discomfort caused by Wuguang's refusing to partake in the meal, they ended up staying quite late, after Fayun Temple had already locked its doors. Wuguang reports that being unable to get into the monastery put him in a foul mood and that he suddenly decided to return to his family. He hitchhiked to Miaoli city and then took several buses back to his familial home in Kaohsiung's Neimen District the next day. When he got there, he encountered a group of family friends eating and drinking alcohol with his father. Everyone was surprised and happy

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<sup>268</sup> Miaoguang's family was originally from Chaozhou 潮州 in Guangdong Province, China. He was born in Taichung's Fengyuan District 豐原. At twenty eight years old he converted to Buddhism after having attended Japanese public school and private Chinese school. At thirty one years old he became a novice monk at Miaoli's Fayuan Temple under the monk Jueli 覺力 (1881-1933) from China and then became a full monk at Taipei's Shipu Temple 十普寺. In 1972 he was elected as the fourth chairperson of the Buddhist Association of Taipei's Taipei Branch. See The Buddhist Association of Taipei website, "Development", <http://www.bataipei.org/pg000.html> (accessed on Oct. 22, 2015).

<sup>269</sup> Refer to Figure 2.

<sup>270</sup> For Jueli, Miaoguo and the establishment of Fayun Temple see C. Jones, "Buddhism in Taiwan," 48-54.

<sup>271</sup> Ou Suying 歐素瑛 et al., "*Hou Kunhong Xiansheng fangwen jilu* 侯坤宏先生訪問紀錄 [Notes from an Interview with Hou Kunhong]," *Annual of Taiwan Oral History Society* 6 (2015): 32 note 11. Online: [http://www.oh.org.tw/annual/tohs-annual\\_n06\\_28-40.pdf](http://www.oh.org.tw/annual/tohs-annual_n06_28-40.pdf) (accessed Jan. 19, 2016).

to see him and invited him to join them for dinner. At first, he wanted to decline the invitation and continue his fast, but when he tried to speak no words escaped his mouth. He thus ended his fast, but only ate a small amount and did not drink any alcohol. As he had been fasting for such a long time, it was difficult for his body to tolerate eating regularly. He thus reports that it took him around twenty-one days to be able to eat like a normal person again.

Wuguang tells an interesting story concerning his first weeks back at home. He states that he remained in correspondence with Lee Shijie and that the next week he wrote him a letter, to which Lee immediately responded. In it Wuguang relates that Lee wrote, “The day after you left, two criminal investigators came to detain you. I do not know what the matter was about. It would be best if you did not return in the near future. Upon reading this letter, I request that you burn it.” Shortly thereafter another letter followed, this one from a friend still working in the mercantile marine industry. It stated that a couple of weeks prior, a criminal investigator boarded the last ship that Wuguang had been stationed on and went through Wuguang’s records and correspondences but did not find any incriminating messages. The criminal investigator then told his friend that he had searched for Wuguang at Lion's Head Mountain but that he had already left, and that his current whereabouts were unknown. In explaining this story, Wuguang states “They were wasting their time, I have no clue as to why they would have suspected me of being a Chinese spy. Good Heavens!”

## **Analysis**

This sections details Wuguang’s transition from a boy into a young man. This coming of age saw the end of the Cooperation and Development Era, the Kōminka Period and the Second Sino-Japanese War. Whether or not we believe Wuguang’s conveniently serendipitously evading



Japanese counter-intelligence officers, we can appreciate the story's literary value and Wuguang's belief in its believability due to its wartime context.

From the very beginning, Wuguang portrays his entire life as one that constituted a continual religious quest. Mirroring Śākyamuni's time as a wandering ascetic, Wuguang states he went without food for “more than ten days” 經過十幾天. Although not an unbelievably lengthy amount of time—and a practice corroborated by Shinzen Young—this would explain his sudden decision to leave the temple and feelings of frustration at finding it locked at night. After going without food for such a period of time he would have undeniably been easily agitated.

This section also gives us further insight into his large family. He was one of seven children in a family that was not very well off. From his travels we can also see that Wuguang was something of a free-spirit and drifter, something he most likely inherited from his father. Wuguang, who was known as a “heavenly vagabond” 太空流浪人, refers to his father as “lone drifter” 孤身的流浪漢. The similarities between these nicknames attest to the fact that in some ways Wuguang saw himself as ‘his father's son’ or ‘a chip off of the old block.’ Noting this drifter quality of Wuguang's character helps us understand not only his maritime travels—which he states lasted “no less than six years”—but also his eclecticism, as its different elements were collected during these journeys. In Wuguang's mind, however, this drifting was not as aimless as that of his father's due to its spiritual goal, a goal he consistently returns to even when speaking of his time at sea and frames as one of his reasons for going overseas as well as quitting his job in Wuqi. In the next section we will begin to see the particular features of the ‘miraculous Daoist immortality alchemical practices’ that Wuguang was performing.

### Section III: Adulthood

After returning to Neimen, Wuguang began working in construction. He reports that due to Japan's involvement in World War II, there was a great demand in the construction business at the time. Although not stated in his autohagiography, his disciples have said that during this time Wuguang also offered his services as a ghost hunter. There is a story that he was initially hired to remodel a house. During the renovations the owners of the house became very ill out of the blue. The family also began hearing voices whose source they were unable to locate. When they explained the situation to Wuguang—who was nothing but their remodeler at the time—he concluded that the house was infested with spirits of the dead. Having received permission from the owners, he performed an exorcism on their home that reportedly rendered the house spirit-free.<sup>272</sup>

Although this story is absent from Wuguang's writings, in the autohagiographical sections dealing with this time of his life we find the first accounts of Wuguang's personal experimentation with various religious rituals. The first mentioned is the rite entitled the 'Celestial Book of the Six Heavenly Stems'<sup>273</sup> 六甲天書 which is found in the Daoist text *The Myriad Methods of Returning to the Origin* 萬法歸宗.<sup>274</sup> Wuguang states that he attempted to

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<sup>272</sup> Semi-structured interview with longtime disciple of Wuguang, Aug. 2014.

<sup>273</sup> See Mugitani Kunio, "liujia and lauding," in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>274</sup> This work also goes by a longer title, *Esoteric Transmission of the Myriad Methods of Returning to the Origin* 祕傳萬法歸宗. I make this assertion based on a comparison of both texts. This is in contradiction to Adeline Herrou's claim that they are in fact different works. Due to the decentralized nature of Daoism, it is plausible that there are multiple texts in circulation with such titles, some of whose contents are different and some whose contents are the same, which would mean there is truth to both ways of looking at it. In the case of Wuguang, however, the ritual he describes and the talismans he used are found in both texts. See Adeline Herrou, "A Day in the Life of Daoist Monk," *Journal of Daoist Studies* 3 (2010): 121-122. Also see Philip S. Cho, "Healing and Ritual Imagination in Chinese Medicine: The Multiple Interpretations of *Zhuyou*," *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 38 (2013): 71-113. Online: <http://www.eastm.org/index.php/journal/article/view/666/578> (accessed Mar. 9, 2016).

use this rite in order to summon the deity through reciting incantations and ingesting enchanted elixirs for forty-nine days in a specially chosen location. He said it didn't work though and nothing happened. Not giving up, Wuguang visited a master who taught a form of taboo folk talismanic rites 符仔仙 that a friend told him about. The taboo nature of these rites are due to their being associated with necromancy and curses.<sup>275</sup> After studying with him and creating his own talismans, Wuguang says he went home and tried them out. Again, nothing happened. Finally, from a source he found more trustworthy, he heard of a master who was able to summon spirits, his mastery and success of which was reportedly testified to by his being able to manipulate a strip of bamboo which would break into two, yet in fact not be broken. Wuguang states that this particular master wished to perform the spirit-summoning ritual atop a deserted mountain. Due to Wuguang's detailed account, we will rely on his words to tell the story. Those involved are Wuguang, his friend Mr. Hong 江先生, the master Mr. Fan 范先生 and two of his students who are left unnamed:

Mr. Hong, Mr. Fan and I rode in my car, passing over a large river on our way up the mountain. On the first leg of the journey, there were many boulders justting out of the road. Despite my flooring the accelerator, we got stuck. So we left the car at the bottom of the mountain and walked to our goal atop the mountain. When we got there it was already dusk. We ate dinner, and then began the ritual. In preparation of the ritual two extremely cordial disciples of [Mr. Fan] tested the bamboo, which was approximately three inches in diameter and broken into two stips. After dinner a table was brought, upon which were placed two candles, an incense censor, three cups of alcohol, four pieces of fruit, etc. Mr. Fan lit a large amount of incense sticks whose smoke rippled through the sky as it was caught by a breeze. [Mr. Fan's] two students raised the bamboo strip. Mr. Fan then began reciting incantations while holding a bowl filled with water in his left hand and carving symbols in the air with a sword he held in his right. Upon concluding the chant he spat holy water and alcohol onto the bamboo and clasped his hands. But it had no effect. He tried again, and again, up to twelve times. Since it was sprinkling, Mr. Hong and I were watching from beneath an overhaning. Mr. Fan then shouted, "How strange! Why is there no miraculous response?" Mr. Hong then said to me, "Brother, the spirits probably don't dare come here because of our presence." I was not convinced of that explanation. Well, that was how the ritual ended.

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<sup>275</sup> See Chi Kao 高旗, "A Study on Fishermens' Folklore in Keelung: Taboos and Religious Beliefs in Waimushan Fishing Village 基隆漁民俗研究: 以外木山漁村之信仰與禁忌為例" (MA thesis, National Taiwan Ocean University, 2011), 117.

It then suddenly began to pour, a torrent that continued through the next day that prevented us from going down the mountain. How strange, if we had been able to drive the car up the mountain, we would have been unable to go down [in this weather]. In the end, we made our way down the mountain with umbrellas, then drove the car from the bottom of the mountain back to Mr. Fan's home. Mr. Fan accepted my payment of 10,000 Taiwanese dollars, but it probably did not feel good. [To make up for the mountaintop failure] he transmitted to me the entire ritual technology regarding the ritual that he had tried to perform. I never tried it though, so I do not know if it is actually efficacious.<sup>276</sup>

Despite each of this miserably failed attempts, Wuguang continued to dedicate himself to studying religion. He attempted to procure as many Daoist scriptures as he could, but very few were available and those that he did find he found incomprehensible.

