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A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values

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CHAPTER TEN: SPECIAL TOPICS OF NAME TABOOING

10.1. Women and Taboo

It is a truism to say that despite the “patriarchal” nature of Chinese history, women played a vital role. Although Chinese society was a male-centred one, there were many examples of women enjoying a high social status and having an extraordinary impact on Chinese society and policy. Yet, although we have numerous works about women in China,¹ the topic of women’s names and especially of their tabooing has been neglected in most research.² It can be said generally that the name of a woman was perceived as important and tabooed in the same manner as the name of a man. The difference was the extension of taboo practice, which depended usually in the case of women on the position of her husband and sons. There are some cases of women’s names being tabooed because of their own power, but most examples are taboos of women on account of their social roles as mothers and wives. Even if taboo cases of men’s names are surely the majority, the number of taboo examples of women is still impressive.

There was no basic difference in the structure of male and female names. They all had their childhood name *xiaoming*, a grown-up given name *ming* and courtesy name *zi*, although all these three names were often similar to each other.³ The childhood name and given name were usually known only to the girl’s or woman’s own family.⁴ Because of the patriarchal outlook of Chinese society, a boy occupied a higher social status and a girl was destined to leave her original family after marriage. Therefore, she was not considered to be a permanent member of her own lineage and her name was not recorded in a family’s genealogical book.⁵ In her new family, the names of her ancestors were of no interest, and her own name was usually recorded, if at all, as “one from ‘such and such’ clan (*shi* 氏),” without her given name.⁶ Patrilineal taboos were important. Matrilineal taboos were degraded as interior taboos (*neihui*).

¹ There are various works about women in China, for example: *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past* 1999; *Women in Chinese Society* 1975; *Frauenstudien* 1992 (all three with various contributions); Ayscough 1937; Linck 1988; Schilling – Kralle 2002.

² The problem of women’s names is mentioned in Bauer 1959, pp. 363-374, Wilkinson 2000, pp. 101-102.

³ Bauer 1959, p. 363.

⁴ Kałużyńska 2008, p. 100.

⁵ Chao 1983, p. 57.

⁶ Bauer 1959, p. 363.

10.1.1. Interior Taboo

Traditionally, the social roles of men and women were divided in China: a man should be a caretaker of the family in public life, and a woman within the family (*nanzhuwai nüzhunei* 男主外女主内).⁷ Correspondingly, taboo names connected with a woman and her ancestors should be avoided, but only inside of her “kingdom”: i.e., her family or the palace (for empresses). Hence, such taboos were called “interior taboos” (*neihui* 內諱), or “women’s taboos” (*nühui* 女諱 or *fuhui* 婦諱).

The principle of interior taboo is mentioned in the *Records of Ritual*. At first it is explained that the names of both parents – mother and father – have to be tabooed after the wailing ceremony, and the names of both grandparents, if the parents are alive. But a few sentences later, a caveat is added: “The names to be avoided by a wife need not be unspoken outside the door.”⁸ In fact, the interior taboo was observed in the family and in the palace by personal attendants. We know about actors and singers who asked about the taboo of the empress in order to avoid it in a spectacle.⁹ But normally, the interior taboo was known only to people living within the family or palace. Other people did not need to know interior taboos, and of course did not avoid them. Because of that, examples of actual interior taboos were not normally recorded. If we know numerous cases of them, it is because many interior taboos “went out” and were then commonly avoided and recorded. Some empresses gained great political power of their own or enjoyed the special favor of the emperor. Often, it was the emperor ordering the avoidance of the name of his mother or female ancestors (see 10.1.3).

10.1.2. Powerful Women and Taboo

Although men usually took the position of power, there were numerous women with high status in China. In general, they became powerful as empresses, especially as regents of underage emperors, or empresses dowagers – the mother of the emperor. Their names became taboo and were often avoided after their death, due to their fame.

Perhaps the name of Empress Fu Hao 婦好 of the Shang dynasty (d. ca. 1200 BC) was already tabooed. She was a queen consort of King Wuding 武丁 (presumably 1250–1192 BC), but also a high priestess, and probably the mightiest military leader of her time.

⁷ Cf. *Songwenjian*, j. 103, p. 2b.

⁸ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 38b–40a. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

⁹ *Caomuzi*, j. 3, p. 22a; Yi Fan 2009, p. 37.

We do not know too much about names of that time, but it is remarkable that the Empress is sometimes called in oracle bones inscriptions by her title (most likely a ritual name) as Mother Xin (*muxin* 母辛). The presumed original name of Fu Hao (the actual role of this name is disputed)¹⁰ was apparently concealed (see 4.2.2).

Empress Lü Zhi 呂雉 (241–180 BC) was a powerful person of the Han dynasty. After the death of Emperor Gaozu in 195 BC, she became Empress Dowager and regent of the young Emperor Hui (210 BC–188 BC). She controlled him and his infant sons – Emperor Qianshao (188–184 BC) and Emperor Houshao (184–180 BC) and de facto kept power in her hands for sixteen years. Apparently, she introduced the avoidance of her given name Zhi 雉, which became taboo. People were not allowed to use it directly in speech or writing. Moreover, as the meaning of *zhi* is “pheasant,” this bird’s name had to be changed. A new expression “wild chicken” (*yeji* 野雞) became popular and is used to this day in some Chinese local language variants.¹¹

In the Eastern Jin period, we also find women of considerable might and influence. It was not only their names that became taboo, but also the names of their parents, including their mothers. Besides, names of empresses were placed in the imperial taboo lists. Empress Chu Suanzi 褚蒜子 (324–384) ruled China as a regent for ca. 40 years. Empress Yu Wenjun 庾文君 (297–328) was a regent for only a few years, but we know that a certain Yu Mao 虞茂 (285–340) had to change his name to Yu Yu 虞預 in order to taboo the name of Yu Wenjun’s mother.¹²

Probably the highest status a woman ever reached in China was that of Empress (strictly speaking “Emperor”) Wu Zetian (r. 690–705).¹³ She was not only the powerful mother or wife of one emperor, but also became the only non-male emperor (which does not have a female form in Chinese, the word Empress always refers to wives and mothers of emperors) of Chinese history. She founded a new dynasty and proclaimed her name and the names of her ancestors as state taboos. Therefore, for example the Crown Prince Li Chongzhao 李重照 (682–701) had to change his given name to Chong Run 重潤, because the name of Empress was Zhao 曁. He was executed nevertheless.¹⁴ Similarly, because of

¹⁰ Besides taboo custom, a ritual renaming is perhaps also possible.

¹¹ Cf. Künstler 1994, p. 130.

¹² Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 82, p. 4b.

¹³ More about the Empress Wu Zetian and her time see Forte 1976.

¹⁴ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 86, p. 7b.

the name of the grandfather of Empress – Wu Hua 武華, the chancellor Cui Ye 崔暉 (638–706) had to change his given name to Xuanwei 玄暉.¹⁵

The title of honour of the preeminent Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧 of the Qing dynasty (1835–1908), who was the virtual sovereign of the Chinese empire for the last thirty-nine years of her life, was perhaps tabooed. We know at least that the eunuch Li Jinxi 李進喜 changed his name to Li Lianying 李連英 (or 李蓮英, 1848–1911), after he started his career in the palace. However, the author of this dissertation could not find examples of tabooing of her original name Xingzhen 杏貞.¹⁶

10.1.3. Mothers and Female Ancestors of Emperors

There are cases of women's names being taboo, if they were female ancestors of the ruling emperor, especially as his mother. Even if they did not have high political power, or were already dead by that time, their name became state taboo because of the status of their descendants. Usually, they were titled Empress Dowager (*huangtaihou* 皇太后, wife of the emperor after his death) or Grand Empress Dowager (*taihuangtaihou* 太皇太后, wife of the former emperor).

This kind of taboo of the empress dowager, as the respected mother of the ruling emperor, was perhaps self-evident. Nonetheless, it seems strange that the author of this dissertation could not find a single case in the documents of taboos for an empress dowager who did not exert at least some political influence. But we do find names of them listed as temple taboos, which means that their names were really tabooed in certain contexts. There are, for example, the names of the mother of emperor Shizong of Jin and of one more empress, recorded this way in the *Collected Rites of the Great Jin Dynasty* (*Da Jin jili* 大金集禮).¹⁷ There were different opinions in various dynasties whether private taboos of the

¹⁵ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 91, p. 5a. In the Song edition of the same work (reproduced in the *Bainaben* edition) 百衲本 *Jiu Tangshu* (b), j. 91, („Liezhuàn”, j. 39), p. 5b last stroke is omitted in the character *xuan*. Cf. also *Cefu yuangui*, j. 825, p. 3b and *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 29, p. 463. In both last sources the name is noticed as Yuanwei 元暉: in the first one, because of taboo of the “first ancestor” of Song (6.4.4); *Jingshi biming huikao* tabooed apparently the name of the Qing Emperor Kangxi, as he wrote his own comment below: “the original character was changed because of taboo.” For Cui family see Buckley Ebrey 1978.

¹⁶ Mao Haijian 2002, p. 152, Fn. 1. We know numerous examples of taboo related to the Empress Dowager Cixi. Actors playing for her had not only to observe her name taboo, but could not use the word *yang* 羊 (sheep), too, being her sign in the Chinese zodiac. Because of that some plays, as for example *Dragon Lady Tending Sheep* (*Longnü muyang* 龍女牧羊), were prohibited, and the character *yang* in other plays was exchanged, for example, to *yu* 魚 (fish). Similarly inauspicious characters as *sha* 殺 (to kill), *si* 死 (death), *wang* 亡 (to lose, to die) had to be avoided. Cf. Yi Fan 2009, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Da Jin jili*, j. 23, p. 203.

emperor (as for example the taboo of the emperor's mother) were an imperial taboo which should be avoided by everybody (see 3.5.3 and 5.4.2).

A specific taboo instance was the avoidance of the taboo name of the father, Taizhang 太章, of an Empress Dowager – Empress Zhong (鍾皇后, d. 965) of the Southern Tang dynasty. When she became a widow in 961, after the death of Emperor Yuanzong of Southern Tang (r. 943–961), she did not receive the usual title of *huangtaihou* 皇太后 because of her “internal taboo” (the taboo name of her father). A special new title was created for her and she was called “Saintly respected queen” (*shengzunhou* 聖尊后).¹⁸

Symptomatic for relations between the taboo name of the deceased empress and the power of the emperor is the story of Zheng Achun 鄭阿春 (290–326). She was not the legal wife of Emperor Yuan, but only his concubine, and her name was not in all likelihood an official taboo during her lifetime. But she was the mother of Sima Yu 司馬昱 – later Emperor Jianwen of Jin (r. 371–372), and the grandmother of Sima Yao 司馬曜 – Emperor Xiaowu (r. 372–396). Though they only became rulers many years after the death of Achun, they both wanted her name to be avoided as a state taboo. It was not seen as a matter of course, because normally only empresses could be put in the taboo list (*huibang* 諱榜). After a long discussion, it was stated that the mother of the emperor was “the small ruler” (*xiaojun* 小君), and names of rulers should be taboo for everybody (see 5.3).¹⁹ Finally, in 394 the title of Empress Dowager was bestowed upon Achun by her grandson Emperor Xiaowu in his decree.²⁰ Later, because of her name, many geographical names were changed, as for example Fuchun 富春 to Fuyang 富陽, Yichun county 宜春縣 to Yiyang 宜陽 and Chungu county 春穀縣 to Yanggu 陽穀.²¹ It also is assumed that because of this taboo many books related to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*) were changed to the *Yangqiu*²² (cf., e.g., works as Sun Sheng 孫盛. *Jin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋; Ge Lifang 葛立方. *Yiyu yangqiu* 韻語陽秋).²³

¹⁸ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 16, pp. 354–355. Cf. also Kurz 2011, p. 93. Saint (*sheng* 聖) was the appellation of an emperor as well.

