A DAOIST’S ENCOUNTER WITH MODERNITY
—SUBSUMING WESTERN SCIENCE UNDER A DAOIST EPISTEMOLOGY IN
THE STORY OF EIGHT IMMORTALS WHO ATTAINED THE DAO

by

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Abstract

This study of a mid-nineteenth century novel, *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* (*Baxian dedao zhuàn* 八仙得道传, 1868), focuses on how the author Wugou daoren 无垢道人 (Immaculate Daoist, fl. 1868) employs the novel form to propagate his religious beliefs and confront Western ideas that were spreading through China during his lifetime. Examining the historical background of the novel and textual evidence within the narrative, this study argues that Wugou daoren, as a Daoist practitioner, tries to validate Daoism by subsuming Western science under a Daoist epistemology. The author is very skilful in setting up an epistemological structure that claims that Western scientific discoveries and inventions—specifically knowledge about electricity and the moon—are derived from Daoist knowledge. To this end, Wugou daoren employs several rhetorical strategies, including commentaries and characters’ discursive speeches, to make his case. The author’s reaction to Western science provides valuable textual evidences of a religious crisis in mid-nineteenth century China in its encounter with the West. This novel, in which history and religion play equally important roles in its literary formation, provides modern readers with textual traces of how religion negotiated its co-existence with modernity during this period of China’s history.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, M. An.
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1. Introduction

The Late Qing period (ca. 1840-1911) witnessed a voluminous output of narrative fiction unprecedented in previous times. Conventional studies see the May Fourth Movement (1919) as marking the birth of modern Chinese literature. May Fourth writings, with their anti-traditionalism, adoption of Western intellectual resources, and the use of realism to express concerns of national crisis, have long been viewed as the true emergence of modern Chinese literature by modern scholars.¹ In recent years, however, scholars such as David Der-wei Wang and Sheldon H. Lu have directed scholarly attention to the second half of the nineteenth century, and argue that the Late Qing marks the beginning of Chinese literary modernity.² Instead of approaching Chinese literary modernization as a singular, linear, and progressive development, Wang suggests that Chinese literary modernity takes a circular path, and within its complex contradictions and negotiations the Late Qing was already reworking its literary tradition.³ Wang has proposed that what makes Late Qing literature modern is that writers’ pursuit of novelty at this time was “no longer contained within indigenously defined barriers but was inextricably affected by the multilingual, cross-cultural trafficking of ideas, technologies, and powers in the wake of nineteenth-century Western expansionism.”⁴ However, this awakening to modernity in Late Qing literature was repressed because of prevailing attitudes during the May Fourth period that regarded political and social commentary as the sole indicator of the novel’s contribution to

¹ David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 16.
³ Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 7, 8.
⁴ Ibid., 5.
literary modernization.\(^5\) Late Qing fiction, as a result, is condemned as artistically crude “middlebrow” fiction that grasps only superficial social reality.\(^6\) In the subsequent decades, the modern discourse continues to diminish this trajectory of modernity within Late Qing fiction. Situated in this theoretical framework, this study of a mid-nineteenth century novel, *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* (*Baxian dedao zhuan* 八仙得道传, 1868), will focus on how the author Wugou daoren 无垢道人 (Immaculate Daoist, fl. 1868) employs the novel form to propagate his religious beliefs and confront Western ideas that were spreading through China during his lifetime. My purpose is to investigate the author’s effort to wrestle with the epistemological and social changes China was experiencing through its encounter with Western powers, and the dynamic between religion and modernity reflected in it; it asks to what extent, if at all, this work embodies early literary modernity in Wang and Lu’s sense.

*The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* encompasses a time span of some 3500 years, starting with the reign of the sage king Yu 禹 (traditional dates c. 2200-2100 BC) and concluding with the Song dynasty (960-1279). It describes how the Eight Immortals—Zhang Guo 张果, \(^7\) Li Tieguai 李铁拐, He Xiangzi 何仙姑, Zhongli Quan 钟离权, Lan Caihe 蓝采和, Lü Dongbin 吕洞宾, Han Xiangzi 韩湘子, and Cao Guojiu 曹国舅—cultivated Daoist teachings over several lifetimes and eventually attained immortality. Stories about the Eight Immortals appeared in the Chinese literary tradition as early as the Tang dynasty (618-907). For example, Zhang Guo’s story was recorded in

\(^5\) Ibid., 2.
\(^6\) Ibid., 14.
\(^7\) He is commonly known as Zhang Guolao 张果老 in the Eight Immortal lore tradition. Wugou daoren chooses to use the name “Zhang Guo” in this novel.
Old History of the Tang (Jiu Tangshu 旧唐书),\(^8\) and the story of Han Xiangzi appeared in A Miscellany of Tidbits from Youyang Mountain Cave (Youyang zuaz 酉阳杂俎) by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (ca. 803-63).\(^9\) By the late Song dynasty (12\(^{th}\)-13\(^{th}\) cent.), the Eight Immortals came together as a group with occasional variations in their membership, and developed into one of the most celebrated subjects in the Chinese vernacular literary tradition.\(^10\) Starting from the Yuan period (1260-1368), the theme of the Eight Immortals appeared in a dramatic genre known as “deliverance plays” (dutuoju 度脱剧).\(^11\) By the Ming dynasty, they further developed and took a firm position in the dramatic repertoire. In addition to deliverance plays, “birthday celebration plays” (zhushouju 祝寿剧) and “supernatural arts combat plays” (doufaju 斗法剧)\(^12\) joined the play list of the Eight Immortals.

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\(^10\) The members of the Eight Immortals have evolved over time. As early as the Five Dynasties (五代 907 - 960), a painting of the Eight Immortals drawn by Daoist Zhang Suqing 張素卿 lists the Eight Immortals as Li Ji 李积, Rong Cheng 容成, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Zhang Daoling 张道陵, Yan Junping 严君平, Li Babai 李八百, Fan Changshou 范长寿, and Ge Yonggui 葛永贵. This version of the Eight Immortals as a group also appeared in a Ming text, Unofficial Works of Mister Sheng’an (Sheng’an waiji 升庵外集) by Yang Shen 杨慎, with changes of Li Ji to Li Er 李耳, Fan Changshou to Fan Changsheng 范长生, and Ge Yonggui to Erzhu Xiansheng 尹朱先生. The version of Eight Immortals in this study first came together as a group by the late Song dynasty, with variations in some of its members. In the Yuan drama Lü Dongbin Gets Drunk Three Times in Yueyang Tower (Lü Dongbin sanzui Yueyanglou 吕洞宾三醉岳阳楼) by Ma Zhiyuan 马致远, the Eight Immortals appeared as Zhongli Quan, Tiegui Li, Lü Dongbin, Lan Caihe, Zhang Guolao, Xu Shenwen 徐神翁, Han Xiangzi, and Cao Guojiu. The exact version of the Eight Immortals that this novel adopts first appeared in a Ming novel, Journey to the East (Dongyouji 东游记), by Wu Yuantai 吴元泰, and became the most accepted version of the Eight Immortals of later times. Zhao Xinggen, Baxian gushi yuanliu kao (Beijing: Zongjiqiao wenhua chubanshe, 2002), 2-3.


Immortals. The Ming is also a period when the Eight Immortals started to be taken up as a subject of the xiaoshuo 小说 genre. Journey to the East (Dongyouji 东游记) by Wu Yuantai 吴元泰 is the earliest full narrative of the Eight Immortals.\textsuperscript{13} Record of the Flying Sword (Feijianji 飞剑记) by Deng Zhimo 邓志谟, and The Story of Han Xiangzi (Han Xiangzi quanzhuan 韩湘子全传) by Yang Erzeng 杨尔增 are two other important Ming novels written on individual immortals from this group of eight.\textsuperscript{14} Since the Ming dynasty, as Philip Clart states, “the Eight Immortals have found a firm place in Chinese popular culture.” In addition to literary transmission through theatre and novels, the Eight Immortals as a theme is celebrated in Chinese folk art, storytelling, and popular literature such as “precious volumes” (baojuan 宝卷).\textsuperscript{15} In the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), several works on the Eight Immortals further appeared, notably The Complete Story of Master Lü (Lüzu quanzhuan 吕祖全传) by Wang Xiangxu 汪象旭 and The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao by Wugou daoren.\textsuperscript{16}

*The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* was published in 1935 by Shanghai shuju (上海书局).\textsuperscript{17} Previous studies, whether on the specific subject of the Eight Immortals or on novels with supernatural themes, usually overlook this work. In his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Wang Hanmin, “Baxian xiaoshuo de yuanyuan ji shanbian,” in *Baxian wenhua yu baxian wenxue de xiandai chanshi: ershi shiji guoji baxian luncong*, ed. Wu Guangzheng (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2006), 659. The earliest edition of *Journey to the East* known to us today is the woodblock print by Yuwentai (余文台) of the Ming dynasty. It contains two volumes, fifty-six *huai*.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 659, 662. *Record of the Flying Sword* tells the story of Lü Dongbin, and *The Story of Han Xiangzi* is about how Han Xiangzi attained immortality.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Clart, *The Story of Han Xiangzi*, xvi.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Wang Hanmin, “Baxian xiaoshuo de yuanyuan ji shanbian,” 662, 664.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Wugou daoren, *Baxian dedao zhuang* (Nanjing: fenghuang chubanshe, 2008), 2. This year of publication is stated in the publication notification of the edition of the novel I use for this study. Xu Zhenya, who proofread the manuscript, wrote a preface in 1931. We don't have more information on why it took Xu Jingfu four more years to publish it.
\end{itemize}
comprehensive study of the evolution of Ming Qing novels on the supernatural, Hu Sheng does not mention it. Furthermore, it is also excluded from some of the major existing anthologies of Chinese vernacular literature. Written in the mid-nineteenth century, *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* is a continuation of the evolution of Eight Immortals lore, borrowing materials from earlier novels, plays, and folklore. As pointed out by Wang Hanmin, Wugou daoren expands the narrative based on the plot line of *Journey to the East*, and incorporates a great deal of Chinese folklore into the novel. It makes this one hundred-chapter novel more complex and comprehensive than previous works that draw on Eight Immortals lore. For example, the prologue greatly resembles the plot of a Beijing opera, *The Eight Immortals Attained the Dao* (*Baxian dedao 八仙得道*), which begins with the story of a filial son named Ping He 平和 who transforms into a dragon. Wugou daoren takes this plot as the prologue of the novel and introduces the Eight Immortals one after another chronologically. He skilfully uses the idea of reincarnation and incorporates many heroes and heroines from Chinese folklore, such as Chang’e 嫦娥, Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女, and Dongfang Shuo 东方朔. The story culminates in the last chapter with the famous story of their crossing of the ocean (*Baxian guohai 八仙过海*), an ending that resembles that for a Ming play titled

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22 Chs. 1-6 act as the prologue of the novel; Chs. 7-17 cover the story of how Zhang Guo attained immortality; Chs. 18-27 do the same for Li Tieguai; Chs. 33-37 for He Xiangzi; Chs. 38-45 for Zhongli Quan; Chs. 55-64 for Lan Caihe; Chs. 80-89 for Lü Dongbin; Chs. 94-96 for Han Xiangzi; and Ch. 97 for Cao Guojiu. For a summary of the novel, see Appendix D.
*Fighting for the Jade Clapper, Eight Immortals Cross the Sea (Zhengyuban baxian guohai 争玉板八仙过海).* 23

What makes this novel innovative in the tradition of Eight Immortals lore is its concern with Western science. Earlier narrative traditions about immortals depict a world full of the fantastic and the supernatural. As early as the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), immortals in hagiographic accounts are portrayed as omnipotent, traveling back and forth between the human world and the supernatural realm. They control rain, foretell the future, transform their appearance, pass through walls, heal diseases, make the dead come back to life, and much else. 24 This novel, in which the Eight Immortals are all portrayed as masters of Daoist arts, continues with this tradition. However, while these fantastic supernatural events take place, there are several occasions when Western scientific ideas are mentioned during the course of the narrative. Wugou daoren’s interest in Western science poses several interesting questions. As a Daoist practitioner, what is his attitude toward Western science? What sense does he make of it? What does his attitude toward Western science say about the relationship between religion and science, or the relationship between religion and modernity? To answer these questions, this study selects the author’s attitude toward electricity and the moon 25 as illustrative examples. It will first look at the author’s background and the historical period in which he lived,

23 The Eight Immortals crossing the ocean is a famous literary trope in the Yuan dramas.
25 In addition to electricity and the moon, Western medical scientists’ ideas concerning the effects of laughter and crying are the last examples in this novel that demonstrate how Wugou daoren grapples with Western scientific ideas. Since he makes only a short comment on them, his argument is less developed than for electricity and the moon. He argues that although it is true that too much crying harms one’s body while laughter lifts one’s spirit, as Western medical science maintains, one should still control one’s emotions, since too much laughter can be bad for one’s body and a proper amount of crying is not necessarily bad. See Wugou daoren, *Baxian dedao zhuan*, 232. Since this episode is less developed and he does not undermine this Western idea, I choose to omit it from my main argument.
while closely examining the novel and looking for textual evidence of his treatment of these subjects. By analyzing several rhetorical strategies that Wugou daoren employs, mainly occasional intrusions into the narrative with his own commentary and use of discursive speeches by the characters, this study argues that Wugou daoren employs the novel form to defend his religious beliefs against the claims of Western science by subsuming Western science under a Daoist epistemology.
2. The Author and His Times

Little information can be gleaned about the author from historical records. Limited information about him is contained in his own preface and a preface by Xu Jinfu 许廑父,26 who edited the manuscript of the novel and published it in 1935. According to Wugou daoren’s own preface, he was born in Chengdu and was orphaned and deprived of an education at a young age. He met a Daoist master, Zhiyuan fashi 志元法师,27 and studied Daoist teachings from him. After several decades of cultivation of the Dao, he had gradually mastered the Learning of Xingming (性命).28 He then followed his master’s instruction and travelled around China, eventually reaching the capital and staying in Baiyun guan (White Cloud Monastery 白云观)29 for a period of time; people who

26 Xu Jinfu was a novelist of the Republican period. He was born in Xiaoshan 萧山 district in Zhejiang province. His date of birth and death are unclear, but probably fall within a period from the Late Qing to the third decade of the Republican period (1931-40). His original name was Yuzhi 与微, styled Qiji 弃疾 and Yichang 一厂. He was also known by his literary names, Jingfu and Yan Wulang 颜五郎. He participated in politics after the fall of the Qing dynasty and eventually gave up his political career and became a novelist in 1920 in Shanghai. His main works are Mingguo tongsu yanyi 民国通俗演义 and Baxian dedao zhuan. See Fei Xiaowei, “Xu Jinfu,” in Zhongguo wenxue dacidian vol. 4. ed. Ma Liangchun and Li Futian (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1991), 2368.


28 Xingming (性命): Xing is usually translated as “inner nature” and ming as “destiny” or “mandate.” According to Isabelle Robinet, xing and ming are Daoist alchemical terms. Xing is the Yin element found in the li 離 (Sun, Fire) trigram, and ming is the Yang element found in the kan 坎 (Moon, Water) trigram. These two opposite poles must circulate and unite in the alchemical process. Isabelle Robinet. “xing and ming,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism, vol. 2. ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (Routledge: London, 2008), 1104-5.

29 Baiyun guan 白云观: Located in Beijing, Baiyun guan (Abbey of the White Clouds) is the most famous Daoist abbey in China. It was first founded in the mid-eighth century with the name Tianchang guan 天长观 (Abbey of Celestial Perpetuity), and it was sponsored by the state. After the fall of Beijing to the Mongols, Qiu Chuji 丘处机 (1148-1227), the Quanzhen patriarch, renamed it Changchun gong 长春宫 (Palace of Perpetual Spring). Qiu Chuji’s successor Yin Zhiping 尹志平 (1169-1251) renamed it Baiyun guan, and since then it remained as the centre of the Quanzhen Daoist tradition. Vincent Goossaert, “Baiyun guan,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism. vol. 1, 207-10. Susan Naquin also includes several
admired his name came from afar to seek Daoist teachings from him. This novel was finished during his residence there. Apart from this novel, Wugou daoren also mentions that he wrote several texts on Daoist self-cultivation.30 According to Xu Jinfu’s preface he was a good friend of his brother-in-law, Lu Jingfu 陆敬甫, who took an official position at the General Surveillance Circuit (guancha 观察) in Beijing.31 Before Wugou daoren left Beijing, he handed over all his works on Daoist self-cultivation and this novel to Lu Jingfu and instructed him to pass them on to someone talented in Daoist learning. Lu Jingfu in turn gave all the Daoist texts to Di’an daoren 涤庵道人32 in Chongqing, excepting this novel because of its vernacular literary form and “shallow literary content.” The manuscript of the novel was damaged during the chaos of the Taiping Rebellion. Xu Jinfu obtained it from Lu Jingfu’s offspring, sorted it out, and published it in Shanghai in 1935. In addition to providing information about how the novel was put into publication, Xu Jinfu also mentioned some personal information about Wugou daoren. According to his account, Wugou daoren could go without eating for several months but his complexion remained normal. It might very well be that Wugou daoren practiced and had a certain degree of mastery of the Daoist technique of “abstention from grains” (bigu 辟谷).33 Based on the limited information found in the prefaces, we can 

30 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuang, 1.
33 Catherine Despeux, “Bigu,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism, vol. 2, 233-34. The term refers to the idea that some Daoist practitioners abstain from grains while cultivating and consuming qi as nourishment. For
safely conclude that Wugou daoren was a Daoist practitioner who lived in Baiyun guan during the mid-nineteenth century. Vincent Goossaert’s research shows that Baiyun guan in the late imperial and Republican periods was the centre for neidan (内丹) training, and many texts were produced to support such training.\(^3\) Since Wugou daoren wrote several texts on Daoist training and himself had a certain degree of neidan mastery, we can further suggest that Wugou daoren was a neidan master and probably participated in producing neidan texts during the mid-nineteenth century.

This novel is as much a response to Western science as it is a continuation of the literary tradition concerning immortals. It was finished in 1868, a period when China was greatly shaken by internal and external crises. Externally, China was defeated by Britain during the Opium War (1839-1842).\(^3\) From within, the Taiping Uprising (1850-1864) and the Nian Rebellion (1851-1868) ravaged much of the country.\(^3\) The Qing government had to rely on Western assistance to put down these rebellions. These waves of crisis made the Qing government realize the strength of Western technology and military power. To survive in a drastically changing world, the Qing government underwent a “Self-Strengthening Movement,” by adopting elements of Western learning and technology during the 1860s. Modernity represented by Western science and technology started to play an increasing role in shaping Chinese society.


\(^3\) Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 160.

\(^3\) Ibid., 171, 183.
Missionaries also played an important role in introducing Western science and technology to China. According to John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, Jesuit missionaries had already translated over 400 Western works into Chinese during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, about two-thirds on Christianity and one-third on science. By the late 1870s, many scientific subjects, such as treatises on mechanics, astronomy, electricity, and chemistry had been translated into Chinese. The introduction of science and technology had a profound influence on Chinese thought and epistemology. In one commentary during the course of the narrative, readers can detect the crisis that Wugou daoren’s belief system faced:

As for this whole story of Houyi flying to the Moon Palace and its reasons, nowadays there are many scientists, geographers, and explorers who say that the moon and the other planets are alike, in that they all have human populations, cities, and cultural and social institutions. However, based on Chinese stories that have been passed down for thousands of years, it is Taiyinxing who is in charge of all affairs on the moon. Also, a person is there especially to hack at the big Sala tree, which falls down when he cuts it and knits together soon after it falls…Since the New Learning has arisen and new theories have flourished, these kinds of old tales are considered to be superstition. Intelligent men and scholars cannot find evidence of what is on the moon, and can only go along with the New Learning and say that [human beings] can go to the moon; as for what [Chinese stories] say about the moon, it is mostly imagination after all.

这后羿飞入月宫始末情由，如今有许多科学家，地理学家，探险家，都说月球和其他星球一样，都有人民城郭，文物制度。而据中国数千年相传的故事，又说月中有太阴星主持各事。又有一人专在那里用锯子锯那大娑婆树，随锯随断，断即复合。……自从新学大兴，新说盛行，这等古话归于迷信一

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38 Spence, The Search for Modern China, 205.
40 The author may have made a mistake here in writing 娑罗树 as 婆婆树. 娑罗 (Sala in Sanskrit) is a kind of tree that usually grows in Southeast Asia. 婆婆 (Saha in Sanskrit) means “suffering.” Saha shijia (娑婆世界) refers to the world the Buddha wants to enlighten with his teachings, which is filled with suffering. Jiyu Ren, ed, Fojiao da cidian (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2002), 1044.
This commentary provides concrete evidence of the social and cultural background under which this novel was written. First of all, Western scientific ideas had been coming into China with the presence of scientists, geographers, explorers, and missionaries. The new ideas and new worldview they brought with them had roiled the intellectual waters and disturbed the epistemological structure in China. The old Chinese worldview had been challenged by the New Learning and condemned as superstition, not only by western scientists, but also by Chinese intellectuals. In addition to the challenge from science, missionaries were also responsible for the construction of Daoism as superstition. Early missionaries regarded Daoist religious beliefs and practices as such.⁴² According to Xun Liu, in the early sixteenth century, Matteo Ricci introduced the term “deluded beliefs” (mixin 迷信) to describe Daoism and other popular religious rituals and practices.⁴³ This perception of Daoism gradually gained acceptance among Europeans, and through them among Chinese intellectuals of the late nineteenth century who were eager to learn from the West. It was under this circumstance that Wugou daoren felt compelled to stand up for Daoism. What he does in this novel is quite simple. He sets up an epistemological structure that dismisses Western scientific ideas and its inventions, and argues that Western science is derived from Daoist arts. It is this effort to subsume

⁴¹ Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 306.
⁴³ Liu Xun, Daoist Modern: Innovation, Lay Practice, and the Community of Inner Alchemy in Republican Shanghai (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 4.
Western science under a Daoist epistemology that makes this novel an interesting subject for study.