He states that when he was thirty-three his father suddenly became ill and passed away in three days. The grief left him torn between throwing himself further into religious practice and taking on further responsibilities of being the family breadwinner. In search of an answer, he lit incense in the altar outside his house and prayed for guidance. He then went to sleep, hoping for a dream that would show him the way. No such dream occurred. Three days later, however, he was visited by a friend who reported that he had numerous Daoist religious books. Unable to read them, he offered to give them to Wuguang. Wuguang states that he read them all, many times over, but did not understand much of anything they said. He continued to inquire about where to locate religious texts and later heard that the local temples belonging to the Xiantian sect 先天派 and Jintong sect 金童派 of Zhaijiao had a number of valuable religious works that

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<sup>276</sup> Wuguang, *Cangsang huiyilu*. Original text: “我與江老 先生及范先生坐我的車開往, 過了大溪爬上山, 但到爬山的第一段崎坡時, 中間有一寸多的石頭自路底凸出路面, 我加油衝了幾次都衝不過去. 然後車就放於山下, 徒步上山到目的地。時已經黃昏, 準備吃晚飯後再開始作法, 該二位兄弟亦非常親切, 要試驗用的竹亦準備好, 該竹約有三寸徑破成二片。晚飯吃後就搬來一隻桌, 放於庭中燃起二支蠟燭, 一個香爐, 還有三杯清酒, 四果等供物, 范先生燻起一大把的線香, 香煙被了微風吃拂, 遙遙飄飄透上天空, 二位兄弟抬起竹片, 范先生就念起咒語左手托一碗水, 右手作劍印於中虛寫符字, 然後將咒水噴洒於竹片上, 用雙手將竹片拿合, 但都無效, 再做幾次至十二點, 我與江老先生因為下了少雨故坐於房屋的簷下觀摩, 范先生大呼奇怪! 為什麼不靈。江老先生對我說, 師兄, 大概是我們在此鬼神不敢來, 我不以為然。這場作法就此結束。隨即下了大雨至翌日, 不能下山, 說也奇怪, 若果昨天車能開上山, 今天怎能下山呢, 後來打傘下山, 在山下開車回到雙冬范先生處, 范先生受我給他的代價一萬元, 大概是過不去, 他就將合竹的符咒秘訣全部傳給我, 後來我尚未試驗過, 是否確實有靈驗卻不知道。”

were related to Daoist internal alchemy. However, he was told that before seriously engaging in Daoist alchemical practices one must study the art of making Daoist apotropaic devices 符咒法, which represent a clear example of ‘magic.’<sup>277</sup> This would enable him to control the forces of nature 呼風喚雨 (literally ‘breathe wind and summon rain’) and evoke supernatural beings for protection. This led him to seek out a master of talisman making in Tainan County. In order to receive the talismans needed to wield power over the natural world, disciples—of whom there were many—had to go through a number of preliminary practices and then enter into a retreat. The preliminary practices consisted of chanting various incantations, self-immolation, painting the body in red Chinese characters and ingesting edible talismans 紅符. These practices eventually culminated in a forty-nine day mountaintop retreat that was spent sitting alone in a dark room performing meditation and esoterically transmitted religious technologies. As the retreaters could not leave the room, all food was brought to them. At the end of the retreat, everyone went down from the mountain and crossed a bridge. At the other end of the bridge, the talisman master was waiting for them. Each disciple in turn pulled a lot corresponding to a specific deity that determined which set of talismans he would be given. Wuguang reports that he attempted to use them in his practices, but he got nothing at all from them.

## Analysis

Despite this recurring theme of total disappointment, Wuguang continued to practice on his own, even without a master. In Wuguang’s autohagiography, he states that while living in Kaohsiung’s Zuoying District 左營區 he began searching for what in English is often referred to as the ‘Golden Elixir,’ ‘Cinnabar’ or ‘Elixir of Life’ which are all translations of the character

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<sup>277</sup> See this dissertation’s Introduction, “Magic.”

*dan* 丹 meaning ‘pellet.’ The process of creating this elixir is referred to as ‘refining the elixir’ 煉丹 (also 鍊丹 or 練丹), whose connotations encapsulate the soteriological aims of multiple Daoist practices. This elixir has many different meanings, both physical and transcendental. Its distillation can represent achieving immortality, a godlike existence, supreme understanding of the nature of reality or all of the above. The belief in this elixir is prehistoric and thus remains in obscurity. Due to this ancientness, there are countless traditions of both past and present concerning its attainment. Typically, these different modes are categorized as either ‘external’ *wai* 外 or ‘internal’ *nei* 內 as explained by Fabrizio Pregadio:

In its various formulations, the Way of the Golden Elixir is characterized by a foundation in doctrinal principles, first set out in the founding texts of Taoism, concerning the relation between the Dao and the world of multiplicity. *Waidan* and *neidan* are two paradigmatic forms of practice, with several varieties for each of them, devised on the basis of those principles. Both forms of practice are centered on the notion of refining (*lian* 鍊, 煉) the ingredients of the outer or the inner elixir—inanimate matter in *waidan*, and the primary constituents of the cosmos and the human being, namely essence, pneuma, and spirit (*jing*, *qi*, *shen*), in *neidan*. The Chinese alchemical tradition has therefore three aspects, namely a doctrinal level and two main forms of practice, respectively based on the refining of an “outer” or an “inner” elixir.<sup>278</sup>

The refining of the elixir thus refers to both external (*waidan*) and internal (*neidan*) means.

External means constitute what the word ‘alchemy’ connotes in a Western sense, as in creating various potions and concoctions. Although benevolent, *waidan* potions often contain ingredients most people would find quite unappetizing. These Daoist potions are used in order to initiate a miraculous transformation of the body of those who ingest them. These elixirs have caused the deaths of numerous people, including Chinese royalty, for thousands of years.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Fabrizio Pregadio, “*Jindan*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>279</sup> Ho Peng Yoke, *Explorations in Daoism: Medicine and Alchemy in Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 79.

Internal practices are very different. They are often built around breath regulation and achieving a form of union with specific deities and celestial beings who correspond to the human organs. Via breath practices devotees ‘refine’ their breath—which is also referred to as the life force and substratum of the Daoist universe, *qi* 氣—while the deity practices are intended to render one’s body a manifestation of pure divinity by housing the corresponding deities within the human organs.<sup>280</sup> The aim of these deity practices is to essentially ‘transform the body’ 變身 and ‘mutate into a god’ 變神.<sup>281</sup> Deity practices are extremely *reserché* and examples of such are largely limited to the Daoist textual tradition. Breath practices, on the other hand are extremely popular and form the foundations of Taiji Quan 太極拳 and Qigong 氣功. The three “primary constituents of the cosmos and the human being” Pregadio referred to above, essence 精, pneuma 氣 (translated by me as ‘breath’ above), and spirit 神 (also ‘god’), form a trinity of sacrality known as the ‘Three Treasures’ 三寶 of Daoism. These treasures are aspects of a human being that act as agents by which one smelts the elixir, by ‘refining one’s essence into pneuma’ 鍊精化氣, ‘refining ones pneuma into spirit’ 鍊氣化神 and finally ‘refining spirit to return to the void’ 鍊神還虛.<sup>282</sup> When this void is reached, one has become an ‘immortal’ or ‘transcendent’ 仙.

Although I have presented these practices as independent from one another, the doctrines and rituals of which they are constructed overlap. These fuzzy boundaries are evident in Wuguang’s practice as he performed them in relationship with one another. Regarding his personal quest for the elixir, Wuguang wrote that he would gather herbs and other materials in

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<sup>280</sup> James Miller, *Daoism: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008), 79.

<sup>281</sup> See Shin-Yi Chao, *Daoist Rituals, State Religion, and Popular Practices: Zhenwu Worship from Song to Ming (960-1644)*, Routledge Studies in Taoism (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), 53-76.

<sup>282</sup> Pregadio, “*Jindan*.”

order to create alchemical concoctions. These he ingested in correlation to the performance of various Daoist bodily practices such as Daoyin 導引, often referred to colloquially in English as ‘Daoist Yoga,’<sup>283</sup> which bear resemblance to both Qigong and Yoga. This has been confirmed by three external sources. According to a contemporary Zhaijiao practitioner, Wuguang’s alchemical concoctions were well known and, in fact, highly sought after during this time by people who wished to purchase them. In a non-structured interview he stated that Wuguang operated a laboratory in Kaohsiung’s Zuoying District, listed in his autohagiography as his residence during this exact time. This individual described Wuguang’s alchemical laboratory, stating that Wuguang had an extremely large cauldron-like pot that was around one meter tall in which he would simmer his mixtures for several days.<sup>284</sup>

Similarly, Shinzen Young recalled that during his time with Wuguang he saw him perform strange yoga-like practices and fast. During the fasts Shinzen said that Wuguang would take “some secret herbal concoction that he found in some old book.”<sup>285</sup> In this account from Young, we find the exact religious practices that Wuguang claims to have performed. Notable is the fact that Young’s account are of observations he made in 1972, some twenty years after Wuguang lived in Kaohsiung’s Zuoying District. This tells us that Wuguang not only truthfully engaged in the practices he claims to have, but that he continued to do so for decades to come.

The other source who confirms this aspect of Wuguang’s religious life during this time speaks to the bodily practices he claims to have performed. The cover of an early copy of Wuguang’s first published book, *The Art of Yogic Nourishment and the Esoteric Path* 瑜珈養生

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<sup>283</sup> A full-length book dedicated to Daoyin is Livia Kohn, *Chinese Healing Exercises: The Tradition of Daoyin* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

<sup>284</sup> Personal conversation with a Zhaijiao devotee, Dehua Hall 德化堂, Tainan, Mar. 2015.

<sup>285</sup> Shinzen Young, personal communication, Oct. 24, 2014.