¹⁹ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 553.

²⁰ *Jinshu*, j. 32, pp. 5b–6a.

²¹ *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 11, p. 9a.

²² *Qidongyeyu*, j. 4, p. 41.

²³ *Lishaobian*, j. 40, p. 10a.

10.1.4. Taboo of the Empress – Wife of the Emperor

Tabooing the names of queen consorts (*huanghou* 皇后) was also practiced, but not as a matter of course. The first examples of such tabooing were recorded in the Han period. In 148 BC an official, Yu Mi 渝彌, had to change his name to Yu 喻 because his name was identical to the courtesy name of Empress Bo of the Han dynasty – Ayu 阿渝.²⁴ However, the case happened after the death of the Empress herself (in 147 BC), though still during the lifetime of her husband, Emperor Jing of Han (r. 156-141 BC). Its facticity can be questioned, for the extant sources reporting the example come only from the Song dynasty.²⁵

Taboos for the Empress were a problem that was the subject of political debates in a few dynasties. In 266, an official of the Emperor Wudi of Jin suggested that the taboo of the queen consort should be observed out of respect, together with the taboo of the emperor, but his proposal was rejected.²⁶ However, later, names of empresses did appear in lists of imperial taboos. Tabooing the names of empresses peaked during Eastern Jin, and remained largely a peculiarity of that period.

Empress Du Lingyang 杜陵陽 (321–341) was the wife of the Emperor Cheng of Jin (r. 326–342). Due to the taboo of her name, Lingyang county 陵陽縣 was changed to Guangyang 廣陽.²⁷ Similarly, Empress Wang Muzhi 王穆之 (d. 365) was the wife of the Emperor Ai of Jin (r. 361–365). Her taboo affected the name of a general, Mao Muzhi 毛穆之 (d. ca. 379), who changed his name because of that to Wusheng 武生 – his childhood name (*xiaozi* 小字).²⁸

A serious discussion about tabooing the names of empresses is known from the Southern Qi (479–502) (see 5.4.2). One official proposed in 479 that the names of empresses ought to be tabooed and recorded in the lists of taboos. In the following controversy, the principle that the “taboo of women is effective only inside the court” of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* was used as an argument. However, opponents to this line of reasoning argued that avoiding the name of empresses would help to better express the reverence of subjects towards the emperor. Names of empresses should therefore be

²⁴ *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng*, j. 30, p. 413

²⁵ This story is not included in the *Book of the Han (Hanshu)* and the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)*.

²⁶ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 555.

²⁷ Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 32, p. 2a.

²⁸ He could not change his name to his courtesy name, Xianzu 憲祖, because of the mother's name of another famous general of Jin – Huan Wen 桓溫 (312–373), which was Xian 憲. Therefore he changed it to his childhood name. Cf. *Jinshu*, j. 81, p. 9b.

recorded on lists of imperial taboo in order to help people notice words that should be avoided. Although some officials thought that it would suffice to announce posthumous names of empresses after their death and to use the rank or family name for living queen consorts, many names of empresses were still tabooed and put on the taboo list.²⁹

The names of empresses remained the subject of discussion in later dynasties, but it seems that they were normally taboo. At least we know that the name of Empress Li Fengniang 李鳳娘 (1144–1200) – the wife of the Guangzong Emperor of the Song dynasty – was tabooed, and because of that the word for a type of flower – *impatiens cyathiflora* (*jinfenghua* 金鳳花) – had to be changed to *hao nüer hua* 好女儿花.³⁰ It is interesting that even during the Yuan dynasty, in the time of Emperor Renzong (1311–1320), the Board of Rites argued that the queen consort is “the mother of *tianxia*,” and recommended to announce the name of the empress as taboo.³¹

Other taboos of an empress, for example of her ancestors, were seldom made public. But there are examples for the tabooing of the names of the parents of the queen consort, the family on the mother’s side of the emperor, the emperor’s son-in-law, or even the whole distant royal family.³² We know, for example, that in the time of the Three Kingdoms, the Minister of the Interior (*situ* 司徒) Ding Mi 丁密 (3rd c.) changed his name because of the name of the father of Empress Teng (the wife of Emperor Sun Hao of Wu) – Teng Mi 滕密. In fact, the change was mutual. Ding Mi and Teng Mi avoided each other’s taboo, which caused inconveniences, and both changed their given names to their courtesy names Ding Gu 丁固 and Teng Mu 滕牧.³³

10.1.5. Maternal and Other Private Taboos of Women

The name of one’s own mother was “holy” for everybody, just as that of one’s father. As we can read in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*, it was prescribed to taboo names of near relatives “after the wailing period,” which meant *inter alia* the names of someone’s mother, grandmother, stepmother, father’s aunts or sisters, husband’s mother and wife.³⁴ Furthermore, the names of female distant ancestors had to be avoided by children, if they

²⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 46, pp. 2b-3a; Cf. also Wang Jian 2002, pp. 93-95.

³⁰ *Sichao wenjianlu*, j. 5, p. 44a.

³¹ *Yuanshi*, j. 116, pp. 1b-2a.

³² For concrete examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 28-29; Fan Zhixin 2006, pp. 46-48.

³³ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 10b.

³⁴ *Liji*, j. 7, p. 83b

were taboo for parents. All taboos avoided by a mother or wife were also taboo for a son or husband, when they were at home.

In the *Records of Ritual* one can also find what is probably the first record about tabooing the name of one's mother – by Confucius: “The name of the Master's mother was Zhengzai 徵在. When he used Zai, he did not at the same time use Zheng; nor Zai, when he used Zheng.”³⁵ This example illustrates the principle of non-tabooing of double names.

A similar tabooing of a mother's name is presumed for the poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), but in this case there is only indirect evidence. Du Fu wrote many poems, but made no mention of the flowers of the crab apple *haitanghua* 海棠花. This fact might have come about by accident, but according to Chinese historians, the cause is deeper: he could not write such a poem because of the name of his mother – Haitang.³⁶ Still more radical and tragic is the case of Cuizi 崔子, whose mother died when he was a child. His stepmother did not respect the taboo of the deceased and often spoke her name. Cuizi could not bear this and committed suicide by jumping into a river.³⁷ This story, whether apocryphal or not, shows that tabooing the name of one's mother was perceived as very important in China.

The examples above concern the taboo of women's names. We can see that their names were respected and avoided, though mostly derived from their own position of power or the one held by a man at her side, or by her relatives. But it is also worth writing a few words about tabooing by women, about taboo names she had to avoid. Our materials on this topic, and especially examples, are very scant. We know that, just like men, women had to avoid states taboos and taboo names of her relatives. As Chinese women were rarely involved in political life, state taboos were perhaps less strictly observed by them. But they had to be all the more careful to respect private taboos, because after marriage, women learned and observed all the taboos of their husbands. We can only speculate how the learning process of tabooing words looked like. Sometimes, apparently, the young woman had to change her name, if it conflicted with a taboo name of her new family. It has remained a custom in traditional Chinese families in Taiwan to this day.³⁸

The following example – the exclusive recording of a woman's feelings on the matter of name taboos – should show how seriously women took the tabooing of names. The story comes from the well-known novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglouloumeng* 紅

³⁵ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39a.

³⁶ *Xianjulu*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Taiping Yulan*, j. 578, p. 7b; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 43, p. 619.

³⁸ Personal conversation with Jiang Ryh-Shin and Pan Feng-Chuan, Sankt Augustin, 9.10.2009.

樓夢). Lin Daiyu's 林黛玉 mother's name was Min 敏, and she tabooed her name. Therefore, whenever she "met the character *min* while reading (aloud) a book, she read it every time as *mi* 密 ..., and if she met this character in writing, she omitted one or two strokes."³⁹

10.2. Religion and Taboo

The relation of taboo custom to religiosity seems to be self-evident, but on the contrary, there might as well be no research on tabooing of name pertaining to religion. The reason is, on the one hand, the specific feature of the Chinese concept of religion which does not have, in principle, a differentiation between religion and doctrine (as we know it from Europe),⁴⁰ and this makes a (modern) distinction between religious and non-religious elements difficult. On the other hand, Chinese scholars such as "Confucians" tried in different epochs to distinguish their own customs as "high culture" or orthodoxy, and disparaged customs of popular religiosity as "superstition" or heterodoxy.⁴¹ Although they often mixed them both, they usually were less interested in "religious" taboos. This approach seems to be continued today, as modern Chinese scholars usually negate the common ground occupied by the practice of name taboo as "high culture" (*bihui*) and "primitive" religious or sorcerous taboo (*jinji*).⁴²

Chinese religiosity was often called a "magical religiosity" (the term itself is controversial),⁴³ because of its almost unlimited belief in deities, ghosts, demons and miracles.⁴⁴ Important elements of it included auspicious and inauspicious omens⁴⁵ and different kinds of taboo. Signs, words and names were used in order to bring about an expected result. In the same way as signs, words and names could also be used to prevent or eliminate unwanted objects or avoid such negative events. Different aspects of name tabooing can be seen in various religious practices. Many "religious" aspects can also be found in the official (state) custom of *bihui*.

³⁹ *Honglounmeng*, hui 2, p. 10. For translation see Hawkes 1973, Vol. I, p. 82.

⁴⁰ It was already identified by the sinologist Wilhelm Grube (1855–1908). Cf. Grube 1910, p. 9.

⁴¹ Cf. also Malek 1996, pp. 190–194; Ransdorp 1979, pp. 387–426.

⁴² About the tension between religion and magic, and between *bihui* and *jinji* customs, see 2.1.3 and 2.1.7.

⁴³ Weber 1920, p. 515. The term is sometimes contested by historians as coming from religious studies. The expanded word "ritual" is proposed in place of "magic". The latter one is used in this work, as it is, in the author's opinion, more concrete and highlights the belief in intervention of external powers.

⁴⁴ Cf. Eichhorn 1973, p. 267; Malek 1996a, p. 17.

⁴⁵ More about them see Lippiello 2001.