One issue that has to be addressed is the term “Daoism.” The definition of Daoism has been a controversial topic in Daoist studies. As a living heritage of Chinese indigenous tradition, Daoism did not begin with a single community or teachings of a great leader. It derived from a complex historical evolution that involved various concepts, values, and practices. The *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Yijing* (*The Book of Changes*) are examples of the earlier textual tradition of Daoist thinking. Daoist ideas of immortality can be found in archaeological findings that are dated as early as the third century BCE. The mystery cult of “The Way of the Yellow Emperor and the Old Master” (*Huang-lao zhi Dao* 黄老之道) emerged toward the beginning of the first empire (221 BCE), and attracted a wide body of followers. By the Han dynasty (206 BCE-221 CE), alchemy became one fundamental part of Daoist discourse. However, a term for Daoism did not exist until the time of Emperor Wu (140-86 BCE) of the Han, when Confucianism was established as the state ideology. By the first century BCE, Daoist-inspired religious groups began to emerge. The “Heavenly Masters” (*Tianshidao* 天师道), founded by Zhang Daoling 张道陵 in the second century, and its liturgy of local community has lasted to the present day. The various Daoist concepts, values, and practices continue to evolve over the next millennium. From Ming times on, Quanzhen

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46 Ibid., 8.
48 Ibid., 10.
(Complete Perfection 全真)\textsuperscript{49} and Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity 正一)\textsuperscript{50} traditions became the two most influential institutionalized Daoist schools. By the mid-nineteenth and twentieth century, Daoist religious concepts and practices widely interfused, and communities and movements such as local temples, redemptive societies, martial arts, and Chinese medicine, all of which drew heavily on Daoist concepts, often consciously label themselves as Daoist.\textsuperscript{51} Thus Daoism, as a diversity of practices and discourses, has never developed a coherent unified identity. Kristofer Schipper sees it as having three major components: the classic works such as the \textit{Daodejing} and \textit{Zhuangzi}, practices related to the search for immortality, and liturgy.\textsuperscript{52} Russell Kirkland proposes the idea of “self-identifying Daoists,” and sees Daoism as a evolving tradition of values, practices, and institutions expressed through the Daoist Canon (\textit{Daozang} 道藏).\textsuperscript{53} Based on this brief discussion of Daoism, this study chooses not to see the Daoist affiliation as exclusive. That is, since Wugou daoren clearly identifies himself as a Daoist practitioner, I use “Daoism” to describe the religious beliefs he tries to defend and the Daoist

\textsuperscript{49} The Quanzhen sect was founded by Wang Zhe 王轡 (1113-70), a neidan practitioner in the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. Under the management of Qiu Chuji 丘處機, the Quanzhen sect became the official form of Daoism, and enjoyed state patronage during the Yuan dynasty. In the Ming period, Quanzhen lost its privileged status to the Zhengyi tradition. At the very end of the Ming, the Longmen Lineage (Dragon Gate Lineage 龙门派) of the Quanzhen sect, founded by Wang Changyue 王常月 (?-1680), restored the Quanzhen sect to its former prosperity. The Quanzhen tradition regained its orthodox status during the Qing, and became orthodox institution of Daoism to present day. See Vincent Goossaert, “Quanzhen,” in \textit{The Encyclopedia of Taoism}, vol. 2, 814-20; also David A. Palmer and Xun Liu, “Introduction: The Daoist Encounter with Modernity,” 9.

\textsuperscript{50} The Zhengyi sect claims its lineage back to the Heavenly Masters 天师道 of the Han dynasty. The Zhengyi Daoist priests provided local communities and temples with liturgical and ritual services. See Chit tin Lai, “Zhengyi Daoist Masters in the Pearl River Delta: Ruptures and Continuities in the Transmission of Tradition,” in \textit{Daoism in the Twentieth Century}, 23.


\textsuperscript{52} Schipper, \textit{The Daoist Body}, 15.

\textsuperscript{53} Russell Kirkland defines “the self-identifying Daoists” as “the people whose ideas, values, practices and institutions are expressed in the writings that have been included in the vast, amorphous collection called the Tao-tsang, its predecessors and later continuations.” Kirkland, \textit{Taoism: the Enduring Tradition}, 13.
epistemology he creates in this novel. As for the nature of the Daoism that Wugou daoren understands, I will explore this issue in the last part of this study.
3. Subsuming Western Science under a Daoist Epistemology—Electricity

The most fully developed attempt to subsume Western science under a Daoist epistemology is Wugou daoren’s notion of thunder and lightning as instruments used by celestial deities to punish evil. These ideas are expressed in his commentary to the novel, in several episodes, and in characters’ discursive speeches. Commentary is a feature of Chinese vernacular novels, and of China’s literary tradition in general. It is the most direct method an author has for putting forward his own views. The narrator in traditional Chinese fiction is a character created by the author, who is modeled on the professional oral storytellers (shuoshuren 说书人 or shuohuaren 说话人) of Song times and later. In addition to being a character of the story, the narrator performs functions of telling, communicating, directing, and commenting on the story. Henry Y. H. Zhao states that the narrator’s position in the conventional narrative frame begins to change in the late Qing. In almost all novels from the late Qing period, there is the change of the self-reference of the narrator from the story-teller (shuoshude 说书的) to the story-writer (zuoshude 作书的).⁵⁴ In this novel, the narrator refers himself as the story-writer (zhushuren 著书人) and zuoshuren 作书人)⁵⁵ whenever he makes comments or interacts with the reader.

Although he is a fictional creation of the author, the narrator does not necessarily hold the

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⁵⁵ For specific usage of the term “story-writer” (zhu/zuoshuren 著 / 作书人), see Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhu (Shannxi: Shaanxi renmin chuban she, 1987), 1, 62, 107, 306, 396, 425, 463, 486, 490, 495, 528, 566, 571, 591.
same tone or judgment toward the narrative as the author.\textsuperscript{56} However, in this novel the narrator equates himself with the author and becomes the spokesman of the author.

As a Daoist practitioner, Wugou daoren is fully aware of the criticism that Daoism faced in his time, and he intrudes into the narrative to express his unbelief in Western scientific ideas and defend his religious beliefs. One example is his claim that electricity is under the management of the thunder god and lightning goddess, who use it to punish evil. He makes this comment in Chapter 50:

As for lightning striking people, scientists say it is an electric shock, which makes a certain sense. However, based on this book’s theory, being struck by lightning still comes under the heavenly deity’s management. Otherwise, why is it that all the people who died from being struck by lightning, both in stories passed on for thousands of years and what has been heard in the present and past, are mostly of the vicious and evil sort, yet one never hears of upright gentlemen with proper morality and behaviour who have suffered this disastrous punishment? [Similar to the Western scientific ideas] these words [of mine] are also nearly arbitrary. However, when have those who firmly advocate atheism had any evidence to provide for us as research material?

Here Wugou daoren directly confronts Western scientific ideas about lightning and firmly advocates that it is a Heavenly phenomenon used to punish evil. He points out that there is some validity to what Western science has to say about lightning, in that death from lightning strike is the result of an electric shock. However, he argues that electric shock is still under the management of heavenly deities. He bases his argument

\textsuperscript{56} Zhao, \textit{The Uneasy Narrator}, 48.
\textsuperscript{57} Wugou daoren, \textit{Baxian dedao zhuan}, 306.
on the traditional Chinese belief that lightning is Heaven’s way of punishing evil. He then backs his argument up with stories he has heard from antiquity to contemporary times. His argumentative strategy lacks sophistication from a modern point of view, but the belief that lightning strikes people as Heaven’s punishment has deep roots in traditional Chinese popular thought. The traditional Chinese belief system also places a moral interpretation upon thunder, and regards it as an instrument wielded by Heaven to punish evildoers.

Such “magical thinking,” as Charles E. Hammond puts it, influenced many Confucian literati.\(^{58}\) They recorded stories or local anecdotes involving the supernatural that they heard from others or read from books, which the author and his audience believe to be true.\(^{59}\) For example, in a Song dynasty (960-1279) text Record of the Listener (Yijian zhi 夷坚志) written by Hong Mai (1123-1202), several entries also see lightning as an agent of Heaven employed to punish those who deserves retribution. Accounts such as those about unfilial sons or daughter-in-laws struck dead by lightning are typical in this text. In one case, a woman who is supposed to be killed by lightning is spared because of her filial devotion to her mother-in-law. To Hong Mai, these accounts are believed to be true if they are in accordance with accepted norms; if not, he writes about his opinions.\(^{60}\) Wugou daoren is not the only one who dismisses the Western scientific idea that a lightning strike is a random electric shock. Qing scholars such as Xue Fucheng

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\(^{58}\) Charles E. Hammond, “The Interpretation of Thunder,” The Journal of Asian Studies 53.2 (May, 1994): 489-90. Hammond states in this article that although some Confucian scholars proposed rational interpretations of thunder and lightning as natural phenomena, many of them believed in thunder as an instrument directed by Heaven to punish evildoers.

\(^{59}\) Hammond, “The Interpretation of Thunder,” 487.

\(^{60}\) Alister D. Inglis, *Hong Mai’s Record of the Listener and Its Song Dynasty Context* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 76, 81.
(1838-94) and Ji Yun (1724-1805) recorded legends and stories of people being struck by lightning and interpreted them as Heaven’s way of punishing evil. In the case of Xue Fucheng, a contemporary of Wugou daoren, his writings reveal some traces of influence from the Western scientific explanation of electricity. Like Wugou daoren, Xue also believes that victims of thunder and lightning must have performed evil actions either in their present or previous lives.\(^{61}\) To Wugou daoren’s contemporaries, stories or legends of people being struck by lightning have a certain legitimacy in that they demonstrate Heaven’s justice. Therefore, Wugou daoren’s use of hearsay and legends to support his argument cannot be said to be baseless. Moreover, he goes on to point out that atheists don’t have enough evidence to support their views. Therefore, the thousand-year-old Chinese tradition cannot be deprived of legitimacy simply because of the emergence of a different opinion.

Several cases in the novel of evil people being punished by lightning can be cited as the author’s way of proving his point. One of the most fully developed plots is the case of Hu Qian 胡千 in Chapter 60, which vividly showcases how the punishment was carried out:

> It was only then that Hu Qian became terror-stricken. Trembling while lying prostrate, he cried out loudly: “Mercy! Immortals! [I] dare not do anything evil from now on!” However, his string of bad deeds had already run out. Suddenly there was a thunderclap in the sky, and the crowd saw that two ferocious looking heavenly generals, a male and a female, had appeared in a field of golden light. [They] saluted the two immortals. At this moment, black clouds suddenly rose up and the moonlight dimmed. However, the shining golden lights were as bright as daytime. In a short moment the clouds suddenly lowered. All in the crowd heard the two heavenly generals say: “Beg to report to the master; [we] accept [your] decree to kill Hu Qian with lightning. However, it is now the end of the twelfth lunar month and the beginning of spring, and the energy of Heaven

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\(^{61}\) Hammond, “The Interpretation of Thunder,” 492, 495.
and Earth cannot connect. If [we] must generate lightning, [you] will have to report matters to the Jade Emperor [and ask that he] specially administer punishment, and only then can we carry out the law.” [The crowd] further heard the immortals instruct [the two heavenly generals], saying: “Please prepare to carry out the law right away; I will immediately report [to the Jade Emperor]; let there be no mistake.” The two heavenly generals bowed and said: “Since [we] have you to report [to the Jade Emperor], we will certainly obey the order.” After saying this, [the two heavenly generals] bowed again and disappeared. In a moment, the golden lights could not be seen. [The crowd] could only hear the roar of thunderclaps and the shaking of the earth, but could not see any lightning.

Hu Qian and those with him could only think of fleeing, but their feet were heavy, as if nailed to the ground, and they could not move even one step. Although Hu Qian was a fiendish petty man, at this moment, being frightened out of his senses, [he] could also feel his evil intentions disappear completely, leaving his souls scattered away. Although he was crying for mercy, it was too bad for him that the sound of the thunderclaps was ten thousand times louder than his pleas. Alas, such good words uttered at the brink of death could not reach to Heaven. The intermittent thunderclaps seemed to circle round the top of his head, as if about to descend but not descending, and this made him feel even worse. In the meantime, those fiendish servants of his also felt similar pain and fear. Only Lan Xiu and his maternal nephew looked unfazed. Instead, they stood far off, watching how the malefactors would be punished by the thunder. Some time passed in this way, and [the crowd] suddenly saw the golden lights again. Inside the golden light field, the immortals spoke loudly: “Thunder god and lightning goddess, take heed! The heavenly tally has arrived. Please carry out the punishment immediately.” Every single word they spoke drilled its way into Hu Qian’s ears. He only felt a “bang” on the top of his head, and two of his three souls already flew apart. The one remaining soul heard the thunderclaps start up again. This time was different from before. Lightning followed wherever a thunderclap started. [The crowd] only heard a “palala” sound shaking the sky, and the air was immediately filled with the smell of sulphur. Hu Qian, who had filled his heart with fiendishness and completely lost his conscience, gave a loud cry at this moment, and was incinerated until he was black as a stick of charcoal and no longer among the living.

胡千这才大骇大惧，伏地颤栗，高叫：“上仙饶命！从今不敢为恶了。”哪知他恶贯已满，半空中顿起一个霹雳。大众都见金光阵里有两位面貌狰狞的神将，也是一男一女，向那二仙行了个礼。此时，黑云顿起，月色无光，而闪烁金光却亮如白昼。一时云头骤低，众人都听得两个神将说道：“启禀法师，奉旨电殛胡千，怎奈现当腊底春初，天地之气不交，如须行电，必得禀明上帝，特别施刑，小将们方可施法。”又听那仙人吩咐道：“请尊神即行预备施法，贫道即刻上禀，不得差错的。”神将们躬身说道：“既有法师代禀，小将们当遵旨！”说毕，又一躬身而退。一霎时，连金光都不见了。但见雷声轰轰，山谷震动，却只见电光。
胡千等众人，只想逃走，谁知两脚沉重，好似钉在地上一般，一步都不能走动。胡千虽是凶恶小人，到了此时，也觉恶念全消，魂飞魄散。先还号呼乞饶，最苦的是雷声大盛，比他的哀求之声大过万倍。可怜他这一番将死的善言，竟不能上达天听，而阵阵雷鸣，又宛然在他顶门儿上打旋，欲下不下的样子最使人难受。同时，那批恶奴也都感受到同样的痛苦和恐慌。只有蓝休等二人，却是一无所苦的样子，反远远立着，看他们怎样受雷之刑。如此过了许多时候，忽见空中金光又起，金光阵里，仙人大呼：“雷公电母听着，玉旨已到，请速行刑。”只此一语，一字字钻入胡千耳中。胡千只觉顶门中“轰”地一声，三道魂灵，早飞去两条。剩下一条听得雷声又起，此番却不比先时，雷声起处，电光随至，但听得“啪啦啦”震天一声响，顿时空中满布硝磺气味。存心凶恶、天良丧尽的胡千，就于此时大叫一声，殛成焦木黑炭一般，自然是不活了。62

This is a case of an evil human who has done many heinous deeds and eventually is killed by lightning. There are two other similar cases, which take place in Chapters 68 and 72. Chapter 68 tells of Li Shaojun 李少君63, an evil turtle who transformed himself into a human being during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han (141-87 BCE) and was also killed by lightning. Chapter 72 is about an evil dragon named Laojiao 老蛟64 who had been the antagonist of immortals since the beginning of the novel and is eventually killed by lightning. Wugou daoren’s commentary makes a general remark that thunder and lightning are used by heavenly deities to punish evildoers, without explaining how this works. However, combining these three cases, readers can discover more clues concerning this Daoist epistemology. In the above case, the punishment is carried out

62 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuân, 367.
63 According to the narrative, Li Shaojun is a turtle that has transformed into the appearance of a Daoist priest. He gains the favor of Emperor Wu by showing him his favorite concubine’s ghost. Li Shaojun is eventually killed by lightning for his evil deeds.
64 According to the narrative, Laojiao is an evil dragon that has mastered some supernatural power during the time of the sage king Yu. He destroys a temple that people had built for a bat that saved many lives during a deluge. After Laojiao and the bat reincarnate as brothers, named Jiao’er and Xianci respectively, Jiao’er manipulates their parents into killing Xianci. This bat later reincarnates as Zhang Guolao, one of the Eight Immortals. Laojiao later engages in a big fight with the immortals. Having lost the fight, Laojiao escapes into the water in the Haining area. About one thousand years after this big fight with the immortals, Laojiao escapes from the ocean but eventually is killed by lightning.
during winter, and “the energy of Heaven and Earth could not connect.” In the case of Li Shaojun being struck by lightning in Chapter 68, the thunder god and lightning goddess say: “now is the middle of the summer, the perfect time for thunder and lightning to display their celestial power.” From these clues, the narrative reveals that lightning is produced by the connected qi of Heaven and Earth. When this qi naturally connects in the summer, the thunder god and lightning goddess can perform their celestial art and carry out lightning strikes effortlessly to punish evildoers. On the other hand, when the qi of Heaven and Earth does not naturally connect in winter, they need special permission from the Jade Emperor to use lightning. Laojiao being killed by lightning in Chapter 72 is a special case, in that he is killed by a sudden thunderbolt in broad daylight. Hammond states that the sudden arrival of thunder on a cloudless day shows the righteous anger of Heaven. Laojiao, who had done many evil things in several lifetimes according to the narrative, dies in a way that demonstrates Heaven’s righteousness. In addition, the narrative also explains that thunder is produced when the thunder god beats a drum.

As if the commentary and cases are not sufficiently clear to express his beliefs concerning thunder and lightning, Wugou daoren further uses the discursive speeches of characters to elaborate the idea that electricity, as a product of nature, is under the control and management of the thunder god and lightning goddess. In Chapter 66, Fei Zhangfang explains to Li Shaojun:

65 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 423.
67 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 423.
68 Based on the narrative, Fei Zhangfang lived at the time of the Qin and Han dynasties. He is a disciple of Li Tieguai. He accidentally killed many innocent people when he saw a local bully insulting his wife. He was given the job of governing ghosts after Li Tieguai plead for him. However, he abused his power and led a female ghost to Li Shaojun whose purpose was to gain favor from Emperor Wu of the Han. Fei Zhangfang
Electricity is a natural product of Heaven and Earth, and not the private property of the lightning goddess, nor has she produced it herself. She only has the right of controlling it and the responsibility of managing it... It is just like what people nowadays know as lightning, which is also not the lightning goddess’s own possession, but merely under her authority and management.

electricity is a natural product of Heaven and Earth, which corresponds to the idea that lightning is a product of qi’s connection with Heaven and Earth. A speech from the thunder god and lightning goddess gives further support to this Daoist epistemology. In Chapter 68, after the thunder god and lightning goddess help Xuanzhuzi 李玄珠子 to kill Li Shaojun, Xuanzhuzi thanks the two deities for their marvellous supernatural power. They reply:

We merely went along with the qi of Heaven and Earth and carried out the punishment, how can it be our supernatural power?... We have presented a decree to the Jade Emperor, asking permission to give electricity to the public in order to allow all law-executors of the human world to be able to use electricity to punish evil. Then the petty person will be more fearful, and crimes will reduce.... The Jade Emperor paid a great deal of attention to this matter. He invited various immortals and the Buddha and held a convocation to discuss this decree. Most of the immortals thought that because good people outnumbered evildoers in the world several-fold, thunder and lightning were sufficient to warn the common run of thieves. If control of electricity were put in human hands, after a while they would become accustomed to it and it would lose its efficacy to inspire fear. It is punished for this mistake and later reincarnates as Cao Guojiu 曹国舅, the last member of the Eight Immortals, and eventually attains immortality during the Song dynasty. His story is told in Chapters 53, and 66-68.

69 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 407.