術與祕密道 boasts the signet 印章 and printed name of Yanjing (see figure 4). In the previous chapter we saw that Yanjing was one of the key figures in the First Taiwanese Buddhist Revival. He was educated in the Japanese run Rinzai school in Taipei, Taixu's Nanputuo Academy in China and Hanazono University in Kyoto. As a modern reformer, he emphasized education as the way to improve the Taiwanese *samgha*. Signets, colloquially referred to as 'chops,' bear the same weight and have the same function as a handwritten signature in the West.<sup>286</sup> Similar to an official 'signing off' on a document, this signifies a 'stamp of approval' or ownership. Throughout the book, Wuguang speaks of not only Yoga, but also Daoyin, Qigong and similar subjects related to internal refinement. The fact that Yanjing—an extremely famous and influential monk bent on modernizing Buddhism—believed in this work enough to grant it his signet and have his name printed on its cover attests to Wuguang's proficiency and knowledge of the subject material.

Yanjing's familiarity with Wuguang's non-Buddhist practices was one of the foundations of their relationship. Wuguang's performance of these practices in Kaohsiung overlapped his time working in construction. From the early 1960s up until 1973 Zhuxi Temple—of which Yanjing was the abbot at that time—was undergoing renovations and Wuguang had been hired to work on this project.<sup>287</sup> These renovations resulted in Zhuxi Temple's architectural transformation from an older to newer style (see figures 5-7). Wuguang took up residence in

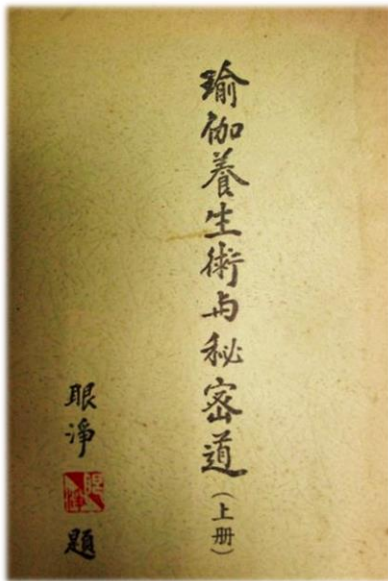
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<sup>286</sup> In contemporary Taiwan, signets are still preferred over handwritten signatures for signing rental agreements, vehicle titles and all forms of legal transitions. As I have always preferred to use my own signature, believing it to be much harder to duplicate that a signet bearing my Chinese name, Bai Kangdi 白康地, as a foreigner I have been allowed to sign my name and accompany it with a red-stamped finger print. Red is the color used for the signet stamp.

<sup>287</sup> This period of reconstruction is memorialized in a stele that currently stands at Zhuxi Temple that I saw on Aug. 2, 2013.

Zhuxi Temple in a cell facing Yanjing's. Yanjing urged Wuguang to become a monk and, although he was initially reluctant, he eventually did.

It is at this point when a number of worlds collided. The ideologies and exploits discussed in the previous chapters constituted attempts to eradicate every religious practice performed by Wuguang detailed in this chapter. Yanjing—at least to a certain extent—embraced these efforts. Thus, Wuguang and Yanjing's meeting was one between premodern and modern religion—a relationship that helped give birth to Wuguang's reenchanting Buddhist modernism. It was also when our “heavenly vagabond,” Wuguang, was put in a very structured environment for the first time in his adult life. As to be expected, the friction caused out of these tensions eventually led to some remarkable developments. As we are about to see, even though Wuguang became a monk, he was not entirely suited for monastic life.



**Figure 4:** Cover of 1972 copy of Wuguang's *The Art of Yogic Nourishment and the Esoteric Path*. Image supplied by MSBL member and reproduced with full permission.



**Figure 5:** Modern façade of Zhuxi Temple.



**Figure 6:** Modern façade of Zhuxi Temple.



**Figure 7:** Older gate of Zhuxi Temple.

## Section IV: Middle Age

The reader may have already noticed one facet of Wuguang's practices that I have yet to highlight: their solitary nature. Each and every 'master' we have yet to see Wuguang speak of was one who he, in the end, saw as a charlatan. Given the fact that the traditional scriptures in

which the techniques that Wuguang was attempting to implement are written in a very esoteric nature, it would have been extremely challenging for Wuguang to follow their directions properly. We saw him admit this fact above when, after obtaining Daoist texts he confesses that he found them largely incomprehensible. The unsupervised nature of his quest came to end—at least temporarily—at Zhuxi Temple with his meeting Yanjing. Yanjing redirected Wuguang's spiritual quest by reorienting his spiritual compass. From Wuguang's perspective, his whole search for preternatural capabilities had, thus far, been one oriented externally as he had been seeking spiritual power through sources other than himself. This changed during a conversation with Yanjing where Wuguang asked him to clarify a passage within a Daoist text that he found incomprehensible. Yanjing's answer:

To refine the elixir, is to refine your mind. A mind that does not move is called 'the elixir.' Awakening the mind is distilling the elixir. Refining the elixir or sitting in Chan/Zen meditation are both methods. If you are unable to awaken your mind, no matter how much you refine, you are still just an unenlightened person.<sup>288</sup>

This encounter happened around the same time that Wuguang heard of someone in Kaohsiung who owned a laundromat. This person was a very advanced practitioner of Daoist alchemy and had a hard spot within his stomach that he claimed was in fact, a physical manifestation of having distilled the elixir within his body. However, he faced medical complications and it turned out it was an advanced malignant tumor and he died shortly thereafter. This adds a whole new dimension to our understanding of why Wuguang chose to turn to Buddhism. Wuguang was immediately very impressed with Yanjing, most notably his humble manner and how he paid no attention to normal hierarchical protocol but treated everyone as his equal. Yanjing evidently

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<sup>288</sup> Wuguang, *Cangsang huiyilu*. Original text: “練丹就是練心，心不動曰丹，悟了心即服了丹，練丹或坐禪都是手段，若不能了悟心，任你練幾世都是凡夫。”

liked Wuguang very much as well and invited Wuguang to live in Zhuxi Temple in the room opposite his own cell.

As noted, Zhuxi temple was undergoing a renovation project and Wuguang's initial reason for living there was to become a temple secretary and supervise the project and its funds. Not too long after, Yanjing encouraged Wuguang to formally leave behind his secular life and become a monk. Wuguang agreed, and returned to his wife to tell her the news. Wuguang recounted this heartbreaking scene for us:

Not long thereafter, the monk [Yanjing] motivated me to become a monk. I returned home to collect my things, just two outfits tucked under my arm. I said "See you later," to my wife and she asked "Where are you going?" "I am going to renounce [and become a Buddhist monk]," I replied. I had thought this would not be an issue, since we were both used to my being a transnational vagabond. This time, however, she was heartbroken and started weeping. She wept and wept and could not speak. When our little daughter saw her mommy crying she grabbed tightly on my leg and would not let go. "Daddy, where are you going?" she asked. Like my wife, I could not muster the will to speak. I picked her up and hugged her then handed her over to her mother and said, "You be a good girl and play with mommy." Her crying mother said, "Because of your wandering to the far corners of the earth your younger brother always bullied me. Now that all of your brothers have moved out into their own houses, I had wanted you to stay here with me and we could have a wonderful life together, but now you want to renounce. How am I supposed to go on?" I felt absolutely horrible, but I did not want to stay there with my wife. I only got married in the first place because my parents had pressured me to do so in order to keep tabs on me. With a heavy heart I tried to say that I was going to stay, but the sentence was cut short by acid rising from the pit of my stomach. So, I left.<sup>289</sup>

Thus, Wuguang became a tonsured monk in 1957, two years after becoming a Buddhist. Despite the heartbreaking nature of the above story, he kept in touch with his wife and children, the latter who still come to celebrate Wuguang's birthday and commemorate his death at the MSBL's head temple. One of his sons also expressed the desire to follow in his father's footsteps and become a

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<sup>289</sup> Wuguang *ibid.* Original text: "經過不久 和尚鼓勵我出家，我就回去帶行裡，簡單衣服二著包成一策夾在腋下，向妻子說再見，她問：你要到那裡。我答：要去出家。本來我是常在國外流浪已經成了習慣是不會怎樣的，但這時她都悲傷流淚，掩面哭不成聲，小女孩看她母親哭泣就抱住我的腳緊緊不放，問：爸爸你要到那裡？我亦不能回答，將她抱給她的媽媽，你乖乖跟媽媽玩啊，她的媽媽哭著說，以前你流浪天涯，使我被你的弟弟欺負，現在他們都各自成家去了，本想你能留下來，過著幸福的生活，至今又是要出家，叫我怎麼過日呢！我大感怨嘆，當時不想帶家後娶妻子，卻被父母強迫成家，連累我的行止，想了大傷心亦將流出的酸淚吞到肚子裡，半句話都說不出，我就出了家門了。"

monk, but Wuguang told him to return home and take care of his mother.<sup>290</sup> Nevertheless, that son eventually grew up and received *abhiṣeka* from Wuguang, becoming an MSBL priest.

As a tonsured monk, Wuguang practiced Chan/Zen meditation, scriptural chanting and taught classes on Buddhism around Tainan. He is also reported to have engaged in anti-missionary activities, targeting Christian lecturers. In an account by a Christian missionary, Wuguang is said to have passed out anti-missionary pamphlets whose text is quoted and annotated in the following passage:

In 1962, the monk Quanmiao [Wuguang] rebuked a missionary in front of hundreds of people at Tainan's Kangle [market]...he vehemently attacked Christianity shamelessly in front of everyone and gave the following criticism: "You see! Jesus is worse than the [legendary thief] Daozhi,<sup>291</sup> his doctrines are diametrically opposed to the words of the sages! Therefore it is unfitting to refer to the New and Old Testaments as a Bible. Secondly, the New and Old Testaments teach people to kill, not only to kill but to massacre entire cities with the utmost rage. You see this kind of god, 'it' is the most violent, cruel and selfish ever spoken of. Is this a god or THE God? He is a master bandit, the primordial evil, he is nothing but a *yakṣa* or *rākṣasa*." He then gave an even greater criticism, "Jesus promoted discord, if everyone believed in Jesus no one would get married and have children, which would mean that the elderly would have no one to take care of them and be filial...I believe the New and Old Testaments are the most evil writings ever produced...Jesus is just a myth, his name should be changed to [reflect] his true nature."<sup>292</sup>

In addition to displaying Wuguang's anti-Christian sentiment, this passage contains specific—rather than general—condemnations of Judeo-Christian scripture. The violent massacres Wuguang refers too are undoubtedly those found in the Old Testament (Joshua: 6:17) while his hypothetical, "if everyone believed in Jesus no one would get married and have children, which would mean that the elderly would have no one to take care of them and be filial" was clearly

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<sup>290</sup> Semi-structured interview with a number of Wuguang's offspring, Jan. 2014.