Using and tabooing names was important in Chinese popular religiosity. Tabooing was perceived not only as a courtesy custom, but also as a real protection for a human being. Many authentic stories are known about curious names or the change of names because of the fear of ghosts. It was, for example, practiced that a “non-real” depreciative name was chosen for a child in order to lead ghosts astray. The new name was written on paper and fastened to the door of a temple in order to announce it to demons. Furthermore, parents exclaimed loudly the new fake name of the child on the way home, and believed that ghosts could thus be deceived. The common popular belief was that they could have power over the child and hurt him or her, if they would come to know its “real name”.⁴⁶

10.2.1. Daoism

The discussion of name tabooing’s contribution to religious culture shall be limited here to Daoism and Buddhism. The intention is not to give a detailed analysis, because that is not yet possible at this stage of research. Some aspects of name tabooing to be mentioned here, and materials collected from different sources, will hopefully serve as a contribution to further research.⁴⁷

Daoists believed that they knew and controlled the “mystical dimension of language”⁴⁸ and “the magic of names.”⁴⁹ The pronunciation or writing of magical names and characters could, according to beliefs in some schools of Daoism, expel bad ghosts from an ill man or, conversely, cause purposeful calamity for enemies.⁵⁰ The knowledge about names of natural spirits such as the spirits of hills, trees, rocks, tigers, snakes and foxes could disarm them and force them to return to their original forms.⁵¹

Special demon-statutes were known, which were supposed to be sent down “by ‘The Most High Great Tao’ in eight scrolls, registering the demons’ family names and given

⁴⁶ Cf. ter Haar 2006, p. 166.

⁴⁷ A short note was found about (common) taboo practice in Daoism in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* 2008, Vol. I, pp. 576-578. No record about taboo (either *bihui* and *jinji*) seems to be given in the *Zhonghua daojiao da cidian* 1995. It is interesting that all words with the character *jin* 禁 in the dictionary seem to have an active meaning, as “control”. Cf. for example *jin shehui* 禁蛇虺 or *jinzhou* 禁咒 (p. 673). Examples of names related to Daoism can be found in Bauer 1959, pp. 321-325.

⁴⁸ Kohn 1991, p. 124.

⁴⁹ Strickmann 2002, p. 30. Cf. also Ge Hong 1999, p. 270 and 318, where records with names of demons are mentioned, protecting against them.

⁵⁰ *Zarys dziejów religii* 1988, p.97. For more about the magic of script in China (in Daoism) see Drexler 1994.

⁵¹ Nickerson 2000, p. 267.

names and the auspicious and inauspicious practices associated with them.”⁵² Additionally, special instructions about that were reputed to have been given by Laozi:

(...) Evil demons come to take control over all the men and women of the world. Your priestly officers should therefore consult my writings and discover there the names of the demons. (...) I am now sending down these Statutes afresh, to make known throughout the world the names of the demons. (...) You can thus name the relevant demons according to the various days, and none of them will dare attack you.⁵³

Names were all-important in the healing practices of the Daoist tradition. It was dangerous if demons knew the real names of human beings, and therefore they had to be tabooed and concealed. But this system of taboo could be turned to one's advantage if the healer knew the real name of a demon and used it actively.⁵⁴ Hence, for diagnosis the healer would call demons of the five directions by name, and in this way located them in the body of the patient.⁵⁵ He had to learn the names of demons, and had long repertories of demonic nomenclature at his disposal. Then he could cure the malady. The healing process was as follows: At first, a ritual therapist vocalized a spell against the first names of the father, mother, elder and younger brothers and sisters of the pathogen ghost. After that, the following performative words were used: “I know your family name and given names. I possess your *gong* and *shang* (Chinese basic musical notes). Why don't you go away? What can you hope for by staying on?”⁵⁶ Apparently, after such a spell the demon had no choice but to leave the body of the sick person, which then became healthy again.

Daoists were no exception in Chinese society, and so they too observed name taboo customs. We should remember that the Daoist elite often wielded considerable power in China.⁵⁷ Emperors often supported this religion and one of them – Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (r. 712–756) – even proclaimed Laozi his ancestor in 741, and the special posthumous title of Emperor Xuanyuan (*Xuanyuan huangdi* 玄元皇帝) was bestowed upon him.⁵⁸ Of

⁵² Strickmann 2002, pp. 81-82.

⁵³ Strickmann 2002, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁴ Strickmann 2002, p. 31.

⁵⁵ Strickmann 2002, p. 29.

⁵⁶ Strickmann 2002, p. 30.

⁵⁷ Cf. Baldrian 1987, pp. 293-298; Lagerwey 1987, pp. 306-316; Wang 2009, p. 51-119.

⁵⁸ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 5, p. 1b; j. 9, p. 5b.

course, the name of Laozi – Li Er 李耳 – could not be used and his titles were used instead.⁵⁹

The name of a Daoist and leader of the Yellow Turbans insurrection in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, Zhang Jue 張角 (d. 184), was reported as taboo. He practised the above-mentioned “demon medicine” and with word, script and gesticulation could cause or prevent injury, expel demons and cure illness.⁶⁰ Therefore later in the Song period his name was avoided by some Daoists and nobody of them dared to speak out the character *jue* 角.⁶¹

The observance of name taboo was also present in rules for Daoist monks - “the most important foundation of the religious organization of Daoism.”⁶² Among various norms, we found four related to our topic:

“Precept 105: Do not be negligent in avoiding taboo (*jihui* 忌諱).”⁶³

“Precept 206: If you reach one place, you have to first ask for local taboos (*jinji* 禁忌).”⁶⁴

“Precept 207: If you come into a house, you should first ask about taboo names (*minghui* 名諱) of elders.”⁶⁵

“Precept 299: You should not speak out the real name (*minghui*) of heaven, which is secret and mysterious.”⁶⁶

As we can see, the custom of name taboos was a part of life for Daoist monks. Names had to be avoided, and titles, as for example *fashi* 法師, or *shifu* 師父, were to be used instead. Local and private taboos had to be observed by a monk, if he went somewhere. If people asked him about somebody’s tabooed name (*hui* 諱), the expression *shangmou xiamou* 上某下某 had to be used.⁶⁷

It is little wonder that examples of name tabooing can be also found in Daoist texts. If we read texts of the Daoist canon (*Daozang* 道藏),⁶⁸ written in the Ming dynasty, we can

⁵⁹ Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁰ Unschuld 1980. p. 88.

⁶¹ *Songshi*, j. 351, p. 5a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, p. 612.

⁶² Schmidt 1985, p. 149.

⁶³ Hackmann 1931, p.15 (*jiezhe, bude wangzuo jihui* 戒者, 不得妄作忌諱).

⁶⁴ Hackmann 1931, p.23 (*jiezhe, suo zhizhi chu bi xianwen qi jinji* 戒者, 所至之處 必先問其禁忌).

⁶⁵ Hackmann 1931, p.23 (*jiezhe, fan ru renjia, bi xianwen qi jia zhong zunzhang minghui* 戒者, 凡入人家, 必先問其家中尊長名諱).

⁶⁶ Hackmann 1931, p.33 (*jiezhe, dang nian yinmi tianzhen minghui, buchou yu kou* 戒者, 當念隱密天真名諱, 不出于口).

⁶⁷ Hackmann 1919, p.166.

⁶⁸ Komjathy 2002; *The Taoist Canon* 2004.

see that there are many taboos of Song, which means that many texts came from that time.⁶⁹ It can be seen, for example, in the *Daozang* edition of *Mozi*, which observes the taboo name Kuang 匡 of Emperor Taizu of the Song (r. 960–976).⁷⁰ There are also numerous other examples of taboo in this edition of *Daozang*,⁷¹ tabooing the names of Song emperors. With the help of taboo practices, we can, for example, determine that the edition on which the version of *Zituan danjing* 紫團丹經 was based most likely comes from the Southern Song period.⁷² Similarly, the avoidance of taboo names helped to date the Daoist *Commentary to the Nine Elixirs of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣) to the latter half of the seventh century.⁷³ Recently, a study on Daoist texts from Dunhuang was undertaken. An analysis of 29 from among ca. 800 texts showed that the taboo custom was observed also in Daoist texts. Numerous tabooed characters of Sui and Tang rulers were found in twelve of them, and various taboo methods (equivalents, omission of strokes) were used.⁷⁴

10.2.2. Buddhism

A description of the tabooing of names in Buddhism seems to be quite complex and challenging. At first glance, the problem of name taboos appears insignificant, for it is hard to find something about name (*ming*) or taboo (*hui*, *bihui*, *jinji*)⁷⁵ in Chinese and Western encyclopedias of Buddhism.⁷⁶ As far as we know, there is also no work treating the

⁶⁹ Cf., for example, *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, p. 32 and 331.

⁷⁰ *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, p. 63.

⁷¹ Cf. *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 1, pp. 133, 292, 343, 409, 434; Vol. 2, pp. 738, 799, 841, 1124. There is, for example, an illustration of a magic mirror in the text, with the character *jian* 鑑 in the title. Originally, it probably should have been the character *jing* 鏡, but it was changed in deference to the Song taboo (the taboo of the grandfather of Emperor Taizu – Jing 敬). As the character *jing* occurs elsewhere in text, it indicates that part of the text dates from before the Song time (*The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 2, p. 618). Cf. also Chen Yuan 1958, p. 154.

⁷² *The Taoist Canon* 2004, Vol. 2, p. 841.

⁷³ Pregadio 2000, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Dou Huaiyong 2009, pp. 56–62.

⁷⁵ These four characters are very seldom seen in Buddhist terms. The word *jiyue* 忌月 as a Buddhist term (1st, 5th, and 9th lunar month) is mentioned in *Grand Dictionnaire Ricci* 2001, Vol. I, p. 448. The expression *huichen* 諱辰 as the day of taboo, day of fate, day of death is mentioned in *Fojiaoyu da cidian* 1975, vol. 1, p. 214.

⁷⁶ The best treatise on names was probably written in *Foxue da cidian* 2002. There are many entries with the character *ming* (cf. pp. 524–526), but no mentions of tabooing. In *Foxue da cidian* 1961, there is no note about *bihui* and *ming* appears only in connection with *faxing yiming* 法性異名 (p. 1389) and *faming* 法名 (p. 1378). We could find no note about “name” in *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms* 1991 and in Schumann 2000. Only the expressions *mingse* 名色 and *mingshu* 名數 are given in Kleine – Li Xuetao – Michael Pye 1999, p. 134. The notes about two words with *ming* in Raguin 1985, p. 253 are very scant.

significance of name within this religion.⁷⁷ The concept of “name” occasionally appears in philosophical discourse as *nāman* or *nāma* (Sanskrit, chin. *ming* 名). There the name denotes something unreal and is one of three unrealities (Sanskrit *prajnapti*, chin. *sanjia* 三假): things (*fa* 法), sensations (*shou* 受) and names (*ming* 名).⁷⁸ According to Buddhist philosophy, names are empty and have no real existence, just like other phenomena.⁷⁹ We see here some similarities to the philosophical Daoist view on names.⁸⁰ The term *nāma* (name) also means personality, mentality, and that which is unseen. It is often connected with *rupa* (*xing* 性 – its form, body) as *namarupa* and describes “the complex of mind and matter.”⁸¹ This important concept is also used in Buddhist meditation.