70 Based on the narrative, Xuanzhuzi is originally a crane that has cultivated the Dao and become a celestial being. He is made to take his original form as a crane for five hundred years because of dereliction of duty. This crane reincarnates as Han Xiangzi, who later attains the Dao and becomes one of the Eight Immortals. Han Xiangzi’s story is told in Chapters 95-96.
would be best to follow the old way. Only the Buddha sighed and said: “human customs are getting worse and worse, and the human heart is getting more and more wicked. If it keeps on like this, I’m afraid that one to two thousand years hence there will hardly be a single moral human in one hundred. Then, the weapons of the human world will lose their efficacy and won’t necessarily be able to warn against evils. What the thunder god and lightning goddess have suggested has to be carried out eventually. However, I’m afraid that harms might happen after a while, and petty people will also be able to use electricity to bully upright people. In the end we will still have to rely on the thunder god and lightning goddess to act with justice.”

小神们不过顺天地之气,做个现成主人,有何法力而言。。。曾向玉帝上过条陈,拟把电力公之于众,要使人间负有执法权者,皆可利用吾电,以惩治恶人,如此则小人益发知道畏惧,犯罪之事或可减少一点。。。为这事情,玉帝倒很注意,曾经请齐各位先祖并西方佛爷,大开会议。结果因大众都说,现在世界恶人犹比善人少得几倍,有雷电以示威,亦大足儆惕一班宵小无行之徒,若将电力操于世人之手,久而久之,人民常见电力,因稔习而生轻顽之心,转失儆世之效,不如照旧为宜。只有西方如来佛爷叹说:‘世风越迟越薄,人心越弄越坏,照此情形,只怕千年之后,至两千年间,百人之中,难得一个正人。彼时凡间兵器,将失其效力,未必能够儆世。雷电二神所说之法,只怕终得实施出来。但恐日久弊生,小人也能利用电力,以欺压君子,结果能够秉公处治者,仍不得不仰望于雷电尊神耳。’

This speech further supports Wugou daoren’s notion of thunder and lightning as products of nature that nonetheless are under the management of heavenly deities bent on punishing evildoers. In addition, the speech hints that electricity will be given to the public eventually. If we consider that this part of the story takes place during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han the time scheme fits almost perfectly, since in about two thousand years, that is by Wugou daoren’s time, electricity would become public knowledge among humans. This is an important message that Wugou daoren very skilfully articulates in the text. He sets up an epistemological structure that reveals how electricity as knowledge had long been mastered by Daoist immortals. In doing so, Wugou daoren dismisses any apparent marvels and wonders concerning what Western

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71 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuang, 423-24.
science has to say about lightning striking people. To him, Western science touches just
the surface of this phenomenon, but fails to understand the rationale underlying it. What’s
more, this speech further indicates that when electricity becomes public knowledge in the
human world, it will have been the immortals’ decision to let humans possess such
knowledge. This point, made here, speaks to the central argument that Wugou daoren
tries to make using this novel. What Western science invented or discovered is nothing
new, but merely partial knowledge of the Daoist immortal world. Therefore, Wugou
daoren skilfully dismisses the importance of the introduction of electricity to China by
Western science, and successfully subsumes Western scientific knowledge of electricity
within a Daoist epistemology.

Another attempt along these lines explains electric light as knowledge that has
been possessed by Daoist immortals long before Western science. In one case, Fei
Zhangfang, who was in charge of governing ghosts, wanted to summon some ghosts for
Li Shaojun to choose from for the pleasure of Emperor Wu of the Han. Fei Zhangfang
explains to Li Shaojun:

Today the ghosts [I] have summoned are not few and the Yin energy must be extremely strong. The Mingjiao lamp\(^\text{72}\) is probably useless. I have prepared an electric light for you. This light is the most powerful light in the world. In fact, the two words, “this world,” are only a manner of speaking. Were you to go all over the world, where could you find this heavenly light? Simply put, heavenly light is the electricity of thunder and lightning. There is a thunder god for thunder, and a lightning goddess for lightning. Although thunder and lightning are derived from nature, the thunder god and lightning goddess have control of them and are responsible for the management of them. This electric light of mine is borrowed from the lightning goddess, because often some ferocious ghosts form groups and do not listen to [my] commands. They conceal their presence and especially create difficulties surreptitiously. Even though [I] have efficient instruments for

\(^{72}\) The Mingjiao lamp (mingjiaodeng 明角灯) is the same as a sheep-horn lamp (yangjiaodeng 羊角灯), which is covered by a semi-transparent cover made of sheep horn. “Mingjiao deng,” [www.zdic.net](http://www.zdic.net/c/e/110/297847.htm).
punishing ghosts, it often reaches the point where my tactics are exhausted. Therefore, I entreated my master, Mr. Tieguai, to write an official request to the lightning goddess to lend some electricity to me.

今天召来的鬼，不在少数，阴气必然盛极，明角灯恐不济事，我已替你预备了一种电火，这火乃是世上最有力量的火。其实世上两字，还不过一句话儿，走遍天下，哪里去找这种天火。说简洁点，就是雷电之电。雷有雷公，电有电母，雷电虽属天成，而雷公电母实有支配之权，管理之责。我这电火，乃是向电母那边借来，因为常有许多厉鬼，结队成群，不服指挥，他们把身子隐起，专在暗中和你为难，便有诛鬼的利器，也每至技穷。因此求吾师铁拐先生，牒请电母，借了电力若干。73

It seems that Wugou daoren takes every chance he can get to let his characters explain knowledge concerning electricity. The discursive speech above not only repeats Wugou daoren’s argument that electricity is under the management of heavenly deities, but further delivers the message that knowledge of electric light is something that immortals possess. Based on this speech, as early as the time of Emperor Wu of the Han, which is when this part of the story takes place, immortals already knew how to use electric light to exorcize ghosts. The lightning goddess, again, is the deity who controls and manages it. Although this is knowledge known only to Daoist immortals, the speech does reveal to readers that the Chinese mastered knowledge of electric light almost two thousand years earlier than Westerners. After Fei Zhangfang delivers this speech, he sets about collecting electricity:

As [Fei Zhangfang] was speaking, he took out two pieces of board that looked like neither bronze nor iron. He said: “This is a most valuable treasure that has been refined in my master’s gourd, called electrical board. So long as you rub these two pieces of board against each other, you can gather electricity from the sky into your room”…While he was talking, he displayed his supernatural power, and collected electricity. Immediately the room was as bright as if it were day. However, this electric light was clear, nearly like sunlight but not as hot, and of a reddish hue.

73 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuang, 406.
说着，从袋中取出两块似铜非铜，似铁非铁的板子，说道：“这是吾师葫芦中锻炼的至宝，名为电板，只要把这板子磨擦起来，便能将空中之电，收入室中。”费长房一面说，一面早已施法，把电光摄到。一霎时满屋透亮，似在白日之下。但这电光却非常清白，似乎日光不如日光之烈而带红。74

The method used to collect electricity greatly resembles a Western scientific experiment for producing electricity. By the time the novel was written, electricity and its related knowledge had been introduced into China. For example, in 1851, an American missionary named Daniel J. MacGowan (1814-1893) published an article in the *Philosophical Almanac (Zhexue nianjian)* in Ningbo, China, introducing the telegraph and the knowledge of storing and transmitting electricity.75 Since electricity and its related knowledge was relatively available by the time the novel was written, it seems that Wugou daoren might very well have been exposed to it. However, the lack of a detailed explanation here suggests that he did not fully comprehend it. Even so, this did not inhibit Wugou daoren from appropriating this Western scientific knowledge and explaining the process of collecting electricity as a form of Daoist art. Based on this Daoist epistemology, electricity exists somewhere in the sky, and one can use the magical tool that has been refined in Li Tieguai’s gourd to collect it. Regarding the method used to stabilize electricity and make it into electric light, the author cleverly chooses to omit this from his narrative. Perhaps the question of how to turn electricity into light is not an important issue after all. Since it is a Daoist supernatural art, it doesn’t require an explanation.

74 Ibid., 406.
After putting forward the message that immortals possess the knowledge of electric light, Wugou daoren further advances yet another important message through Fei Zhangfang’s speech:

My master also said that after two thousand years public morals will become more and more feeble, and the heart of mankind will be like that of ghosts. The lamps of the human world will not be usable. At that time Madam Lightning Goddess will have a much heavier responsibility, because all things in the human world will rely on her electric power to radiate brightness and illuminate the world.

吾师又言，二千年后，世风愈薄，人心似鬼，人间所用灯火，不堪应用，那时这位电母太太，责任更来得重大。因为世上所用之火，都要仰仗于她的电力，才能放出大光明来，普照世界咧。76

This speech adopts the same strategy that Wugou daoren employs in explaining electricity according to what was public knowledge in his day. Indeed, according to Fei’s speech, it is in the nineteenth century that electric light will become public knowledge.

An interesting pattern emerges in these speeches. The characters who speak of the future usually obtain their knowledge from their masters, who are highly cultivated immortals, while they themselves are still in pursuit of immortality. In a sense, the future as revealed by highly accomplished immortals carries more legitimacy. One defining trait of Daoist immortals is their ability to foretell the future. However, this future is a heavenly secret and ought not to be revealed to the public. It seems that the disciples who occasionally learn of the future from random conversations with their masters are the most likely to reveal details about the future. As in an earlier case, it is the Buddha who foretells that knowledge concerning electricity will be given to humans in about two thousand years,

76 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuang, 406.
and it is the thunder god and lightning goddess who revealed this future to readers.\textsuperscript{77} In this case, it is Li Tiegua\textiid\, who foresees that about two thousand years after the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han, the world will be illuminated by electric light, and it is Fei Zhangfang, the less cultivated disciple, who makes it known to readers. This pattern continues in the narrative, and knowledge concerning the future is nearly always revealed by minor characters who have learned it from their highly cultivated masters.

The speeches concerning electric light do not end here. As if Wugou daoren anticipated that some people would be suspicious of his theory, he employs the recipient of the conversation to challenge this view and enable him to further consolidate his argument. After Fei Zhangfang’s long speech, Li Shaojun asks him: “This speech [of yours] is nearly a comedy, can it be that people two thousand years from now will all be able to borrow electricity from the lightning goddess like you did?” Fei Zhangfang elaborates:

All things under heaven are originally for the use of all people under heaven. Since the future world cannot be lit without electricity, the world will naturally gather electricity for use as electric light. At that time the method of gathering electricity must be similar to farming and sericulture, with nothing that causes wonderment to people. However, the authority for delivering electricity still will be in the hands of the lightning goddess.

再说天下之物, 原供天下人利用, 将来的世界, 既然非电不明, 世界上的电, 自会收取电光来用。那时节收电之法, 必如今日之耕织蚕桑一般, 大家看得没有什么稀奇。可是送电之权, 仍操在电母手中。\textsuperscript{78}

This speech reveals that two thousand years into the future, people will not need to borrow electricity from the lightning goddess as Fei Zhangfang has done in order to

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{77} See p. 24 and n. 71.
\textsuperscript{78} Wugou daoren, \textit{Baxian dedao zhuan}, 407.
\end{footnotesize}
have electric light. The method of gathering electricity in the future will be as normal as farming is to people of Fei’s time. Therefore, by the time that Wugou daoren writes this novel, which is around two thousand years from the time that this part of the story takes place, electric light indeed is a normal phenomenon, and not an immortal’s supernatural power. By employing this question-answer strategy, Wugou daoren skilfully avoids further detailed explanation of how electricity is gathered by people of his day, a knowledge that might very well have been beyond his mastery. The last sentence of the speech is of special importance in that it consolidates the structure whereby the new world that is lit by electricity remains within a Daoist epistemological structure. It states that the delivering of electricity will still be subject to the management of Daoist immortals. Therefore, when Wugou daoren’s contemporaries are benefiting from electric light, no matter whether they are Chinese or Westerners, the Daoist supernatural world is still at work. Through a carefully planned narrative strategy, Wugou daoren successfully appropriates Western scientific knowledge of electric light and subsumes it under a Daoist epistemology.

In addition to arguing that lightning strikes people as heavenly deities punishing evildoers, and that electric light as immortals’ supernatural power, the last evidence Wugou daoren uses to demonstrate electricity as a Daoist supernatural art is the view of the telegraph. After Daniel J. MacGowan introduced the telegraph in the *Philosophical Almanac* in 1851, Western powers made a great effort to introduce it into China in the following decades.\(^7^9\) Although the Qing government had a heated debate about whether China should adopt the telegraph during the 1860s, it is clear that Wugou daoren was

aware of its function and convenience. The strategy of explaining the telegraph as a Daoist supernatural art is similar to that used for electric light, that is, to make the argument in the discursive speeches of characters. In Chapter 16, Wugou daoren employs a conversation between Sun Xianci 孙仙赐⁸₀ and Hu Sanjie 胡三姐。⁸¹ Sun Xianci is a new disciple of Wenmei zhenren 文美真人 (The Perfected Literary Beauty)⁸² embarked on a path of Daoist cultivation. Hu Sanjie is Sun Xianci’s Daoist sister studying under the same master. Sun Xianci asks Hu Sanjie if there is anything faster than cloud riding, and Hu Sanjie answers “Of all the supernatural powers, sword light is the fastest.”⁸³ She explains:

In the old days Madam Xuannü cast a five-coloured sword and was able to join the sword with her spirit. Wherever her spirit goes, the sword follows…[She] later was able to refine light out from the sword, to the point where there was only light without the sword. Where the light goes, the sword goes. In an instant it can fly from the southernmost point to the northernmost. In addition to its efficacy at killing tyrants and demons, it can also transmit messages. When one’s mind and the sword connect, the sword’s light can reflect what is in one’s mind; or, one can compose a letter in one’s mind and use the light to transmit it to places more than ten-thousand li distant.

从前玄女娘娘炼五色宝剑，能使剑与神合，神之所至剑亦随之。。。又以炼得从剑生光，继且成有光无剑的地步。光之所至即剑之所至。大约一刹那间可由极南之处飞到极北地方。它的效用除斩暴除妖之外，兼可传递消息。心

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⁸₀ Sun Xianci is the reincarnation of a mouse that drowned itself to save humans during the flooding period of the time of Yu. He later reincarnates as Zhang Guo during the Tang dynasty and eventually becomes one of the Eight Immortals.

⁸¹ Hu Sanjie is a fox spirit who is determined to cultivate the Dao. Wenmei zhenren takes her as his disciple on the condition that she oversees Sun Xianci’s cultivation of immortality.

⁸² Wenmei zhenren is a disciple of the grand master Laojun 老君. Wenmei zhenren is known for his odd interest in taking animals as his disciples in the immortal world. The term “zhenren” is usually translated as “perfected,” or “True Man.” Zhenren is someone who has attained the Dao and ranks higher than a xianren (immortal 仙人) in the Daoist celestial hierarchy. Kunio Miura, “zhenren,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism. vol. 2, 1265-66.

⁸³ Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 99.
This speech explains a Daoist art that uses light derived from a sword to transmit messages. Based on the text, the original purpose of this sword light is for killing tyrants and demons, and transmitting messages is an additional function. The principle underlying transmitting messages is that sword light can reflect what is in one’s mind, and therefore the message can travel afar with the sword light in an instant. After explaining the Daoist art of transmitting messages, the following speech indicates how the telegram, a Western scientific invention, actually originated from this Daoist art. Hu Sanjie continues:

I have also heard my master say that in five thousand years humanity will be more developed, and many forms of Daoist art will be passed on to the human world. At that time our grand master will ask Xuannü to transform her sword light into electricity, enabling two people to talk and send letters from thousands of li away in an instant. That’s what the grand master told our master.

This speech clearly explains the idea behind the telegraph and telephone, which use electricity to transmit messages in the form of words and voices. Again, this speech falls perfectly into the pattern discussed above. A minor character—Hu Sanjie—overhears information concerning the future from his or her master—Wenmei zhenren—and reveals the secret to someone in a conversation—in this case Sun Xianci; in this way the secret is also revealed to readers. To make the information more believable, Hu Sanjie does not
forget to mention that it is the grand master Laojun 老君 who foresees the future and
imparts this information to Wenmei zhenren. This conversation between Hu Sanjie and
Sun Xianci takes place during the time of Yu, roughly five thousand years prior to the
time when the novel was written, based on the accepted belief that Chinese civilization is
five thousand years old. This speech sets up an overall epistemological structure whereby
the advancement of the human world is shown to have benefited from Daoist arts. Indeed,
by the time Wugou daoren writes this novel, it has been about five thousand years from
the time of Yu, and indeed a great number of Daoist arts from the immortal world have
been imparted to the human world. Electricity, electric light, and the telegraph are all
elements of such transmission. This epistemological structure undermines any credit that
Western science might claim for its inventions. To Wugou daoren, electricity, electric
light, and the telegraph are not marvellous inventions of Western science; rather, they are
knowledge that has long been possessed by Daoist immortals.

What is interesting about this speech is its mention of transforming sword light into
electricity at the time this Daoist art is passed on to humans. Using sword light to
transmit messages does not fit the reality of the world Wugou daoren was living in.
Wugou daoren is clearly aware of this problem. To make his argument sound, he skilfully
adopts the strategy he employs throughout the novel, which is to use his characters to
make a statement without providing detailed explanations. Here, Hu Sanjie mentions that
the grand master will ask Xuannü to transform her sword light into electricity in order for
humans to transmit messages. Therefore, by Wugou daoren’s lifetime, humans would use
electricity rather than sword light to transmit messages. By making this one statement,
not only does the future that the immortals foretold five thousand years ago turn out to be
true, but it also enables Wugou daoren to avoid providing a detailed explanation of how to transform sword light into electricity. This is exactly the same approach, of not explaining how to stabilize electricity and make it into electric light, used in the earlier case.
4. Subsuming Western Science under a Daoist Epistemology—the Moon

Electricity and its related knowledge are not the only issues that Wugou daoren argues against strongly in the novel; he also disagrees strongly with what Western science has to say about the moon. He intrudes into the narrative in Chapter 50 concerning Chang’e, a legendary fairy who lives on the moon according to Chinese mythology, and speaks clearly his views about the moon.

Mr. Tieguai having spoken to this point, the writer has to intrude with some superfluous words and ask that the reader hear them clearly. As for this whole story of Houyi flying to the Moon Palace and its reasons, nowadays many scientists, geographers, and explorers say that the moon and the other planets are alike, in that they all have human populations, cities, and cultural and social institutions. However, Chinese stories that have been passed down for thousands of years say it is Taiyinxing who is in charge of all affairs on the moon. Also, a person is there especially to cut the big Sala tree, which falls down when he cuts it and knits together soon after it falls. There is a food box hanging on top of the tree. It comes down when the tree falls and goes up when the tree grows back together. [The stories] are exactly the same as what is recorded in this book. However, those who pass on the stories are too lacking in learning. They not only mistake Chang’e as Taiyinxing, but also do not know who the tree cutter is and why he has to suffer like this. Since the New Learning has arisen and new theories have flourished, these kinds of old tales are regarded as superstition. Intelligent men and scholars cannot find evidence of what is on the moon; they can only go along with the New Learning and say that [human beings] can go to the moon. As for what [Chinese stories] say about the moon, it is mostly imagination after all. Whether it is actually like this, no one can conclude. Based on the author’s opinion, as for many things nowadays, what has been passed on since ancient times in China is akin to philosophy, while what has been said by foreigners pertains entirely to science. The two often have absolutely opposing theories. [If we] think carefully, how can there be no principle linking the two? As for lightning striking people, scientists say it is an electric shock, which makes a certain sense. However, being struck by lightning still comes under the heavenly deity’s management. Otherwise, why is it that people who died from being struck by lightning, both in stories passed on for thousands of years and in what has been heard in the present and past, are mostly of the vicious and evil sort, yet one never hears of upright gentlemen with proper morality and behaviour who have suffered this disastrous punishment? [Similar to the Western scientific ideas,] this speech is also nearly arbitrary. However, how can those who firmly advocate atheism

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86 This portion of the commentary is analyzed earlier in this study to demonstrate the historical background of this novel. See p. 11 and n. 41.
have any evidence to provide for us as research material? Since the principle of lightning is like this, the situation of the moon can be considered in the same way. I venture to say that Xu Fu met immortals while drifting over the sea, and then set up a regime to propagate descendants. Before Xu Fu arrived, how can one know that the people of that state were not subjects of the immortals? Otherwise, why did the immortals have sovereignty to bestow that land on Xu Fu? To draw an analogy from that, maybe the future moon will be like that kingdom in the sea, which will be bestowed on humans by Taiyinxingjun as a place for propagating the race. Or, perhaps she loves the elegance and beauty of the moon, cannot bear to part with [it], and will never allow humans to make inquiries [about it]. These examples are all hard to speak of or imagine. If because [we] believe the talk of some explorers and stubbornly insist that the moon, like the earth, is a place inhabitable by humans and in no way a place where immortals come and go, then, it is the same as the theory that there is no thunder or lightning god; it will not be able to persuade our group of stubborn pedants. Better not to speak too much nonsense lest too much nonsense makes people mad. [I] hasten to continue with the proper business.