<sup>291</sup> Daozhi 盜跖, is a legendary robber and marauder believed to have lived during the Spring and Autumn period 春秋时代 (c. 771- c. 481) found throughout Chinese literature and folklore.

<sup>292</sup> Timothy Kung 龔天民, *A Study in Buddhist Ksitigarbha and Yama-Raja* 地藏菩薩與羅王真相 (Taipei: Daosheng, 1990). Online: <http://www.jonahome.net/files/dizhangwang/3/2.htm> (accessed Jan. 18, 2015).



aimed at Jesus telling his disciples they must abandon their families to become his followers (Luke 14: 25-7). The upshot is that Wuguang had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible.

Despite articulating his anti-Christian standpoint through evoking Buddhist beliefs in demonic beings, he believed himself to be unfit for monkhood and came to feel as though he was leading a double life. Externally, he was a devoted Chan monk while internally he was wracked with doubts and even regretted entering the monkhood at all. When giving lectures, he was able to speak eloquently and answer parishioners' questions. However, he felt like a total phony who did not believe in what he was saying. He felt that the answers he gave in response to parishioners' questions were shallow and only functioned to give people peace of mind. He also found his Chan meditation practice unfulfilling.

This inner turmoil motivated him to seek counsel from Yanjing, whom he asked, "What is the main point of meditation?" Yanjing answered, "Chan is not in sitting, it is in awakening." Wuguang then asked, "What is awakening?" "Awakening the mind," replied Yanjing. Wuguang was not much impressed with this answer.

Wuguang tells us that these conflicting emotions caused him to fantasize about leaving the monkhood. The only reason he remained a monk at this point was because he dreaded the loss of face that he would inevitably suffer by disappointing everyone whom he had forced to make personal sacrifices in pursuit of his religious quest. Being privy to the tear-stained scene in which he left his wife and family, we can understand his concern. Having nowhere to turn,

Wuguang remained at Zhuxi Temple and in the late 1960s became a fully ordained monk at the Japanese-built Rinzai temple in Taipei.<sup>293</sup>

Seeking solace, Wuguang relates that he decided to on a religious retreat 閉關 out in the wilderness. In preparation, he began delegating his responsibilities to other Zhuxi Temple monks and with the increased free time, started building a small, concrete hut near a mountaintop waterfall in Kaohsiung's rural Liugui District 高雄六龜區. Once the hut was constructed and his responsibilities covered, he approached Yanjing to ask for leave. Yanjing said no, stating "One who has yet to enlighten the ground of the mind, cannot go into the mountains." However, Yanjing did allow him to enter into retreat within the monastery walls where Wuguang could remain alone in his own room.

Before entering the retreat, Wuguang visited Zhuxi Temple's library to search the Chinese *Tripitaka* for all instances of Chan/Zen recorded sayings literature 禪宗語錄 as the study thereof was to be a crucial element of his solitary practice. Once his retreat began, Wuguang claims to have spent the entire day on his bed oscillating between studying the Chan/Zen texts and performing Chan/Zen meditation in half hour intervals. This regiment put a strain on his body to the point that he could hardly walk. When Yanjing would visit him—something Wuguang says he did quite often—he would knock on the door to Wuguang's cell with his walking stick. The pain in Wuguang's legs was so severe that it would sometimes make it impossible for him to stand, forcing him to roll off of the bed and onto the floor from where he

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<sup>293</sup> According to his disciples the year was 1967. However, 1966 is listed as the year in Kuo Yongkun 郭永坤, *Guangmingwang si* 光明王寺 [Temple of Universal Brightness], found on the website of the Buddhist Association of Kaohsiung 大高雄佛教會, <http://nknush.kh.edu.tw/~volunteer/data/te001.pdf> (accessed Dec. 6, 2015).



would crawl to the door. He imagined this insane display prompted Yanjing to suspect that was suffering from demonic possession.

Wuguang reports that a lay devotee visited him during the fourth month of this retreat and informed him that a master of Tibetan Buddhism from China had recently been coming to Tainan. She was in search of an established Buddhist community that would allow her to teach the Dharma, but had been turned down by every temple in Tainan that she had approached—including Kaiyuan Temple, Zhuxi Temple's head temple. Wuguang became interested in the possibility of learning from this master as he was unfamiliar with Tibetan Buddhism: an interest intertwined with the hope for the potential to reinvigorate his religious practice. This Tibetan master was the female Elder Gongga of the Tantric Revival spoken of in the previous chapter. In 1960, Wuguang used his position at Zhuxi Temple to organize the ten-day Dharma event featuring Elder Gongga where she transmitted *phowa* practices. During this event Wuguang became a disciple of Elder Gongga and then began studying Karma Kagyu esoteric rituals.<sup>294</sup> He also helped secure a place for Gongga and her followers to live and practice at Zhuxi Temple. He set them up in the dormitory used for the Buddhist Academy Yanjing had established at Zhuxi Temple, Miaoming Vihara 妙明精舍, which Wuguang himself had helped construct. He also designated a place for Gongga to stay near the monastery's ossuary stūpa 靈骨塔.<sup>295</sup> This was to ensure her privacy since people would not come there due to the association with death.

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<sup>294</sup> Lo Wei-shu, "A Study of the Development of Chongqing Temple in Tainan and its Relationship to the Development of Tibetan Buddhism in Southern Taiwan," 316-317.

<sup>295</sup> Huang Hui Li 黃慧琍, "The First Research of Tibetan Traditional Buddhism Development---Base on the Tibetan Tradition Buddhism Group in Tainan Area, 藏傳佛教在台發展初探——以台南地區的藏傳佛教團體為研究對象" (MA thesis, National University of Tainan, 2000), 54.

Wuguang's tutelage under Elder Gongga was short-lived. Wuguang states that he became disillusioned with Elder Gongga after she appointed a new disciple to lead the community. He reports that this was done behind his back and that a number of Elder Gongga's followers in Tainan perceived it as a slight to Wuguang, as he had contributed so much to the community and had been Elder Gongga's assistant during lectures. Wuguang wrote that he decided not to defend his position in order to avoid creating ripples within the community and make the newly appointed leader lose face, and therefore Wuguang severed his ties to the fledgling community. Another version of the reason for Wuguang's estrangement from Elder Gongga is told by her followers. They state that it was rooted in differences in Buddhist practice. As some Tibetan Buddhist rituals involve the ingestion of meat—which is forbidden in orthodox Chan Buddhism—Wuguang eventually banned the practice of Tibetan Buddhism at Zhuxi Temple.<sup>296</sup> Even if this latter account is closer to the truth, it does not seem to mark the end of Wuguang's involvement within the community as he claims to have continued to practice with them even after they vacated Zhuxi Temple.<sup>297</sup> There is also evidence that Wuguang personally continued to perform Tibetan Buddhist practices privately while living at Zhuxi Temple.<sup>298</sup> Although Wuguang portrays his time with Gongga and her community as signifying the entirety of his formal study of Tibetan Buddhism under a master, he contradicts this in his autohagiography by

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<sup>296</sup> Fabienne Jagou, "Tibetan Buddhism in the Tainan Area: A Case Study of Two Karma bKa'rgyud School Monasteries" (paper presented at the Third International Conference on Tainan studies with the theme Religion in Transformation in the Tainan Area, National Museum of Taiwan Literature, Oct 21, 2012).

<sup>297</sup> Between the time Gongga's community left Zhuxi Temple and found a permanent ritual space, they practiced at a small sanctuary in Tainan called Dehua Hall 德化堂 as noted in Lo Wei-shu, "A Study of the Development of Chongqing Temple in Tainan," 316-317. In Wuguang's autohagiography he states that he was teaching at Dehua Hall at that time per the invitation of the sanctuary's leadership. Wuguang's having taught at Dehua Hall was confirmed to me by the sanctuary's elders on Mar. 29, 2015. However, they did not recall Gongga's presence.

<sup>298</sup> Shinzen Young, personal correspondence, Oct. 21, 2014.

stating that he received the Tibetan version of the Adamantine Armor Mantra from the Buddhist reformer Nan Huai-Chin (Nan Huajin 南懷瑾, 1918-2012).<sup>299</sup>

After breaking away from Gongga and her community, he figured that he should return to Japan and study at Hanazono University like Yanjing and a number of his other Dharma-kin had done. As Wuguang could not afford to make this happen on his own, he needed financial assistance from the monastery. After inquiring into this possibility, he was informed that it was impossible. This impossibility, we are told, is due to another Zhuxi Temple monk's failure to pay his tuition when at Hanazono University only a short time before. This debt caused a lien to be put against the monastery.

With the squashing of yet another dream, Wuguang once again entered into retreat, for real this time. He decided to finally make good on his earlier plans and seek answers in the small hut he had constructed near the mountaintop waterfall. Wuguang says that he took along two lay members of Zhuxi Temple who wanted to come with him and one other companion. All three of these companions are left unnamed, but we do know that the first two were human and the last one was spiritual. Wuguang believed that while on retreat he was shadowed by a Dharma-protector 護法 (Skt. *dharmapāla*). Dharma-protectors are relatively minor deities in the Buddhist pantheon who are often of non-Buddhist origins.<sup>300</sup> Dharma-protectors are often given wrathful visual depictions, expressing their abilities to protect people from both internal and external threats.