We observe an utmost importance assigned to a name in Buddhist practices. There are numerous oral techniques focused on the various names of the Buddha. These names are to be sung or recited, and it is important for them to be pronounced correctly. Invocation and multiple repetition of the name of Buddha, used often as mantra, have a soteriological effect for believers. Pure Land school of Buddhism focuses on the ritual of reciting the name of the Buddha Amithaba (jap. *nembutsu*, chin. *nianfo* 念佛), and believers are sure that pronouncing this name with sincerity will save them. Calling the name of Amithaba has performative power and makes him present. “The sense is a humble submission to the power of what is named, which is also somehow the name itself.”⁸² But the name can be invoked only in a ritual context and not outside of it. In that respect, it is not so far from the Chinese belief in the power of real names.

A special name is given to a monk or new believer. After somebody decides to become a Buddhist, an initiation ceremony is arranged and he will be proclaimed a follower of Buddha. He obtains from a master a new name, i.e. the Dharma name (*faming* 法名, *fahao* 法號). This name is also called *jieming* 戒名 (forbidden name), or *fahui* 法諱 (taboo of dharma). Originally, and still in Theravada Buddhism, such a name was apparently given only to monks after they “left the family” (*chujia* 出家) or for pious believers after death,

⁷⁷ A short note about the name in Mahayana Buddhism (only about calling the name of Buddha) is in Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303. In Bauer’s work on Chinese names only a listing of Buddhist names could be found (cf. Bauer 1959, pp. 325-328). No work or paper about names could be found in Reynolds 1981.

⁷⁸ *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 59.

⁷⁹ *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* 1937, p. 204.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Daodejing*, j. 1, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* 2003, vol. VII, p. 125. More about the concept of *namarupa* see *Buddhistisches Wörterbuch* 1976, pp. 132-133; Schumann 1986, pp. 79-80.

⁸² Mathewson Denny 1987, p. 303.

as a kind of posthumous name. But in Chinese Buddhism, every Buddhist was eligible for such a name.⁸³ The new (Buddhist) name constitutes a new human being, a new (Buddhist) personality. No information could be found about a possible practice of taboo of a Buddhist's former name. Apparently it is not used, but there is no concrete evidence of explicit and conscious avoidance. The character *jie* 戒 (forbidden) is often used in Buddhism terms. The expression 戒律 *jielü* is the Chinese translation of the Sanscrit word *shila*, and describes ethical rules of Buddhist life (there are five, eight or ten precepts [*jie*] in Buddhism). None of these rules has a direct connection with naming or with name tabooing.

Knowledge about the names of demons and deities⁸⁴ was cultivated in Chinese (popular) Buddhism for medical purposes. In the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳),⁸⁵ we read in the biography of Fotucheng 佛圖澄⁸⁶ that he “was proficient at intoning magic spells and could make the spirits his servants.”⁸⁷ In the *Sutra of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva about Care for the Sick* of Buddhist Canon, translated into Chinese in 625–650 AD, we find a prescription about the expulsion of demons, with the last sentence: “If after that this person still vocalizes the name (of the appropriate demon), the expulsion is complete.”⁸⁸ Later in the same *sutra*, the name of demon was to be used against the sleeplessness of children: “If a small child cries and cannot sleep at night, the name of demon should be written under his eyes. The spell of expulsion should be recited twenty one times and one should ptyalize three times. It causes expulsion and relaxation.”⁸⁹ The power of names is present in many other works of Chinese Buddhist magical medicine which referred to the words of Buddha: “If you have headache, your eyes are blurred, and chills and fever assail your heart, you should at once utter the names of these two demons, (...) and every one of the various demons will be smashed and defeated.”⁹⁰ By naming the demon, it will be neutralized. By calling or writing names of (positive) spirits, the living human will be protected. Both these aspects of the power of the name in Buddhism can be seen in the following words of the Buddha to Śakra the Monarch of Heaven:

These are the names of the spirit-kings of the five directions. If hereafter, in the last age of the world, there is a day when the four classes of disciples are in danger, they

⁸³ Cf. Huang Kexi 2006, p. 27.

⁸⁴ Cf. Bunce 1994.

⁸⁵ Compiled in ca. 519 by Hui Jiao 慧皎 (497-554).

⁸⁶ Indian monk, ca. 232-348, other names: Buttocho (jap.), Buddhasingha (Sanskrit).

⁸⁷ Wright 1990, p. 46.

⁸⁸ Unschuld 1980, p. 253.

⁸⁹ Unschuld 1980, p. 257.

⁹⁰ Strickmann 2002, pp. 110-111.

should write the names of the spirit-kings and their retinues on a round piece of wood. This is called the mudra rite. (...) Sickness and suffering will be cured and demon-vapours will be destroyed. (...) If you seal a person's house with the names of seven gods on the mudra, these gods will protect that person.⁹¹

Besides, in Buddhism, the names of ghosts should not be mentioned in the presence of a person (especially a sick person), “for fear that this would immediately deliver the patient into the power of the spirit so rashly named.”⁹² Thus this custom is similar to the Daoist practice. Perhaps it can be regarded as a common Chinese practice, rather than a specifically Buddhist one.

We can only presume that, especially in popular Buddhism, believers were – as indeed all Chinese people – affected by the tabooing of names. There is an example of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty – Zhu Yuanzhang, who had been a Buddhist monk in his youth. After he became emperor, he consciously avoided names and words related to Buddhism, such as *shi* 釋 (Śākyamuni) and *heshang* 和尚 (monk). And when the emperor found the character *guang* 光 (light, bare) in a poem of his official Shi Mengwei 施孟微, he ordered his dismissal, because of its similarity to the hairless head of a monk.⁹³ When the characters of the name of Zhu Yuanzhang were tabooed (see 7.2.2), we can also presume that the names of other persons related to Buddhism were avoided, at least in everyday life.⁹⁴

Certainly, the “name” had a strong connection to omens also in Buddhism. This is evident in the story of the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks* (*Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳), where the monk Fotucheng 佛圖澄 warned the Emperor Shi Le 石勒 (r. 319–333) of the Later Zhao dynasty: “You should order the people not to eat onions (*cong* 蔥).” In fact his words were soon revealed to be prophetic: in 330, the rebellion of Shi Cong (*Shi Cong panluan* 石蔥叛亂) took place, whose name contained this character.⁹⁵

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to analyze taboos in Buddhist texts, but it can be taken as a certainty that these writings, just as any other Chinese texts, were affected by the custom of name tabooing. It is unclear whether changes made because of taboo stem from the Buddhists themselves, but it seems to be very possible in many cases. An article

⁹¹ Strickmann 2002, pp. 134–135.

⁹² Strickmann 2002, p. 277.

⁹³ *Liunan suibi*, j. 6, p. 105.

⁹⁴ Here we can see also one of the psychological mechanisms of taboo origin: fear of one's past.

⁹⁵ *Gaosengzhuan*, j. 9, p. 3–4; Wright 1990, p. 51.

on ancient Buddhist works about ophthalmology reports taboo examples in them. Two different works were found which are respectively attributed to Long Mu (*Yanke Long Mu lun* 眼科龍木論) and Long Shu (*Longshu yanlun* 龍樹眼論)⁹⁶. As the authors of this article have demonstrated, this actually refers to one and the same person – the famous Indian philosopher Nagarjuna (ca. 150–250). Works referring to his names were translated under the name Long Shu during the Tang dynasty. Later, when the name of Emperor Yingzong of Song (Zhao Shu 趙曙, r. 1063–1067) was tabooed, its homonym *shu* 樹 was also changed to *mu* 木 and was perpetuated.⁹⁷ It can be assumed that there are many other taboo characters in yet unstudied Buddhist texts.

Summing up, Buddhist monks in China had to follow the general practice of name tabooing, but as far as we can see, Chinese Buddhist tradition itself did not use taboos for its own divine figures (such as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas). The reason for this is that only by invoking their real names could one hope to make them present.

10.3. Rebellion and the Tabooing of Names

Most known cases of name tabooing are taboos of the emperor. Subjects had to avoid the name of their ruler, sometimes mainly as an expression of loyalty. But what happened if a subject refused such obedience and related taboos? Official documents offer only a sparse record of such cases. We know much about consequences of (often unintended) violations of the taboo name of an emperor. These were often considered as usurpation and *lèse majesté*, and punished in extreme cases with death sentence since every potential rebel had to be eliminated. Such was the end, for example, of the life story of scholar Wang Xihou 王錫侯 (1713–1777), who accidentally published a few imperial names (see 1).

It was prohibited for subjects to use “power characters” that had meanings related to the emperor or political power, such as *jun* 君 (ruler), *long* 龍 (dragon) or *tian* 天 (heaven). In contrast, names demonstrating faithfulness and allegiance were encouraged. Therefore, rebels in China sometimes changed their names in order to obtain legitimacy and an auspicious omen. Very representative of this phenomenon is the person of military governor Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852–912). In his youth, he joined the Huang Chao Rebellion (黃巢之亂, 874–884). When Zhu Wen defected in 882 to the side of Emperor Xizong of Tang (r. 873

⁹⁶ Sometimes, especially in Ming, also called *Long Shu pusa yanlun* 龍樹菩薩眼論. There are about twenty books with both these names (Cf. Yang Hong – He Zhongjun 2009, pp. 12–13).

⁹⁷ Yang Hong – He Zhongjun 2009, pp.12–13.

to 888), the Emperor rewarded him and conferred upon him a new personal name – Quanzhong 全忠 (Wholeheartedly Loyal). By changing his name, the Emperor attempted to underline the subordination of Zhu (see 6.3.3). When Zhu later took political power by imprisoning and killing in 908 the last emperor of the Tang dynasty, the name Quanzhong became for him an onerous burden. As a *de facto* rebel against the Tang dynasty, he needed political legitimacy for his deeds, and his name was an important symbolic weapon in that respect. Therefore, when he proclaimed himself Emperor Taizu of the Later Liang, he changed his name to Zhu Huang 朱晃 (Bright). Furthermore, he issued a special decree which allowed the characters of his former name, Quanzhong, to be used freely in order to show the change.⁹⁸ Since this was no longer his given name, taboos would have made no sense anymore.

Names of rebels were sometimes openly used in order to show disrespect through the violation of their taboos, or on the contrary, avoided in order to conceal a detested name. An example of such a taboo of hatred is the attitude of Emperor Suzong of Tang (r. 756–762). During his whole reign there was the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763), started by general An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757). In order to express his anger, the Emperor tabooed the character *an* 安 and many (especially geographical) names were changed because of that.⁹⁹ It was also a kind of protection of his own power, which would have been offended by the presence of a detested name. Names of rebels were also tabooed by other people, as we know from the case of general An Baoyu 安抱玉 (703–777) of the Tang dynasty, who changed his name, choosing the Tang imperial family name, to Li Baoyu 李抱玉 in order not to have the same family name as An Lushan.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes even words related to a rebel were tabooed, as in the case of *zei* 賊 (bandit, usurper) or *ke* 剋 (to destroy) (see 7.1.3 and 7.2.1).