铁拐先生说到这里，作书人却要插入几句废话，奉告看管听清楚了。这后羿飞入月宫始末情由，如今有许多科学家、地理学家、探险家，都说月球和其他星球一样，都有人民城郭，文物制度。而据中国数千年相传的故事，又说月中有太阴星主持各事。又有一人专在那里用锯子锯那大婆娑树，随锯随断，断即复合。树顶有饭篮，断时便下，合时又上，和本书所说一般无二。不过传说的人太无学识，不但错认嫦娥即太阴星主，却不知锯树者是什么人，为何要受这等苦楚。自从新学大兴，新说盛行，这等古话归于迷信一流。达人学士，既不能找出月宫证据，只好附会新学，单道月中可以交通，至所说的月宫，究竟大半属于理想。是否确实如此，谁也不敢断定。据作书人见解，现有许多事情，中国古时所传，远于哲学。外人所讲，则完全属于科学。二者每有绝对相反的议论。其实仔细研究，何尝没有可通之理？比如雷电击人，科学家说是触电，道理是一些不错。若照本书所说，那触电之事，仍属天神管理。若不然，为什么千古相传，今昔所闻，凡遭雷击毙命的人，大抵都属于怪人恶煞之流，却不曾听得有品行端正的正人君子受触电的惨刑。这话虽也近于武断，但坚主无神论者，又何尝有甚么凭据，可以指给我们作研究的资料呢？雷电之理既然如此，月宫的情形，正可作同样观。窃谓徐福浮海遇仙，就在海中立国繁殖人民，建设为政。在徐福未至之前，彼邦人民，安知不属神仙之徒。否则，为什么仙人又有主权，将该地赐与徐福呢？以彼例比，或者将来的月宫，也和当年的海国一样，由太阴星君赐与今人，作殖民之地。也许她心恋清华，不忍割弃，终不许人类问津。这都还

87 This portion of the commentary is analyzed earlier in this study to illustrate Wugou daoren’s belief that lightning strikes people as heavenly deities’ way of punishing evildoers. See p. 17 and n. 57.
88 Xu Fu 徐福 is a legendary figure who is dispatched by Qinshihuang 秦始皇 (221-210 BCE) of the Qin 秦 dynasty (221-206 BCE) to seek for immortality pills.
This commentary reflects Wugou daoren’s lack of belief in Western scientific notions concerning the moon. He approaches this clash of ideas between China and the West via the tale of Chang’e and Xu Fu in Chinese mythology. He first draws readers’ attention by saying that the next paragraph consists of his “superfluous words.” However, it is these “superfluous words” that he wants readers to “hear clearly,” a paradox indicating the importance of this commentary. Indeed, Wugou daoren feels strongly about the new theory of the moon that had been introduced into China by Western science. The new theory not only completely denies old Chinese beliefs about the moon, but also condemns them as superstition. What is worse is that Chinese intellectuals have started to go along with the new theory uncritically. Wugou daoren analyzes the conflict between the old Chinese worldview and Western ideas more thoughtfully. For him, the old Chinese worldview and its related beliefs are more like philosophy and Western ideas are science. Even though the two often have opposed positions, there is still a principle linking them. What principle links these two often-clashing ideologies? Using the example of lightning striking people, Wugou daoren proposes an idea he has been trying to establish throughout this novel, which is that what Western science discovers is still within a Daoist epistemological structure. He then moves on to the legend of Xu Fu,

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89 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 306-07.
arguing that, like the land bestowed on Xu Fu by immortals, the moon might be bestowed on humans by Taiyinxingjun in the future. Or, Taiyinxingjun might not want to give it to humans. Here, the logic of Wugou daoren’s argument is somewhat far-fetched, since he tries to use old folktales themselves to demonstrate that these folktales are not superstition, as Western science maintains. However, he does point out that the Western scientific notion of the moon doesn’t have any evidence to support it either. Therefore, the thousands of years of Chinese tradition cannot be stripped of legitimacy simply because of the emergence of a different worldview.

What Wugou daoren does in this commentary is not only show his disagreement with Western scientific ideas concerning the moon, but also correct the mistakes of old Chinese tales about Chang’e. In his view, those who pass down the story of Chang’e are “too lacking in learning,” and mistaken in their belief that Chang’e is Taiyinxing. It can be argued that this is his effort to gain legitimacy and authority for his novel. By setting himself apart from the unlearned transmitters and pointing out their mistakes, Wugou daoren wants his readers to believe that the information in this novel is authentic.

Another example in the narrative shows the same effort. In Chapter 93, Wugou daoren changes the title of the popular story “Lü Dongbin 三洞宾 Three Times Flirts with Baimudan 白牡丹” to “Lü Dongbin Three Times Tests Baimudan.” He backs up his change by stating that he obtained the true version of the story through many secret texts. He states, “only the author of this novel, by researching many secret texts, found out the ‘three tests’ story and the reason why it was mis-transmitted as the ‘three times flirts’

90 Based on the narrative, it is the two immortals Piaomiao zhenren 缥缈真人 (Perfected Mist) and Huolong zhenren 火龙真人 (Perfected Fire Dragon) who help Xu Fu establish a regime on an island. Xu Fu’s story is recounted by Li Tieguai in Chapter 44.
story." In this case, Wugou daoren tries to show readers that he is different from such unlearned people. He has access to many secret texts, hence to reliable information that many other transmitters lack. Therefore, pointing out the mistakes of the story of Chang’e and correcting it accordingly can be seen as a way for Wugou daoren to gain authority for his novel.

Why Wugou daoren incorporates the story of Chang’e into his novel is an interesting issue to explore. The story of Chang’e and Eight Immortals lore are two distinctive narrative traditions in Chinese literature. However, in this novel, Wugou daoren devotes three chapters to Chang’e\(^92\) and still other chapters to her later reincarnations.\(^93\) According to Wang Hanmin, it is Wugou daoren who developed the Eight Immortals narratives to their most comprehensive version by incorporating a great deal of Chinese lore into the plot of his novel.\(^94\) That Wugou daoren chooses to incorporate the story of Chang’e is no coincidence. She is the female immortal who resides on the moon in Chinese popular beliefs, and her story is mainly passed on through oral transmission. The relationship between oral literature and novel is a mutually beneficial one. While oral and written literature borrowed material from each other, the written novels can cross regional, linguistic, and temporal barriers that oral tradition can

\(^{91}\) Wugou daoren, _Baxian dedao zhuang_, 591. A similar effort to show the authenticity of the information is found on 425 and 495.  
\(^{92}\) The story of Change’s is recounted by Li Tieguai in Chs. 49-51.  
\(^{93}\) According to the narrative, Chang’e is reincarnated as Meng Jiangnü, and the story of Meng Jiangnü is told in Chapters 47 and 48. Meng Jiangnü later reincarnates as Wang Yueying, the wife of Lan Caihe who is one of the Eight Immortals. Their story is told in Chapters 56-64.  
\(^{94}\) Wang Hanmin, “Baxian xiaoshuo de yuanyuan ji shanbian,” 668.
not. In this case, Wugou daoren borrowing materials about Chang’e from ancient Chinese lore, develops its narrative, and hopes that the novel form will spread his notion of the moon, explained through the story of Chang’e, to a wider audience.

This widespread belief in Chang’e reflects its central place in ancient Chinese cosmology. When Western natural science was introduced into China, this old Chinese worldview was among the first beliefs to be condemned. Wugou daoren skilfully makes Chang’e an important recurring character in the novel as a means to counter Western scientific notions concerning the moon. As a character, Chang’e later delivers a speech about the moon, which allows Wugou daoren to argue that Western scientific discoveries concerning the moon are but partial knowledge of the immortal world. Therefore, Chang’e and her story are a deliberate part of Wugou daoren’s master plan to subsume Western science under a Daoist epistemology.

Now that Wugou daoren has expressed his lack of belief in Western scientific ideas about the moon through an extensive commentary, his next task is to subsume Western scientific notions of the moon under a Daoist epistemology. He accomplishes this through a conversation between Chang’e and Lü Dongbin in Chapter 84. This part of the story takes place during the Tang dynasty, when Lü Dongbin is on a journey to Mount Lu 南山 to cultivate the Dao. Chang’e says:

Now because Taiyinxing received a decree from the Jade Emperor, and because the human birthrate on earth is increasing daily and with it the population, the original moon could only follow the earth, being utterly insufficient to illuminate the countless worlds beyond. For this reason, [the Jade Emperor] ordered Taiyinxing to draw up a plan to add a moon. Taiyinxing convened we immortals together to discuss the plan. [We] plan to borrow several large stars that surround the earth on

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all sides, and let them follow the other large planets and revolve around the sun. The light reflected back to them from the sun will become moonlight; only in this way can it illuminate the whole universe. As for the original moon, it will be just for illuminating the earth, and its brilliance will be something to behold. This plan having been made, [the Jade Emperor] issued another decree making Taiyinxing the general officer of the moon in charge of several other subordinate stars. Taiyinxing then chose several highly competent female immortals from among those who originally were clerks on the moon to be subordinate officials. I was appointed as one of the subordinate officials in charge of the original moon.

This speech by Chang’e speaks of a complicated astronomical structure that the Daoist immortals have created. In this structure, there are several big planets revolving around the sun and reflecting sunlight. Because the moon by itself is not enough to illuminate the whole universe, immortals borrow several other stars around the earth and make them revolve around the sun and reflect sunlight as well. The original moon then illuminates the earth only. This idea, of planets revolving around the sun and reflecting sunlight, greatly resembles the Western heliocentric theory of the solar system. This theory and its related astronomical knowledge were introduced into China at the end of the Ming dynasty.  

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96 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuán, 527.
system. It is also true that the moon revolves around the earth and reflects sunlight to illuminate the earth. However, the presence of immortals is an even greater factor for this astronomical structure. Not only does each planet have a specific deity in charge of it, but these immortals also have the ability to change the whole structure, as when in this case they add several stars to reflect more sunlight in order to illuminate the universe. To Wugou daoren, the heliocentric theory is just one component in the whole astronomical structure, and Western scientific knowledge again grasps only the surface of the Daoist system of knowledge.

With these textual evidences found in the novel, one important question needs to be addressed: How successful is Wugou daoren’s effort to subsume Western science under a Daoist epistemology? Is it credible? From the perspective of modern readers, there are definitely some faults in the epistemology that Wugou daoren creates. For example, he fails to explain how sword light is transformed into electricity. Moreover, he avoids explaining how electricity is collected and turned into electric light. These cases expose the somewhat far-fetched logic of the Daoist epistemology that Wugou daoren creates. However, when thinking about the credibility of his efforts to subsume Western scientific ideas under a Daoist epistemology, one has to take into account the intended audience of this novel. As he writes in his preface:

For the convenience of beginners, [I] have especially imitated the style of writing for recording unofficial history, and wrote the book using ordinary spoken language. Very much for the reason that Daoism has been declining and followers of Daoism mostly are illiterate, this work is therefore popular, seeking a wide readership, not profound meaning.
This preface by Wugou daoren shows that his intended audience for this novel is Daoist followers, most of whom are barely literate. When Wugou daoren wrote this novel, he was aware of this low literacy of his readers. Hence he chose to use ordinary spoken language, in hopes that with its simple stories it would be popular with such readers. The illiteracy of the majority of Daoist adherents gave Wugou daoren the advantage to manipulate narrative materials for his purpose of subsuming Western science under a Daoist epistemology and claiming that what Western science discovers or invents is but a partial knowledge of the Daoist immortal world. People who heard this story would be those who would have had little chance to be exposed to Western scientific inventions such as electric light and the telegram. They would have even less chance to understand Western scientific theories, such as heliocentrism. Therefore, they likely would not challenge what Wugou daoren has set forth in his novel. Furthermore, Wugou daoren’s claim—that what Western science has discovered is only a partial knowledge of the Daoist immortal world—was a common sentiment among many Chinese of his time. When the first interpreter’s college opened up in Beijing in 1862 during the Self-Strengthening Movement, many anti-foreign literati objected to Western teaching, putting forward their argument that “Western sciences borrowed their roots from ancient Chinese mathematics…China invented the method, Westerners adopted it.”99 This view continued to be held by many Confucian literati. David Der-wei Wang

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98 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuann, 1.
shows that Wu Jianren’s science fiction novel *The New Story of the Stone* (1908) speaks with a similar voice, claiming that Western discoveries are mentioned in classical Chinese references.\(^{100}\) Erik J. Hammerstrom’s research shows that Buddhists made a similar effort in negotiating Buddhism’s co-existence with modernity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by highlighting the similarities between Buddhism and science while maintaining the superiority of the former.\(^{101}\) This widespread sentiment during the late nineteenth century was the way that many Chinese dealt with the profound epistemological and social changes introduced by the Western powers. Written during this period of social and cultural crisis, Wugou daoren’s effort to subsume Western science under a Daoist epistemology seems more plausible than incredible.

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\(^{100}\) Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 274.

\(^{101}\) Erik J. Hammerstrom, “Buddhists Discuss Science in Modern China (1895-1949),” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2010), viii.
5. Conclusion

The introduction of Western science and technology presented arguably the greatest challenge to an old Chinese worldview. As mentioned above, Confucian literati, Buddhists, and Daoists all endeavoured to make sense of their changing world during the second half of the nineteenth century. Wugou daoren, as a Daoist practitioner, chooses to use a literary form, the novel, to inject his own voice into the larger intellectual and epistemological debate in China during his lifetime. The novel had been widely used by religious groups to propagate their religious beliefs in Wugou daoren’s time. According to Patrick Hanan, Christian missionaries employed the novel form to spread their doctrines during the nineteenth century. Beginning with the first “missionary novel” in 1819, missionaries in China were active in composing and translating novels with strong religious messages.102 We cannot know if Wugou daoren was inspired by their method to adopt it himself. However, the novel form did allow him to design a Daoist epistemological structure that supported his claim that Western scientific discoveries and inventions can be traced to Daoist immortals. Through a deliberate design of discursive speeches, many characters in the novel become Wugou daoren’s spokesmen. One has to be aware that the Daoist epistemological structure Wugou daoren creates in this novel reflects his own version of Daoist beliefs. The folklore and legends incorporated into the narrative are products of Chinese popular beliefs. From Wugou daoren’s painstaking effort to defend the truth of the story of Chang’e, we can conclude that he must have believed in these folk stories; or, perhaps, adopting these popular beliefs may very well have been for the purpose of spreading his religious message among illiterate Daoist

followers. In any case, Wugou daoren’s version of Daoist epistemology is more like a mixture of Daoist beliefs and Chinese popular beliefs.

*The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* is a product of the clash of ideas between an old Chinese worldview and Western science. To a larger extent it is a product of religion’s encounter with modernity. Wugou daoren might not have been aware of terms such as “modern” or “modernity.” However, he was fully aware of the challenges that science and technology posed to religion. As an individual, he chose to use the novel form to defend his religious beliefs against this threat. However, his voice in defense of his religious beliefs eventually did not make a ripple in the discourse of his time. The socio-political trajectory was not on the side of religion but rather on that of science. What happened in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was disastrous for Daoism. During the Hundred Day’s Reform in 1898, an edict was issued by the Qing court to “destroy temples in order to create schools” (*huimiao banxue* 毁庙办学).*"}^{103}\)

According to Lai Chi-tim’s research, non-monastic Daoism was labeled as superstition by the Nationalist government during the campaign known as the Reform of Customs (*fengsu gaige* 风俗改革) after the fall of the Qing dynasty.*"}^{104}\)

These attacks on Daoism as superstition provoked a response from some Chinese traditionalists, who attempted to validate Daoist ideas in scientific terms. For example, Chen Yingning 陈撄宁 (1880-1969) rationalized Daoist Inner Alchemy discourse and body cultivation technologies by incorporating concepts from biology and atomic theory during the

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These attempts promoted Daoism as a scientific system of knowledge and practice, trying to fit it into a framework set up by science.

Wugou daoren’s novel, on the other hand, depicts a world filled with supernatural and fantastic events and explains Western science within the framework of religion. Although his ideas did not get a hearing until the publication of the novel in the early 1930s, it is his efforts to grapple with profound epistemological and social changes during the second half of the nineteenth century that have left textual traces that modern readers can follow as they seek better to understand the dynamic between religion and modernity.

His novel falls into a period when Chinese literature started to show signs of its early modernity. If we take David Der-wei Wang’s framework of early Chinese literary modernity as represented by its dealing with cross-cultural ideas, technologies, and Western powers, Wugou daoren’s novel fits these criteria of Chinese literary modernization, for as a conservative religious practitioner he tries to defend his beliefs and hold onto the traditional Chinese worldview when faced with the challenge of Western science and modernity. Furthermore, if we look at another major form of modernization that Chinese literature went through, which is to employ vernacular language to enhance the social efficacy of writing for the modern world, Wugou daoren’s use of ordinary spoken language in writing this novel again makes his work modern. However, the concept of the “modern”, as David Der-wei Wang put it, is “new

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106 Theodore Huters, Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 102-03.
and different in the face of tradition,” and is “always associated with innovation, change, and the overcoming of tradition.” In terms of narrative material, although Wugou daoren has developed the Eight Immortals lore with innovations and changes, the new materials he selects to put into his novel, such as folktales, still work within the framework of traditional literary genres. Episodes concerned with Western science, which are innovative when compared to earlier Eight Immortals lore, retain their foothold in traditional systems of the fantastic and the supernatural. Most importantly, the conventional narrative form of the hundred-chapter novel, with each chapter headed by a couplet, the traditional narrative technique of employing a storyteller, and the inclusion of subject matter having to do with the supernatural and the fantastic, show little that is innovative, instead falling into the traditional mode of Chinese vernacular literature. Completed at the time when China was poised at the brink of modernity, The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao is a project undertaken by Wugou daoren deliberately to defend Daoist beliefs, protect the old Chinese worldview, hold on to tradition, and pass it on to future generations. From both a literary and religious point of view, this novel is an effort to protect tradition, not oppose it. It is in this mixture of modern and traditional, scientific and fantastic that the author, as a conservative religious practitioner, was inevitably drawn into the early Chinese literary modernization discourse.

107 Wang, Fin-de-siècle Splendor, 6.
Bibliography


_____.“Baxian xiaoshuo de yuanyuan ji shanbian 八仙小说的渊源暨嬗变 (Origins and evolution of the Eight Immortals novels).” In Baxian wenhua yu baxian wenxue de xiandai chanshi, 656-669.


Appendices

Appendix A—Preface by Wugou daoren

At a young age, I was orphaned and deprived of an education. [Thus] I wandered around aimlessly in Chengdu. Fortunately I met Master Zhiyuan\(^{108}\) in Qingyun Temple.\(^{109}\) [He] taught [me] the doctrines of religion, and instructed me in the Great Dao.\(^{110}\) Following [him] for twenty-eight years, only then [did I] begin slightly to understand the mysterious principle\(^{111}\) and gradually master the Learning of *xingming*.\(^{112}\) [Since] Master Zhiyuan traveled to the Western Lands, I have not been able to meet him for several decades. I often recalled [his] kindness in instructing me, and there was not one day when he was absent from my thoughts. Until the second year of the Xianfeng reign (1850-1861), [I] listened to Master Zhiyuan’s instruction and traveled around to observe the great sights of mountains and rivers. Starting my journey from Shu, [I] went to more than ten provinces in the south and north, and it was through this that my body was strengthened and my courage and knowledge enriched. Later, [I] halted my journey

108 Zhiyuan fashi 志元法师: see note. 27.
109 Qingyun guan 清云观: There is a Qingyun mountain in present-day Chengdu in Sichuan province. Since the author met his teacher, Master Zhiyuan, in Chengdu, it is possible that a temple existed in the Qingyun mountain in the mid-nineteenth century.
111 Xuanli 玄理: 玄 means “mysterious.” Hence I translate 玄理 as “mysterious principle.” According to Livia Kohn, xuanxue 玄学 can be interpreted as “arcane learning,” “mysterious learning,” or “profound learning.” It is a philosophical trend in Daoism that started in the third century in northern China. It can be described as “an intensification of philosophical discourse and a deepening and specification of philosophical concepts.” This was a philosophical trend that advocated that the Dao and Universal Principle (li 理) work everywhere and also are embodied in oneself. Xuanxue incorporates Confucian moral values and meditation practice, whereby one can attain the realization of one’s inner nature through “sitting in oblivion” (zuowang 坐忘). Wang Bi 王弼 (226-49) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (252?-312) are the two most influential figures of this trend. Their thoughts are reflected in their commentaries on the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, respectively. Livia Kohn. “Xuanxue,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, vol. 2, 1141. Here, I understand 玄理 as having similar meaning as 玄学.
112 Xingming 性命: see note. 28.
in the dust of the capital. I planned to stay for several years and then make a journey north of the Great Wall. Unexpectedly virtuous and wise people from four directions mistakenly heard of [my] undeserved reputation. From time to time there were those who came from far away to seek the *Dao* [from me]. [My] natural talent is dull and my learning is shallow, how could I be someone’s teacher? However, touched by those gentlemen’s sincerity, how could I let myself forget [about it] and be at ease? Hence, according to Master Zhiyuan’s repeated instructions and guidance, together with what I had realized during the several years of traveling, [I] composed several *juan* of books as an aid to introductory [learning], similar to what Confucians nowadays call primary learning. [These books] are shallow and crude, not sufficing to garner so much as a smile from people of refinement.