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<sup>299</sup> Currently, there is nothing more known about Wuguang's encounter with Nan Huai-chin as neither Wuguang's writings nor any of his disciples have been forthcoming with such information.

<sup>300</sup> Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 249-250.

Wuguang commenced his retreat by reciting the Adamantine Armor Mantra 200,000 times over the span of 48 hours. Perhaps due to this, two major developments reportedly occurred during this retreat. The first is not found in any of his writings and represents a modern oral myth among his students. The second is in his autohagiography. Both are fantastical. To appreciate the details of the first story one must first have a basic knowledge of Taiwan's geography, climatology, topography and zoology.

Taiwan sits in the northern subtropics and rests upon the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim also known as the 'Ring of Fire' for its high level of geothermic activity. Because of this activity and global position, over half of Taiwan is covered in mountains and frequently rocked by earthquakes as well as typhoons. Additionally, there is a rainy season popularly known as the 'Plum Rains' 梅雨 during late spring and early summer. For a number of reasons, the most dangerous place to be caught during such a storm is in the mountains. First, rain falls heavier and lasts longer in the mountains due to the lower temperatures at higher elevations that cause the moisture in the clouds to condensate at a higher rate. The dangers posed by heavy precipitation are additionally exacerbated by the sloping hills, which are largely untouched by the hand of man. The mixture between frequent earthquakes and regular downpours coupled with the slope of the land are the perfect recipe for flashfloods, avalanches and mudslides—each being potentially deadly. Additionally, infrastructure and even home dwellings in the mountainous regions are generally much shabbier than those in the flatlands. The former is due to governmental neglect of rural areas and the latter due to the generally lower socioeconomic status of those who live in the mountainous regions as well as relatively lackadaisical enforcement of zoning and building codes. Also, the rural nature of the mountains as well as the lower socio-economic status of its residents leads to cheaper, less stable habitation structures.

This can be seen by the dual home-ownership of more well-to-do Taiwanese aboriginals of the Paiwan Tribe 排灣族, who are concentrated in southern and eastern Taiwan. Over successive waves of colonization, Taiwanese aboriginals have been forced out of their agricultural holdings in the lowlands by ethnic Chinese settlers and pushed into the less-hospitable mountainous regions. This is the source for the racial terms ‘mountain land people’ 山地人 and ‘flat land people’ 平地人 to refer to Taiwanese of aboriginal and Chinese descent respectively. The former term is considered offensive, but the latter is not. Well-to-do aboriginals often maintain dual home-ownership, having a house in their tribal mountain village and one in the lowlands. During both typhoons and the Plum Rains, these wealthier aboriginals prefer to live in their home in the lowlands due to the danger posed by the lethal combination of climate, topography and geology just detailed.<sup>301</sup> The lethality of this combination has caused entire village populations to relocate to charitably constructed towns in the lowlands after whole villages have been wiped from the face of the earth.<sup>302</sup> The other major threat one faces when in rural Taiwan is the prevalence of venomous snakes.

The fantastical tale we are about to hear is based upon these mundane geographic, topographic, climatological, geological and zoological features. I have gone into such detail concerning these features and their consequential dangers for this was the assumed knowledge of this story’s intended audience, without which the tale’s ‘street value’ is inevitably diminished. As I recount this tale—which was told to me by a MSBL member who holds a faculty position related to a scientific discipline at a Taiwanese university—we must keep in mind that

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<sup>301</sup> This information was gathered while periodically living in one such lowland aboriginal house in southern Taiwan between 2014 and 2016.

<sup>302</sup> Three such towns in southern Taiwan include: Rinari 禮那里, New Laiyi 新來義 and Wulaluzi 吾拉魯滋.

Wuguang's retreat took place in the mountains of rural Kaohsiung country in southern Taiwan where the rains are their most furious and dangerous.

The first, oral tale is an account of sudden enlightenment. Within Chan/Zen discourse a distinction is made between sudden enlightenment 頓悟 and gradual enlightenment 漸悟. The former asserts that enlightenment happens in a lightning flash moment of realization and the latter perceives it as the accumulation of steady spiritual progress. Most forms of Chan/Zen have embraced the former while denouncing the latter as inferior. This dichotomy, however, is extremely polemical and used in sectarian debates and should thus not be taken as a definitive construct.<sup>303</sup> Wuguang's tale of sudden enlightenment is set in his small hut near the mountaintop waterfall during his retreat and begins with him sitting in meditation while a storm rages outside. As the rain fell unabatedly, the lake at the bottom of the waterfall flooded the entire area around Wuguang's hut—yet not a drop of rain penetrated it nor did the rising flashflood-waters seep beneath the door. Not realizing that he was in fact being preternaturally protected, Wuguang sought to flee the mountains and seek shelter in the lowlands lest he risk being buried alive or hurled down the mountain in a mudslide. When he opened the door to leave, he was confronted by an abnormally large snake wrapped around one of the pillars that framed the doorway to his hut. Its head was poised at the center of the entrance presenting a gaping, fang-armed mouth. This sight is reported to have initiated a sudden enlightenment experience for Wuguang. He then closed the door and composed a *gāthā* 偈 entitled *One True Sentence of Dharma* 一真法句 to encapsulate the insight gained from this cognitive transformation. The next day, after the rain had stopped, Wuguang carved this *gāthā* onto a rock

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<sup>303</sup> John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 247.

that to commemorate this experience. However, believers who have sought out the hut and *gāthā*-engraved stone say that they are nowhere to be found. They attribute these disappearances to the earthquakes, typhoons, Plum Rains and mudslides that frequent this area.<sup>304</sup>

The other fantastical development is found within Wuguang's autohagiography. It details when Wuguang began to believe that he had acquired supernatural healing powers. He says he realized this after healing a veteran from advance-staged syphilis, restoring mobility to a young paralyzed man and restoring sanity to another—a chain of events that Wuguang claims garnered him the reputation as a faith healer. As this reputation spread, more and more people began seeking him out—even to heal their livestock. Wuguang says each of these healings was accomplished through practicing *adhiṣṭhāna* and reciting mantras.<sup>305</sup> He states that although he was thankful for this newfound ability, he did not understand it. He recalled Elder Gongga often stating that through the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, one would eventually “see living Buddhist deities and hear mantras from the sky,” but he had never believed such claims as they contradicted the disenchanted form of Buddhism that he had studied at Zhuxi Temple. He pondered whether the source of this ability was located either within or without of himself. He articulated this inner/outer dichotomy in terms of the ‘self power/other power’ 自力/他力 distinction that was crucial to the Japanese disenchanting typology in relation to the secular-religious-superstitious trinary as discussed in the previous chapter. The reader should recall that this dichotomy is central to Pure Land Buddhism and came to be used as a way to distinguish

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<sup>304</sup> Interview with one of Wuguang's oldest disciples, Aug. 2014.

<sup>305</sup> The next chapter contains a lengthy discussion on *adhiṣṭhāna*.

between superstitious and non-superstitious forms of religion in Japan and then later Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial period.<sup>306</sup>

As Wuguang had lost faith in Chan/Zen and had a negative experience with Tibetan Buddhism, he turned to the only other Buddhist alternative he had: Shingon. It is reported that Wuguang discovered Shingon's Tang Dynasty forerunner, Zhenyan, while studying the Chinese *Tripitaka* during this retreat. Seeking to determine whether his healing capabilities were derived from self or other power, he decided to go to Kōyasan, Japan.

## Analysis

This section detailed the events of Wuguang's life that occurred between the early 1950s and late 1960s. During this time he became a Chan monk, received a modernized Buddhist education under Yanjing's tutelage, studied Tibetan Karma Kagyu Buddhism, went on retreat, became a well-known folk healer and went into two solitary retreats. Thus, we have located the sources of his Chan/Zen, scientific, philosophical and Tibetan knowledge. Before even acquiring erudition and familiarity in these fields, he was already an advanced alchemist and practitioner of multiple forms of Daoist cultivation. Although he does not speak of his studies of Kundalini Yoga, this was another religious practice he is known to have engaged in.<sup>307</sup>

The tension born out of the integration of these disparate elements—as well as the friction between disenchanted and enchanted worldviews—plunged Wuguang into a period of doubt. This doubt is poignantly expressed in his desire to leave the monkhood and return home,

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<sup>306</sup> See pages 70-73.

<sup>307</sup> This is a well-known and popularly discussed fact among the members of the MSBL. It is also evidenced by his book on Yoga discussed above, as well as the first article he ever published, “*Wo dui misheng de kanfa* 我對密乘的看法 [My View of Esoteric Buddhism],” *Bodhedrum* 菩提樹 154 (1965): 8-11. This article details the connection between Yoga and esoteric Buddhism.



his retreats and his constant investigations of other religious traditions. These studies were not born out of mere curiosity, but were instigated by a lack of spiritual fulfillment. This void did not become filled until experiencing a moment of sudden enlightenment and subsequently gaining preternatural healing powers. However, the acquisition of these powers presented him with more questions—questions he articulated in Meiji-originating religious vs. superstitious typology.

The role the self/other-power dichotomy played in Wuguang's understanding of religion and magic cannot be overstated. Before his clear articulation of this dichotomy, he alluded to it in his initial conversation with Yanjing concerning 'refining the elixir.' Wuguang states that he realized that the entirety of the pre-Buddhist phase of his spiritual quest was one that was externally oriented—in other words, a pursuit of other-power. Only after encountering Yanjing did he decide he should be looking inwards to discover the self-power buried inside. Then, when he believed that he had in fact acquired the ability to perform actual magic, he wondered whether the existence of these powers contradicted or confirmed the modern typologies that he had learned. This shows us that the answer to this question determined whether or not Wuguang would become a modernist who built upon Buddhist engagements with modernity or a fundamentalist who rejected them. As we already know it was the former, it is unsurprising that he concluded that these powers originated within. In the next chapter, we will explore the repercussions of this conclusion. Now, we will continue to see how Wuguang's life unfolded after coming down from the mountain.