Rebels did not reject the taboo system as such, but only the taboos of the ruling dynasty. In their stead, insurgents usually put their own “emperor” and started their own taboo customs.¹⁰¹ This was the above mentioned case with Zhu Wen (see above) and also with Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–1678). As the commander of the Qing dynasty and factual ruler in Yunnan since 1659, he started to establish his own taboo system, which he

⁹⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 149.

⁹⁹ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 33–34.

¹⁰⁰ *Xin Tangshu*, j. 138, p. 3a.

¹⁰¹ Important was, however, the change of the year title of a dynasty. “This signified a rupture with the ruling dynasty and a claim to the cosmological legitimation of the newly adopted name” (Aubin 1987, p. 137).

continued after becoming a rebel in the so-called Revolt of the Three Feudatories (*sanfan zhi luan* 三藩之亂, 1673–1681). He declared himself the First Emperor of the Zhou dynasty in 1678. His name was tabooed and many geographical names were changed, such as Guilin 桂林 (to Jianlin 建林), Guiyang 桂陽 (to Nanping 南平), Guidong 桂東 (to Yichang 義昌). Characters of his name were replaced by others (*san* 三 by *can* 參 and *gui* 桂 by *gui* 貴). The name of his father Xiang 襄 was also tabooed: names with this character were changed to *xiang* 廂. We know that e.g. the name of Xiangyang 襄陽 was changed to Hannan 漢南 for that reason.¹⁰²

10.3.1. Taboo in the Heavenly Kingdom of Transcendent Peace as an Example

A special case of name tabooing by rebels – the customs of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (Taiping tianguo 太平天國, 1850–1864) – deserves special consideration and serves here as an eminent example.¹⁰³ At least since the seizure of Nanjing in 1853, when Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 was established as a King with divine power in the same year, the tabooing of names was introduced as an important rule of the state, in many aspects similar to the taboo system of the Qing dynasty. In 1862, the Taipings issued the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided* (*Qinding jingbi ziyang* 欽定敬避字樣) – a collection of taboo characters and otherwise prohibited characters and words.¹⁰⁴ In fact, there were many more tabooed characters which had to be observed.¹⁰⁵

The Taiping leaders (Hong Xiuquan, Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清, Feng Yunshan 馮雲山, Xiao Chaogui 蕭朝貴) stressed their political power which was also expressed clearly in the taboo system of their names. Many examples of that can be found. In fact, the name of Hong Xiuquan itself was already the result of tabooing. His milk name was Hong Huoxiu 洪火秀, and he changed it to Xiuquan in about 1842. The secret meaning of this new name is often given as a reason for the change: elements of both characters put together compose the sentence “I am the King of the people” (*he nai ren wang* 禾乃人王). The new name legitimated the new leader as the ruler of the whole world. But there was still another reason for the change: the name Huoxiu would have offended the taboo name of God,

¹⁰² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 18.

¹⁰³ More about the Taiping Rebellion see Kuhn 1978, pp. 264–317. For the custom of the tabooing of name in that time see Wang Jian 2002, pp. 265–270; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 318–330.

¹⁰⁴ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698–700. For translation see Michael 1971, Vol. III, pp. 1001–1008.

¹⁰⁵ There were more than 160 characters tabooed by Taipings, according to Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 105.

Yahweh (*Yehuohua* 爺火華). Thus, the character *huo* in the name of Hong Huoxiu had to be changed in any event.¹⁰⁶

Every character of the Taiping leaders' names should be avoided. When the character *xiu* 秀 became taboo, it was replaced by *xiu* 繡 or *you* 莠.¹⁰⁷ The *xiucai* 秀才 was called *youshi* 莠士.¹⁰⁸ The character *quan* 全 was changed to *quan* 銓 or *quan* 詮, *qing* 清 to *jing* 菁, *yun* 雲 to *yun* 蓁, *shan* 山 to *shan* 珊, *gui* 貴 to *gui* 桂.¹⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that apparently (modified) given names were used as a form of address to rulers. If somebody wanted to address Yang Xiuqing 楊秀清, he used the form Henai 禾乃.¹¹⁰

Similarly to the emperors of the Qing dynasty, rulers of the Taipings ordered the taboo of “power names.” During the Taiping Rebellion, the title *wang* 王 was especially tabooed and could be used only for rulers of the Taiping – correspondingly “Heavenly King” *tianwang* 天王 (Hong Xiuquan), “Eastern King” *dongwang* 東王 (Yang Xiuqing), “Western King” *xiwang* 西王 (Xiao Chaogui), “Southern King” *nanwang* 南王 (Feng Yunshan), “Northern King” *beiwang* 北王 (Wei Changhui), “King in the Wings” *yiwang* 翼王 (Shi Dakai 石達開).¹¹¹ In other cases, the use of the character *wang* 王 was prohibited.

There are many other “power” taboo characters recorded in the already mentioned *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided*. Characters such as *tian* 天 (heaven), *sheng* 聖 (holy), *jun* 君 (monarch), *guo* 國 (state), *jing* 京 (capital), *du* 都 (capital), *huangdi* 皇帝 (emperor) and *fu* 府 (seat of government) were all tabooed. The character *jun* 君 was replaced by *jun* 鈞 (you) and *guo* 國 by *guo* 郭 (city wall).¹¹² Peking (Beijing) was called Beiyan 北燕.¹¹³ Especially in religious texts, *tian* (heaven) was changed to *tian* 添 (add).¹¹⁴

The character *huang* 皇 was written as *huang* 黃.¹¹⁵ The character *long* 龍 (dragon), as a symbol of the emperor, was taboo, and was changed to *long* 隆 (prosperous, flourishing).¹¹⁶ Therefore, the province Heilongjiang 黑龍江 was called Wulongjiang 烏隆

¹⁰⁶ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 101; Spence 1994, p. 39. See also Wagner 1982.

¹⁰⁷ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹⁰⁸ *Nanzhongji*, p. 641.

¹⁰⁹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698-699.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Taiping jiushige*, p. 240.

¹¹¹ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 320-321.

¹¹² *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, pp. 698-699.

¹¹³ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹¹⁴ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242.

¹¹⁵ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242.

¹¹⁶ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 243.

江.¹¹⁷ Only the Taiping rulers could use the symbol of the dragon. Other taboo words were titles such as *hou* 后 (empress) and *chen* 臣 (minister).¹¹⁸

Even stronger were the regulations for using the *wang* 王 (king) character in the names of other kings and deities. The character could not be used to refer to emperors of the Qing dynasty, as antagonists of the Taiping. The common way of tabooing their names (as taboo of hate, see 3.8.3) was to add the dog radical to the character and to write *kuang* 狂 (wild, mad, unrestrained).¹¹⁹ In this way, for example, names of ancient Chinese kings, such as King Wen and King Wu of the Zhou dynasty, were written as *wenkuang* 文狂 and *wukuang* 武狂.¹²⁰ Similarly, the name of a Chinese deity like the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea (*donghai longwang* 東海龍王) – was changed to *donghai longyao* 東海龍妖 (Dragon Demon of the Eastern Sea).¹²¹

The Taiping preferred to change the titles of former rulers. If only God can be called “emperor,” then another ruler could be named at most as “marquis” (*hou* 侯).¹²² The mythological period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors (*sanhuang wudi* 三皇五帝) was changed to Three Directions and Five Clans (*sanfang wushi* 三方五氏).¹²³ The antagonists of the Taipings – members of the Qing dynasty’s government – were called demons. We know, for example, that high officials were called “big head of demons” (*dayaotou* 大妖頭),¹²⁴ and the capital of the Qing was called “demon’s den” *yaoxue* 妖穴.¹²⁵ The characters of the Era name of the Qing Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐 were written with the “dog” part 犭 on their left side.¹²⁶

One peculiarity of the Taiping Rebellion was an extremely strong connection between taboo custom and religion. Among the taboo names, many were related to Christianity. The names of the Christian God Yahweh (Jehovah, *Yehuohua* 爺火華), and of Jesus Christ (*Yesu Jidu* 耶穌基督) were taboo.¹²⁷ In the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided* we can find characters that were supposed to be used instead. The character *huo* 火

¹¹⁷ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹¹⁸ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 122-123.

¹¹⁹ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242; Chen Peirong 1994, p. 89.

¹²⁰ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 718.

¹²¹ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹²² Michael 1971, p. 809.

¹²³ Wu Liangzuo 1988, p. 106.

¹²⁴ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 6, p. 181.

¹²⁵ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹²⁶ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 102.

¹²⁷ *Tianwang zhaozhi*, p. 685. Michael 1971, p. 946.

could not be used anymore. It had to be changed to *huo* 燒, *huo* 伙, *huo* 夥, or *yan* 炎.¹²⁸ Because of that, for example, *shenghuo* 生火 (make a fire) was changed to *duihuo* 堆燒, *fahuo* 發火 (catch fire, detonate, get angry) to *chonghuo* 沖燒, and fire as one of five elements became *yan* 炎.¹²⁹ Moreover, fire as a component of characters was also taboo because of God's name, and so, for example, the character *ying* 營 was written in a reduced form as *ying* 营 (like the simplified character we know today).¹³⁰ Similarly, the character *hua* 華 was tabooed and changed to *hua* 花, for example *huaren* 華人 (Chinese) became 花人.¹³¹

Other words, related to religion, were taboo, as for example Lord (*zhu* 主) and God (*shangdi* 上帝). According to the *List of Characters to be Reverently Avoided*, the form of the character *zhu* 主 had to be changed to *si* 司 (commander), *zhuan* 專 (expert) or *zhu* 柱 (pillar).¹³² Therefore “daughters” of Hong Xiuquan were not called *gongzhu* 公主 (Princess), but “palace city women” (*gongchengnü* 宮城女).¹³³ Because Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the character “son” *zi* 子 was taboo. Only Jesus could be called “Son of Man” *renzi* 人子 and only God could call people “my people” *zimin* 子民 (literally: people as sons). The texts of that time, especially those from the *Bible*, but also other annunciations, had the expression *liangmin* 良民 (good people) instead of that.¹³⁴ Such words as “my son” (*wuzi* 吾子), “small son” (*xiaozi* 小子), “beloved son” (*qinzi* 親子, *aizi* 愛子), were all changed to “my younger brother” *wudi* 吾弟, *xiaodi* 小弟, etc. The address *ersanzi* 二子 (all of you) was also changed to *ersandi* 二三弟.¹³⁵

A character that was especially avoided was *gui* 鬼 (ghost). All characters with the part *gui* – such as soul (*hun* 魂, *po* 魄), a surname or state name Wei 魏, or “to be ashamed” (*kui* 愧) – were changed by replacing this part with *ren* 人 (human).¹³⁶ The *guixiu* 鬼宿 (Ghost mansion – one of the Chinese constellations), however, was called *kuixiu* 魁宿

¹²⁸ Cf. *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹²⁹ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 320.

¹³⁰ Xu Jiu 1990, p. 87.

¹³¹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹³² *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698.

¹³³ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 322.

¹³⁴ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699; Wu Liangzuo 1987, p. 123.

¹³⁵ Wu Liangzuo 1987, p. 123.

¹³⁶ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699.