After each book was finished, [I] again thought about the transmission of the Way that has been broken, especially nowadays. As for later learning, what is of concern to Daoists is that it encompasses only a few of the classics and disregards the progenitors. This is also a responsibility of mine. Therefore [I] took stories of how various immortals attained the Dao, from Laozi to recent times, together with my own experience of cultivating the Way, and wrote *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao*. For the convenience of beginners, [I] have especially imitated the style of writing for recording unofficial history, and wrote the book using ordinary spoken language. Very much for the reason that Daoism has been declining and followers of

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113 *Kouwai* 口外: 口北. An area that is outside of the Great Wall, northern part of the nowadays Hebei province, and Inner Mongolia. Mathews*. 3434.

114 *Daotong* 道统: The succession of those who preached the truth. According to the Song dynasty philosophers, it began with Fu Xi 伏羲, and ended with Zhu Xi 朱熹. Mathews*. 6136.

Daoism mostly are illiterate, this work is therefore popular, seeking a wide readership, not profound meaning. However, this book was composed hastily, and collation was not finished. In addition, [I] have had to travel north of the Great Wall,¹¹⁶ and [therefore,] some textual research has not been examined and mistakes were inevitable. As for rectifying mistakes in this clumsy work of mine,¹¹⁷ that must wait future gentlemen to undertake.

In the seventh year of the Tongzhi reign [1868], Immaculate Daoist wrote this preface at the White Cloud Temple¹¹⁸ on the west side of the capital.

(Translated by Michelle Yingzhi An)

¹¹⁶ The author mentions that he planned to travel to north of the Great Wall after his stay in the capital, and based on this remark, I have translated haiwai (海外, literally “overseas”) as “north of the Great Wall”. See note. 113.
¹¹⁷ A polite and self-deprecating reference to the hastily finished work.
¹¹⁸ Baiyun guan 白云观: see note. 29.
¹¹⁹ Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuan, 1.
Appendix B—Preface by Xu Jinfu

The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao was written by Wugou daoren [Immaculate Daoist] from Emei.120 Wugou was born in an unknown periphery town in Sichuan province. His ancestors had served as officials in the Qing dynasty, [but] by the time Wugou was born, his family was very poor. [After] his father passed away and his mother remarried, Wugou was destitute and wandered to Chengdu.

[I am] not sure by what chance [Wugou] met an old Daoist, Master Zhiyuan121, from Qingyun guan.122 Zhiyuan had attainment in Daoist cultivation and understood the art of physiognomy. [He] said that Wugou’s nature and behaviour were refined, like that of other extraordinary men. [Therefore, Wugou] was suited to conceal himself beyond the mundane world, and not suited to aggressively seek fame and fortune in human society. Hence [Zhiyuan] accepted [Wugou] as his disciple, and personally taught [him] the meanings of the Daoist classics.

Wugou was originally bright. Moreover, there was nothing that [Wugou] did not assiduously put his mind to when it came to Zhiyuan’s supervision, guidance, instruction, and admonishment. As a result, when Wugou reached middle age, he had already mastered all of Zhiyuan’s teachings. He had a deep understanding of Xuangong123 and was able to know things of the past and future. He often went without eating for several months and his complexion remained fresh. At first, when he was in the marketplace his

120 Emei 峨眉: Mount Emei is located to the southwest of Chengdu, the capital of present-day Sichuan, and is one of the Four Famous Mountains (sida mingshan 四大名山). It is associated with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Puxian 普贤) of Buddhism and is also important to Daoists, who believe that Laozi transmitted the Dao to the Yellow Emperor there; it is a site where Lingbao scriptures were transmitted. James Robson, “Emei shan,” in The Encyclopedia of Taoism. vol. 1, 397.
121 See note 28.
122 See note 109.
123 Xuangong 玄功, refers to the practice of the Mysterious Learning (Xuanxue 玄学), see note 111.
daily routine of eating and sleeping was no different than normal people. When he spoke with others he also rarely touched on Daoist philosophy. Probably he did not want to show off his remarkable ability to the world, and therefore concealed it deliberately. However, after a while the number of people who knew of Wugou became greater and greater. Wherever he went, there were people who came seeking the Dao [from him], or who wished to follow him to travel beyond the mundane world. Wugou could not put up with this, and thereafter did not use his real name wherever he went.

As it was the transitional time between the Xianfeng reign (1850-1861) and the Tongzhi reign (1862-1873) of the Qing dynasty, Wugou knew a big upheaval was imminent. He could not bear to witness the carnage in Jiangnan, and so went north to the capital, staying in several Daoist temples for about ten years. At that time my brother-in-law, General Surveillance Commissioner Lu Jingfu, had just traveled to the capital and was on excellent terms with Wugou. It happened that he was implicated in a criminal case, which nearly endangered his life. Luckily, among the officials in charge of the case was someone who admired Wugou. With a word Wugou secured Lu’s release, and a gross injustice was wiped clean. Because of this, a high-ranking official came to know Lu Jingfu’s personal character and took him under his wings. That Lu Jingfu was later able to take a post in a prefecture outside of the capital was all because of the strong recommendation by this high-ranking officer, when in fact, the whole thing originated in Wugou’s speaking up on his behalf. Thereafter, Lu Jingfu and Wugou became even closer. Wugou said: “In this vast human world, it is rare to meet someone like Lu Jingfu, who serves as a government official but is upright and just, not after fame and

wealth, and not troubled by worldly matters.” From then on, Lu Jingfu began to see Wugou’s true nature and realized that he was an extraordinary person beyond the mundane world. He treated him with the reverence due a teacher. The secrets of nourishing one’s life that were taught by Wugou were mostly unknown in the world. Lu Jingfu became an adherent of Wugou’s teachings and lived to the age of ninety-eight, free of any disease.

Wugou had been staying in the capital for a long time when one day he suddenly told Lu Jingfu that he had received an order from [his master] and would go north of the Great Wall. When it came time to leave, Wugou gave the Daoist texts he had written and the manuscript of *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* to Lu Jingfu and said, “if you meet someone [who has deep understanding of the Dao], then give them to him for carving into woodblocks.” Lu Jingfu accepted the books and returned to Zhejiang. He often felt dismay that he could not find that person. Then the Taiping Rebellion\(^\text{125}\) happened. Lu Jingfu took his family and left Zhejiang to escape from the chaos. Along the way they met with disaster and lost all their traveling expenses. [The bandits] stole Wugou’s texts and wantonly destroyed them. Only the manuscript of *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* was comparatively less damaged. However, the order of the pages was topsy-turvy, confused like tangled silk. After the

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\(^{125}\) The Taiping Rebellion was an immense upheaval, led by Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全, which ravaged much of China between 1850 and 1864. See Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 171. Here, there is a discrepancy of timing. The novel was finished in 1868 (the seventh year of the Tongzhi reign), based on the author’s preface. When Lu Jingfu took the texts back to Zhejiang, it must have been after 1868. Therefore, Lu Jingfu could not have left Zhejiang to escape the Taiping rebellion, since it had already ended. One possible explanation of this discrepancy could be that Lu Jingfu’s offspring mistook the subsequent sociopolitical chaos as a continuation of the rebellion. After all, about seventy years passed before Lu Jingfu’s offspring recounted the history of the manuscript to Xu Jinfu in the 1930s.
chaos subsided, Lu Jingfu gave all the texts to Di’an daoren\textsuperscript{126} of Chongqing. Di’an went by a Daoist name, but was not an actual adherent of Daoism. Because he admired Daoist learning, he often wore a yellow hat and dressed like a Daoist priest. His friends mostly were people who dwelt beyond the mundane world. For his whole life he lived and breathed the Way, and of all the Daoist texts, from the \textit{Daodej}\textsuperscript{127} and \textit{Nanhua}\textsuperscript{128} to writings by his contemporaries, there were none that he had not read in their entirety. Lu Jingfu admired his high moral character, and so asked Di’an to clarify obscure points [in the texts] on Daoist teachings that Wugou had entrusted to him. Di’an’s understanding rather matched that of Wugou, and so [Lu Jingfu] said with emotion: “the person that Wugou spoke of can be none other than he!” He then gave all the Daoist texts to Di’an, keeping only \textit{The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao}. Because it was in the form of a novel and its literary content was shallow, he meant to sort it out and publish it, but he later died and this plan never bore fruit.

After Lu Jingfu passed away, his offspring turned to commerce and set up a shop in Lanxi\textsuperscript{129}. Although they knew about the manuscript of \textit{The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao}, they were not competent to put it in order. This amazing Daoist text, matchless in its generation, nearly became food for worms and fishes. It happened that I traveled to Lanxi and stayed overnight in the shop owned by Lu Jingfu’s son. During our long conversation from dusk to just before sunrise, the talk turned to this novel and I hurriedly asked to see the manuscript. I could see that the manner of the

\textsuperscript{126} See note. 32.
\textsuperscript{127} Here it refers to the \textit{Daodejing} 道德经.
\textsuperscript{128} Here it refers to \textit{Nanhua zhenjing} 南华真经. \textit{Nanhua zhenjing} and its commentaries are collected in the \textit{Zangwai daoshu} 藏外道书. See Louis Komjathy, \textit{Title Index to Daoist Collections} (Cambridge: Three Pines Press, 2002), 84.
\textsuperscript{129} Lanxi is a county in modern day Zhejiang province in China.
writing was classical, elegant, outstanding, and beautiful; the meaning was subtle, profound, coherent, and smooth. It was truly beyond the world of mortals, imbued with a natural grace of floating clouds and flowing water. Writers of the past and present may be able to imitate its style but cannot grasp the appeal beyond the words. I never did see the other Daoist texts, and even if I saw them I certainly would not understand them. In terms of this novel alone, even the single remnant [I saw] was wonderful. It was divine! Simply divine! Can we not say that it is an extraordinary text that transcends [works] both ancient and present? I read it several times and could not put it down. I could not help but ponder whether I am competent to pass on Wugou’s knowledge. Imitating Maosheng\(^\text{130}\), who volunteered his services, I took on the task of editing [the manuscript]. I supplemented what was lacking, added what was missing, and adjusted the disordered pages into the correct order. After this had been done I put the book into publication, and asked my old friend Zhenya\(^\text{131}\) to proofread it. This demonstrates my cautiousness, and fear that if I made mistakes I would spoil Wugou’s hard work. Considering that the manuscript had been scattered, the task of organizing and editing it could not be finished in a short time. In addition, both Zhenya and I were poor and we could not devote [ourselves] to this task full time. I’m afraid that errors were still unavoidable. I hope the

\(^{130}\) Xu here refers to the idiom "Mao Sui recommends himself" (Maosui zijian 毛遂自荐). Maosui was an advisor for the Duke of Pingyuan of the state of Zhao during the Warring States period. He proposed to the Duke that he himself go the state of Chu, and successfully persuaded Chu to be Zhao’s ally against the state of Qin. See Baoyuan Ni, ed, *Hanyu chengyu shiyong cidian* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2002), 546.

\(^{131}\) Xu Zhenya (1889-1937) was a main member of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School 新鸳鸯蝴蝶派, which was famous for romantic fiction in the Republican period. Born in Changshu 常熟, Jiangsu 江苏 province, he was the editor for *Minquan bao* 民权报 in 1911. After publication of this newspaper was halted, he became an editor for *Zhonghua shuju* 中华书局 in Shanghai. In 1914, he became the editor for *Xiaoshuo congbao* 小说丛报 and started to publish novels on romance. His main works include *The Soul of the Jade Pair* (Yulihun 玉梨魂), *A Tearful History of the Deserted* (Xuehong leishi 血鸿泪史), and *A Record of Lovers being Forced to Separate* (Bangda yuan yang lu 棒打鸳鸯录). See Youchun Xu, ed, *Minguo renwu dacidian* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1991), 711.
reader will avail [us] of what you know after you study [this text]. It will not only be
Jingfu and Zhenya’s good fortune; the spirit of Wugou must also bless you!

Written by Xu Jinfu of Eastern Yue at Clear Wind Bright Moon Hut By the Sea.

(Translated by Michelle Yingzhi An)

The text is in Chinese, discussing the life of a character named 吴哥 (Wugou) and his interactions with various people. It mentions the importance of the text for understanding the character's fortune and the spirit's blessings. The text also describes the author's meetings with 吴哥 and his mentor, 詹若愚 (Jian Ruoyu), and their shared experiences and teachings. The text concludes with the author's reflections on the significance of the text and its potential impact on the reader.
绪，而美妙如此，仙乎！仙乎！谓非旷逸今古之奇文乎！研诵几过，爱不忍释，不自揣其能否胜无垢所谓传人之作，竟效毛生之自荐，任整理之责。于其缺者补之，损者益之，颠倒而错杂者，排次而纠正之。既竣而付之梨枣，且嘱老友枕亚为任校订之责。盖所以示审慎之心，兼恐鱼豕之误，负无垢一片苦心也。顾书经散乱，整理校订，委非短期内所能蒇事。而余与枕亚皆困于衣食，无暇专任其事，纰缪之处，仍恐难免。所望读者诸君，于研习之余举所知以相示。非第廑父、枕亚之幸，无垢之灵，必且为诸君祝福也！

越东许廑父序于海上清风明月庐

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132 Wugou daoren, Baxian dedao zhuān, 1-2. "Eastern Yue" refers to present-day Zhejiang province.
Appendix C—Preface by Xu Zhenya

My old friend Jinfu showed me a manuscript that he edited, *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao* written by Wugou, and instructed me to proofread it. As a person dwelling beyond the mundane world, Wugou cares little for fame and wealth. He single-mindedly devotes all his leisure time to writing texts of Daoist cultivation. Knowing his intention behind doing this, does one even need to mention the value of his work? Besides, there are famous practitioners of previous generations within the Daoist tradition, and their stories are circulated among women and children of remote rural areas in the forms of specious ballads and proverbs. These not only fail to tell the truth, but also blaspheme sages more than anything else.

Today I read the whole story of how various immortals attained the Dao and the circumstances of their preaching of it as recorded in *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao*, and it is utterly thorough. The means by which he corrects errors of the folk stories are legion; in particular, the one where he corrects grand master Chunyang’s “Three Times Flirts with Baimudan” as a mis-transmission of “Three Times Tests Baimudan” has the greatest merit for the Daoist tradition. In addition, the various parts that belong to textual research of Daoist studies are carefully examined and comprehensive. The work is indeed a most precious treasure of the Daoist tradition, and an extraordinary text in academic circles.

It is a pity that the manuscript has been greatly damaged in the war. Having undergone editing by Jinfu, errors are still inevitable. Besides, after examining Wugou’s manuscript, it seems there are also many mistakes. That’s why in his own preface there is the sentence “this book was composed hastily, and collation was not finished.” With one
proofreading, I have selected those [passages] that can be edited and edited them, and corrected those that should be corrected. For places with more discrepancies, I dare not change them hastily. For example, it seems that “Fei Zhangfang” is a mistake for “Wang Yizhi.” Furthermore, when Emperor Wu of the Han meets the ghost of his deceased consort Li, between the lyrics that are partially understandable and partially puzzling are those that differ from the Confucian texts. Having seen them, Jinfu and I both dare not to correct them immediately. I am afraid that other instances like this are inevitable. It can only be hoped that readers of this book will discover and point out such errors. Should the book be republished at some other time, it can list the mistakes one by one. Such a contribution to later learning surely will not be insignificant. It will also render outstanding service to Wugou and ought to be applauded in one voice by both Daoists and literary writers.

Written by Xu Zhenya of Haiyu in August of the twentieth year of the Republican period.

(Translated by Michelle Yingzhi An)
皆经察见而未敢即为更正。似此类者，恐尚不免。此则有望于读本书者，探索而指示之。庶异时再版之顷，可以一一摘举，便利后学，定非浅鲜。是亦无垢之功臣，而道学家、文学家所应同声感谢者也。

民国二十年八月海虞徐枕亚序
Appendix D—Summary of *The Story of Eight Immortals Who Attained the Dao*

**Chapter 1. Using a Dragon’s Cinnabar Pill, an Immortal Helps a Filial Son; Driven by Covetous Thoughts, an Evil Official Tries to Exact a Magical Jewel**

The storyteller states that the story of the Eight Immortals takes place over many dynasties and is very complex. He uses the story of two dragons that control a great flood as the prologue to start his storytelling.

In remote antiquity in the Guankou 灌口 area under the supervision of Erlangshen 二郎神, a celestial deity whose maternal uncle is the Jade Emperor (*Yuhuang dadi 玉皇大帝*), there is a large dragon hidden under the water. On the bank there lives a filial son named Ping He 平和. Ping He follows the instructions of a Daoist immortal, Piaomiao 纤缈真人 (Perfected Mist), and obtains the dragon’s cinnabar pill (*dan 丹*) to cure his mother’s blindness. Ping He then uses this cinnabar pill to cure common peoples’ diseases and accumulate merit. Three years later, after he cures the daughter of the local magistrate, Mao Hu 毛虎, he is forced to swallow the cinnabar pill lest Mao Hu take it away. Ping He suddenly transforms into a golden dragon after he swallows the cinnabar pill.

**Chapter 2. Two Drops of Dragon Tears Turn into a Beach; A Magical Sword Cuts Open a Dragon’s Eyes**

Ping He and the dragon, who has lost its cinnabar pill, become one under the supernatural power of Piaomiao zhenren. Piaomiao zhenren instructs Ping He to cultivate the Dao in the Guankou area. Feeling sad about leaving his mother, Ping He sheds two tears and takes off. These two drops of dragon tears turn into a beach, called “Mother Gazing Beach” (*Wangniang tan 望娘滩*).
Piaomiao zhenren meets his elder Daoist brother Huolong zhenren (Perfected Fire Dragon) after he leaves Ping He. Huolong zhenren recounts his encounter with a dragon whose original form is a rope. In the Qiantang River in Zhejiang, a rope cultivates itself and turns into a female dragon that needs five hundred more years of self-cultivation to be able to open her eyes. Two government officials who are on the same boat with Huolong zhenren want to kill her. They borrow a magic sword from Huolong zhenren, but accidentally use the male sword when they were supposed to use the female sword. Not only do they fail to kill the dragon, but they also give her two eyes, sparing her the five hundred required years of cultivation. It is fate that dictates that this should happen. Huolong zhenren instructs the rope dragon to cultivate the Dao, and sets up a sluice gate to test if the rope dragon has achieved high attainment.

Laojun 老君 (Lord Lao) is the master of Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao zhenren. He knows ahead of time that these two dragons will attain the Dao under the tutelage of Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao zhenren.

Chapter 3. Testing the Dragon’s Determination, an Immortal Sets up a Sluice Gate; Leaving Its Physical Body, the Dragon Is Born to a Filial Woman

Seven or eight decades have passed in the human world. The rope dragon successfully passes a sluice gate that Huolong zhenren sets up. Huolong zhenren takes the rope dragon’s soul and sends it to the human world. Hu Xiuchun 胡秀春, a filial daughter, becomes pregnant by the rope dragon without having a husband. She gives birth to a girl and names her Hu Feilong 胡飞龙. The birth is unusual, as a ball comes out from Xiuchun’s mouth with the help of a Daoist nun, who instructs Xiuchun to keep the ball for Feilong, who will be able to get whatever she wants from the ball.
Feilong is able to talk at one month old. When she reaches her eighth year, she goes to a local school and is the smartest student. A classmate insults her mother for giving birth without being married, which greatly upsets Feilong.

**Chapter 4.** Giving Birth Without Being Married, a Woman Is Slandered; Demonstrating Her Chastity, She Commits Suicide by Jumping into a River

Humiliated, Xiuchun commits suicide by jumping into a river. Feilong wants to take revenge for her mother, but is too weak to beat the two bodyguards protecting her classmate. Huolong zhenren appears at night, gives her the cinnabar pill she cultivated in her past life as a robe dragon, and imparts Daoist teachings to her. He tells Feilong that in the near future she will marry another dragon from the West and they will become the ancestors of a dragon clan that will help the Jade Emperor control water.

**Chapter 5.** A Dragon Travels through the Qiantang River; A Disciple Looks for Her Master on the Shore of the Eastern Sea

After Huolong zhenren leaves, Feilong masters many Daoist arts in a matter of days. She then begins to take revenge for her mother. However, she is not used to her new form and accidentally transforms into a dragon, which causes a great flood. Many innocent people are killed. Having finished taking revenge for her mother, Feilong follows Huolong zhenren’s instructions and goes to the Eastern Sea to cultivate the Dao. Missing her mother, she secretly digs an underground passage connecting her mother’s grave to the Eastern Sea; she is able to visit her mother’s grave more conveniently.