## **Section V: Maturity**

In 1970, Yanjing passed away. Wuguang states that while he was preparing to study in Japan—something that Yanjing had always encouraged him to do—Yanjing fell ill and was hospitalized. Seeing that Yanjing was not getting better, Wuguang convinced him to return to the

monastery and pass away in peace within its walls. Wuguang tells us that he took care of Yanjing for three days until his death and then made funeral arrangements. After Yanjing's affairs were posthumously put in order, Wuguang moved to Taipei and was given donations by devotees to travel to Japan. However, the money he was able to raise did not cover his tuition, so he did odd custodial jobs in order to supplement it.

In the hopes of going to Kōyasan, Wuguang wrote a letter to his grade school teacher—with whom he had lived in Japan while studying stenography—to try and make connections for him. He states that his teacher, who was living in Tōkyō at the time, drove all the way to Kōyasan to see what he could do. He then put Wuguang in touch with Meguro Ryūko 目黒隆幸, who was the head priest of Kōyasan's Henshōsonin 遍照尊院. Wuguang states that Meguro warned him that it would be difficult for him to study at Kōyasan since he was not Japanese, but still advised him to apply for a student visa and figure out the rest after arriving in Japan. Wuguang writes that this proved difficult as he had to additionally apply for permission to leave the country because of restrictions born out of Republican martial law. However, he eventually navigated the procedural difficulties and traveled to Kōyasan in 1971.

There are conflicting accounts of how Wuguang came to become a Shingon priest while in Japan. His only extant writings from this time do not speak of his experiences in Japan.<sup>308</sup> As the known Japanese individuals who played a role have all since passed away, we are limited to accounts from Wuguang, his students and those who knew him. Meguro Ryūko's involvement is attested to by the contact he kept not only with Wuguang, but even his posthumous followers

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<sup>308</sup> Wuguang's article, "*Guanyu 卍字 biaozheng zhi lunji 關於卍字表徵之論據* [Regarding the Controversy over the Direction of the Swastika]," *Bodhedrum 菩提樹* 227 (1971): 27, was written while he was in Kōyasan. However, it does not contain any details about Wuguang's time there.

who met with Meguro multiple times before the latter passed away. Amidst the different accounts concerning the details of what happened between Wuguang's arrival in Japan and initial return to Taiwan, they consistently imply that he encountered resistance. The tales told by himself and members of the MSBL all attribute this difficulty to Wuguang's non-Japanese ethnicity. However, I have also been informed that there was a Korean Buddhist studying with Wuguang at Kōyasan at that time.<sup>309</sup> Additionally, Shinzen Young who is from America became a Shingon priest before Wuguang did. The presence of these non-Japanese devotees questions the validity of the accounts that attribute Wuguang's initial difficulty at receiving training to his ethnicity. Nevertheless, we will view these first.

According to Wuguang, after he arrived at Kōyasan Meguro introduced him to Hotta Shinkai 堀田真快 (1890-1984), abbot of Kongōbuji 金剛峰寺. Wuguang says that he requested to become his disciple and study at his training hall 専修學院 but that Hotta refused both requests; the first because he did not take on personal disciples and the second because the training hall was not open to foreigners at that time. According to Dr. Huang Ying-Chieh (a.k.a. Tulku Palme Khyentse Rinpoche) of Huafan University in Taiwan, when he met Wuguang many years later, Wuguang related this story and added a detail not found in his autohagiography. Huang states that Wuguang told him that he responded to the Shingon priests who barred his entrance by likening his own situation to that of Kūkai's, stating that if Kūkai's Tang Dynasty Chinese teachers had been similarly exclusive then today there would be no such thing as Shingon.<sup>310</sup> In Wuguang's autohagiography it simply states that despite Hotta's refusal, he stayed

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<sup>309</sup> Interview with high-ranking MSBL member, May 2014.

<sup>310</sup> As reported in the personal blog of Dr. Huang Ying-Chieh (aka Tulku Palme Khyentse Rinpoche), associate professor of Huafan University. Online: <http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/gadegadepalagade/article?mid=486&prev=515&next=412&l=f&fid=14> (accessed July 10, 2013).

in Japan and began auditing classes and that this dedication helped Meguro persuade the abbot of Hōju-in 寶壽院, Kamei Senyū 亀位宣雄 to allow Wuguang to officially enroll as a student and eventually obtain *abhiṣeka*. Wuguang's students, based on either Wuguang's later embellishments or their own, have said that Wuguang waited outside of Hōju-in for three days in the snow without food or water to prove his loyalty.<sup>311</sup> A number of students have also said that he lied, claiming to be the newly appointed abbot of Zhuxi Temple in the hopes that this status would convince them to train and ordain him.<sup>312</sup> The fact that Zhuxi Temple's abbot, Yanjing, had just passed away makes it possible that such a lie had been told. Interestingly, during fieldwork at Zhuxi Temple one young nun—who had never met Wuguang—told me Wuguang was a previous abbot of Zhuxi Temple.<sup>313</sup>

Out of all these stories, there is possible corroboration in a photograph of Wuguang taken during this time. In this photo Wuguang is wearing an Avalokiteśvara hat 觀音帽 (a.k.a. swallowtail hat 燕尾; see figure 8). In Japan, this hat is worn by high-ranking monks—such as abbots—of very important temples at special occasions such as the funeral of a leading Buddhist figure or installation of a deity. It is not worn regularly, nor by common monks.<sup>314</sup> So the fact that Wuguang is wearing an abbot's hat while in Japan lends credibility to the claim that

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<sup>311</sup> Conversation with MSBL member, May 2014.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Conversation with Zhuxi Temple nun, Aug. 2, 2013.

<sup>314</sup> Victor G. Hori, personal correspondence, Aug. 6, 2013 and personal correspondence with the proprietor of Houi-Butsugu Shop 後藤新助法衣仏具店, Sept. 13, 2013. In searching for information regarding this particular religious piece of headgear—about which little to nothing is written—I wrote Dr. Hori due to his academic credentials and experience as a Japanese Zen monk. He detailed his personal knowledge regarding the hat and suggested I contact a merchant dealing in Japanese Buddhist ritual wear. Both Dr. Hori and the proprietor of the Houi-Butsugu Shop's having confirmed that the donning of this hat is limited to extremely high-ranking abbots of important temples.

he lied about his credentials. If this is true, he must have had a reason to lie. Being refused training would be the most logical reason for him to put on such a charade and masquerade as Zhuxi Temple's abbot. In regards to how Wuguang was perceived by the priests at Kōyasan, Shinzen Young stated, "I got the impression that at least some of the monks there recognized that he was already a master. I think they may have also been impressed with his proficiency in Tibetan practices."<sup>315</sup> Regarding these practices, and why others may have been impressed thereby, Shinzen related a story concerning Wuguang:



**Figure 8:** Wuguang, circa 1971.  
Image supplied by MSBL member.

I was initially drawn to him because of the depth of his practice and his attainments in Tibetan Vajrayāna. I don't know if he mastered all six of the "dharma of Naropa" or not, but I can attest to one thing: when I met him in Japan, he invited me to press my finger into his fontanel suture area. My finger went down in between the skullbones! He said that that was part of the *phowa* practice. It was pretty freaky.<sup>316</sup>

These short testimonies are revealing on a number of levels. First, they show that Wuguang did in fact attempt to project an air of authority as a Buddhist master while in Japan. It also shows that he very much flaunted the Tibetan aspect of his credentials. Lastly, the fact that Young states that Wuguang referenced *phowa*—the exact practices that we know Elder Gongga transmitted during the event Wuguang organized at Zhuxi Temple—adds further credibility to these accounts. Regarding exactly how Young met Wuguang while in Japan he relates:

I met Wuguang when he was still in training at the Shinbessho on Mt. Kōya. Shinbessho was a place for doing groupwide *kegyō* [Quadrilateral Cultivation]. It was something of an

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<sup>315</sup> Shinzen Young, personal communication, Oct. 24, 2014.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

innovation. The more traditional way was to do individual *kegyō* in an individual temple under a personal master. That's what I did under Nakagawa Zenkyo at Shinno-in.<sup>317</sup>

From this it appears that Wuguang was never the disciple of a single Shingon priest, despite the fact that all known accounts depict him as having sought out a personal master. Young relates that Wuguang was part of a “group wide” training course, meaning that it was in fact a large class of devotees being trained in the Quadrilateral Cultivation (“*kegyō*”). Young contrasts this with his own experience which entailed training under a private master. This more traditional kind of training involves one becoming a disciple 弟子 of a priestly teacher 師僧 and this relationship is registered when one begins training.<sup>318</sup> Thus, it was perhaps due to this transition between a master-disciple focused form of training to more “group wide” classes that caused Wuguang to initially seek out a personal priestly teacher and to be denied. This passage also gives greater detail about where Wuguang ended up studying and shows that he studied at a number of temples on Mt. Kōya. The one that Young mentions here, Shinbessho 真別處, is a popular name for Entsūritsu-ji 圓通律寺, which is a commonly used training hall.<sup>319</sup> Wuguang’s disciples say that he studied at Sanbō-in 三寶院, which is another training hall.<sup>320</sup> We cannot know for certain whether or not his having been trained in multiple locations was by choice, but from Wuguang’s own testimony as well as these other accounts thereof, it would appear that it was in fact out of necessity.

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Philip L. Nicoloff, *Sacred Kōyasan: a Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kōbō Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 192.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, 194 and 350.

<sup>320</sup> Chewei 徹威, “*Zhenyanzong conglaimiyou ‘jingang asheli’* 真言宗從來沒有「金剛阿闍梨」 [Zhenyan/Shingon has never had an ‘Adamantine Ācārya’],” *Fengshui Magazine* 129 (2008). Online: <http://fengshui-magazine.com.hk/No.129-Mar08/A54a.htm> (accessed Jan. 19, 2016). Chewei was a disciple of Wuguang and is currently the head of the MSBL’s Hong Kong branch.