(eminent mansion).¹³⁷ Also the word *shen* 神 (deity) was taboo and thus changed to *shen* 申.¹³⁸ Buddhist terms were disgraced and changed. The Buddha was called the “dead demon” (*siyao* 死妖).¹³⁹ The word for Boddhisatwa (*pusa* 菩薩) was changed to *gaisha* 該殺 (should be killed).¹⁴⁰

Characters of the Twelve Earthly Branches, used in the Chinese calendar, were also tabooed. But it seems that most of the changes were made because of inauspicious pronunciations. Names of years and days were repeatedly changed by Taiping: the year 1851, called in Chinese *xinhai* 辛亥, was renamed to *xinkai* 辛開, as the second character had a pronunciation similar to *hai* 害 (injury). Two years later, the name of the year 1853, *guichou* 癸丑, had to be changed to *guihao* 癸好 in order to avoid a bad omen – the character *chou* 醜 means “ugly”. Besides, the year *yimao* 乙卯 (1855) was revised, because the pronunciation in Southern Chinese dialects is similar to *mao* 冇 (not have). The new name of the year was *yirong* 乙榮.¹⁴¹

Another peculiarity is the large number of “evil” or “dangerous words” (*ehui* 惡諱), perhaps because of the rejection of tradition by the Taiping rebels, or because most people were from the lower strata of society. Inauspicious words were tabooed and changed. It is possible that some of the “new words” were just terms used according to local custom. The word “death” *si* 死 was written and pronounced as *shang tiantang* 上天堂 (go to the heaven).¹⁴² Similarly, the word *shuai* 衰 (decline) was written as *shuai* 帥 (handsome), and *li* 離 (leave) as *li* 利 (profit). The character *bai* 敗 (lose) could be changed to *sheng* 勝 (win).¹⁴³ The character *shang* 傷 (injury) in the word *shangyuan* 傷員 (the wounded) was changed to *nengren* 能人 (able persons),¹⁴⁴ and *shangbing* 傷兵 (wounded soldiers) to *rongjun* 榮軍 (glorious army).¹⁴⁵ Words related to sex and toilet were tabooed as impure. For example, the words *dabian* 大便 (defecate) and *xiaobian* 小便 (urinate) were

¹³⁷ *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 243.

¹³⁸ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 718.

¹³⁹ *Huxuesheng huanji*, p. 738; *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴⁰ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹⁴¹ *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 699; *Zeiqing huizuan*, j. 8, p. 242; *Banxing lishu*, pp. 172 and 195-200; Wang Jian 2002, p. 268.

¹⁴² *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴³ Liu Hongwei 2010, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ Wu Liangzuo 1993, p. 101.

¹⁴⁵ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 123-124.

euphemized as respectively *runhua* 潤化 (moisturisation) or as *runquan* 潤泉.¹⁴⁶ The word *jianying* 姦淫 (adultery) was changed to *dashuipao* 打水礮 (play water cannon). Sodomy (*jijian* 雞姦, homosexual rape) was called *datonggu* 打銅鼓 (play copper drum).¹⁴⁷

The same character could be tabooed as a courtesy taboo (*jinghui* 敬諱) and as a “bad word” taboo (*ehui*), e.g. all people with the family name Wang 王 had to change it to Wang 汪 out of reverence for the Heavenly King (*Tianwang* 天王),¹⁴⁸ and in contrast, the title of the Northern King (*Beiwang* 北王) of one of the Taiping leaders – Wei Changhui 韋昌輝 – was changed retrospectively to “to carry soil” *beitu* 背土), after his execution.¹⁴⁹

Even though most rebels were commoners, the tabooing was not limited to the pronunciation of taboo words. Taboo was also specially observed in writing. In fact, taboo characters recorded during the Taiping Rebellion went even further than regular taboos, showing the importance of writing in this rebellion. For example, the Taiping changed words, such as that for a musical instrument, *pipa* 琵琶, to *biba* 比巴 and the Chinese zither *qinse* 琴瑟 to *jinbi* 今必 – because they contained the character *wang* 王.¹⁵⁰

10.4. Specific Historical Conditions

10.4.1. Avoidance of Taboos from Past Dynasties

The standard rules of taboo custom determined that (in the case of the emperor) observance should stop after seven generations. But we know that sometimes the practice of taboo avoidance was continued after that period, too, and even in the following dynasties. There was, for example, an officer and tactician called Yang Fu 楊阜 (3rd c. AD), in the time of the Three Kingdoms, who still avoided the taboo of the first Emperor of Han, Liu Bang (206 – 195 BC). When he wrote in a petition to the throne this sentence from the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*): “he united and brought into harmony ten thousand states” (*xiehe*

¹⁴⁶ *Jinling shengnan jilue*, p. 722.

¹⁴⁷ *Jinling chengwai xinyuefu*, p. 745.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Qinding jingbi ziyang*, p. 698. The “water” component is written above the character *wang* 王 in the original.

¹⁴⁹ Wu Liangzuo 1987, pp. 120-121.

¹⁵⁰ Xu Jiu 1990, p. 88.

wanbang 協和萬邦),¹⁵¹ he replaced the taboo character *bang* with *guo* 國, as it had been prescribed before.¹⁵²

Such a continuation of taboo practice after the end of a dynasty could have various motives. The case above shows that names of past persons, especially emperors, were sometimes venerated for a long time and therefore tabooed. Examples of such practices can be observed in particular at the time when subjects of a past dynasty were still living. Besides the aforementioned one, we also know about a certain Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204-273) from the Three Kingdoms period who changed all the characters *zhuang* 莊 to *yan* 嚴 in his *Commentary to the Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu zhu* 國語注) in order to taboo the name of Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han (r. 58–75 AD).¹⁵³ A similar case was reported from the Tang period. When the *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu*) was compiled (629–636 AD) *inter alia* by Wei Zheng 魏徵, shortly after the decline of the Sui dynasty, all the *zhong* 忠 characters were changed to *cheng* 誠 because of the taboo of the father of Emperor Wen of Sui (d. 568). For example, the title of biographies about loyalty and moral integrity (*zhongjie* 忠節) was written as *chengjie* 誠節.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Fu Jian 苻堅 (338-385) was called by his courtesy name Fu Yonggu 苻永固 in order to taboo the name of Emperor Wen of the Sui.¹⁵⁵

In addition, we can see many instances of avoiding taboos out of habit, though the dynasty had already perished. We should remember that the tabooing of an emperor's name was often practiced for a long time and many generations. People became accustomed to using some names and characters, regarded them as normal, non-tabooed words, and continued this custom sometimes for centuries. We can find direct information about that in the text of Wang Su 王肅 (464–501) from the Northern Wei period (386–535 AD). He wrote that the name *shengzhong* 省中, used before as the taboo equivalent of *jinzhong* 禁中 (Forbidden Palace), was preserved and used until his time.¹⁵⁶ The character *jin* 禁 had become taboo half a millennium before, as the name of the father of the Empress Wang Zhengjun 王政君 (71 BC–13 AD). People used the new “tabooed” name out of habit, not because of special reverence.

¹⁵¹ *Shangshu*, j. 1, p. 2a.

¹⁵² *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵³ *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵⁴ *Suishu*, j. 71, p. 1a.

¹⁵⁵ *Suishu*, j. 15, p. 1b; *Rizhilu*, j. 23, p. 28a.

¹⁵⁶ *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554.

Similarly, it is possible that the writing of characters was perpetuated in the tabooed way, especially if revisers copied an original tabooed text and neglected to correct it. The *Shihui juli* gives many examples from the *Stone classics of Later Shu* (*Hou Shu shijing* 後蜀石經, 934–965),¹⁵⁷ where strokes are omitted as taboo in the characters *shi* 世, *min* 民, *min* 岷, *hun* 緡, *yuan* 淵, *qi* 棄, *xie* 泄 and *ye* 葉.¹⁵⁸ In fact, the original text was written in the Tang period and tabooed Tang names. Most probably, the avoidance of Tang taboo in the stone classics was no longer the expression of respect, but rather an unconscious borrowing. The same happened with the characters *xuan* 玄, *hong* 弘, *ning* 寧, or *zhu* 貯 (taboo names of Qing emperors) which even in Republican times were still written in the tabooed way without a stroke, as they were considered to be the original form.¹⁵⁹ Such “avoidance of taboo name” is of course not a real taboo case, but it does belong to a complete picture of the overall cultural practice.

There was also the (seldom) practiced custom that rulers coerced subjects to observe taboos of past dynasties in order to show their own power or strengthen loyalty. We can read about such a policy in the time of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty (r. 1735–1796). The Emperor was furious when he discovered that the taboo character of Emperor Wu of Han (140–87 BC) – *che* 徹 – was left unt tabooed by compilers of the *Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku Quanshu*). Both sentences: “Che of Han imitated the Qin rule” (*Han Che fang Qinzheng* 漢徹方秦政) of *Ji’nanji* 濟南集¹⁶⁰ and “Che of Han fluttering up and down” (*xiehang Han Che* 頡頏漢徹) of the *Beishi* 北史¹⁶¹ – should have been changed and replaced by Han Wu 漢武.¹⁶² Here, the reason for taboo was to show that respect for an emperor should be obligatory, even after a long time. This possible avoidance of past taboo names should be considered if we want to determine the age of a text or its origin.

10.4.2. Identical Taboos in Different States and Periods

An interesting, but sometimes also confusing, phenomenon of taboo customs is the occurrence of the same taboos in different periods. It is plausible that people had identical names, and there are numerous cases that such names were tabooed in various times.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Zhongguo congshu zonglu*, Vol. 2, p. 185.

¹⁵⁸ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 80.

¹⁵⁹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 80.

¹⁶⁰ *Ji’nanji*, j. 1, p. 7a.

¹⁶¹ *Beishi*, j. 83, p. 2a.

¹⁶² Chen Yuan 1958, p. 169.

Usually, a taboo for someone is apparent. But sometimes the same characters being tabooed in many periods can also cause problems.

The most famous two cases are recorded by Chen Yuan: The name of the place Hengshan 恆山 (today Zhengding 正定 in the Hebei province), established in the beginning of the Han period, was tabooed and changed to Changshan 常山 in the time of Emperor Wen of Han (Liu Heng 劉恆, r. 179–157 BC). After the old name was re-established in the Sui period (as Hengshan 恆山 and later changed to Hengzhou 恆州), the character *heng* was again tabooed in the time of Emperor Muzong of Tang (Li Heng 李恆, r. 821–824) and Hengzhou was changed in 820 to Zhenzhou 鎮州. Fortunately, the original name was apparently not changed back after the fall of the Tang dynasty, and therefore did not need to be tabooed during the Song time, since Emperor Zhenzong (997–1022) also had the given name Heng 恆. But later, the name of Zhenzhou (in the meantime already changed to Zhending 真定) was tabooed once more, because of the name Yinzhen 胤禛 of the Emperor Yongzheng of Qing. Consequently, it has been called Zhengding 正定 since 1723 until now.¹⁶³

The relations of identical characters with different epochs would be still more interesting, if we knew that taboo characters of one period were used as equivalents of taboos in an earlier one. The already mentioned character *heng* 恆 was often used, for example, as a replacement for the taboo character *hong* 弘. There is the name Hongnong 弘農, established in the Han period and changed to Hengnong 恆農 during the reign of Emperor Xianwen (Tuoba Hong 拓拔弘 r. 466–471) of Northern Wei. The reestablishment as Hongnong in the Sui period was preserved for one century, when a new change was made back to Hengnong in 705, because of the taboo name of Crown Prince Li Hong 李弘 (652–675) of the Tang dynasty. The tabooed name was used until 728, and was then restored to Hongnong, until a new need for tabooing the *hong* 弘 character arose in the Song period in 960 – the father of the Emperor Taizu was called Hongyin 弘殷. Hongnong was renamed once more as Hengnong, which was changed thereafter, in 997, to Guolüe 虢略 because of the taboo of Emperor Zhenzong of Song.¹⁶⁴

Numerous other characters became taboo in different periods. For example, the taboo names of the Han dynasty, such as Hong 宏 (Emperor Ling Di of Han, r. 168–189)

¹⁶³ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 81–82.