After cultivating the Dao for several decades at the Eastern Sea, Feilong becomes bored. She transforms into a female Daoist priest and goes to the market place. She meets a young Daoist priest and begins arguing with him about who is senior.
Chapter 6. Competing for Righteousness, Two Dragons Fight for the Cinnabar Pill; Alarmed by the Two Dragons, the Jade Emperor Looks for Capable Recruit

Feilong and the young Daoist priest engage in a fight. It turns out that the young Daoist priest is none other than Ping He. During their fight, they both transform into their dragon forms and arrive at the Heavenly Palace. Seeing gold and red lights caused by the fight, The Jade Emperor dispatches Taibai jinxing 太白金星 and Li Changgeng 李长庚 to investigate. The two dragons, annoyed with Li Changgeng, set about destroying the Jade Emperor’s palace. Erlangshen goes after them and tries to get them under control, but the Jade Emperor’s palace is half destroyed. Shocked that there are no deities capable of helping him govern the celestial realm, the Jade Emperor wants to recruit some.

Li Changgeng visits Laojun to ask him about the matter of the two dragons. Laojun says that within three thousand years, eight immortals will be recruited into the Heavenly court to help the Jade Emperor govern Heaven.

Chapter 7. At a Crucial Moment, Two Masters Save Their Disciples; Recounting the Past, a Mouse Transforms into a Bat

Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao zhenren arrive at the Eastern Sea and stop Erlangshen from killing the two dragons. They tell Erlangshen that these two dragons will receive retribution for what they have done some time in the future, but now they are needed to help a human king control a great flood in the human world.

Huolong zhenren recounts to Piaomiao zhenren the story of a mouse that cultivates the Dao. This mouse, from the time when Heaven and Earth separated, cultivates the Dao and begins to understand human morality. The mouse drowns while saving people in the Guankou area during a great flood. A Daoist immortal, Wenmei
zhenren 文美真人 (The Perfected Literary Beauty) saves its spirit and gives it two peaches to eat. After eating the two peaches, the mouse’s spirit grows wings and obtains the name “Bianfu” 蝙蝠 (bat).

Wenmei zhenren, who likes to take unusual animal spirits as his disciples, is the number one disciple of Yuanshi 元始 (Original Commencement).

**Chapter 8. Laojiao Destroys the Bat’s Temple; Yuexia Laoren Marries Two Dragons**

Piaomiao zhenren then tells Huolong zhenren the story of Ping He of Guankou and how the two dragons meet. It begins with the bat being venerated as a deity in a temple in Guankou after it dies. The bat’s spirit is able to transform itself into a human after being worshipped by humans, and becomes good friends with Ping He, who is cultivating the Dao in the same area. In the same waters, an evil dragon, Laojiao 老蛟, feels offended when he sees that the bat, a lowly creature, receives human worship; it destroys the bat’s temple. Ping He then fights with Laojiao, displaying his supernatural power and moving mountains, which fill half of the ocean, but he unnecessarily kills many innocent people. Erlangshen pursues Ping He for his wrongdoings, but before Erlangshen can catch him, Piaomiao zhenren take Ping He to the marketplace. There Ping He and Feilong meet.

Piaomiao zhenren and Huolong zhenren summon the two dragons out of the water and reprove them for their crude and rash behaviour.

**Chapter 9. Invited to the Heavenly Palace, Two Dragons Receive Titles; To Please Her Mother –In-Law, a Woman Makes a Fake Snail Meal**

Yuexia Laoren 月下老人 (Old Man Under the Moon) marries the two dragons because they are destined to be husband and wife. The couple then receives a celestial
decree to become dragon king and queen of the sea and help the human king govern the
waters. They go to the Heavenly Palace and thank the Jade Emperor, visit various
immortals, and receive lots of gifts. Laojun, the master of Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao
zhenren, reveals that Donghua dijun 东华帝君 (Lord of Eastern Splendour) will later go
to the human world. Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao zhenren visit Donghua dijun. During
their conversation, Donghua dijun reveals his wish to go to the human world to have
some fun. Huolong zhenren and Piaomiao zhenren take this as an inauspicious sign, for
what an immortal thinks or says will become true in the future. Huolong zhenren and
Piaomiao zhenren help the two dragons build a palace in the ocean and instruct them to
help the Jade Emperor govern the waters.

There lived a family of three in the Mount Song area of Henan during the time of
sage king Yu 禹--mother Wangshi 王氏, son Sun Jie 孙杰, and daughter-in-law Liushi 刘氏. The mother takes ill after flooding destroys her home. Before she dies, she sees a
huge snail that Liushi has picked up and wants to eat it. Liushi cooks the meal with
something else, saving the snail. After Liushi dies, Sun Jie notices that someone is
cooking meals for him every day, but he does not know who it is.

Chapter 10. A Widower Discovers a Beauty; A Snail Pays a Debt of Gratitude

Sun Jie finds out it is the snail that transforms into a beautiful woman and cooks
for him every day. The snail’s name is Luo Yuan 罗圆 and she wants to show her
gratitude for Liushi’s saving her life. They become husband and wife, and their family
prospers day by day. Sun Jie is goodhearted by nature, and helps poor people with his
resources. One thing that troubles him is that after more than ten years of marriage with
Luo Yuan, they still do not have a son.
Chapter 11. Bewitching a Young Girl, an Evil Dragon Takes Revenge; Making a Fool of Himself, a Daoist Priest Tries to Exorcize a Demon

Wenmei zhenren tells the bat that it has to cultivate morality after reincarnating as a human. The bat reincarnates as the son of Sun Jie and Luo Yuan, named Sun Xianci 孙仙赐. Xianci is smart and becomes a court official before he turns twenty. Being a young and capable man, many influential families want to marry their daughters to him. Bo Gao 伯皋, who wants to marry his second daughter Huier 惠儿 to Xianci, is one of them. But one day Huier is bewitched by a demon who transforms into a young man and peeks into the garden. This demon is none other than the evil dragon Laojiao. Bo Gao invites a Daoist priest, Master Ding 丁法师, to exorcize this demon, but Master Ding is less powerful than Laojiao.

Chapter 12. Wenmei Exorcizes the Demon; Xianci Is Taken to the Imperial Garden

Bo Gao meets a Daoist immortal in the market. This Daoist immortal gets rid of Laojiao for Bo Gao and goes to Xianci’s home in case Laojiao tries to hurt Xianci. This Daoist immortal is Wenmei zhenren. When Wenmei zhenren sees Xianci in the imperial garden with a woman, he knows right away that the woman is Laojiao. Wenmei zhenren scares Laojiao away and tells Xianci of his past lives. Xianci decides to cultivate the Dao to become an immortal. After Wenmei zhenren leaves, Xianci hears a girl calling his name while he is searching for a way out of the garden.

Chapter 13. Tested of His Determination to Cultivate the Dao, a Young Man Makes up His Mind; To Fulfill Filial Duty, Sanjie Gives Well-Intentioned Advice

This girl tells him her name is Hu Sanjie 胡三姐, and she shows him the way out of the garden. They become good friends. Sun Jie wants Xianci to marry Hu Sanjie.
because this may stop him from leaving the family to seek for immortality. Hu Sanjie tries to seduce Xianci one night; she tries to persuade him to be filial to his parents and follow his father’s wish, but Xianci is unmoved. It turns out that Hu Sanjie is an immortal, and Xianci has passed all her tests. She tells Xianci that he and Bo Huier are destined to be husband and wife.

**Chapter 14. Husband and Wife Both Cultivate the Dao; Parents and Child Become Estranged**

Luo Yuan gives birth to a second son, Jiao’er. Xianci marries Miss Bo and the two decide to cultivate the Dao together. When Jiao’er is twelve years old, he starts to show his cunning side, manipulating Sun Jie and Luo Yuan into believing that Xianci and Miss Bo want to harm them. Sun Jie and Luo Yuan fall for Jiao’er’s scheme and send poisoned pastry to Xianci, which he eats and dies. Miss Bo dies of grief soon after.

**Chapter 15. A Thousand Year-old Fox Reveals Preordained Fate; A Young Man Cuts Off Worldly Ties**

After Xianci dies his soul meets Hu Sanjie, and realizes Hu Sanjie is the person Wenmei zhenren has entrusted to guide him on his path. Hu Sanjie is a fox that has committed many misdeeds, and she wants to become a disciple of Wenmei zhenren. Wenmei zhenren accepts her on the condition that she work for him for one hundred years to accumulate merit. Guiding Xianci will be her first task. Xianci realizes that his younger brother, Jiao’er is the reincarnation of Laojiao, who wants to take revenge on him because of their past lives. Sun Jie and his wife Luo Yuan will suffer retribution for their own wrongdoings. Hu Sanjie also tells Xianci about his past karma with his wife
Miss Bo. Their marriage is a way for her to repay his kindness to her in a former life.

Xianci then devotes his time solely to Daoist cultivation in a mountain cave.

**Chapter 16. A Filial Son Visits His Mother at the Bottom of the Sea; A Fox Spirit Pays Respect to the Dragon King in His Palace**

Hu Sanjie tells Xianci that his brother Jiao’er transformed their mother Luo Yuan back into a snail, and that she is trapped in the Huai Sea. Luo Yuan suffers this retribution because she had done many wrong things earlier on. Wenmei zhenren will teach her a method for transcending the animal realm, on the condition that Xianci does three thousand good deeds and reincarnate as a human one more time in a thousand years. After a thousand years, Xianci will reincarnate as Sun Jie’s son once again. By that time, Luo Yuan will have gained high attainment and she will be able to transcend the animal realm through the efficacy of a major Daoist ritual.

Hu Sanjie also reveals during her conversation with Xianci that using electricity to deliver messages over long distances will be common human knowledge five thousand years from the time of the sage king Yu.

Xianci and Hu Sanjie go to the bottom of the Eastern Sea and meet his old friend Ping He, who is now the dragon king of that ocean. In secret, Ping He informs the deity of the Huai Sea that he should protect Luo Yuan.

**Chapter 17. Sun Xianci Meets His Mother in the Sea; Zhang Guolao Reincarnates and Attains Immortality**

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133 Wugou Daoren uses the name “Zhang Guo” in the main text, and here is the first time of the only three usages of the commonly used name “Zhang Guolao” in the Eight Immortal lore tradition. The other two times are seen in the titles of Ch. 93 and 94.
After Xianci meets his mother, Luo Yuan, at the bottom of the Huai Sea, he and Hu Sanjie go back to a cave on Mount Tiantai 天台. Hu Sanjie instructs Xianci to cultivate the Dao in the cave for five hundred years, and use the next five hundred years after that to do good deeds in the human world. After Hu Sanjie takes care of Xianci, she goes back to Wenmei zhenren to report. Wenmei zhenren is pleased with how Hu Sanjie has taken care of Xianci. He gives her the Daoist name Tonghui 通慧, and accepts her as his disciple. After a thousand years, by the time of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE), Sun Jie reincarnates as Zhang Tiancheng 张天成 and Xianci reincarnates as his son, named Zhang Guo 张果. Father and son cultivate the Dao together and seek immortality under the guidance of Tonghui. They go to Luo Yuan’s residence in the Huai Sea to participate in the ritual that free Luo Yuan from her animal body.

Tonghui and the dragon king’s conversation reveals the relationship between Zhang Guo and Li Tieguai 李铁拐, who is in charge of the Daoist ritual for Luo Yuan. Li Tieguai was originally a celestial clerk in charge of offering incense, who flirted with a celestial maiden in charge of arranging flowers. Xianci helped her in that moment, and she became his wife, Miss Bo. For their indiscretion, both clerk and maiden were sentenced to reincarnate as humans for ten lifetimes. Only then could they go back to Heaven. They are now in their tenth lifetime. The maiden’s surname is He, and she was born in the Jiangnan area; the clerk’s surname is Li, born in the Henan area.

As Tonghui and Zhang Guo arrive at Luo Yuan’s residence, the storyteller states that he has to take up another plot line to tell the story of Li Tieguai.

Chapter 18. The Golden Mountain Becomes a Historical Site; Kindness Is Repaid in Next Life
The person who is in charge of the ritual for Luo Yuan is a crippled Daoist, Li Tieguai. His story begins with the story of Ma Dagu 马大姑. Ma Dagu lived during the middle of the Zhou dynasty (no dates given). She married a poor scholar surnamed Gu 古, whose stepmother abuses them. While Gu is away on business, the stepmother forces Ma Dagu to remarry. Ma Dagu jumps into a river, and while a Daoist priest tries to save her he accidentally breaks her leg, and they both drown. After scholar Gu comes back home, he finds out what happened. He drops all his gold into the river where Ma Dagu had drowned herself and becomes a Daoist hermit. The place where he drops the gold is therefore named Golden Mountain.

Ma Dagu was the ninth reincarnation of the celestial maiden, and the Daoist priest was the ninth reincarnation of the celestial clerk. Now the maiden is reincarnated as He Lanxian 何兰仙, and the Daoist priest is reincarnated as Li Xuan 李玄. He Lanxian devotes herself to Daoist cultivation from a young age. At seven years of age, a female Daoist named Xuannü 玄女 (Dark Lady) takes her as a disciple and instructs her. She tells her to wait for a Daoist surnamed Li to visit her; only after this visit can she attain immortality.

Li Xuan is born into an official family in Luoyang. He also is devoted to Daoist cultivation from a young age. Li Xuan remembers his past life and always tells his parents that he will look for a woman whose leg he accidentally broke in his past life. When Li Xuan is ten years old, Taibai jinxing comes to visit him and takes him away.

**Chapter 19.** Fearing No Obstacles to Pursue the Dao; Encountering Demons along the Way
Li Xuan realizes that he has arrived at the bottom of Mountain Hua 华山. He meets Wang Daguan 王大官 and Wang Xiao’er 王小二 there and stays a night in their home. Knowing that Li Xuan is determined to seek the Dao, Wang Daguan gives him a golden elixir that he has received from a Daoist immortal. Li Xuan goes into the mountain, trying to find a Daoist immortal. On the mountain, he meets a fake Daoist who is actually a demon trying to boil him. Li Xuan believes this is a test set by immortals to see if he has the resolve to pursue the Dao, so he determines to jump into the boiling water.

Chapter 20. Laozi Reincarnates to Save Mankind; Li Xuan Escapes Danger

Laozi goes west and passes by Hangu Pass 函谷关 where Yin Xi 尹喜 dwells. Yin Xi recognizes Laozi and wants to become his disciple. Laozi leaves a text, the *Daodejing* 道德经, with Yin Xi and asks him to seek his reincarnation after about twenty-five years have passed. Yin Xi finds Laozi’s reincarnation and Laozi takes Yin Xi as his chief disciple. Yin Xi is named Wenshi zhenren 文始真人 (Perfected Literary Origin). All of Laozi’s family ascends to Heaven. Laozi is also known as Laojun.

Laojun’s mount, an ox, escapes to the human world while the cowherd is asleep. It is none other than the demon that wanted to eat Li Xuan. Wenshi zhenren saves Li Xuan and takes him to Mount Kunlun 昆仑山 to meet their master Laojun.

Chapter 21. Li Xuan Takes Demons as Servants at Riguan Peak 日观峰; A Female Monster Steals Texts from Zixia Cave 紫霞洞

Laojun takes Li Xuan as his disciple, reveals Li Xuan’s previous lives to him, and instructs him to read a text called The Profound Text (*Xuanjing* 玄经) and cultivate the
Dao in the Zixia Cave on Mount Hua. Laojun also gives Li Xuan a sword for protection. Wenshi zhenren takes Li Xuan to the Zixia Cave in Mount Hua, and while there Li Xuan takes two animal spirits, a female rooster named Feifei 飞飞 and a male rabbit named Diandian 颠颠, as disciples. Feifei and Diandian promise to do good deeds and protect Li Xuan, and in return they receive instruction on the Dao. Wenshi zhenren leaves and Li Xuan stays there to cultivate the Dao. One day, a woman comes into the cave and wants to be Li Xuan’s servant. It turns out that this woman is a demon called Mrs. White Jade 白玉夫人. Mrs. White Jade steals The Profound Text and goes away.

**Chapter 22.** Achieved Immortality, Li Xuan Visits Laozi; Attained the Dao, Li Xuan Visits Parents

Li Xuan finds out more information about Mrs. White Jade from the Earth God 土地. She was born from [the union of] Laojun’s ox and a wild ox. Li Xuan takes The Profound Text back from Mrs. White Jade and takes her as a disciple. Meanwhile he keeps cultivating the Dao, and is able to cut off food and master all the supernatural powers of an immortal. Now it has been three years since Li Xuan first met Laojun; he goes to Mount Kunlun to visit Laojun again, and Laojun and his disciples congratulate him for attaining immortality. Li Xuan next goes to the human world to visit his parents. His parents become younger and healthier after taking pills given to them by Li Xuan. Li Xuan leaves home and visits the Jiangnan area. He sees a young man about to jump into a lake. Knowing that the young man is a filial son, Li Xuan uses his supernatural power to change the water into ice.

**Chapter 23.** Jumping into a River, a Filial Son Tries to Commit Suicide; Displaying Supernatural Power, an Immortal Comes to the Rescue
After using his supernatural power to freeze the water in the lake, Li Xuan agrees to save this young man Yang Ren’s 杨仁 mother, who has been detained by Niu Jing 牛静, an evil attendant of a prince. Li Xuan orders some celestial attendants to take Yang Ren’s mother to a safe place, then transforms Yang Ren to resemble his mother. The prince punishes Niu Jing after realizing Li Xuan’s immortal identity. Li Xuan takes Yang Ren as a disciple.

Chapter 24. Immortal Li Displays Supernatural Power to Punish Evil; A Filial Son Follows Daoism to Repay Immortal Li’s Kindness

Li Xuan tells Yang Ren’s mother that it was fated that he save Yang Ren. Yang Ren’s mother shows great respect for the Dao and gives Yang Ren permission to leave her and pursue the Dao. Li Xuan asks Yu’er 玉儿 (former Mrs. White Jade) to take care of Yang Ren in the Yuya cave 玉崖洞 on Mount Tai 泰山. It has been ten years now since Li Xuan last saw Laojun, and he goes to the Bajinggong 八景宫 to meet him. Laojun tells Li Xuan that he has a debt from a previous life that he needs to pay. However, he should help deliver his parents to the immortal world first.

Chapter 25. Laojun Talks About Karma in a Daoist Context; Li Xuan Loses His Physical Body in a Fire

Li Xuan follows Laojun’s instruction and delivers his parents to the immortal world. He then goes to see his disciple, Yang Ren. He tells Yang Ren that he will leave his physical body to travel and Yang Ren should burn his physical body, but only after seven days. Li Xuan’s spirit goes to visit Lanxian, who has been cultivating the Dao for more than twenty years. Li Xuan takes He Xiangu (Lan Xian) to Mount Heng 衡山 to cultivate the Dao. Six days after Li Xuan leaves his physical body, he suddenly feels a
rush in his heart. He knows something must have happened. When he arrives at Mount Tai, his disciple Yang Ren and his physical body are nowhere to be seen. It happens that Yang Ren’s mother is on her deathbed and a good friend of Yang Ren’s named Zhou Xiaoguan comes with the information on day six. Yang Ren thinks his master Li Xuan is dead. He burns Li Xuan’s physical body and goes back home to see his mother one last time. Yang Ren’s mother passes away right after Yang Ren arrives at home.

**Chapter 26.** Borrowing a Physical Body, Li Xuan Becomes Li Tieguai; Abandoning His Mater, a Disciple Mourns for His Dying Mother

Li Xuan arrives at Mount Tai and realizes what has happened. Wenshi zhenren comes and tells Li Xuan the reason why he lost his physical body. Li Xuan accidently had broken a drowning woman’s leg in his previous life and therefore ought to be crippled in this life. Li Xuan borrows the corpse of a crippled beggar whose body color is very dark. Wenshi zhenren gives Li Xuan a magical crutch made from one of the peach trees from the garden of the Queen Mother of the West. Li Xuan thereafter goes by the name of Li Tieguai 李铁拐 (Li of the Iron Crutch). He goes to visit his disciple Yang Ren.

**Chapter 27.** Under Supernatural Power, Yang’s Mother Comes Back to Life; Receiving a Request, Immortal Li Goes underneath the Huai Sea

Li Tieguai employs his supernatural power and makes Yang Ren’s mother come back to life because of Yang Ren’s filial devotion. He tells Yang Ren to travel around for twelve years and await his further instructions. Arriving at the Bajinggong, Laojun gives Li Tieguai a magic gourd. Li Tieguai goes to the Yuya cave on Mount Tai and discovers that Yu’er has escaped. Tonghui arrives and tells Li about the matter of the snail Luo
Yuan and Zhang Guo. Li Tieguai, Tonghui, Feifei, and Diandian together go to the Huaihai village to meet up with Zhang Guo. On their way, they meet four other people who look like evil sorts.

**Chapter 28.** The Snail Builds a Daoist Ceremony Site; A Mussel Invites a Group of Demons

Li Tieguai arrives at Luo Yuan’s residence in the Huaihai village in the bottom of the Huai Sea. Here they meet Zhang Guo. It turns out that the four people they meet on their way are disciples of Laojiao, who is now a member of the Mojiao (Demon Sect). Laojiao captures Feifei and Diandian.