Having received *abhiṣeka*, Wuguang returned to Tainan in 1972. Regarding this time, we can once again to draw upon Shinzen Young's account as he lived with Wuguang at Zhuxi

Temple:

I lived with Wuguang for about 8 months, just he and I together in a little corner of Zhuxisi. He had his bedroom and I had mine across from his. There was a Shingon altar [sic] in the main area. He also had an office. We were located right next to where the dead bodies were put before cremation. I seem to remember him saying something like he chose that place because people would tend not to come around due to the funereal associations. FYI, we always spoke Japanese. He was one of those Taiwanese who grew up under the Japanese and really liked the Japanese. I seem to remember that I used Mandarin with just about everyone else. I can tell you I don't think he had much of an organization built up around him at the time. One more tidbit. One night as I was sitting in my room, I heard a bunch of yelling and cursing in Taiwanese. When I went out, Wuguang was exorcising someone who had been training to become a medium, but it had gone badly and it turned into the Chinese equivalent of demonic possession. That was pretty interesting to watch.

I can also tell you something about his daily routine. It was amazing. He was the most clock-like, regular human I ever encountered. Every night from about 8-12, he would do a 4-hour sit in full lotus in his room. Then he would lie down for 4 hours attempting not to fall asleep, but deeply resting the body. Then he'd get up, go to his office, and begin his day—which, as I remember largely consisted of a stream of people seeking help in various ways. He was particularly known for his ability to psychically locate runaways.

He was one of my great role models for what it means to be a “functioning Bodhisattva.”

At that time he was interested in establishing credibility for *vajrayāna* by linking it to texts that already existed in the Chinese canon, the Tang dynasty Zhenyan works you alluded to. But I got the impression he felt Tibetan *vajrayana* was superior to the Japanese form.<sup>321</sup>

In the very first paragraph we see that when Wuguang returned to Taiwan he returned to Zhuxi Temple. We can also appreciate what a weird situation this must have been. In order to ensure his privacy, Wuguang set himself up near the ossuary stūpa, which, as he told Young, was to ensure his privacy. The reader should recall this is the same place Wuguang had designated for Elder Gongga to stay at Zhuxi Temple in the early 1960s. Within this relatively secluded section of the monastery grounds, Wuguang set up a Shingon altar. It was also where he established his office where he would spend his entire day attempting to help a great number of people—the majority of whom, implied by Young, sought Wuguang out for his reputation as a wonder-

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<sup>321</sup> Shinzen Young, personal correspondence, Oct. 24, 2014.

worker. This adds credence to Wuguang's claiming that while on retreat near the mountaintop waterfall, he acquired a reputation as a folk healer.

The fact that so many believers came to see him each day shows that this relatively secluded section of Zhuxi Temple was indeed a very publicly accessible place. Thus, we can readily identify exactly who Wuguang wanted to put distance between himself—other Zhuxi Temple monastics. We saw that Wuguang performed strenuous meditation during his private retreat at Zhuxi Temple that caused Yanjing to entertain the possibility that Wuguang had become possessed (or perhaps had lost his mind). During that time though, Wuguang's room was across from Yanjing's. Now that Yanjing was gone, and Wuguang was additionally performing exorcisms—on monastic grounds in a modernized, demythologized temple—as well as Shingon rituals (and who knows what else), it makes sense that he would want to keep prying eyes at bay.

Despite Wuguang's iconoclasm, he *was* favored by Yanjing. This is attested to by multiple details already listed such as Yanjing installing Wuguang in the room across from his own, entrusting Wuguang with the funds to create a monastic scholarship fund, his entertaining Wuguang's absurdity and spending his last three remaining days on earth in Wuguang's care. Additionally, Yanjing gave many of his personal belongings to Wuguang before he passed away.<sup>322</sup> This relationship is undoubtedly what had enabled Wuguang to use his secretarial position at Zhuxi Temple to organize the *phowa* retreat officiated by Elder Gongga, allocate space for her followers to stay on the monastic grounds and later designate a secluded living space for himself away from prying eyes. However, now that his master was no longer able to

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<sup>322</sup> See the pictures of Yanjing's items in Wuguang's possession after his master's death in Jing-ming ed., *Yanjing heshang*, 31.



speak for Wuguang, his peculiarities that Yanjing seemed to have found endearing would soon make Zhuxi Temple inhospitable.

Although Young says Wuguang did not have “an organization built around him” when he first came back to Taiwan, it is obvious that before going to Japan he was already a charismatic leader who had developed a following, albeit a loose and unorganized one. According to his disciples, as soon as he came back to Taiwan, he immediately founded the MSBL and began teaching his own form of esoteric Buddhism at Miaoming Vihara on the grounds of Zhuxi Temple. We are also told it was just a year later, in 1973, Wuguang relocated the Shingon altar that Young mentions—as well as his esoteric lecturing—to a small folk religious temple named Longshan Hall 龍山內院. After the relocation, Wuguang’s following steadily grew while he continued to periodically visit Kōyasan.<sup>323</sup> He publically propagated his Dharma, as testified to a 1978 television broadcast entitled *Grand Master Quanmiao of Tainan Receiving the Transmission of Zhenyan/Shingon Buddhism* 台南全妙大師獲佛教真言宗真傳.<sup>324</sup> This broadcast was aired on Apr. 20, 1978 in Tainan and shows Wuguang receiving a certificate from a Japanese monk in a Shingon temple in Japan. Thus, in addition to spreading his Dharma through word of mouth, he also took advantage of modern media outlets.

Although Wuguang began only giving elementary forms of *abhiṣeka* and training his students in short, introductory esoteric practices, he eventually began to give Dharma-transmission *abhiṣeka* on Taiwanese soil. He adapted the practices contained in the ritual manuals he had received in Kōyasan by Sinicizing them. I have been told that these activities did

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<sup>323</sup> Personal interview with Chesheng, July 2013.

<sup>324</sup> Aired on, *Taiwan Television* (TTV) 臺灣電視公司 on Apr. 20, 1978. Online: <http://dava.ncl.edu.tw/metadatainfo.aspx?funtype=0&PlayType=2&id=135218&BLID=135218> (accessed Dec. 22, 2015).

not go unnoticed by his Japanese Dharma-kin. In fact, another Taiwanese Chan monk who was traveling to Kōyasan at that time, who also eventually received *abhiṣeka* and formed his own monastery based on a mixture of Chinese Chan and Japanese Shingon, reportedly told Meguro what Wuguang was up to.<sup>325</sup> Wuguang then received a letter written by Meguro around 1980. This letter rebuked Wuguang and told him that he should neither be altering the traditions nor giving his students Dharma-transmission *abhiṣeka*. Wuguang ignored these orders and continued pursuing his goal, which Young above relates was to legitimize esoteric practices by rooting them in the Buddhist canon. One vital component of his strategy to achieve this validation was to link himself to Tang Dynasty Zhenyan via Shingon *abhiṣeka*. Towards this aim, Wuguang assumed three distinct titles that I have never seen proof of him ever being awarded. Two are Japanese and one, although rooted in Tang Dynasty esoteric Buddhism, is primarily used by Tibetan Buddhists. The two Japanese ranks that he took on are greater arch bishop 大僧正,<sup>326</sup> which is the highest rank within the Japanese ecclesiastical hierarchy 僧階, and *maha-ācārya* 大阿闍梨 (‘high priest’).<sup>327</sup> Of these, the second is the most important and is fully written as ‘Grand Master of Lamp Transmission’ 傳燈大阿闍梨 representing the priest’s authority to give Dharma-transmission *abhiṣeka*. Wuguang gave himself the shortened version of this title in order to show that he was the patriarch of a new Buddhist lineage. The greater archbishop title is less important and is largely symbolic. Although his disciples often refer to Wuguang by these titles in writing, the more preferred term is guru 上師. This was used in Tang China, but since then has

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<sup>325</sup> See Cody Bahir, *Buddhist Master Wuguang’s Taiwanese Web*, 87.

<sup>326</sup> As signed in *Mijiao sixiang yu shenghuo* 密教思想與生活 [Esoteric Buddhism and Life], (Kaohsiung: Guangmingwangsi, 1981), 3.

<sup>327</sup> See Wuguang, *Xinbian zhengfa yanzang* 新編正法眼藏 [New Perspective on the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye] (Hong Kong: Forms Publications (JK), 2014), 7. In the foreword written by Wuguang’s students it says that he received *maha-ācārya abhiṣeka* 大阿闍梨灌頂.

primarily been used by Tibetan Buddhist masters as a Chinese translation of the term *Lama* (which itself is a Tibetan rendering of ‘guru’). This is a shortened version of the term ‘Lofty Esoteric Guru’ 金剛上師, which denotes an influential teacher of esoteric Buddhism. However, during the Tantric Revival it was used by Chinese devotees who had received Japanese Shingon ordination. Wuguang undoubtedly first encountered this term during his studies with Elder Gongga as it was the title she used. Since Wuguang’s personal adoption of this term, it has become a general title for esoteric Buddhist teachers—regardless of denomination—in the Chinese-speaking world.<sup>328</sup>

Despite his break from Kōyasan and presenting false credentials, Wuguang was in fact promoted to a high-rank within the Japanese ecclesiastical hierarchy—just not to this particular rank. In 1983 he was given the title of lesser archbishop 少僧正 and was allowed to wear purple robes (see figure 9), the color associated with the Japanese imperial household, as a sign of his spiritual maturity.<sup>329</sup>



**Figure 9:** Wuguang wearing the purple robes in accordance with his status as a lesser archbishop. Image provided by MSBL member.

<sup>328</sup> See Cody Bahir, *Buddhist Master Wuguang’s Taiwanese Web*, 89-90.

<sup>329</sup> For a thorough treatment of purple robes see, Duncan Williams, “The Purple Robe Incident and the Formation of the Early Modern Sōtō Zen Institution,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009): 27-43.

## Conclusion

The remainder of Wuguang's story is inextricable from the history of the MSBL and has thus been interwoven into our discussion in Chapter 6. In conclusion, I would like to return to the four questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter: how did Wuguang become so eclectic? What are the particular sources of the specific elements within his eclecticism? How did Taiwan's history and religious makeup shape his life? Why did Wuguang sophisticate 'superstition' rather than accepting—or entirely rejecting—the disenchanted hermeneutic of Buddhist modernism?