¹⁶⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 82.

or Long 隆 (Emperor Shang of Han, r. 106), became taboo repeatedly in the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties (Hong 宏 was Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei, r. 471–499) and the Tang dynasty (Long 隆 was Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, r. 712–756). Similarly, an identical taboo name (Hu 虎) belonged to the Emperor Wu of Later Zhao (Shi Hu 石虎, r. 334–349) and the grandfather of Emperor Gaozu of Tang (r. 618–626) – Li Hu 李虎. Characters such as *jing* 敬 (taboo of the Emperor Gaozu of Later Jin, r. 936–942, and of the grandfather of Taizu of Song, r. 960–976), *zhen* 禎 (taboo of an ancestor of the Emperor Taizu of Sui, r. 581–604 – Yang Zhen 楊禎 – and of the Emperor Renzong of Song, r. 1022–1063), *zhong* 忠 (taboo of the father of the Emperor Taizu of Sui, r. 581–604 – Yang Zhong 楊忠, and of the Crown Prince Li Hong 李忠 of the Tang, 643–665), and many others, also were identical in different dynasties.

Such cases of the same names and characters used in different periods can cause great confusion. Toponyms were changed many times, not only because of taboo. Names were abolished and re-introduced. Sometimes they ceased to exist and became forgotten. We should also remember that not only imperial taboos, but also many similar private taboos were observed in various periods. This makes the list of possible identical taboo characters much longer. If we add problems with the incomplete restoration of taboos to their original characters by later revisers, identical taboo characters can really be considered as a potential source of mistakes. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine the time and reason for a taboo, if there are various possible tabooed persons. Fortunately, in concrete cases and contexts there is normally only a limited range of alternatives. Additional help here can also be found by the determination of the method of tabooing – which usually differs in various periods.

10.4.3. Mutual Avoidance of Taboos from Different States

At times when the Chinese territory was divided into several states, the custom of name tabooing was of course continued. Every state had its own distinctive imperial taboos. Yet, there are cases in which taboos of one state were also observed in another one. This mutual avoidance was usually connected with concrete situations. Since ancient times, the taboo of another state was observed in diplomatic relations and during visits to other countries. The old rule of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* determined: “If you come to a country, you should

ask about the taboos”¹⁶⁵ (see 4.3.1.3) Therefore Fan Xianzi 范獻子 mentioned already in the *Sayings of the states* (*Guoyu*), blushed when he unknowingly used taboo names of the Lu state during his visit to this country (see 8.2.3.).¹⁶⁶ Another incident, recorded in the *Hanfeizi*, happened when the ruler of Wei wanted to visit Zhou. At the border, he was asked for his name by the guard, and used the title Land-Extender (*bijiang* 辟疆), reserved only for *wang*. He was not admitted until he changed this usurper title (see 4.3.1.4).¹⁶⁷

Examples of “taboo culture” or “taboo diplomacy” between different countries can be also found in the Three Kingdoms period. As the envoy Chen Zhen 陳震 of the Shu state went with congratulations to Emperor Sun Quan of the Wu state, he asked about its taboos.¹⁶⁸ When the Emperor Sun Hao of the Wu state later sent two envoys to Wei, their first question upon entrance was about taboos (see 5.2.8).¹⁶⁹ But in that time we still have no evidence of name changing because of external taboos. No examples of a mutual observance of taboo customs are known from the time of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589).

The custom of respecting the taboos of other states prevailed in the Tang times and the Five Dynasties period, and especially in the Song period. From the Tang period, we know about the avoidance of Tang taboos by the Nanzhao state 南詔 (8–9th c.).¹⁷⁰ In the time of the Five Dynasties, there was a poet, Wang An 王安 (869–941), in the Southern Tang state. He lived on the border of the Southern Han state, and many envoys came to see him. This was confusing, because *an* 安 was a taboo character of the Southern Han – it was the name of an ancestor (Liu Anren 劉安仁) of Emperor Liu Yan 劉龔 (r. 917–925). Therefore, a new name – Wang Hui 王會 was bestowed on him.¹⁷¹ Similar records are also known in connection with the Later Zhou Dynasty (951–960).¹⁷²

Numerous cases of mutual avoidance of taboo between Song, Liao, Jin, Western Xia and the Tibetan Empire (Tufan, Tobo) can be found. For example, chieftains of the Tanguts – Li Yiyin 李彝殷 (d. 967) and his son Li Guangrui 李光睿 (d. 978) – tabooed the names of Song emperors and therefore changed their names to Li Yixing 李彝興 and Li

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *Liji*, j. 1, p. 40a.

¹⁶⁶ *Guoyu*, j. 15, p. 2ab.

¹⁶⁷ *Han Feizi*, j. 14, p. 7b.

¹⁶⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Shuzhi”, j. 9, p. 5a.

¹⁶⁹ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 3, p. 11b.

¹⁷⁰ *Tangyulin*, j. 2, p. 5b.

¹⁷¹ *Nan Tangshu*, j. 6, p. 128.

¹⁷² Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 135–136.

Kerui 李克睿. The characters *yin* 殷 and *guang* 光 were taboos of the father of Emperor Taizu (Zhao Hongyin 趙弘殷, 899-956) and of Emperor Taizong (Zhao Guangyi 趙光義) respectively. This was still before the Tangut state of Western Xia was established.¹⁷³ *Vice versa*, Song people avoided taboo names of the Western Xia. For example, the Song official Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) avoided them in his letter to Jingzong 景宗 – the first Emperor of Western Xia 1032-1048. As the taboo name of the emperor's father was Deming 德明, he changed the name of Emperor Mingzong 明宗 (926-932) of Later Tang to Xianzong 顯宗.¹⁷⁴

When, in 1043 two Song officials - Ding Yi 丁億 and Li Weixian 李惟賢 – were sent as envoys with congratulations to the Liao, they had to temporarily change their names to Ding Yi 丁意 and Li Baochen 李寶臣. It was because the characters *yi* 億 (the name of Emperor Taizu, r. 907-926) and *xian* 賢 (the name of Emperor Jingzong, r. 969-982) were taboo.¹⁷⁵ The same thing happened when, in 1193, Wanyan Kuang 完顏匡 was sent as an envoy from the Jin state to Song. In order to avoid a Song taboo (the name of Emperor Taizong), he changed his given name to Bi 弼.¹⁷⁶ Most likely, such changes were only temporary, and the former name was used again after the end of the mission.

It was also possible, though there are only few known examples, that toponyms were changed because of the taboo of another country. Thus, Guangzhou 光州 and Guangshan county 光山縣 on the Song territory, in 1158 were changed to Jiangzhou 蔣州 and Qisi 期思, as they violated the taboo name of Wanyan Guangying 完顏光英 – heir apparent of Jin.¹⁷⁷ The reason for the change was probably to promote good relationships. A very different case is reported about avoiding Tibetan taboos by the Song dynasty. According to the *Fengshi wenjianji* 封氏聞見記, the Tufan (Tibetans) tabooed “dog” (*gou* 狗). Therefore, when a certain Gou Zeng 苟曾 was to be sent on a diplomatic mission to them, he had to change his surname to Xun 荀, and continued to use it after his return.¹⁷⁸ In this example, a Tibetan taboo was not related to a name, but to tabooed animals in the Chinese pronunciation.

¹⁷³ *Songshi*, j. 485, pp. 1b-2a.

¹⁷⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 30.

¹⁷⁵ *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.

¹⁷⁶ *Jinshi*, j. 10, p. 2b; j. 98, p. 2b.

¹⁷⁷ *Songshi*, j. 88, p. 7a.

¹⁷⁸ *Fengshi wenjianji*, j. 10, p. 133.

The aura of a strong dynasty could also influence taboo practice of other countries for some time. We know at least, from the *Rongzhai suibi* 蓉齋隨筆, that the founding emperor of the Former Shu kingdom, Wang Jian 王建 (r. 907–918), tabooed the names of emperors from the Tang dynasty, and that all taboo names of the Tang dynasty were written with the omission of strokes in the stone inscriptions of his time.¹⁷⁹ But in fact, we can presume that Wang Jian (and his clerks), as a former military governor of Sichuan by the Tang court, just prolonged the Tang custom after the fall of the dynasty out of habit.

10.5. Impact on Neighbouring Countries

Mutual avoidance of taboos between different states, as has just been reported, shows that not only Han Chinese countries were affected by “Chinese taboo customs.” Taboo practice was transferred as a part of Chinese culture (i.e. the culture) to other countries, and became one of its characteristics there. Certainly the influence was especially strong in the states bordering on China, connected by the political and cultural relations. This was the case, for example, in the Liao State of the Khitan people (907–1125), the Western Xia State of the Tangut people (1032–1227), the Jin State of the Jurchen people (1115–1234), the Kingdom of Nanzhao, the Tibetan Empire or the states on the Korean peninsula. The “Chinese taboo customs” can also be found in Japan, and it can be presumed in Vietnam, although this topic needs further research. No material of such impact could be found in Chinese sources. Available records of Chinese sources on taboos in other countries are practically limited to the period between the 7th and 13th centuries. No notes could be found about later taboo practice outside of China. Probably it is also because the golden time of the custom in China itself was already gone, and the taboo practice less restrictive after the Song period.

An important indication that non-Han Chinese states adopted a taboo culture as their own is the fact that they avoided taboo names not only in contacts with the Chinese court, but also between each other. We know, for example, cases of taboo between Liao, Jin and the states of Korea.¹⁸⁰ Information about taboo customs was apparently spread to neighboring countries. A record from the *Standard History of Jin (Jinshi)*, made in 1150, confirmed, for example, that “name taboos” of the Jin were conveyed to the Song, Western Xia and Goryeo (Korea).¹⁸¹ It seems that the non-Chinese states observed the taboo customs

¹⁷⁹ *Rongzhai suibi*, j. 4, p. 5a.

¹⁸⁰ See examples of such cases in Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 134.