**Chapter 29.** The “Soul Sucking Bottle” Cannot Retain Immortals; Demons Are Defeated inside the Magic Gourd

Li Tieguai employs his supernatural power and obtains several magical weapons from Laojiao’s followers.

**Chapter 30.** To Pay for Past Karmic Debt, a Snail Builds a Daoist Ceremony Site With Its Shell; To Attack an Outsider, a Mussel Sets up an Arena inside Its Stomach

Four more recruits join Laojiao’s group. Laojiao sends a note to Li Tieguai to initiate a fighting challenge. Luckily, the five Zhenren—Wenshi, Piaomiao, Guangcheng, Yunzhong, and Wenmei—all come to Li Tieguai’s aid. The dragon king and queen greet their masters, Piaomiao zhenren and Huolong zhenren. Meanwhile, Tongtian jiaozhu, the head of the Demon Sect, also comes to help Laojiao. The two sides are poised to do battle.

**Chapter 31.** A Supernatural Power Combat Takes Place inside a Mussel’s Palace; A Group of Immortals Hide inside a Magic Gourd
The immortals and demons engage in a big fight and both sides employ their magical weapons. All the immortals are captured by Tongtian jiaozhu’s net, which is called the “Immortal Killing Net” (zhuxianwang 诛仙网). The net becomes tighter and tighter under Tongtian jiaozhu’s incantation, and all immortals feel great pain. Luckily, Li Tieguai has one last supernatural power to save them, his gourd. The immortals retreat inside Li Tieguai’s magic gourd and find it is rather a huge residence. The immortals stay inside the gourd and await for help.

Chapter 32. The Magic Gourd Breaks During the Supernatural Power Combat; The Demon Mussel Surrenders Due to Internal Disorder

Laojun comes to save his imperilled disciples. Tongtian jiaozhu loses one eye. He saves Laojiao and the two escape together.

Chapter 33. Dahu Is Mocked by a Demon; The Earth God Delivers a Speech

He Xiangu has been cultivating the Dao in a cave in Mount Heng for more than one hundred years after Li Xuan takes her there. A demon ox takes Wu Dahu’s 吴大户 wife, assumes Wu Dahu’s appearance, and enjoys the pleasures of Wu’s concubines. He Xiangu decides to kill this demon. She goes to Wu Dahu’s residence and sees the ox taking his pleasure with the women. He Xiangu inhales a black smoke that the ox releases and falls down to the ground.

Chapter 34. A Group of Naked Women Taken by a Demon Ox; The Magic Iron Sand Shows Its Power

He Xiangu wakes up right away thanks to the Daoist powers she has acquired through self-cultivation. A group of naked women take her to a room behind the hall. She tells them she is there to save them from the ox, but cannot defeat the ox and is instead
captured by him once again. A female immortal named Lady Shangyuan 上元夫人 arrives and saves He Xiangu. It turns out that this ox once belonged to Laojun. The cowherd was not careful and this ox secretly came to the human world when Laojun was helping his disciples fight against Tongtian jiaozhu. He Xiangu defeats the ox with help from Lady Shangyuan.

**Chapter 35. He Xiangu Goes to the Human world on Order; Young Master Zhao Flirts With Young Women**

He Xiangu keeps cultivating the Dao in her cave. Her master, Xuannü, comes one day and instructs her to go to the human world to do good deeds. Receiving three magical weapons and moral instructions, He Xiangu goes to the human world now under the reign of Emperor Yingzheng 营政 (the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, r. 246-210 BC) She arrives at a Daoist temple named Qingxu guan 清虚观 in the capital Xianyang 咸阳. The son of the eunuch Zhao Gao 赵高 often relies on his father’s power and takes young women for his pleasure. He sees He Xiangu and is about to take her by force.

**Chapter 36. A Young Master Is Punished for Offending a Female Immortal; An Eunuch Seeks Help from the Emperor to Protect His Son**

He Xiangu pretends that she is interested in Zhao and follows him to his residence. She realizes that among the group of Daoist priests in Qingxu guan, one has deeper Daoist cultivation than her. Arriving at the Zhao residence, He Xiangu displays her magical power and tens of Zhaos appear in the hall. Zhao’s father, Zhao Gao, knows they are being toyed with by immortals and goes to Emperor Yingzheng for help. Yingzheng is talking to his subjects about his envoy, Xu Fu 徐福, who goes to Penglai 蓬莱 to seek the secret of immortality.
Chapter 37. Admonishing a Tyrant, Xiangu Expresses Kindness; Controlling a Big Leopard, a Young Kid Raises His Fists

Hearing Zhao Gao’s account, Yingzheng is overjoyed by the presence of an immortal in the human world. Zhao Gao changes his tone from complaint to excitement and suggests that Yingzheng meet He Xiangu. He Xiangu does not meet Yingzheng, however. She instead urges him by letter to be a benevolent ruler, but Yingzheng disregards her words. He Xiangu goes back to Qingxu guan and finds out a Daoist priest, Master Liu, has been taken away by the Zhao family. He Xiangu goes looking for help from a Daoist priest whose cultivation is greater than hers, one Fei Zhangfang 费长房. On her way to Fei Zhangfang’s place she sees a nine-year-old child chasing a leopard.

Chapter 38. With Great Skill, a Child Bring a Beast under Control; Seeing Real Kongfu, the Child Comes to a Realization

The child captures the leopard barehanded. The author offers comments on the effects of excessive emotion on the human body. The child’s name is Zhongli Quan 钟离权 and he invites He Xiangu to his home.

Chapter 39. A Wine Jar Could Contain Tieguai; A Gourd Could Cover Xiangu

On their way to Zhongli Quan’s home, they meet Li Tieguai. Li Tieguai wants to take Zhongli Quan as his disciple. Fei Zhangfang is also Li Tieguai’s disciple.

Chapter 40. Recounting Previous Lives, Humans and Animals Have Lifetimes of Friendships; Clearing up Confusion, New Friends Are Actual Old Acquaintances

Li Tieguai asks Zhongli Quan to look into his gourd, and Zhongli Quan sees his previous life as the cowherd for Laojun. He Xiangu also sees her previous life and realizes that Li Tieguai is Li Xuan. Li Tieguai tells He Xiangu that he instructed Fei
Zhangfang to warn Emperor Yingzheng with four characters, “Hu will exterminate Qin 亡秦者胡.” However, Yingzheng took this to mean “Barbarians will exterminate Qin,” and therefore Yingzheng decides to build a great wall, which places a great burden on the people.

Chapter 41. To Prevent Barbarians, a Tyrant Builds a Great Wall; To Welcome a Guest, a Young Child Encounters a Monster

Li Tieguaí tells He Xiangu that the Emperor Yingzheng is building this great wall in the North. A young girl is forced to become Yingzheng’s concubine and her lover is recruited to build the wall. Li Tieguaí concludes that this couple will meet their unfortunate fate soon. He tells Zhongli Quan to meet Fei Zhangfang, who is on his way to Zhongli’s residence. Zhongli Quan gets lost in the forest, and there he meets a monster. The monster does not harm Zhongli Quan and instead gives him directions, whereupon Zhongli Quan takes this monster as a disciple and names him Shanyue’er 山月儿. After Zhongli Quan leaves Shanyue’er, he is taken up by something into the sky unexpectedly.

Chapter 42. Zhongli Meets a Celestial Animal; Dijun Obtains a Brilliant Disciple

Zhongli Quan is taken to the Heavenly Palace by a tiger. Here he meets Donghua dijun. It turns out that fate has already determined that Donghua dijun will be Zhongli Quan’s master. Li Tieguaí makes a mistake in taking Zhongli Quan as his disciple. Donghua dijun says that Zhongli Quan will deliver his reincarnation to immortality in the future. (It foreshadows the later relationship between Zhongli Quan and his disciple Lü Dongbin, a reincarnation of Donghua dijun.) Donghua dijun instructs Zhongli Quan not to take monsters as disciples in the future, because doing so would have future
consequences. Zhongli Quan follows Donghua dijun’s instructions and goes to Youzhou in the human world.

**Chapter 43.** Encountering an Old Demon, Zhongli Employs Tricks; Protecting Her Husband, Meng Jiang Suffers from a Disaster

Zhongli Quan rides clouds on his way to Youzhou, and en route he meets two Daoists who are also riding clouds. These two Daoists were members of the Demon Sect. Zhongli Quan obtains some information from them. It turns out that the young couple Li Tieguai mentioned earlier are Fan Qiliang and Meng Jiangnü. These two Daoists are on their way to assist Emperor Yingzheng to imprison Fan Qiliang and Meng Jiangnü, fearing Zhang Guo and other immortals will disrupt Yingzheng’s plan. Zhongli Quan pretends that he is on their side. He obtains a magical weapon from the evil Daoists and assures them that he will go and assassinate Li Tieguai.

**Chapter 44.** Master and Disciple Talk about Past Events in Youzhou; Xu Fu Establishes a New Regime in The Eastern Sea

Zhongli Quan meets Li Tieguai and insists that he call him master as before.

Zhongli Quan meets Fei Zhangfang. Zhongli Quan wants to show Li Tieguai the magical weapon he obtained from the evil Daoists, but he is not careful and the magical weapon injures Li Tieguai, He Xiangu and Fei Zhangfang.

**Chapter 45.** Zhongli Nearly Cause a Disaster by Misusing a Magical Weapon; A Golden Needle Proves Effective at Once

After taking magic pills that Li Tieguai has given them, all three recover right way. Li Tieguai tells Zhongli Quan to take this opportunity and gain the trust of the evil
Daoists, and he succeeds in gaining their trust. The evil Daoists initiate a fight with Li Tieguai. Li Tieguai employs a magical mud ball to fight against them.

**Chapter 46. A Mud Ball Comes Out from a Head; A Mischievous Immortal Hides inside an Ear**

Li Tieguai’s mud ball kills the evil Daoists. Arriving at the camp where Meng Tian is in charge of the project of building a great wall, He Xiangu finds out that Zhang Guo is imprisoned by the evil Daoists. He Xiangu saves Zhang Guo from the imperial guards.

**Chapter 47. A Fox Spirit Plays Tricks on He Xiangu; Cruel Soldiers Cut apart Meng Jiangnü’s Corpse**

He Xiangu meets Tonghui on her way back from Meng Tian’s camp. Tonghui tells He that Meng Jiangnü’s husband, Fan Qiliang, has died. Here four of the eight immortals--Li Tieguai, He Xiangu, Zhang Guo, and Zhongli Quan--unite.

After Meng Jiangnü dies, the Emperor Yingzheng orders his soldiers to cut off her flesh and throw it into the river.

**Chapter 48. Mengjiangnü’s Flesh Transforms into Silver-Coloured Fishes; Extraordinary Souls Stay in the Mengpo Pavilion**

Li Tieguai transforms Meng Jiangnü’s flesh into silver-coloured fish in acknowledgement of her chastity, and sends the souls of Meng Jiangnü and Fan Qiliang to the underworld. The king of the underworld grants them rebirth as humans. Meng Jiangnü reincarnates as Wang Yueying 王月英, and Fan Qiliang reincarnates as Lan Caihe 蓝采和. Their births are unusual. They are born on the same day, and their mothers both have a similar dream of a Daoist. The Daoist tells both mothers that their children
will marry each other for they are destined to be husband and wife. Wang Yueying and Lan Caihe speak to each other at one month old. They meet at a young age and recognize each other right away.

Chapter 49. Master and Disciples Discuss Karma in Zixia Cave; A Powerful King Becomes a Lumberer under a Sala Tree

Li Tieguai and all the other immortals go back to the Zixia cave on Mount Hua. Here Li Tieguai tells the others about the previous lives of Meng Jiangnü and Fan Qiliang. Meng Jiangnü’s previous life was Chang’e 嫦娥. In that previous life she was Houyi’s 后羿 concubine. However, Houyi was a very crude ruler and Chang’e stole a magical pill, which the Queen Mother of the West had given to Houyi. When Houyi saw that Chang’e was about to fly into the sky, he shot Chang’e and she died. The third princess of the Jade Emperor, who resides on the moon, took the soul of Chang’e to the moon. Houyi went to the moon in search of Chang’e.

Chapter 50. A Cruel King Is Punished to Saw a Tree on the Moon; Chang’e Feels Pity for Her Former Master

Houyi fell into the trap of the third princess. The third princess told Houyi that the moment he cuts down a tree on the moon will be the moment he can take Chang’e and go back to the human world. However, the tree could not be cut down. It grew back together every time Houyi cut it down. The author intrudes into the narrative and talks about why he believes there are immortals on the moon and why he does not believe western scientific ideas of the moon. Chang’e felt pity for Houyi.
Chapter 51. Filling in the Great Wall, Sinking to the Bottom of the River, an Oath Is Eventually Realized; Leaving the Former Master, Finding a New Lover, a Happy Event Becomes Vain

Chang’e fell in love with Houyi, which violated the rules of the immortal world. As punishment she was sentenced to reincarnate as Meng Jiangnü. On her way to be born as a human, she met a young boy, who talked to her and wanted to take her as his wife. This boy was called Pifa xianren 披发仙人, and he in turn was punished for his flirtation by being sentenced to reincarnate as Fan Qiliang. The flirtation between these two is the reason why they have to suffer in the human world.

Chapter 52. With the Use of Electricity, Everywhere Is Like in One Place; Passing on The Profound Text, Various Disciples Have Different Fate

After finishing the story of Meng Jiangnü and Fan Qiliang, Li Tieguai talks about Emperor Yingzheng and his inevitable fall in the future. Zhang Guo receives a letter from his master, Wenmei zhenren, through the method of sword light. Li Tieguai says electricity can also be used to send words and letters. Wenmei zhenren instructs Zhang Guo to cultivate the Dao for a longer period of time because of his low level of accomplishment. Li Tieguai gives three juan of The Profound Text to Zhongli Quan and instructs him to cultivate the Dao. He also instructs his disciple, Fei Zhangfang, to go home. Here Li Tieguai talks about Confucian family values as essential values for cultivation of the Dao. Fei Zhangfang goes back home and sees a local bully insulting his wife.

Chapter 53. Fei Zhangfang Commits Killing Out of Rage; Erlangsheng Comes to the Human World to Warn Violence
In a rage, Fei Zhangfang kills the bully and his followers. Erlangshen sees Fei Zhangfang’s unnecessary killing and decides to punish him. Li Tieguai pleads for Fei Zhangfang, and instead is appointed to govern ghosts.

**Chapter 54. Fei Zhangfang Is Appointed to Govern Ghosts; Xuanzhuzi Is Instructed to Guard the Evil Dragon**

Li Tieguai instructs Fei Zhangfang to do good deeds and accumulate merit. He leaves Fei Zhangfang and goes to meet Erlangshen. While they are talking, they meet Xuanzhuzi, a celestial assistant of the Jade Emperor. Xuanzhuzi and Erlangshen joke about making mistakes when attending to their duties. Li Tieguai knows that their joke actually foreshadows Xuanzhuzi’s misfortune in the future.

**Chapter 55. To Prevent Future Disaster, Xuanzhuzi Controls the Tide of the Qiantang River; Realizing Past Lives, Wang Yueying Gains Thorough Understanding of Life**

Xuanzhuzi follows the Jade Emperor’s decree and governs the Haining area, where Laojiao is hiding.

When Lan Caihe turns ten, he and Wang Yueying together study with a private tutor. Since Wang Yueying has already been betrothed to Lan Caihe, she stays at the Lan residence during her school year.

**Chapter 56. Wang Yueying Persuades Her Husband to Cultivate the Dao; Uncle Hu Helps His Sister to Form Wily Ideas**

Wang Yueying doesn’t forget about her previous life and is determined to cultivate immortality. Seeing Lan Caihe pursuing a scholarly life and official career, she is very upset. The couple have to attain immortality together owing to their past Karma.
Lan Caihe’s father, Lan Wen 蓝文, has a concubine named Mrs. Hu 胡氏, who hates Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying because Lan Wen is so fond of them.

Chapter 57. Encountering a Family Misfortune, Wang Yueying’s Parents Pass Away; Deluded by Fame and Wealth, Her Husband Is Attached to Worldly Pursuit

Lan Caihe’s mother passes away and Mrs. Hu begins to take charge of the household. Her brother, Hu Qian 胡千, is an evil person. Mrs. Hu pretends to be a dutiful woman while Lan Wen is sick and soon becomes his official wife. After Wang Yueying’s parents pass away, she becomes even more determined to cultivate the Dao. One day, while Wang Yueying is telling Lan Caihe of her decision, a servant arrives and informs them that Lan Wen is seriously ill.

Chapter 58. Hardening Her Heart, a Vicious Woman Commits Crime; Feeling Righteous, a Honourable Servant Is Outraged by Injustice

Mrs. Hu and Hu Qian secretly put poison into Lan Wen’s medicine and Lan Wen dies. From then on, Mrs. Hu takes charge of the household and treats Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying badly. She makes Lan Caihe take care of the sheep and cows, and makes Wang Yueying cook food and wash clothes. Hu Qian and Mrs. Hu decide to send the young couple to the local magistrate’s office and sue them for not being filial to their parents. A retired housekeeper named Lan Xiu 蓝休, overhears them, is indignant.

Chapter 59. Killing Someone to Get His Money; Saving a Master but Getting Condemned

Lan Xiu goes to tell Wang Yueying about Hu Qian’s scheme on the same night. However, Hu Qian sees Lan Xiu outside Wang Yueying’s room, and uses this as an opportunity to accuse Yueying of not being chaste. Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying have to
run away, and Hu Qian comes after them in pursuit. Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying reach a river and have nowhere to run. They have no choice but to jump into the water.

Chapter 60. Thunder God and Lightning Goddess Manifest Power to Kill Evil Servants; Immortals Display Supernatural Power to Save Disciples

Four immortals save Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying. They summon the thunder god and lightning goddess, and Hu Qian and his followers are punished with death by lightning. Lan Xiu and a runner who help Lan Caihe are rewarded with longevity and wealth for their moral conduct. Among the immortals who save Lan Caihe and Wang Yueying are Li Tieguai and He Xiangu. Li Tieguai instructs Wang Yueying to refrain from cementing the emotional tie of husband and wife and asks Lan Caihe to go to Mount Wangwu 王屋山 and take up moral training.

Chapter 61. Li Tieguai Cautions Xuanzhuzi; Wang Yueying Tests Lan Caihe

Li Tieguai then goes to Lan Caihe’s home and punishes Mrs. Hu. After this is accomplished, he, He Xiangu, and Wang Yueying go to visit Xuanzhuzi in Haining. Li Tieguai warns Xuanzhuzi to be alert at all time while governing Haining. After talking to Xuanzhuzi, he instructs Wang Yueying to test Lan Caihe’s fidelity to her.

Chapter 62. Passing a Giant Serpent, [Lan] Splits a Mountain to Form a Path; Seeking the Dao Alone, [Lan] Fears No Death

On his way to Mount Wangwu, Lan Caihe encounters a giant serpent. Mustering all his strength and courage he gets past this serpent and continues his journey.

Chapter 63. Talking Freely About the Dao in the Earth God Temple; A Beautiful Woman Seduces a Young Daoist
After getting past the serpent, Lan Caihe takes lodging in a temple. A beautiful young woman serves him tea and food and tries to seduce him, but Lan Caihe’s response is to elaborate his views on the Three Teachings.\textsuperscript{134}

\textbf{Chapter 64. Wang Yueying Tests Her Husband; Dongfang Shuo Steals Peaches of Immortality}

Lan Caihe is unmoved by this young woman’s seduction and thus passes Wang Yueying’s test, since it is she who has assumed this disguise. Lan Caihe finally arrives at Mount Wangwu and cultivates the Dao there.

Dongfang Shuo 东方朔 is a reincarnation of Suixing 岁星, and has some mastery of Daoist arts. He serves Emperor Wu at the Han court. Emperor Wu tells Dongfang Shuo to ask for some peaches from the Queen Mother of the West. Dongfang Shuo accedes to this request in order to gain the emperor’s favour. Knowing that the Queen Mother of the West is visiting the land of the Buddha, Dongfang Shuo decides to steal some peaches in her absence.

\textbf{Chapter 65. Suixing Plays Tricks and Sets a Trap; A Guard Brags and Makes an Unforced Confession}

Dongfang Shuo transforms into a young maiden and goes into the Queen Mother’s peach garden. Knowing that each of the peaches are numbered, Dongfang Shuo pretends to be the daughter of the governor of the garden, and then tells other maidens that his father, the governor, always steals peaches from the garden. A supervisor hears

\textsuperscript{134} At the time when the story of Lan Caihe takes place, which is some time during the Qin dynasty, the term “Three Teachings” has not appeared. I choose to use it based on the context of the narrative. Lan Caihe acts as a spokesman of Wugou Daoren, who is expressing his understandings of the Three Teachings here.
this information and questions the governor of the garden, who is gambling while on duty.