The answers to the first three questions are given in the details of Wuguang's Daoist upbringing, the different folk, Daoist and yogic practices he studied, his education at Zhuxi Temple, experiences with Elder Gongga and time at Kōyasan. The answer to the fourth question is more multifaceted.

Were Wuguang to consider religious practices related to magic as superstitious then he would be forced to question the faith in which he had been brought up—Daoism. For him to apply the secular-religion-superstition trinary as his predecessors had would have forced him to declare that the religion of his childhood and early adulthood—as well as the beliefs of his family and the throngs of people who sought out his spiritual assistance—as irrational, backwards and superstitious. Thus, he could not whole-heartedly accept Buddhist modernism. His refusing to reject Buddhist modernism in preference for fundamentalism was rooted not in his upbringing, but his personal interests. He tells us that, even as a child, he was fascinated with scientific advancement and technology—particularly inventions related to radio and television broadcasting. The upshot is that a rejection of modern science would constitute intellectual disingenuousness.

There is yet a deeper personal reason that Wuguang chose to rescue magic from the category of ‘superstition’—he had an unshakably firm belief in its veracity. This belief was rooted in his childhood experience with the Divine Husbandman detailed above. In order to demonstrate this fact, we must take a close look at how Wuguang related this event:

Perplexedly, a great pain arose in my stomach. When my parents returned home and found me in this state, they sought a physician to treat me, but the pain did not subside. After nightfall my father invited his friends and a Daoist ritual master who lived nearby to ask the gods. Shortly thereafter, the god’s throne began to tremble and a divine voice roared: “This child of yours is impolite, he defiled my sanctity by using a brush on my beard, therefore [this pain] is a castigation.” My father then knelt down and entreated the god be merciful and protect my body. He then offered a spoon of incense ash which he referred to as a ‘miraculous medicine’ for me to ingest. It truly was a miraculous medicine for I completely recovered within a half of an hour. From that point on, I dared not act foolhardy towards godly icons. [Since then], this mystical event has always been carved into my soul, to the point that recollection thereof makes it feel new. That was the moment my fascination with mystical forces—invisible to the physical eye—as well as my quest to understand them were born.<sup>330</sup>

This tale marks the beginning of Wuguang’s spiritual inquiry as expressed in the final sentence, “That was the moment my fascination with mystical forces—invisible to the physical eye—as well as my quest to understand them were born.” The forces of which Wuguang speaks obviously represent an example of Weber’s *geheimnisvollen unberechenbaren Mächte*. As we are already privy to the fact that the trajectory of Wuguang’s life was dominated by a quest for magical forces, this declaration is a concrete confirmation that Wuguang’s reenchanting Buddhist modernism can be traced back to this experience.

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<sup>330</sup> Wuguang, *Cangsang huiyilu*. Original text: “不知怎樣，我的肚子大痛起來，父母親回來看到這情境，找大夫來診療，但都沒有止痛，是夜父親就請了法官及鄰近朋友來問神了。駕去神轎不久就開始跳動，大發神威說，你這個孩子不禮貌，用梳子梳吾的嘴鬚污穢了神聖，所以是一種教訓，父親就跪下來請求神明開恩，保佑我的身體，後來賜了一匙的香灰，稱它是仙丹給我服下去，真是仙丹妙藥，不經半小時全部都痊癒了，自此我都怕得不敢對神像輕舉妄動。這些神秘事項永遠刻在心靈，至今回憶猶新。那個時候起對於肉眼看不到的神秘力量，求了解的心亦興起了很大的興趣。”

This provenance is additionally confirmed by the passage that immediately follows the above where Wuguang shows us that later, similar experiences directly built upon this one further guided his religious inquiry:

Sometimes I would see the masters of mediumship using talismans and holy water to cure people, or spirit-mediums using swords to hack their bodies, causing blood to flow like water, or fire-walking without injury. Later, one time in the Zhengziliao district of Tainan while celebrating a god's birthday there was a spirit-medium who had viciously slashed his own forehead. Not only did his whole body hemorrhage but the skin on his forehead was shred to pieces. He became comatose. Later [his fellow practitioners] carried him into a dark room, sat him in a chair and besought the god for a miraculous cure. The medicine was an ointment consisting of ash from the incense burner and alcohol mixed together that was applied to his head. They then bandaged his head and made him rest until the morning of the next day. When he awoke, he took off the ash and discovered that his forehead did not have the slightest scar—it was as it had been before [the incident]. Everyone then praised the might of the god with deep inexpressible feelings. This experience further impassioned my quest for knowledge.<sup>331</sup>

Again, Wuguang is revealing the fact that what motivated his life-long study of religion was in fact, this experience. The exact *type* of experience detailed above is an example of a 'spiritual experience.' The spiritual experience Wuguang relates here is neither revelatory nor blissful. It was additionally not resultant of spiritual practices nor even intentionally induced. In contrast, it was entirely negative and even nonconsensual. Thus, what Wuguang experienced is what Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) referred to as 'daemonic dread.' Otto saw daemonic dread as the "religion of primitive man" that constitutes a "crudely naïve and primordial emotional disturbance,"<sup>332</sup>—a fitting description for a painful childhood encounter with a wrathful deity. Otto explained that

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid. Original text: “有時看了巫師的行符咒水治病，神祇的誕辰乩童施展特技操劍砍其全身血流如注，過火時赤足履如平地絲毫不傷，後來有一次在台南鄭仔寮，在祝賀神明生辰的時候，一位乩童操劍砍自己的頭額等處，不但全身流血，頭部傷得皮膚全碎，終於休克不知人事，然後被抬入暗室坐於椅子上，同神求仙丹治療，就在香爐內掬了香灰攪酒敷其頭上，用繃帶包好令他休息到了隔日上午，乩童醒來，掀去頭上的香灰，發現他的頭上沒有一點傷痕，一向如故，大家都大讚神明威力，深感不可思議，由此使我更加求知的心理旺盛起來。”

<sup>332</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, tr. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 7<sup>th</sup> edition; 1936), 16.

daemoniac dread is prone to produce physical sensations that lay out of the range of normal experience:

It is a remarkable fact that the physical reaction to which this unique ‘dread; of the uncanny gives rise is also unique, and is not found in the case of any ‘natural’ fear of terror... And any one who is capable of more precise introspection must recognize that the distinction between such a ‘dread’ and natural fear is not simply one of degree and intensity. The awe or ‘dread’ may indeed be so overwhelmingly great that it seems to penetrate to the very marrow, making the man’s hair bristle and his limbs quake.<sup>333</sup>

Here we find Otto explicitly stating that negative physical sensations can be symptoms of daemoniac dread. The crippling pain Wuguang experienced—albeit much more intense than anything described by Otto—was, in the god’s own medium-projected voice a ‘castigation,’ a punishment, an outpouring the god’s ‘wrathful’ potential—the exact characteristic Otto assigns to daemoniac dread. The spontaneous, unsolicited and painful quality of this experience—all exacerbated by Wuguang’s young and impressionable age at the time—are what rendered it so radically formative.

In addition to the nuances of the experience and Wuguang’s developmental stage at the time is the story’s context. The shrine in which this occurred was housed in Wuguang’s childhood home. This home was occupied by a family who was descended from Daoist priests whose ancestors had brought Daoist idols when they came over from China. The hero of the story, whose efforts led to Wuguang’s recovery, was a ritual specialist 法官 who was either a Daoist or a prominent local folk religious figure.<sup>334</sup> In a Daoist home, housing a Daoist shrine, Wuguang was struck down by a Daoist god and subsequently cured by a Daoist priest through

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> This term, *faguan* 法官 is the same words for a ‘judge’. It is used both in Daoism as well as Chinese folk religion for people especially adept at working with non-corporeal entities. For more information see E. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural*, 14; Jan Jakob Maria de Groot, *The Religious System of China: Its Ancient Forms, Evolution, History and Present Aspect, Manners, Customs and Social Institutions Connected Therewith* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center; Reprint; 1989), 1264, 1278, 1252 and 1289.

Daoist spiritual technology. At Wuguang's age and location, it would have been logistically impossible for him to experience this experience in any other way than he did. The same can be said of his personal interpretation of this episode. Wuguang tells us, "[Since then], this mystical event has always been carved into my soul, to the point that recollection thereof makes it feel new," revealing that he reflected on this divine intervention throughout his life to such a point that the memory thereof remained fresh until he wrote it down in his dying days. In the years immediately following this event, Wuguang's interpretation—and recollection—of what happened would have been deeply colored by those around him, particularly his father, mother, siblings and the ritual master who healed him. Thus, Wuguang's understanding of what happened was entirely reasonable—even if not entirely believable—given the circumstances.

Epistemologically speaking, Wuguang's belief in 'invisible forces' placed an *onus probandi* (burden of proof) upon every religious doctrine, scientific principle, philosophical concept and spiritual technology that he encountered, the standard of proof being demonstrable consistency with his belief in the awesome powers of magic. Thus, in addition to motivating Wuguang to seek magical power, his childhood daemonic dread also shaped his investigative methodology. This is evidenced by his accounts of seeking various Daoist, folk, Buddhist and Samoan masters in order to learn magical technologies. This sort of religious polygamy shows that his quest was neither directed by religious affiliation nor doctrine. In order to evaluate the validity of *a priori* truth claims he tested the magical potency of the various spiritual technologies he learned and held their potency to the *a posteriori* standard of his original, childhood religious experience. This potency was something that he could only ascertain via experimentation. Rather than believing in their efficacy at face value or relying on others to perform the rituals for him he demanded that he witness their potency for himself. This is why



his autohagiography is dominated by the repetition of a single, quadrangular narrative structure:

1. He hears of a master renowned for having preternatural powers, 2. He learns spiritual technologies from the master, 3. He tests those spiritual technologies, 4. He concludes that they are either effective or ineffective.

As ‘magic’ is this study’s most central feature, now that we know *why* Wuguang attempted to rescue it from the typological pit of ‘superstition,’ let us look at *how* he did.