¹⁸¹ *Jinshi*, j. 60, p. 14a.

sometimes even more strictly than was the case in China proper. It is little wonder, if we know that they considered it a fundamental part of being cultured.

As the taboo practice in Liao, Western Xia and Jin states have already been discussed before (see 6.4.7), only a short review of the situation of these customs in Korea and Japan will be included here.

10.5.1. “Chinese Taboo” in Korea

Korea had a strong relationship with China in many periods of its history and was often regarded as a tributary of “the Middle Kingdom.” The impact of Chinese culture is visible to this day – Korea is called “the most Confucian country on earth.”¹⁸² Besides, the Chinese naming culture affected Korean practice, and personal names (*ming* 名), courtesy names (*zi* 字), pen names (*hao* 號) and posthumous names (*shi* 謚) were distinguished.¹⁸³ Not surprisingly, the Chinese taboo customs were also adopted in Korean culture, and the personal name was avoided.

Chinese sources write about the observance of Chinese imperial taboos (*guohui* 國諱) in Korea. Apparently, the impact of the Tang dynasty was extremely powerful, for there are many examples of such tabooing from that period. In particular, geographical names were changed, for example Changyuan county 長淵縣 and Chanyuan county 澶淵縣 were changed to Changshui 長水 and Chanshui 澶水 respectively, and Jinyuan prefecture 金淵郡 and Jinyuan county 金淵縣 were both changed to Jinquan 金泉, because of the taboo of Emperor Gaozu of Tang.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, Jiuyuan County 酒淵縣¹⁸⁵ was changed by King Gyeongdeok (r. 742–765) of Silla to Jiuquan 酒泉 in the Tang times.¹⁸⁶

But the custom of name tabooing was not only limited to names of Chinese emperors. Names of Korean rulers were also tabooed which means that it became integrated into Korean culture. Zhangzhou 漳州 and Zhangde County 章德縣 were changed to Lianzhou 漣州 (today in Gyeonggi-do Province of South Korea) and Xingde 興德 (today Xingde in the North-Jeolla Province of South Korea), because they contained homonyms of the character Zhang 璋 – the given name of Chungseon – King of the Goryeo dynasty (r. 1308–

¹⁸² Cf. www.bookrags.com/research/confucianismkorea-ema-02 (Access 15.10.2011).

¹⁸³ For further information about naming customs in Korea see *A Handbook of Korea*, p. 346.

¹⁸⁴ Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 296-297.

¹⁸⁵ Today Jiuquan Township 酒泉面 in Yeongwol County of Gangwon Province of South Korea.

¹⁸⁶ *Sanguo shiji*, j. 35, p. 10b.

1313).¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Wuzhen 武珍 was changed to Huaping 化平 in 1310, and to Maozhen 茂珍 in 1362. The reason was the taboo name Wu 武 of King Hyejong 惠宗 (r.943–945).¹⁸⁸ Today it is one of the biggest cities of South Korea – Gwangju City 光州.

The name of Confucius Qiu 丘 was also taboo in Korea. There was a Daqiu County 大丘縣 recorded in many works.¹⁸⁹ But later, the second character of the city's name was changed to *qiu* 邱, which was a standard equivalent character for the taboo name of Confucius in China during the Qing dynasty.¹⁹⁰ The name is used to this day – it is Daegu City in South Korea. We also know about the tabooing the names of the rulers of the Liao dynasty. There is a record in the *Songshi*: “Xi 熙 avoided later the taboo of Liao and changed his name to Ke 穎.”¹⁹¹ This was Sukjong of Goryeo dynasty of Korea (r. 1095–1105), with the personal name Xi 熙 who avoided the homonym of the name of the last Emperor of the Liao dynasty Tianzuo – Yelüyanxi 耶律延禧 (r. 1101–1125). Even before that, in 1056, because of the character *zhen* 真 of the name Yelüzongzhen 耶律宗真 of Emperor Xingzong (r. 1031–1055 of Liao), toponyms with *zhen* 鎮 were changed to *cheng* 城, for example Ningdezhen 寧德鎮 was changed to Ningdecheng 寧德城.¹⁹²

10.5.2. “Chinese Taboo” in Japan

A special relationship between a name and a human being can be discovered in Japan from ancient times on. The Japanese, like the Chinese people, considered the “real name” of a human being or deity as its soul. The recitation of such a name was called *kotodama* 言靈 (word soul, chin. *yanling* 言靈), and had a performative effect. It should be used only in a ritual context, otherwise its articulation could injure and control the name's owner.¹⁹³ *Kotodama*, as a mystical power dwelling in words and names, was a central concept in Japanese religiosity.

The original name was called in Japan *imina*, and was often only known within the family. It had to be protected and avoided, hence its connections with the words *imi* (taboo)

¹⁸⁷ *Gaolishi*, j. 33, p. 26a.

¹⁸⁸ *Gaolishi*, j. 57, pp. 52a–53a.

¹⁸⁹ Cf., for example, *Gaolishi*, j. 8, p. 34a.

¹⁹⁰ Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 298.

¹⁹¹ *Songshi*, j. 487, p. 7b.

¹⁹² *Gaolishi*, j. 58, p. 38b.

¹⁹³ Plutschow 1990, p. 75.

and *imu* (to avoid).¹⁹⁴ Normally, other names were used, as we also saw in China: *azana* 字 (courtesy name) and *gō* 号 (pen name). After a person's death, the posthumous name *okurina* 諡 was bestowed in order to prevent the use of the original name.¹⁹⁵ Names were written in Chinese characters (*kanji*) with Japanese pronunciation.¹⁹⁶

The avoidance of people's names was common and the revelation of them was often part of a special ritual as a sign of trust. For example, in the wedding ceremony in ancient Japan, the mutual ritual pronouncement of the couple's original name was an important part. Before marriage, the name of a young girl was often only known to her and her parents.¹⁹⁷ In the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, *Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves* (*Man'yōshū* 万葉集), compiled ca. 759, we find poems about name as taboo, as for example: "Unable to keep to myself / The name of someone I love / I spoke her name / Breaking a taboo."¹⁹⁸

The original name of the emperor was also taboo in Japan, and was called a state taboo (*kokki* 國忌). According to Herbert Plutschow, the title "Emperor of ..." (with locations they ruled), was used instead. This was, for example, the most common way to avoid imperial names applied in the oldest extant chronicle of Japan – *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki* 古事記), from the 8th century. Besides, the posthumous name of an emperor could be used.¹⁹⁹

Although taboo practices were probably also part of ancient Japanese culture, there is no doubt that the later taboo custom was received from China and was sometimes observed very strictly. Transfer of Chinese script from the 4th–5th centuries had a big impact on the acceptance of the practice of "Chinese taboo".²⁰⁰ Recorded examples of taboo avoidance in Japan start from the 8th century, when in 757 a person from the Fujiwara 藤原 clan had to change his name because of the name of an ancestor of the emperor.²⁰¹ From the

¹⁹⁴ Hara Kazuya 2001, p. 280.

¹⁹⁵ For Buddhist commoners, a posthumous name or religious name *kaimyo* 戒名 was given by a Buddhist priest after death. It was inscribed on the ancestral tablet and on the grave-stone in order to avoid the personal name (cf. Harada 1917, vol. 9, p. 168).

¹⁹⁶ For further information about name in Japan see: Gamo 1981, pp. 1969-1970; *Japan-Handbuch* 1941, pp. 420-422.

¹⁹⁷ Plutschow 1990, p. 83.

¹⁹⁸ Plutschow 1990, p. 83.

¹⁹⁹ Plutschow 1995, p. 35.

²⁰⁰ Lewin 1981, p. 1754.

²⁰¹ Cf. Plutschow 1995, p. 38. The original source could not be seen. The author describes "powerful Fujiwara" (which is a clan name), who had to change his name in 757 to Kusuharabe, because of the name Fujiwara of the mother of "Emperor Kogen". In fact, the Empress (!) Kōken was ruling at that time (r. 749–758 and 764–770 as Empress Shōtoku).

year 823, there are two reports of name changes because of an imperial taboo: a certain Kiyowara Shigeno changed his name to Natsuno due to one of the imperial princes, Shigeno, and the Ōtomo clan had to change its name to Ban because of the name of Emperor Junna (r. 823–833) – Ōtomo (大伴), according to the *Ruiju Kokushi* 類聚国史.²⁰² In a later edition of a Japanese collection of poems *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語) from the 10th century, the name Yonohito was used in order to avoid the name Yohito of an emperor.²⁰³

Many edicts were issued with instructions for tabooing the imperial name and observance of taboo was mandatory. We can find, in a Japanese historical tale called *Imakagami* 今鏡 (written in 1170), a story about an anthology of poetry, *Collection of Golden Leaves* (*Kinyo Wakashu* 金葉和歌集), compiled about 1126–1127. The anthology was sent to the Retired Emperor Shirakawa (1053–1129), but was soon returned by him for correction, as the taboo name of a princess was listed in it. Only after the name Sannomiya (Third Princess) was used instead of that could the anthology be published.²⁰⁴ There were also many emperors changing their names in order to avoid taboo violations. Hence, for example, Emperor Uda changed his name Sadakami to Sadami, and Emperor Daigo Koreki to Atsugimi. Furthermore, Emperor Gohorikawa changed the pronunciation of his name from Yutahito to Toyohito, Emperor Gomizunoo – from Tadahito to Kotohito, Emperor Gosakuramachi – from Satoko to Toshiko, and Emperor Antoku – from Kotohito to Tokihito.²⁰⁵

Imperial taboo had political meaning in Japan, and was a sign of power and its avoidance was a sign of allegiance and loyalty. On the other hand, to openly use a taboo name was regarded as usurpation. Apparently, opponents to the emperor would sometimes use the same names as the emperor exactly for that purpose, especially during turbulent periods, as for example in the South and North courts period (Nanboku-chō period 南北朝時代, 1336–1392). There must have been many names with the parts *taka* and *haru* during the reign of Emperor Godaigo (r. 1318–1339), whose name was Takaharu 尊治. But later, after the conflict had been resolved, this name of the emperor continued to be tabooed even centuries later. We know that, because of this, in 1472 a certain Takaharu changed his name to Tametaka, and in 1727, Shijo Takaharu changed his to Takafumi.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Plutschow 1995, p. 38.

²⁰³ Plutschow, p. 39. Yohito is the given name of the Emperor Go-Uda (r. 1274–1287).

²⁰⁴ Plutschow 1995, p. 36.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Plutschow, p. 39.

²⁰⁶ Plutschow 1995, pp. 38–39.

Several discussions about rules of taboo in Japan are known. One of them took place at the court of Emperor Yōzei (r. 876–884), around the question whether the Retired Emperor Seiwa (r. 858–876) could use his original name, Korehito, in letters to his son. Such a revelation of a secret name was considered dangerous by the Grand Council Dajokan. Finally it was allowed after a sentence from the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* was quoted by Oe Otondo (811–877), which accepted the use of the name between father and son.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, the avoidance of former taboo names in choosing an Era name was also a subject of discussion.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Plutschow 1995, p. 36.

²⁰⁸ See examples in Plutschow 1995, p. 38–39.