**Chapter 66. The Queen Mother Returns to Clear Injustice; The Ghost Governor Lends out a Ghost**

Dongfang Shuo is able to steal some peaches, and when the Queen Mother of the West returns she immediately knows what has happened. She punishes the governor of the garden for dereliction of duty. Dongfang Shuo is not punished, but will encounter difficulties in the human world as retribution. Dongfang Shuo gives some of the stolen peaches to Emperor Wu of the Han and successfully wins his favour.

Several years later, Emperor Wu of the Han meets another Daoist named Li Shaojun 李少君, who is a member of Demon Sect. Li Shaojun asks Fei Zhangfang for the use of a random female ghost so that he can pretend that it is the ghost of Emperor Wu of the Han’s favourite concubine. Fei Zhangfang employs the electrical light he borrowed from the lightning goddess and summons some ghosts.

**Chapter 67. Assistant Zhang Borrows a Ghost to Cheat His Master; An Immortal Descends to the Human World to Save His Disciple**

Emperor Wu misses his deceased concubine Mrs. Li very much. Hearing that Li Shaojun can arrange for him to meet Mrs. Li’s ghost, he is overjoyed. Fei Zhangfang has a disciple named Wang Yizhi 王一之. Wang Yizhi realizes that Fei Zhangfang has made a big mistake lending a ghost to Li Shaojun. Li Shaojun meanwhile wins over Dongfang Shuo and becomes Emperor Wu of the Han’s favourite Daoist at court. Li Tieguai and Xuanzhuzi come to talk to Dongfang Shuo. They tell him that Li Shaojun is originally a big turtle and possesses a magical weapon called the Eye-blocking Ball.
Chapter 68. A Punishment Closes the Peach-Stealing Case; The Debauchery Mirror Breaks the Eye-Blocking Ball

Li Tieguai and Xuanzhuzi destroy Li Shaojun’s Eye-blocking Ball, but Li Shaojun escapes. Li Tieguai therefore goes to punish Fei Zhangfang for the mistake he made in supplying the ghost to Li Shaojun. After taking Fei Zhangfang’s soul into his gourd, Li Tieguai talks to Xuanzhuzi and hints at his inevitable fate before taking his leave. Xuanzhuzi and Dongfang Shuo together kill Li Shaojun with the help of the thunder god and lightning goddess. An ensuing conversation about electricity between Dongfang Shuo and the thunder god reveals that after two thousands years have passed humans will be able to harness and use electricity.

Chapter 69. The Crippled Immortal Invents Corpse-Returning Method; A Virtuous Woman Marries the Demon Dragon

After killing Li Shaojun, Xuanzhuzi thinks Laojiao has lost one of his able assistants and starts to neglect his duty in governing Haining. In Hangzhou city, there live a mother, Mrs. Hu 胡氏, and daughter Chunying 春瑛. Chunying marries a young man named Wang Chengfu 王诚夫, who takes lodging in their house. Chunying has twins, and before giving birth dreams of a dragon whose appearance is rather fierce. Mrs. Hu becomes suspicious about Wang Chengfu because he never mentions his family. One night, Mrs. Hu goes to the backyard and is greatly shocked by her son-in-law, who has resumed his original appearance as a dragon.

Chapter 70. A Dragon’s Original Form Scares His Mother-In-Law to Death; An Omen from a Dream Clears up Confusion
Mrs. Hu passes out and Chunying’s daughter, a four-year-old girl, tells her mother that Hushi had been frightened by a large dragon. Chunying becomes suspicious that her husband might be a dragon. She dreams of an immortal named Zhongli Quan, who warns her not to trust her husband. Chunying tells Wang Chengfu about this dream and Wang Chengfu is furious.

**Chapter 71.** Telling the Truth, a Demon Manipulates a Virtuous Woman; With Transmission of Sorcery, Precarious Situation Suddenly Arise

Wang Chengfu reveals to Chunying that his real identity is Laojiao. He manipulates her into trusting him to be a good person, and Chunying becomes even more supportive of her husband. Chunying learns some magical arts from Laojiao; she also becomes able to transform into a dragon after receiving Laojiao’s semen.

**Chapter 72.** With Immortals Employing Supernatural Power, Orthodox Wins Over Heterodox; Putting half of the Ocean Water in a Bucket, the Evil Dragon’s Wife Plots Revenge

Zhongli Quan comes to Chunying and Laojiao’s residence and they engage in a big battle. Laojiao moves water from the sea and floods the Hangzhou area. Xuanzhuzi realizes that Laojiao has escaped from his control and comes to the aid of Zhongli Quan. They kill Laojiao with the help of the thunder god and lightning goddess. Xuanzhuzi is punished for his dereliction of duty and sentenced to resume his original form of a white crane. Chunying, however, escapes. Zhongli Quan cultivates the Dao for another ten years and comes to Hangzhou to look for Chunying. He finds out that she is plotting revenge and will employ her powers of magic to create a bucket that can contain half of the water from the Eastern Sea, with which she will inundate Hangzhou.
Chapter 73. Zhongli Exhorts a Stubborn Woman; [Zhongli] Finishes the Entire Bucket of Water in One Mouthful

Zhongli Quan transforms into a young girl and talks to Chunying, and her words move Chunying. However, she is very invested in the idea of revenge and does not want to change her plan. Zhongli Quan then asks Chunying for a cup of water, and Chunying responds by handing over the bucket of water she obtains from the Eastern Sea. Zhongli Quan drinks it all.

Chapter 74. An Obstinate Woman Is Imprisoned under a Mountain; Xu Xian Gives Her Light and Water out of Sympathy

Chunying realizes this little girl is none other than the immortal who appeared in her dream ten years ago. Seeing that Chunying still cannot give up her plan for revenge, Zhongli Quan imprisons her underneath a big mountain.

Chapter 75. An Immortal Creates a Historic Site in Big Well Alley; A Ghost Governor Visits Famous Masters in White Cloud Mountain

Wang Yizhi becomes governor of the ghostly realm after his master Fei Zhangfang passes away, and cultivates the Dao on his own. Zhang Guo, He Xiangu, and Lan Caihe transform themselves into commoners to test Wang Yizhi.

Chapter 76. Lan Caihe Admonishes a Worldly Person in a Long Ballad; Wang Yizhi Is Shortsighted and Takes the Wrong Path

Zhang Guo, He Xiangu, and Lan Caihe tell Wang Yizhi to board their boat. Seeing big waves, Wang Yizhi becomes afraid and decides not to get on to the boat. Wang Yizhi thus fails their test.
Chapter 77. Searching for Immortals but Fooled by Immortals; Governing Ghosts but Tricked by Ghosts

Wang Yizhi’s determination to cultivate the Dao is not strong. As a result, he cannot become an immortal and is still a ghost governor. Wang has a good friend named Huan Jing 桓景, who lives during the Jin 晋 dynasty (AD 265-420). Huan Jing obtains a cinnabar pill (dan) from a big dog as instructed by Li Tieguai and is able to see ghosts. Some especially ferocious ghosts decide to kill Huan Jing and his family with a plague virus, but Wang Yizhi overhears them scheming and is able to save Huan Jing and his whole family from this disaster.

Chapters 78. Ascend Heights On the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month; A Dog’s Eyes Evade Plague. The Ghosts Governor Falls into a Pit; A Presented Scholar Gets Bullied

A servant reports to Huan Jing that Wang Yizhi has been killed by ferocious ghosts. Huan Jing goes to Wang Yizhi’s home and sees many ghosts surrounding his residence. They are angry at Wang Yizhi for his interference in their plot to kill Huan Jing, and have killed him instead. Shocked by this turn of events, Huan Jing passes away shortly after, and the job of governing ghosts is passed on for three more generations and by the time of the Tang, Zhong Kui 钟馗 becomes the ghost governor. Zhong Kui is also killed by ghosts eventually.

Chapter 79. Ghosts Trick Zhang Tianshi and His Seal Loses Efficacy; Ghosts Knock on the Wall and a Lost Arrow Shows Efficacy

After Zhong Kui is killed by ghosts, Zhang Tianshi 张天师 is appointed as the ghost governor by the Jade Emperor and he is able to last until the end of the Qing dynasty.
Chapter 80. Foretelling the Future, Governor Zhang Is Abolished; Fulfilling a Past Promise, Lü Chunyang Is Born

Lü Dongbin 吕洞宾 is born in the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). Zhongli Quan comes to find Lü Dongbin in the human world and serves as his tutor for five years. Lü Dongbin’s family serves the Tang court for generations and his parents want him to be an official. However, Lü seems uninterested in embarking on the official path. When Lü is eight years old, he says to his father that the Daoist teaching is the ultimate form of knowledge, which infuriates his father.

Chapter 81. Master Lü Makes Remarks That Shock His Father; Immortal Zhong Recites Poems to Warn His Disciple

Zhongli Quan talks about the importance of filial piety to Lü Dongbin. Lü Dongbin takes the civil service examination at age twelve and takes the first place. As time passes by, Lü Dongbin gets married and starts a successful official career. Seeing that Lü Dongbin is so lost in worldly pursuit, Zhongli Quan tries to remind him about the Way of the Dao.

Chapter 82. A Stern Criticism Awakens a Lost Disciple; A Grand Statement Marks a True Immortal

Zhongli Quan speaks of the importance of Daoist self-cultivation. He tells Lü Dongbin about his past life and Lü Dongbin decides to give up his worldly pursuits. Zhongli Quan gives Lü Dongbin a magic cape and instructs him to go to Mount Lu 庐山 to study sword techniques from an immortal there. He summons a crane to take Lü Dongbin to a riverbank near Nanchang city.
Chapter 83. A Dog Is Drawn to Miss Wang in Peach Blossom Mountain 桃花山; The Dog Bites Lü Dongbin in the Town of Xiakou 夏口

The crane takes Lü Dongbin to the riverbank and departs. Lü Dongbin encounters someone who is on his way to invite a Buddhist monk, Zhiyuan 知圆, to tame a demon in his master’s household. Lü Dongbin follows him to see the monk. The Abbot of the temple speaks Lü’s name without asking, which surprises him. The Abbot wants to take Lü Dongbin as his disciple, but Lü Dongbin rejects his proposal. The Abbot then tells Lü Dongbin that the demon they want to tame is Erlangshen’s dog, which had escaped from his master. The monk Zhiyuan and Lü Dongbin arrive at the Wang residence to tame the demon, and during the combat, the dog bites Lü Dongbin.

Chapter 84. Entrusted by a Friend, Chang’e Passes Messages; Receiving a Celestial Decree, Star Ministers Govern the Moon

It happens that Lü Dongbin harmed a dog when he was three years old. This is his retribution for harming that dog. Lü Dongbin stays in the Wang residence for three days. On the third night, the immortal Chang’e comes to visit him. Chang’e talks to Lü Dongbin about how the moon gets its luminosity from reflected sunlight.

Chapter 85. Reproving His Blood Sister, Erlang Loses His Temper; Repaying a Debt of Love, a Female Deity Suffers a Misfortune

Chang’e tells Lü Dongbin that she is taking a message from Zhang Guo to Erlangshen. Erlangshen has a sister who had attained immortality at the end of the Zhou Dynasty. Her Daoist name is Lady Yuanzhen 元真夫人. When Lady Yuanzhen becomes an immortal, her fiancée, who had been very much in love with her, dies of grief. She therefore owes him a debt of love. Her fiancée reincarnates as Wang Chang 王昌, who
goes into a temple and sees Lady Yuanzhen’s statue. Yuexia Laoren comes to them and tells them that they are fated to be husband and wife again. They consummate their love relationship and Lady Yuanzhen becomes pregnant. Erlangshen is furious about her sister’s behaviour and imprisons her underneath Mount Tai 山.

**Chapter 86.** Borrowing a Liuli House to Save a Female Deity; Giving a New Born Baby a Specially Made Precious Lotus Lantern

Chang’e tells Lü Dongbin that Li Tieguai helps Lady Yuanzhen. Lady Yuanzhen gives birth to a boy named Wang Tai 王泰.

**Chapter 87.** Putting Personal Interest above the Law, Yuelao Acts as Peacemaker; Assisting the Righteous to defeat the Evil, Erlang Tames the Heavenly Roar Dog

Chang’e tells Lü Dongbin that she will send a message to Erlangshen about his dog. The monk Zhiyuan loves Lü Dongbin’s magic cape and wants to steal it from him. They engage in a fight. Erlangshen comes and saves Lü Dongbin from Zhiyuan by kicking Lü far away.

**Chapter 88.** [Lü] Hears a Murder Resulted from Adultery on His Journey; [Lü] Catches a Glimpse of a Ghost Deep at Night

Lü Dongbin arrives at Xiakou and sees a group of young children playing on the ground. The boys tease a girl named Xiaojinzi 小金子 (Little Gold) about her infatuation with Lü Dongbin. From their conversation, Lü Dongbin learns that Xiaojinzi’s mother has committed adultery with Mr. Wang. The mother has killed Xiaojinzi’s grandmother and older brother, who knew about her affair.

**Chapter 89.** Descending Mount Lu to Punish Adulterer and Adulteress; Entering a Secluded Valley and discovering a Fairland
Determined to get justice for Xiaojinzi, Lü Dongbin goes to her home but is captured by the evil couple. Xiaojinzi makes Lü Dongbin promise to marry her and she then releases him. Lü Dongbin escapes but then falls into a deep hole. Here he meets He Xiangu, who is waiting for him so that she can teach him sword techniques.

**Chapter 90. A White Snake Repays a Debt of Life-saving; An Immortal Has an Unpaid Karmic Debt of Love**

Lü Dongbin studies with He Xiangu for three years and achieves high attainment of the Dao. He Xiangu goes to the Xiang River after she finishes her duty to impart her knowledge about sword techniques, and Lü Dongbin also goes there with her.

**Chapter 91. Escaping from Calamity, a Crane Meets Its Master on a Mountain Peak; Seeking a Magic Sword, [Lü] Visits a Fox Spirit on Taiping Mountain**

Chang’e tells the crane who lives by the Xiang River that his two teachers are coming soon to teach him the Dao. This crane is Xuanzhuzi, who is being punished for his neglect of duty in governing Haining. Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin arrive at the Xiang River and reveal to the crane his previous lives. The crane is determined to cultivate the Dao. Lü Dongbin obtains a magic sword.

**Chapter 92. Cautioning Evil, News of Earthquake Comes from Japan; Meeting with Catastrophe, an Old Man Hides in the Operatic Circles**

Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin send the crane to the underworld so that it can reincarnate as a human being. The crane reincarnates as Han Xiangzi 韩湘子 in the Tang dynasty. Lü Dongbin cultivates the Dao atop Qianyun Cliff 纤云崖 for another five years and eventually attains immortality. The human world is now under the governance of the Tang Dynasty. Zhang Guo is in the human world serving the Tang emperor. Zhongli
Quan and Lü Dongbin go there to meet him. An evil Daoist named Ye Fashan 告叶法善 tells the Tang Emperor that Zhang Guo is in fact immortal. The Tang Emperor wants Zhang Guo to be his Prime Minister. Lü Dongbin transforms into a clerk and informs the emperor that Ye Fashan must go to the Zhongnan Mountain 终南山 to invite Zhang Guo to court. Ye Fashan is dispatched there to seek out Zhang Guo.

Chapter 93. Ye Fashan Pays Respect to Zhang Guolao; Lü Dongbin Three Time Tests Baimudan

Arriving at Zhongnan Mountain after a long journey, Ye Fashan meets Zhongli Quan, who has transformed himself into a young Daoist. Zhongli Quan tells Ye that Zhang Guo has already gone to the Palace and met the emperor. Zhongli Quan employs his supernatural power and sends Ye Fashan back to his home, sparing him another long trip. Ye Fashan realizes that Zhang Guo is a real immortal and dares not disturb him any more.

Lü Dongbin invites Zhang Guo to a brothel to meet his lover, Baimudan (White Peony), and tells Zhang Guo that Baimudan is a reincarnation of Xiaojinzi. He owed Baimudan a love relationship in their past encounters. However, he has tested her twice and found that she has the potential to become an immortal.

Chapter 94. Riding a Donkey Backwardly, Guolao Manifests Supernatural Power; Paying a Worldly Debt, Master Lü Delivers His Lover to Immortality

Zhang Guo displays his magical powers to the emperor, but realizes that the Tang emperor just wants to have a long life and will not give up worldly pleasures. He then leaves the human world, pretending that he has died. Seeing Baimudan has strong determination to pursue the Dao, Lü Dongbin gives her instructions and guidance.
Chapter 95. Attacking Heterodoxy, Wengong Dismisses Daoism; Praying for Rain, Xiangzi Displays Supernatural Power

Han Xiangzi is the nephew of Han Yu, a prominent minister at the Tang court. Han Yu would like Han Xiangzi to pursue an official career, but Han Xiangzi is determined to cultivate the Dao. They debate about the Three Teachings. Seeing that his uncle belittles Daoist teachings so much, Han Xiangzi has no choice but to leave home. Ten years later, Zhongli Quan gives Han Xiangzi a text titled *Tiāngāng měihuí*. Han Xiangzi gradually masters some Daoist arts and then goes back home, as instructed by Lù Dongbin, to attempt to change Han Yu’s attitude toward the Dao. Han Xiangzi displays his supernatural powers and successfully prays for rain. Han Yu does not recognize him until Han Xiangzi kneels before him.

Chapter 96. Displaying Supernatural Power Twice to Manifest Wine and Flower; Showing Wengong the Dao for the Ninth Time in Languan in the Qin Mountain

Han Yu falls out of favour with the emperor and is sent into exile. On a snowy night, he and his two servants arrive at the Languan area. His servants desert him and his horse refuses to move. Han Xiangzi arrives at this difficult juncture and saves Han Yu. Han Yu realizes that an official career is not worthy pursuing and decides to cultivate the Dao.

During the Northern Song dynasty, Fei Zhangfang reincarnates as a younger brother of the empress dowager, surnamed Cao. People call him Cao Guojiu. During the Northern Song dynasty, Fei Zhangfang reincarnates as a younger brother of the empress dowager, surnamed Cao. People call him Cao Guojiu.

Chapter 97. [Cal Guojiu] Does Somersault and Swing in the Hole of a Coin; [Wang Tai] Splits Mountain Tai and Saves His Mother to Bring Karma to an End
Cao Guojiu has a younger brother called Cao Er 曹二. Cao Guojiu has been cultivating the Dao since a young age. When he is thirty years old, Lü Dongbin and Han Xiangzi test his determination to cultivate the Dao and he passes their tests. Cao Er, in the meantime, engages in worldly pursuits. Defeated in the infighting of court politics, his property is confiscated and he is killed. Cao Guojiu is able to escape this disaster because people know he is not interested in worldly matters. He leaves home, arrives at Mount Heng 衡山, and meets his master, Han Xiangzi. Han Xiangzi tells Cao Guojiu that Wang Tai has gone to Mount Tai, split the mountain into two halves, and rescued his mother. Cao Guojiu cultivates the Dao for another twenty years under Han Xiangzi’s tutelage and eventually attains immortality. The Eight Immortals, Zhang Guo, Li Tieguai, He Xiangu, Zhongli Quan, Lan Caihe, Lü Dongbin, Han Xiangzi, and Cao Guojiu all have attained the Dao.

**Chapter 98.** The White Snake Attains the Dao after Experiencing Calamity; A Filial Son Meets an Immortal While Trying to Cut off His Arm

It is the Northern Song dynasty in the human realm and the human world is in chaos. The Eight Immortals receive a heavenly decree to go to the human world to help mankind.

**Chapter 99.** Lu Gaojian’s Encounter With Immortals Becomes a Much-Told Story in Hangzhou; Story of A Dog Attains Immortality Adds Glory to the Western Lake

Lü Dongbin displays his magical powers and saves those who are filial to their parents and have faith in Daoist arts. It has been about a hundred years since the Eight Immortals arrived in the human world, and they are invited to a birthday celebration of the Queen Mother of the West. On their way to the birthday celebration, they pass by the
Eastern Sea. Lan Caihe drops his flower basket into the sea accidentally. The grandsons of the dragon king, Mo’ang 摩昂 and Morun 摩闰, take the basket for themselves. He Xiangu and Lan Caihe kill them.

**Chapter 100. The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea and a Battle Occurs; The Two Dragons Pass Away and the Heavenly Realm Is at Peace**

He Xiangu and Lan Caihe realize that they have killed two grandsons of the dragon king, but it is already too late. The dragon king and the Eight Immortals engage in a big battle. The Eight Immortals move Mount Tai to the Eastern Sea, which kills most of the dragon clans and leaves only Aoguang 敷广 alive. The Eight Immortals report this incident to the Jade Emperor. It turns out that this is the fate of the dragon clan, because the dragon king and dragon queen nearly destroyed the Heavenly Palace thousands of years earlier. It is their retribution. Thereafter, the Eight Immortals help the Jade Emperor in governing heavenly affairs and the heavenly realm is at peace.

(Summarized by Michelle Yingzhi An)